History and the History Curriculum

The second edition of a journal is in some ways more significant than the first. When we launched the idea of a dedicated journal on the theory and practice of history teaching and related learning, its future was unclear. The universally positive response that we have received to the first edition is reflected in the quality of the papers that are included in this volume, organised around its major theme on children's understanding. A premise of any teaching is that it must map on to our understanding of the cognitive development of children in relation to what is being taught. Thanks to the support and help of Hilary Cooper, the journal contains a number of papers that address this central issue.

A crucial factor is the impact of pedagogy upon the quality of children's thinking. Indeed, if there is no 'learning affect' or 'value added' in terms of how children think and develop their understanding of both contemporary and historical problems and concepts, there seems little point in the teaching of history. Keith Barton's *Primary children's understanding of the role of historical evidence: Comparisons between the United States and Northern Ireland* is an extremely suggestive comparison of the quality of children's understanding of the nature and role of historical evidence in the U.S.A. and Northern Ireland. Explicitly, the Northern Irish pupils have a much clearer understanding of the evidential basis of historical accounts and interpretations than comparable American pupils. The main causal factor appears to be the absence of a syntactic dimension of the American history curriculum, with its predominantly transmissive mode of instruction and learning. This is reflected in the relative absence of an understanding of the role of evidence as an element in historical understanding. Peter Lee, in *History in an Information Culture,* addresses the whole question of progression in relation to explanation in his presentation of findings from a study funded by the British government, *Project Chata: Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches at Key Stages 2 and* 3. The eight progressive levels of pupils' explanatory thinking that his paper suggests should have a major impact upon creating a pedagogy which aims to develop and accelerate such explanatory thinking in children. Yosanne Vella, in *Extending Primary Children's Thinking through the Use of Artefacts,* examines the role of artefacts in developing pupil thinking. Her conclusions highlight the interventionist role of the teacher in developing pupils' skills, processes and concepts that underpin their understanding. The application of a Vygotskian model of intervention has some suggestive conclusions as to the levels and nature of children's intellectual development when compared with development through a non-interventionist model.

How children think in the context of their history education lies in the top layer of the educational process. Underneath it is the thinking of teachers as a crucial element in their pedagogical knowledge. The last decade has highlighted the importance of teachers' knowledge bases, with the crucial orienting features being the attitudes, values and beliefs that teachers bring to the classroom. Beliefs encompass a knowledge and understanding of the nature of a discipline, its skills, processes and related syntactic concepts. Beliefs can be culturally determined: a Marxist and Islamic views of history are substantially different from those of an empiricist; all three differ markedly from the mentality of a postmodernist. The education and training of teachers needs to take fully into account the mental map of the teachers of a subject – what they know and understand about the nature of what they are teaching. Isabel Barca's *Prospective teachers' ideas about assessing different accounts* is both rich and suggestive in dealing with the issue of educating and training teachers. It suggests that without a due emphasis upon developing an understanding of the nature of the discipline, and related attitudes towards its teaching, meaningful curricular progress is doomed to failure. Teachers will fall back upon their existing knowledge of what the subject involves, a knowledge that is atavistically culturally determined.

The remaining contents of this edition address some other seminal issues of concern to teachers, teacher educators and curriculum experts. Peter Brickley's paper *Postmodernism and The Nature of History* complements Isobel Barca's study. Peter reviews the debate that has been raging about the nature of the discipline over the past decade. The post-modernist stress upon the importance of narrative, authorial perspectives and constructivism has major implications for teaching the discipline.

Carley Dalvarez in *The Contribution of History to Citizenship Education* summarises the current situation relating to the introduction of Citizenship as an element in the English National Curriculum. Her paper raises many questions that we need to consider; it is particularly pertinent as she is a Newly Qualified Teacher about to enter the profession. Paul Goalen's article *The Drama of History* places this major element in the history teacher's repertory into its historical context, as well as reporting on contemporary cutting edge developments in the field.

The International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research is still evolving. In the next edition we hope to introduce the concept of life histories, looking at the contribution of key players to the development of the teaching of history. We would also like to print contributions from new entrants to the profession like Carley Dalvarez – freshness; spontaneity and originality are the life-blood of history teaching.

Prospective teachers' ideas about assessing different accounts

Isabel Barca, University of Minho, Portugal

Abstract *This is a small-scale exploratory study on an issue of major importance to teachers and teacher educators: what prospective teachers [and implicitly teachers] understand about the nature of the historians' accounts that they use with pupils. It examines how prospective Portuguese teachers reacted to two contrasting modern historians' accounts of an historical situation, the visit of Vasco da Gama to the court of the Indian ruler of Calicut. The authors wrote their accounts from diametrically opposed cultural perspectives, i.e. those of Portugal and India. The paper analyses the students' responses to the historians under four categories: information, bias, authorship and historical grounds. The student responses under the four headings ranged from the naïve to the sophisticated. The inference is serious for both initial training and continuing professional development, and for serving teachers. A major factor in the quality of teaching and learning is an appropriate historical methodological training that enables teachers to analyse and interpret secondary sources, and to use this knowledge in their teaching.*

The context of the study

In history education, concerns about promoting a critical approach to understanding accounts of the past has been defended from different theoretical perspectives. Some authors point to the need to compare diverging (not necessarily conflicting) accounts and look for their relative assessment under historical grounds, hence assigning some objectivity to the history craft (Ashby Lee, 1987; Shemilt, 1987). Others advocate a relativistic view at school arguing either for deconstructionist strategies (Jenkins, 1991) or overlapping notions of point of view and bias (Lang, 1993). History does not deal with proved certainties about a fixed past; it encompass different constructions to answering questions. Nonetheless, history is a form of knowledge which meets a given set of criteria: several answers about a given past can be judged as more or less satisfactory on historical grounds. Research in cognition has suggested that children and adolescents of different countries operate with less or more sophisticated arguments in history (Dickinson & Lee, 1984, Wineburg, 1991, Cooper, 1991; Lee, 1997; Barca, 1996; Cercadillo, 2000). In order to develop learning situations that promote a critical approach to history, it is essential that prospective teachers gain some awareness of historical criteria along with an understanding about the divergent elements that constitute historical accounts.

What counts as historical criteria?

The emergence of new paradigms on objectivity of knowledge has brought about a progressive awareness of the complex status of historical accounts and explanations. Objectivity does not mean absolute neutrality in the sense attributed by early positivists. Ideas concerning the social production of knowledge entail the recognition of the importance of perspective. History is produced from a given point of view, within a specific value-laden context. This is a legacy brought up by several thinkers, defending several views. But while a postmodernist view emphasises the context and contingency of knowledge, objectivists claim that it is possible to identify methodological criteria, inter-subjectively shared, which open up the possibility of the assessment of competing accounts. Among these objectivists, whether it is possible to reach a consensual perspective about an issue, as Rubinoff claims, or whether different perspectives necessarily will remain, as Dray counter-argues, is an unresolved matter. (1)

Different accounts of a given past situation produced under different contexts frequently coexist, but that occurrence does not mean that different accounts cannot be discussed and assessed in relative terms. An understanding of how a given cultural context may influence, form and shape historical conclusions might contribute to the development of an awareness of the complexities of the notion of methodological detachment, especially where we encounter historical dogmatism. Nonetheless, to

assume that this is the goal of critical thinking on history appears too narrow. In the historian's craft there is always the quest for a more powerful and convincing account of the past: what strategies are at work, what criteria are applied in arguments for a better account or explanation? The clarification of such criteria might be a more fruitful route for the production of historical knowledge.

Historians usually apply some specific criteria to justify their own, or preferred, accounts against other competing ones. Such standards can be used either to discriminate between an historical explanation produced under commitments of a detached perspective as opposed to a fictionalised account or to assess the adequacy, scope and power of competing historical explanations. These criteria for determining the degree of acceptability of an explanation can be systematised as referring to principles of evidential and logical consistency. Although these two notions may be seen as interrelated, discrimination between them is useful for the purpose of analysis of historical criteria. Historians share a preoccupation for giving an account of the past well grounded on evidence. Contrary to philosophers of the linguistic turn who insist that there is an epistemic gap between evidence and reality, defenders of an objective history have emphasised that evidence is precisely what gives access to the past. (2)

In history it is not enough to get a coherent description, an account must be supported by specific evidence and not refuted by other sources. Otherwise the account could not be distinguished from fiction or propaganda. Consistency with evidence can also be seen as a criterion to weigh different but well-supported accounts: an account constructed in the light of a wider range of evidence might provide more in-depth answers to an historical issue. Therefore, not only can we try to 'demonstrate' that a favoured explanation is well supported, and not refuted by the body of evidence, but we can also argue for its greater scope due to its consistency with a greater variety of evidence (McCullagh 1994). Criteria of logical consistency, in terms of internal coherence and plausibility, are also commonly valued as central features of a good historical account (Martin, 1987; McCullagh, 1994). (3)

Criteria of logical consistency do not provide a distinction between a fictional and an historical account since they are also required in any acceptable story. However, related concepts of explanatory power - in the sense of a more or less logically satisfactory explanation - may enhance arguments for and against competing accounts (4). Martin (ibid.) has pointed out that historians subsume arguments of internal logic but rarely make them explicit, while the relative plausibility of accounts is often discussed by recourse to a comparative situation.

Method

This is a descriptive study intending to explore the following questions:
- What criteria do prospective history teachers employ when deciding upon different historical accounts?
- How do such prospective teachers support their arguments for a given account?

The sample consisted of 18 undergraduate students attending year 4 in the Teaching of History course at the University of Minho. Fifteen students were in their early twenties and three were mature students. Eight were female and ten were male.

The research questions emerged from a paradox raised by a previous task devised broadly to explore undergraduate students' ideas about criteria that they would apply in the teaching of history. This individual task consisted of first selecting five out of six historical sources to be used in a year 8 class (in basic school) and then justifying the selection made. The six historical sources were about Vasco da Gama's arrival in India. They included three visual sources (a map of the Vasco da Gama route, a picture of the harvesting of pepper cloves in the Spice lands and a picture of Vasco da Gama) and three written sources (an excerpt from the log of Vasco da Gama's trip, an account of Luís Albuquerque, and an account of Sanjay Subrahmanyam). From the students' responses, it was observed that they all systematically rejected the Subrahmanyam source. Some of the students argued that it conveyed the same information as the other written sources (i.e. the log and Albuquerque's account). These students seemed unaware of essential differences in the interpretation of the historical agents' attitudes made by Albuquerque (a Portuguese historian) in 1992 and Subrahmanyam (an Indian

historian) in 1995 (Appendix 1). This misinterpretation of one main aspect of the substantive content of the texts affected any objective comparison of the three written sources.

Both Subrahmanyam's and Albuquerque's accounts gave an interpretation based upon the log of Vasco da Gama's trip, the only existing written primary source of the encounter between da Gama and an Indian potentate. In his account, Luís Albuquerque alluded to the Indian ruler's suspicion towards da Gama's commercial intentions and to an unpleasant incident for the Portuguese involving inadequate gifts that da Gama was about to offer to the king. Albuquerque's interpretation is the one traditionally taught in Portuguese schools. Conversely, Sanjay Subrahmanyam gives a fresh, alternative reconstruction and interpretation of the encounter between da Gama and the ruler. Sanjay interprets da Gama's actions as being grounded in suspicion that is justified in the light of the previous experiences of Da Gama's crew in Eastern Africa. This new perspective is reflected in the recently published work of some Portuguese historians.

To explore the research questions stated above, a week after the initial task of selecting texts, students were given a new set of tasks based on the three written sources previously used: an excerpt from the da Gama's trip (source A); the Albuquerque account (source B); the Subrahmanyam account (source C). The set of tasks asked students to:
(a) identify substantive differences in messages conveyed by the two historical accounts,
(b) rank the three sources in terms of their relative validity as an explanation of the diplomatic failure of the Gama trip, and to justify their ranking (Appendix 2).
The students responded individually. They started their task in the two-hour period of the Methodology of History Teaching class and were allowed to finish it at their own pace, giving it back a week later. They were requested to answer carefully and on a strict individual basis.

The data was analysed using a qualitative approach. In the first phase, the data was coded into two sets of categories: one that analysed the relative validity of the key-features mentioned; another based upon criteria of historical assessment and their relationship with the substantive key-features formerly identified. This phase of analytical coding led to an overall categorisation that attempted to integrate the two sets of ideas and to examine individual patterns of thinking.

Analysis of responses: from information to historically grounded ideas

Students identified substantive differences between the Portuguese and the Indian account in different ways. These may be categorised into three sets of ideas:
1. a few students considered both accounts as conveying basically the same information;
2. a few students gave a contradictory or a vague discrimination of meanings;
3. the remaining students reported specific differences perceived in the two accounts.
Among those students who reported no substantial differences between the two versions, criteria for assessing accounts relied on information or were related to a vague notion of neutrality. Among the remaining two categories the idea of neutrality was stated at different levels of sophistication. A few students also employed emergent criteria of scope and logical consistency when discussing the accounts. The two dimensions that were analysed (substantive differences and assessing criteria) resulted in an integrated pattern of ideas: (1) information, (2) bias, (3) authorship, and (4) historical grounds. Figure 1 shows the distribution of students' responses across the four categories of ideas.

Figure 1. Students' ideas on criteria for assessing historical accounts (%)
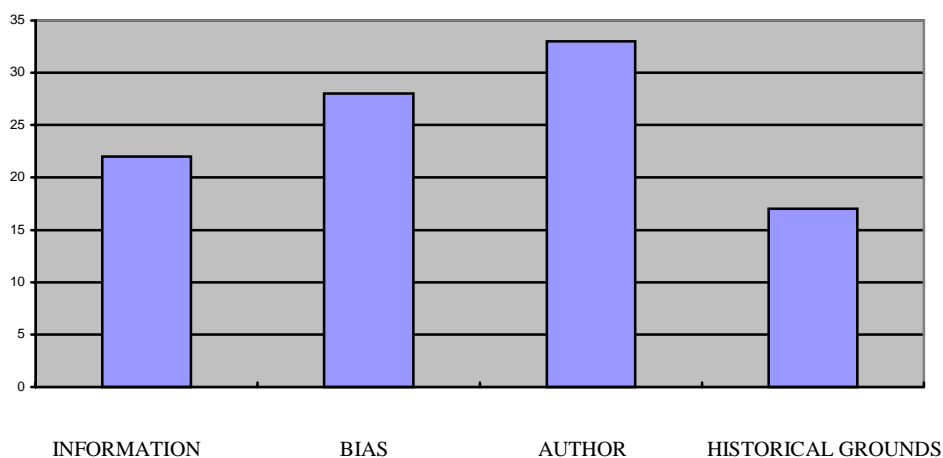
Information

A few students stated that there were no substantial differences between the two explanatory accounts but only factual details. They avoided interpreting the specific meanings conveyed by each source and treated the historical material as information. Criteria for deciding among accounts appeared vague and not directly related to the substantive features of accounts given. Sofia, for example, asserted:

> Both sources have some points in common, both agree that hostilities did not happen from the beginning. Hostilities began due to the non-welcome gifts offered by the Portuguese.

Sofia avoided directly answering a question addressed to highlight substantive differences between accounts. She rather identified some similarities between them. It is worthy noticing that in the former task (selection of sources to be used in a year 8 class) this student had eliminated the Subrahmanyam's account as 'we can find in this one the information conveyed by the other sources [trip log and Albuquerque account]'. This non-discrimination of messages indicates a superficial approach to evidence, probably assuming that history deals with aggregation of information. Different perspectives or dissonance between sources were not considered and this might help to understand why she listed similarities instead of differences between accounts. The only diverging element Sofia noticed was that 'Albuquerque manages to get a more neutral reality'. In her selection of the best explanation, Sofia ranked the sources in order A, B and C, and said:

> My choice was not easy to take. I choose source A because it is a primary source. Pupils start by making contact with a primary source and then with secondary sources, which are based on the analysis of primary sources like A.

Sofia's arguments focussed teaching concerns related to what she probably believed to be historical methodology. Accordingly, she seemed to value direct observation - primary sources first - followed by the subsequent secondary sources. Arguments for making choices among the two secondary sources (beyond a vague statement of neutrality) were not apparent.

Similarly, three other students showed information-centred ideas. José, for example, limited his response to summarising some factual steps taken out of Albuquerque and Subrahmanyam's accounts:

> In source B, da Gama's target is to make direct contact with the king of Calicut in order to establish a trade deal [...]. In source C, da Gama misses the expectation to be addressed to by the natives of Calicut.

José presented a descriptive procedure in several passages of his work (in this task as in the previous one), giving arguments at a substantive level. He presented a kind of empathetic justification of da Gama's attitudes:

> Da Gama did not want to expose himself to a potential danger if he would directly encounter the king of Calicut.

Second order criteria for his ranking of accounts are not apparent in his responses.

Bias

Some students perceived the global differences in Subrahmanyam's and Albuquerque's accounts as related to divergent side-taking. They emphasised as the main source of bias the cultural context that influenced and shaped the 'other' [Subrahmanyam's] side's interpretation. Subrahmanyam's account was considered as being biased, constructed on the basis of a prejudice against the Portuguese. Conversely, the familiar account was judged as objective, or even as the real interpretation of the past situation. Here we see neutrality being valued within a strict positivist paradigm.

Five students presented ideas closely related to an explicit dichotomy of ideas. Francisco asserted:

> Source B: a Portuguese, western perspective. A more neutral perspective referring to the true purposes of Vasco da Gama and his intentions. Failure of Portuguese diplomacy.
> Source C: an Indian, eastern perspective. A less neutral perspective, seeing Vasco da Gama as an intruder not being aware of the reality he is about to encounter. He is suspicious and considers himself superior to the Indians. It ascribed the failure of the Portuguese diplomacy to the Portuguese themselves.

Francisco interpreted both accounts within their specific context of production. Employing criteria of neutrality and truth in a bi-polar assessment, he valued the 'western perspective' as conveying the truth, in opposition to the other account judged as less neutral. Francisco interpreted the fresh explanation of reasons for da Gama's actions, offered by Subrahmanyam, as producing a negative picture of da Gama. He does not consider that this interpretation mirrors the familiar version *of* reasons for the Indian king's actions.

In less assertive words, Sílvia also argued that:

> Source C appears to be more critical towards the Portuguese attitude ... da Gama shows great suspicion, as if on the Portuguese arrival they feared and maybe prepared themselves for future conflicts.... Source B gives more tangible data in terms of justifying features, such as Portuguese competing trading intentions. This last one appears to be more objective.

Like Francisco, Sílvia pointed to the main focus of each account [Subrahmanyam's and Albuquerque's] and valued the one emphasising the Portuguese goals. She judged accounts assuming a criterion of objectivity in the sense of truth against uncertainty. She argued for Albuquerque's version in terms of 'tangible data' as justifying Portuguese motives. But, it seems that she did not explore the background to the reasoning of both agents [Subrahmanyam and Albuquerque], when casting doubt on Subrahmanyam's interpretation.

Authorship

Some students emphasised the national context that influenced the author's perspective in the production of each account while showing an accurate perception of substantive differences between the two accounts. The key-features identified do not consistently bear their arguments for the best account. Six students presented responses suggesting this categorisation of ideas.

Raul stated:

> Differences of perspective are mainly due to the different nationality of authors: that of invaders and invaded, that of who arrives and establishes contact and that of who is contacted. This seems to nurture an impossible consensus. Source B considers the Vasco da Gama plan as a systematic one, in spite of differences between the expected and the encountered. There is, then, a global plan for trading through factories, and the gifts would be a mean to an end. Source C denotes something in between the plan and the contingency, a perhaps more prudent attitude from the Portuguese side, only wishing to know before planning, in a first contact with no greater or minor powers.

Raul scanned the main features of both accounts, giving for each of them a global interpretation of Portuguese intentions and actions. He highlighted two different perspectives: a systematic plan, according to the Portuguese historian; a less systematic, more contingent approach, according to the Indian historian. In the arguments for his preferred (Portuguese) account, Raul emphasised the gifts incident, implicitly forgetting the tension between his plan and his contingency 'theory':

Raul ranked the sources in order B, C and A, saying:

> First ranking, source B, as it more clearly refers to the diplomatic failure between Portugal and India during the first encounter. It points out the Portuguese naivete when undervaluing the eastern power and quotes arguments given by the undervalued 'Portuguese gifts […]'. Second ranking, source C, since it also refers to the minor gifts giving a bad impression to the Indians. This one also lists the mutual mistrust and the beginning of guerilla activities between those powers.

Raul stated that Albuquerque's account was the more direct answer to the question posed. He argued in B's favour that it emphasized a relevant major factor narrated by both authors (the gifts incident), devaluing the process of mutual misunderstandings stressed by Subrahmanyam. When interpreting the selection made by the Portuguese historian, he implicitly suggested that Albuquerque assumed a decentred, objective perspective: the Portuguese historian showed the Portuguese 'gaffe' and the Indian reaction. It seems that this student employed a criterion of methodological objectivity to discriminate between a more or less accurate perspective.

Lina pointed out:

> Source C gives a different perspective from source B. While the first one is a Portuguese historian' excerpt, the second one is an Indian author's. It is always complicated to construct nonbiased explanations; it is always complicated to avoid interference of these aspects in the final result no matter how many concerns we have about neutrality.
> In my opinion, Luís de Albuquerque makes clear that the main reason for the diplomatic failure between Portugal and India was the bad reception that the Indian king gave to the Portuguese gifts […], a conflict that developed as time passed. Sanjay Subrahmanyam stresses that the Portuguese acted with suspicion towards the people of Calicut […]. Besides that, he also gives emphasis to the poor gifts they had to offer to the king.

Lina equated both perspectives about attitudes towards the other side and the underlying reasons: the Indians reacted badly to the Portuguese gifts, according to Albuquerque, the Portuguese acted with suspicion on their arrival, according to Subrahmanyam. For Lina, this was due to the role of cultural presuppositions underlying historical conclusions. She claimed that is 'always complicated' to control for neutrality, thus to eliminate bias – a notion which seems close to the absolute neutrality ideal, reminiscent of the early positivism. Lina valued source B over source C:

> Source B answers the question in a more correct fashion. However, in a history class I would give both sources to provide different perspectives, two sides of the issue.

Here Lina opted for an explanation, which, as she formerly said, emphasized the centrality of the gift incident. Although both accounts had mentioned the same incident, as Lina recognised, she implicitly rejected the other arguments of source C (da Gama's suspicion) on grounds of the incorrect nature of the explanation. Her criteria for justifying 'correctness' remained unexplained.

Historical grounds

A few students showed an accurate perception of substantive differences between accounts, employing arguments coherent with the key features surveyed. The cultural context which influenced, shaped and was mentioned as influencing the perspective taken. Criteria of explanatory consistency emerged implicitly or explicitly, subsuming notions of perspective and logical consistency and depth of argument.] Thus, Mário pointed out:

> Source B reflects a Portuguese-centered perspective, in spite of a tentative objective analysis of the encounter of da Gama and the king of Calicut. It is still a one-side perspective, giving the idea of some perplexity or misunderstanding about the Indian reaction to the Portuguese gifts. Source C is extremely important because it gives us the Indian perspective on the first encounter of the Portuguese with the king of Calicut. [...]. It gives us 'the view' from the 'other side', but it also 'deconstructs' the relative fair image on this first encounter and stresses a climate of tension that might have occurred at the time.

Mário gave a global analysis by interpreting central features in each account (reaction to gifts and a climate of tension). He implicitly discussed differences in terms of explanatory scope (exploring both views) and logical consistency (referring to the tense climate pointed out by Subrahmanyam). Mário gave himself a fresh interpretation of the Portuguese reaction to this state of affairs (the Portuguese attitude of perplexity facing the Indians' attitudes). Mário, as most of his colleagues did, situated these two versions in specific cultural contexts. He valued the access to different perspectives, thus giving the opportunity to create a more complex picture (to 'deconstruct' previous, simpler ones). This student valued the access to new perspectives, thus solving the neutral/bias dilemma. When arguing for Subrahmanyam 's account, he claimed:

> As the Portuguese plans and intentions are well known, source C gives a better explanation. While providing the perspective of an Indian author, it permits us to understand the bad Indian reaction to the Portuguese gifts. It shows that the Indians paid attention to a non-dignified member first sent by the Portuguese to land […]. Another contributing factor for ranking source C first was that it provides one of the scarce Indian contributions on this issue to which I have had access. The history of Portuguese expansion has been approached within a mainly Portuguese perspective. It is required to enrich it, and/or correct it, or complement it with some others produced by those with whom we had contacted, traded and explored. Source B was ranked second. It belongs to a period of the Portuguese historiography and to an author representing major concerns with accuracy and scientific objectivity, comparatively to other periods and former authors (even to some contemporary authors) […]. In spite of all this, it is a perspective centred in the Portuguese intentions and behaviour; it lacks a counter-perspective.

Mário kept the former arguments based on implicit criteria relating to perspectives, (different perspectives enlarge knowledge) and logical consistency (the substantive key features he formerly identified were basically sustained). Concerns with methodological detachment were also apparent when he valued Albuquerque's account on grounds of objectivity.

Carla also reported substantial differences in accounts:

> Source B stresses the mistrust of the king of Calicut in relation to the Portuguese. The Portuguese goals were to get trade and Christians […]. For the king of Calicut, the first goal was seen as a competition, leading to a dissent […]. Source C stresses the Portuguese mistrust in relation to the

people of Calicut. The suspicion is clear when […]. The author asserts that these misunderstandings grew up during the Portuguese stay

Carla gave an extensive survey of several key-features. She equated intentions and behaviours of historical agents in the light of both accounts. Her thorough interpretation seems coherently to support her choice of the best account:

Sources B and C are both important as they clarify the reasons of dissent thus giving a fresh perspective on it.

As pointed out above, Carla arguments appear to rely on the substantive features she highlighted. Criteria of scope and logical completeness might underlie her decision of valuing both historical accounts, in order to reach a new perspective (and one of a greater scope?).

Conclusions

Although the results of this study cannot be generalised, they provide some evidence about how historically literate young adults might decide upon different historical accounts. Different and more or less elaborate criteria underlie their arguments for and against specific accounts of a given past situation. A focus on mere information, the detection of problems with knowledge or with authorship, or implicit concerns about consistency of accounts in terms of their relative scope and power may be some of the criteria employed by adults when selecting historical accounts. The picture broadly coheres with some levels of ideas about provisional historical explanation, which were traced in a former study with a sample of Portuguese adolescents. (5)

In the present study on a small sample of mature and historically literate students, ideas tied to information and description also appeared. Ideas of a better account given by a more neutral historian (almost invariably, the Portuguese) were the most popular pattern observed in this study; either based on strict true/false, neutral/biased statements or on grounds of an inevitable imprisonment of national presuppositions. Accepting different accounts as a genuine condition of the historical knowledge and discussing them on objective grounds emerged among a few undergraduate students, as it did among a few secondary school students. Nonetheless, ideas stressing the context of production as affecting the author's perspective appeared more explicit here than in the study on adolescents' thinking.

The patterns of ideas described here also reflect those suggested by the Chata Project (Lee, 1997) on children's understanding of accounts. The information category represents the 'telling' level, in which accounts are perceived as being the same. The bias category also appears to equate the 'taking-side of authors' level: historians cannot get rid of partisanship (but the undergraduate students stressed that some authors manage to be more neutral or objective). The historical ground category might approximate to the 'nature of accounts' level: different accounts are genuinely accepted as legitimate constructions, hence enriching historical knowledge.

The argument of different national contexts as one of the main justification for different accounts appeared across the several patterns of responses except in the information category, where no substantive differences were reported. We might infer that ideas about the contingency of the historical production might be explicit irrespective of more or less sophisticated conceptualisations.

