

Towards an Interpretations Heuristic:

A case study exploration of 16-19 year old students' ideas about explaining variations in historical accounts

Arthur John Chapman

Institute of Education, University of London

Doctor in Education

Abstract

This thesis is a case study exploration of a group of 16-19 year old students' understandings of historical accounts. The thesis builds on prior research by the author, completed in the Institution Focused Study element of the EdD, and aims to add to existing understandings of the ways in which history students conceptualise historical accounts and controversies and the discipline of history.

Twenty-four students in one institution, twelve in the first and twelve in the second year of their advanced level history studies, completed three written tasks over the course of an academic year. Twelve of the twenty-four students, six from each year, were interviewed. The written tasks and the interviews were designed to generate data on student understanding of historical accounts. Each written task focused on paired texts in which two historians made differing claims about an historical topic and the students were asked to answer the same four questions in each task. The interview questions mirrored the written task questions but were general in nature, looking at historical disagreement rather than at a particular controversy.


Data analysis focuses on the students' ideas about explaining why historical disagreements arise, one of the questions that the research instruments explored. Data is analysed qualitatively, through a process of inductive coding, and a model of five ideal typical approaches to explaining why historical disagreements arise is posited and tested against the data. The purpose of the analysis is to inform pedagogy and to suggest ways in which students' thinking can be progressed. The discussion of the data links the ideal typical model to existing research, practitioner and historiographic literatures on historical interpretations and implications for practice and for further research are identified and discussed. A heuristic, for use in teaching and assessment focused on historical accounts, is outlined.

Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Name: Arthur John Chapman

Signature: 

Date: 22/09/2009

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2000 word statement

My professional role has changed considerably since I began my EdD studies. How have my EdD studies supported my professional development and how have the various elements of the EdD programme had coherence?

When I began my EdD studies I was a head of history working with 16-19 year old students following Advanced Level History courses and I also occasionally taught level 1 undergraduate courses focused on historiography. Over the course of my EdD studies my role and institutional context has changed a number of times and I am now a history education lecturer working with students following initial teacher training and masters courses. History and history education have been constants throughout these shifts of role and I have been engaged in teaching history or teaching how to teach history continuously since I began my EdD studies. With the exception of three early modules, my EdD studies have focused on history education and my Institution Focused Study (IFS) and Thesis both focus on the same aspect of history education (historical interpretations or accounts). These studies have had a profound effect on my thinking about history and about history education and also on my activities as a history educator.

Early work on the Foundations of Professionalism course engaged me with current debates on educational professionalism and helped me define and articulate a position on the nature and identity of teaching as a profession. This work on educational professionalism was closely linked with work, on Advanced Research Methods, that reflected on conceptions of educational knowledge and on the relationship between research and practice in education. The conception that I subscribe to, and that emerged from this reflection, foregrounds critical reflection and reflexivity, the integration of theory and practice and dialogue within a community of practice.

My EdD studies have helped to define my thinking about educational professionalism and also supported the development of my own practice, as comments below (at pp.43-45) in relation to the dissemination of this thesis indicate. I have published a number of articles in *Teaching History*, a practitioner journal which I now co-edit, engaged in a range of activities in the history education community and, most recently, co-edited a volume of case studies of practice, based on collaborations between history education practitioners and academics, that aim to integrate theory and practice (Cooper and Chapman, 2009). All of this work has been informed by my EdD studies, from my first article (Chapman, 2003), which exemplified pedagogic approaches to interpretations informed by my work on my IFS, through to the book, which sets out to exemplify and theorise constructivist history pedagogy, a pedagogic approach that my EdD studies have been particularly

effective in assisting me to define and theorise (Chapman, 2009(a)) and which draws, in two case studies (Chapman and Hibbert, 2009; Chapman and Facey, 2009) on understandings of historical accounts developed here. This activity has emerged from my EdD studies, disseminated aspects of my EdD studies, and expressed the conception of my role as a history educator that I have developed through my EdD studies.

An aspect of this activity, as is indicated at p.45 below, has been engagement in policy contexts. Again, this activity has been informed by the understanding of policy and policy making developed through my EdD studies and in particular through work on Curriculum Policy and Practice I, where I focused on models of how policy is made. Work on this module involved sustained reflection on the evolution of the National Curriculum in England (Phillips, 1998) and developed my understanding of the micro-politics of educational policy. I have engaged with aspects of curriculum and assessment policy, as a history educator, and endeavoured to advance models of history education grounded in research and practitioner reflection (Chapman, 2006(b)). This work has been an expression of the writing and community of practice focused activities referred to above: an edition of the journal *Teaching History* that I managed (Historical Association, 2007), for example, was very much intended as an intervention in policy debates, advocating the ‘disciplined mind’ (Gardner, 2000) and the contribution

of history as a form of knowledge in a context where competency based models of the curriculum (RSA, 2005) are increasingly influential.

As has been noted, the impact of my EdD studies on my conception of history has been fundamental. My undergraduate and postgraduate studies were very much focused on metahistorical questions and, in particular, on the methodology of the history of ideas (Tully, 1992). I engaged with these questions during my Post Graduate Certificate of Education studies in 1992/1993, in the context of reflection on the nature and purpose of history education, and I was interested, in particular, in defining history's aims in a way that took note of postmodernist arguments about knowledge (Chapman, 1993). At that time and also at the assignment stage of my EdD studies I was persuaded by postmodernist arguments that modelled history as 'discourse' rather than as 'epistemology' (Jenkins, 1991). My EdD studies at the assignment stage gave me opportunity to engage in greater depth with postmodernist arguments than I had been able to before and, in particular, with the work of Hayden White (White, 1973, 1978, 1987 and 1999).

Work on my assignment on the implications of postmodernism for history education, in Curriculum Policy and Practice II, was the high point of my interest in these arguments and my marker's comments on the assignment began a process of renewed reflection, particularly at the IFS and Thesis stages of the EdD, that has shifted my conception of

history back in an epistemological direction. Subsequent engagement with theory, and in particular with post-positivist articulations of historical knowing (Bevir, 1999; Lorenz, 1998(a) and 1998(b); Rüsen, 2005) has led me to develop a conception of historical knowing that accepts the inevitable embeddedness and positionality of historical knowledge claims, that is aware of the textual and rhetorical features of historical representation but that also takes seriously history's claim to articulate interpersonally defensible knowledge claims about the past. These are complex issues and I address them fully below in Chapter 3 of this thesis which attempts to articulate a model of historical knowing. The shift in my own thinking followed from a realisation that many postmodernist arguments against historical epistemology, whose opposition to positivistic conceptions of history I fully support, are themselves crypto-positivist (Lorenz, 1998(a); Rüsen, 2005) in the assumption, found in the work of White in particular (White, 1973), that 'facts' are givens but narratives are not. The shift in my thinking on these issues also followed from a broadening of my history education resulting from my EdD studies. Many of the insights that postmodernism develops are, as I discovered, articulated equally effectively and often more cogently by existing work in the philosophy of history: by work in the British idealist tradition (Collingwood, 1994; Oakeshott, 1991 and 1999); and by constructivist models of historical knowing (Goldstein, 1976 and 1996; Megill, 2007). My EdD studies, particularly in the thesis stage, were profoundly shaped by engagement with this tradition and by

an evolving commitment to a constructivist, rather than postmodern or deconstructivist, conception of historical practice.

The main focus of my EdD studies, from the Institution Focused Study phase onwards, has been on historical accounts and interpretations. I have engaged with theorising on these issues in a sustained manner in both my IFS and my Thesis both of which have been concerned with understanding how 16-19 year old students conceptualise and approach historical interpretations and accounts. There have been notable constants as well as shifts in my thinking whilst working on these two pieces of research. The continuities are in the conception of accounts, and in a focus on the importance of historians' assumptions and apparatus to the enterprise of making meaning about the past (Chapman, 2001, p.6-7 and Chapter 3 below). The shifts have been related to the engagement with the work of Collingwood and also with the corpus of history education literature directly focused on historical accounts, discussed below in Chapter 3, much of which has appeared since my IFS was completed. As noted below (at p.24) I had not engaged with Collingwood directly during my IFS and, as a result, my understanding of key research traditions that build on Collingwood's work was only partial. Collingwood's model of the development of historical understanding (modelled at pp.57/8 below) and his conception of historical evidence and of the role, in constituting archives as evidence, of historians' questions and reading strategies, has had a major impact on my evolving understanding of what history is and,

consequently, a major impact on my understandings of what my students did when they answered questions that I asked them about accounts. It was evident, in the analysis of data in my IFS, that a key dimension of student thinking about accounts was the degree to which historians were modelled as either active or passive in the construction of accounts and I noted that understandings of evidence, questioning and sense making all had importance in progression in student thinking (Chapman, 2001, pp.45-55). This thesis explores and develops these perceptions in greater depth than it was possible to do in my IFS, informed by Collingwood's model of the development of thinking about evidence and by Lee and Shemilt's arguments about the theory-like, rather than story-like, nature of historical accounts (Lee and Shemilt, 2003 and 2004).

My IFS and this thesis are closely related in terms of their instruments and approaches to assessing students' conceptions of historical accounts and the IFS functioned as a pilot for this thesis, for example by developing instruments. The two pieces of work differ dramatically in scope, however. Whereas my IFS explored the ways in which students explained the existence of differing accounts of the past, the ways in which students modelled logical relationships between accounts and how students approached adjudicating between accounts, this thesis focuses on one issue only and explores students' explanations for account differences. This restriction in focus is pragmatic. As is apparent below, I collected data on all these issues in the research phase of this thesis, however, constraints of space and the qualitative focus of

this study have necessitated a narrowing of focus. It is also apparent, from the analysis reported here, that a focus on explanation is an effective way into understanding student thinking about accounts, the key focus of this investigation.

In addition to shaping my thinking about substantive matters, my EdD studies have also had a dramatic impact on my thinking about research methods and methodology. This has, of course, been a partly theoretical process and involved reading and thinking about methodology, particularly as part of the modules Methods of Enquiry I and II and Advanced Research Methods. However, the most instructive element has been practical. Although my theorising about both history and epistemology had made the limits of inductivism more than clear to me (Blaikie, 1993; Novick, 1988), I spent a great deal of time, despite this understanding, during the data analysis phase of my thesis, approaching my work in an inductivist manner, hoping for patterns to emerge from the data. As will be apparent from the methodology of this thesis, I have adopted an approach here that, although grounded in data, actively develops hypotheses and tests these against data. There is no great theoretical insight here, Popper's objections to inductivism and advocacy of 'searchlight' approaches to research, for example, are well known and have been for decades (Popper, 1979, pp.341-361). Understanding and the application of understanding are, however, distinct things. The process of working on my thesis data has helped me apply understandings of the importance of creative questioning to

knowledge construction, and appreciate the pertinence of Darwin's claim that "all observation must be for or against some view if it is to be of any service" (Charles Darwin, cited in Novick, 1988 at p.35).

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 The Focus of this Study

This study is about historical interpretation, an important area of history education at school and university. The study addresses interpretation in a 16-19 context and understands historical interpretation as it is typically understood in that context, namely as historiography and as a dimension of the academic discipline called history.¹

Historical interpretation is a process of constructing meaning about the past. The process of interpretation yields a product: accounts of the past.² Notwithstanding the aspiration to produce singular, definitive and “ultimate” history, shared by many historians at the start of the twentieth century (Carr, 2001, p.1), the expansion of the discipline of history during the twentieth century resulted in the proliferation, rather than the consolidation, of accounts of the past (Ankersmit, 1994). As we will see below, and as has been understood for much longer than is often assumed (Creighton, 1902), there are good reasons, linked to the nature of historical accounts, why we should expect such proliferation to continue.

¹ ‘Interpretations’ are typically understood more broadly in earlier phases of English history education. At Key Stage 3, for example, the study of interpretation often involves popular cultural historical representations of the past, for example, film (Banham and Hall, 2003).

² The nouns ‘interpretation/s’ and ‘account/s’ are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

This study focuses on the plurality of historical interpretations and on explaining why historical accounts are plural. The purpose of the study is pedagogic, rather than historiographic, however, and these questions are posed in order to aid reflection on history students' understandings of the nature of historical accounts and of the discipline of history. These issues are explored in two ways: through a theorisation of historical practice, in Chapter 3 below, and through a case study of a group of 16-19 year old students' thinking about historical accounts, in Chapters 4 and 5 below. The methods used to construct this case study are discussed in Chapter 2. The implications for practice of the theorisation elaborated in Chapter 3 are identified in Chapter 6 where the outline of a 'heuristic' is sketched for use in assessing and developing students' understandings of accounts.

1.2 Interpretation in English History Education

Understanding historical interpretation is a key objective of the English school curriculum across Key Stages 1-3, GCSE and AS and A2 (QCA, 1999, 2006, 2007(a) and 2007(b)) a focus on developing reflexivity and 'historiographical and methodological awareness' is a requirement of history first degrees (QAA, 2007, pp.5-6).

However, in general, historical interpretation is reported to be "less well developed" than other aspects of historical teaching and learning (Ofsted, 2004, p.6) and "exploring interpretations" has been

identified as one of a number of “continued weaknesses” of history at Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16 (Ofsted, 2007, p.14). Furthermore, studies of school to university transition (Booth, 2005; Hibbert, 2006) suggest that many undergraduate history students have a limited understanding of the importance of interpretation as a process (Hibbert, 2006, p.268) and that many university tutors perceive first year undergraduates as having “a superficial, if any, grasp of historiography or reflexive sense of the discipline” (Booth, 2005 p.14).

There is a considerable research and pedagogic literature on pupil understandings of historical interpretations and practitioners and academics continue to develop teaching strategies to engage pupils and develop their understanding of this challenging area of historical learning. This study aims to contribute to that task.³

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority’s subject criteria for history post-16 state that

A level specifications should require students to comprehend, analyse and evaluate how the past has been interpreted and represented in different ways, for example in historians’ debates and through a range of media such as paintings, films, reconstructions, museum displays and the internet.⁴ (QCA, 2006, p.5)

³ Relevant literature is discussed below at pp.58-64, 72-82 and 185-188.

⁴ We can see the broader focus of interpretations, common at Key Stage 3, being introduced to A Level here. However, as the examples that follow suggest, A Level examiners still primarily understand interpretations in historiographic terms.

The requirement to address interpretations issues is interpreted in variable ways by exam boards as the following examples, from specifications current from September 2008, illustrate.

Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)'s *Specification B* requires students to study

how and why historians disagree about the past...

This will involve studying:

- i. how historians work and how the nature of the discipline makes... different interpretations inevitable;
- ii. how and why different methodological approaches have led to different interpretations...
- iii. the contribution that different approaches and interpretations make to our understanding of the past... (OCR, 2008, p.34)

The following illustrates assessment approaches proposed to assess these issues.

- (a) What can you learn from these extracts about the interpretation, approaches and methods of the historian? Refer to the extract and your knowledge to explain your answer...
- (b) When studying post-conquest England some historians have used a top-down approach while others have concentrated on... ordinary people. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these two approaches? (OCR, 2007, p.3)

In contrast, Edexcel interpret the requirement to focus on interpretations through the following assessment objective:

Analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, how aspects of the past have been interpreted and represented in different ways.
(Edexcel, 2007(a), p.10)

This objective is then assessed principally through questions that

require candidates to compare... provided source material while exploring an issue of historical debate, and to reach substantiated judgements in the light of their own knowledge and understanding of the issues of interpretation and controversy. (Edexcel, 2007(a), p.7)

The following exemplifies such questions:

‘Very little was restored, and even less was settled.’
How far do you agree with this judgement on the Restoration Settlement? (Edexcel, 2007(a), p.7)

As is apparent here, there are contrasts of approach to interpretations post-16, including an approach that focuses on interpretation in methodological terms, as a process, and an approach that focuses on interpretations as products, or as claims or ‘judgments’ to be tested and assessed.⁵

⁵ The ‘product’ / ‘process’ distinction is developed in Stenhouse (1975). The contrast in approaches to interpretation is historic and reflects differences in focus associated with traditional and ‘new history’ approaches (Phillips, 1998). Prior to curriculum reorganisation in 2000/2001, a number of innovative courses existed at Advanced Level focused on developing history students’ understanding of history as a discipline, including AEB 673, the Cambridge History Project and the London Syllabus E (Hibbert, 2006; White, 1995). The OCR *Specification B* represents a revival of ‘new history’ approaches post-16.

This study focuses on understanding interpretation as a process, a form of understanding that is arguably presupposed by understanding interpretations as products.⁶

1.3 The Context for this Study

This study has taken a considerable time to complete and its context has therefore changed significantly. The study's original and continuing contexts are identified below.

When I began this study in the 2001/2002 academic year, I was a head of history in a sixth form college and my principal professional motivation for developing my understanding of historical interpretations was directly tied to that context: I wanted to understand how my students thought about historical interpretation so that I could teach them more effectively.

My EdD Institution Focused Study (Chapman, 2001), which piloted methods of data collection used in this study, began the process of systematic reflection on my students' ideas about historical accounts. This thesis aims to develop and refine claims made there about "students' conceptions of the *nature* of historical accounts, and... of history *per se*" (2001, p.8). I have continued to work on aspects of the teaching and learning of interpretations since 2005, when I began to

⁶ Interpretation is discussed and theorised in Chapter 3 below.

work in Initial Teacher Education rather than in 16-19 contexts, and this study has continued to have particular relevance to my professional concerns and activities as a history educator.⁷

Reflecting on the nature and form of historical interpretation is not a simple matter and my thinking on these questions has changed considerably during the process of analysing the data reported below and as a result of thinking involved in that process. Recent literature in the philosophy of history on the nature and status of historical knowledge claims has been shaped by debates on history and postmodernism.⁸ These are not issues that can be addressed, let alone resolved, here and they have been explored in existing history education literature (Brickley, 2001; Seixas, 2000; Yilmaz, 2007). This study is ‘positioned’ in these debates, however, and it is appropriate to indicate the assumptions operative below: this study approaches historical interpretation from a constructivist perspective according to which history is conceived primarily as a form of knowledge, rather than as a form of rhetoric, and according to which historical knowledge claims can be rationally and interpersonally constructed and defended on the

⁷ See the ‘Dissemination’ component of Chapter 2 (at pp.43-45 below).

⁸ The literature on postmodernism and history is vast and can only be gestured at here (for example, Ankersmit 1994, 2002 and 2005; Ankersmit and Kellner, 1995; Appleby *et al* 1994; Berkhofer, 1995; Callinicos, 1995; Evans, 1997 and 2002; Fay *et al* (Eds.) 1998; Fernández-Armesto, 2002; Furedi, 1991; Ginzburg, 1999; Jenkins, 1991, 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2003; Jenkins *et al* (Eds.) 2007; McCullagh, 1998, 2003 and 2004; Munslow, 1997; Niethammer, 1992; Novick, 1988; Samuel, 1994 and 1998; White, 1973, 1978, 1987, 1999 and 2007 and Windschuttle, 2000).

basis of reasoned explanation of the evidence from the past that remains in the present.⁹

⁹ These propositions are developed in Chapter 3 below. Constructivist approaches to history are described in Ankersmit, 2005 (at pp.113-117) and developed in Collingwood, 1995, Goldstein, 1976 and 1996, Megill, 2007 and Rüsen, 2001 and 2006.

Chapter 2. Data Collection and Interpretation

2.1 General Orientation

This study is a case study and it has a qualitative orientation and an exploratory intention (Cohen and Manion, 1997, pp.106-125; Gibbs, 2002, pp.1-5).

The case study structure of the study follows from its origins as practitioner research (Robson, 1999, pp.445-463). This study, and my Institution Focused Study (IFS) that informs it (Chapman, 2001) focused on a key aspect of my practice as a teacher: developing my students' understandings of historical interpretation.

The qualitative orientation of the study follows from its object: understanding student thinking involves engaging with rich examples of it and the methodology developed in this study involved sustained reflection on what students said.