The observation of similarities between levels of progression among children, adolescents and undergraduate students raise questions about the concept of progression itself. If some undergraduate students display ideas reminiscent of less elaborate patterns how far can we accept a model of progression in historical thinking? Research has indicated that some youngsters may perform in more sophisticated ways than the eldest. Besides, levels of thinking are not invariant. As far as research on cognition is concerned, it is relevant to explore further what kinds of second-order ideas prospective teachers reveal and employ when making concrete decisions about historical accounts. As we increasingly recognise that learning is situated within a context where it is socially constructed, the

type of experienced knowledge, the focus and the methods of teaching may affect the kind of historical thinking. An almost exclusive content-centred, transmission pattern of teaching throughout formal schooling might be responsible for the occurrence of less elaborate categories of ideas among prospective history teachers. This observation suggests that it is desirable that undergraduate students experience learning situations congruent to the nature of history.

Notes

1 See Rubinoff, 1991 (Introduction: W. H. Dray and the critique of historical thinking) and Dray, 1991 (Comments), in Van der Dussen, W. J. and Rubinoff, L. (Eds.), *Objectivity, method and point of view*: *essays in the philosophy of history*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
2 While Goldstein argued for the epistemic gap between evidence and reality Danto stressed that evidence is the bridge to the past. See Goldstein, L. (1976). *Historical knowing*. Austin: University of Texas; Danto, A. (1965). *Analytical philosophy of history*. Cambridge: CUP.
3 Coherence concerns the extent to which an account does not contain internal contradictions. Plausibility is seen in terms of not contradicting knowledge of real or imagined events in the real world (inspired in Pennington, N. & Hastie, R. (1992). Explaining the evidence: Tests of the story model for juror decision making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62* (2), 189-206.).
4 Followers of the deductive-nomological model defend that historical explanation is always logically incomplete. Followers of the rational model assert that historical explanations can be complete in terms of being logically satisfactory.
5 The study traced a progression from story-centred ideas up to emerging ideas of perspective as a genuine feature in history. Intermediate levels were: a restricted idea of more or less correct explanations, a focus on aggregation of factors and a concern with absolute neutrality (Barca, 1996).

References

Ashby, R. & Lee, P. (1987). Children's concepts of empathy and understanding in history. In Portal, C. (Ed.), *The History Curriculum for Teachers* (pp. 62-88). London: The Falmer Press.
Barca, I. (1996). *Adolescent students' ideas about provisional historical explanation*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London.
Barton, K. & Levstick, L. (1998). "It Wasn't a Good Part of History": National Identity and Students' Explanations of Historical Significance. *Teachers College Record*, 99 (3), 478-513.
Cercadillo, L. (2000). Significance in history: students' ideas in England and Spain. Paper presented at the Symposium *Creating knowledge in the 21st century: insights from multiple perspectives*, AERA, New Orleans.
Cooper, H. (1991). *Young children's thinking in history*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London.
Dickinson, A. & Lee, P. (1984). Making sense of history. In Dickinson, A., Lee, P. & Rogers, P. (Eds.), *Learning history* (pp. 117-153). London: Heinemann.
Jenkins, K. (1991). *Rethinking history*. Londres: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Lang, S. (1993). What is bias?. *Teaching History*, *73*, 9-13.
Lee, P. (1997). "None of us was there". Children's ideas about why historical accounts differ. In Anohen, s. et al., *Historiedidaktik, Norden 6, Nordisk Konferens om Historiedidaktik*, Tampere 1996, Copenhagen.
Martin, R. (1989). *The past within us*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
McCullagh, C. B. (1984). *Justifying historical descriptions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Shemilt, D. (1987). Adolescent ideas about evidence and methodology in history. In Portal, C. (Ed.), *The History Curriculum for Teachers* (pp. 39-61). London: The Falmer Press.
Wineburg, S. (1991). Historical problem solving: a study of the cognitive processes used in the evaluation of documentary and pictorial evidence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *83* (1), 73-87.

Appendix 1
Historical accounts

Source B:
In Calicut the Portuguese found a world that was civilized as their own, dealing in unsuspected riches and having an intense commercial activity. In spite of the polite welcome given to Gama by the Samorin of Calicut, the latter soon realized the commercial implications that lay behind the expedition, although ostensibly the fleet was supposed to be there to meet people of the Christian faith who, it was believed, resided in those latitudes.
The gift sent ashore by the Portuguese admiral served as the pretext for the first disagreement between the navigators and the men of Calicut. It was badly received and they said "it was not the sort of gift to send to the king; that the poorest merchant arriving from Meca or the Indies gave him more; and if they wished to please him they should sent gold, because the king did not have to accept the sort of gift that had been sent." With the passing of time this conflict became more acute and was never overcome in the many years that followed.
Luís Albuquerque, 1992

Source C:
The brief Gama's staying at the East African coast is essential to define the Portuguese behaviour in Malabar. It must be stressed the extreme suspicion of Gama in Calicut; he waits for ships from land to visit his naos, rather than promoting a first contact, and he sends a dispensable member of his fleet - an exile called Joao Nunes – rather than someone with authority.
Contrary to what some other chronicles tell, Islam and Christianity did not enter in a direct confrontation at the moment of Gama's arrival at Calicut. What happened during those three months (Gama quit Calicut on 29 August) was something more complex. The needed information was definitely acquired but the Portuguese - with their insignificant gifts in fabric, hats, coral and agricultural products – did not managed to get a favorable impression. There was indeed, a real climate of hostility in some contacts; the mutual suspicion is obvious when hostage and counter-hostage taking occurs.
Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 1995

Appendix 2

1. What differences of perspective do you notice between source B and source C?
2. Rank sources A, B and C in a decreasing order as an explanatory answer to the question: why did the diplomatic failure in the first contact between Portugal and Calicut occur?
3. Justify your ranking.

Primary children's understanding of the role of historical evidence: Comparisons between the United States and Northern Ireland

Keith Barton, Division of Teacher Education, University of Cincinnati, USA

Abstract *This study examines similarities and differences in the ways primary children in Northern Ireland and the United States understand the role of historical evidence. Although limited in scope, the research reported here points to critical issues in developing and expanding children's perspectives on this fundamental topic in history education, and it has implications for educators in both locations. The comparative dimension of this effort is particularly important, because studies that examine similar issues in differing national contexts can shed light on the relative importance of the variety of influences on children's understanding. Research conducted in only one setting may give the impression that identified features of children's thinking are invariant or age-related characteristics of their developments; comparative studies of students who grow up in different societies, and who have been exposed to differing curricula, can expose distinctions between the particular and the general. In Northern Ireland and the United States, children learn about history from similar kinds of sources - schools, relatives, the media, and historic sites - but the content of what they learn there is very different. A comparison of students' ideas in the two locations, then, holds promise for illustrating how these sources may interact to influence children's ideas about history.*

Background and methods

Examining children's understanding of the role of evidence is an especially significant topic for comparative investigation. In Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, learning how accounts are grounded in the analysis and interpretation of evidence is a central goal of the curriculum and features prominently in instruction. In the US, although there is no official national curriculum, curricular and instructional patterns are relatively similar throughout the country (despite variations at individual schools or in specific classrooms), and this de facto national curriculum emphasises learning the content of specific stories about the past rather than learning how these accounts are produced. In recent years, however, a number of educators have proposed curricular and instructional changes that would place much greater emphasis on the use of primary sources and related aspects of historical enquiry (e.g., Holt, 1990; Levstik and Barton, 2001; National History Standards Project, 1994; VanSledright and Kelly, 1998; Wineburg, 1991).

Instituting such changes requires a knowledge base relevant to children's understanding of the components of historical enquiry. A number of studies in the UK have examined the range of children's ideas about evidence and its role in producing historical accounts (Foster and Yeager, 1999; Lee, Ashby, and Dickinson, 1996; Shemilt, 1987). US studies have examined children's ability to identify perspective and judge the reliability of historical sources (Barton, 1997; VanSledright, in press; VanSledright and Kelly, 1998; Wineburg, 1991). This study, however, addresses a somewhat more basic question than previous work with US students - it does not ask what children do when they work with historical sources, but whether they recognise the need for such sources in the first place. If students do not understand the role of evidence *as* evidence - that is, if they do not recognise that historical accounts are constructed from sources—then work with the sources themselves may be premature.

The research reported here is based on three separate studies with children in the upper elementary or later primary years; two of these were conducted in the US and one in Northern Ireland. The first US study took place in a fifth-grade classroom (where students were approximately 10-11 years old) and involved five weeks of classroom observations and four semi-structured interviews with focus groups of four students each. The second US study took place in two classrooms, one at the fourth grade level and one a fourth/fifth combination (ages 9-11); that study involved approximately 90 hours of classroom observation, combined with 29 interviews with a total of 33 students (described in more detail in Barton,

1996, 1997). The study in Northern Ireland consisted of 60 interviews with 121 students (aged 6-12) at four schools, as well as 38 classroom observations of upper primary history instruction in one school (described in more detail in Barton in press, 2001). The results reported in this paper are based primarily on the interview components of each of theses studies.

Findings

In both US studies, students focused on oral transmission of information as the principal source of historical knowledge. When asked how people find out about the past, nearly every student suggested that the information was handed down through word of mouth. As one boy explained, 'Their mom and dad told them before they died, then they just keep passing it up'. One girl also said that people learn about the past 'from like stories from their parents', and another noted, 'Well, like if like adults lived, and if your grandparents or something were alive, at a certain time, they could tell you, or like somebody, you could just find out from different people'. One boy pointed out, 'Maybe it's been passed down through families', and another added, 'Through generations'. One girl also explained, 'Probably from people that told them, like a grandpa told their son or something, and they lived back then, they would tell what they knew, and someone else just came up'.

Even when asked about topics distantly removed from their own experience, students suggested the information was transmitted orally. In discussing Native Americans, for example, one student said, 'Maybe an Indian that lives now has it passed on to him from his great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfathers, who lived back then, and lived to be ninety years old, and passed down to him, so now he could tell us about that'. When asked how they knew what happened in the American Revolution, nearly all students responded immediately with one of two answers - either their teacher told them, or they read it in books. When asked how the people who write books know what happened, most responded that the information had been passed down orally from generation to generation. One student suggested that authors might have 'had like ancestors that were like there, back then, and they just passed it on', while another replied, 'Maybe their grandma and grandpa told them, and their grandma and grandpa told *them*, and their grandma and granpa told *them*' … and was about to continue until another student interjected, 'We get the picture'.

This perspective on the transmission of historical information was also apparent when students were asked whether they thought the way their parents or grandparents had studied the American Revolution would be different than the way they studied it themselves. Nearly all agreed that it would be, but they pointed not to the generation of new questions or the discovery of new evidence, but to the corruption of accounts through repeated retellings. One noted that his parent's study of the topic would have been better because 'it was closer to the war and stuff than it is now'. Another explained that their parent's version would 'probably be more truthful, since it was closer to the Revolutionary time, and now we're farther away'. One girl succinctly characterised this perspective when she compared historical information to the game known in the US as 'telephone', in which messages are changed as a string of people retell them.

Even when students pointed to books as a source of historical information, they saw them as little different than a written version of this oral transmission. In some cases, students suggested that books were simply the end-product of this process of transmission. One girl, for example, said, 'It could be if their family just sort of, the stories that kept coming up in the family, like if I was passing, if I had kids and I passed the story down, and maybe they would make a book about it'. Another girl suggested that people who write about history probably 'had relatives that was a hundred years old, and they had relatives that were a hundred years old, and they find that out'. And one boy suggested that people who write books about history know about the past 'because their parents told them'.

Other students thought books were directly based on older books. One group of students, when pressed on whether they really thought someone writing a book on the American Revolution would rely on what his or her grandparents said about it, decided that the person would probably copy the information out of other books. This information would have been copied out of still other books, the

ultimate source being either books written at the time, or information that had been passed down orally until being written down. And just as they suggested that accounts transmitted orally might have been changed with retelling, students also pointed out that accounts in books may have become corrupted. One suggested that when their parents were young, there may have been 'a good book' about the Revolution, but 'it got old and gray, and so this guy decided to make a new book, and added things in it that weren't true'. Another student agreed: 'People add more things, like you put a point of view in, and then you want to add things to like make the book more exciting, so the kids are interested'. As one girl said to (the agreement of her interview partners), 'People don't want the same thing over and over again', and so 'it will be a little more exciting to put some action in it'.

In Northern Ireland, many students also thought that people know about the past through word of mouth. One girl, for example, said, 'It's always passed on from someone who died earlier on', and a boy suggested that 'Your granny could tell you'. Another student even remembered the term for this process: He explained that people know about the past because of 'word of mouth, I think it's called, when people pass on the word in families'. Several students echoed the comments of their US counterparts by describing an unending chain of oral transmission. As one boy said, 'the ones that lived a long time ago passed it on to their son, and their son's son passed it on, they kept on passing it on, and they told somebody else, and they told another person'. Similarly, one girl observed, 'Your mummy tells you what it was like then, and her mummy tells her what it was like, and her mummy tells her'.

Compared to the US students, this focus on oral transmission was far less prominent, and rarely was applied to more distant periods in history. Fewer than a fourth of students in Northern Ireland identified word of mouth as the sole means of learning about the past; nearly all the rest pointed to various forms of physical remains as the way people in the present discover what happened in history. As one girl said, 'They keep going and looking for clues''. Similarly, another noted, 'Archaeologists find things from the past that tell us lots of things about it', and still another girl observed, 'People find remains, and they started to study, and they started to find out what kind of life they had, the way they made their things'. Several students gave more specific examples of the kinds of remains used. One girl said that 'they find things, fossils and photographs, and old clothes and things people wore'; a boy noted that 'they've uncovered and found remains of buildings, and bones of people'; another girl, said, 'There's archaeologists, and they will dig up and find like scrolls and bits of jugs and all, or maybe even ruins of the wall or house or whatever'. In several cases, students pointed to both physical remains *and* word of mouth as means for learning about the past. One girl, for example, first said that people 'told stories about it' and 'passed it on from generation to generation', but when asked for other ways, she added, 'The evidence, like bones, and you can see chain mail, swords, axes, and then bones of dead animals and stuff that they would have eaten'.

US students also sometimes mentioned such physical remains, but much less frequently than their counterparts in Northern Ireland, and usually only when pressed to think of ways of finding out about the past other than through books or oral transmission. Some students noted the possibility of going to an old fort or battle site to find information, or looking at old muskets or uniforms in a museum. One girl said, 'They get a hat from back then, and a hat from now, and they compare'. Similarly, another girl explained that 'they might find old stuff, from the old days….like if people died or something, you could go to their house to find older things, if they were sorta old'.

Although responses in both locations included reference to physical remains and orally-transmitted personal experience, the relative importance of these sources was inverted. Students in the US focused almost entirely on word-of-mouth as the source of historical information (even when represented in books), and only occasionally mentioned artefacts and other remains. Those in Northern Ireland were much more like to point to physical objects and archaeological excavations as the means by which people find out about the past, either instead of or in addition to oral accounts. These differences reflect the contexts in which the students themselves had learned about history. Although they had learned about history in similar settings - at school, from relatives, through visits to historical sites, and from the media - the nature of those settings in the US tend to constrict children's understanding of

historical sources and their use as evidence, while in Northern Ireland they help to expand that understanding.

US students' emphasis on oral transmission was consistent with many of their own experiences, in which they had found out from older people in their families what had happened in the past. The influence of their interactions with relatives was unmistakable, and in fact, they often used themselves as examples of how people learn about history. Tonya, for example, explained how her mother and grandmother told her about the past, and Robert explained, 'You can pass it down in your family, cause my grandpa knows, like we're related to Daniel Boone, and my grandpa's grandpa…he bought a replica of Daniel Boone's gun, and he made like all the stuff like Daniel Boone had, and my Grandpa has it all, so he can pass it to us, and it keeps going down, that's how they like get it through to everybody'.

Students in Northern Ireland made similar observations and frequently pointed to the role of parents, grandparents, and other siblings in helping develop their historical knowledge and interests (Barton, 2001). But their experiences in other settings served to *expand* their understanding of the range of sources upon which historical accounts could be based. In school, for example, learning about sources of evidence is a fundamental goal of history instruction, and in each of the classrooms I observed, students directly learned about these sources. In one, the teacher frequently mentioned specific archaeological finds that yielded information on Viking life, and he even told students about his own experience as part of a excavation that uncovered the remains of an Irish monastery's round tower (used in part as protection against Viking raids). Another class began its study of history by excavating the school's rubbish bin and drawing conclusions about recent school activities; the class also went on a field trip that included a visit to a prehistoric burial site. And students in another class learned about historical sources by bringing in artefacts from the 1940s and 1950s as part of their study of the recent past; a handout also required them to analyse a photograph from the period in order to reach conclusions about schooling at the time. Students at the other schools reported similar experiences with historical sources.

Nor were these activities simply isolated activities, quickly completed and forgotten, or divorced from the bulk of the content that students learned. Rather, discussions of historical remains were a frequent feature of instruction, as students saw, touched, visited, or read about the sources of the information they were learning. These sources played such a large part in the study of history not only because it was required by the official curriculum, but because the specific content of instruction made it a particularly meaningful and accessible topic. The primary curriculum in Northern Ireland focuses on social and material life, and these are aspects of history that are particularly well illuminated through artefacts, pictures, and other forms of physical remains. In addition, many of the time periods covered in primary schools - the Mesolithic Era, Ancient Egypt, the Vikings - are ones known about largely or exclusively through archaeological investigations. Thus, the role of physical remains is much more salient in studying these periods. World War II and the post-war era, meanwhile, are so recent that artefacts are readily accessible. The focus both on these time periods and on social and material life makes it easy for teachers to highlight the role of a range of historical sources.

Perhaps just as importantly, many of students' experiences outside school in Northern Ireland reinforced this familiarity. Any of the students in this study could see numerous examples of historic physical remains within a few miles of their homes or schools. Such sites included Neolithic burial sites or stone circles, round towers from medieval monasteries, the earthworks of Norman forts, and castles, abbeys, and churches in various states of ruin. As one girl explained, 'We can see evidence of settlement up at Ballyreagh"; another explained that 'McEwan's cairn, along the road, it was excavated'. (Some location names have been replaced with pseudonyms in order to avoid revealing the location of the schools.) Such sites are neither scarce nor inaccessible—they are the inescapable landmarks of any drive from town to town in Northern Ireland. When one boy explained that we know about the past because 'the scientists found bones, castles, houses—like bits and pieces left—and they put them back together', he was not simply relating an academic fact learned in school, he was describing his immediate environment. In Northern Ireland, then, many of the informal experiences

students have outside school, and the formal lessons on evidence they have in their classrooms, work together to create a more sophisticated understanding of the role of evidence in historical enquiry. Because of these in-school and out-of-school encounters, children are not limited to a belief that information about the past is handed down solely by word-of-mouth.

US students also had learned about history at school and in their communities, but in the US, these venues are unlikely to help students develop an understanding of the variety of sources upon which historical accounts can be based. At school, students most often learn stories about the past - the story of Columbus or the American Revolution or Martin Luther King, Jr. - and these stories are supplied through teachers' presentations, narrative books or other readings, and sometimes films. The emphasis of this exposure is on learning the content of the narratives themselves, not on understanding how they were constructed; activities like those in Northern Ireland - where students use sources as evidence to reach conclusions about the past - are highly unusual. Although textbooks sometimes contain pictures of artefacts or other relics, these are typically used only as glossy illustrations, and are not integral to the presentations themselves. The specific content of historical narratives in the US, meanwhile, renders most such sources less relevant. Because students are more often learning stories of what famous people did than of how people lived their everyday lives, descriptions of social and material culture - and the evidence for them - is marginal to the overall emphasis of the curriculum.

Historical sites in the US are also fundamentally different than those in Northern Ireland. In the US, there are no ruined castles, of course, but neither are there usually any other historical sites that replicate the kinds of remains that archaeologists or historians might work with. Historical sites in the US usually consist of restored building or extensive, developed parks. When students go with their families to Colonial Williamsburg, Independence Hall, or Civil War battlefields, they see representations of the past that often are highly authentic in their detail, but they are less likely to encounter the kinds of partial remains and artefacts upon which those representations have been based. Visitors see the outcomes of historical enquiry, but not the process itself. Similarly, a drive through the countryside is unlikely to expose students to the kinds of ruined structures that are a part of the landscape in Northern Ireland. In the US, structures that would correspond to the historic eras students study in school are either restored or demolished - rarely are they allowed to languish as ruins, and thus children are not exposed to such remains. And the older remains of Native Americans do not survive as obvious structures in most parts of the US - they either exist below ground or appear in the landscape as rare mounds or circles. Whereas in-school and out-of-school experiences in Northern Ireland work together to strengthen children's understanding of history, those same settings conspire in the US to obscure how historical knowledge is constructed - children there are unlikely to encounter the role of evidence either in or out of school.

One final characteristic of students' responses was notable: in neither location did they demonstrate any substantial familiarity with the use of written primary sources as a means of finding out about the past. In the US, some students had recently read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and they mentioned that historical accounts might be based on the diaries of people alive at the time. One student also mentioned the use of archives, but he could not specify what might be found in them. And one group of students suggested looking at old newspapers, although they were unsure whether newspapers existed as long ago as the time of the American Revolution. Such references were rare, however, and in Northern Ireland students never mentioned written primary sources. In the US, this omission is consistent with the lack of exposure to such sources in school or out. In Northern Ireland it may reflect the fact that the topics most often covered in the primary curriculum - Vikings, Mesolithic peoples, daily life in the Victorian Era or the recent past - are most often approached through the use of physical artefacts rather than written documents.

Conclusions

Based on this research, students in Northern Ireland appear to have a more developed understanding of the role of historical evidence than do students in the US. Most of the US students in these studies appeared to treat historical sources simply as *information*, a perspective also identified among some

English children in the work of Shemilt (1987) and Lee, Ashby, and Dickinson (1996). US students thought that people in the past knew what was going on around them, and they passed that information along to us, either through oral transmission or through books. Even when students talked about the use of physical remains and artefacts, they treated such remnants of the past simply as sources of information. They thought that old uniforms or muskets would show what old uniforms or muskets were like, but there was no suggestion that these could be used inferentially as evidence for a historical account. Historical sources, then, were simply seen as a means of direct access to the past.

Although many students in Northern Ireland also saw oral transmission (but not books) as a source of knowledge, they typically combined this with a recognition of the role of other sources. Moreover, the way they referred to these other artefacts and remains indicated at least an initial understanding that they could be used as evidence, not simply as sources of information. Students frequently used words like 'clues' and 'evidence', they often noted that the remains historians and archaeologists work with are 'bits' or 'pieces', and in some cases they clearly indicated that remains (such as animal bones) were used as evidence to answer questions (such as what people ate). This research did not provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the sophisticated levels of understanding of evidence that have been documented in other studies in the UK, but it makes it clear that most had at least progressed beyond the initial stage. They knew that historical knowledge was not simply transmitted (at least not always), but that it had to be constructed from evidence. If further research were to demonstrate that these findings are representative of students throughout Northern Ireland, educators there should feel justifiably proud of their accomplishments in further developing students' understandings, as well as confident that children's ideas about evidence provide a foundation upon which they can continue to build in primary and secondary school. The only shortcoming in children's understanding, as revealed by this research, was their limited familiarity with written historical evidence; this is an area to which educators there might wish to devote greater attention.

These findings have two important implications for US educators. First, an understanding of the role of evidence is well within the capacity of children in the upper elementary years. If schools in Northern Ireland have been able to integrate the use of evidence into history instruction, there is no reason US schools cannot do the same. And if primary children in Northern Ireland can understand that evidence is required in order to create historical accounts, elementary students in the US should be able to as well. These findings from Northern Ireland, together with many years of collective practical experience and empirical evidence from throughout the UK, demonstrate that there simply is no basis for thinking that such understandings are beyond the capabilities of children.

However, because students in the US may have less extensive experience with historical evidence in informal settings outside school, educators there should also pay attention to the *starting point* for developing an understanding of evidence. Responses of US students did not indicate a lack of familiarity with the role of bias, perspective, or reliability in historical evidence. Rather, students there did not recognise the need for evidence in the first place; they simply thought information from the past was directly transmitted to people in the present. This suggests that classroom exercises designed to acquaint US students with the evaluation and interpretation of evidence may be premature, and ultimately may be self-defeating; such exercises might simply give students 'the means to answer questions they have not yet learned to ask' (Shemilt, 1997, p. 43). Particularly given that out-of-school experiences in the US do not often expose students to incomplete physical remains of past societies, educators there might begin by helping students problematise historical knowledge so that they understand why evidence is needed - an approach that would necessarily be grounded in exposure to the overall process of historical enquiry. As educators in the UK are well aware, sources become evidence only in relation to historical questions (Dickinson, Gard, and Lee, 1978); if students are unaware of the role of questions in history, they will be unlikely to develop an understanding of evidence. This study suggests, then, that developing US students' understanding of the role of evidence will require more thorough changes in instruction than simply exposing them to primary sources.

Correspondence *Keith C. Barton, Associate Professor, Division of Teacher Education, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0002*
keith.barton@uc.edu

References

Barton, K. C. (1996). Narrative simplifications in elementary children's historical understanding. In J. Brophy (Ed.), *Advances in Research on Teaching,* Vol. 6 (Pp. 51-83). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
Barton, K. C. (1997). 'I just kinda know": Elementary students' ideas about historical evidence. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 25,* 407-430.
Barton, K. C. (2001). 'You'd be wanting to know about the past": Social contexts of children's understanding in Northern Ireland and the USA. *Comparative Education, 37,* 89-106.
Barton, K. C. (in press). A sociocultural perspective on children's understanding of historical change: Comparative findings from Northern Ireland and the United States. *American Educational Research Journal.*
Dickinson, A. K., Gard, A., & Lee, P. J. (1978). Evidence in history and the classroom. In A. K. Dickinson & P. J. Lee (Eds.), *History teaching and historical understanding* (Pp. 1-20). London: Heinemann.
Foster, S. J., & Yeager, E. A. (1999). 'You've got to put together the pieces": English 12-year-olds encounter and learn from historical evidence. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 14,* 286-317.
Holt, T. C. (1990). *Thinking historically: Narrative, imagination, and understanding.* New York: College Entrance Examination Board.
Lee, P., Ashby, R., & Dickinson, A. (1996). Progression in children's ideas about history. In M. Hughes (ed.), *Progression in learning* (Pp. 51-81). Philadelphia, PA: Multilingual Matters.
Levstik, L. S., & Barton, K. C. (2001). *Doing history: Investigating with children in elementary and middle schools.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
National History Standards Project. (1994). *National standards for United States history: Exploring the American experience.* Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools.
Shemilt, D. (1987). Adolescent ideas about evidence and methodology in history. In C. Portal (Ed.), *The history curriculum for teachers* (Pp. 39-61). Basingstoke: Falmer Press.
VanSledright, B. A. (in press). I don't see how historians can do this: Fifth-graders practicing history in the classroom. *Elementary School Journal.*
VanSledright, B. A., & Kelly, C. (1998). Reading American history: The influence of multiple sources on six fifth graders. *Elementary School Journal, 98,* 239-265.
Wineburg, S. S. (1991). On the reading of historical texts: Notes on the breach between school and academy. *American Educational Research Journal, 28,* 495-519.

The Contribution of History to Citizenship Education

Carley Dalvarez, University of Hetfordshire, England

Abstract *Internationally, citizenship is both a tacit and explicit component of the history curriculum. At the most extreme it is the driving element that shapes and forms the whole curriculum: such was the case throughout the Soviet Empire. In England, citizenship is about to be introduced as a compulsory element in the education of 11-16 year olds. What are the implications of this change for the teachers of history, the teaching of history and the citizenship education of pupils? Citizenship education is grounded in a discourse that extends back to Ancient Greece. In England, concepts of citizenship were analysed and articulated in the 1950s and received acknowledgement in the 1988 Education Reform Act. 1998 saw a government recommendation that citizenship becomes a statutory subject on the curriculum: from 2002 this will occur. The relationship between history and citizenship is explored further below, with specific reference to its implications for both teaching and learning styles and the civil, political and social components of a citizenship curriculum.*

Keywords Citizenship, Citizenship education, History curriculum,

Introduction

The issue of citizenship and values has been a major discussion point for English schools following the report of a British government working party on citizenship, the Crick Report. With a formal emphasis on educating young people regarding values and their roles and responsibilities as citizens, teachers in England are now faced with delivering a curriculum related to citizenship and related values.

Before considering how to educate children to be citizens, I feel it necessary to define citizenship and its role in education. The notion dates back to the era of the Greek city-states, and has evolved continually since both deepening (by increasing the scope of democratic involvement) and broadening (by widening beyond male property-owning -elite class). Citizenship is normally taken to mean the membership of, and participation in, the activities of a community or group of communities. It implies an abstract sense of loyalty and a sense of bonding to the concept of civic order rather than an individual. Citizens are members of a club that instil these common attitudes and practices with positive virtues. They are rewarded for their conformity by certain privileges or rights.

Citizenship and Society in the 20th Century

In T.H. Marshall's essay 'Citizenship and Social Class' (1952) his analysis separates citizenship into three strands: civil, political and social which he acknowledges are based on historical convenience over successive centuries although he believes that true citizenship only occurs when all the strands unite. However, traditional models of citizenship such as this tend to view 'community' as simplistic or one-dimensional which Hicks (1995) feels is due to the emphasis on the nation state as the primary focus of community identification. But as the late twentieth century has witnessed events such as the break up of the Soviet Union and a resurgence of religion as a political force, which indicate that the nation state is not a natural order, this presents a considerable challenge to the model of citizenship. Individuals are no longer seen as members of a single community as class, gender and race are augmented by what Holden (1995) refers to as allegiances of scale, ranging from local to regional and national communities. Also further dimensions are added as citizenship rights are claimed for future generations, non-human species and the earth itself. Whilst some theorists call for a radical restructuring of citizenship to take into account new concepts of community, others such as Selbourne (1994) respond by reasserting the traditional homogeneous model. This attempt to recapture citizenship for conservatism is a significant one, since it has had a clear impact on the current citizenship agenda and therefore, according to Arthur and Bailey (1999), the model of citizenship education introduced into British schools.

The British government's 1988 Education Reform Act, the culmination of an intensely politically volatile period in education, recognised the central rule schooling plays in shaping social values, making it a statutory requirement of schools to promote 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society' (ERA, 1988). The emphasis on society as well as the individual places citizenship education, the 'making of good citizens', in a key role. The Act makes it clear that the core and foundation subjects were not the whole curriculum, and citizenship education was identified as a key theme within the whole curriculum. ERA faced major problems over its implementation. Accordingly the government set up a review under Lord Dearing. The Dearing Report of 1994 recommended a 'slimmed down' curriculum. Cross-curricular themes rated scarcely a mention leaving schools unsure of their status leading to a greater variety in provision.

Citizenship and Education in England

The renewed interest in citizenship education in England was a result of the government discussion white paper, Excellence in Schools. The white paper stated a need to enhance the place of citizenship and political education within the English National Curriculum. The advisory group chaired by Lord Crick was to provide advice on effective education for citizenship in schools (QCA/DfEE 1998). Crick's report identifies three key dimensions: participation in democracy, the responsibilities and rights of citizens, and the value of community activity (QCA/DfEE 1988:4). The report draws heavily upon Marshall's three strands of citizenship: the civil, political and social. However Marshall emphasized the citizen's rights as the essential element of the civil and political domains, and the role of the state in providing the conditions for the social citizenship, reflecting the era in which he was writing, whereas the Crick report stresses the need for a much greater connection between rights and duties. This report' s notion of citizenship education is that it should be education 'for' not 'about' citizenship, not just thinking like a good citizen, but acting like one as well. This implies that schools have a responsibility to develop both knowledge of citizenship and civil society, and to develop values, skills and understanding. In doing this, they will educate children about their rights, freedoms and responsibilities, and how their actions can affect the lives of others.

The history of citizenship education in the United Kingdom reflects a long-standing scepticism amongst educators about the explicit teaching of political citizenship. According to Hahn, (1999:239) the general view is that 'citizenship is caught not taught'. This view, alongside the declining public confidence and interest in democratic processes and institutions, clearly sets up a potential conflict with the model of citizenship education proposed by the Crick Report and endorsed by the government's Qualifications and Curriculum Agency [QCA], a body that oversees both the curriculum and its assessment. As citizenship education is only compulsory for 11-16 year olds, past experience suggests that English schools attitudes towards non-statutory citizenship goals may be varied and largely determined by individual schools and teachers' personal motivation. Also many primary schools believe they are already addressing the issues involved through a programme of Personal, Social and Health Education [PSHE], assemblies, circle time or extensive opportunities for discussion and debate. But is this adequate and are they allowing their pupils to develop fully in relation to citizenship criteria? English schools have the opportunity to become proactive instead of just reactive. It is now common practice for schools to establish a school ethos related to values, community involvement and, in some respects, citizenship. This ethos should impact upon every aspect of school life. As stated previously, it is said that pupils need to be prepared for, as well as taught about, citizenship and in my opinion schools must consider the values implicit in the way individuals relate to one another within the school community. Taking this into account, it is necessary to understand why citizenship education should be included in primary education. As the United Kingdom is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi faith society, it is vital that we prepare children to take an active role as citizens by: providing them with the skills to develop good relationships, to have an understanding and respect of the differences between people, to develop their self confidence and to make them aware of their responsibilities.

Teachers in England are very aware of the constraints made on the timetable today, and having to justify time spent on citizenship education seems yet another burden. By bringing citizenship to the forefront of the revised National Curriculum 2000, schools have been given the opportunity to think creatively about the links between citizenship and the other curriculum subjects. We cannot separate certain aspects of citizenship and history, as they are so complementary. History's subject matter is the study of human society and citizenry in the past, and it is inevitable that children will learn lessons and be provoked into thought about human behaviour from its study. The lessons learned may not always be desirable ones, and they may indeed be learned on false premise or misinterpretation. But any student of history should have their understanding of humanity extended by time spent thinking, reading and writing about the past.

Citizenship and History Education

In discussing the links between the values of citizenship and history, I feel it fundamental that the aims and purposes of history education are explored first. There are a variety of rationales for history education but most see the history curriculum as fulfilling both extrinsic and intrinsic purposes. Intrinsically, the outcome of learning history will be the acquisition of the skills required to study it (Lee, White 1993). In the past, history has been used explicitly in various societies to inculcate children with certain attitudes and values. For example, in Britain in the early twentieth century, history was part of developing particular qualities of patriotism and loyalty to the Empire (Board of Education, 1905, cited in Phillips 1998). More recent examinations of the history curriculum show the subject being justified for extrinsic purposes. Tate (1994) proposed history as an essential means of induction into the dominant culture of the nation. However, others such as White (cited in White and Lee 1993: 15) see history as 'performing social functions, assisting the promotion of a student's well-being as an autonomous person within a liberal democratic community enabling more effective participation'. Walsh (sited in White and Lee 1993) believes history instils a love of the past while Roger (1987) says history enables children to understand the present better in its historical context. The original aims of the National Curriculum (DES 1991:1-2) contained a mixture of social and intellectual aims for history education, including:

- To help understand the present in the context of the past,
- To arouse interest in the past,
- To help give pupils a sense of identity,
- To help give pupils an understanding of their cultural roots and shared inheritance.

Whereas the most recent curriculum review re-emphasises the importance of values (QCA 1999: 132): ' Pupils develop their individual and collective sense of identity and learn to appreciate the diversity of human experience by understanding and valuing their own and other's inheritance They are able to clarify their own life choices, attitudes and values in context, through considering the ways in which the past influences the present.'

The different understandings of history represented by these varying views have clear implications for the teaching and learning styles within the subject, which in turn may convey certain values to children. For those who believe in a 'traditional' view of historical knowledge and disregard the importance of perspectives, the learning is likely to be passive with an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge rather than enquiry or investigation. According to Copeland (1998) this approach will give the following outcomes:

- An awareness of the dominant cultural and moral values of society in the past
- A knowledge of historical facts
- An understanding of what has traditionally been regarded as culturally, politically and morally important by societies in the past
- An understanding of some of the diversity of human experience

Whereas for those who see history as ' a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past' (Carr 1963:30), learning will be an active process. Pupils will be encouraged to view a range of evidence and come to their own conclusions about the past. This approach will lead to development in:

- Understanding primary evidence
- Understanding the uncertain nature of historical knowledge
- Understanding the diversity of human experience
- Having an awareness of the variety of points of view, which inform different versions of history

Values, Ethics, Morals and Beliefs

It is my belief that history should aim to develop a set of values, ethics, morals and beliefs and the thinking skills to exercise the judgements that being a citizen involves through fostering knowledge and understanding of human behaviour in the past and present, which in itself is the main aim of citizenship education. However a key issue that needs to be addressed is, 'Whose values do the children develop?' Straughan (1988) discusses three main approaches in which values are dealt with in school:

Values transmission - in which values are transmitted through the teacher and institutional behaviour.
Values neutrality - in which the teacher takes a neutral position as children examine social situations and the issues they raise.
Values clarification - where values are discussed and debated.
The philosophy of the individual teacher will consciously and unconsciously affect the values role model that they represent to children. It also affects the way in which they regard the importance of children's own contributions to their learning in history .It is vital, therefore, that teachers examine their own positions on the nature of history and be aware of their own political values and viewpoints.

Also, it is necessary to consider the values conveyed in the content of the history syllabus in England. There has always been a degree of flexibility that allowed for choice of content within the curriculum, although published materials have tended to push teachers towards certain content and emphasis. Therefore, it would be possible within the curriculum framework to select as subjects for study events, people and changes that explicitly emphasise the pluralist nature of society, or on the other hand 'high culture' by teaching about 'the best we have inherited' (Tate 1994:67). Others advocate the inclusion of particular subject matter to emphasise Britain's relationship to Europe, in order to promote a clearer sense of European citizenship. Pupils could be learning explicitly about people or groups of people who represented certain values in society, or whose treatment by that society teaches pupils about attitudes and values of the time. Implicitly the choices made by government, schools or individual teachers, about what content to emphasise give messages to children and society about prevailing cultural and moral values. It is for these reasons that schools and teachers must examine anew the values context that they are providing for children learning history.

Citizenship, Empowerment and Access

Education for citizenship is about empowerment and access. Children need opportunities to play an active part as citizens within the school community. Through investigating the history of parliament and issues such as Guy Fawkes [a plotter who was foiled in his attempt to blow up parliament in 1605] and the Suffragette campaign [to secure votes for women] pupils will have a deepened understanding which can then lead on to activities such as elections for school council. It is important for teachers to include the perspectives of children, not only because they are part of all societies today but also because they are tomorrow's adults and the decisions they make as adults may well be affected by their childhood experiences and development. Children should be taught about the rights of children and adults in the past as part of the process of preparing them for active citizenship in the future. Children's experience in the here and now can be enhanced by knowledge about other children's experience in the

long ago and far away. History should be enquiry led and Fines and Nichol (1997) identify five key principles related to the enquiry process which I have adapted to possible opportunities:

- Questioning: getting children to ask and answer questions e.g. about the lives of children in the past. .
- Speculate and make connections: the lives for children as we imagine them. .
- Using authentic sources with integrity: sources reflecting all sectors of society e.g. including where possible authentic sources reflecting children's own experience. Studying real historical knowledge in depth: first-hand accounts of events written by children.
- Beginning with the children and building on from there: making it accessible for all e.g. using children's own experience as a starting point.

Children may learn about the rights of people in the past and compare these to the present day and understand that the members of society who would be deemed citizens have changed over time. They can also experience democracy in the classroom through listening to and valuing the voices of others. Hearing the opinions of others contributes to learning about democracy and experiencing being heard contributes to learning through democracy.

Educating for citizenship cannot be confined to the school community, and active citizenship is clearly a desirable goal. Involvement in community groups requires both a sense of civic responsibility and of political skills. However, Crick argues that for the education of 11-16 year olds community involvement cannot be divorced from the social and political reality of the community, and teachers need to address not only 'what is the case?' but 'what ought to be the case?' and 'can it be done better?' (QCA/DFEE 1998:63-64). I believe that there is no reason why this critically reflective approach could not be used for the education of 5-11 year olds. The English National Curriculum's programme of study for 5-7 year olds allows the freedom for children to practice their own developing ideas of moral judgement. With an emphasis on the child's own past and that of the communities making up the school, it allows for the representation of a suitably broad range of interests and viewpoints. The curriculum for 7-11 year olds betrays the politicisation of the curriculum in that four of the six core units tell the Anglo-Saxon story with little opportunity to consider the non-white perspective. It is vital that pupils should be aware that British history is not exclusively about people of European descent. It is only by giving the children knowledge of Britain's multi-cultural diversity that we can enable them to look and think critically at historical interpretations. It is important for all pupils to be taught that people of many ethnic origins have contributed to the growth and development, and to the culture and society of Britain during the historical periods they study. The local study unit would be an excellent opportunity for children to ask key questions about the make up of both the school and local community and investigate how and why it has changed over time.

Citizenship and Teaching Styles

John Dewey was acutely aware that for citizenship education the teaching approach was as important as the content. His approach was driven by the need to educate the democratic citizen, arguing that problem solving is the best way of developing a critical outlook, the key to producing actively engaged citizens (Dewey sited in Straughan 1988). In order to achieve a critical outlook, children need the skills of questioning, interpreting, reflecting and forming conclusions, which are the key skills of historical enquiry. It is the combination of the rigorous application of evidence and the examination of social, cultural and moral issues that makes history an essential method to producing critically reflective and active citizens. Inquiry into the past is also a fundamental aspect of human nature. As Gardner (1999:153) states, 'nearly all humans are curious about their origins and their fate; and in that sense, the study of tour story' requires little justification. ' It is my belief that citizenship education will be effective when children are able to use their historical knowledge, understanding and skills to appreciate the significance of controversies, and therefore see how patterns of loyalty are constructed, represented or imposed. Pupils should feel as well as think their way through issues past and present. They should be encouraged to question and feel outraged, inspired and moved by events in the past therefore developing their own ideas of right and wrong. By learning about experiences from the past

(especially those relating to children) they can begin to understand the concepts of continuity and change in addition to empathising with people in the past. This may at times lead pupils into confronting difficult issues and questions.

Conclusion

By using history as a vehicle for citizenship you avoid stigma that may be attached, allowing access to all without anyone feeling exposed. In making the history studied relevant to the children's lives you can serve to make people in the past more individual and human in the children's imagination allowing empathy and reflective thinking. Through using the variety of teaching approaches historical enquiry allows, such as role-play and simulations, difficult abstract concepts, such as 'rights', can be revisited repeatedly in varied and stimulating historical settings so that the majority will have a deepened understanding. The National Curriculum for history offers ample opportunities to educate to become active and reflective citizens by developing a range of critical thinking skills needed throughout life. From the Industrial Revolution to the Poor Law and the status of women, the curriculum contains plenty of stimulating lines of enquiry. However, in order for this to be effective, schools, teachers and even pupils need to consider the curriculum content, identify key questions, plan effectively and start from the children's own experience. It is hoped that if pupils can see the relevance of historical issues to their own lives, then they will become more interested in history, become better at history and better informed and more developed as people.

Correspondence *Carley Dalvarez, School of Education, University of Hertfordshire, Watford Campus, Wall Hole, Aldenham, Watford, WD25 8AT*

History in an Information Culture

Peter Lee, Institute of Education, University of London, England
Project Chata: Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches at Key Stages 2 and 3
Project team: Rosalyn Ashby, Manling Chau, Alaric Dickinson, Peter Lee

Abstract *This paper discusses research evidence from Project Chata bearing on students' understandings of the nature and status of different kinds of historical claims. The research suggests that the majority of students from age 7 to 14 years treat all historical claims as if they were matters to be directly tested by finding and compiling information; the appropriate questions are whether the information is available, and whether it is true. Nevertheless, some 12 to 14 year-old students are beginning to make more difficult and far-reaching distinctions between singular factual statements and explanations, and to recognize — at least implicitly — that claims made in rival historical accounts cannot necessarily be evaluated as if they were discrete matters of fact, but must be related to the accounts themselves.*

Keywords History Education, Progression, Children's concepts, Evidence, Accounts, Cause, Rational understanding

Introduction

The context of history education in Britain

A major problem for history as laid down in the recent English National Curriculum frameworks (DES, 1995; DfEE & QCA, 1999) is that those frameworks do not make adequate distinctions between the different kinds of claim encountered in history. They fail to distinguish information from *evidence*, and have nothing clear to say on historical *explanation* or *accounts*. For example, the specification of 'historical enquiry' for Key Stage 3 (11-14 year-olds) declares that:

> Pupils should be taught:
> (a) to identify, select and use a range of appropriate sources of information, including oral accounts, documents, printed sources, the media, artefacts, pictures, photographs, music, museums, buildings and sites, and ICT-based sources as a basis for independent historical enquiries
> (b) evaluate the sources used, select and record information relevant to the enquiry and reach conclusions.

This specification, with its emphasis on 'information' and lists of source types, rather than understanding of evidence, is weak enough. But under 'interpretations of history', all we are offered is:
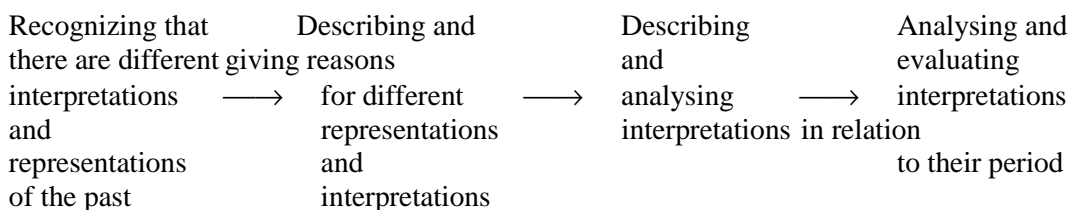
> Pupils should be taught:
> a) how and why historical events, people, situations and changes have been interpreted in different ways;
> (b) to evaluate interpretations[1]

Interpretation is left entirely unexplained here, so it is natural to look for enlightenment in the history attainment target, which describes progression through a series of attainment levels. At level eight — the highest level apart from a level of 'exceptional performance' — 14 year-olds would be expected to 'analyse and explain different historical interpretations', and should be 'beginning to evaluate them'. A glance at levels one to seven reveals that no guidance is given as to what is meant by 'interpretation', how it relates to accounts, or what progression in this area would look like. The notion of 'narrative' appears quite separately, coupled with an injunction that it should be 'consistently well-structured'. Instead of a progression of ideas, we are offered a progression that falls back on generic

descriptions of behaviour — 'beginning to' do something, or doing it 'independently' — that beg precisely the questions of what it is that has to be done, and how it progresses.

Demands from teachers for help in understanding the kind of progression at stake in the previous, rather similar, 1995 version of the curriculum, were answered with a schema that confirmed the difficulty of actually sorting out what was involved (SCAA, 1996). The chart supplied to teachers listed 'Ascribing significance', 'Interpretations', and 'Historical enquiry'. Under the first heading it managed nothing except a final goal: 'Assessing the significance of events, people and changes.' There was no indication whatever of any steps towards the goal, and the goal itself was no more than an expansion of the heading. The progression set out under 'Interpretation' was as follows.

| Recognizing that there are different interpretations and representations of the past | $\longrightarrow$ | Describing and giving reasons for different representations and interpretations | $\longrightarrow$ | Describing and analysing interpretations | $\longrightarrow$ | Analysing and evaluating interpretations in relation to their period |

The progression here is from *recognition*, through *describing and giving reasons for* and *describing and analysing*, to *analysing and evaluating in relation to period*. But these are again generic descriptors that leave untouched the ideas students and their teachers might need.

It is understandable that difficulties of this kind have occurred. The issues underlying these problems lie at the very roots of the discipline of history, and many of the key concepts involved are philosophically contested. The rhetorical turn that has run parallel with various kinds of postmodern critique of history has pushed such problems to the fore. It would be foolish to pretend that either the compilers of the National Curriculum or the author of this paper could settle such matters. But there are realistic moves to be made short of providing philosophically watertight analyses of the concepts involved. First, it is incumbent on those who dictate to teachers what they must teach, that they at least suggest some of the key ideas involved. Second, it is crucial that we understand what pupils are likely to make of our attempts to teach such key ideas, and we cannot do this without some idea of what prior conceptions they are likely to be working with. Failure here risks pupils assimilating what we think we are teaching to sets of ideas they already hold.[2]

By exploring what students have to say when confronted with conflicting explanatory claims or rival accounts, it may be possible to begin the task of giving substance to progression schemas. First we must know the student ideas we are addressing. Then we need to understand the range of moves students currently make as their ideas run up against ever more complex demands. Armed with some understanding of all this, we may have some prospect of devising effective teaching approaches, and even a sensible attainment target.

The Project *Chata* (Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches 7-14) research reported in this paper closely resembles what Wineburg calls 'applied epistemology', asking 'questions about what people know and how they come to know it'. Working within a long British research tradition its concern is specifically with second-order understandings, the ideas that constitute students' knowledge of what 'history' is. (Wineburg, 1996.) History in this sense is not to be confused with particular substantive knowledge, or the particular picture of the past that students come to acquire, and *a fortiori* not with a view of the past intended to reinforce any particular value-system. In Shemilt's words, 'History is important to civilization and culture because of what it is, not because of the stories it tells.' It is 'a valuable part of the school and college curriculum because it *displays* the virtues of an open society not because it *persuades* students of anything whatsoever.' (Shemilt, 1996)

Project *Chata*
The findings reported in the first part of this paper represent a small part of the work of Project *Chata*. *Chata's* final report was accepted by its funders (the Economic and Social Research Council) in 1997,

but analysis and writing continues. The project's central objective was to produce models of the development of children's concepts of historical enquiry and historical explanation, particularly ideas about *evidence* and *accounts*, and about *cause* and *rational understanding*. The project comprised four phases, but only data from Phase 1 is discussed in this paper. (See Lee & Ashby, 2000, for some findings from Phase 3 and 4.)

In Phase 1, written responses were collected from 320 children between the ages of seven and fourteen, across three task-sets, on three separate occasions. The task-sets were designed to investigate children's ideas about *evidence*, *accounts*, *cause*, and *rational understanding*. Each task-set included tasks on all four main strands, and addressed different historical content within the national curriculum, but was constructed to be self-standing, providing children with the material necessary for the tasks.

Partly because the project initially received additional support from Essex Local Education Authority, and partly because intrusion by researchers into schools was sensitive at a time of large-scale educational change, the project's purposive sample was confined to Essex schools. The sample was drawn from three primary and six secondary schools. (See Table 1).

Table 1. Phase I schools

School	Phase and type	Intake	Y3	Y6	Y7	Y9
School A	primary	urban	17	29		
School B	primary	small town	16	18		
School C	primary	rural	22	28		
School D	secondary comprehensive	urban			24	24
School E	secondary comprehensive	suburban			24	25
School F	secondary comprehensive	urban			23	
School G	secondary comprehensive	small town				10
School H	secondary selective (girls)	urban +			14	16
School I	secondary selective (boys)	suburban +			15	15
Total	in each year group		55	75	100	90

N = 320

+ indicates a wide catchment area drawing students from beyond the locality

Mean age of year groups
Y3: 8 years 1month; Y6: 11 years 2 months; Y7: 12 years 1 month; Y9: 14 years1month

Follow-up interviews were conducted with 122 children, including all those from year 3, on all three task-sets. For year 3 the interview responses were analysed along with the written responses; the remaining interviews were used only to check that the written responses were not systematically misleading.

The written tasks took the form of four booklets and a clue sheet. The children were asked to complete the booklets by writing, ticking boxes, ordering statements or drawing arrows. The three task-sets were given over a period of three weeks for secondary, and slightly longer for primary children. For the eleven and fourteen year-olds around 90 minutes was available for an entire task set, with a break approximately half way through. An entire day was set aside for year 3 and year 6 children to complete each task-set: most of the ten year-olds finished within half a day, but others took longer. The seven and eight year-olds were read the background information provided, and were then taken through the tasks by a research officer with considerable experience as a primary deputy head-teacher; their work was broken into short periods interspersed with organized games in the playground.

The focus of this paper

This paper discusses components of *Chata* that allow us to take some tentative steps towards building a picture of the way students' epistemologies begin to become differentiated. More specifically, it examines:

(i)   how students decide between alternative explanations, and the degree to which they recognize explanations as having a different status from singular factual statements;

(ii)   how students understand apparent conflict between claims embedded in rival historical accounts.

Historical Explanation

Testing explanations

As part of *Chata*'s investigation of children's and adolescents' ideas about historical explanation, students were presented with pairs of different explanations. The example here is one of three such pairs, each using different historical content appropriate to the National Curriculum in England, and each given to students as part of a task-set consisting of a range of tasks together with a small collection of materials sufficient to tackle them. After reading a cartoon and text presentation on Roman and British life prior to the Roman conquest, and a brief story describing Claudius's invasion of Britain, the students were offered two explanations, both referring to factual statements made in the materials already used (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Alternative explanations

The Romans were <u>really</u> able to take over most of Britain because the Roman Empire was rich and properly looked after.	The Romans were <u>really</u> able to take over most of Britain because they beat the Britons at the battle by the River Medway.

The students were asked four questions, and given three or four lines in which to write their responses to each.[3] The two responses reproduced here exemplify some major differences between types of response.

Richard (Year 6)

How can there be two different explanations of the same thing?
    Because no people that are alive today and they weren't alive then so no-body knows what happened.

Does this mean one explanation is better than the other?
    No because as I said just on the last question nobody was around and one could be right they both could be right they both could be wrong.

How could you check to see if one explanation is better than the other?
    If there were records of the invasion.

How could you check to find out if either explanation is a good or bad explanation
    You can't

James (Year 9)

How can there be two different explanations of the same thing?
    Both points helped the Romans. (There are also more explanations.) The Romans had several factors on their side, each one is true and helped them in different ways.

> *Does this mean one explanation is better than the other?*
>   Not necessarily, both might be important or minor. The Romans might not have
>   managed the conquering without A and they might not have without Point B. (In
>   this case point 1 makes point 2 happen.)
> *How could you check to see if one explanation is better than the other?*
>   If point A wasn't true then would X happen?
>   If point B wasn't true then would X happen?
>   If without A, X doesn't happen, but it does even without B, then A is more
>   important than B [Punctuation added.]
> *How could you check to find out if either explanation is a good or bad explanation*
>   If point A wasn't true could X still happen?
>   If point B wasn't true could X still happen?
>   A good explanation would mean X couldn't really happen while a bad explanation
>   wouldn't stop X happening even if the explanation wasn't there / wasn't true.

For Richard the important point about the past was that it is out of our reach, because nobody alive today was around then. This explains why there can be two different explanations of the same thing: nobody knows why the Empire ended, so we simply have competing claims, either or both of which may be wrong. Pressed on the prospect of evaluating explanations of the past against one another, he appealed to records, but concluded that there is no real chance of finding out whether either explanation is a good or bad one: 'You can't'.

James saw both of the two explanations as contributing to Roman success. He added, 'There are also more explanations', and that several factors 'helped them in different ways', clearly envisaging a more complex explanation. The assumption here may be that, in general, we should expect multi-causal explanations in history. This assumption is characteristic of older students in general (Lee, 1997b, Lee *et al*., 1996c) and there is evidence on other tasks that James thinks this way.