Developing understanding involves metacognition, however (Donovan *et al* 1999), and a hermeneutic circle. As Megill has put it:

investigation will be prompted by the traditions, commitments, interests, and hopes of the investigator, which... affect what the investigator discovers... [and] the process of... research

and writing will change... the investigator... (Megill, 2007, p.87)

Making sense of what my students said in reply to questions I asked them about historical interpretation raised complex questions concerning, for example, their conceptualisation of historical evidence, and exploring these questions involved questioning my own conceptualisation of this and related aspects of historical understanding.¹⁰

This study is exploratory in the sense that it provides a detailed exploration of the ideas that twenty four sixth formers offered when asked to explain variation in particular historical accounts and to explain historical disagreement in general. The study also theorises historical interpretation and the ideas that students need to master in order to make informed sense of what historians do.

I make no claims for the general applicability of the empirical findings offered here: my respondents are not representative of 16-19 history students nationally. However, I hope that the analysis offered below is useful as an example of sustained reflection on historical learning and the challenges that learning to think about historical interpretations present for students. The 'accounts heuristic', sketched in Chapter 6, is proposed in that spirit.

¹⁰ Shifts in my thinking about evidence are apparent in contrasts between this text and my IFS: Collingwood is referenced once in my IFS (Chapman, 2001, p.43) and then as a secondary reference, whereas Collingwood's model of historical evidence is fundamental to the reflection that follows below.

2.2 Methodological Framework

This study operates within a qualitative methodological framework and closely follows traditions developed in the history education research community.

A number of studies have sought to model student thinking about the discipline of history by asking students to complete written tasks and interview tasks and then by making inferences from what students have said or done to the underlying constructs (Gardner, 2000, pp.253-60) or concepts of history that student performance is held to imply (Ashby and Lee, 2000). Studies that approach historical thinking in this manner in relation to accounts are discussed in Chapter 3 below. Inspiration for much of the theorizing below and in my IFS and for the methods of data generation developed here was provided by Project CHATA's research on accounts (Lee, 1997).

The inference from performance to underlying conception can be theorised in various ways, for example, in critical realist terms (Blaikie, 1993, pp.58-62; Harré, 2002). In any case, the logic is clear: hypothetical entities (students' conceptualisations) are posited to explain real phenomena (students' performance).¹¹ There are no doubt various ways

¹¹ A 'discursive' rather than 'cognitive' approach could be taken here (Harré and Gillet, 1994, pp.18-37) and it is possible to model respondents as simply talking in different ways and deploying different linguistic 'tools' (Wertsch, 1998 and 2002) rather than as operating on differing conceptual assumptions. The two approaches are likely to be extensionally equivalent in pedagogic terms, however, since pedagogic interventions that aim to transform student discourse and that aim to transform student conception equally involve encouraging students to talk in particular ways (Woodcock, 2005).

in which such an strategy can be validated, for example, tacit conceptualisations posited to explain performance could be validated if they are ‘fruitful’ in generating new ideas and perspectives or ‘comprehensive’ in explaining relevant data in defensible ways (Bevir, 1999, pp.100-103)). I assume a pragmatic rationale here: the analysis that follows below is offered in the intention that it will be useful and develop ‘conversation’ about how to move students on (Rorty, 2000).

2.3 Methods of Data Generation

Two methods were used to collect data. The first method was piloted and applied in my IFS and then expanded and deployed here (Chapman, 2001, pp.11-15).

- (a) All participating students were asked to complete three pencil and paper tasks each consisting of a pair of historical accounts about the same issue. Students were asked to answer the same four open questions in each task.
- (b) Half the participating students were asked a series of questions, mirroring the questions in the written tasks but focused on disagreement in general, in individual semi-structured interviews (Robson, 1999, p.231) once they had completed the written tasks.

All three written tasks presented students with conflicting accounts closely based, with one exception, on found texts. Texts were adapted so that they were of equal length (around 500 words) and could be easily read, compared and commented on by students in around 50 minutes.¹² These tasks are reproduced in Appendix 8.1 (pp.214-231).

The intention was to present students with different kinds of conflict of interpretation in the three tasks. The first task focused on the Ranters. Students were presented with a descriptive account of the practices of the Ranters, on the one hand, and an argument that the Ranters did not exist, on the other.¹³ The second task focused on the Peterloo Massacre. Students were presented with a description of the events of Peterloo, focused on the experiences of protestors, in which the events were emphatically characterised as a ‘massacre’ and a description of Peterloo that was more broadly focused, that provided a context for the events and that clearly judged Peterloo not to be a massacre.¹⁴ The third task focused on Britain and the Holocaust.¹⁵ Students were presented with contrasting assessments of the record of the British public and government towards Jewish refugees and the Holocaust: the texts were consistent in many of their factual claims but drew contrasting conclusions, contextualised facts differently and made different

¹² The texts were presented with contextualising introductions and also with the authors’ names and their titles of their texts: these items were added in response to comments about a need for further information by students who completed the IFS task.

¹³ These accounts were based on Hill (1975) and on the arguments of Davies (1986). The account of the latter was created on the basis of a review of Davies’ book (Aylmer, 1987).

¹⁴ These accounts were based on Thompson (1981) and Gash (1979).

¹⁵ This task was re-used, with minor modifications, from my IFS (Chapman, 2001, pp.101-105).

assumptions about how British actions should be evaluated, the first text, for example, foregrounding an imperial context for British decisions.¹⁶ All three account-pairs presented contrasting judgments but only the Ranter and Peterloo texts were flatly contradictory and they were flatly contradictory in different respects (on an existential and an evaluative proposition respectively). The texts differed in a number of other ways: for example, whereas the Peterloo texts involved descriptions of a discrete event, albeit at different levels of resolution and with different foci, the Holocaust texts were talking about an issue rather than an event. As well as articulating different claims about the past, the authors of the paired accounts in the three tasks conceptualised their topics in differing ways and made differing assumptions: how far would respondents show awareness of these dimensions of difference when explaining account variation?

Students were asked to answer the same four questions in each task. The questions had been deployed successfully in my IFS and were re-used in these tasks and are stated in Figure 2.1.

¹⁶ These accounts were based on Ceserani (1998) and on a review of Ceserani's arguments by Rubinstein (1999) and were presented as independent assessments of the issue. I use the word 'fact' advisedly throughout this thesis: facts are not givens but, as it were, 'takens' - generally accepted claims that are, in principle, subject to revision (see Megill, 2007, p.99).

Figure 2.1 Written Task Questions (all tasks)
(Chapman, 2001, p.14)

Question One

How do the two accounts differ?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Question Two

How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Question Three

Can both accounts be true?

If they can, in what ways?

If they cannot, why not?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Question Four

Is it possible to decide between the two accounts?

If it is possible, how can this be done?

If it is not possible, why is it not possible?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

The rationale for these questions is explained fully in my IFS (2001, pp.14-15). I will focus on the rationale for the second question only because, as is explained further below (pp.35-6), this thesis focuses on how students explained account variation, and therefore on Question Two only.

Question Two asked respondents to explain how different accounts might come about: the intention was that students should develop hypotheses, rather than treat this as a factual question, and modal language was used to encourage this (Chapman, 2001, p.15).

Most students completed the written tasks individually in quiet environments (an office or classroom) and in a free period.¹⁷ The tasks were completed in the same order at roughly half-termly intervals in the second half of the winter term of 2001 and in the spring term of 2002. Most students completed each task in between 35-50 minutes. Students' answers were transcribed prior to analysis.

The interview 'task' mirrored the issues raised in the written tasks but at a general level, focusing on disagreement not on particular texts. The first written question was not asked because there were no interview texts. A semi-structured interview method was adopted using the protocol reproduced in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol
<u>1. Explanations for differences in accounts</u> <i>Why do historians disagree?</i>
<u>2. The implications of differences in accounts</u> <i>When two historians disagree, can they both be right?</i>
<u>3. Adjudicating between accounts</u> <i>If you had to choose between two different accounts how might you do it?</i>
<u>Follow up questions.</u> Use summary to develop answers and follow up questions like "Could you tell me a little more about that?" Try to recap at the end of each question, summarising what has been said, and then asking 'Is there anything more you would like to add?'

¹⁷ As is noted below (p.43) two students completed the task at home.

The intention of the interview was to explore students' ideas in depth. Many of the interviews were conversational in nature, particularly the second year interviews, and the wording of the protocol frequently varied, although the foci remained constant. Follow-up questions and prompts were used during the interview in order to encourage the development of answers. Challenge was occasionally used also for this purpose. Summary was used to clarify students' answers as in the following exchange:

Stop me if I am getting this wrong. So far it's basically [that] your political views may drive you to take an extreme stance?

Yeah.¹⁸

Edward Year 1

Summary was also used to encourage students to develop or extend their answers as in the following example.

Okay so there are some things that are related to evidence?

Yes.

... Or there's the possibility of personal bias?

Yes.

Are there any other reasons why people draw different conclusions...?

Dan Year 1

¹⁸ Throughout this thesis, interviewer questions are denoted by text in italics and respondent comments by normal text and elisions made for presentational purposes are denoted by '...'.

The interview strategy is exemplified below in Appendix 8.4 (pp.266-276) and in Chapter 5 where the data is explored in detail.

Two additional questions were asked at the end of interviews as a result of comments that were offered by the first interviewee: this student commented on differences between history and their other subjects and also referred to their personal study research project.¹⁹

Interviews were conducted after respondents had completed all three written tasks in the first half of the summer term, for second year students, and the second half of the summer term, for first year students. Interviews lasted 20-40 minutes, depending on the length at which respondents answered. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

2.4 Methods of Data Interpretation

Once all the data had been collected and transcribed the interview and written data sets for all questions were analysed using an inductive coding strategy associated with grounded theoretic approaches to data analysis (Blaikie, 1993; Gibbs, 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).²⁰

¹⁹ The personal study question was only asked of Year 2 students who had completed this component of their studies.

²⁰ As is frequently noted, inductive coding is inherently problematic if understood in a pure inductivist manner, as seeing without preconceptions (Barton and Levstik, 2008, p.153; Chapman, 2001, p.11). Some elements of the data set were analysed using NVivo, when it was available to me, and others, including the data reported here, were analysed in Word using highlighting and text modification functions to code text.

It rapidly became apparent that the data set was too large and complex to report adequately in a qualitative manner in a short thesis and I decided to focus analysis on student explanations for variation in accounts and for historical disagreement: the rationale for this narrowing of focus is explained below (pp.35-36).

2.4. i Data Description: Inductive Coding

The coding process described below is exemplified in Appendices 8.3 and 8.5 and in the analysis of task responses in Chapters 4 and 5 below.

Written Data Coding

The written data set was analysed first and read and coded in iterative cycles until a system of codes had been developed that could code the entire data set for the explanatory question: thirty four descriptive codes were developed. The intention of this coding process was to provide minimally theorised, high-resolution re-descriptions of ideas that students proposed at a level of generality that would allow similar ideas to be identified across responses.

Once exhaustive low-inference descriptive codes had been developed, codes were grouped into broader categories on the basis of perceived similarities of content and six broad code categories were

developed. An additional ‘minor codes’ category was created to group ideas that appeared in small numbers of responses.²¹ These seven codes were then used to explore patterns in the data set as explained in the section that follows.

A further reduction of complexity in the data was carried out in order to identify the relative weight that particular explanatory moves had in respondents’ answers. All the code categories that were applied to each response were coded as having either ‘major’ or ‘minor’ importance in that response.²²

Interview Data Coding

The interview data set was analysed using the code categories developed in the written data set coding and this proved straightforward to do.²³

The interview data set could not be analysed in the same manner as the written data, however: as has been explained, interviews involved a process of interaction with the interviewer and ideas appearing late in interviews do not, therefore, have the same status, as expressions of students’ default or initial ideas, as ideas appearing early in the

²¹ Minor codes are exemplified at pp.253-254 below.

²² This process is exemplified at pp.259-265 below.

²³ A further two minor codes were added as noted at p.282 below.

interview.²⁴ Interviews were therefore analysed ordinally and early-appearing explanations for variation given a higher status when characterising respondents' thinking than late-appearing explanations.

2.4. ii Data Analysis: Ideal Typical Explanatory Moves

In my IFS I focused on progression, noting differences between first and second year responses and positing a progression model on this basis (Chapman, 2001, p.68). I elected not to take this approach in this study. I was struck more, whilst coding data descriptively, by similarities between particular student responses across years than by differences between year groups. There were also *a priori* reasons for not focusing on progression: curriculum change meant that the focus on historiography across the two years of advanced level study, that had been the norm for cohorts of students before 2000/2001, was no longer present and a sustained focus on historiography was only present in the final module of the second year course, by which point the written data tasks had been completed.²⁵

Instead of focusing on progression, therefore, I decided to focus on the possibility that students across the two years were explaining

²⁴ The notion of a 'default position' has been deployed by Lee (2005(b)) to analyse students' historical thinking and developed, for example, by Searle as follows: "Default positions are the views we hold prereflectively so that any departure from them requires a conscious effort and a convincing argument." (2000: pp.9-20). It is possible that the interview process scaffolded movement away from default positions for some students (see Chapter 5 below). Stern (2005) explores 'everyday' notions of interpretation in depth.

²⁵ As Stuart (Year 2) commented in his interview, in May 2002, explaining why he had not considered historiographic issues in his 'personal study': "You don't really learn history like that until now."

account variation in a limited number of broadly similar ways. Whereas the coding phase of data analysis had been 'inductive' the data interpretation phase posited a theory, grounded in perceptions of the data emerging during the coding phase, and set out to test the theory against the data.

I posited a number of 'ideal types' of response to the task of explaining variations in accounts based on the six data codes generated in the descriptive data coding, and developed a schema to enable the development and grounding of an ideal typical model of 'explanatory moves'. This schema is explained below in hypothetical terms and is developed in detail, using the descriptive code categories in Chapter 4.

As has been noted, descriptive coding yielded 6 main code categories and code categories were coded in terms of their 'major' and 'minor' importance in respondents' answers. It was apparent from inspection of the data set that there were positive and negative patterns in the data, or patterns of presence and absence: many respondents made major reference to explanatory moves coded under one category, minor reference to moves coded under other categories and no reference to moves coded under still other categories. The schema (Figure 2.3) aimed to accommodate and to explore such patterns.

Figure 2.3 Schema of relationships of presence and absence

	-4	-3	-2	-1
+1	A	B	C	
+2	D	E		-C
+3	F		-E	-B
+4		-F	-D	-A

Positive numbers and the rows represent 'presence' in this schema and negative numbers and columns represent 'absence'. A respondent's explanations can be mapped onto this figure provided that we can identify explanatory moves that they make that are of major and minor importance and moves that they do not make. For example, if explanation '+4' was the only explanatory move of major importance in a respondent's answers to questions then they would map onto the figure in cells '-F', '-D' and '-A'; or, to take a more complex example, if explanation '+1' were of major importance in a respondent's explanations and if they made minor reference to all other ideas apart from '+4' then they would map onto the figure in cell 'A'.

A number of relationships between respondents and in a data set can become apparent through this schema. Cells shaded in the same colour are directly contrary: a fact that allows respondents who make

opposite explanatory moves to be identified. It is apparent from the diagram also that cells above the black diagonal are contrary to corresponding cells below the diagonal, allowing a broad pattern of contrast to be identified between respondents who appear above and below this line.²⁶

The schema allows ideal types of response to explanatory questions to be postulated and then tested against real data so that the value of these response types can be assessed. These ideal types are posited for heuristic purposes only: they are not proposed as comprehensive descriptions of real data but rather as tools that enable data to be modelled. An ideal type has value, in this context, if it enables pedagogic reflection on how students approach account variation and on ways in which student thinking might be developed.²⁷ Chapters 4 and 5 develop an analysis of my respondents' explanations for account variation using this schema and assess and explore the pedagogic insights into student thinking that this kind of analysis yields.

²⁶ 'Contrary' is used loosely here rather than in its strict logical sense (Copi and Cohen, 1998, pp.226-237).

²⁷ Ideal typical analysis is discussed by Blaikie (1993, pp.178-9), Ringer (1997) and Parsons (1964, pp.13-28).

2.5 Institutional Context and Ethical Considerations

2.5.a Participants

Figure 2.4 summarises the respondents who took part in this study. The process of recruiting students to the study is discussed under ethical considerations below (pp.42-43).

The data set for this study consists of task responses from twenty-four respondents, half of whom were first and half of whom were second year advanced level students attending the same institution. As Figure 2.4 shows, the respondents were following two courses based on the same exam specification.²⁸ None of the students had directly studied any of the topics examined in the tasks as part of their course.

It is apparent from the tables that more than twenty four students were recruited. Participants were volunteers and all those who volunteered were welcome to take part. Two first year students dropped out over the course of the project, however, and one second year interview was inaudible. Only data from students who completed all three written tasks was included in analysis, since the intention was to analyse students' responses across three tasks.

Over two thirds of the history students in the institution were female and, although there were more girls in the written data sample, it

²⁸ The courses had different content but the same assessment structure.

is apparent that girls were under-represented there and much more so in the interview sample. One of the two courses (Course A) was slightly over-represented in the interview sample (one third of the history students in the institution were following this course). The students came from across the ability-range, however, high achieving students were markedly over-represented in the sample.

Figure 2.4 Respondents (By year and Course)

Course A

Year	Gender	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Interview
2	F	3	3	3	1
1	F	4	4	4	0
2	M	0	0	0	0
1	M	2	2	2	2
Total		9	9	9	3

Course B

Year	Gender	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Interview
2	F	4	4	4	2
1	F	4	3	3	2
2	M	5	5	5	4
1	M	4	4	3	2
Total		17	16	15	10

All Respondents

Year	Gender	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Interview
2	F	7	7	7	3
1	F	8	7	7	2
2	M	5	5	5	4
1	M	6	6	5	4
All	F	15	14	14	5
All	M	11	11	10	8
Total		26	25	24	13

2.5.b The Institution

The institution in which data collection for this study took place was a co-educational high achieving state sixth form college in Surrey. I had worked in the institution since September 1993 and I had been Head of the History Department since 1996.

There was a strong ‘new history’ tradition in the department and, prior to the 2000/2001 curriculum changes, historiography had been a key part of all our courses, however, in 2001/2002 we were running courses in which historiography featured principally in the final unit of the second year course only. All students completed a personal study in the second year of their courses and second year students, therefore, had experience of sustained historical enquiry.

2.5.c Ethical Considerations

My institution was philosophically, practically and financially supportive of my EdD studies. Access had been negotiated at the IFS stage of my studies and this was continued on the condition that findings were disseminated within the institution and that consent was sought prior to the publication of findings.

Students were recruited to the study from classes that I taught, and informed consent was gained, through announcements in class

calling for volunteers and through the use of an information sheet in November 2001 and also, through requests for volunteers from within the group of students who had completed the written tasks at the beginning of the interview phase in the summer.

All participants were volunteers and I made it clear that participation in the research was both voluntary and confidential in the sense that findings would be anonymised.²⁹ I also made it clear that participants could withdraw at any time. One first year student chose to withdraw having completed the first written task and another withdrew from college for personal reasons. The timing of the research tasks reflected my responsibility to prioritise student interests: tasks were not set at times when key academic deadlines or examinations were pending. Interviews were conducted in quiet environments where students could speak freely without the interruption or scrutiny of other students. All tasks took place at times convenient to students and, in two cases, students completed written tasks at home.

2.5 Dissemination

Direct dissemination of the outcomes of this thesis through publication will depend on institutional approval and in the first instance dissemination will be directly to the institution.

²⁹ All student names in this report are pseudonyms.

I have disseminated emergent theoretical and pedagogic aspects of this thesis in a number of ways.

Two articles in the professional journal *Teaching History* (Chapman 2003 and 2006(a)) have disseminated teaching strategies developed through the processes of reading, reflection and data analysis that this thesis has involved and one article, written in collaboration with a colleague from the institution in which this study originated, has disseminated understandings of historical consciousness developed through this study (Chapman and Facey, 2004). I have also contributed short feature articles directly addressing interpretations issues that disseminate pedagogic approaches grounded in my theoretical work (Chapman, 2007 and 2008).