It is in the remaining questions, however, that the most startling differences between James's response and Richard's become apparent. Whereas James began to raise questions that can only arise where there is some understanding of the nature and status of explanatory claims, for Richard the next question simply raised the information issue again. And, of course, if you think that explanations are like singular factual statements, the problem is relatively straightforward: the only question is, 'Is this explanation true or false?' It follows that you then have to see whether you can trust the information you have. Since Richard probably also subscribed to the direct observation paradigm (you can only trust what you can see) and the Romans are no longer with us, he was unable to tell if either explanation is 'right' or 'wrong' (true or false).

James was employing a different set of ideas altogether. Explanations have different weight, and may be related to one another. So 'point 1 makes point 2 happen': the first explanation makes the event described in the second possible, and that event may in turn be part of the explanation. James seemed to be thinking in terms of necessary conditions here: 'The Romans might not have managed the conquering without A and they might not have without Point B'. This is confirmed in his answers to the next two questions, where his algebraic formulation is logical, if not especially easy to follow. In question three he is using the notion of necessary condition to test the relative weight of the two explanations (or, more precisely, the factors given by each explanation). The argument seems to be:

>   If A isn't true (the Empire wasn't rich/well looked after), and so X doesn't happen (the Romans
>   don't take over Britain),
>   *and*
>   If B isn't true (the Romans didn't win at the Medway), but X still does happen (the Romans do
>   take over Britain),
>   *then*
>   A is more important than B.

In other words, A is a necessary condition of the Romans' success, whereas B is not.

In question four, which many students did not distinguish from question 3 (some complaining that they had already answered it) James used the same logic to test the validity of the explanation. In a good explanation, A and/or B being false would mean X couldn't happen, whereas in a bad explanation, their falsity would not 'stop X happening'. Note that the issue here is not simply whether A or B *are* true or false, but what consequences would follow from the absence of the factors to which they refer. Deciding whether A or B is true doesn't get you anywhere, unless you can say what is likely to occur without the factors they each describe. This is a counter-factual schema. It is not yet a counter-factual *argument* of a historical kind, because that would entail reasoning about historical possibilities in the light of further evidence; but it does provide the logical basis upon which such reasoning might rest.[4]

The status of 'because' statements
There is strong additional evidence that James's response indicates an understanding of the difference in epistemological status between singular statements of fact and explanatory claims. In another task, students were asked whether there was 'any real difference' between two boxes (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. The status of 'because'

> The Romans took over Britain. The Roman army had good weapons.

Box 1

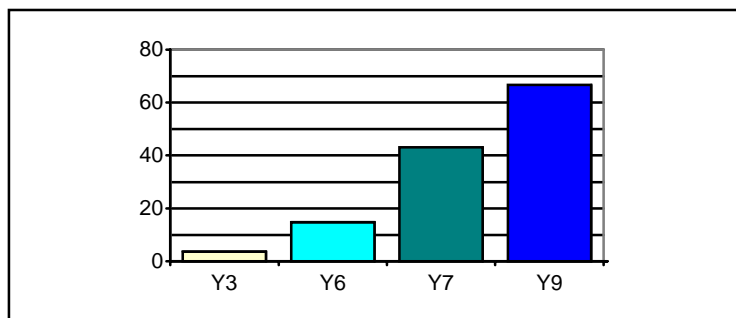> The Romans were able to take over Britain because they had good weapons.

Box 2

James replied:

> Box 1 has 2 separate facts and does not connect them together. Box 2 says fact A happened <u>because</u> of fact B. In some cases Box 2 wouldn't be true, while Box 1 was true: there is a difference.

James spells out some consequences of the fact that Box 2 is explanatory. This is a rare step beyond a more frequent — but not common — response, which is simply that Box 1 is a statement of facts, and Box 2 is an explanation (Lee *et al*. 1996d). (Note that more than 95% of year 3, 85% of year 6, and 57% of year 9 do not distinguish the boxes even in this way. See Figure 3.)

Fig. 3. Percentages of year-groups saying that Box 2 is explanatory

To the question 'How we could check whether Box 2 was right?' James replied:

If the Romans didn't have good weapons, would they have been able to take over Britain anyway? If they could then Box 2 is wrong.

When asked (in a further task) to link sets of possible causes to explain why the Romans could take over Britain, James produced a valid analytical (branching tree) structure, rather than the linear structures most common even in year 9. (He produced similar structures in the other two task-sets.) He did not treat the explanatory task as a request for a story structure, but organized the material to show the relationships between different causal factors. On a range of other tasks James provided further evidence that he thought of historical explanations as being different in nature and status from factual statements. (Some of these tasks are described in Ashby *et al.*, 1997, and Lee *et al.*, 1996 and 1998.)

In contrast with James, Richard thought there was no real difference between the boxes on the 'because' task (Figure 2),

Because the first box is two sentences, in the second box they're put together and had extra words so it makes sense.

His proposal for checking whether Box 2 was right was

By weapons from the Romans that have been found and from British weapons from those days.

Despite the use of 'so it makes sense' the evidence of his responses suggests a concern with the truth of the component information, not with its explanatory relation to what is to be explained. When asked (in a further task) to join boxes to explain Roman success, Richard ignored the intransitivities between some of the boxes, to produce a linear story. The causal relations in the structure he produced were invalid, but if the series of links is construed as 'and then', the story works. In Task-set 2 Richard's proposed check as to whether one explanation is better than the other was to 'find another historian that says the same', and in Task-set 3 he suggested, 'See what other people say'. There is a sense of helplessness here, as ideas that work well with information run into stiffer challenges in the face of testing explanations.

Students' ideas about claims in rival accounts
Students' approaches to testing explanations seem to be mirrored in their ideas about the nature and status of claims about the end of the Roman Empire. When students are confronted with what appears to be a direct clash between two rival historical accounts, what do they make of it?[5] One task from Project *Chata* presented students with two brief accounts of the Roman Empire, running parallel down a single page (Appendix I). The accounts differed in tone, theme and time-scale. The first was in the main a story of barbarian incursion, and gave the end of the Empire as 476, with the overthrow of the last emperor in the west. The second paid more attention to matters of political organization, economic difficulties and social problems, and fixed the end as 1453, when the Turks captured Constantinople (Lee, 1997a). Four statements were offered as to what this difference might mean.

(a) No one knows when it ended
(b) It's just a matter of opinion when it ended
(c) There was no one single time when it ended
(d) One of the stories must be wrong about when it ended

Students were asked to choose the sentence that was nearest to how they thought, and to explain their choice (and whether it was what they really thought). They were then asked how we could decide when the Empire ended, whether the two dates were the only possible times for the end of the Empire, and whether the differences between the stories mattered.

Finding or deciding?
Consider the differences between the two pairs of responses set out below.

Louise, year 9:

'It happened so long ago no-one really knows when it ended.' 'It is what I think.' We could decide when it ended by 'looking it up in a few books and take the time that most of the books say.' There are other possible times when the Empire ended 'because no-one really knows when it ended it could be any time.' The differences in the stories matter, 'because they are supposed to be the truth. If you looked in one book you would like to know what you were reading is the complete truth'.

Ying Ting, year 7:

It's just a matter of opinion, 'because many historians have different opinions for when the Empire ended. Some historians may have interpreted it differently.' 'It is exactly what I think.' To decide when the Empire ended 'we would have to compare other books and dig up archaeological sites and look for artefacts that help.' There are other possible times when it ended 'because as I have written before there are different opinions to when the Empire actually ended.' The differences in the stories matter: 'it depends on what you are looking. [*sic*.] You would want it to be the same when you are comparing stories. This would show that one is true.'

Nathan, year 7

There was no one single time when it ended, 'because parts of the Empire were captured or just about managed to keep themselves going while others were gone. Because some part might be captured, broke free, and re-captured.' We could decide when the Empire ended 'when there are no emperors and when no other land belonged to the Romans.' There are other possible times when it ended 'because some might argue that it ended when "it split" into two and had different emperors.' The differences in the stories matter 'because one story could be partly right and could lead people into thinking the right way.'

Lara, year 9

There was no one single time when the Empire ended, 'because there is no definite way of telling when it ended. Some think it is when its city was captured or when it was first invaded or some other time. I think it is more a mixture of [opinion] and [no single time] but [no single time] is more important.' We could decide when the Empire ended 'by setting a fixed thing what happened for example when its capitals were taken, or when it was totally annihilated or something and then finding the date.' There are other possible times when it ended 'because it depends on what you think ended it, whether it was the taking of Rome or Constantinople or when it was first invaded or some other time.' The differences in the stories matter 'if they are big differences. Because people will not know the whole story.'

Louise and Ying Ting both had strategies for deciding when the Empire came to an end, but both treated the question as a matter of fact: we just lack the requisite knowledge. For Louise, the solution was to count the voices: 'take the time that most of the books say'. Ying Ting may have had a similar idea in mind when he said 'compare other books', particularly in the light of his later comment that 'you would want it to be the same when you are comparing stories. This would show that one is true.' Although he remarked that 'Some historians may have interpreted it differently', the notion of interpretation was not cashed as anything more than a disagreement over the facts, and his further test was to 'dig up archaeological sites and look for artefacts that help'.

Several key elements that reappear over and over again in students' ideas are visible here. Differences in stories mean either that no one knows, or that accounts are just matters of opinion. Louise's insistence that no one knows seemed to be a contingent matter; we *could* know if most books agreed. The time when the Empire ended is something we don't happen to know, but may in principle be knowable. Many students were more sceptical, explaining that none of us was alive in those days, so we can never know. Clearly, if the matter is one of fact, and we do not have the facts, then all we have is opinion. (Not every use of 'opinion' is based on these ideas. Older students sometimes used 'opinion' to refer to the intervention of points of view, whether as bias and partisanship, or as something legitimate.)

For both Louise and Ying Ting, the tests for deciding between claims that depend on their relationship with alternative accounts were the same sort of tests as would be applied for singular statements of fact. So uncertainty as to when the Roman Empire ended is of the same order as whether the Goths entered Rome in 410. Disagreement between accounts is thus seen as a matter of lack of knowledge; a dispute about when the Roman Empire ended is a problem of lack of knowledge that an archaeological find could settle.

None of this is to belittle the ideas with which Louise and Ying Ting were operating here. The notion of consensus is an intelligible and sometimes appropriate rule of thumb for handling difficult disputes, especially for lay people with no time to apply more sophisticated tests. Equally, archaeological finds may indeed have some bearing on a dispute like the end of the Roman Empire. But students equipped only with these ideas are likely to run into difficulties, because the strategies the ideas suggest are in general inadequate in the face of this kind of problem. The responses given by Nathan and Lara help to show why.

Both Lara and Nathan chose the sentence saying that the difference in dates given by the two stories meant that there was no one single time when the Empire ended. In part this represented awareness that the dissolution of something like the Roman Empire was not a simple matter. As Nathan said, 'Parts of the Empire were captured or just about managed to keep themselves going while others were gone.' But Lara explicitly made a move that went beyond substantive complexity when she said that the way to decide when the Empire ended would be 'by setting a fixed thing what happened for example when its capitals were taken, or when it was totally annihilated or something and then finding the date.' She was treating the problem not as a knowledge issue, but as a matter of deciding upon *criteria*. Nathan did not make this step in such an explicit manner, but it is clear that he too was offering alternative criteria for the end of the Empire. Our decision could be 'when there are no emperors and when no other land belonged to the Romans.' Alternatively, 'some might argue that it ended when "it split" into two and had different emperors.'

It seems appropriate to talk about these pairs of responses in terms of a progression of ideas. Lara and Nathan have more powerful ideas than Louise and Ying Ting, making available to them strategies for dealing with disputes of the kind they confront here, so that they are not left to fall back helplessly on 'no-one knows', or 'it's just a matter of opinion'. For Lara and Nathan the issue is not that there was a date when the Empire ended, and for some reason we have been unable to discover when it was, but that we need to decide on what counts as 'the end'. Ideas of this kind are capable of making headway in dealing with a problem that defeats Louise and Ying Ting, but, of course, such ideas themselves begin to create a new set of problems. Why should this particular set of criteria be invoked, rather than another set? None of the students in our sample pursued this problem, but the tasks did not ask them to do so. Further analysis of the kinds of differences they picked out between pairs of accounts may shed light on this.

At this point all that can safely be said is that some students recognized that accounts could be constructed to answer different questions, and that where two accounts were produced on different timescales, this made a difference to what each could say about 'the same' event. Becki, year 9, for example, said of the two accounts, 'They are taking different viewpoints. They agree with each other but are concentrating on different aspects not different opinions.' Ideas of this kind may be the

beginnings of precisely the kind of understandings that would allow students to answer questions about why one set of criteria for deciding when the Empire ended may in some circumstances be more appropriate than another. This process, in which new ideas solve problems at one level only to open up new ones, does not, of course, stop there. In the current state of history education in the UK, research with older students is probably required in order to pursue matters further.[6] It is worth noting that the Cambridge History Project attempted to teach some central ideas to 16-18 year-olds on Advanced Level courses in Britain. Examination and coursework evidence from the course suggests that much can be achieved in helping students develop more sophisticated understandings.[7]

An intermediate position
The differences picked out in the discussion so far, between responses that treat the end of the Roman Empire as a knowledge problem, and those that treat it as criterial, might raise a sceptical question. Could it be that all that is happening is that some children have a more complex notion than do others of the substantive concept, *empire*? It is clear from the data that the difference is not simply that some students have a better grasp of the kind of entity an empire is. This is plain when we examine a different kind of response, in which the complexity and duration of an imperial collapse is understood, but the issue remains one of knowledge (or the lack of it). Some of these responses applied a particularly revealing strategy for deciding when the Empire ended.

The idea that the Empire was complex and its end prolonged was well understood by many students who nevertheless treated the problem as simply a lack of the requisite knowledge, and sought to solve it by finding the missing items. Victoria, year 9, felt that the end of the Empire is just a matter of opinion.

> 'This is the best sentence because there isn't really a set time as to when the empire ended because one half of it was captured and ended before the other half which wasn't captured for many years afterwards. I think the Roman empire gradually fell apart bit by bit so there wasn't one specific day when it suddenly ended. It would be very difficult to find out exactly when it ended because it was such a long time ago now. But you could see which was the most common date people from the time of the empire said it came to an end. .. There are other possible times [for the end of the Empire] other than the two in the stories. For instance there may be another story with another time in it.' The differences 'do matter in history stories because you can't decide which are true facts and which are false if they are different. They should be the same.'

Some younger children gave similar responses. Kelli, year 6, said that the end of the Empire is just a matter of opinion, 'because it was slowly decreasing and there was no one time when it ended.' To decide when the Empire ended we could 'look in history books and narrow it down?'

Victoria's suggestion that we could make a decision by seeing 'the most common date people from the time of the empire said it came to an end' was not intended as a criterion, but as a better means of getting to the facts, because people at the time would know what we, many years later, do not. Jackie, year 7, expressed a similar thought: 'all the people who were there when it ended are dead so there is no one to ask. . . .' This kind of response on this particular task is congruent with those on other *Chata* tasks, addressing other sets of ideas: many students clearly believe that almost any question in history would best be answered by an eye-witness or an agent.[8] There seem to be at least two elements involved here: first, something like the 'direct observation paradigm' of knowledge elucidated by Atkinson (1978), and second, a notion remarkably similar to Arthur Danto's 'Ideal Chronicler'. (Danto, 1965.)

If the belief that secure knowledge can only be obtained through direct inspection is joined with a belief in the possibility and desirability of a complete account of the past, we arrive at an idea uncannily resembling the Ideal Chronicler (IC), which methodically records every occurrence as it passes from the present into the past. It is remarkable how well Danto's invention, created to show the impossibility of 'complete accounts', describes students' ideas. What the IC produces is very like the

complete compilation of all possible information about the past that students think of as the only solution to the problems of history.

Problems of completeness and independence worry older students more than younger ones. Older students more often recognize the active intervention of historians, at least as authors compiling information, or expressing an opinion, if not as wielders of a methodology. A complete account obviates the need for selection, and an *independent* IC would remove the threat of bias or distortion. The notion of *distortion* carries with it the idea that accounts are *copies* of the past, which may be *accurate* copies, or may not. (This is still very close to earlier notions of the truth and falsity of accounts.)

The idea that the end of the Empire was drawn out, and occurred in different places at different times, produced an illuminating kind of response to the question 'How could we decide when the Roman Empire really ended?' Peter, year 7, said there was no one single time when it ended, 'because it could of started going wrong in AD 476 and actually fell apart in AD 1453.' He glossed this with what he really thought, 'the Roman empire started falling apart from AD 476 but totally went at AD 1453.' We could decide when the Empire ended by getting 'more information and which comes up the most or say about AD 921.' There <u>are</u> other possible times 'because that's just 2 of the stories but there could be other stories that say something totally different.' The differences in the stories matter 'because it could turn the whole thing around.'

Peter knew that an empire falling apart was a *process* going on over an extended period of time. But this did not automatically lead to him thinking in terms of criteria for what counts the end; instead, he fell back on treating the problem as something to be solved by acquiring missing knowledge. He offered the same test as Louise, accepting the majority view, but supplemented it with taking a mean of the two dates. This may seem a wildly inappropriate move, but is a sign of the intractable nature of what might be called a 'multiple past' — many separate endings, all of which may be known or unknown. If the end of the Empire is not just one decidable moment, but lots of moments in different times and places, then averaging offers a tempting short cut.

Peter's solution was not uncommon. Joanne, year 7, said there was no one single time when it ended, 'because some things take quite a time to end'. She suggested a similar test to Peter: 'Find the middle of the 2 dates.' Kirsty, year 7, having made the same choice, applied the same logic: 'You get 3 or 4 books and read them put the times down and put a time in between.'

What do these responses tell us? There seems to be an intelligible progression of ideas from treating the end of the Empire as a factual question, through seeing it as a problem about complex and multiple pasts, to envisaging the issue as one that involves establishing criteria for what counts as an end. Figure 4 gives the big picture.

Figure 4. The end of the Roman Empire: what kind of problem is it?
(Percentages of year-groups)
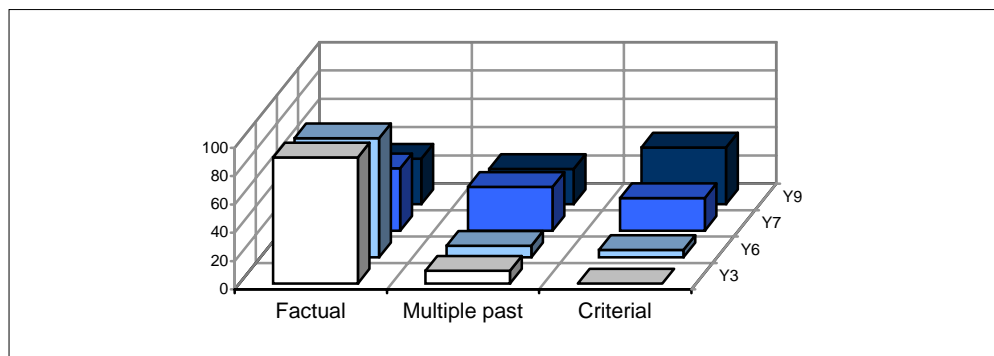
Categories for the 'end of empire' task

Two of the three groups of responses in Figure 4 summarize analysis carried out at a higher level of resolution, and represent a conflation of the categories used in coding the data. (The 'factual' group amalgamates four distinct categories, and the 'criterial' group three.) These initial categories are set out below, with brief examples of the kinds of responses allocated to each: the distribution of responses is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The end of the Roman Empire: categories by year-group
(Percentages of year-groups)
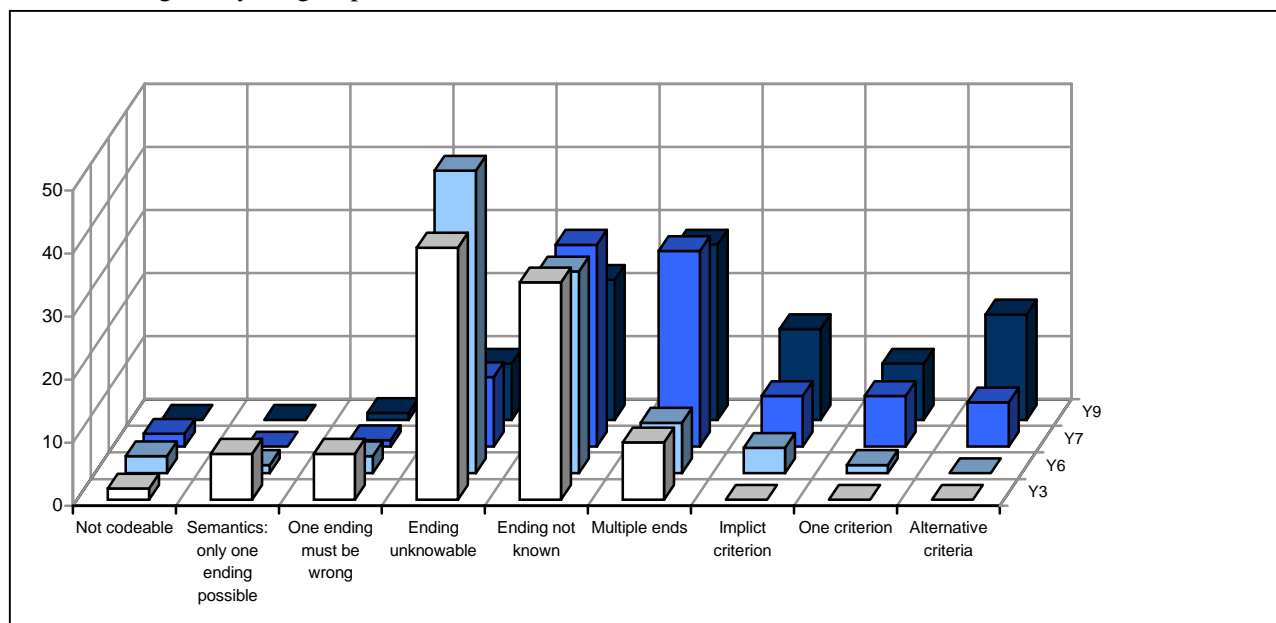
1. Semantics only

In the first category, students treated the issue as a semantic one, insisting that the Empire could only end once. Jim, year 6, chose 'one of the stories must be wrong about when it ended', and explained 'because the same thing couldn't of ended at different times.' The differences in the stories mattered, 'because they have to be the truth in history otherwise it is not history because it didn't happen.'

2. One story is wrong, the end is known

The second category comprised the students who claimed that only one story was right, and that they knew which it was. Jason, year 6, wrote that one of the stories must be wrong about when the Empire ended 'because one day must be wrong and story one was the right sentence.' This was 'exactly what I think.' We could decide when the Empire ended 'because in story one it said that the last western Emperor was overthrown, that meant the Roman Empire had come to an end.' There are no other possible times when the Empire could have ended: 'It had to be from story 1 or 2 because one of them must be right, otherwise there would be no point having the two stories.' For these students, the matter is a factual one, and it is closed.

3. The end is unknowable

Students in the third category thought that there was one end, that it was a matter of fact, but that it was unknowable. Amanda, year 3, explained to her interviewer why she chose 'No-one knows when it ended'.

| Amanda | 'Cos they weren't there, and they don't know. |
INT	Right, so nobody, we weren't there so we don't know. What about the people that were there at the time, would they know?
Amanda	Yes.
INT	So do you think they might have written it down or told somebody?

Amanda   Don't know.

Michelle, year 7, wrote 'because like it said no-one knows why it ended so that's why they put different times. It is really what I think. You can't [decide when the Empire really ended].' The differences would matter, 'because you want to know the truth not lies.'

4. The end is knowable, but contingently unknown
The remaining 'factual' category consisted of the students who thought the end was a factual matter, and in principle could be known, but that we happen not to know it.

Figure 6. How we could find out when the Empire ended?
(Percentages of those coded 'contingently unknown' in Figure 5)
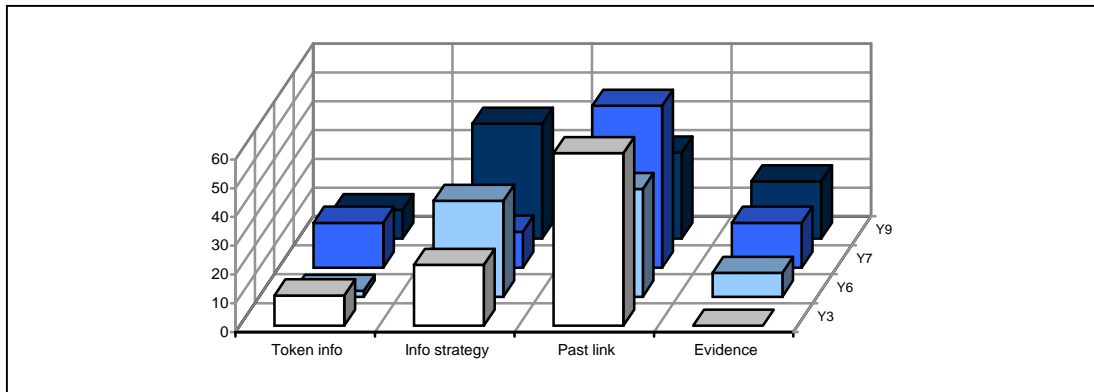
Louise and Ying Ting (quoted earlier) are typical of responses in this category. This group was spread rather evenly across age groups, and further analysis suggested that it included a range of views. For some students a token appeal to information was all that indicated any possibility of knowing (books or indexes), while others had some sort of strategy for using information (see Louise's check on what most books say, above). Many invoked a link with the past in selecting appropriate information (documents, journals, 'finds' in 'digs'). A very small group made it clear that inference or evidence was required. But all, of course, saw the problem as one of knowledge.

5. The end is multiple
Responses that treated the problem as factual, but saw it as deriving from the complexities of a multiple past, were treated as a single group. This intermediate category tended to concentrate on the geographical division of the Empire, and to treat the end as if it came in discrete parts. There were two or more endings, and the problem is to be sure that we have discovered them all, or, if pressed, to say which was *really* the end. (For examples see Victoria, Kelli and Peter, above.)

6. The end is criterial (implicit criterion)
Some students took a very similar line, barely going beyond the factual issue of multiple endings, but showed signs of groping for a decision procedure that would not leave them with arbitrary choices or helplessness in the face of complexity. Responses of this kind were classified in the first category of the criterial group of responses. They included those in which criteria for the end of the Empire were left largely implicit, or barely more than geographical, but also indicated that a decision was at stake, not simply the discovery of information. Robert, year 9, wrote: 'It is all a matter of opinion how you interpret the information and depending on what you believe the Roman Empire was, then how and when you think it ended will always be your own opinion. . . . . You cannot decide when the Roman Empire ended because it is all a matter of opinion and what you believe the Empire was.' There are other possible times when it ended 'because those were only two stories about how it actually ended and other people will have different ideas and will also give different times for the end.' The differences in the stories matter, 'because it doesn't give a totally clear picture of what happened and I believe history stories should give all views and opinions not just one.'

7. The end is criterial (one explicit criterion)
Responses that offered a single explicit criterion as to what might count as 'the end', often as a provisional or tentative possibility, were allocated to this category. Jeremy, year 7, took the view that it is just a matter of opinion when the Empire ended, 'because both times are correct for different views.' A decision could be made: 'we could see when the Roman traditions ended and take that as a date.' Helen, year 9, suggested that a decision might be taken, but with some difficulty. 'I don't think it would be easy to tell when the Roman Empire ended because different parts ended at different times. Perhaps the date when the laws and ways were no longer followed would be a possible one.'

8. The end is criterial (alternative criteria)
The final criterial category (which included Lara and Nathan in the initial group of examples) comprised responses that gave alternative criteria for the end of the Empire. To count as alternatives, the criteria had to be more than simply related or cumulative, and offer a real choice. This, of course, is where the next level of problems begins: once alternative criteria are posed, why should one be preferred to another? As already indicated, none of the responses took this up, but since the task did not explicitly demand it, it cannot safely be said that none of the students had any apparatus for dealing with the problem.

Conclusions

For many younger children history is a compilation of information, thought of as pre-existent, waiting to be found and marshalled. The only important questions — apart from asking whether it is true or false — are whether it is available and where it can be found. Ideas like this can persist at least to age 14, but older students tend to give historians a more active role, sometimes simply as compilers, but frequently as having views that may affect the outcome of their work. The model of a historical claim for most seven to 14 year-olds is the singular statement of fact, asserting the occurrence of an event or action, or stating that something or someone existed. By 12 to 14, however, some students are beginning to distinguish between different kinds of historical claims, and to recognize that different sorts of claim require different sorts of treatment.

More particularly, ideas seem to begin to emerge that allow students to make inroads into problems that defeat their peers. Translated into adult terms, these ideas include understanding that:
- explanations make special claims, and that to test them *as* explanations, something more is needed than an assurance that their component statements are true;
- historical accounts are *not* copies of the past;
- historical accounts are more than the sum of their parts, so claims made within them have to be evaluated in relation to the account, not simply as discrete facts;
- claims made within accounts involve decisions as well as discoveries.

Students develop their own ways of making sense of history, both as a discipline and as the versions of the past it produces. Some of the ideas they employ are more powerful than others. Some ideas work well in school if the tasks that school offers are of a certain kind, but founder when rival accounts or explanations are encountered outside it. The *Chata* research does *not* show that students meet too many information-collecting tasks in school, and too few that set sterner and more interesting problems. It does, however, suggest that *if* information collecting in practice forms the bulk of students' work, school history is likely to let students go on working with weaker ideas than they will need. Moreover, information collecting here may include many activities that teachers would classify as explaining, or even evaluating interpretations. Students' power to assimilate activities to their own prior conceptions should not be underestimated.

The ideas that *Chata* was concerned with are not likely to be automatically developed by exposing students to multiple interpretations, or teaching them to hunt out the hidden agendas in accounts. The 'how and why' laid down in the National curriculum can only too easily be assimilated by students to pre-existing ideas. For students starting with the idea that knowledge demands direct observation, and

that only an Ideal Chronicler can produce acceptable (complete and perspectiveless) history, then exposure to disagreement may simply entrench the view that history is simply impossible. Alternatively, such exposure may confirm history as merely a matter of opinion, where opinions cannot be meaningfully evaluated, and one is (in the nature of things) as good as another.

Even teaching students to critique accounts may lead to similar results, if critiques seem always to show that nothing can be safely said, and if what is taught always ends up, not with a discussion of more powerful ideas for thinking about *any* account, but just another different substantive account to be learnt in place of the previous one. In raising questions about the ways in which accounts or explanations may be tested or evaluated, it may also be important to give students examples that do not carry heavy emotional charges, and from which they can stand back.

The issue here is not about what students *fail* to do. Even some very young children made efforts, in deciding between historical claims, to meet the demands of the claims in question. What is at issue is the kind of ideas they have available to them for handling the claims. The research reported in this paper suggests that by age 12 some students already work with ideas that go beyond looking for information, counting voices, or abandoning the effort in the face of the impossibility of history or the ubiquity of untestable opinion. Many of these know that accounts are not copies of the past. They understand that 'interpretation' at the level of accounts is seldom exhaustively described in terms of bias, ulterior motives or even ideology. They can see that standpoint and therefore perspective is inescapable, and not a failure to achieve an impossible perspectiveless neutrality. They know that the significance of events or processes is not fixed, but changes with the theme and timescale of the account.

There is reason to suppose that many key ideas that draw distinctions in the nature of different kinds of claims, whether in explanation or accounts, could be taught earlier. Findings from Phase 3 of *Chata* indicate that even in the space of six months, there is detectable and important progress in students' ideas about historical explanation in all the age groups investigated (8, 11, 12 and 14 year-olds). Research in England and Spain by Lis Cercadillo demonstrates that most students operate with a variety of different notions of significance (Cercadillo, 2000; 2001, forthcoming). Considered together, research findings of this kind suggest that there is an important task to be done, that it is a possible one, and that it should start at least at the beginning of Key Stage 3, and probably earlier.

Appendix I

FIRST STORY

Chapter 1

The Roman Empire got very big. It was hard to protect. Barbarians raided it, burning towns and farms and killing people. It cost a lot to keep up big Roman armies.

Chapter 2

After a time the Empire was split into two halves, east and west, to make it easier to run. But Emperors had trouble finding money to pay for the army. When lots of people were killed by disease, there were fewer people to be soldiers, especially in the western half of the Empire. Barbarians were allowed to join the army. Before long, even many army leaders were barbarians.
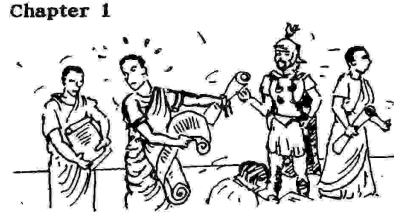
Chapter 3

An Emperor who lived in the eastern Empire allowed barbarians to settle in the western Empire. But still the western Empire couldn't protect itself. In 410 and again 455 the city of Rome was captured by barbarians. In 476 the last western Emperor in Rome was overthrown. That was the real end of the Roman Empire, even though in the east an Empire of some kind managed to last for a time.
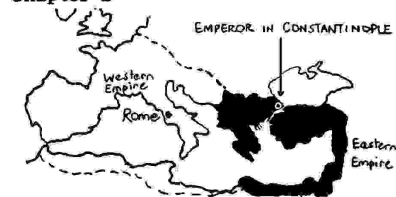
**SECOND STORY**

Chapter 1

The Roman Empire got very big. That made it hard to look after and keep in order. It cost a lot to run the Empire. Emperors had trouble finding enough money.

Chapter 2

EMPEROR IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Western Empire

Rome

Eastern Empire

After a time, the Empire was split into two halves, east and west, to make it easier to run. Each half had its own capital city: Rome in the west and Constantinople in the east. Sometimes each half of the Empire had its own Emperor, sometimes one Emperor ran both halves. The east was richer than the west. Emperors often preferred to live in Constantinople in the east rather than Rome in the west.

Chapter 3
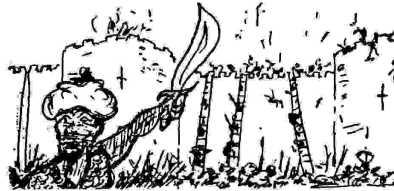
Barbarians attacked the Empire. The west was too poor to protect itself properly. The city of Rome was captured by barbarians. The eastern half managed to keep the barbarians out. It lasted a long time, but was soon very different from how the old Empire had been. The real end of the Roman Empire came nearly 1000 years later when Constantinople was captured by the Turks in 1453.

References

Ashby, R., Lee P. J. and Dickinson, A. K. (1997) 'How Children Explain the 'Why' of History: the *Chata* Research Project on Teaching History', *Social Education 61* (1), 17-21.

Atkinson, R. F. (1978) *Knowledge and Explanation in History*, London, Macmillan.

Barca, I. (1997) *Adolescent students' ideas about provisional historical explanation*, University of London, unpublished PhD thesis.

Cercadillo, L. (2000) *Significance in History, Students' Ideas in England and Spain*, University of London, unpublished PhD thesis.

Cercadillo, L. (2001, forthcoming) 'Significance in History': Students' Ideas in England and Spain', in A. K., Dickinson, P. Gordon, and P. J. Lee, (eds) *International Review of History Education, Volume 3: Raising Standards in History Education* London, Woburn Press.

Danto, A. C. (1965) *Analytical Philosophy of History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Department for Education (1995) *History in the National Curriculum: England*, London, HMSO.

Department for Education and Employment and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (1999) *History: The National Curriculum for England*, London, DfEE and QCA.

Elton, G. (1963) *Reformation Europe 1517-1539* , London, Fontana.

Ferguson, N (1997) *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, London, Picador.

Hawthorne, G. (1991) *Plausible Worlds*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Lee, P. J. (1997a) '"None of us was there": Children's ideas about why historical accounts differ', in S. Ahonen et al. (eds), *Historiedidaktik, Norden 6, Nordisk Konferens om Historiedidaktik, Tampere 1996*, Copenhagen, Danmarks Laererhøjskole, pp. 23-58.

Lee, P. J. (1997b) 'Children's ideas about explaining the outcome of action in history', in L. Leite, M. Duarte da Conceição, R. Vieira de Castro, J. da Silva, A. P. Mourão and J. Precioso (eds), *Metodologias da Educação*, Braga, Universidade do Minho, pp. 409-423.

Lee, P. J., Dickinson A. K. and Ashby R. (1996a) ' "There were no facts in those days": Children's Ideas About Historical Explanation', in M. Hughes (ed.), *Teaching and Learning in Changing Times*, Oxford and Cambridge (MA.), Basil Blackwell, pp.169-192.

Lee, P. J., Ashby R. and Dickinson A. K. (1996b) 'Progression in children's ideas about history', in M. Hughes (ed.), *Progression in Learning*, Clevedon, Bristol (PA) and Adelaide, Multilingual Matters, pp.50-81.

Lee, P. J., Ashby R. and Dickinson A. K. (1996c) 'Children Making Sense of History', *Education 3-13 24* (1) 13-19.

Lee, P. J., Ashby R. and Dickinson A. K. (1996d) 'Children's understanding of "because" and the status of explanation in history', *Teaching History 82* (1) 6-11.

Lee, P. J., Ashby R. and Dickinson A. K. (1998) 'Researching children's ideas about history', in Carretero, M. and Voss, J. (eds) *International Review of History Education*, *Volume 2*, *Learning and Reasoning in History*, London, Woburn Press, pp. 227-51.

Lee, P. J. and Ashby R. (2000) 'Progression in historical understanding among students ages 7-14' in , P. Seixas, P. Stearns, and S. Wineburg (eds), *Teaching, Learning and Knowing History*, New York, New York University Press, pp.199-222.

Martin, R. (1989) *The Past Within Us: an Empirical Approach to Philosophy of History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Parker, G (1976) 'If the Armada had landed', *History 61* (203).

SCAA (1996) *Consistency in Teacher Assessment: Exemplification of Teaching standards Key Stage 3*. London: School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Shemilt, D. (1996) Review of L.Kramer, D. Reid and W. L. Barney (eds), 'Learning History in America: Schools, Cultures and Politics', *History and Theory 35* (2) 252-275.

Wineburg (1996) 'The Psychology of Learning and Teaching History.' In D. C. Berliner and R. C. Calfee, (eds), *Handbook of Educational Psychology* (pp. 423-437). New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.

Notes

[1] The 1995 version included 'analyse': this made little difference given the lack of guidance, but it was potentially useful, and the current version can be read as little more than deciding between stories, rather than trying to understand why they differ, and the degree to which they make different claims. However, 'analyse' still survives in the attainment target for levels 6 and 8.

[2] Examples of this include students' understanding of 'bias', which assimilates complex matters of standpoint to personal bias, and 'opinion', which students often assimilate to a context of rights of expression, rather than used as an epistemological category. (See below.)

[3] In order to enable students to complete the whole task-set, lines were printed in the materials to indicate approximate suggested response length. The students interpreted these tacit messages flexibly, and sometimes wrote less than the three or four lines provided, and sometimes much more, cramming extra lines into all available spaces.

[4] Hawthorne (1991) discusses counter-factuals in history; Martin (1989) deals with explanatory weight; and Parker (1976) and Elton (1963, p.282) raise counterfactual questions; Parker offers a full counterfactual argument. Ferguson (1997) is a collection of extended 'exploratory' counterfactuals that go beyond the ordinary tacit references to possibility in most historical work. The distinction between the counterfactuals that may be presupposed in an explanation, a counterfactual argument in support of a necessary conditionship claim, and the counterfactual speculations that might be used to re-assess or establish an overall historical interpretation, does not seem to have been explored in the literature.

[5] 'Accounts' is used in this paper to cover both narratives and developmental accounts of change, and is intended to avoid dichotomies between 'mere narrative' and 'explanatory narrative'. 'Story' will be used interchangeably with account, because when talking with young children, story is the nearest available intelligible equivalent. The use of the word 'rival' here is an attempt to encompass a range of possible relationships, which include — at least — the following. *Competing* accounts may differ without disagreeing about substantive historical matters: they set different parameters, while appearing to discuss the 'same' piece of history. *Conflicting* accounts offer alternative treatments of some passage of the past, such that acceptance of one is at least implicitly a rejection of some part of the other. *Contradictory* accounts cannot be simultaneously accepted without logical contradiction. It seems likely to us that there may be a tendency to inflate disagreement: many rival accounts are treated as contradictory when they merely conflict, and as conflicting when they are competing. But clearly this requires more serious discussion than it can be given here. Suffice it to say that the rival accounts of the Roman Empire used in the research reported in this paper are arguably competing (or at most conflicting) despite the intemperate use of 'really' in connection with the alternative terminal dates. (Research in progress by Arthur Chapman at the Institute of Education is beginning to provide new insights into the ways in which 16-18 year-olds conceive the relationships between accounts.)

[6] Arthur Chapman's work (see previous note) will be important here.

[7] Unfortunately government 'reforms' to standardize 'A' Level courses have ended CHP.

[8] The research of Isabel Barca (1997) in Portugal found the same stress on eyewitnesses as *Chata* has found in Britain. Her work takes a further step in suggesting that actors in a particular set of events are seen by students as still better authorities when it comes to explaining the outcome of their actions, even when the outcome is on a scale far greater than the actions envisaged (Portuguese expansion in the Indian Ocean).

Extending Primary Children's Thinking through the Use of Artefacts

Yosanne Vella, Faculty of Education, University of Malta.

Abstract This article reports part of the findings of a research project involving Maltese school children working with historical sources. In the actual research project there were various sessions each time involving different types of historical sources: artefactual, pictorial and written evidence. However this paper focuses on the findings involving children's thinking with the artefacts only and is based on the Vygotskyian assertion that instruction can go ahead of maturational development. This research sees an "interventionist' role on the part of the teacher as crucial in the intellectual development of pupils and tries to show how correct is the assumption that teaching methods can stimulate the pupil along the road of intellectual development. The article strongly suggests that in a social learning context conventional views of differences in pupil performance linked to IQ are mistaken.

Introduction

This project, which was carried out with Maltese primary school children at San Andrea Infant and Middle private school, used a combination of research methods of data collection and analysis. Qualitative methods were mainly used by the author while working with pupils to establish their ideas. The research had three main aims; first to establish (through the pre-intervention part) what specific ideas children have about an historical object and then to see whether it was possible to encourage children to look differently at sources (the intervention part) and finally to note any change in their response to the original object (the post-intervention part).
The responses of the same children were analysed to see whether the activities were accountable for the improvement. However, children's responses also produced quantitative data about frequency and distribution of children's ideas on the historical object.

Historical objects

In history when we say 'objects' we mean artefacts: things made by people, rather than natural objects. Objects can have various forms from something tiny like a button to a huge building or ruins. The most ordinary objects can yield much historical evidence and create various images. They also have the advantage of providing tactile experience which aids investigative learning immensely and they are especially useful with the younger pupils whose reading and writing skills are still not well developed.

For this research the artefact presented to pupils for discussion in the pre- and post-intervention sessions was a 19th century Maltese iron. (See Figure 1) The research involved a cross-section of classes of children throughout the primary age range. Small groups of children were selected to facilitate more detailed observation of their thinking. Sessions consisted of work with groups of three pupils coming from grade one (5 year olds) grade four (7 year olds) and from grade seven (10 year olds). A total of eighteen pupils in all, divided into groups of three. The class teacher's opinion was sought to assign each child in their class to an achievement band (high, middle and low) related to their overall school performance. Children were then selected from the class list so that numbers were balanced by achievement, band and sex.

Figure 1

Each group session, which lasted an average of one hour, followed the same pattern:

 Pre-Intervention (around 5 minutes)
 Intervention (around 45 minutes)
 Post-Intervention Elicitation (around 5/10 minutes)

Pupils were left free to comment on their own in both the pre-intervention and post-intervention sessions. In the pre-intervention sessions they were seeing the object on their own for the first time. The 19th century iron was then removed and the children went through the intervention session with the researcher. During the post-intervention session they were once again given the 19th century iron, and again they discussed it on their own, but this time after going through the intervention session with the researcher.   Therefore during the post-intervention session they were looking at it on their own for a second time.

The Intervention Sessions

The intervention sessions were in effect learning situations based on constructivist learning. The teaching approach of the researcher was based on the following constructivist principles (taken from Littledyke and Huxford, 1998 p.21, as adapted from Scott et al 1987):

ORIENTATION: Arousing children's interest, curiosity and motivation.
ELICITATION/STRUCTURING: Helping children to find out and clarify what they think, feel or are able to do.
INTERVENTION/RESTRUCTURING: Encouraging children to test their ideas, feelings or physical capabilities, and to extend, develop or modify them.
REVIEW: Helping children to recognise the significance of what they have found out or what has been achieved.
APPLICATION: Helping children to relate what they have learned or achieved to their everyday lives or to meaningful activity.

The interventions were carried out according to pre-planned activities. On the whole for the sake of uniformity the researcher was quite strict in sticking to the planned program in all the sessions. Of course some sessions took a bit longer than others did, because length of session depends also on children's responses and participation. Therefore the basic framework was planned, however what the researcher said with individual groups as the session progressed was spontaneous as a result of the

interaction and dynamics within the group. Pupils asked unexpected questions and passed specific comments which the researcher responded to, however most of the time knowledge had to be constructed rather than given. Here is one example to illustrate the discussion and negotiation that went on between the researcher and the pupils during the intervention session as different tasks involving various artefacts went on.

Seven year olds discussing with researcher 19th century coffee grinder during intervention session:

Researcher:	I've got something else to show you. Hold it touch it. What is this do you think ?
Jacob:	Wood
Researcher:	It's made of wood and what else, just wood?
Suzanne:	Metal
Researcher:	And metal there's metal on the handle as Suzanne said.
Jacob:	Like this (touches handle)
Researcher:	And how many parts is it made of? Open the drawer, there's a drawer there too.
Jacob/Diane:	One, two, three
Researcher:	Three, yes made of many, many parts and how do you think this worked? And what do you think this was for?
Diane:	They turn it round and put water or things in there.
Researcher:	They might put things in there, perhaps water but why would they put water for? I don't think it was water. What would they put in there?
Diane:	Like food
Researcher:	Maybe food and then they'll turn it round. They put coffee in here, they put coffee beans in here, then they turn it round and then… how would they get them out?
Diane	Open the drawer (At the same time as they answer, Jacob opens the small drawer)
Researcher:	Open the drawer and find it ready there
Diane:	Then how would they drink it?
Researcher:	Then they put them in hot water. Because the coffee beans will be big and then this will squash them, cut them up in small pieces and have it like we have coffee in small grains.
Diane:	But how do they turn it fast or slow?
Researcher:	It depends because the coffee beans might be hard to turn so you turn it slowly but as they grow smaller you could go a bit faster. (Shows manually what's being said, followed by Jacob who copies researcher's movements.)

The process of structuring and elicitation was particularly used during the intervention session. Together with the researcher the children went through the process of learning how to gain information just by looking at objects very carefully. The support offered by the researcher scaffolded children's learning and provided the framework on which the children could categorise and place the objects. The researcher also found Durbin et al's question framework for using objects with children useful.

Several situations were created which, besides helping the children to understand better historical sources, also served as an 'orientation' exercise where the main objective was to arouse the children's interest, curiosity and motivation. To give one example, different historical artefacts were hidden in a big blue plastic box and they were shown to the children one at a time. Children got used to waiting excitely for the next object to emerge. The packaging made the activities more interesting to the pupils and gave them an air of speciality.

A medieval vase handle, besides being hidden in the blue box, was also wrapped in a towel. Some children actually thought the towel was the next object! They showed a lot of interest when the

researcher said that there was something much more special inside; they were clearly very curious as it was unwrapped slowly and the medieval piece of pottery emerged.

Data collection and analyses

The following codes were created from all the comments said by the pupils as they discussed the 19th century iron, in all the pre and post intervention sessions. This included all the age groups during the pre- and post-intervention sessions. Individual remarks which were deemed to have any historical significance were categorised and grouped together and the following codes emerged:

1. What Object is
2. How Object feels
3. Appearance of Object
4. How Object might have worked
5. Design of Object
6. Age of Object
7. Where Object came from
8. Value of Object

In turn, a scoring system for each code was created for assessing children's comments while discussing the iron. With this scoring system the researcher wished to measure valid contributions pupils made before the intervention compared with valid contributions made after the intervention. At no point are pupils' responses classified as wrong answers. The students were left totally free to discuss the presented source by being asked "Tell me all you can and anything you wish about the object/picture/written source". This resulted in very open-ended discussions involving probabilities and possibilities together with general descriptions. Therefore all the children's talk in the pre and post sessions fall under divergent thinking and the scoring system was created in such a way as to support assessing divergent thought processes of this nature. The scoring system is of a higher order nature and gives graded scores on pupils' comments based on their complexity. All these ratings for individual codes were then added to produce a total score for each pre and post intervention session.

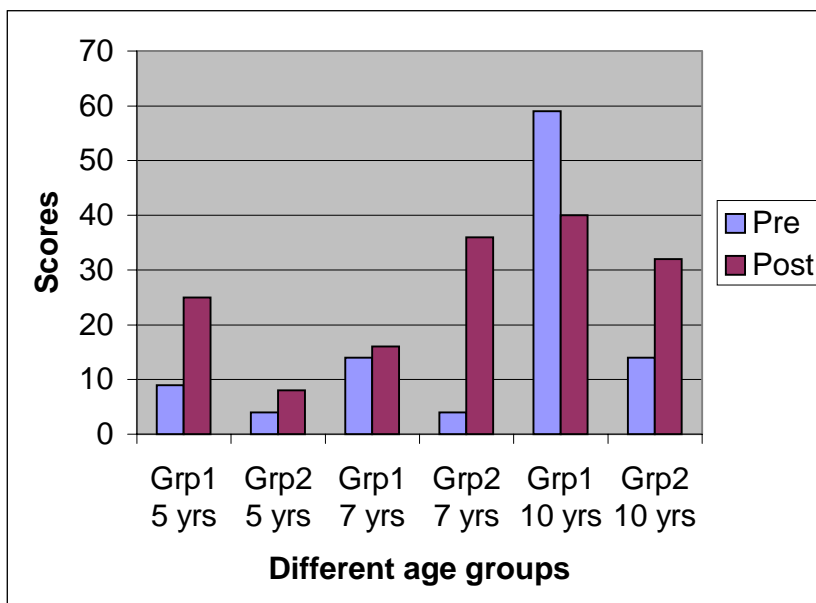Using the total score each group obtained in each session the following graph emerged:

Figure 2

Discussion of some of the pre and post intervention data

From the graph in Figure 2, one can see that the majority of groups scored higher in the post sessions after the intervention with the researcher. Most of the post-intervention sessions were extensively longer because children gave much more details and descriptions were more sophisticated. This becomes much more evident once children's actual talk is qualitatively analysed. The following is just one example which compares one group of seven year olds talk in a pre and a post intervention session. The difference is immediately highlighted:

Pre-intervention Grade 4 Group 2	Post-intervention Grade 4 Group 2
Dianne: It's heavy. Researcher: What else? Talk between you. Jacob: It's made of stone. Dianne: It's dirty. Suzanne: It's dusty.	Dianne: It's look like an iron. Suzanne: It's very, very heavy. Jacob: It's really heavy. It's small. Dianne: It's like very hard to touch it. Jacob: It's not only stone, but it's with metal as well. Dianne: It's like very dirty and old with those browns. Jacob: It has a lot of scratches on it. Suzanne: It's very, very dusty. Dianne: It's like old. Jacob: You already said it. Dianne: It's like going up and down. Jacob: It's not straight. It's in a triangle shape. Dianne: It's like a real iron but it's not. Jacob: It is. Dianne: But a real iron is made of plastic. Jacob: But in old days, it was like that. Dianne: Like not many people have them now. Suzanne: It's very expensive. Jacob: It has metal inside it. Dianne: It has holes over here. Jacob: This is maybe… Dianne: It's like going up and down. Jacob: It's very dusty inside. Dianne: It's like made of metal. Suzanne: It has many lines going up and down. Jacob: It's sharp at the edges. Suzanne: Some pieces got peeled off. Jacob: The paint's got off. Dianne: It has very dark colours- it has white, green... Suzanne: It's very cold. Jacob: It's very old. Dianne: When you touch it, it's like hurts your hand. Jacob: It's very, very heavy. Dianne: If you put it on your finger, you could break your finger.

It is very interesting to note that children's idea on the iron's appearance clearly existed before the intervention. They describe it by saying it's heavy, dirty and dusty. Probably because of its weight, Jacob thinks it's made of stone. In the post-intervention it is clear that the same ideas reccur but the intervention has made the children more confident in asserting them and using this confidence as a spring board to giving more complex descriptions. From this short pre-intervention description:

    Dianne: It's heavy.
    Researcher: What else? Talk between you.

Jacob:	It's made of stone.
Dianne:	It's dirty.
Suzanne:	It's dusty.

We now have this post-intervention description of the iron's appearance:

Dianne:	It's look like an iron.
Suzanne:	It's very, very heavy.
Jacob:	It's really heavy. It's small.
Dianne:	It's like very hard to touch it.
Jacob:	It's not only stone, but it's with metal as well.
Dianne:	It's like very dirty and old with those browns.
Jacob:	It has a lot of scratches on it.
Suzanne:	It's very, very dusty.
Dianne:	It's like old.
Jacob:	You already said it.
Dianne:	It's like going up and down.
Jacob:	It's not straight. It's in a triangle shape.

Many ideas were already in children's minds before the intervention; the intervention helped them to express them better. Then there are completely new concepts being mentioned whose origin is clearly what has been going on in the intervention stage. Almost step by step, as they were mentioned by the researcher during the intervention, this group of seven year olds go through the notions of describing an object historical by focussing on:

Its value …
Dianne:	Like not many people have them now.
Suzanne:	It's very expensive

Its age and what it's made of …
Dianne:	It's like a real iron but it's not.
Jacob:	It is.
Dianne:	But a real iron is made of plastic.
Jacob:	But in old days, it was like that.

Its design …
Jacob:	It's not straight. It's in a triangle shape.
Suzanne:	It has many lines going up and down.
Jacob:	It's sharp at the edges.

During this research there were frequent situations when the children talking in the group start to co-ordinate their thinking as part of the group. This might be compared to the internal dialogue people conduct whilst thinking alone. If one follows the dialogue in the pre-intervention session, of the five year olds, one can see this happening:

Pre-Intervention Session with five year olds	**Post-Intervention with same five year olds**
Eric: I think it is a magnet.	Eric: It has design and it is old it is old.
Neil: How odd it is! It's stone.	Neil: But we can... It is old and it's with a
Eric: It's iron, it's iron, it's iron, look!	circle over here (pointing to the
Saskia: It's hot, so iron.	handle).
Eric: No, it's iron, it's not stone.	Saskia: It has a bit of paint off.
Neil: It's iron, but it's hot and it's old.	Eric: It costs a lot of money, about...
Eric: It's heavy (tries to pick it up).When	Neil: About Lm5.
it's... on, if it drops tshhh..uhh, like that. It's	Eric: What?

very red.
Neil: It's hard stone.
Eric: Let me see... number 5 W C...