My interest in developing student thinking about interpretations also runs parallel with an interest in developing online discussion in history and I have recently published a book chapter, partly based on collaborative work with a colleague from the institution in which this study originated (Chapman and Facey, 2009), that focuses on developing understandings of interpretation and that drew on insights developed here (Chapman and Hibbert, 2009). In 2007/8 and 2008/9 I developed these approaches further through work supported by a Higher Education Academy Teaching Development Grant that made direct use of instruments developed for this thesis to develop online interaction between advanced level students and academic historians (Chapman,

2009(c)). This project has allowed pedagogic approaches based on the thinking reported below to be developed and these are illustrated in Chapter 6 below.

I have also disseminated approaches to interpretations pedagogy, through presentations and workshops at a number of conferences and events,³⁰ and contributed to relevant discussions in policy contexts,³¹ drawing on understandings developed through this research process.

I aim to disseminate this research further through continuing work on discussion boarding in history and, in due course, through the on-line publication of this thesis and through articles based on it in professional journals.

³⁰ Through workshops on 'Challenging Interpretations' at the Historical Association Conference for teachers in March 2007, at the Schools History Project conference in July 2007 and also through in-service training on this and other aspects of conceptual learning for North Tyneside District Council in November 2007 and January 2008.

³¹ As Convenor of the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth's History Working Group in 2005-2007 (Chapman, 2006(b)) and in consultancy for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on revisions to the National Curriculum Attainment Target for History (in April 2007) and on developing Assessing Pupil Progress frameworks in history (in July, September and November 2008).

Chapter 3. Understanding Historical Accounts: Theoretical and Research Contexts

3.1 The Historicity and Identity of the Past

Central to an historical understanding of the past is an awareness of its historicity, which entails understanding a number of propositions about the past and the present.³²

Firstly, an historical understanding of the past entails the understanding that, at least where matters concerning culture and meaning are concerned, the past and the present are distinct and different: things that are in the present, or that were in the past, exist, or existed, contingently and therefore variably rather than necessarily and universally.³³

Secondly, an historical understanding of the past entails awareness of the fact that the past exists (in so far as it can be understood as existing at all) only in the present and in the form of:

³² I am using the term 'historical' normatively to denote a particular mode of understanding of the past, opposed, for example, to traditional understandings (Rüsen, 2005).

³³ This point is well captured in L.P.Hartley's observation that "The past is a foreign country" (cited in Lowenthal, 1996 at p.2006). The cultural restriction of this observation acknowledges the possibility of anthropological universals (Mithen, 2008).

1. often highly exiguous and contingent relics and reports from the past;³⁴ and
2. contemporary constructions of the past shaped by present concerns and purposes.

Two further understandings follow: an understanding that accounts of the past are inherently plural and an understanding of how the past can and cannot be known.

Constructions of the past are never fixed and change continually as the present changes and are a product of interaction between present conceptions and concerns, which are contingent rather than necessary and therefore inherently variable, and relics and reports.

Since the real past does not exist, knowledge of the past is inevitably knowledge of an absent and inexperienceable object (Collingwood, 1994; Goldstein, 1976 and 1996). Historical knowledge is structurally aporetic and not autopic: there is no experiential bridge (or '*poros*') back to the past and autopsy (or 'seeing for yourself') is not possible (Mukherjee, 2007, pp.98-99 and 117).³⁵ Historians aim to make

³⁴ 'Relics' and 'reports' (Bevir, 1999, pp.31-32; Shemilt, 1987) or 'sources' and 'traces' (Megill, 2007, p.25) refer to surviving fragments of the past "not made with the intention of revealing the past to us" and fragments "intended... to stand as an account of events" respectively (Megill, 2007, p.25). The distinction overlaps, but is not equivalent to, the distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' sources (Burrow, 2007, p.463).

³⁵ Hopkins (1999) uses the conceit of time travel to demonstrate "the limitations of autopsy": even if it were possible to 'go back' one could only witness the witnessable and, in any case, one would do so anachronistically (p.43). Lowenthal (1996) makes the latter point in relation to contemporary attempts to reconstruct the past 'authentically' (p.210).

claims about the past but, perforce, they must do so indirectly and inferentially by *constructing* claims and *creating* models that ‘explain the evidence’ that remains in the present (Goldstein, 1976 and 1996).³⁶ An historical representation of the past is always a ‘shaky inferential construction’ (Megill, 2007, p.13) therefore and never a representation of experiential knowledge by acquaintance.³⁷ As a result, historical knowledge is “counter-intuitive” and constructed in ways that conflict with everyday epistemological assumptions or “default positions” (Lee, 2005(b)). Even if it were possible to experience the past directly, experiential modes of knowing would not help us: history is replete, and inconceivable without, a host of entities (from the Neolithic Revolution to ‘9/11’) that we posit to make sense of the past but that were beyond the experience of contemporaries as such (Barca, 2002; Lee and Howson, 2006).³⁸

An historical understanding of the past also entails an awareness of the necessary role that constructing the past plays in all human projects and an awareness that all histories are human documents. To be human involves living in time, and all living in time, apart, perhaps, from in the immediate moment, entails narrative consciousness of

³⁶ As both Bevir and Goldstein argue, it is possible to evaluate the respective merits of competing historical accounts in terms of the degree to which they succeed in explaining the evidence (Bevir, 1999; Goldstein, 1976 and 1996).

³⁷ Knowledge-claims constructed indirectly and inferentially are not unique to history: as Harré shows, many forms of knowledge involve claims about entities that are posited to explain evidence that we can experience but that are themselves inexperienceable: “molecules and their behaviour are works of the human imagination, representing, one hopes, real productive processes” (Harré, 2002, p.2).

³⁸ Such entities are only conceivable after the fact (Danto, 1985) and many are inexperienceable as such - a point well made in Tolstoy’s representations of battle in *War and Peace* (White, 2007).

past/present/future.³⁹ Constructing the past is, therefore, a highly ‘serious business’ and personally, collectively and inter-collectively consequential and contestable and there are as many pasts as there are present identity projects (Frieze (Ed.) 2002; Lowenthal, 1998).

No historical understandings are easily bought and an awareness of historicity is difficult for adults to achieve as much as it is for history students (Wineburg, 2001 and 2007).⁴⁰ Research into student thinking about history suggests that students often have preconceptions about the historical past or about how it is possible to know it, grounded in everyday experiential epistemologies, that impede historical understanding and that need to be challenged if understanding is to be progressed.⁴¹

As Lowenthal notes (2000, p.66), ‘presentism’ is an important barrier to historical understanding and consists, in essence, in eliding the difference between past and present. Presentism takes many forms, including a disposition to use the present as a yardstick to evaluate the past in terms of our “politically correct shibboleths” (Wineburg, 2007, p.8) and a tendency to confuse current conventions with authenticity in representation (Seixas, 1993).

³⁹ Kosellek, 2004; Ricoeur, 1984, 1985, 1988, 2004 and 2005; Rüsen, 2001 and 2005.

⁴⁰ Awareness of historicity itself is a contingent historical development associated with nineteenth century European historicism (Iggers, 1997; Rossi, 2001). The extent to which it has a universal cultural application or is an expression “of the development of occidental cultures and societies” (Kölbl and Straub, 2001) is much debated (Guha, 2003; Lal, 2003; Rüsen, 2001; Rüsen (Ed.) 2000).

⁴¹ The importance of engaging with learners’ preconceptions is well understood (Donovan *et al* (Eds.) 1999 and Gardner, 2000, pp.253-60) and an approach to historical learning that builds on understanding preconceptions is developed in, for example, Lee (2005(a)).

Two forms of presentism as continuity thinking are foregrounded in the literature: a positive form, in which past and present are thought of as essentially identical (Rüsen, 2005, pp.11-12 and 28-30) and in which the past becomes normative and a model for the present/future (Barton and Levstick, 2004, pp.54-65; Seixas, 2005, p.145);⁴² and a negative form, or “deficit” model of the past (Lee, 2005(a), p.45), in which people in the past who did not act as ‘we’ do are assumed to be essentially like us but lacking in resource or intelligence (Barton and Levstick, 2004, pp.212-213).

More consequential than presentism for understanding student thinking about historical accounts is the suggestion that students treat the meaning of the past as “fixed” (Lee, 1997; Lee, 2005(a), p.59-62; Lee and Shemilt, 2003 and 2004). Nothing is ever fixed ‘in the end’ and all meanings, as matters of convention, are inherently contingent. In addition, even elementary facts are “meaningless unless... situated within larger frameworks” that give them “meaning” and these “frameworks are partially rooted in... the historian’s present” (Megill, 2007, p.27) which continually changes. Furthermore, many apparently simple descriptions are in fact evaluations and relative to evaluative frameworks:

⁴² This form of thinking is as much as an adult educational strategy as a form of student thinking (Barton and Levstick, 2004, pp.58-59) and Seixas and Clark found no examples of ‘traditional’ thinking in their study of Canadian students historical consciousness (2004), however, Kitson and McCully (2006, p.32) and Barton and Levstick (2004, p.51-4) report examples that demonstrate identity thinking in which students use “we” and other linguistic markers to asserting past/present continuity.

[in] the historiographic context, facts are... conditioned by judgement... whether Louis XVI was murdered, executed, or even punished is a historical question; but the “fact” that a guillotine of a given weight separated his head from his body is not. (Koselleck, 2004, p.149)

Without frameworks, concepts, criteria of meaning, and so on, there can be no history and all histories are, therefore, to be understood relative to the frameworks operative in their construction.

As Lee and Shemilt argue, the notion that the past has fixed meaning is an example of an assumption that makes sense in everyday contexts, where frameworks are often givens: such assumptions are potential barriers to historical learning, however, and need to be anticipated and addressed.

A window is broken or clothes are torn, so mum wants to know what happened. The question for the child (and mum too) is simply whether or not she tells it like it was. From the child’s point of view the past is known: it is given and fixed. Because mother and child are working with shared assumptions about what matters in the past, the past can become a touchstone for telling the truth; once it has happened, it cannot be changed, and there can only be one true account of it. (Lee and Shemilt, 2003, p.14)

3.2 Information, Inference and Evidence

3.2.i Historical Evidence

There can be no accounts without interpreters to construct them and there are many ways of making sense of relics and reports within and outside disciplinary history: “the same sources and the same set of events” therefore “lend themselves to a variety of interpretations” (Iggers, 2001, p.6776).⁴³

What is distinctive about disciplinary history’s mode of approaching the archive? The answer to this question is relatively simple, as historians, unlike, say, geomorphologists, cannot point to a specific corpus of methods or concepts that define their practice and, given the fact that history, like other human sciences, has been subject to extensive “methodological differentiation” and “fragmentation” since the 1960s (Lorenz, 2001, p.6872): any definition of historical practice has, therefore, to be broad (Burke (Ed.) 2001; Cannadine, (Ed.) 2002; Fulbrook, 2002).⁴⁴

⁴³ Even the identity of archival sources is relative to how they are interrogated (Lee and Shemilt, 2004, p.20). As Austin argued, speech is a way of ‘doing things with words’ and a speech ‘act’ may be considered as performing a number of discrete actions simultaneously – as doing something *in* saying what it says, *by* saying it, *through* saying it, and so on (Austin 1975; Thompson, 1981, pp.18-21): reading a report as a report therefore, depends upon a decision to treat it literally (in terms of what is reported *in* the act of reporting).

⁴⁴ Arguably, also, there is little to differentiate historical practice from social science in general other than an almost exclusive concern with past objects: “all survivals of a ‘conserved past’ have to be interpreted regardless of whether they are pots or texts, and... this task of recovering the past is conceptually and methodologically indistinguishable from mediating the frames of meaning found in coexisting cultures” (Giddens, 1984, p.357).

Disciplinary history asks questions (Lévesque, 2008, p.117; Ricoeur, 2004, p.117) about the meanings of materials surviving from the past, which is, by definition, absent (Jenkins, 1991, p.6-9) and constructs accounts in answer to these questions.⁴⁵

History is... a problem-solving discipline. A historian is someone... who asks an open-ended question about past events and answers it with selected facts which are arranged in the form of an explanatory paradigm... The resultant explanatory paradigm may take many different forms: a statistical generalisation, or a narrative, or a causal model, or a motivational model, or a collectivised group-composition model, or maybe an analogy. Most commonly it consists not in any one of these components but in a combination of them. Always it is articulated in the form of a reasoned argument. (Fisher, 1970, p.xv)

There is no limit to the questions that an historian might ask, which is, of course, one reason why what can be said about the past is inherently variable. There are, however, unanswerable questions: questions need to be delimited and the “impossible object is a quest for the whole truth” (Fisher, 1970, p.5); and archives set limits to the questions that can be answered.⁴⁶

There are no limits to the forms that historians’ answers might take either, although historical answers have necessary features:

⁴⁵ As Lorenz notes, the relative importance accorded to interrogation and to composition has varied over time (Lorenz, 2001, p.6871 and p.6875). Innovative approaches to historical representation are discussed in Ferguson (2006), Fogu (2009), Harlan, (2007), Hopkins (1999), Kansteiner (2009) and Rejack (2007).

⁴⁶ Even if one compiled ‘everything’ about ‘everything’ one would be very far from knowing everything about it: the consequences of the past continue to unfold in the present and the future changes the meaning of the past (Danto, 1985). Kennedy provides a useful discussion of ways in which the archive delimits questions that can be asked (2007, pp.12-30).

accounts become historical, in the disciplinary sense, precisely by being structured around an 'infrastructure' of citation and argument, running alongside and supporting a 'superstructure' of substantive claims and narration (Goldstein, 1976, pp.140-143; Grafton, 2003, pp.231-233). As Evans observes:

You have to be prepared to back all your ideas, and also you have to provide other historians with the means of disproving what you say. You have to have footnotes, which will allow your critics to... check out what you are saying, and say, 'Look this is not a legitimate interpretation'. (Richard J. Evans quoted in Kustow, 2000, p.28)

It is history's infrastructure that makes history a discipline and that enables objectivity: it is perfectly possible, and indeed the norm in a diverse historical community of practice, to combine adherence to 'a broader historical framework, purpose and theory' (Leinhardt and Young, 1996, p.441) with a commitment to procedural objectivity (Fulbrook, 2002) and, as Bevir has argued, it is possible to specify norms of practice in the form of 'rules of thumb' that are procedural and formal rather than substantive and which can, therefore, be equally applicable to approaches with different substantive or paradigmatic commitments (Bever, 1999, pp.100-103).⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The extent to which a community of practice actually enables or constrains diversity and debate is, of course, open to debate (Jenkins, 1991, pp.24-31; Daddow, 2004).

Disciplinary historical practice has traditionally been conceived as a method, originating in nineteenth century philology (Evans, 1997). Lorenz summarises this historical method as consisting of:

- (a) ...techniques... to locate... relevant sources;
- (b) source criticism... by which the temporal and spatial origins of ... sources are established as well as their authenticity; and
- (c) interpretation, by which... information... from... sources is put together. (Lorenz, 2001, p.6871)⁴⁸

Studies of professional historians' readings of documents confirm the centrality of particular practices of reading to disciplinary historical thinking, and, in many respects, mirror this model (Wineburg 1991, 1994, 2001, 2005 and 2007 and Leinhardt and Young, 1996). Wineburg and Leinhardt and Young confirm the importance of active questioning and particular heuristics or schema of contextualisation, sourcing, corroboration and classification to historians' reading strategies (Leinhardt and Young, 1996, p.447; van Drie and van Boxtel, 2008, pp.92-5) and characterise historical reading as a iterative, recursive and intertextual process through which historians read and re-

⁴⁸ Source criticism, as Lorenz also notes, is further distinguished into "internal" and "external" criticism – the former focusing on features of the text itself and the latter focused on relationships between the text in question and other materials (Lorenz, 2001, p.6871). There is more to be said than can be said here about this model of historical method (Iggers, 1997; Evans 1997). Von Ranke's conception of historical method also required comprehensiveness in reference to relevant documents and objectivity, for example. These requirements are complex and problematic in many ways (Novick, 1988) but can be coherently stated in post-positivist terms (Bevir, 1999). This characterisation of 'method' also says little about composition, which White (1973) argues involves processes such as 'prefiguration' and 'emplotment'.

read documents, making interconnections between them, positing and revising meanings and contexts, and so on (Leinhardt and Young, 1996, p.445; Wineburg, 1991, pp.509-10). This process of recursive interaction between text and preconception instantiates the “hermeneutic circle” (Bernstein, 1983, pp.131-9; Megill, 2007, pp.86-88) central to the construction of meaning (Ricoeur, 2004; Stanford, 1986 and 1998).

As Wineburg notes, historical reading is typically far removed from literal reading and aims to construct meanings that archival texts were often not designed to convey. Wineburg describes this reading as reading for “subtext” and as taking two forms (1991, p.498): reading for the rhetoric of the text or, in other words, reading texts as acts that sought to impact their past context of utterance, and reading texts as human documents, or as evidence of assumptions and beliefs that texts express but that may have been “unknown unknowns” to their authors.⁴⁹ In historical readings, ‘What is going on?’ is more important than ‘What is happening?’ and the literal is secondary to the inferential.⁵⁰ Historical reading entails active questioning, creative thinking, model-building and knowledge construction.

⁴⁹ ‘Unknown unknowns’ are discussed in BBC News Magazine (2007).

⁵⁰ The distinction between ‘what happened’ and ‘what was going on’ is Shemilt’s and is adapted to a new context here (Shemilt, 2000, p.95; Kelly, 2004, p.3).

Collingwood drew a contrast between what he called “scientific history”⁵¹ and two further variants of history, when modelling the development of the discipline of history over time. Figure 3.1 summarises Collingwood’s analysis.

Figure 3.1 Collingwood’s Typology of Forms of History
(Based on Collingwood 1994, pp.249-282)

Type of history	Raw materials	Processes
1. Scissors-and-paste history	Reports The <i>content</i> of past reports consisting of statements about the past.	Literal reading of past reports. Selection and combination / presentation of the content of past reports in accounts.
2. Critical history	As above and inferred propositions about the credibility of the authors of past reports.	As above except that some content is excluded on the grounds that the reports in which it originates are not ‘credible’.
3. Scientific history	Relics from the past - e.g. archaeological remains. Reports The existence of past reports is data as much as the content of the reports (i.e. testimony is no longer privileged).	Formulating questions about the past Reading reports and relics inferentially, as well as literally, in relation to questions. Constructing arguments using these materials in order to answer questions in accounts.

Collingwood’s model reprises and anticipates many of the considerations discussed above. It is also mirrored in research studies of

⁵¹ Collingwood understands ‘science’ in the German sense here and expresses a commitment to “*Wissenschaft*” rather than to positivism (Evans, 1997, pp.73-74).

progression in student thinking and is worth exploring in full. For Collingwood, questions define historical practice.⁵² Historians resolve problems that they set themselves and these questions are never primarily about literal meaning.

Confronted with a ready-made statement... the scientific historian never asks himself: 'Is this statement true or false?', in other words 'Shall I incorporate it in my history of that subject or not?' The question he asks himself is: 'What does this statement mean?' And this is not equivalent to the question 'What did the person who made it mean by it?'... It is equivalent, rather, to the question 'What light is thrown on the subject in which I am interested by the fact that this person made this statement, meaning by it what he did mean?' This might be expressed by saying that the scientific historian does not treat statements as statements but as evidence. (Collingwood, 1994, p.275)

3.2.ii Progression in the Understanding of Historical Evidence

There is substantial evidence, from small and large scale research studies in a number of countries, suggesting that students in both primary and secondary stages of education can learn to think historically and inferentially about the past and also, crucially, that students often have misconceptions about historical knowing that can impede the development of historical understanding.⁵³

⁵² In Collingwood's "logic of question and answer" (Collingwood, 1939, pp.29-43; Gadamer, 2004, pp.363-371; Harris, 2005, pp.220-222) the "meaning" and the "truth" of a proposition "must be relative to the question it answers" (Collingwood, 1939, p.33).

⁵³ Ashby, 2005(a) and 2005(b); Barca, 2002; Barton, 2001 and 2008; Boix Mansilla, 2001 and 2005; Kölbl and Straub, 2001; Lee, 2005(a) and 2005(b); Lee and Shemilt, 2003 and 2004; Limón, 2002; Shemilt, 1980 and 1987; van Drie and van Boxtel, 2008; VanSledright and Franks, 2000 exemplify or discuss this research.

Lee and Shemilt propose a progression model of the development of student thinking about historical evidence that draws on a substantial research base and in particular, findings from the Schools Council History Project (SCHP) evaluation study (Shemilt, 1980) and the Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches research project (Project CHATA). This model is outlined in Figure 3.2 below.⁵⁴

Figure 3.2 Progression in ideas about evidence: outline
(Based on Lee and Shemilt, 2003, p. 114)⁵⁵

1	Pictures of the past
2	Information
3	Testimony
4	Scissors and Paste
5	Evidence in isolation
6	Evidence in context

Underlying this progression model are two important oppositions that the literature confirms are key in the development of historical understanding and that mark a shift from everyday experiential notions of knowing to historical notions of knowing: the opposition between experiential and inferential knowledge and the opposition between

⁵⁴ Data collection for SCHP evaluation took place in 1973-76 (Shemilt, 1980, p.10). During the interview phase, 167 15-year-old students were interviewed to explore their conceptions of historical method. Half the interviewees were and half were not project students (Shemilt, 1987, p.40). Project CHATA was funded by the ESRC and ran between 1991-1996 and focused on 7-14 year old students' metahistorical or second order ideas (for example about evidence, cause and accounts). A sample of 320 students across the age range completed a series of three pencil and paper tests focused on explanation and enquiry involving paired stories differing in theme, tone and time scale and 122 students were interviewed (Lee, 1997, pp. 25-6).

⁵⁵ The model is reproduced in full in Appendix 8.6 (p.285).

information and evidence (Lee, 2001). As Lee and Shemilt note in their discussion (2003, pp.19-20), progression involves conceptual shifts. Firstly, from Information to Testimony: as far as the first two levels in the model are concerned history is about information. The second shift, between the fourth and the fifth levels, marks a transition from testimonial to evidential conceptions of historical sources. As far as level 3 and 4 thinkers are concerned, historians collate 'truths' and at level 4 these 'truths' are 'credible' claims excerpted from testimony whereas at level 3 the 'truths' are 'credible' testimonies themselves. In neither case do historians generate their own propositions, other than about credibility. The third shift occurs at the last two levels. Here history becomes creative: rather than generating claims by copying and collating elements of the archive, historians are understood as *constructing their own claims* by interrogating archives and drawing inferences and conclusions. Before level 5 students model historians as *depicting* the past in *story-like* collages of *pre-existing* truths and after it histories become more like *theories* than stories and theories that propose solutions to delimited problems that historians pose (Lee and Shemilt, 2004, p.27).

A wide range of studies confirms the dependence of student thinking on the ideas that this model proposes. As Kölbl and Straub put it, in their discussion group study of 13-14 year old German students' historical consciousness, "the topos 'to-see-something-with-one's-own-eyes'" is crucial for many students (2001) and Barca, reporting parallel

Portuguese studies of samples of 11-19 year old school students and of student teachers, suggests that this 'direct observation paradigm' (Atkinson, 1978 cited in Barca, 2002) underlies many history novices' conceptualisations of historical accounts: when asked to chose the best author to give an account of a past situation the school students expressed a clear preference for witnesses or agents whereas the trainee teachers, with greater exposure to historical study, expressed a clear preference for recent authors, indicating an understanding of the 'mediated' nature of historical knowledge (Barca, 2002). Barton's interview and observation based study of American elementary school students' understandings showed that these students overwhelmingly modelled history as based on handed down experience and transcriptions of experiential knowledge (2008, pp.211-213), a form of thinking also apparent in the SCHP data (Shemilt, 1987, p.42). Boix Mansilla's study of sixteen exceptional 14-17 year old American students' ideas about standards of acceptability in history (Boix Mansilla, 2001 and 2005) provides further support for the proposition that many students think of historians as simply transcribing credible claims found in the archive (Boix Mansilla, 2005, p.106).

The examples that follow exemplify the kinds of ideas that students operating at the higher end of the progression model deploy.

The following response is from a CHATA interview with a 13-14 year old student.

Is there anything you have to be careful about when you're using sources to find out what's happened?

You have to think about how reliable they're going to be... either if they're a long time after the event... there's going to be more passed on either by reading something or having a story told to you, which if its told you it's less likely to be accurate... and also if it's a particularly biased piece of evidence [we] might have to look at it and compare it to another piece of evidence, and it might not be much good on its own to get information, just opinion—it would only be good if you wanted an opinion of how people saw the event.

Right.

So you have to look at what context you're looking at the evidence in and what you want to find out from it. (Lee, 2005, p.56-57)

As Lee notes, this student demonstrates three forms of sophistication: awareness of the need to ask questions of sources and that the value of a source is question-relative and “signs of recognising that we can ask questions... that... sources... were not meant to answer” (Lee, 2005, p.57).

Shemilt cites the following as an example that may be understood, with due caution, as instantiating a highly sophisticated approach to evidence (Shemilt, 1987, p.57).

How would you try to find out what those motivations were? ...

I'd think about the realistic possibilities – for example, for an invasion there's differences in ideas, natural resources... land...

How would you come to a decision when you seem to have a lot of 'realistic possibilities'?

I'd study the backgrounds of the countries and you'd trace over previous disputes and find out what they were in need of... (Shemilt, 1987, p.57)

It looks as if this student models historians as *creating* claims by asking questions rather than as transcribing testimonial 'truths' and it looks as if they model historians as interrogating claims (rather than witnesses) and developing situation models that enable questions to be answered (Wineburg, 1994, pp.88-9).

Boix Mansilla (2005) provides a number of examples, such as the following, of students modelling historians as thinking evidentially rather than informatically or testimonially.

Another good example is the American Revolution. Here you had these... mobs who were looting... And it appears that there is an implicit group... who were instigating the revolution... they do not come up but they seem to be there because there were... bonfires and drinking parties... that were sponsored by somebody... So then you have to look for them. You start identifying groups. (2005, p.107).

This student clearly models historical knowing as the active and inferential process that Leinhardt and Young and Wineburg describe: enigmatic 'facts' (bonfires, looting) lead to hypothesis (the "implicit group") and to purposive questioning.

Qualifications are necessary and some studies report ambivalent findings (VanSledright and Franks 2000), nevertheless, it seems clear

that curriculum and pedagogy can make a difference to student understandings of evidence. Shemilt reported “dramatic” differences between SChP and non-SChP students’ conceptions of “how historical knowledge is based and founded” (1980, pp.36-7 and 39), Boix Mansilla found “a strong association” between students’ epistemological ‘stances’ and their backgrounds in science and in history respectively (2005, pp.112-3) and Barton (2001) reports dramatic differences in the models of historical evidence held by American and Northern Irish elementary school students observing that

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. (Barton, 2001)

3.3 Understanding Historical Accounts

3.3.i. Types of Claim and Types of Account

As a number of authors have argued, disciplined historical discourse is a matter of making, sustaining and challenging claims about the past (Coffin, 2006 and 2007; Grafton, 2003; Megill, 2007): understanding the value of historical source material entails understanding the kinds of claim that it can be used to support (Ashby 2005(b); Lee, 2005(a)); understanding historical accounts entails understanding that accounts are of different kinds and have a logic and that different types of account work in different ways (Lee, 2001 and 2004).

Accounts can be compared at a formal level in terms of generic ‘tasks’ that they aim to accomplish (Megill, 2007). Megill argues that all historical writing involves four tasks that are, at least in principle, analytically distinct (Megill, 2007, pp.97-98) and that will have differing importance in accounts of different types. These tasks are summarised in Figure 3.3.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ It is of course difficult to distinguish between these ‘tasks’ in practice: the distinctions are analytical and are offered as such (Megill, 2007, p.97-99). Similar distinctions have been advanced by Runciman (1983, pp.71-85) and by Coffin (2006).

Figure 3.3 The Four Tasks of Historical Writing

(Based on Megill, 2007, pp.96-98 and adapted from Chapman, 2009(b), p.35)

Task	Explanation
Description	Describing an aspect of historical reality – telling what was the case
Explanation	Explaining why a past event or phenomenon came to be
Interpretation	Attributing meaning and significance to aspects of the past
Argument / justification	Justifying descriptive or explanatory claims by supplying arguments to support them

Megill argues that these “tasks” correspond to distinct questions about the past – “*What* was the case?”, “*Why* was it the case?”, “What does all of this *mean* for us *now*?” and “How far can answers to these questions be evidentially *sustained*?”⁵⁷

This typology no doubt has faults, however, it does three important things:

- it draws attention to the fact that historians make claims of different kinds and thus raises questions about the role that kinds of claim play in different accounts;
- by distinguishing between tasks, the typology raises the question ‘How are these different types of claim sustained?’ and ‘Are they sustained in the same way?’; and

⁵⁷ The first two questions are Megill’s and third and fourth are my constructions based on interpretation of Megill’s text.

- by categorising tasks into claims and support for claims
the analysis focuses attention on questions like ‘What is claimed?’ and ‘How far are claims sustained?’

These points are highly consequential for thinking about student understandings. As Lee (2001) has shown, many students assume that historical accounts are made up of factual statements only and that assessing accounts amounts to assessing the facticity of their component statements. Accounts, however, *organise* factual statements in relation to questions and do so using concepts and criteria; furthermore, accounts organise their materials in different ways depending on the tasks that they are performing: all historical tasks involve concepts but concepts do different work in descriptions, explanations and interpretations (Cercadillo, 2001 and 2006; Lee 2001; McCullagh, 1984 and 2003).

To describe something is to deploy conceptual categories: thus, to describe an event as a ‘battle’, for example, is to deploy a concept, to define it in particular ways and to use this concept to organise factual propositions about the event; to explain why an event took place is to invoke and deploy theories about how the world works, about the entities that exist in it; and so on. The same observation applies to justification: to support a claim is also to reveal assumptions about how historical claims can be supported. Furthermore, to ask a question is to

reveal assumptions about the kinds of question that historians should set out to ask.⁵⁸

3.3.ii Paradigms and Paradigmatic Assumptions

What an account is, then, is relative to what it does. What it does, however, is also relative to the criteria and conceptualisations that an account deploys or presupposes.

The impossibility of simply passively mirroring some or all of the past without presuppositions has long been understood:

Even the ordinary, the ‘impartial’ historiographer, who believes... that he maintains a simply receptive attitude; surrendering himself only to the data supplied... is by no means passive as regards the exercise of his thinking powers. He brings his categories with him, and sees... phenomena... exclusively through those media. (Hegel, 1956, p.11)

Hegel overstates the case – historical knowing is a recursive and reflexive process and the encounter with the record can change ‘categories’ (Megill, 2007, pp.86-88; Stanford, 1986 and 1997; Wineburg, 1991, p.509), the point stands, however: no perception without presuppositions.

⁵⁸ These issues are the staple of historical debate as three recent reviews, in a generalist journal, show: Hobsbawm’s (2009) review of a work by Overly turns on questioning of the kind of question that Overly asks; Duffy’s (2009) review of a work by Thomas turns on objections to the conceptualisation of religion organizing the book’s claims; and Siegelbaum’s review of a work by Figes turns on objections to Figes’ substantive and methodological presuppositions (Siegelbaum, 2008).

No empirical activity is possible without a theory, or at least elaborate presuppositions behind it, even if these remain implicit... All historians have ideas already in their minds when they study primary materials – models of human behaviour, established chronologies, assumptions about responsibility, notions of identity and so on. Of course, some are convinced that they are simply gathering facts, looking at sources with a totally open mind and only recording what is there, yet they are simply wrong to believe this. (Jordanova, 2000, p.63)

Historians' interpretive frameworks are frequently discussed in historiographic and history education literature⁵⁹ and have been systematically analysed by Fulbrook (2000 pp.31-50) as "paradigms" and Leinhardt and Young's study of historians' readings of texts shows that readings are shaped as much by the "interpretive stance assumed" as by use of source reading schemata (1996, p.449).

Fulbrook defines a paradigm as "a world view" entailing "a particular set of assumptions about the nature of the world, a corresponding set of analytical concepts for describing the world, and a number of hypotheses purporting to explain how the world" works (Fulbrook, 2000, p.31).

Fulbrook distinguishes between "theoretical" and "meta-theoretical" presuppositions: the former shape the logic of enquiry and answers to questions like: 'What questions are worth asking, about what data and at what level of analysis?' and 'What analytical tools should be used?'; the latter are commitments of a philosophical anthropological

⁵⁹ For example, Burke, 2001, pp.2-8; Callinicos, 1988 and 1995; Hexter, 1972 (pp.65-109); Limon, 2002; and Yilmaz, 2007.

nature and reveal presuppositions about the nature of humanity and about knowledge (Fulbrook, 2001, pp.34-5).

As Jordanova's comment indicates, everyone has a paradigm: there is no alternative. Explaining what people did, at Glastonbury or Agincourt, entails an ontology that answers questions like 'What is a person?', 'What motivations do persons typically have and is there a hierarchy amongst these?', 'What constitutes and preserves collectivities of people?', 'Do collectivities have emergent properties?' and so on.⁶⁰ Answers to such questions have consequences and illustrate the nexus between methods, methodologies and paradigms. If, for example, collectivities are thought of as prior to and determining the actions of individuals and if, let us say, language is held to have primacy, then language will have priority in the attempt to understand collective behaviour and accepting this view will have consequences for archive selection, data collection, analysis and interpretation.

The importance of paradigmatic frameworks in historical study cannot be overstated and is apparent in every sub-field of the discipline (Burke, 2001; Cannadine, 2002) from the history of ideas (Bevir, 1999; Tully, 1992) to the history of imperialism (Cain and Hopkins, 2001; Colley, 2002). Awareness of these issues is also necessary for understanding historiography at advanced level: thus, for example, understanding the historiography of Nazism raises theoretical and

⁶⁰ Questions of this kind are addressed in Giddens (1984) pp.41-64 and Anderson (1980).

metatheoretical questions about the merits of social scientific and high political approaches to the past in the form of the structuralist / intentionalist debate (Bauer, 2002; Kershaw, 1993; Layton, 2000) and understanding the historiography of Chartism means engaging with Marxist historiography and historiography influenced by the “linguistic turn” (Brown, 1998; Stedman Jones, 1984).⁶¹

Two points are worth stressing, given the fact that students’ often model differences in interpretation in terms of subjective distortion (pp.107-112 and pp.151-161 below).

Firstly, a paradigm is not an avoidable bias: there can be no interpretations without categories and assumptions.

Secondly, theoretical and metatheoretical questions can be rationally debated and historical controversies often turn on these issues as much as on substantive matters: conceptualisations of historical data are not simply subjective impositions but proposals that are interpersonally tested through disciplinary conversation.

Theoretical questions – such as the relative merits of ‘microhistorical’ and ‘cliometric’ approaches to the study of slavery – can be readily made accessible for students, as a recent report of

⁶¹ These two topics are typical A2 topics and were studied by my respondents. A number of history education researchers have stressed the importance of a focus on methodological and historiographic dimensions of history in history education (for example, Limon, 2002 and Yilmaz, 2007), as has recent practitioner literature (Howells, 2005 and Hammond, 2007).

teaching strategies adopted with 13-14 year old students suggests (Hammond, 2007). Metatheoretical debates, for example about the relative priority of material interests in shaping human action, raise questions that arise in students' everyday experience, about which they are likely to hold views and which they can be encouraged to debate.

3.3.iii Progression in the Understanding of Historical Accounts

Again, there is substantial evidence, that suggests that history students can develop sophisticated understandings of historical accounts, that particular misconceptions are common in student thinking and that these misconceptions need to be challenged if students are to progress (Lee, 2001 and 2004).

Thinking about historical accounts is clearly closely related to thinking about evidence, since historical accounts are constructed using evidence and since

research suggests that the root of students' ideas about both concepts are some everyday preconceptions applicable (albeit in different ways) to both concepts (Lee and Shemilt, 2004, p. 26).

Lee and Shemilt propose a progression model of the development of student thinking about historical accounts and this model is outlined in Figure 3.4 below.⁶²

Figure 3.4 Progression in ideas about accounts: outline
(Based on Lee and Shemilt, 2004, p.30)⁶³

1	Accounts are just (given) stories
2	Accounts fail to be copies of a past we cannot witness
3	Accounts are accurate copies of the past, except for mistakes or gaps
4	Accounts may be distorted for ulterior motives
5	Accounts are organised from a personal viewpoint
6	Accounts must answer questions and fit criteria

The broad pattern of progression in the CHATA accounts data has been summarised as follows: over time, “a broad shift” is apparent

in students’ views of historians. From seeing historians as more or less passive story tellers, handing on ready-made stories or compiling and collating information, they move to thinking of historians as actively producing their stories,

⁶² This model draws in particular on CHATA research on accounts reported in Lee, 1997, 1998, 2001 and 2004 and Lee and Ashby, 2000. The progression model reproduced here is substantially the same as that reported in Lee 2004. Although the SCHP evaluation did not focus on accounts as such, data on student ideas about “evidence and methodology” in history was collected and analysed (Shemilt, 1987).

⁶³ The model is reproduced in full in Appendix 8.6 (p.286).

whether by distorting them for their own ends or legitimately selecting in response to a choice of theme (Lee, 1998, p.31).

Underlying the model are the same oppositions that were key in the case of historical evidence (p.60 above): between experiential and inferential knowledge and between information and evidence (Lee, 2001; Lee and Shemilt, 2004; Shemilt, 1987); however, a further distinction, highlighted in the discussion of evidence but that is particularly consequential for the understanding of accounts, is the opposition between accounts as copies of the past that should be assessed in terms of adequacy of representation and accounts as theory like structures that should be assessed relative to their purposes, the questions they ask and the criteria and concepts that they presuppose.

Again, progression involves conceptual shifts (Lee and Shemilt, 2004, pp.26-31). Firstly, a shift occurs between levels 2 and 3: students at level 2 think of accounts as varying because the touchstone of sound knowledge is experience and we cannot experience the past: at levels 1 and 2, therefore, accounts are simply stories or guesses / matters of opinion without epistemological status. Secondly, a shift occurs between level 4 and 5: at levels 3 and 4 students think of the past as fixed, the past only happened in one way and the 'evidence' (where it is available) ought, in principle, to allow us to identify this 'one way' which accounts should in principle be able to depict, even if, in practice, archival gaps or biases prevent 'the true picture' from emerging. At levels 5 and 6, by

contrast, and just as was the case with evidence, students start to see that accounts vary as the questions that are asked about the past vary: at level 5 this is simply a subjective matter (people just happen to ask different questions, see different things as important and so on) whereas at level 6 account variation is a matter of necessity rather than subjective contingency and an expression of facts about accounts *per se*. In summary, for level 5 and 6 thinkers, histories are more like theories than stories.

The scale of variation in the sophistication of students' ideas can be scoped by contrasting the following two interview excerpts, the first from an SCHK evaluation interview, exploring general ideas about historical methodology and the second from a CHATA interview, exploring why there might be different accounts of when the Roman Empire ended.

You can't do an experiment... You just has to guess....

How would you distinguish between two guesses...

You pick which one you like best... which is most interesting – or the one... for your (social) class. (Shemilt, 1987, p. 47)

Why are there different dates?

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.

How could you 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.

Could there be other possible times when the Empire ended?

Yes, 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. (Lee, 2005, p39)

It is apparent in the first excerpt that this student operates at level 2 and thinks of history less as a form of knowledge than an expression of subjectivity. In the second extract, on the other hand, we have a clear example of level 6 criterial thinking and a perspective from which account variation is perfectly natural and follows from the very nature of accounts: there can be no date for the end of the Roman Empire without criteria to operationalise the concepts ‘Roman’, ‘Empire’ and ‘end’ and it very much looks as if this student perceives this question as at least in part a theoretical question – the kind of question you resolve by debating concepts rather than by counting ‘truths’.

There is a significant research literature on accounts, much of it inspired by and methodologically close to the CHATA research. This literature is discussed below, in relation to students’ ideas about explaining why different accounts may exist.⁶⁴ The literature provides support for the CHATA progression models across a range of age groups and contexts.