Neil: Lm5.
Saskia: Maybe Lm1 or Lm2.
Eric: Lm100 I would say.
Saskia: I would say Lm10.
Eric: Lm10?... No.
Neil: I would say Lm2.
Eric: It's not pounds, it's not pounds... It's about Lm600.
Saskia: Let me see (as she lifts it). I can only hold it with one hand. I need two hands.
(The others experiment. They can lift it with one hand).
Eric: There are signs. The colour is... I think it's black the colour.
Saskia: And you can do this (sliding it on the table) like an iron.
Eric: It's a kind of ironer but it's...
Saskia: It's a little iron.
Neil: It's like it was a toy, like a toy iron and then they put stone on it.
Eric: They put it on the shelf to decorate the house.
Neil: We put it here (upright on the table) and then when the man was walking, he was ironing (going through the motion of ironing).
Researcher: How do you iron with that?
Eric: We can ...
Neil: We put on the switch.
Researcher: So where are the wires for that iron?
Eric: We don't have.
Researcher: Why not?
Eric: 'Cause I don't know where it is. Either we put a wire here (pointing at the hole of the handle) and it's stuck to the wall.
Researcher: Did they have electricity when they used it?
Neil: Nooo.
Researcher: So how did they use it with no electricity and no wires?
Neil: This is to flatten the clothes down.
Researcher: But if it's cold it won't flatten them. It has to be hot. How would you heat it up?
Eric: They could get a special...
Neil: And then you could put it in the fire and it becomes hot.
Eric: They could get a special, they get a thing like the one that the beaker, we use. We put it on it and we hold it like this (upright) and it becomes hot and then they go like this (ironing).
Researcher: Saskia, would you use this iron to iron your clothes with?
Neil: Maybe we can iron like this (upside down) 'cause it's hot.
Saskia: It's not hot.

At one point, Saskia says 'It's hot, so iron.' In all probability, if directly asked if the iron is hot or cold, Saskia is perfectly capable of correctly answering it's cold. However, it could be that she says it's hot because she has realised what it is. This object is an iron, and irons are hot when being used. In fact the grey iron is not hot at all, but it could be that this is Saskia's way of acknowledging its function. But Neil picks up on this and in his comment accepts Saskia's statement that it is hot, even though the iron he is touching is obviously cold to the touch!

Neil internalised Saskia's comment and adds it to his comment, even though the iron he is actually holding is not hot. In this statement, he is also the first person to say it's old. 'It's iron, but it's hot and it's old.' Meanwhile Eric starts to notice letters engraved on the iron but, before he can develop this further, he abruptly loses interest and brings to an end the session for the whole group.

The post-intervention session is extensively longer. After the intervention session Saskia has gained more confidence and contributes more. Eric introduces the session by saying 'It has design and it is old it is old.' He remembers the word 'design' from the intervention, since design of object is one of the things focussed on by the researcher however it is unclear whether he has actually understood its meaning. Neil and Saskia start to focus on details, Saskia says 'It has a bit of paint off.' The appearance of object is eluded to by Eric; he mentions the colours and says there are 'signs' on it, but this time, unlike in the pre-intervention sessions, he does not mention the number 5 and the letter W again. A conversation on the value of the object follows. This is again a result of the intervention. However, it is quite a superficial discussion where they all shoot out money figures which in fact reveal that they do not yet know the value of the money figures they are mentioning, but they are just repeating figures they must have heard adults mentioning.

Saskia is the first to try and see how the iron might have worked by mimicking how an iron works. The children feel it is a smaller iron than the ones they've seen at home and they suggest alternatives as to what it might really be if not an actual iron.

Saskia:	It's a little iron.
Neil:	It's like it was a toy, like a toy iron and then they put stone on it.
Eric:	They put it on the shelf to decorate the house.

There is immediate difference between the groups when it comes to language being used. The older groups are far more articulate and express themselves better. As to be expected, the older children use more complex language.

The five year olds' conversation tended to contain disjointed sentences, they often repeat the same word several times and their explanations are punctured with lots of blanks of silence as they hesitate a lot before they speak. As to be expected the language skills of the seven year olds and of the ten year olds are better. Their descriptions are clear and to the point. For example Eric, a five year old says 'It's iron, it's iron, it's iron, look!' Hannah, a seven year old says 'It's like an iron'. At some point the five year olds do say the object is old, Neil says 'It's iron, but it's hot and it's old'. With the seven year old, the statement is much more clear and Hannah says 'I think it's an iron that they used to use in olden days.' Essentially, they are actually saying the same thing, but the seven year olds are just using better structured sentences, while the concept and ideas are the same. Bruner's famous spiral curriculum comes to mind. That is, children at any age are in possession of powerful intellectual abilities, Both five and seven year olds understand that the object is old, even if the language tools of the five year olds are not yet as sharp as those of the ten year olds.

Unlike the five and seven year olds the ten year olds figure out how the iron might have been used, for themselves, without absolutely any help from the researcher. In such a situation careful assessment of children's ability should be undertaken by the teacher for it is clearly a case where independent thinking is occurring and to intervene here would have been more of an 'interference' than an 'assistance'.

The language and ideas of ten year olds are undoubtedly very complex. While five year olds struggled with the constant guidance of the researcher to explain how to heat up this iron. The way the ten year olds describe how it could be heated, on their own, they show that they are aware of the physics of heat!

> Daniel: At that time they did not have a hot plate. They used to have a grid and put it on there.
> Malcolm: Maybe they used to wait for it not to be so hot.
> Daniel: If it has an insulation not a conductor to insulate it maybe it would be better.

Several ten year olds offered explanations as to where the iron might have come from. With the younger groups, only seven year old Sasha said that 'It was under water'. She is referring to archaeology under the sea . Sea archaeology is often on the news as, Malta being an island with a rich history, this type of archaeology often makes headlines. Although Sasha's explanation is incorrect, she compared the appearance of the rusty old iron to old objects brought up from the sea around Malta's coast. This shows that the culture one lives in will affect the learning that goes on.

The immediate reaction of anyone looking at an object for the first time is to try and guess what it is. Unfortunately as Durbin et al (1990, p.6) warn 'once children know the name of an object, they are often tempted to dismiss it and overlook the information and ideas which it contains.' There is much less referral to 'What the object is' in all post-intervention sessions than in the pre-intervention sessions. This is significant and considered by the researcher as a positive achievement, for the researcher deliberately played down the importance of guessing what an object is, precisely to avoid the reaction described by Durbin et al Pupils often feel that they have 'failed' if they do not correctly guess what the object is, so the researcher wanted to avoid this feeling of disappointment and to gradually instill the notion that in history there might not always be one correct final response, but various possible explanations are acceptable. During the intervention session, activities did not focus on finding the correct answer to what the object we were handling was, but rather to learn how to look at an object historically.

Durbin et al p.6 also make the point that this is also the case when children talk about age of object 'The questions 'what is it?' and 'how old is it?' are likely to close down the discussion.' In the case of this research, 'age of the object' percentage referral by pupils was equal before and after intervention. However, in their comments pupils are not giving dismissive one-off dates that end the discussion as Durbin et al suggest, but rather pupils are referring to the age of the object as part of a historic explanation about the 19th century iron. For example:

> Malcolm (ten years): Probably it was used in the 40s, 20s in the 1920s maybe.
> Claire(ten years):   Even older. It looks rusty.

Later on:

> Claire (ten years): But now it is rusty before it was not rusty
> Daniel (ten years): Maybe it is a restored object

The younger groups the five and seven year olds seem to be juxtapositioning the comment that 'it is old' along side most comments. It seems to be very relevant to them as a reason for whatever they were commenting on about the object. A kind of constant reassurance that they are dealing with a historic object here.

> Neil (five years):   It's iron, but it's hot and it's old.
> Eric (five years):   It has design and it is old ..it is old
> Neil (five years):   But we can …It is old and it's with a circle over here (pointing to handle)

Sasha (seven years): This cannot get broken because when it's…when it's old it gets very hard, cause the things will get…will get more older and older and will get drowned with the water and it wouldn't be able…. (Sasha's comments here are based on her previous assumption that the iron was found under water)

A probable explanation is that in fact throughout the sessions a great emphasis was done on the fact that these are *old* objects. Apparently this impressed pupils a lot and this is why they repeatedly made them refer to the 19th century iron often as being old, in spite of the fact that the researcher did not place any emphasis directly on specific age of objects during the intervention sessions.

Undoubtedly the most imaginative groups were the five year olds. They would focus on something on the iron and completely make up whole stories based on their initial, albeit often false, assumptions. This happened with one group of 5 year olds: when Ezekiel noted some brown colour on the iron, he immediately said that this was blood. Throughout the conversation that followed he interjects other comments on the object with reference to hospitals and injuries. What is interesting is that Yasmin, another child in his group, accepts that what Ezekiel has said is correct and joins in the conversation about injury. The third child Rebecca tries in vain to move the conversation back to looking at the object historically. She makes an effort to talk about what they had been doing with the researcher, that is, the design and appearance of the iron. However, she fails, blood and injuries are much more interesting, and Ezekiel cleverly mentions that the iron is heavy only to explain what would happen if it fell on your foot!

Some conclusions

In this project, it is difficult to say who the lower ability students are and who the higher ability students are. This backs the notion that the activity of children handling sources, an enquiry-based approach typical of the 'New History' teaching method, dissolves to some extent the ability performance created by IQ differences. The difference between abilities would probably have been immediately apparent had a traditional history teaching task been given, for example 'write a few sentences about this object'. This is backed by Scott's findings in 1978 where he found no correlation between IQ and history divergent thinking tests he devised for his research, while in his control group using traditional testing there was a significant correlation between IQ and these tests. (Scott, 1978, p.95).

Throughout this study, quite young children are continually making complex deductions and developing powerful cognitive skills. For this to occur, the intervention stage was crucial, therefore what is needed in our history teaching, is what Lee, Dickinson and Ashby, 1996 p.19 advocate: 'greater precision in our teaching objectives', in order to match tasks to children's abilities and to increase our awareness of what holds children back.

This further supports what is becoming very obvious from this study, that is, to provide accurate help during the intervention stage there must be close contact and close dialogue. As Saljo, 1998 p. 57 says 'Thinking is thus socially distributed by means of language and talk is a most productive and significant vehicle for cognitive activities.' Talking with pupils is not merely a medium in which whatever is inside comes out but rather the actual interaction during the process of talking is producing the learning.

All teaching which occurs in our schools can be looked upon as intervention, for is this not what happens during normal classroom activities? Unfortunately class intervention activities as carried out in this study are not common in Maltese classrooms. This is because of the size of normal Maltese classrooms of around thirty pupils. With traditional teacher centered classroom approach, the vital interaction between the adult and the child as portrayed in this study does not occur. However the problem of the normal large size of classrooms can be overcome by adopting particular teaching and classroom management strategies. One important strategy is organising history teaching in groups. This would create the right atmosphere for communication.

When the post-intervention session should occur also makes a difference as to how much change one should expect. Undoubtedly although the cognitive benefits of the intervention were immediately evident the full extent of their impact does not materialise in the first post intervention session. One interesting study in children's thinking in physics (Howe, Tolmie, & Rodgers, 1992) suggests that there is a delayed effect during which individuals re-equilibrate their thinking as a result of the intervention and in their studies more sophisticated understanding of physics actually occurred two months later. It is hoped that the full extent of the interventions in this study can really be appreciated once the study is completed, and it can be viewed as a whole which would include all the final post-intervention sessions with the same groups using the pictures and written sources as well.

This study shows that historical knowledge is socially constructed and communicated. History skills are discursive in nature and they reflect everyday thinking skills. They are constructed and communicated within everyday culture. The thinking skills used in history are vital thinking skills necessary for children to evolve if they are to live successfully within their culture. Historical representations of natural phenomena are similar, and learning is facilitated if the teacher uses this to his or her advantage. For example, understanding notions of time and change are necessary in everyday life; history just brings them into sharper focus. In other subjects, for example in science, learning may prove difficult because scientific observations are not always similar to everyday representations of the same phenomena. On the other hand, learning history does not involve children entering an alien way of viewing the world. On the contrary, as seen from this study, they are entering a community of discourse whose tools they are already familiar with. The role of the researcher was to introduce new ideas and skills and to provide support and guidance where necessary. In this way, children's thinking becomes more sophisticated and this would in turn foster a critical perspective of both history and the world they live in.

Correspondence *Yosanne Vella, Lecturer, University of Malta, Department of Primary Education, Faculty of Education, Msida MSD 06 Malta Email:yvel2@educ.um.edu.mt*

References

Bruner, J.S. (1967) *Toward a Theory of Instruction.* Cambridge, MA Harvard University Press.
Durbin, G, Morris, S. & Wilkinson, S (1990) *A Teacher's Guide to Learning from Objects* English Heritage p.6
Howe, C.,Tolmie, A.,& Rodgers, C. (1992) The acquisition of conceptual knowledge in science by primary school children:Group interaction and the understanding of motion down an incline. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 10, p. 113-130.
Lee, P, Dickinson, A & Ashby, R *'Children making Sense of History'* Education 3 to 13 March 1996 p.19
Littledyke, M & Huxford, Laura (1998) *Teaching the Primary Curriculum for Constructive Learning* David Fulton.p.21
Saljo, R (1998) Thinking with and through artifacts in Faulkner, D, Littleton, K & Woodhead, M *Learning relationships in the classroom* p.57
Scott, Brian (1978) Historical Enquiry and the Younger Pupil in Jones, G & Ward, L *New History Old Problems* University College of Swansea, Faculty of Education p. 95

The Drama of History

Paul Goalen, Homerton College, Cambridge, England

Abstract *During the early 1990s I explored a range of hypotheses concerning the use of educational drama to teach history to children in the upper primary and lower secondary age range. The results were published in a series of papers between 1992 and 1996 which attempted to analyse what it was about educational drama that made it an effective tool for the teaching and learning of history in primary and secondary schools. This paper is a summary of the findings of that research project, an introduction to some of the important pieces of literature on the subject and an account of how the research ideas have been translated into the practice of training of students.*

Key Words History, Pedagogy, Educational drama, National curriculum, Teacher training.

Preamble

As a boy at All Hallows prep school in Somerset in the early 1960s, I was regularly chosen by the aging white-haired headmaster, Mr Dix, to perform one of Shakespeare's soliloquies on speech day. One year I remember playing Macbeth opposite a Lady Macbeth played by the son of an Italian Bristol ice-cream manufacturer: we performed several scenes, but the most memorable for me was the soliloquy which begins,

> Is this a dagger which I see before me,
> The handle towards my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
> I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. (Macbeth, *Act 2, Scene 1*)

But at the tender age of 11 or 12, it was not Shakespeare's tragedies, or stories about jinxed plays, that struck a chord with me, but Shakespeare's histories that gripped me. I well remember on an other occasion standing before an audience of three or four hundred people seated outside the school on chairs arranged on the grass on a warm summer's afternoon. I was dressed as Henry V, with St. George's cross on my chest, trying to rouse the audience into the frenzy of activity with the soliloquy which begins,

> Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
> Or close the wall up with our English dead.
> (*Henry V*, *Act 3, Scene 1*)

I did not enjoy formal history lessons when I was at prep school. But I got a thrill from performing this scene, which made it one of those critical events in one's life that you do not forget. It was also perhaps my first introduction to the *drama of history*, a fascination for which has remained with me to this day.

Researching Drama in History: An Historical Overview

The origins of my research into using educational drama to teach history goes back to my P.G.C.E. history teacher training in Bristol in 1973-4 under the guidance of Charles Hannam and Ann Low-Beer. They introduced me to the work of that inspirational teacher of history, John Fines, who sadly died in 1999, and I bought his book 'The drama of history' whose title I have borrowed for this paper (Fines and Verrier, 1974.) Unfortunately, although I felt I knew quite a lot about history, I was not confident in the techniques of modern educational drama and so only occasionally did I try to put some of the ideas in this book into practice.

In my first job at Sir Bernard Lovell School in Bristol, I did not find anybody who shared my interest in using educational drama to develop children's historical thinking. After two years there, I moved to Abbeydale Grange in Sheffield and teamed up with the Head of English who agreed to collaborate and teach me some of the techniques he used to teach drama to children. Unfortunately, soon after our collaboration began, he was promoted to a Deputy Headship in the south west, so once again I was left on my own to dabble but not to develop. In my third job as a schoolteacher at Manor School in Chesterfield, I used drama to a limited extent for certain exercises each year. Unfortunately, I was cut off from regular contact with the drama specialist by a split-site school where the Humanities team was separated by a distance of 1.2 miles from the English and Drama specialists.

In 1988, I moved to Cambridge to become Head of History at Homerton College. Soon afterwards I met a specialist who trained teachers in the techniques of modern educational drama. Her name was Lesley Hendy. Initially, she agreed to teach me to use some of the techniques she was developing for use with student teachers. We agreed to teach a topic on the Abolition of Sati in nineteenth century India to a group of Year 2 B.Ed. students, based on the evidence from some Parliamentary Blue Books, which I uncovered in the University Library. This led to a short publication in *Teaching History* number 69 in 1992. Subsequently we collaborated on two further more formal research projects, leading to joint publications (Goalen and Hendy 1993 and 1994). I also published two further articles based on original research under my own name (Goalen, 1995 and 1996) and learned to 'fly solo' when using educational drama with school children.

My own life history, therefore, and the opportunities it provided for developing my interest in teaching history through drama, helped to shape my knowledge and understanding of this particular pedagogic style. During the 1970s and 1980s, whilst teaching in state comprehensive schools, the opportunities for collaborative work in this area were few and far between. The culture of the isolated teacher in his or her classroom, separated by the classroom walls and lack of resources from the professional practice of colleagues in other subject areas, was the norm and remains the norm for most teachers. Whilst we may sometimes talk to each other about our professional practice, the lived experience of working collaboratively with another colleague on a joint educational venture, where the planning, delivery and evaluation of a series of lessons is a shared experience, is a relatively rare phenomenon. Yet much work has been done on the value of developing collaborative cultures and coaching teams in schools (see for example Joyce, 1983): the problem has been one of implementation. There simply have not been the resources available to make team-teaching with manageable group sizes, where real professional growth can begin, a practical possibility.

The collaborative research described in this paper was carried out in a context potentially hostile to this kind of pedagogical development. The National Curriculum for History had been introduced in 1991, and teachers were focusing on mastering and delivering areas of subject knowledge which were unfamiliar to many. However, I detected a window of opportunity here, for although the National Curriculum for England and Wales was highly prescriptive in terms of subject knowledge, it left it up to the teacher to decide how this material might be delivered. The danger was that as teachers struggled to deliver a new curriculum which was over-prescriptive and burdened with simply too much content, they would resort to traditional methods of 'chalk and talk' and their more imaginative and innovative inclinations would be stifled by sheer weight of theses externally imposed requirements. I embarked on the research with a sense of mission: to save the pedagogical practice of teaching history through drama from a perceived threat of extinction, rather than simply to extend and develop my own skills.

The first piece of research involved teaching Year 5 (9-10 year olds) class in a Cambridge City primary school about the Aztecs, a world history Key Stage 2 topic on the National Curriculum. Two parallel Year 5 groups in the school were taught about the Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest for a term. The 'experimental' group were taught using the techniques of educational drama we were developing, whilst the 'control' group were taught using more traditional methods (Goalen and Hendy, 1993). Each group was tested twice to measure their historical understanding of the topic and

the extent to which their understanding was enhanced by the teaching that took place. What we found was that although the brightest children and the weakest children in the 'experimental' group improved during the term, the improvement shown on the second test was not statistically significant. However, when we analysed the results of the 60% of children in the middle range of ability in our 'experimental' group, we found that they had improved their performance over the 'control' group to a statistically significant degree.

The research method and statistical analysis can be examined in Goalen and Hendy (1993), but what was exciting about these findings was that educational drama was engaging children in the middle ability range far more effectively than more usual teaching methods. Indeed it was putting quite complex conceptual understandings within the grasp of children of average ability, understandings that more usually would have been achieved by only the very best minds in the class. Some conservative practitioners who believe that the education system is designed to sort and select our young people for future but varied job and career paths, may find these findings threatening since they open up the possibility of extending understandings to a far wider cohort of children than traditionally was thought possible.

The next significant piece of joint research we undertook involved some further work with children in order to try and define the context which makes educational drama such an effective tool for the teaching of history (Goalen and Hendy, 1994.) What we found was that drama can provide the teacher with situations that help to promote discussion and to clarify ideas and points of view. It also enables teachers to lead children towards a position where they can take on the role of a historian as a commentator on, and critic of, evidence and interpretations.

This time the research was conducted in a Suffolk Middle School with a Year 6 (10-11 year olds) class studying the Key Stage 2 topic *Britain since the 1930s*, and a Year 8 class studying the Key Stage 3 topic *The Making of the United Kingdom*. Whilst we were teaching and researching in the Suffolk Middle School, I was also busy researching and interviewing for an article published the following year in the Curriculum Journal (Goalen, 1995). This article explored the literature on teaching history through drama since the publication of *The Drama of History* (Fines and Verrier, 1974) and tried to gauge the extent to which drama was still being employed as a teaching strategy by History Departments in one Local Education Authority. The full details of this exploration can be found in Goalen (1995) but one or two points are worth repeating here. First, much of the research since Fines and Verrier (1974) has been devoted to the 'Living History' movement which has explored ways of bringing history alive on sites of historic interest. The most useful starting point for anyone researching teaching methods for a 'Living History' project would be the Historical Association pamphlet History Through Drama (Wilson and Woodhouse, 1990). This could then be supplemented by reference to the English Heritage publication History Through Role Play (Fairclough, 1994) which provides useful practical guidance on planning and organising 'Living History' projects. On the other hand, to find out how to use educational drama in the *classroom*, you would need to consult Fines and Verrier (1974) and the research carried out at Homerton College, the references for which are given below.

Apart from tracing the development of teaching history through drama from the 1970s to the 1990s, the 1995 article was also concerned with the impact of the introduction of the National Curriculum on using drama to teach history. On the face of it, the introduction of a National Curriculum for history posed a serious threat to the continuation of such teaching methods. The Programmes of Study were overcrowded, and there was a new emphasis on acquiring historical knowledge, which would put pressure on teachers to cover the whole syllabus rather than be more selective and focus instead on developing real historical understanding. Pressure from the Right was also promoting the more widespread adoption of traditional teaching methods and the abandonment of 'trendy' theory developed by educationalists who did not understand *real* classrooms. Furthermore, the partial collapse of Local Education Authority structures and the dispersal of their teams of advisers into other activities such as inspection, meant that a key element of support for teachers was removed just at the

time they were grappling with the new content and assessment procedures introduced through the National Curriculum.

I decided therefore to carry out a small-scale study to see how far teaching history through drama had survived the implementation of the National Curriculum for history in one Local Education Authority. With the help of the LEA adviser, I interviewed nearly a quarter of one county's heads of history in state schools, who before the introduction of National Curriculum history had been using drama alongside other teaching methods to deliver the old curriculum. The evidence I gathered suggested that although teaching style was constrained for a short time while teachers were coming to terms with the new content-heavy syllabus, they nevertheless held on to their belief in and commitment to history through drama and started to reintroduce this mode of pedagogic operation as soon as they felt more comfortable with the new curriculum. In other words, these teachers demonstrated a high level of professionalism in their willingness to mediate and interpret the new curriculum rather than be enslaved by it.

The heads of department interviewed emphasised four main reasons why they continued to believe in the educational benefits of history through drama:
- It promotes the acquisition of historical knowledge
- It develops historical skills including empathy and an understanding of interpretations
- It develops an appreciation of history through the high levels of enjoyment and engagement experienced through drama
- It promotes equal opportunities and the development of individual self-esteem

Drama in the Curriculum: Two Case Studies

Case-Study 1
In the Sussex Middle School with our year 6 and 8 classes, we used video and audio recorders to build up a database of transcribed lessons. These were subsequently analysed and used to develop our thinking on what makes the contexts provided by educational drama so effective for developing children's historical thinking.

Our starting point was a model of educational drama developed by Heathcote (1982) and adapted by O'Toole (1992) which we described as the *Heathcote-O'Toole Model* of *distancing frames*. During the term, informed by our teaching of the two classes, we gradually refined the *Heathcote-O'Toole Model* to a five-frame model specially adapted for teaching history through drama (see Figure 1.) The *Questioner* frame was used to raise questions and provoke discussion, whilst the *Clarifier* frame was employed to clarify the ideas of the people in the event and to provide an interpretation. The third frame was defined as *Alternating Viewpoint* and was used to reconstruct events from different points of view and to question different interpretations, thus introducing higher-level thinking than the first two frames above. The fourth and fifth frames were defined as *Commentator* and *Critical Historian*, for these were used both to provide reasons why an event might have occurred and to help make judgments based on evidence, as well as to challenge interpretations using evidence to arrive at an informed understanding of the event. Clearly, pupils need to be able to operate at quite a high level of sophistication to work successfully within these latter frames.

Here is an example of Year 8 pupils grappling with an interpretation in history by questioning the evidence. We were engaged in *Collective Role Play* debating Oliver Cromwell's record in Ireland. *Collective Role Play* is when several members of the group play the same part simultaneously to provide mutual support and present a range of activities. In this example one group of pupils were playing the part of Cromwell, and my colleague Lesley Hendy and another group were playing the part of a historian interrogating Cromwell:

> Les   Can I ask Cromwell a question? Can I ask whether you think that if you make a
> promise you've got to keep it? Would you say that's a rule you live by?

Pb.1   Yes

Les   Well in that case why did you break that promise to the people of Drogheda?

Pb.1   We never even made a promise. What evidence have you got that we made a promise?

Pb.2   You did. You gave them quarter (if they laid down their arms.) That's a kind of promise, isn't it?

Pb.1   Yes, but where does that promise come from? Where have you got evidence for that?

Pb.2   Clarendon.

Pb.1   Yes, but he got defeated so he's going to try to make up some …

Pg.1   He's biased anyway.

Pg.2   You're biased as well.

Pb.1   And we don't trust you.

Pb.2   Yes, but why did you break your promise?

Chorus: We didn't make a promise! You can't break a promise if you didn't make one!

Here, the Collective role play was enabling the children to challenge each others' interpretations of the evidence. Clarendon, it is suggested, was not an unbiased source, and therefore was not reliable when evaluating Cromwell's role in the massacre at Drogheda. The drama was therefore enabling the children to operate as commentators and critical historians at much higher levels, perhaps, than would have been possible using more traditional teaching methods with this age group. In the opinion of the researchers, at any rate, more children arrived much more rapidly at a sophisticated understanding of the issues than would have been possible using other methods.

In addition to developing these History Distancing Frames, we also experimented with a wider range of drama teaching strategies than we had employed in the first research project. These are outlined for the reader below:

DRAMA STRATEGIES	QUICK REFERENCE
WHOLE-GROUP-IN-ROLE	Method of producing make-believe talk and action either in a spontaneous or continuous manner which is not meant to be repeated
TEACHER-IN-ROLE	Teacher takes on the roles of characters within the drama to build belief, tensions, develop ideas, ask questions, Roles can be of high, medium or low status.
STILL IMAGE	The group take up different poses to construct a picture to describe what they want to say.
FREEZE -FRAME	A series of linked still images that can describe different important moments in a drama.
MANTLE OF THE EXPERT	The pupils are asked to take on the role of people with specialist knowledge that is relevant to the situation of the drama.
SMALL GROUP WORK : PREP ARED SCENES	Pupils are divided into small groups to work through spontaneous action or to prepare scenes to show other groups.
THOUGHT -TRACKING	Individuals, in role, are asked to speak aloud their private thoughts and reactions to events.

THOUGHTS IN THE HEAD	Individuals in role speak publicly, supported by another individual who speaks aloud their private thoughts. (This strategy helps pupils understand that private thoughts and public voice may not be the same.)
HOT-SEATING	Group, as themselves, question Teacher-in-Role or Pupil-in-Role to find more information about the character and their situation.
TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE	A group or individuals in role describe for others what they can see.
COLLECTIVE ROLE PLAY	Several members of the group play the same part simultaneously to provide mutual support and present a range of ideas.
GHOSTS	Pupils in role as ghosts from the past make comments about how they have been treated.
CONSCIENCE ALLEY	Group are used to provide advice or give conscience to a character as s/he is made to walk through the alley (made by dividing the group and lining them up opposite each other.)