⁶⁴ Barca, 2001 and 2005; Boix Mansilla 2005; Cercadillo, 2001 and 2006; Chapman, 2001; Gago, 2005; Hsiao, 2005; MacDiarmid, 1994; and VanSledright and Afflerbach, 2005 exemplify or discuss this research. Other work (such as Seixas, 1993), that is not directly focused on explaining variations in written accounts, is not discussed here.

VanSledright and Afflerbach (2005) report a small scale and exploratory study involving eight 8 to 9 year old American elementary school students. The students were given a collection of documents relating to the same topic, two of which were accounts, and asked to come to a view on the causes of a rebellion. VanSledright and Afflerbach report that their findings were “generally consistent” with the CHATA models (2005, p.15) and that these students were operating at a level that corresponded to level 4 on Figure 3.4.

Gago (2005) reports a study of 10-13 year old students in one Portuguese school: fifty-two students took part in pencil and paper assessments and a sample of ten students were interviewed. The students were asked to examine two parallel accounts with differing theme, tone and scale and to explain how there could “be different accounts in history” (2005, p.86). Gago’s findings are consistent with the CHATA progression model, with the majority of students reported as moving over time towards explanations for account variation that allow for legitimate activity by historians in shaping accounts, in the form of the expressions of opinion or historians’ decisions (Gago, 2005, 92-4).

Hsiao (2005) reports a study of 13-15 year old Taiwanese students’ preconceptions about accounts, in a context where a prescribed textbook “plays a fundamental role” (p.54). As part of Hsiao’s study, ninety-four students, across the 13-15 age-range, were asked to read variant textbook accounts of the same issue from different countries and

to explain why the accounts differed. Overall, Hsiao found some support for CHATA models and some awareness of “basic notions regarding the procedures behind historical accounts” (p.63): the largest category of explanation in the data set was “Author perspective”, a category including both author “opinions and biases” and the selection of information (p. 60).

Barca (2005) reports a large-scale study conducted in two Portuguese schools, one strand of which involved one hundred and nineteen students across the 12-17 age-range completing a pencil and paper task that involved competing accounts of reasons for the establishment of the Portuguese Maritime empire and in which students were asked to adjudicate between the accounts and justify their choices. Barca reports

Some evidence of patterns running from an information-based mode... to a perspectival view... with intermediate levels of ideas tied to a naïve realism or skepticism, factorial aggregation... or a positivist... quest for consensus.... (p.74)

Barca notes that “more complex ideas” emerged “at earlier ages in Britain than in Portugal” and points to differences in history curricula to account for this (Barca, 2005).

Cercadillo (2001 and 2006) reports a large-scale comparative study of understandings of significance in England and Spain: seventy

two students in each country, in the 12 to 17 age-range and from a range of schools, completed two pencil and paper tasks each of which contained competing assessments of the significance of the same topic. Students were asked, amongst other things, to explain why these differing assessments might arise. A sample of students was also interviewed.

As Cercadillo notes, significance raises accounts issues with great clarity because judgments of significance are always relative to criteria of significance and a frame of reference (Cercadillo 2001, p.120) and, as Lee *et al* observe, judgments of significance vary across types of significance, by the subject with reference to whom the judgment is made, by theme and time scale and by question (Lee *et al* 2001, p. 201). Cercadillo proposes a grounded progression model that supports CHATA conclusions about accounts. A key issue in progression was student awareness that judgments of significance are relative to frames of reference and that criteria of significance are multiple and relative to different types of significance, such as causal and contemporary significance (2001, p.140). Younger students tended to assess significance in contemporary terms (in other words, as fixed by the experience of people who experienced events). Cercadillo found differences by country with English students “reaching a higher order of ideas... at earlier ages” (2001, p.140) although this gap narrowed for 16-17 year old students.

Boix Mansilla's study has already been described above (pp.63-64). The students taking part in the study were provided with two accounts of aspects of the Holocaust covering variant time periods, focused on different actors and offering differing causal explanations. As has been noted, Boix Mansilla identified two broad stances amongst respondents: on the one hand a stance that is characterized as historically "objectivist" and a stance that might be characterized as 'contemporary constructivist'. Boix Mansilla's findings are consistent with CHATA models – the latter position is characterized, by a recognition that delimited questions entail selection, for example (2005, pp.107-8). The "strong association" between students' 'stances' and their educational backgrounds has been noted above.

My Institution Focused Study (Chapman, 2001) reported a case study of twelve 16-19 Advanced Level history students in one institution in which the students were asked to complete pencil and paper tasks relating to two competing accounts and, amongst other things, to explain why differing historical accounts were possible on the same issue.⁶⁵ My findings were consistent with the CHATA progression model for accounts: a spectrum of explanations for variation was identified, ranging from explanation in terms of distortion and bias to explanation in terms of legitimate variation resulting from historians' assumptions. "Assumptions explanations" were more common in second year

⁶⁵ The task was an earlier version of the Holocaust Task used in this study.

responses (2001, pp.45-55 and 68-69) and, in this case, all students studied historiography as part of their course.

Barca (2001) reports a study of eighteen undergraduate Portuguese trainee history teachers in which the student teachers were provided with two historical accounts relating to the same incident and a report that both accounts drew upon. Students were asked to identify differences between the two accounts and to rank all three documents in terms of their validity as explanations. Barca reports findings consistent with the CHATA model: students drew on a range of ideas from an “information category”, corresponding to the lower levels of the CHATA model where students treat differences as apparent only and as a function of how stories have been told, through to an “historical ground category” that Barca suggests “might approximate to the 'nature of accounts' level” (Barca, 2001). At this level students accepted different accounts as expressions of different perspectives and thus, perhaps, as constructed in the light of different criteria.

McDiarmid (1994) reports a small-scale interview based study of American trainee teachers before and after their completion of an historiography course. Sixteen students completed the course.

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the impact of the course on students’ understandings of history and history teaching. At the start

of the course, when asked to account for variations, in a set of accounts of the reconstruction, almost all students drew on the

assumption that historians bring predetermined positions to the writing of... accounts...Bias can be traced back to the personal circumstances... of the historian” (McDiarmid, 1994, p.170)

By the end of the course, McDiarmid reports that “at least three” students had moved away from this position (pp.172-3).

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter set out to model the conceptions that understanding historical accounts entails. It is clear that understanding historical accounts is a complex matter and one that depends upon developing a concept of evidence and an awareness that claims about the past depend upon questions, concepts and criteria as much as ‘facts’ or ‘sources’.

Developing these understandings is no easy task and one that involves challenging everyday epistemological ideas. It has been suggested that it is critical in particular to develop understandings of both evidence and accounts that move students away from the notion that historians are simply story tellers telling it ‘like it was’ in a comprehensive way. Understanding both evidence and accounts involves understanding that meaning can only be made by asking questions and that historians offer reasoned answers to questions delimited by the focus that they have chosen to take and also by the concepts and criteria that frame their questions.

Consideration of history education research on student understandings of evidence and accounts provides support for two linked progression models and suggests key indicators of progression in the understanding of these two metahistorical concepts, providing a basis for thinking about the ideas that my respondents brought to the task of explaining account variation and historical disagreement.

Chapter 4. Data and Discussion: The Written Tasks

4.1 Introduction: Analysing the Written Task Data Set

As will be recalled from the discussion in Chapter 2 above, twenty four students completed three written tasks over the course of a number of months and the written task data set consists of seventy two task responses, three for each respondent. The tasks each contained two contrasting historical accounts. The following question is the focus of analysis here:

**How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?
(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)**

The written task responses were analysed through a process of inductive coding and thirty four high-resolution low-inference codes were devised to code the data set descriptively for this question. These codes were simplified and grouped under seven code categories on the basis of similarities between the explanations for account variation to which the codes made reference.

The codes and code categories are exemplified and discussed in Appendix 8.3 (pp.244-265) and are also exemplified below as individual

responses are discussed and only a brief explanation of the code categories is appropriate here.

The **Author Bias** code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that account authors had preconceptions about the historical topics or personal or political agendas and that they *imposed* these *preconceived meanings* through their accounts by, for example, intentionally misrepresenting the record.

The **Author Interpretation** code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that the authors had *made emergent sense* of their archival materials in differing ways through processes of meaning construction.

The **Author Background / Beliefs** code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that account authors had differing backgrounds or differing beliefs and that this fact explained differences in their accounts.

The **Author Focus** code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that account authors had asked different questions and that this fact explained differences in their accounts.

The two Source categories identify explanations for variation that suggest that differences in the accounts were explained by limitations in

the archive (such as a lack of sources), in the case of the **Limited Sources** code category, or because authors had based their accounts on different sources, in the **Variable Sources** code category.

The **Minor Codes** code category identifies explanations for variation that figured in a small number of responses only, such as the suggestion that author incompetence or error explained differences in accounts.⁶⁶

Exploration of the data during the coding process indicated that references to particular explanations had variable importance within individual responses: individual responses were therefore coded taking note of the relative importance within each response of the explanations that were mentioned and these were graded as having either 'major' or 'minor' importance in each response.⁶⁷

Exploration of the data during the coding process also indicated that a number of individuals offered similar explanations for account variation across more than one task. An analysis of the data set by individual was therefore undertaken. Figures 4.1 (a) and (b) present this analysis.

⁶⁶ These ideas had minor importance in the data set, however, these ideas often had major importance in individual responses.

⁶⁷ This process is exemplified at pp.259-265 below.

Figure 4.1 (a) The frequency with which Year 1 respondents made major reference to code categories across three tasks. This table counts the frequency with which respondents in one year group made major reference to particular code categories across the three tasks and notes where respondents made major reference to a move in all three tasks ('3'), in two of the three tasks ('2'), in one of the three tasks ('1') or in none of the three tasks ('0'). The frequency of reference to a code category has been highlighted: major reference to a move across all tasks has been shaded in black and major reference to a move in two of the three tasks has been shaded in grey.

		Code Categories							
Year	Respondent	Author Bias	Author Background / Beliefs	Author Focus	Author Interpretation	Limited Sources	Variable Sources	Minor Codes	
1	Alice	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	
1	Adam	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	
1	Ben	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	
1	Beatrice	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	
1	Christine	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	
1	Dan	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	
1	Edward	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	
1	Diana	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	
1	Elizabeth	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	
1	Hannah	0	3	0	1	1	3	0	
1	Jenny	2	0	0	2	2	1	1	
1	Frank	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	

Figure 4.1 (b) The frequency with which Year 2 respondents made major reference to code categories across three tasks.
This table counts the frequency with which respondents in one year group made major reference to particular code categories across the three tasks and notes where respondents made major reference to a move in all three tasks ('3'), in two of the three tasks ('2'), in one of the three tasks ('1') or in none of the three tasks ('0'). The frequency of reference to a code category has been highlighted: major reference to a move across all tasks has been shaded in black and major reference to a move in two of the three tasks has been shaded in grey.

Year	Respondent	Code Categories							
		Author Bias	Author Background / Beliefs	Author Focus	Author Interpretation	Limited Sources	Variable Sources	Minor Codes	
2	George	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	
2	Jane	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	
2	Mark	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	
2	Kim	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	
2	Ian	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	
2	Mary	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	
2	Amy	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	
2	Ruth	2	1	1	0	2	0	1	
2	Peter	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	
2	Trina	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	
2	Stuart	0	2	0	3	1	1	0	
2	Vicky	1	0	3	0	2	2	1	

4.2 Explaining Account Variation: Patterns of Response

Figures 4.2(a) and (b) allow individual responses to be analysed for consistency of approach, where consistency is defined as the repetition of the same move across two or more tasks.

Twenty of the twenty-four students made reference to at least one idea across at least two tasks and twelve respondents displayed higher levels of consistency of approach than this. Two respondents in each year displayed no consistency across the three tasks and made different moves in each task. Negative patterns of consistency are also apparent: with one exception, respondents can also be grouped in terms of the moves that they *did not* make in any of their three task responses.⁶⁸

It is apparent that understanding patterns of consistency in this data set entails understanding patterns of presence and absence. As was explained in the Methodology Chapter (at pp.36-38 above), a schema was devised to represent such patterns: Figures 4.2(a) and (b) endeavour to map the data reported in Figures 4.1 (a) and (b) onto this schema and to model respondents' approaches in terms of explanatory moves that they did and did not make.

The figures map the **dominant moves** that respondents made. A dominant move is an explanatory move that occurs in *at least two* of a

⁶⁸ The one exception is Beatrice, Year 1: she made every one of the major moves at least once.

respondent's task responses and that occurs *more frequently* than any other move that they make.⁶⁹ Figure 4.2(a) identifies respondents who made one dominant move across at least two tasks. If the same two moves occur more than once and with equal frequency in a respondent's task responses, a respondent is described as making two dominant moves. Figure 4.2(b) maps respondents who made more than one dominant move across the three tasks. There were no examples of students who made more than two dominant moves across the three tasks.

The majority of the data set can be mapped onto these schema: fifteen of the twenty four respondents (seven in Year 1 and eight in Year 2) made one dominant move and four respondents (2 in each year) made more than one dominant move. However, four respondents (two in each year) made different explanatory moves in each task and one Year 1 student made every major move at least once.

⁶⁹ The assumption is that frequent reference to a move is indicative of a commitment to explaining account variation in terms of the move.

Figure 4.2 (a) Year 1 and Year 2 respondents who made one dominant explanatory move across 2 or more tasks

A respondent was deemed to have had a dominant explanatory move if reference to ideas coded under one code category appeared more frequently than reference to ideas coded under other code categories in two or more of their task responses. The number of tasks in which reference to moves coded in this way were made is indicated after respondents' names. First year respondents are presented in *italics* and second year respondents in **bold**.

	No Author Interpretation	No Author Focus	No Author Background / Beliefs	No Variable Sources	No Limited Sources	No Author Bias
Author Bias	<i>Diana (3)</i> <i>Edward (2)</i> Jane (3) Mark (3)	<i>Edward (2)</i> Jane (3) Mark (3)	<i>Edward (2)</i> Jane (3) Mark (3)	<i>Edward (2)</i> Jane (3) Mark (3)	<i>Diana (3)</i> Jane (3)	
Limited Sources	Kim (2)	Kim (2)				
Variable Sources						
Author Background / Beliefs					Amy (2)	
Author Focus	Vicky (3) Trina (2)		<i>Frank (2)</i> <i>Christine (3)</i> Vicky (3) Trina (2)	<i>Frank (2)</i> <i>Christine (3)</i>	<i>Christine (3)</i> Trina (2)	<i>Frank (2)</i> <i>Christine (3)</i> Trina (2)
Author Interpretation		<i>Ben (2)</i> George (2) Stuart (3)	<i>Alice (2)</i>	<i>Elizabeth (3)</i> George (2)	<i>Elizabeth (3)</i> <i>Alice (2)</i> George (2)	<i>Elizabeth (3)</i> <i>Alice (2)</i> Stuart (3)

Figure 4.2 (b) Year 1 and Year 2 respondents who made more than one dominant explanatory move across 2 or more tasks

A respondent was deemed to have made more than one dominant explanatory move if reference to ideas coded under more than one code category appeared with equal frequency in two or more task responses. Respondents appear in as many rows as they made dominant moves. The number of tasks in which reference to moves coded in this way was made is indicated after respondents' names. First year respondents are presented in *italics* and second year respondents in **bold**.

	No Author Interpretation	No Author Focus	No Author Background / Beliefs	No Variable Sources	No Limited Sources	No Author Bias
Author Bias	Ruth (2)	Jenny (2)	Jenny (2)	Ruth (2)		
Limited Sources	Ruth (2)			Ruth (2)		
Variable Sources		Hannah (3)				Hannah (3)
Author Background / Beliefs		Hannah (3) Ian (2)		Ian (2)		Hannah (3)
Author Focus						
Author Interpretation		Jenny (2) Ian (2)	Jenny (2)	Ian (2)		

The purpose of mapping responses onto this schema was to assess the extent to which respondents could be understood as conforming to ideal typical approaches to explaining account variation on the basis of moves that they made / did not make. Types are posited on the basis of the rows in the table: an ideal typical Author Bias respondent, for example, would make reference exclusively to Author Bias explanatory moves. Mapping real respondents onto the table allows the degree to which respondents approximated to ideal types of respondent to be assessed. It will also be recalled that the figure allows relationships between explanatory moves to be represented and identified and contrasting explanatory moves to be identified above and below the diagonal of black squares.⁷⁰

What types of respondent and relationships between respondent types does Figure 4.2(a) suggest?

It is apparent that one student (Jane, Year 2) appears to conform to the 'Author Bias' ideal type and that a number of other students approximate to that type: Mark (Year 2) and Edward (Year 1) appear in 4 of the possible 5 cells in that row and Diana (Year 1) appears in 2 of the 5.

The picture is less clear in the case of Author Interpretation: no student conforms to the ideal type or approximates to it to the same

⁷⁰ See pp.37-38 above.

degree as in the Author Bias row. Nevertheless, George (Year 2) and Alice and Elizabeth (Year 1) appear in 3 of the possible 5 cells of the row.

The figure reveals a striking contrast between subgroups within these groups of respondents: the students in the yellow cells at the top left and the bottom right of the figure explained account variation in contrary ways, making at least two Author Bias moves but no Author Interpretation moves in their three task responses, on the one hand, and showing the opposite pattern, on the other.

Three respondents approximate closely to an Author Focus ideal type, appearing in three or four of the possible five cells on the figure and one respondent appears in two cells. The Limited Sources and Author Background / Beliefs rows are sparsely populated, however: one respondent figures in two cells in the former and one respondent figures in one cell of the latter. The Variable Sources row is not populated.

A further observation arises from the overall shape of the data: thirteen of the fifteen respondents mapped onto the figure appear either above or below the black diagonal of squares suggesting that we have two broadly contrasting approaches to explaining variation in accounts here, linked to Author Bias and Author Interpretation moves. The two exceptions do not challenge this suggestion: Vicky made Author Bias moves and Author Focus moves but no Author Interpretation moves and

Trina made Author Focus moves but neither Author Bias nor Author Interpretation moves.

The figure gives us good grounds for positing three ideal explanatory types therefore: Author Bias, Author Interpretation and Author Focus. There are varying degrees of fit between respondents and these types but the pattern is there. There are much slighter grounds for positing two further types (Author Background / Beliefs and Limited Sources).

Figure 4.2(b), it will be recalled, maps the moves of respondents who made more than one dominant move across the three tasks.

With the exception of Hannah, who appears in the previously unpopulated Variable Sources row, all the respondents fall into types discussed above. Because they made more than one dominant move, however, these respondents cannot be singly typed: Ian, for example, made both Author Background / Beliefs and Author Interpretation moves in two tasks.

The analysis suggested by Figures 4.2(a) and (b) gives qualified support for the construction of an ideal typical model of types of explanation for account variation: real respondents conform or approximate to three of the ideal types and there is a clear contrast between two of these types.

4.3 Accounting for Variations in Accounts: a Five-term Ideal Typology of Explanatory Moves

I propose a five-term ideal typology of approaches to explaining account variation.⁷¹ The discussion that follows will test the value of this proposal, by exploring respondents' answers in detail and we have already seen that there are stronger grounds for positing some types than others.⁷² I propose that we think of respondents as explaining account variation by making explanations that fall under one or more of the five types identified in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Schema of explanatory types

Explanatory Type	Definition
1. Authorial explanation	Explanation in terms of author backgrounds or background beliefs
2. Archival explanation	Explanation in terms of the variable or limited nature of the archive available to account authors.
3. Impositionist explanation	Explanation in terms of variations in the author activity of imposing preconceptions through representations of the past
4. Hermeneutic explanation	Explanation in terms of variations in the author activity of construing or constructing the meaning of the past.
5. Inquisitorial explanation	Explanation in terms of variations in the author activity of asking questions of the past.

⁷¹ It is possible, of course, that more than five types would be required to model other data sets.

⁷² The typological model is valuable to the extent that it enables pedagogic sense to be made of what respondents did.

I propose five ideal typical explanatory moves, collapsing the Variable and Limited Sources code categories into one Source code category, because the intention here is heuristic rather than exhaustive: there are good grounds, therefore, for applying Ockham's razor.⁷³

Three of the five types focus on author *activities* and two do not. The two types that do not focus on activity focus on different features of the authors of accounts: their *identities* and their *resources*.

4.3.i Authorial Explanation: Historians' Identities

An ideal typical **authorial explanation** for account variation would explain variation solely and exclusively in terms of authors' preconceptions and beliefs and / or account authors' backgrounds held to determine those preconceptions and beliefs. An ideal typical authorial respondent would explain account variation in all cases exclusively in authorial terms.

None of the respondents conform to type and none of the task responses are ideal typical, in the sense of making major reference exclusively to authorial explanation. However, authorial explanation was Amy's sole dominant move; and it was also one of two dominant moves

⁷³ "It is vain to do with more what can be done with fewer" (cited in Russell, 1979, at pp.462-3). Very few respondents made exclusive major reference to these ideas and in addition, respondents, such as Vicky Year 2, who made reference to both ideas, did so equally.

for both Hannah and Ian. I will discuss Amy and Hannah's responses below.

Amy made major reference to Author Background / Beliefs in her Holocaust and Peterloo responses: these two responses are discussed below.

It is possible for there to be two such differing accounts because each was written by a different historian... each... has a different approach which can be influenced by their (1) original ideas, e.g. what they were looking for when researching their accounts, in turn affected by their education, status, ethnic group, etc. (2) their evidence – which archive they have looked into – giving different evidence, and the amount of sources they have looked at – and cross-referenced. (3) The fact that both sources are written with hindsight puts the accounts in a position where the only way to give an account is through interpretation. Interpretation of what happened, and how etc. Neither authors were there – experiencing it and so neither have had the same experience finding out about it (however... had both been there accounts would still differ as both historians are individuals).

Amy Year 2 Holocaust

This response was coded as explaining variation by major reference to ideas coded under the Author Background / Beliefs (her first five lines), Variable Sources (point (2) in her list) and They are Secondary Sources codes (the remainder of her response).⁷⁴ Amy suggested that historians take different 'approaches' to the study of the past and that there are two issues here: differing 'original ideas' that drive research and differing backgrounds that 'affect' these differing

⁷⁴ They Are Secondary Sources is a Minor Code: these codes are exemplified at pp.253-4 below.

agendas. Her response displayed considerable sophistication and Amy was aware that historians actively look for things and that research is a process of interpretation, although Amy also clearly privileged experiential knowing. Authorial factors shape investigation and what is looked for but little was said here about *how* investigation might affect the interpretation of what is found.

Amy's response to the Peterloo task is reproduced below.

It is possible for there to be two such differing accounts because as with all historical events, inferences are made by historians. The person who is writing about the events will obviously be influenced by the kind of person they are. Their background interests and political views... will affect the way that they view / interpret information & facts. E.P.Thompson's book "The Making of the English Working Class" is a clue to the fact that his interest lies within the working classes. He has chosen to specifically focus on them so it is fair to say they are his main interest, and this comes across in his extract, which clearly favours the people and places them as the 'victims' of the event. Norman Gash's extract on the other hand is taken from... "Aristocracy & the People" suggesting that it is the relationship between the two that he is focussing on. However from his extract we can infer he has more sympathy with the upper classes, especially... with the yeomanry and hussars... Another possible reason... is the possibility that not much reliable information is available on the event – so inferences have to be made in order to attempt to find out what happened.

Amy Year 2 Peterloo

Again, this response was multiply coded and Author Background / Beliefs (lines 1-6), Author Focus (lines 6-10 and 12-14) and Author Bias (lines 9-10 and 14-17) were all identified as having a major

importance here.⁷⁵ Again, Amy began by referencing authorial factors: historians draw conclusions ('inferences') when constructing accounts and these inferences are 'affected' by historians' identities ('the kind of person they are'). There are sophisticated ideas here. Historians' identities or preconceptions affect the way they 'view / interpret information & facts' causing them to focus on different things and to identify with different groups and position them accordingly in their accounts (e.g. 'as victims'). How preconception might impact *reasoning* was not fully explained here, however, and Amy's last two lines reveal a testimonial conception of evidence and imply that interpretation only arises where testimony is deficient.

Author Background / Beliefs was a dominant move for Hannah in all three of her responses. Hannah's response to the Ranter task is reproduced in below.

The two accounts are extracts from books written by two different historians, different people have different opinions and the way that they interpret information may be different also. However these two accounts are so completely opposite, I would say that the historians used differing evidence and sources when researching the Ranters.

Also the second account seems more factual... and cynical while the first seems to be based on fact however guesswork has been used and gaps filled in.

The first is more about the beliefs of the Ranters and the second is about whether this group really existed.

Hannah Year 1 Ranter Task

⁷⁵ The last five lines of her response were coded as making reference to Limited Sources, however, this reference was deemed to be minor: it was her last suggestion and, in contrast to the other explanations, this explanation was offered as a possibility only.

The first paragraph of this response was coded as making major reference to Author Background / Beliefs, the second to Variable Sources, the third to Author Interpretation and the last as making minor reference to Author Focus.⁷⁶ Hannah suggested that different opinions would lead to different interpretations of information but *how* opinions might yield these results was unexplained. Hannah repeated the same formulation in all of her three responses arguing, in her Holocaust task response, that “different people will never have the same opinion about a subject, people view things differently”. An incomplete explanation clearly functioned as a default position here.

It is apparent, from these examples that authorial explanation can be linked to sophisticated ideas but also that it appears incomplete as an explanation and that it appears alongside other explanatory moves. To invoke authorial explanation is also, very probably, to beg questions about exactly *how* author identities shape interpretive activities. One further example, from a response that was coded as making major reference to this move, is discussed below.

The two writers may have opinions themselves on the situation, of which would be reflected within their books. These opinions would change the approach of which they would say whether Britain could have or should have done more to help the refugees of that time.

Adam Year 1 Holocaust

⁷⁶ The reference to Author Focus was deemed to be minor because the suggestion is the last and the least explained of four.

We have a mechanism here: existing opinions shape judgments of possibility (what ‘could’ have been done) and normativity (what they ‘should’ have done). This is clearly a potentially sophisticated position and one that recognises that historical judgments depend on principles as well as factual propositions, although *how* these principles would interact with documentary materials was unexplained.

It is apparent, from the discussion of these task responses, that authorial explanatory moves have importance in them and that they have importance for some respondents in more than one response. It is also apparent, however, that none of these respondents relied exclusively on authorial explanation or conformed closely to an authorial ideal type. The move also tended to be non-explanatory: it either failed to fully explain variation or implied other moves.

Positing an ideal typical authorial move is likely, nevertheless, to be pedagogically useful: these examples suggest that students who explain variation, in whole or in part, through author identities are likely to need to be encouraged to think about mechanisms and about how identity might impact inference.

4.3.ii Archival Explanation: Historians' Resources

An ideal typical **archival explanation** for account variation would explain variation solely and exclusively in terms of limitations or variations in the archive available to historians and an ideal typical 'archival' respondent would explain account variation in all cases exclusively in these ways. Archival explanation was a dominant move for three respondents but none conformed to type. Four task responses were ideal typical, however, and made major reference exclusively to archival moves. Two of these responses are discussed below.

Kim explained variation in the Ranter texts exclusively in terms of the limitations of the archive.

It's possible to have two such differing accounts... for the simple reason that most of the evidence came from hostile sources. This combines with the fact that what evidence we do have is not 'direct'...

In other words, we have accounts of what Ranters believe in from the Ranters point of view, however, we only have hostile sources to tell us what the Ranters actually did. This is not helpful as it can be rightly argued that there were many during this period... who would... start stories of Ranters so as to condemn... Cromwell... for allowing them to exist.

These factors plus the fact that there are very few reliable sources can easily lead to two opposing views being taken on the same issue.

Kim Year 2 Ranters

Trina's response to the same task was coded as explaining variation through major reference to source variation and minor reference to ideas coded as authorial factors (reproduced here in italics).

Both Account One and Two are written by two different historians, who it is possible to suggest, would have differing opinions. Noticeably, they are also written at different times... Account One was written in 1975 and Account Two in 1987. Perhaps, in this time difference there was room for differing opinions to come to light that perhaps would have influenced... the author of Account Two, or not been accessible to the author of Account One....

Therefore, both historians would have perhaps had a range of different and contradicting evidence and research to draw on, especially seeing as the two sources were published at varying times and the opinion of the historian, perhaps due to their political ideas, would have influenced how they interpreted this research.

Trina Year 2 Ranters

These observations were typical of those coded under Variable and Limited Sources.⁷⁷ How did these references to archives explain account variation?

Kim's response did not tell us *how* the conflicting and unreliable witness testimony might have translated into variable accounts and this element of her explanation was entirely tacit. Trina's Ranter response did not explain *how* variable sources might yield variable accounts either and, although her references to authorial issues gestured at this, it is not clear *how* these beliefs might impact interpretation.

⁷⁷ See pp.251-253 below.

It is apparent that purely archival explanation is essentially non-explanatory in these cases and that further explanatory moves were presupposed here.

Responses that treat archival issues hermeneutically will be discussed below. Two examples of responses that drew heavily on archival explanation but that suggested testimonial models of evidence will be discussed here.

All of Ian's response below, apart from the second paragraph which was coded as making reference to Author Interpretation, was coded as explaining variation through the limitations of the available sources.

It is possible for two accounts to differ so wildly over the same issue, but for it to happen there need to be special circumstances. This would probably revolve around the evidence. With a topic that is relatively limited, and... out of the public eye, evidence would probably be limited. When this evidence is too vague, or from a discredited author or even too controversial, it can provoke different reactions.

Here we have a case of a discredited author – Abiezer Coppe, who is quoted as a major source in Hill, the author using him to prove two points in the short passage. Davis, however, discredits Coppe... Whereas Mr Hill believes Coppe's work, Mr Davis obviously does not, hence the obvious difference in their accounts...

Ian Year 2 Ranters

Ian's explanations implied that archives set clear limits to legitimate variation in accounts: this was a 'special' case and in run-of-the-mill cases, presumably, sources constrain variation. It very much

looks as if Ian was operating Collingwood's 'scissors and paste' epistemology here, albeit with a 'critical' inflection (see pp.57-58 above) in which variation in accounts follows from variation in assessments of who to believe rather than variation in what historians construe reports to *mean*.

Like Ian's, Ruth's response to the Ranter task was coded as explaining variation in terms of the limitations of the sources, with the exception of the second paragraph which was coded as making reference to Author Bias.

When articles are being written about subjects such as the Ranters... there are very little records... and so it is difficult for either side of the argument to be accurately represented. Much information can also be manipulated...

Also these writers are obviously passionate... and all want to prove their opinion, not disprove it.

It also depends on who, when and where the supporting evidence is obtained, because that may have biased information in it.

Ruth Year 2 Ranters

Impositionist language is clearly present here and the language of interpretation and inference is absent: sources are treated as simply sources of 'information' rather than grounds for inference and meaning construction.

Archival explanation, like authorial explanation, clearly has limits as an ideal type: few responses conformed to it and it is likely to have only limited work to do, therefore. Nevertheless, it is apparent that

archival explanation had some importance for respondents and that it was offered as sufficient explanation in some cases. There are likely to be good pedagogic grounds for positing an archival type: paradoxically, reliance on archival explanation may indicate tacit or undeveloped thinking about what historians' *do* with archives and, thus, indicate where teaching interventions might focus.

4.3.iii Historians' Activities 1: History as Imposition

An ideal typical **impositionist explanation** for account variation would explain account variation solely and exclusively in terms of authorial imposition of preconceptions through representation of the past. Such imposition could be conscious and deliberate or subconscious and unwitting and might result, for example, in the tendentiously selective representation or tendentiously positive characterisation of the past activity of a group with whom the historian identifies in the present. An ideal typical 'impositionist' respondent would explain account variation in all cases exclusively in these ways.

Some respondents conformed to type, or nearly so: Author Bias had major explanatory importance in all three tasks for Jane (Year 2), Mark (Year 2) and Diana (Year 1). Nine responses were ideal typical and made major reference exclusively to Author Bias. I will cite two examples of ideal typical responses. The first is completely impositionist

in approach and the second is dominated by an impositionist perception of historical practice, although it also contains minor reference to ideas coded under Author Focus, identified in italics.

The two accounts differ because the two historians have opposing views. Account 1 is taken from... "The Making of the English Working Class" and consequently the historian is likely to take a positive view of the "revolutionaries" he describes; his loyalty to the working class exhibits what could be considered a socialist view.

Account two on the other hand is taken from... "Aristocracy and People" consequently he is likely to have more sympathy for the Yeomanry who were of a higher class than those attending the meeting. Both have interpreted historical evidence to suit their own beliefs and purposes.

Diana Year 1 Peterloo

Diana approached the Peterloo Task in completely impositionist manner: the historians had agendas and wrote different accounts because they identified with a group in the past and presented history tendentiously expressing that identification. Precisely how imposition worked requires clarification: historians begin with "sympathy" and they produce works that "exhibit" this view by interpreting "evidence to suit their... beliefs and purposes" but what such interpretation involves is not explained.

Diana's references to author bias in her other two responses were consistent with the stance she took here. In her Holocaust response she referred to the influence of authors' "preconceived ideas on the issue" and in her Ranter response she argued as follows:

I imagine these 2 accounts to be different primarily due to the fact that the historians have different purposes. Account 1 WANTS the “Ranters” to be true in order to use them as material for his book... Similarly, account 2 WANTS the “Ranters” to be fictional in order for them to be used as proof of “Myths” in his /her book. Both need the story of the Ranters to fit their purpose, and have interpreted it to do so.

Diana Year 1 Ranters

In these examples Diana understood interpretation as a process of assimilation: authors knew what they wanted the story to be – their ideological or vested interests told them – and they made the archive tell it. How this takes place is not fully apparent nor is it apparent if there was a fixed meaning extant before manipulation began. It is clear, however, that historians’ thinking is *static* in this process – accounts reflect static preconceptions and interpretation is about belief confirmation not belief generation.

Diana did not rely exclusively on notions of bias in all her responses. She made reference in her Holocaust response, for example, to variable account “focus”. As is the case of her Peterloo response, however, although she perceived the different foci of the accounts, she construed difference as imposition.

It is difficult to determine why the two sources have such differing accounts. However there is an evident manipulation of statistics present in both. While source one considers the number of Jews arriving in Britain from Germany, Czechoslovakia and Austria... source two... mentions only the number of German Jews... thus supporting the writer’s assertion that Britain did not accept German Jews into the country. *Therefore source one is considering the Holocaust and its affects on Jews throughout the “Greater Germany” such as Austria and Czechoslovakia, whereas source two limits its evidence only to German Jews.* Moreover one must consider the motivations for each historian’s

conclusions, this too may have affected their manipulation of sources.

Jane Year 2 Holocaust

Jane's response to the Holocaust task, like Diana's, noted that we have accounts of different types focused on different things, however, again, these perceptions were interpreted impositionally: the historians were selective because they had preconceptions and selected and presented information tendentiously (the word "manipulation" occurs twice in her response). Again, as in Diana's case, Jane appeared to model account construction as assimilation.

Jane's response to the Peterloo task was very similar to Diana's explanation for variation in terms of ideological *parti pris*. As in her Holocaust task, Jane recognised that the two authors were approaching the topic in different ways ("the subject matter of the two sources differ greatly"), again, however, difference in focus was construed as bias, as a matter of adopting, for example, a "pro-working class stance" and of presenting actors and situation elements in ways consistent with these stances. Again, like Diana, Jane interpreted the Ranter case in terms of vested interests linked to notions of audience – the authors were writing books of specific kinds and therefore needed to represent the past in ways that were consistent with these projects (so, in the case of Hill, had he "denied the existence of the Ranters... his narrative would not exist... so may not have been published").

Mark made impositionist moves in all his responses. I will discuss one of Mark's responses in full to explore how he conceptualised imposition and explore a passage from another of his responses to demonstrate the degree to which his thinking was consistent across his written responses.

It is quite possible to have 2 differing accounts as much of the evidence is likely to be influenced by subjective opinion and subsequently to some degree biased interpretations.

Much of the historical evidence is likely to be primary accounts and slightly left/right biased depending on the political leaning of the individual.

This problem is accentuated further in secondary evidence as not only is it subject to the original bias it is now also subject to the historian's bias.

Due to the retrospective nature it is not possible to prove or disprove events 100% and it is very easy to manipulate them i.e. 11,000 Jews settled and 55,000 entered. The second figure may not represent what is implied as it is possible 10,000 or 20,000 entered purely as a stop over to another country.

Mark Year 2 Holocaust

Again, imposition works here through tendentious representation.

The underlying logic of Mark's case is clear, however, and it is clearly informatic, rather than evidential. Mark appeared to think of historical knowledge in quasi-experiential terms: historical knowledge is based on reports that are biased by the preconceptions and commitments of the past informants, about whom we often know little; the experiences reported are past and cannot be re-assessed experientially; we are left therefore in a position where historians are free to exercise bias just as their dead, and therefore unaccountable, witnesses did. An almost

identical formulation was present in his Peterloo response where he argued as follows.

[T]here are going to be subjective accounts which differ as a result of location, intentions and bias of the individual who recorded them... Bias is also a reason why the accounts may differ not only on the part of the historian but also on the part of the people present. It is quite obvious that the two historians are writing books on the two class groups and this is likely to have been a contributing factor to the distortion of the events. The historians want to present a romanticised picture of the classes and so interpret evidence differently.

Mark Year 2 Peterloo

There are good grounds for positing an impositionist ideal type: we have clear examples of respondents who consistently deploy impositionist explanations and there are also clear similarities between them. The notion of impositionism is also likely to be useful heuristically: it seems likely, from these examples, that impositionism works on autopic epistemological assumptions (p.47 above) and involves Collingwood's 'scissors and paste' thinking (pp.57-58 above). The pedagogic response indicated here is clear: impositionist thinkers need to develop their understandings of evidence.

4.3.iv Historians' Activities 2: History as Meaning Construction

An ideal typical **hermeneutic explanation** for account variation would explain variation solely and exclusively in terms of historical interpretation, understood as a process of meaning construction. Whereas impositionism conceives historians' meanings as resulting from

the *one-directional action*, of *static* preconceptions on the historical record, a hermeneutic approach conceives historians' meanings as *emergent* and the result of a *dynamic interaction* between historians' beliefs and the archive.

Again, some respondents conformed to type, or nearly so. Elizabeth (Year 1) and Stuart (Year 2) made major reference to Author Interpretation moves in all tasks and made no major reference to Author Bias moves in any task. Responses that conformed to the ideal type were rare, nevertheless: Elizabeth, for example, made major reference to two ideas in two of her three responses and where she made major reference exclusively to Author Interpretation, minor reference was also made to other ideas. The following is a rare example of a response that conformed closely to the hermeneutic ideal type and was coded exclusively using the Author Interpretation code.

The two articles do not completely contradict each other.
The 1st article assumes [the] use of the witness accounts to write about the Ranters.
2nd article evaluates the witness accounts to prove the non-existence of the Ranters.
It is possible for there to be two different accounts. The difference of the accounts is a result of the interpretation of the witness accounts.
If someone believes that [the] witness accounts were not a result of the disassociation of [the] Ranters [that] people tried to achieve and [that] they were valid, then the stories of Ranters could have been believed.
Peter Year 2 Ranters⁷⁸

⁷⁸ The words in parenthesis have been added to Peter's response to make its logical structure clearer.

Although there are ambiguities and elisions in this response, it is clear that variation was exclusively explained here in terms of decisions made in the *process of constructing meaning*. Account variation arises, as Peter said, “a result of the interpretation of the witness accounts”. It is not a matter of preconceptions being imposed but of differential conclusions emerging as “a result” of interpretive assumptions. Meaning *emerges* through the interaction of assumption and archive and conclusions are shaped by assumption not pre-empted by imposition, as the “if... then...” logic of Peter’s final paragraph shows.

Similar ideas were apparent in a number of responses, such as the following:

[I]t very much depends on how one perceives the evidence...the author of Account 1 believes that the existence of the “Ranters” in the play proves their actual existence... the author of account 2 may have perceived their appearance in a play as nothing more than the fiction that plays often are.