The wide range of teaching strategies we employed helped to provide variety and interest in our sessions with the two classes, though anyone beginning work in this area need not feel they have to master all the techniques at once. To start with one or two 'safe' strategies and then build on them as your confidence grows would be a wise approach for anyone 'starting from scratch' as it were.

Still images and freeze frames are relatively easy techniques for beginners to start with. More demanding, but equally worth trying out early in the process of discovery is 'hot seating'. Here the teacher must learn as much as possible about the historical character to be played, and then allow the children time to formulate some questions to ask the teacher in role. The better prepared the teacher is in terms of subject knowledge, the more useful this technique becomes for imparting large amounts of historical information in an engaging and memorable way.

Case-Study 2
I also had a hunch that drama might also help in the development of children's writing, so I planned one further piece of research to explore this possibility. Goalen (1996) explores how whole-class teaching, small group work, and educational drama, can be used to promote children's analytical and empathetic writing, rather than just oral fluency and confidence.

I had noticed when first teaching the BEd students about the Abolition of Sati that their writing on social change in nineteenth century India was fresher and more direct than the usual essays they turned in, so it seemed to be an idea worth exploring systematically with children. This time I learned to 'fly solo' by teaching on my own a class of Year 7 (11-12 year olds) in a Cambridgeshire Village College the Black Death and Peasants Revolt spread over their history lessons during the first half of the summer term of 1995. My theoretical starting point was provided by Jerome Bruner writing in 1966 in *Studies in Cognitive Growth*. Bruner (1966) defined three forms of representation, the *ikonic*, the *enactive*, and the *symbolic*, and he suggested that all three may be integral to intellectual development. I began each lesson with a discussion of the relevant historical sources with a particular focus on the pictorial (*ikonic*) evidence, which is more accessible than many written sources for introductory whole class discussion. This evidence was presented on overhead transparencies so that the children could gather round the screen to study and discuss clear and enlarged versions of the relevant paintings or print. We would then move onto the *enactive* mode of representation by using educational drama to provide a framework for the children to explore their own and each other's

understanding of the introductory material. Other written sources were often fed in at this point. Finally I would set a written homework, which challenged the children to operate within Bruner's *symbolic* mode by exploring through *writing* a series of different but related historical problems.

I set the children both *analytic* and *empathetic* writing tasks. One such exercise was to ask the children to explain the causes of the Black Death, and why it was that such different reasons for the causes of the Black Death were given in medieval times. Here is one pupil's response:

> The Black Death was a disease that came from black rats. The flea then comes along and bites into the rat. Then, when the flea bites into a human, the disease is given to the human.
>
> The medieval answers to why the Black Death was caused were different because they didn't know about germs, and that they could spread. Some people thought the Black Death was caused because God was punishing them for their sins. Other people thought that the disease was in the air, and had spread across from China and India: so people went around breathing into handkerchiefs filled with herbs so they didn't breathe in the disease.'
> (Year 7, male)

The impressive thing about this answer was that the pupil had used the primary sources as evidence rather than just factual knowledge. His use of the phrase 'some people thought that' is a good example of someone using tentative language in order to distinguish between fact and interpretation (Hoodless, 1994). He is not saying that medieval people must have been stupid or that their reasons made no sense in the medieval context; rather he is pointing out that they did not have the scientific knowledge to understand what was really going on.

Whole class teaching and educational drama could then result in quite impressive *analytical* writing. But I also set an exercise designed to produce high quality *empathetic* responses. The distinction between *analytical* and *empathetic* writing is in some senses a false one (Levine, 1981) since the child writer producing a story, diary, or newspaper report still has to understand, shape and communicate just as the child who is responding in a more obviously academic style. Indeed, the task, which required the children to write a speech for John Ball during the Peasants' Revolt outlining the reasons for the rebellion, produced some fresh and vivid historical writing. The speeches were to be recorded onto tape to encourage the use of lively and informal modes of expression, but the children also had to consider historical issues such as long-term and short-term causation. Here is an example of one child letting her historical imagination get to work on the evidence in a controlled and disciplined way:

> Friends, I have come to address you for the very last time. By this time in a few days time I will be dead from being hung, drawn and quartered. A horrible death, as I'm sure you'll agree. And what for? Why did we waste our efforts just for our leaders to die gruesome deaths? I'll tell you. It was because we the serfs wanted equality, the right to be the same as everyone else. All our lives we have lived in squalid cramped conditions, and why? So people like the hated Poll Tax collectors can live in luxury and eat fine foods off silver platters, drinking fine wines, while we have to make do with coarse black bread, wooden plates and water. (The Poll Tax collectors) were another reason for the revolt by trying to extract every last coin from us. The amount was too high, it was unfair, they came too often. Are these the actions of fair men?
>
> We have had a bit of a hold over the rich, especially after the Black Death, when there were only a few peasants to work. Then we would demand payment or threaten to move elsewhere. The Statute of Labourers was too outrageous. They said they were angry because we wouldn't work for free! We were probably more angry than them though. To

try and make us work for less than 2d a day! To try to treat us like dogs in their manors!
We foiled that plan however.

Also the King said he would lead us in place of the valiant Wat Tyler, who suffered so
horribly under the cruel blade of the Mayor of Smithfield, taking us back to our villages,
only to send his men to capture the so-called 'ring-leaders.'! He who we trusted above all
others. I ask you, I plead with you, to carry on the revolt after my death. Farewell, and
thank you.'
(Year 7, female)

This writing is clearly imaginative, but it is also rooted in the historical record. The children had
explored through educational drama John Ball's sermon to the peasants at Blackheath, the
introduction of the Poll Tax, the Statute of Labourers, as well as the events of the rebellion itself.
Educational drama had been used here not to fill the gaps in the historical record or to encourage
flights of fancy; rather it was being employed to illuminate the historical record and to make the
evidence meaningful and accessible to all the children in this Year 7 mixed ability class. Whole class
teaching, small group work, drama and written homework assignments had provided a coherent
learning experience for the children which helped to develop fluent writing as well as oral confidence.
Teachers, therefore, need not be frightened into abandoning active learning strategies like drama to
focus more on writing exercises when governments or bureaucrats question standards. Written work,
divorced from the coherent learning experience that history through drama can provide, could so
easily become a sterile and unimaginative process resulting in a dull and unfocussed product.

From theory into practice: training student teachers to teach history through drama

Since 1993, history through drama has been a permanent feature of our history methods course on the
primary BEd. We have also done some work in this area with the primary postgraduates, but
unfortunately history through drama has not found a permanent niche on this course, which has been
subjected to numerous internal and external pressures resulting in less time for the preparation of
specialist historians. History through drama requires an investment of time and thought, but the
postgraduate curriculum has become overcrowded and there is insufficient space left on it to develop
high quality work in the Humanities subjects.

Time allocations on the undergraduate BEd course however are more generous and enable us to
develop high levels of subject knowledge in our student teachers, as well as a good understanding of
planning in the short and medium term, museum education, developing a local study, organising
residential fieldwork experience, developing the use of ICT, leading a team of teachers, and teaching
history through drama. The history through drama work is done in the summer term at the end of
Year 1 of the BEd course, and we take the students to Kirby Hall in Northamptonshire to work with a
group of local schoolchildren in Year 5 (9-10 year olds.)

Kirby Hall is an absolute delight for working with children. Situated in a valley in gently undulating
countryside only two miles outside Corby, Kirby Hall is worth making a long detour to find. It is a
stunning Elizabethan / Jacobean shell open to the elements, but part of the main house still has its roof
and so can be used for teaching in wet weather. One of its attractions for use with children learning
history through drama is that it is uncluttered with furniture or fittings so you have vast amounts of
floor space to spread around on, and since it is not a particularly popular tourist attraction, you can
work there with minimal disruption. In fine weather, the gardens outside are unfussy but well
maintained so there is plenty of space to work in the open air.

The preparation for the trip takes place in College. The model for teaching history through drama that
the students are introduced to is one that depends on using evidence as the starting point for historical
enquiry. Each student teacher is provided with a starter document pack which includes primary and
secondary sources on the Elizabethan Poor Law and life in a seventeenth century country house. We

set the drama during the Commonwealth period when Lady Hatton is in charge of the estate while her Royalist husband is in exile in Paris with Charles II. In addition to the background material mentioned above, we also give students a bill for the purchase of luxury dress materials from Paris dated 1654, and a letter from her son's schoolmaster dated 1655 complaining about lack of payment for his teaching duties. The drama takes place when Lady Hatton was expecting her husband home from the Royalist Court in Paris, but the estate is heavily in debt and Lady Hatton's conspicuous consumption causes dismay on an estate where others less fortunate than her ladyship suffer the effects of an economy drive. Finally, I introduce the student teachers to a range of drama teaching strategies and go through a framework for implementing these strategies, which the students are allowed to develop and adapt.

On site we spend the morning exploring Kirby Hall without the children, learning about its architectural history and orientating ourselves for the work with the children which follows in the afternoon. When the children arrive they are divided into groups of about eight or ten, and the students, working in pairs, take off their groups to a chosen location on site. Some students do a short tour of the house with their pupils first. Others do a few warm up exercises with their pupils such as playing *Simon Says,* with the pupils taking on the role of servants in the house, either washing, cleaning silver, bed-making or cooking on a spit. But the real work begins when the children are introduced to some primary source material, some pictures, artefacts, documentation, and of course the room itself where they are working, so that they develop the idea that they are working from evidence.

The student teachers are then encouraged to introduce the children to the idea of a *Still Image*, which they then build up into a picture of servant activities in their chosen room. The student-teacher then counts down from five and starts the picture moving as a mime, while narrating the story of the house during the Civil War and Commonwealth period to provide the children with the historical context for their drama. The mime is then developed into pair work where the children are encouraged to talk with another servant about the situation in the house and the period of the Civil War, with the student teacher trying to join in and feed in more information to build up a picture of the Hattons and their household. The student teachers are then encouraged to develop their role by introducing rumours that strict economies are going to be imposed on the household, with some possible sackings, and then presenting the bill for Lady Hatton's Parisian dresses as a scandalous extravagance.

In the next frame, with the children still in role, one of the student teachers takes on the role of a servant who has stolen something because their family is very poor. Information is fed in about the workings of the Poor Laws, and the thief talks about what might happen to her if she is caught. The children in role are encouraged to discuss what they should do with the information they have learned: should they report the thief or protect her? The children then come out of role to discuss what they have learned about Lady Hatton so far. In an exercise we call *Role on the Wall*, the student teachers provide an outline picture of Lady Hatton and invite the children to write on the picture things they know about her and things they think about her in two lists in order to try and get them to think about the difference between fact and opinion.

The steward, George Jeffries (played by a lecturer), who had once been Charles's organist in Oxford, then summons the groups of servants to a meeting place to discuss the fate of Jim Service (played by me) who has been caught stealing. The information about the house, the period and the Poor Laws is reinforced in this scene as Jim Service pleads for mercy and for the other servants to stand by him. As the tension mounts, the other thieves are gradually identified and reference is made to the evidence as much as possible. Finally the children return to their groups and *Mark the Moment* with a still image of the moment from the story that they found most significant, and then out of role they discuss why they have chosen that particular scene and what they have learned from the afternoon's activities.

The student teachers are encouraged to gather as much evidence as they can about pupils' understanding and achievement during these exercises, often with the help of a hand-held tape

recorder so that pupils' reactions and comments can be later transcribed and used as evidence to assess the effectiveness of using drama to teach history. Their assignments, which they write up after the day at Kirby Hall, are not just reviews of the literature on history through drama or descriptions of the drama strategies used during the afternoon; they are also attempts to assess at what National Curriculum levels the children were operating at during the afternoon, and what subject knowledge and historical skills had been learned and developed. Working in pairs usually helps the students to become confident in using these drama strategies, and it was rewarding to learn that some of the students who were inspected by HMI during our 2000 BEd. History Inspection were using drama strategies in the sessions that were seen by the inspector.

The Kirby Hall experience suggests that in undergraduate courses for prospective primary teachers at least, there is still time to introduce trainee teachers to the use of progressive and enriching teaching styles early in their careers. On the other hand, the over-crowding of the primary postgraduate courses in Initial Teacher Education has forced us to drop history through drama from the training offered to specialist historians doing the one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education after their first degree in history. This is a serious omission, but it is one that has been forced on us by government policies which have increased the time spent by trainees in schools, and placed a greater emphasis on learning to teach the basics (ie Maths, Science and English) in their college-based courses. The Humanities subjects have been squeezed and we simply do not have the time any longer to promote history through drama on the one-year primary postgraduate course. (There would be time on a one-year secondary course to develop work in this area, but we have not had a secondary history course at Homerton and our attempts to get one off the ground have not been supported by central Government. Next academic year this will be remedied as we converge with Cambridge University's School of Education.)

Drama in the Future: Props and Costume: some ideas for development

History through drama at Homerton College has relied very little on props and costume. During the development stage we felt we wanted to pursue strategies that could be employed in the school hall or classroom with the desks placed to one side without the need for elaborate props or costumes which might be time consuming to organise and possibly distracting to use. We wanted instead to encourage children to focus on the evidence, and to use that evidence to develop their own historical understanding.

However, recently, I have been struck by the potential value of props and costume in the *drama of history*. Events in my own life have shown how the use of colour in costume, and some carefully chosen props, can lend meaning to actions, which might otherwise be missed by an audience. For example, the carefully chosen front cover of a book or a magazine may convey to an audience meaning which you may not otherwise wish to articulate. Alternatively, the use of colour in costume may help to convey meaning such as loyalty to particular sets of ideas or people, or portray images such as purity, cowardice and decay. However, I have not explored such ideas systematically with children whilst using educational drama to teach history, and I will perhaps leave it to others to pick up this particular baton and run with it.

Finally, it is worth emphasising again that history through drama is not about 'flights of fancy', but rather it is about making history, historical evidence and interpretations more accessible to a wider audience than some more traditional teaching methods are able to reach. The starting point for any such project must be the evidence, the raw material of the historian's craft, which has to be assiduously collected and sifted and then presented in accessible formats for students to work with. Evidence must always be treated with caution, neither being wholly accepted nor wholly rejected before it has been rigorously evaluated. The drama of history can assist in this evaluative process and can make meaningful events that might otherwise appear remote or even unbelievable to a more casual observer.

Note: This title for this article has been plagiarised from the title of the book published in 1974 by the late John Fines and Ray Verrier: *The drama of history: an experiment in co-operative teaching (New University Education*.) Their work on using educational drama to teach history was the inspiration for my own research in this area.

Correspondence *Paul Goalen, Homerton College, Cambridge, UK*

References
Bruner, J.S. (1966) *Studies in Cognitive Growth*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
Fairclough, J. (1994) *History Through Role Play*. London: English Heritage
Fines, J. and Verrier, R. (1974) *The drama of history*. London: New University Education
Goalen, P (1995) Twenty years of history through drama. *The Curriculum Journal* 6, 1, 63-77
Goalen, P (1996) Educational drama and children's historical writing: process and product *The Curriculum Journal* 7, 1, 75-91.
Goalen, P and Hendy, L. (1992) 'The challenge of drama.' *Teaching History* 69: 26-33
Goalen, P and Hendy, L. (1993) 'It's not just fun, it works!' Developing children's historical thinking through drama. *The Curriculum Journal* 4, 3, 363-384
Goalen, P and Hendy, L. (1994) History Through Drama: The Development of 'Distance Framing' for the Purposes of Historical Inquiry. *Curriculum* 15, 3, 147-162.
Heathcote, D. (1982) *Signs and Portents* SCYT Journal No. 9 April
Hoodless, P. (1994) 'Language use and problem-solving in primary history.' *Teaching History* 76:19-22
Levine, N. (1981) *Language Teaching and Learning: 5 History*. London: Ward Lock Educational.
O'Toole, J (1992) *The Process of Drama* London: Routledge
Wilson, V. and Woodhouse, J. (1990) *History Through Drama: A Teachers' Guide* London: The Historical Association

Postmodernism and The Nature of History

Peter Brickley, North Tawton, Devon, England

Abstract *I focus in this paper on some recent exchanges between postmodern and empirical historians and argue that the significance of the debate has been misunderstood. In particular, I attempt to show that although there are real differences between them – not least in the importance accorded to values in the creation of historical knowledge – both sides nevertheless share a common epistemological base and that this calls into question the radicality of the postmodern challenge to mainstream historiography.*

Introduction

This article is intended as a contribution to the current debate about the nature of history: a debate which has been continuing since the key exchanges between Geoffrey Elton and Edward Carr during the 1960's (Carr, 1961/1964; Elton, 1967). More specifically, it is a debate which in recent years has been carried on in a number of leading British and American history journals, for example between F.R. Ankersmit (1989 & 1990) and Perez Zagorin (1990) in History and Theory, between Arthur Marwick (1995) and Haydn White (1995) and others in the Journal of Contemporary History. It concerns too, importantly, the differing accounts of the discipline given by Richard Evans *In Defence of History* (1997) and Keith Jenkins' *Why History*? (1999). Taken as a whole, this forty year-old debate has focused on the nature of interpretation in historical knowledge. The debate itself can be contextualised within a longer and continuing concern by historians, stretching back into the nineteenth century and beyond, a concern which has attempted to make sense of history as an epistemological, reliable, and thus useful, knowledge-making enterprise. In brief, what is at stake in the current phase of the debate is the extent to which postmodern approaches to knowledge might be considered relevant within accepted practices of academic history.

Postmodernism and its essential features
It is notoriously difficult to identify essential constituents of postmodern thought and especially so when seeking agreement on similarities and differences between variants such as poststructualism, deconstruction, pragmatism and the 'linguistic turn'. However, I take the work of Derrida (1976), Foucault (1980) Lyotard (1984), and Rorty (1989) to be exemplary of a postmodern genre; one which has been widely challenged, not least by Alex Callinicos (1989, Jurgen Habermas (1990) and Christopher Norris (1990). Similarly, in the application of postmodernism to history, there is a range of expression; for example, that of Frank Ankersmit (1989), Tony Bennett (1997), Robert Berkhoffer, Jnr. (1995), Patrick Joyce (1996), Alun Munslow (1999) and Beverley Southgate (1996). All these authors, in various ways, have argued for a reconstituted, more thoroughly reflexive historical discipline. These theorists can, to an extent, be contrasted with proponents of a stronger version of historical postmodernism, such as Elizabeth Ermarth's (1992) 're-timing of time' and Keith Jenkins' (1997 & 1999) 'end of history' argument. As with generic postmodernism, these ideas have met with fierce resistance. Significant players in the opposition to historical postmodernism being in addition to Zagorin, Marwick and Evans, the historians Gertrude Himmelfarb (1987), Gabrielle Spiegel (1992), and Lawrence Stone (1992).

Evans v Jenkins
The starting point for this article is organised around Richard Evans' *In Defence of History*. This work is regarded here as indicative of the general position on postmodernism currently taken by mainstream professional historians. The book was much acclaimed by the more established members of the historical community on its publication in 1997. It met also with heavy criticism from postmodern historians as was evident in the polemical exchanges which Evans had with opponents in the year following publication (Evans, 1998). Certainly he seems prepared to take on all-comers, but throughout his book he singles out Keith Jenkins' work – mainly from *Rethinking History* (1991) and

What is History? (1995) – maintaining a running critique of his account of history, a critique which has been robustly rejected by Jenkins in *Why History*? (1999). Although it is likely that Jenkins' work has achieved a degree of notoriety because he, like Ermarth, has applied postmodern ideas more radically than have others, it is not an easy matter to dismiss these two theorists as extreme and non-typical postmodernists. In their general philosophical outlook they share much with the mainstream generic and historical postmodern view. Indeed, a good deal of the criticism of postmodernism in this paper is directed against Ankersmit's critique of empirical historiography, a critique he shares with Jenkins. Yet Ankersmit's proposals for the future of the discipline fall well short of those of Jenkins. Thus it appears helpful to structure the way into the debate in this introduction through a focus on aspects of this core exchange between Evans and Jenkins.

One of the rare points of agreement between them is that postmodernism, as it is currently expressed by either Evans or Jenkins, does not fit comfortably with present historical practice as the discipline is understood within *In Defence of History*, i.e. within mainstream empirical history. Evans approvingly quotes Arthur Marwick in asserting that postmodernist ideas are a 'menace to serious historical study' (p7) and he himself speaks of postmoderns as 'intellectual barbarians at the disciplinary gates' who are 'loitering with distinctly hostile intent' (p8). For his part, Jenkins has been declaring since 1997, when he switched his view from a previously positive stance about the role of postmodernism in historical explanation (1991, p.25) that, postmodernity, which is 'precisely our condition: it is our fate' (Jenkins, 1995, p.6), implies that we can learn nothing from history 'other than that which we have put into it' (1999, p.3). He argues therefore that we might as well simply 'forget history' and

> lead lives within grammatical formulations which have no reference to a past tense articulated in ways which are, as it were, "historically" familiar to us'. (Jenkins, 1997{a}, p.57)

It is the central aim of this article to counter both of these positions, of Evans and of Jenkins, and to argue that not only is it possible to conceive of history as being constructed by historians – which in their various ways both Evans and Jenkins effectively accept – but that such construction is no bar to history's being of value as a discrete form of knowledge. Further, it is possible to see that empirical historical practice has within its own methodological assumptions – without the addition of specifically postmodern insights - sufficient epistemological openendedness to cope with the socio-political environment of knowledge-making; those which postmodernists have identified as constituting the historical condition they call postmodernity.

Two areas of the dispute between Evans and Jenkins have been taken as significant and will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this paper, A Charge of Realism. Considered here in outline, the areas of dispute indicate the general direction which is being taken in making a response to Evans and Jenkins' account of history.

Postmodernism and historians
The first of these starting points relates to the manner through which postmodern ideas might be accepted by historians. It suggests that there is a danger in taking the debate at face value; that is, that the understanding which can be made of the debate, and the constituent arguments, is not exhausted by the participants' own descriptions of them. It is possible to arrive at a quite different account of how they interact, other than the one that Evans and Jenkins make – or which is made for them by their supporters.

What is being focused upon here, to explain this by way of example, is the response which Evans and Jenkins respectively make to the process through which postmodern ideas could begin to be assimilated into disciplinary norms. The result is the opposite of what might be expected. For all his polemical objection to postmodernism, Evans sees the need for the discipline to evolve with the changing times and he deplores attempts of historians such as Geoffrey Elton to raise a 'disciplinary drawbridge' against ideas from non-historians (pp. 8-11). What he sees happening is that postmodernism is being gradually assimilated into the discipline and, as it is slowly being accepted by historians, it is being modified – quite naturally in Evans' view. He places postmodernism in a context

which includes what he suggests have been earlier claims, by for example, Rankeans, cliometricians, psychohistorians and early social historians. These, he says, have argued in their turn that all previous ways of doing history were 'redundant, biased, useless or false' but, they have nevertheless, one after another, settled down to become proponents of sub-specialisms 'coexisting happily with all other sub-specialisms' (1997, pp. 201/3) . Jenkins, on the other hand, clearly laments, even as he accepts, that this is what is taking place; that Evans

> replays the old strategies of divide and rule, "us against them"and "some of them against others of them" the really barbaric are kept out, while the more moderate and usable are let in to bolster the ranks. It is the typical assimilationist gesture so beloved of conservatives, and it permeates the whole of Evans' text. (1999, p. 97)

What is interesting here and important for this article is that it is Evans – a supposed 'certaintist' and 'lower case' historian, to use Jenkins' own terms - as an acknowledged representative of traditional empiricist historians who is here readily accepting that the exposure to challenge, implied in the assimilation of new ideas into an existing discipline, is likely to change not only the challenging ideas but also those of existing practices. Thus, whether Evans notices it or not – and the evidence is somewhat ambivalent – both he and historians like him appear to be working more with constructivist assumptions about the nature of knowledge than with the realist, objectivist, epistemological stance attributed to him (and them) by postmodernists in general and by Jenkins in particular (Jenkins, p. 1991, p.28, 1995, pp. 8-10 & 1999, p.100). At the same time, Jenkins himself shows a quite different set of assumptions than the one that he is noted for supporting. Evans has already pointed out a curious inconsistency in Jenkins' actual, rather than advocated, approach to knowledge

> Given the stress laid upon the shifting nature of concepts by Postmodernists, and the emphasis given to the indirect, contingent or even arbitrary or non-existent correspondence of words to reality, the dogmatic and apodictic tone of Jenkins' declaration that postmodernity is an indisputable fact of life seems strangely out of place, coming as it does from a self-confessed proponent of such ideas.(Evans, 1997, p.13)

That this definition of postmodernity by Jenkins was perhaps no one-off slip by him seems evident from his negative reaction here to the suggestion by Evans that postmodernism could possibly evolve through being accepted by historians. Postmodernism, for Jenkins, seems to be a fixed category which can be understood, accepted or employed only as Jenkins would have it understood. Clearly all might not be as it seems in a characterisation of postmodernists (represented by Jenkins in relation to himself) as 'generous, quasi-transcendental, cross-discursive, playful and radical and who can be compared with traditional empirical historians (represented by Jenkins in relation to Evans) as 'practical, technical, "serious men" of the flat-earth variety' who are 'suffering very badly from the "effects of gravity" ' and who preside over a 'mean-spirited, often arrogant and dismissive discourse' (Jenkins, 1999, p.95).

In attempting to show that there is at least one other way of considering the interpretative dimension to history than the one which is advocated by postmodernists and tacitly accepted by many empirical historians (that postmodernists are relativistic and that empiricists are truth-seeking objectivists), this paper focuses on the apparent assumptions of both sets of participants in the debate. It considers the possibility that what is at stake here is not, as is so often thought, a question of whether history – or indeed any form of knowledge – can or cannot provide objective, 'certaintistic' as Jenkins terms it (1991, p.28), knowledge. The issue is, rather, a struggle over how a broadly accepted sense of scepticism in knowledge should be understood and expressed. There is evidence in the manifest open-endedness of mainstream empirical historians that there appears to have long been an assumption in the western intellectual tradition, that knowledge is – in principle at least - open to ongoing interpretation. Thus it is reasonable to think that this assumption has been articulated and handled in different ways. What is at stake now in this postmodern debate, and in the postmodern history debate, is that within a cultural context in which interpretation of all forms of knowledge has become increasingly important, empiricism and postmodernism are competing for a dominance of expression.

It is in such an intellectual context that Jenkins' stance here can be understood as being something more than simple irascibility on his part.

Jenkins' insistence that postmodernism be understood as postmodernists would have it understood now, rather than accept that its meaning be watered down through a process of assimilation, does makes sense in terms of his own project. There are considerably differing consequences resting upon which interpretative model – empiricism or Jenkins' version of postmodernism – the historical community chooses. This is not because empiricism assumes the existence of an impossible grounding objectivity and postmodernism, a radical subjectivity, but rather the opposite. Empiricism is an approach to knowledge which is comfortable with the idea of knowledge as being simply a human strategy for making communicative meaning where it is obvious that no absolute objectivity is possible or indeed desirable. On the other hand postmodernism demonstrates an anxiety about truth to such an extent that the absence of certainty in knowledge – an absence which is absurdly easy to show – is taken to herald the beginning of a new historical epoch and to be the justification for an astonishingly radical programme of methodological and disciplinary change leading, in the case of Jenkins, to an abandonment of history altogether.