Alice Year 1 Ranters

A similarly hermeneutic model of account construction is apparent in the following example, that was typical of Elizabeth’s approach across the three tasks.

The two accounts are written by completely different people with different views. No two people have the exact same view and interpret information in different ways. The ways authors interpret information affects their beliefs.

The two writers may have had access to different accounts which would have consequently provided them with differing information on which to form conclusions.

Both accounts agree that evidence is 'minimal' and much of that is from hostile witnesses. It seems the two writers have interpreted this in different ways; one questioning the evidence, one cross-referencing.

Both writers would have differing opinions on other events at that time that might have affected the way they interpreted the information, and their views on the topic.

Account one is based solely on 'radical ideas during the English Revolution' and so would deal with the beliefs of the 'Ranters' explaining their 'radical ideas'. Account two, however, deals specifically with the 'myth' around the Ranters. Each piece was written for a different purpose and this explains the differences.

Elizabeth Year 1 Ranters

This response was multiply coded – as making major reference to ideas coded under Author Interpretation (in paragraphs one and three), Variable Sources (in paragraph two) and Author Background / Beliefs (in paragraph four) and as making minor reference to ideas coded under Author Focus (in paragraph five). It is clear, however, that Elizabeth was thinking hermeneutically. The word 'interpretation' occurs four times in her ten sentences and it is clearly understood as an *interaction* between ideas historians hold and data they examine. The form of Elizabeth's reference to variable sources differentiates her approach from testimonial approaches: for Elizabeth source materials were not testimony to be 'believed' but materials that yield "information... on which to form conclusions" and history was a matter of belief generation not preconception confirmation; as Elizabeth put it, in diametric opposition to an impositionist formulation, the "ways authors interpret information affects their beliefs."

It is apparent that Elizabeth's thinking was shaped by two propositions that are best described as hermeneutic, namely the propositions:

1. that historical meaning emerges as sense *is made* of source materials;
2. that the process of interpretation is inherently variable – because human beings are subjects who *make meaning* in variable ways.

There are problems with this second proposition, of course: historians are not merely atomic individual subjectivities and interpretation has inter-subjective and conceptual dimensions.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, it is apparent that Elizabeth thought of interpretation as a *process* through which meanings are construed and constructed.

Stuart's responses to all three tasks were remarkably consistent in form and the principle that interpretation is person relative was present in all them (as he noted in his Peterloo response, the historians had "interpreted... sources in different ways as every historian does"). Like Elizabeth, he suggested that historians use different interpretive strategies and also that historians make sense of individual factual propositions in different ways:

⁷⁹ Elizabeth was thinking, therefore at level 5, in Lee and Shemilt's accounts progression model (pp.73-74 above).

[T]he facts are just interpreted in different ways... just because... there were some anti-Semitic sections... does not mean that there could not have been pro-Jewish feeling too. The discussion of the censoring of news broadcasting during the war does not rule out pro-Jewish feeling in Britain... the anti-Semitic element could have been limited to just a few.

Stuart Year 2 Holocaust

Like Elizabeth also, Stuart invoked a range of ideas, including archival considerations such as the following –

The fact that the sources were written 11 years apart also suggests a reason why they could be different as new evidence could have been introduced or old evidence disregarded.

Stuart Year 2 Peterloo

Although he referenced a range of considerations, Stuart clearly approached account variation in a hermeneutic manner, as the following response indicates.

It is possible for there to be two such different accounts of the same issue because different people interpret evidence in different ways.

Account one has accepted the sources at face value, believing exactly what they say about the Ranters. Account two however seems to have tried to look deeper into where the evidence comes from, the authors, their backgrounds and the number of sources, which has allowed him to come to his conclusion.

It seems to me that such a different view can arise on one issue because there are few sources and so little evidence of the Ranters existence.

The accounts were also written at different times, between 1975 and 1987 new evidence could or could not have changed the way the situation looked and could be interpreted.

Stuart Year 2 Ranters

Stuart explained account variation here in terms of the individual construction of meaning through differential interpretive strategies: he

had one historian treat archival materials uncritically as testimony and the other question and contextualise sources; claims emerged from and follow engagement with the archive (“looked....which has allowed... conclusions”). Stuart was also aware that historians operate in contexts and that their presuppositions are not simply subjective whims: historical meaning arises through interaction between sources and historians’ discourses and evidence can change perception.⁸⁰

Approaches very similar to these examples can be found in the responses of respondents typed in different ways. Christine, for example, who conformed closely to the inquisitorial type in two of her task responses, responded to the Ranter task almost exclusively in hermeneutic terms.

It is possible for there to be 2 such different accounts on the same argument due to the same evidence being interpreted in 2 very different ways. Account 1 uses the content of the evidence to show how many people were opposed to Ranters and concludes that therefore due to a highly publicised opposition that it must have been a major problem in order for it to be spoke of so much. As these accounts are against the Ranters they all show them in a bad way, focusing on the most outrageous parts of their beliefs. So account 1 concludes they were a large movement, with extreme beliefs who were hugely opposed as this is the only content of the evidence available.

Whereas account 2 looks at the reliability and the roots of the evidence and what this can tell us about the Ranters. Account 2 therefore shows that to begin with a lot of evidence of the Ranter movement was in the press, which would obviously sensationalise the truth in order to produce better stories. In turn these press reports were taken as fact causing many people to believe the movement was very big. This created huge

⁸⁰ On first inspection, Stuart and Ian (see p.105 above) were thinking in very similar ways. However, Stuart talked in ways that connote meaning construction (‘conclusion... interpretation’) where Ian used the language of ‘belief’, which implies a testimonial approach.

opposition, causing written evidence to be opposed to the Ranters and exploiting the worst parts of a movement which was actually a myth created by the papers.

The two accounts are so different as they both focus on different aspects of the evidence. Account 1 looks at the content of the evidence whereas account 2 looks at the origin and reliability of the evidence, causing them to conclude two totally different arguments.

Christine Year 1 Ranters

All but the last paragraph of Christine's response, which was coded under Author Focus, was coded using the Author Interpretation code category. There are many similarities between Christine's thinking here and the examples discussed above. Christine was clearly thinking in terms of *emergent* meanings. Whereas Stuart, for example, simply noted that authors had made different interpretive decisions, Christine explored the assumptions that they made in detail and showed how they led to variant meanings. Christine clearly thought that historians ask genuine questions and that these questions yield variable answers. Interpretation did not just involve inference (rather than imposition), it involved *chains of inference*, and *conclusions* conditioned by the *reasoning* rather than by the identities of their authors.

Again, there are good grounds for positing a hermeneutic ideal type: we have clear examples of respondents whose explanations conform to type with consistency and there are clear similarities between them. It is also likely to be pedagogically useful to posit the type. Although these respondents recognised that history involves inference and meaning making, there is more to interpretation than generic

subjectivity. These students needed to know more about the role of concepts and traditions of enquiry, for example, and to engage further with history as a discipline.

4.3.v Historians' Activities 3: Questioning History

An ideal typical **inquisitorial explanation** for account variation would explain variation solely and exclusively in terms of the enquiries that the authors of accounts were pursuing when constructing their accounts, and explain variation in terms of the proposition that the authors are simply trying *to do* different things. In other words, an ideal typical inquisitorial explanation would explain variation solely by making reference to ideas identified by the Author Focus code and explain variation by saying

- that historians have focused on different aspects of the past and / or
- that historians have asked different questions of the same aspects of the past.

An ideal typical inquisitorial respondent would explain account variation exclusively in these terms across all the three tasks.

No respondents conformed to type, however, two respondents made major reference to ideas coded under Author Focus in all three of their task responses (Vicky, Year 2 and Christine, Year 1) and two respondents (Frank, Year1 and Trina, Year 2) made major reference to ideas of this type in two of their three task responses. With the exception of Trina, however, all these respondents made major reference to other ideas also. Two of Trina's responses conformed to the inquisitorial ideal type, however, and showed this move operating as a sufficient explanation.

Although the two accounts are not written at particularly different times... the titles of the two books... are perhaps a key to their differing accounts.

Account One is "The Making of The English Working Class". This would coincide with the fact that Account One focuses largely on the fault of the middle class... In contrast, Account Two comes from "Aristocracy and People", which would perhaps be more focused on the upper middle classes or aristocracy's role in the event rather than the plight of the working class.

Therefore, I believe that the fact that the two accounts are approaching the "Peterloo" event from the viewpoints of two differing classes allows for the two differing accounts of the same issue.

Trina Year 2 Peterloo

Although the two accounts seem to differ in their perception of Britain's role... in the 1930s period, both accounts are written in 1999 and therefore presumably would benefit from the same kind of primary and secondary evidence and research. However, Account One is an article from the "Modern History Review" and therefore perhaps would have less room for constant debate surrounding this issue and would perhaps need to make... broader and sweeping statements regarding the treatment of Jews during the Holocaust. Whereas Account Two is an extract from a book debating specifically Britain's role in the Holocaust and therefore would perhaps be more focused [on]... the actual role of Britain in the Holocaust rather than any other country's role.

Trina Year 2 Holocaust

Both responses modelled history as driven by questions and assumed that historians may entirely legitimately focus on differing issues, scrutinise different sources and articulate different claims. The task texts were modelled as answering different questions which we might construe as ‘What role did the Middle Class play in Peterloo?’ and ‘What role did the Aristocracy play in Peterloo?’ and ‘How were Jews treated during the Holocaust?’ and ‘What role did Britain play in the Holocaust?’ The contrast with Jane’s response (p.110 above) is striking: both respondents noted the same fact (differential focus) but Jane understood focus variation as manipulation.

As was noted above, all of Christine’s responses made major reference to inquisitorial ideas. The following was typical of her approach which was very similar to Trina’s.

Both accounts were written after the event at the same time, meaning neither is first hand evidence, which means it is easy for their opinions to be bias[ed] due to differing accounts they have heard.

Account 1 is from a book looking generally at modern history whereas Account 2 has had more in depth research into the situation and could therefore gain a more rounded and less biased view. The situation can be seen in two very different lights as demonstrated by these accounts, this may be due to focusing on various aspects of what was or was not done to help. For example, Account 1 being a book on modern history from around the world may have concentrated more on comparing what Britain did to help in comparison to other countries. Whereas Account 2 may have concentrated on what more Britain could have done and not what they did do. The accounts differ as they take two different perspectives and concentrate on the differing points, which they feel are most important.

Christine Year 1 Holocaust

The first paragraph of Christine's answer was coded as making minor reference to ideas coded under the They Are Secondary Sources and Variable Sources codes and material in the final three sentences of her response was coded as making minor reference to ideas coded under Author Interpretation as well as to ideas coded under Author Focus. The bulk of her response was coded under Author Focus. Christine suggested that an historian's focus might lead to differing ways of framing an issue, which in turn could lead to further differences in the questions that are asked and the comparisons that are made. This is clearly a sophisticated explanation for account variation and arguably a more sophisticated explanation than Trina's.

Christine's response was remarkable also for containing a mixture of sophisticated and unsophisticated ideas. As we have seen, Christine clearly understood that history is constructed through questions, in the light of assumptions and so on. On the other hand, as her first paragraph above suggests, Christine also talked in ways that implied experiential thinking. The former set of ideas are dominant here, as elsewhere in her responses, and it is probable that her thinking has outgrown simpler but persistent default positions.

Frank made major reference to inquisitorial considerations, coded under Author Focus, in two of his three responses and the following was typical of his approach.

It is possible for there to be 2 differing accounts on the same issue because each account although on the same issue focuses on different aspects.

The first account seems to be more about British peoples' help and acceptance of the Jewish refugees, fund raising and home taking in refugees. Whereas account two focuses on some people who did not have such an accepting attitude, which could be because, according to the document, the British government did not fully inform the public of the situation in Germany.

Each account has truth in it but account one is more positive to the attitude of the British people whereas account two gives a very mixed report.

Frank Year 1 Holocaust

Although elements of the final paragraph were coded as making minor reference to Author Bias, this response was almost exclusively coded using under Author Focus. Unlike Christine, who linked differences in content focus to differences in question focus, Frank simply suggested that account differences followed from differences in the content focus: no rationale was offered for content choices.

Vicky, like Christine, made reference to ideas coded under Author Focus and also to a large number of other explanatory moves. Unlike Trina, Christine and Frank, however, Vicky combined major reference to ideas coded under Author Focus with major reference to ideas coded under Author Bias.

They were written by different historians who would have had different purposes to their accounts. Account one for example, is from a book called "The Making of the English Working Class" and so naturally focuses on the role of class in Peterloo.

The accounts were written on different dates, 1968 and 1979, this could affect the amount of evidence and research available to the historians.

The historians could be of different skill levels, this would affect the quality of their accounts.

The authors could be biased and so only portray the event how they want others to see it and not what actually happened.

The type of evidence could affect the accounts i.e. descriptive secondary evidence could make an account more unreliable. The authors are probably tailoring their accounts for different audiences.

One historian could be incompetent and not have done thorough research.

Vicky Year 2 Peterloo

It is difficult to interpret Vicky's responses: she tended to provide *ad hoc* lists of possible explanations and it is hard to gauge the importance of any one explanation. This response was multiply coded using the Author Focus (paragraph 1), Variable and Limited Sources (paragraphs two and five), Author Error (paragraphs three and six), Author Bias (paragraph 4) and Audience codes (paragraph seven).⁸¹ It is clear, however, that inquisitorial considerations were key to Vicky's thinking: in all her responses her first move was to refer to variable 'focuses' (Holocaust Task), 'purposes' (Peterloo Task) or 'objectives' (Ranters Task). It is also apparent that Vicky's reference to bias is simply one of a list of possible explanations and that she did not construe variable focus as a form of manipulation.

Again there are good grounds for positing an inquisitorial ideal type: we have clear examples of respondents whose explanations conform to type. Again, there are lacunae here, however: it is not clear from the cases discussed *why* historians might want to ask different

⁸¹ Author Error and Audience are Minor Codes. Minor Codes are exemplified at pp.253-254 below.

questions. As was the case with hermeneutic explanation, the pedagogic implications are clear: students who explain variation in this way are likely to need to know more about history as an interpersonal practice, to understand paradigmatic dimensions of enquiry, and so on.

4.3.vi Atypical Respondents

It will be recalled that there were five respondents who could not be mapped onto Figures 4.2(a) and (b) and who therefore were literally ‘atypical’ since typicality was posited using those figures:

- four respondents (Adam and Dan in Year 1 and Mary and Peter in Year 2) responded to each task in a different way; and
- one respondent (Beatrice Year 1) made every move at least once.

It will also be recalled that one of the respondents (Jenny Year 1), who could be mapped onto Figure 4.2(b), was atypical in a looser sense: her response broke the pattern of contrast that held for the majority of respondents by *simultaneously* making major reference to impositionist and hermeneutic explanatory moves.

These respondents clearly do not conform to any type. How far can their explanations for account variation nevertheless be understood in terms of ideal typical moves?

Two students (Adam, Year 1 and Peter, Year 2) explained variation in all three tasks without making major reference to impositionist explanations.

We have discussed aspects of Adam's Holocaust response above (pp.101-102) and it was clear that he explained variation in the Holocaust accounts by making 'authorial explanation' moves. In his Ranter task response, Adam explained variation as follows.

Both sources have said that they have found little evidence upon the subject of the Ranters. When there is not much to go on, there would always be a question upon how and whether these people existed. This is where the two conflicting views come from. Whereas Hill argues towards their existence, Davis argues against. This means that their views are always going to have the opportunity to clash. An example of this is that of the evidence they have got. Hill uses it to back up his evidence compared to Davis who decides to say it is useless and just dismisses it.

Adam Year 1 Ranters

The first four lines of this response were coded under Limited Sources and the remainder under Author Interpretation and it is apparent that Adam's explanation for variation in the Ranter case can be understood in terms of the archival and hermeneutic explanatory moves. It is clear from this response that historians can do different things with

sources and advance opposite arguments and that lack of evidence is a permissive condition for this.

In his Peterloo response, Adam considered variable evidence as a possible permissive factor but dismissed this and explained variation as follows:

There are a few similarities of the two accounts which illustrate some truth is written. These points may have then been played upon by authors or storytellers creating two different accounts.
Adam Year 1 Peterloo

It is possible that Adam thought that where the evidence is plentiful and reliable, difference could only be a matter of presentation. Adam's position here is reminiscent of explanations in terms of 'telling' identified in the CHATA data set (Lee, 1997, pp.31-32). The response was unusual here, however: no other respondent explained variation in this way.⁸² It is apparent, nevertheless, that two of Adam's three responses can be understood in terms of the ideal typical moves proposed above, and there is no suggestion of manipulation or imposition in his responses.

We have already discussed Peter's Ranter response above (pp.113-114) and it will be recalled that variation was explained hermeneutically. What can be concluded from his remaining responses? Peter explained variation in his Peterloo response in terms of the

⁸² Storytelling is a Minor Code. These codes are exemplified at pp.253-254 below.

limitations of sources (“lack of evidence”). Peter explained variation in his Holocaust response as follows.

Account two points out that the British involvement with the Jewish people is poorly understood. This could be the reason why the accounts are different. Either account may contain errors or misinterpretation.

Another possible reason why these accounts differ could be that they highlight and talk about different things. For example account one does not look into media but account two does.

The articles may also differ because of the aim of the book. Account two is a book dedicated to Britain and the Holocaust and account two is a general history book, therefore the aim is different. Therefore detail is likely put on different things.

Peter Year 2 Holocaust

Peter’s first explanatory move was coded as a minor reference to Author Error. The remainder of Peter’s explanation clearly explained account variation in inquisitorial terms, in terms of differences of Author Focus.

It is apparent, that like Adam, Peter can be understood as explaining account variation by making ideal typical explanatory moves and it is apparent that, like Adam, he made no major reference to impositionist moves in any of his responses.

Dan (Year 1) and Mary (Year 2) explained variation in different ways in all tasks and did make major reference to impositionist explanations in at least one task.

Dan explained account variation by reference to ideas coded under Author Interpretation and Author Background / Beliefs in his Ranter response, to ideas coded under Author Bias in his Peterloo response and under Author Focus in his Holocaust response. We appear, therefore, to have a respondent who draws on hermeneutic, archival, impositionist and inquisitorial moves varying approach by task. I will examine the language that Dan used to explore historians' activities in all three responses to explore Dan's understanding of historians' activities more fully.

In Dan's response to the Ranter task he contrasted the claims that the historians' made and he then explained this difference as follows:

These two contrasting opinions about the same text could be due to the historians' personal opinions. They may have been taught about the subject during their education, or have knowledge from elsewhere, which could bias their opinion before even starting to look at the evidence.

The difference could also be due to their personal empathy, or lack of it, towards Ranter beliefs. An atheist may be more likely to accept, and believe that there was such a group than a religious practiser.

Dan Year 1 Ranters

Dan explained variation here in authorial terms: historians existing opinions and beliefs remain static in their encounter with evidence and shape the conclusions they advance.

In his Peterloo response Dan considered the possibility that the "historians had the same evidence...yet they interpreted it differently"

but argued that it was impossible to tell from the texts. His positive proposal was straightforwardly impositionist: historians begin with preconceptions and manipulate narration to conform to preconception.

Another reason could be that the historians were approaching the event with the intention of encountering different views... Account One... part of "The Making of the English Working Class" may have been written... to make it appear that the working classes were suffering from cruel oppression and class hatred, yet... emerged victorious...

Dan Year 1 Peterloo

In contrast to his Peterloo response, which perceived differences of focus as differences in bias, Dan's Holocaust response noted that the two texts had a different "purpose" and "cover" a different "range of topics" and he clearly felt that this accounted for the differences in the texts. However, Dan concluded by explaining variation in terms of imposition, suggesting that

One was looking for evidence to support the view that Britain held little blame, whereas the author of Account Two may have been looking more critically upon the government's actions.

Dan Year 1 Holocaust

Although Dan's moves vary by task, it is apparent that he conceived historical knowing in impositionist terms: interpretation is referenced but the language of interpretation is absent.