The issue of theory
The second significant area of the Evans/Jenkins exchange is the issue of theory. If it is accepted that empirical history can, in effect, challenge the postmodern claim to the high ground of sceptical open-endedness, then there needs to be some evident explanation about why this challenge is not transparently obvious at the level of everyday historical working. And it has to be accepted that often it is not. As the following brief outline perhaps shows, it is possible to begin to see in Evans' approach to theory one of the reasons why this might be so. There is a tension in his treatment of historical causation, evident in a reticence on his part to address sufficiently convincingly the implications of his own account of how historical causes might be understood. This feature of Evans' argument is one that Jenkins has centrally focused on, and any response to their dissension ought also to address this aspect of the debate. Jenkins is right to critique Evans' approach to the broader issues of historical causation for this is a weakness not only of Evans' work, but of the genre – of traditional empirical history – which he is defending. However, the missed opportunities which are consequent on this tension towards theory, represent not a terminal weakness as Jenkins asserts (1999, p.93), so much as merely a need for historians to modernise and adapt their practice to changing social conditions.

To look at this in a little more detail, although certainly Evans rejects the suggestion of Elton and Marwick, that only practising historians can legitimately write about the nature of history (1997, p.11), he does not extend the applicability of this argument to the discipline of philosophy. Evans makes the point early in his book that 'very few historians in practice have possessed the necessary expertise to discuss the theory of history at a level that a trained philosopher would consider acceptable' (1997, p.10). Sensible though this point might seem, there are clear limits to Evans' contention here. For example no one expects a military historian to be capable of directing warfare, or a historian of science to be at the cutting edge of this or that branch of scientific endeavour. So it is with philosophy, especially when it is the historical dimension of philosophy which is being brought to the fore. If it is possible to gain insights from a history of thought, which is widely accepted as a legitimate area of historical study, then it ought also to be possible to gain insights from what might be regarded as a branch of this i.e. a history of philosophy.

Unsurprisingly, given his comments on the subject, Evans does not employ insights from the history of philosophy himself. The result in his work is an account of history as a form of knowledge which ventures rarely, if at all, beyond the collective wisdom of major European historians from Ranke onwards. What he does is to tacitly accept a methodology for history which is not dissimilar to a postmodern-like constructivism, or even relativism. For example he openly accepts that historical explanation involves 'constructing an ensemble of narratives' (1997, p.146) and that, in relation to linear notions of time

historians have been accustomed to employ a variety of concepts of temporality in their work; indeed one could say that its precisely this that distinguishes them most clearly from mere chroniclers, whose notion of time, is by definition confined to the tale of years'. (1997, p.153)

At the same time, although Evans broadly accepts that it is historians' changing ideas about the discipline which constructs the sense they make of the past (and that new ideas about how the past should be understood are always likely to change over time), he is nevertheless prepared to ignore the implications of this view in his more detailed accounts of how historians work. Thus Evans implies that the limits to historical interpretation are unrelated to the assumptions, values or thought processes of historians or by what might count in any community of historians or receivers of historical knowledge as an appropriate construction, or as a valid or sensible cause. Rather than enter this area of discussion, Evans' account remains at the level of technique. For example in his 'history as sculpture' analogy the historian is ultimately constrained by the kind of stone employed, or by the competence of the sculpture, not by the norms of the community within which he or she works (1997, p.147). History by this account remains a purely craft activity, not in any way political or normative.

Similarly, in the example of the road accident which Evans discusses in relation to the difficulties of knowing its cause, he appears to ignore the possibility that it might be the context of knowledge-making – its social or operational environment – that at least in part determines the acceptability of various proffered causal explanations (1997, p.131). Such a critique of Evans is not perhaps unreasonable. After all, David Hume famously observed that we never actually see a cause (Hume, 1977, p. Ch4). If we do not see causes then it seems sensible to conclude that the existence or otherwise of a causal connection in particular circumstances is, at the very least, open to the possibility of discussion. Evans clearly cannot be oblivious to the extent that issues such as causation and epistemology have been the subjects of lengthy debate by philosophers in the western tradition against a backdrop of changing social and political conditions. By avoiding an engagement with these discussions Evans weakens his own account of history. The measure of that weakness, and that of historians who share his approach to the discipline, is the extent to which such accounts lack historical self-awareness, intellectual breadth and, in the multicultural, multinational, mass knowledge-making conditions of the 21st Century, a degree of functional utility.

It is the urgent task of historians, and historian teachers, to develop practices which will fill this weakness within empirical history. There are sound reasons why it is both possible and desirable for empirical history to be more genuinely open in its constructivist assumptions, not least because an empirical historical position thus developed, leaves much of the supposed radicality of the postmodern challenge no longer relevant. To do this requires a shift in perceptions and understanding.

A Charge of Realism

It is perhaps to be expected that, if the thrust towards interpretation is as important in our western culture as the overall argument of this paper assumes, the enthusiastic trading of accounts of interpretation in historical knowledge is likely to slip into the kind of polemics which have been touched on in this paper so far. Inevitable as this may be, such heated debate is not always conducive to the recognition of fresh perspectives. This section focuses on an example where it would be easy to take at face value the self-avowed positions, the armed camps even, of combatants in the postmodern history debate.

Here elements of exchanges between Arthur Marwick and Hayden White, and between Perez Zagorin and (on different occasions) Frank Ankersmit and Keith Jenkins, are examined. It will be seen that, for all their polemical rancour there is evidence of a largely unrecognised commonality in the epistemological assumptions displayed by postmoderns and empirical historians. Both sides accept that knowledge is, at root, a human construction of one sort or another. Their debate is not therefore specifically about whether empirical historiography is inclusive of philosophical assumptions of naïve realism. Indeed it will be suggested that the points at issue are not – or at least are not only – about whether one or other side think there are unproblematic truths about the world, existing complete with

their linguistic descriptions, independently of knowers. Rather it is about the attention paid by either side to the ways interpretation might be understood to function.

In defining the terms being used here, realism, like postmodernism and empiricism can be a slippery concept, used variously. For example in the exchange between Jenkins and Zagorin in 1999/2000, both of them used 'anti-realism' to mean something akin to idealism. This would make realism little more than a not very helpful catch-all term for any position other than idealism. In contrast to this, and more in keeping with its general use, 'realism' will be used to indicate the positing of a world existing, complete with meanings, independently of human minds. Likewise the use of the term 'empiricism' here eschews reference to any narrow 'laid-down creed' (Woolhouse:1988:Ch1) and is taken to mean the reliance at root of understandings of the world deriving from the human senses or from reflecting and intellectualising upon the results of sense impressions. In this sense 'constructivism' refers in this paper to the idea that meaning results from the human activity of observing, reflecting etc.

In Arthur Marwick's polemical critique of postmodernism in the Journal of Contemporary History (1995), he gave an interesting and unexpected explanation for his oft-repeated assertion that history functions in a similar way to science; that is that scientists

> write up their researches and in doing so control the machinaries they deploy, knowing their work will be subject to the scrutiny of cold-eyed colleagues.(1995, p.9)

He suggested that this mechanism operates as a form of professional control which ensured that works of history

> will be subject to the competition of the intellectual market place; eventually a balanced well-substantiated much scrutinised account will pass into our textbooks.(1995, p.10)

This is an interesting comment made by Marwick because postmodernists have generally regarded traditional historians to be believers in a correspondence theory of truth. That is, the existence of an independently existing objective past, the uncovering of which, directly and through the evidence, (in all its already existing nature before we as historians start to work on knowing it) is the appointed task of historians (Munslow, 2000, pp. 4 & 81). Here was possible evidence of another view – one of constructivism, which called into question previous understanding of traditionalism in contemporary historiography. By implication, also in question is the extent to which postmodernism has not left empiricism as far behind as its adherents seem to believe.

This was not exactly how Hayden White saw it when he responded to Marwick's paper. In a context of sharp exchanges in which Marwick had described postmodern historians as 'metaphysical interlopers' and White called Marwick's ideas 'bizarre and uninformed', Marwick's assumption of a constructivist account of history became simply a weapon with which he could be berated. Despite some preliminary, and rather grudgingly-given praise, saying that Marwick's point here was 'interesting' and 'potentially radical', White quickly moved on to speak of it as an example of Marwick's incoherence; it was 'at odds' with his general position – 'a demon' which Marwick had imputed to postmodernists (White, 1995, p.236). All this was seemingly unconscious of the fact that, apart from a slightly different emphasis on the political, what Marwick argued here bore a strong similarity to what Jenkins had claimed constituted a postmodern definition of historical knowledge:

> History is a shifting, problematic discourse, …that is produced by a group of present-minded workers (overwhelmingly in our culture salaried historians) …whose products, once in circulation, are subject to a series of uses and abuses that are logically infinite but which in actuality generally correspond to a range of power bases that exist at any given moment and which structure and distribute the meanings of histories along a dominant-marginal spectrum. (Jenkins, 1991, p.26)

Having criticised Marwick for holding a postmodern-like constructivist position, White then attributed to him a crude realist one, and criticised him for that too. White asserted that

> postmodernism tends to be sceptical of all notions of essences, leery of the kind of authority that Marwick claims for historical knowledge'(White, 1995, p. 234)

The statement seems not to have recognised that Marwick's claim for historical knowledge argued for the very opposite of essentialism – that a piece of history

> does not form a single self-standing account, which is automatically to be taken as an authoritative, all-encompassing statement, a secure piece of knowledge. On the contrary, it is merely a contribution to knowledge, immediately open to scrutiny, analysis and criticism by fellow historians (Marwick, 1995, p. 23)

Similarly, White misread Marwick's account of the relationship between science and history, claiming that Marwick has argued that history is a science. Not surprisingly White was able to show the weakness of such a claim. The difficulty for White's case, on a less committed reading, is that although it is true that Marwick, in company with many historians, considers history to be one of the social sciences, he was careful to draw a line in relation to natural science. To this history is merely to be compared, not conflated. Lest there should be any misunderstanding, he further cautioned,

> I have no wish to overdo the parallels between history and the natural sciences – there are enormous differences…' (1995, p. 11)

For White it was as though this statement had not been made. White seems to have just assumed that Marwick was working with a realist notion of science and because Marwick had made comparisons between science and history, this imputed realism must apply to history too. In fact, Marwick had tried to make it clear that his view of history is one in which historical knowledge is not something complete and given, but rather it is one in which the product is always open to further interpretation - interpretation based on sources which are 'politically and conceptually loaded, biased and imperfect, in all sorts of ways' (1995, p.29). Clearly history was, for Marwick, a thoroughly open-ended project. His account of it bore a remarkable similarity to White's own; i.e.:

> As I understand it postmodernism simply brings under question the authority of "the past" as a font of social wisdom and moral propriety. (White, 1995, p.234)

Indeed, for all his criticism of Marwick's position, White finally, towards the end of his paper, tacitly accepts that his own and Marwick's versions of historical practice do share a basic approach to knowledge. He agreed, as did Marwick, that history is:

> a construction by historians, comprised out of the data or evidence contained in the primary sources. (White, 1995, p.243)

What is interesting is that this was no simple victory for Marwick. At this point in his critique, White shifted the focus of his attack to what is the real difference between them. It is not one of realism against relativism, or even of closed against open modes of knowledge making. Rather, like the difference between Evans and Jenkins, it relates to their differing concerns with how historical interpretation should be controlled or handled – in other words the 'closure'(of the logically, never-ending chain of possible interpretations). White saw this as being the way

> a historian's account of his or her subject is constrained by the conventions of language, genre, mode (for example, narrative), argument and a host of other cultural and social contextual questions.' (1995, p.244)

This is certainly pertinent, for nowhere in Marwick's account of history is there a sense in which he has attached any importance to achieving an understanding of the ways in which interpretations are constructed intellectually. Like Evans, his emphasis is always on the practical aspects of interpretation; for example the handling of primary sources (1981, pp. 144-146). His discussion of a recognisably 19th century 'mental set by historians (p. 21), shows that he is not entirely oblivious to the idea that the historians' mental attitude, through which the practicalities operate, is a constituent of the history produced. It is just that he seems not to regard this as important and it has not therefore been factored into his explanation of history. The result of this in his exchange with Hayden White was that he was not able to respond to White's compelling argument that history

> is not merely a matter of telling the truth about the past, not even the truth as seen from a specific perspective, or making sure that one's facts are straight. It is much more a matter of imagining both the real world from which one has launched one's inquiry into the past and the world that comprises one's object of interest. (1995, p.241)

To this one might add that the recognition of such imagining occurs through, amongst other things, an awareness of the constructing nature of the field of secondary sources within which an historical perspective is developed. Again, like Evans who also has not addressed this dimension, Marwick's historiography will be seen to have been the weaker for this lacuna in his thought.

Similar assumptions about the grounds for historical knowledge become apparent through a consideration of Perez Zagorin's opposition to postmodernism articulated in two major articles published in History and Theory. The first of these, 'Historiography and Postmodernism; Reconsiderations', was published in 1990 and was a response to an earlier paper in the same journal by Frank Ankersmit. The second paper 'History, the Referent and Narrative; Reflections on Postmodernism Now,' published in 1999, covered remarkably similar ground. However, it involved a more wide-ranging critique of postmodernism, focussing specifically upon the arguments Keith Jenkins has offered and on those postmodern contributions to the debate which Jenkins collected in his *The Postmodern History Reader* (1997). Their respective targets, Ankersmit and Jenkins, have responded to both articles. Indeed, the exchanges have continued up to the time of writing, but the discussion here only lightly touches on these responses, for what is important is not every twist and turn of the debate itself so much as the assumptions displayed by Zagorin.

There is no doubt that Zagorin opposes postmodernism. This opposition can unambiguously be seen at the beginning and end (at least) of both of his papers. In the first he opens by pointing out that historians have been 'decidedly critical of it' (1990, p.263) and he ends by commenting that Ankersmit's postmodern view 'seems woefully impoverished' (1990, p.274). Similarly, in the 1999 paper he opens by comparing – unfavourably – postmodernism with pragmatism (1999, pp.1-2) and closes with the view that postmodernism is 'founded on a mistaken conception of the nature and function of language'. However, throughout both papers Zagorin has shown repeatedly that, like Marwick, he holds an epistemologically open, constructivist, account of knowledge. To be completely clear, what is taken here as constructivism (variously 'constructionism') is a position shared with postmodernism (Munslow, 2000, p.53). In this, knowledge is characterised by the view that it is the community of knowers which in some way (be it through language, concepts, methods, procedures or the focus of study etc.) validates or otherwise 'grounds' knowledge.

Nowhere is Zagorin's position more obvious than in the reason he gives for the basic unacceptability of postmodernism as a methodology for history. Zagorin and Marwick agree that postmodernism's proponents have simply not been able to convince sufficient numbers of working historians of its value to them. It has, Zagorin says, failed to 'accord with some of the strongest intuitions and convictions that historians bring to their work' (1999, p.24). Zagorin has repeatedly returned to this view and clearly believes that it is appropriate to judge postmodernism by the extent to which it has attracted support from working historians. This is consistent with his empirical stance that, since it could never be known whether any particular approach to knowledge was an fully accurate means of making sense of the past, (because as all sides agree, it is not possible to get back to the past to check),

general acceptability and perceived utility become crucial criteria. What is significant here is that Zagorin, like Jenkins, is working with an assumption that history is a construction of historians – it is what historians agree that it should be. After all, as Jenkins admits in *Rethinking History*

> the past has gone and history is what historians make of it when they go to work.
> (Jenkins, 1991, p.6)

Clearly Zagorin and Marwick are in agreement with Jenkins' view here. They draw attention to the fact that some aspects (at least) of the account of knowledge, expressed by White, Ankersmit or Jenkins have, for whatever reason, not been seen as convincing to many historians. Obviously it is not what they want to take 'to work' as a description of their approach to historical knowledge. Thus there is no reason why those historians should accept this postmodern critique, since both sides agree that there is no absolute true, right or accurate way of doing history beyond that which seems sensible to the majority of practitioners at any one time and in any one place. This could not, arguably, be a more unequivocal indication of Zagorin's constructivist assumptions about the nature of the discipline.

Zagorin effectively side-steps a great deal of the postmodern challenge to traditional historiography by simply accepting it and agreeing that:

> the point is not whether it is possible to obtain a total conception of world history or the historical process, for it almost certainly is not.' (1990, p.273)

Similarly, in his account of what is conventionally taken to be historical truth Zagorin shows that he holds a position in common with postmodernists. For example what we take to be firm historical knowledge is for him only ever a form of sedimented interpretation. For example,

> If an historical interpretation comes to be widely accepted, it may even cease to be the subject of debate and take its place as an established part of our understanding of the past. Of course this may not last. The subsequent emergence of another interpretation may force it to undergo renewed challenges which throw it into question and perhaps displace it. (1990, p.269)

What is particularly interesting here is the closeness of this account to that of Stanley Fish, who Keith Jenkins includes in those postmodernists whose 'ample imaginaries' will help us 'forget history'. (Jenkins, 1999, p.12). For example:

> Asserting the textuality of history and making specific historical argument have nothing to do with each other. They are actions in different practices, moves in different games. … The belief that facts are constructed is a general one and is not held with reference to any facts in particular; particular facts are firm or in question insofar as the perspective (of some enterprise or discipline area of enquiry) within which they emerge is firmly in place, settled; and should that perspective be dislodged (always a possibility) the result will not be an indeterminacy of fact, but a new shape of factual firmness. (Fish, 1989, p.308)

Like Fish, Zagorin is happy with the idea that the question of whether objectivity is possible is quite separate from the issue of whether it can be employed as an aim and in a regulatory category. He uses the example of the pragmatists Bears and Becker to show that it is quite possible to argue about the nature of objectivity while still using an understanding of it (1999, pp. 1-2). Zagorin regards history as being able to provide in 'some non-absolute yet valid sense ….a true representation and understanding of the past' (1999, p.11). He spells out and lists exactly what is implied in his use of these terms. Thus history

- does not pretend to know or tell everything,
- is always a selective reconstruction of the past, from a great manifold of facts,
- a selection dictated by the subjects, problems and questions the author proposes to deal with,
- is written from a point of view,

- in its statements is susceptible of disproof,
- embodies comments and judgements relative to controverted questions,
- doesn't profess to be a mindless and mechanical transcript of reality, but an attempt at understanding.' (Zagorin, 1999, p.12)

In rejecting Ankersmit's charge that empirical historians are antiquarians, Zagorin stresses that history is never for its own sake. It 'must, by implication be always to show, to understand.' (1990, p.273).

Zagorin, interestingly (and unlike Marwick) has not argued for the primacy of primary sources. He has made it clear on almost every page of both papers that he considered history to be an interpretative discipline. Therefore there could be no possibility of historians acquiring knowledge of the past directly from the evidence of primary sources, in any unmediated way. Rather he claimed that primary sources are a necessary and important part of the business of making sense of the past and are not invalidated by the need and existence of interpretation. What he argued – and this is not incompatible with the generality of postmodern accounts – is that knowledge-claims must be justifiable; that common practice is such that

historians know that they may be called upon to justify the veridicality, adequacy, reliability of particular statements, interpretations and even of their entire account. (1990, p.272)

This justification is, for Zagorin as it is for Jenkins, ultimately a social one, i.e. that historians must

ask what the foundation of history is and what purpose it serves, or should serve, in culture and society. (1990, p.273)

However, this is where Zagorin differs from the postmoderns. It is not necessary to chart the trajectory of Jenkins' intellectual journey from Marxist-Leninism to postmodernism to see that he articulates this cultural dimension in more overtly political terms. What, in Evans, Marwick and Zagorin's accounts is sketched in only lightly, is strongly worked in Jenkins' treatment where, for example, he has chosen to stress rather than to minimise differences between historians – be they differences of class, gender or ethnicity (Jenkins, 1991, Ch1). Again, as with Evans and Marwick it is possible to see a weakness of explanation here in Zagorin's approach, compared with the richness of Jenkins' political analysis, or the excitement of Ankersmit's linguistic understanding of interpretation. Compare, for example, Ankersmit's argument that:

the nature of the view of the past is defined exactly by the language used by the historian in his or her historical work (Ankersmit, 1989, p.145)

with Zagorin's equivalent, i.e. his mere statement of pluralism:

history will always find differing accounts and interpretations of the same subject'
(Zagorin, 1999, p.12).

It is hardly to be wondered at that postmodern historians should seek a political explanation (of an underlying conservatism) for this seemingly deliberate lack of interest on the part of mainstream historians in exploring more comprehensively the social bases of interpretation within the discipline.

There is, of course, a good deal more to these debates, and to other similar ones, than has been represented here in this preliminary discussion. The intention has been to show simply that both sides, within some limited exchanges of the current debate, share a common philosophical outlook. It would, however, be possible to find many more examples where mainstream empirical historians demonstrate constructivist epistemologies. Macaulay would be one, for as we know he prefigured Hayden White by more than a century and a half in suggesting that history could be likened in certain ways to literature (Stern:1970 Ch5). Other examples could be drawn from Collingwood, from Hexter, from Dray…Leff, Vincent, Jordanova, Bevir, and so many more. Clearly there is much work here still

to be done in combating the kind of misunderstandings which postmodernism promotes. Suffice to say for the moment that the conventional way of understanding postmodernism's engagement with mainstream historiography is simply not adequate.

A caveat is necessary here, for Alun Munslow – unlike White and Jenkins – has made a distinction between different approaches within mainstream empirical historiography and he does appear to accept the point being argued here. He separates out from his own spectrum of mainstream historiography those historians who he regards as being 'representational' or realist from those he sees as constructionists (2000, pp. 5 & 6). Ultimately, though, Munslow's distinction is a superficial one in that it merely shifts his critique to a slightly deeper level, for he really does believe constructionists to be fundamentally realist:

> Both reconstructionists and constructionists read the documents…for the reality they reflect (Munslow, 2000, p.8)

The possibility that the reverse could be the case, that those historians who wish to limit re-articulations of established accounts of the past represent merely a conservative rump of a more general open-endedness by empirical historians; ie. they are parasitic on empirical methodology, is not even considered by him.

This article indicates that an understanding of the differences between the opposing sides in this debate can be found at a level of detail within the larger argument. The issue is about how there is an epistemological closure in the making of historical knowledge, rather than whether there is one. It appears that mainstream empirical historians play down differences between practitioners which might have arisen from differing intellectual assumptions of a value-laden nature. At the same time, these historians are assiduous in insisting that historical explanation is an continuing, open-ended enterprise, and they seem genuinely surprised that their postmodern opponents do not recognise this. Postmoderns (Jenkins' recent 'end of history' argument apart) take it as given that the practice of history is ongoing. In addition to this, they stress strongly that the intellectual context of knowledge-making in our time implies new minimum standards of historical explanation. They vary somewhat on what these might be - for example, from White's and Ankersmit's linguistics to Jenkins' politics - but a common factor is that they must involve historians being able to account for how and why they interpret particular pieces of evidence as they do. However, despite the sophistication that postmoderns bring to their reading of the interpretative process, their own lacuna is that they seem not to want to recognise that the nature of their contribution to continuing changes in historical methodology is merely one of detail, rather than of fundamental essence, as they claim. To put it simply, they overstate their case and they do so by tilting at a straw target.

Correspondence Peter Brickley, 4, Fore Street, North Tawton, Devon, EX20 2DT, England.
Peter@brickley98.freeserve.co.uk

References
Ankersmit, F. (1989) 'Historiography and Postmodernism' *History and Theory,* No 28.
Ankersmit, F. (1990) 'Reply to Professor Zagorin' *History and Theory,* No. 29.
Bennett, T. (1997) *Outside Literature* London; Routledge.
Berkhoffer, Jnr., R. (1995) *Beyond the Great Story* Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.
Bevir, M. (1994) 'Objectivity in History' in *History and Theory* No. 33, pp.328-344.
Callinicos, A. (1989) *Against Postmodernism – A Marxist Critique* London, Polity.
Carr, E. (1964) *What is History?* London, Macmillan, & London; Pelican.
Collingwood, R. (2001) *The Principles of History* Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Derrida, J. (1976) *Of Grammatology* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.
Dray, W. (1980) *Perspectives on History* London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Elton, G. (1967) *The Practice of History* London, Fontana.
Ermarth, E. (1992) *Sequel to History* Princetown New Jersey, Princetown University Press
Evans, R. (1997) *In Defence of History* London, Granta.

Evans, R. (1998) *In Defence of History: Reply to Critics* Reviews in History Continuous Discourse, 1998 reviews: list@ihr.sas.ac.uk

Fish, S. (1989) 'Commentary: The Young and the Restless', H. Aram Veeser (ed.) *The New Historicism* London, Routledge.

Foucault. M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977by Michael Foucault.* Gordon, C. New York, Pantheon.

Foucault. M. (1996) '"Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" "Truth and Power"' (orig. 1977) in Cahoone, L. (Ed.) *From Modernism to Postmodernism* Oxford, Blackwell.

Habermas, J. (1990) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* London, Polity.

Hamilton, P. (1996) *Historicism* London, Routledge.

Hankinson, R. (1995) *The Sceptics* London, Routledge.

Himmelfarb, G. (1987) *The New History and the Old: Critical Essays & Reappraisals* Cambridge, Massachusetts University Press.

Hume, D. (1977) *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill. Jenkins, K. (1991) *Rethinking History* London, Routledge.

Jenkins, K. (1995) *On What is History?* London, Routledge.

Jenkins, K. (1997) (a) 'Why Bother With the Past?…' *Rethinking History* No 1 (1) pp 56-67.

Jenkins, K. (Ed.) (1997) (b) *The Postmodern History Reader* London, Routledge.

Jenkins, K. (1999) (a) '"After" History' in *Rethinking History* London, Routledge No. 1 (3).

Jenkins, K. (1999) (b) *Why History?* London, Routledge.

Jenkins, K. (2000) 'A Postmodern Reply to Perez Zagorin' *History and Theory* No 39, pp.181-200.

Jordanova, L. (2000) *History in Practice* London, Arnold.

Joyce, P. (1996) 'The End of Social History?' in *Social History* No.21 (1).

Leff, G. *(1958)* Medieval Thought St Augustine to Ockham *London, Penguin.*

Lyotard, J. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Marwick, A. (1981) *The Nature of History* London, Macmillan.

Marwick, A. (1986) *Introduction to History Arts Foundation A102* Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Marwick, A. (1995) 'Two approaches to Historical Study: the Metaphysical (including 'Postmodernism') and the Historical' *Journal of Contemporary History* No. 1 (30) pp 5-35.

Marwick, A. (1997) *Introduction to History Arts Foundation A101* Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Munslow, A. (1997) *Deconstructing History* London, Routledge.

Munslow, A. (2000) *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* London, Routledge.

Norris, C. (1990) *What's Wrong with Postmodernism* London, Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Rorty, R. (1989) *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Southgate, B. (1996) *History: What and Why?* London, Routlege.

Southgate, B. (2000) *Why Bother with History?* Harlow, Pearson Educational.

Spiegel, G. (1992) 'History and Postmodernism' *Past and Present* No. 135.

Stern, F. (1970) *The Varieties of History* London, Macmillan.

Stone, L. (1992) 'History and Postmodernism' *Past and Present* No. 131.

Vincent, J. *(1995)* An Intelligent Person's Guide to History *London, Duckworth.*

White, H. (1973) *Metahistory – the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

White, H. (1978) *Tropics of Discourse.* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press.

White, H. (1987) *The Content of the Form* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

White, H. (1995) 'Response to Arthur Marwick' *Journal of Contemporary History* No. 2 (30) pp.233-246.

Woolhouse, R. (1988) *The Empiricists* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Zagorin, P. (1990) 'Historiography and Post-Modernism; Reconsiderations ' *History and Theory* No. 3 (29).

Zagorin, P. (1999) 'History, the Referent, and Narrative: Reflections on Postmodernism Now' *History and Theory* (38) pp.1-24.

Zagorin, P. (2000) 'A Rejoinder to a Postmodernist' *History and Theory* (39) pp. 201-220.