Mary's explanations for account variation in the Ranter task were coded as making major reference to Author Interpretation and Limited Sources, in the Peterloo task as making major reference to Author Focus

and in the Holocaust task as making major reference to Author Bias. Her Peterloo and Holocaust answers were very similar, however, in that she also made minor reference to Author Bias in the former and minor reference to Author Focus in the latter. Again, I will examine the language that Mary used to characterise historians' activities in order to model her understandings more fully.

Mary's Ranter response had hermeneutic themes. Mary explained the variation in her Ranter response in the following way.

Whereas source 1 is taking the small sources they have and expanding them, 2 is questioning. It's merely a question of how sources are examined.

Mary Year 2 Ranters

Mary thought of historians as actively making sense of the record of the past and as reading it in different ways. Mary's Peterloo response supported this suggestion, demonstrating a clear awareness that the account authors were focusing on different things.

The two accounts are arguing with different objectives. 1 is from a book "The Making of the Working Class" which is probably about their repression over the years and is bound to side with the workers... rather than discuss the aristocratic / working class problems... it chooses to highlight the problems found between the middle and working class. Source 2, however, is coming from the Aristocratic perspective... This is why its main debate is whether the magistrates made the correct decision...

Mary Year 2 Peterloo

It is apparent, however, that focus was conceived as side-taking: indeed, for Mary, difference in focus was "bound" to lead to bias.

Side-taking, rather than focus, was Mary's explanation for variation in the Holocaust task: Mary noted that the authors were "talking about different things" but construed this as tendentious selection and presentation:

They are... manipulating the language they use and the figures to suggest their opinion... trying to be negative and saying 'only 11,000... being positive by saying 'at least 55,000... both sources have taken the facts their way. By... including the... Austrian and Czech Jews they make it seem... big amount... Also source 2 does not say what action... after 1939, it only deals with the fact that it wasn't publicised... 1 does mention this.

Mary Year 2 Holocaust.

It is apparent that in these two tasks Mary understood variation in impositionist terms. Other processes, such as questioning, were referenced, but impositionism clearly played the key role.

Beatrice made reference to all the explanation types at least once in her task responses and had two dominant moves, referring to ideas coded under Author Bias in her Peterloo and Holocaust responses and under Author Background / Beliefs in her Ranter and Holocaust responses. I will focus below on her Ranter and Holocaust responses: the contrast between the two is indicative of the range of her ideas and illustrates tensions in her thinking.

Beatrice's Ranter response is reproduced below.

The two accounts occur due to the different interpretations made by the two historians. The two have looked at the evidence, and formulated different ideas.

The lack of evidence also caused different interpretations to be made. It could have meant they did not exist, or that many dismissed the movement.

The sources are also written in different times... Perhaps some of the evidence was shown to be unreliable. The accounts are also different, because of the different backgrounds of the historians, which may cause them to interpret the information differently.

The issue is also less clear because of the time period.

You could believe or not in the Ranters depending on the way in which you looked at the activities going on during that period, making the group 'Ranters' seem more or less likely.

Beatrice Year 1 Ranters

There are clearly hermeneutic ideas here: the historians have 'looked' *and then* drawn conclusions and assumptions about context condition their judgments.

Beatrice's Holocaust response began in ways that contrasted dramatically with this approach, however.

Bias from the author and having access to different information will change the end conclusion from the author.

Account 1 does not blame England for not helping. I believe that it is significant that it is by "Rubinstein" a traditional Jewish name, perhaps this person does not want to believe badly of one of the allies.

Source 1 does not look into detail of British reaction to the war – perhaps if it had done so a different opinion would have emerged.

I also think that source 2 focuses more on German Jews or this seems to be implied – whereas source 1 talks about Jews saved from many regions of Europe.

Beatrice Year 1 Holocaust

The first half of this response is clearly impositionist: 'bias' and what historians 'want to believe' shape histories, however, the second

half reads very differently: enquiry replaces preconception and historians 'look into' and 'focus' on variable issues. Beatrice's responses appear inconsistent therefore and one response appears internally inconsistent. It is possible, but no more than that, that the first half of her Holocaust response was a default position and the second half a reflective one.

Jenny was unusual in making three dominant moves: making major reference to ideas coded under Author Interpretation and Limited Sources in her Ranter response, under Author Bias and Limited Sources in her Peterloo response and under Author Interpretation and Author Bias in her Holocaust response. Jenny's responses are of particular interest because they contrast and because her Holocaust response simultaneously made hermeneutic and impositionist moves, upsetting a contrast apparent in the majority of responses.

Jenny's Ranter response is reminiscent of responses that we have examined already.

It is possible to have 2 such differing accounts because the people who wrote them interpreted the resources... available differently. They both used similar sources, and both said that evidence was scarce... but the first account showed more of what was in them, and the 2nd seemed dissatisfied with them and commented more on their reliability than what they said. The 2nd account has then used the sources as examples of the hysteria of the time... It is possible for there to be... such differing accounts... because the reliability of the sources is questionable.

Jenny Year 2 Ranters

Jenny's response was coded as under Limited Sources and Author Interpretation. It is worth noting, however, that most of what Jenny said

focused on testimony and making judgments of credibility and on ‘showing’ what was in a source rather than on the inferential construction of claims.

Jenny’s Peterloo response was structurally very similar to her Ranter response.

The historians are also responsible for the difference, as they can exercise their personal opinions on the matter, choosing to show sources which best support them, as there is obviously a choice of differing ones.

Jenny Year 1 Peterloo

Again, we have the language of ostention - sources ‘show’ things – rather than the language of inference and history is construed as a rhetoric of claim-validation rather than a process of claim-development.

When the underlying model of historians’ activities underlying Jenny’s Ranter and Peterloo responses is considered, then, the responses appear structurally similar.

Jenny’s Holocaust response needs to be cited at length, given its unique status in the data set.

It is possible because either the accounts... differ in their interpretation of events and are subjective or they simply highlight whichever facts strengthen their case.

Whilst account 1 shows British public opinion... account 2 shows government knowledge... These opinions differ but could both have happened simultaneously because the government did not necessarily make the information it had public. While account 1 talks about the “growth in British hostility...” account

2 reminds us that “ministers feared a generous response”. These ministers could have been overruled; if a minister fears something, that is not the end of it.

Account 1 makes Britain sound better by stating the number of Jews from many different countries allowed into Britain, but account 2 makes Britain sound worse by only stating the amount of German Jews, which of course will be a smaller number. It also describes the numbers with “only” making sure the readers knows that Britain was not generous...

[T]he accounts... differ so much because each historian has simply picked up the facts that support their argument and ignored those that do not. Neither of them have acknowledged the other opinion and argued against it.

Jenny Year 1 Holocaust

Some elements of this response (the second paragraph) were coded under Author Interpretation and some elements (principally the final paragraph) were coded under Author Bias. There is also material here that was coded under the Storytelling code (in the third paragraph).

What actions did Jenny have historians take here? Historians were described as ‘showing’ things or said to ‘talk of’ things; historians were described as manipulating representations through, for example, tendentious ‘highlighting’; and historians were described as selecting information tendentiously (picking only ‘facts that support their argument’). It is clear that Jenny was making impositionist moves here. Although Jenny referred to interpretation, it was not modelled hermeneutically: interpretation was a matter of ostention and sources were sources of information rather than sources of inference.

4.4 Conclusions

This chapter has proposed and explored the value of an ideal typical schema of explanatory moves by applying the schema to model respondents' approaches to the written tasks. This ideal typical schema is heuristic only: the purpose is to aid comprehension of 'what is going on' in the student responses not to provide an exhaustive description of 'what is happening' in the responses.

Some of the ideal types are better supported in the data than others. We have good grounds for positing three ideal typical respondent types – impositionist, hermeneutic and inquisitorial. It is also apparent that there is a clear contrast in the data set between respondents who approximate to the impositionist type, on the one hand, and respondents who approximate to the hermeneutic and inquisitorial types on the other and that we can postulate a master opposition between impositionist and non-impositionist approaches to explaining account variation. The archival and authorial ideal types, are poorly instantiated in the data set: however, although we cannot posit respondent types we can posit response types; respondents make explanatory moves of these kinds even if they were not perceived as sufficient explanations. It is also apparent that where students did not conform to ideal types their responses can be understood as approximating to one or more ideal typical move. The schema therefore has application in modelling explanations of various kinds.

The ideal typical analysis echoes many conceptual contrasts identified in existing work on progression. The impositionist and hermeneutic ideal types, for example, are logically linked to contrasting conceptions of evidence, the former to testimonial and inferential conceptions of evidence corresponding to levels 3 and 4 in Lee and Shemilt's evidence progression model (pp.59-60 above) and to Collingwood's 'critical history' (p.57 above) and the latter being logically linked to level 5 on Lee and Shemilt's model and to Collingwood's 'scientific history'.

It is also apparent from the discussion above that, although some respondents conform to the hermeneutic ideal type, these students retain a fundamentally personal and subjective conception of account variation in which interpretation is person relative and not theory, concept or criterion relative and it is apparent that these students are operating, therefore, at level 5 in Lee and Shemilt's accounts progression model (p.73 above).

Types can be posited on two levels, then: at respondent level, where they have drawn attention to some clear patterns in this data set, and at the response level, since it is apparent that all the responses can be analysed using the five ideal types. The ideal typical schema is also likely to be useful pedagogically and diagnostically. As we have seen, reliance on particular ideal typical moves looks like being a clear

indicator of where teaching interventions might focus: on developing understandings of evidence, in the case of respondents whose responses conform to the impositionist ideal type; and on developing knowledge and understanding of interpersonal aspects of the discipline of history and of the importance of theory, concepts and criteria, in the case of the respondents conforming to the hermeneutic and inquisitorial ideal types.

Chapter 5. Data and Discussion: The Interview Task

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has posited an ideal typical model of explanatory moves and shown it to be analytically robust and diagnostically useful as a tool for thinking about student understandings. This chapter will test the robustness of the ideal typical against the interview data set and use it to explore respondents' thinking, as revealed by a richer data set. I will address the following three questions in the discussion that follows:

- How far are respondents' approaches to explaining account variation in their interview responses consistent with the approaches that they adopted in their written tasks?
- What light do interview responses shed on my respondents' understandings of historical accounts?
- What limitations in my respondents' thinking do the interview responses reveal?

The first question will be dealt with discretely and the second and third questions will be considered jointly.

5.2 Analysing the Interview Data

It will be recalled that respondents were asked to answer the following question in their interviews:

Why do historians disagree?

The question was intentionally broad and, unlike the question posed in the written tasks, the question was a general question about historical disagreement rather than a specific question about account variation.

As has been noted, at pages 34-5 above, the interviews involved a process of interaction in which, in some cases, respondents' ideas changed and developed. The typing of responses that follows will note the order in which particular moves appear in interview responses and type respondents in terms of an initial or 'default' position.

Interviewees were volunteers and the sample is not representative of the written data sample: none of the respondents who were typed as making inquisitorial explanations in their written tasks volunteered.

5.3 Consistency Across the Written and Interview Tasks

The interview data was coded using the codes and code categories developed for the written task data. It proved straightforward to code student responses using this coding system, although it was necessary to create two additional minor codes to code ideas that appeared in the interviews but not in the written data. Figure 5.1 presents the results of this coding. I will site one example of a coded response here to exemplify the process.⁸³

Ruth's interview response was coded as explaining disagreement in terms of Author Background / Beliefs, Author Bias, Author Interpretation and Author Psychology (in that order). The psychology code was a Minor Code that took account of reference to author psychology in two interviews and this category is explained further below.⁸⁴

Ruth's interview began in the following way.

Why do historians disagree?

I think it's a lot to do with like individual... opinions... Because...people have different opinions with politics... and I think people view things in the way they want to see it... the historian will look at things like events in the way they perceive it and quite often they can... distort the information

⁸³ Further examples will be discussed below, where respondents' ideas are explored more fully, and the interview data coding is explained in Appendix 8.5 (pp.277-283).

⁸⁴ Minor Codes are listed at pp.282-3 and 253-4.

or... get what they want from the information to suit their way of thinking.

Right, so... political views shape how they see the past?

Yeah but it might not just be their political views, I mean for example their upbringing.

How might that work then?

I don't know. It... shapes someone. Some people... are quite negative some are quite positive and they are going to look on a situation in light of their past experiences and the way they see things. So... different historians... are all going to have different experiences and different ways to interpret it... and so they are going to see an event in a different way and they are going to see evidence in a different way.

Ruth Year 2

Ruth's initial answer clearly explained disagreement in terms of authorial factors which were held to operate in a classic impositionist manner ('distort... information... to suit'): interpretation was, metaphorically at least, a matter of perception and authorial preconceptions function like lenses that cause things to be 'seen' in distorted ways.

Ruth's default position clearly conformed to the impositionist type, however, at times, later in the interview, Ruth also used the language of interpretation and these passages were coded in hermeneutic terms.

The facts don't change. A fact is a fact and if it's true its always going to always stay true but you can always interpret it in different ways.

Could you explain that to me? So two different people could agree about the facts but interpret them in different ways. Could you give me an example?

Erm... [Long pause] No.

What you are saying is that the facts don't change, but what you think of them, the way you interpret them is going to be affected by who you are.

Yeah.

Could you give me an example of that?

Say someone's been killed and the fact is they are dead okay, but people could interpret the way they are dead in two very different ways. Like someone with a negative attitude or very sort of suspicious is going to think 'murder' and someone else might just think 'natural death' or like suicide or something like that do you know what I mean.

Ruth Year 2

As is apparent from the pauses and interviewer interventions in this passage, Ruth experienced some difficulty when asked to develop and explore her explanations and it is likely that we were reaching the limits of her thinking about this topic here, nevertheless, she clearly referenced an interpretive process.⁸⁵ It is apparent, however, that Ruth's default position was to think dispositionally or attitudinally about interpretation which she conceptualised as personal and affective rather than theoretical and conceptual.

Ruth's last observation was developed further as follows, in terms that were coded as 'psychological' explanation:

⁸⁵ Ruth's comments are reminiscent of Kosellek's (at p.51 above).

People have always got... their own needs and desires and they are going to want to satisfy that in the way that they examine things. So if they... look at a piece of evidence they are not... going to go totally against what they believe and... they are going to try to make it work towards what they want because it's will satisfy them more.

Ruth Year 2

I cite this example to demonstrate how responses were coded and also to draw attention to the significance of the ordinal presentation of codes in Figure 5.1 below. Ruth's initial response to the question was straightforward to code, however, her position developed, in interaction with the interviewer, and additional explanations for disagreement emerged.

In the analysis below (Figure 5.1) ideas that respondents proposed early in their interview will be used to identify respondents' default positions on historical disagreement. Further emergent ideas that develop during the interview will be considered in the subsequent discussion.

Figure 5.1 The order of appearance of explanatory moves in the interview data for both year groups

This table notes the incidence of explanatory moves in respondents' answers to the interview question 'Why do historians disagree?' and notes the order of appearance of these moves. A positive number indicates that an idea is present and a zero indicates absence. Positive numbers are ordinal and indicate the order of appearance of explanatory moves ('1' denoting an opening move, '2' the next move, and so on). Student's ideas were coded using the system of codes developed to code the Written Task data set.

Year	Respondent	Code Categories							
		Author Bias	Author Background Beliefs	Author Focus	Author Interpretation	Limited Sources	Variable Sources	Minor Codes	
1	Adam	4	0	0	2	3	1	0	
1	Ben	3	0	0	4	1	0	2	
1	Dan	2	1	0	0	0	3	0	
1	Edward	1	2	0	0	0	0	3 & 4	
1	Elizabeth	4	2	0	3	0	1	0	
1	Jenny	2	1	0	3	0	0	4	
2	George	2	1	0	0	3	4	5	
2	Mark	2	4	0	5	3	1	0	
2	Kim	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	
2	Ruth	1	2	0	3	0	0	4	
2	Peter	0	1	0	2	3	0	0	
2	Stuart	4	0	3	2	0	1	5	

As the figure indicates, half the respondents explained disagreement by making reference to ideas coded under Author Background / Beliefs and Author Bias in their first two explanatory moves. Reference to Figure 4.3(a) and (b) and to the discussion in Chapter 4 indicates that with one exception, George Year 2, these respondents were typed as explaining account variation in impositionist terms in their written task responses: we can say, therefore, that five of these six respondents are broadly consistent in their approaches across both data sets.

Two respondents explained variation by making reference to ideas coded under Limited or Variable Sources and Author Bias in their first two explanatory moves. Mark explained variation in terms of biased or partial source materials and authorial bias and his initial position was entirely consistent with the approach that he adopted across his three written tasks. Ben explained variation in terms of limited sources, author error and author bias (in that order).⁸⁶ Ben's interview response was largely inconsistent with his written data responses (as Figure 4.3(a) shows, Author Interpretation was his dominant move in two of his written responses).

The remaining four respondents explained disagreement in their initial explanations in non-impositionist terms. Adam and Stuart explained variation by making reference to ideas coded under Limited or

⁸⁶ The 'Author Error' code is illustrated in the discussion of Ben's interview (pp. 173-177 below). Minor Codes are listed at pp.282-3 and 253-4.

Variable Sources and Author Interpretation in their first two explanatory moves; Elizabeth explained variation by making reference to ideas coded under Limited or Variable Sources and Author Background / Beliefs in her first two explanatory moves; and Peter explained variation by making reference to ideas coded under Author Background / Beliefs and Author Interpretation in his first two explanatory moves. Author Bias figured in three of these four responses but late in the interviews and in response to questioning aiming to develop initial responses. It will be recalled that these respondents were typed as making either clearly hermeneutic or consistently non-impositionist explanations for account variation in their written responses: their interview and written data responses are therefore broadly consistent.

Ten of the twelve respondents were consistent in approach across both data sets where their initial interview responses are concerned. The typing of respondents in Chapter 4 is therefore confirmed by the interview data: the majority of respondents approached the interview task in ways that might have been predicted on the basis of their written task responses.

A number of additional observations follow from Figure 5.1.

It is apparent that inquisitorial explanatory move figured in only one of the twelve interview responses: it will be recalled, however, that the interview sample was not representative of the written data sample.

It is also apparent that seven of the twelve respondents made reference to both Author Bias and Author Interpretation in their responses, an observation that argues against the suggestion in Chapter 4 that these modes of explanation contrast strongly. This can be considered a task effect, however: respondents were asked to suggest additional explanations to those that they initially offered during the interview and respondents whose initial position is to reference Author Interpretation (such as Stuart) made reference to Author Bias late in their responses: the contrast claim stands, therefore, for respondents' initial positions on disagreement. This claim is further supported by the fact that four of the six respondents whose initial positions were authorial and impositionist made no reference to ideas coded by Author Interpretation in their interviews.

It will be recalled that the discussion in Chapter 4 argued that although there were grounds for positing authorial and archival explanatory types, these forms of explanation for variation were essentially incomplete. Figure 5.1 indicates that both explanatory moves are prominent in the interview data set. As the discussion below will show, however, these ideas worked in combination with other moves and did not stand alone as explanations for variation.

This chapter will analyse the interview responses in detail. I will focus on three features of responses in particular and explore:

- the forms and limits of impositionist explanations;
- the forms and limits of hermeneutic explanations and
- explanations that foregrounded archival explanations for historical disagreement.

The themes that I am foregrounding reflect instructive features of respondents' answers from a pedagogic perspective and allow key issues, such as conceptions of evidence, to be considered.

5.4 Impositionist Explanations for Historical Disagreement

The interview data set contains many examples of impositionist explanation. All respondents, with the exception of Peter in Year 2, made some reference to ideas coded under Author Bias and seven of the twelve respondents made reference these ideas in their first or their second explanatory move. Six of the twelve interview respondents' first two explanatory moves made reference to ideas coded under Author Bias and Author Background Beliefs and historical disagreement was essentially a function of imposed authorial preconceptions for these respondents. This section of the discussion will focus on those respondents who made particular reference to impositionist themes; reference will also be made, however, to impositionist explanations offered by respondents whose initial positions were hermeneutic.

I will focus in particular on two respondents (Jenny and Kim) whose responses differ greatly in sophistication and allow the range covered by an impositionist stance to be indicated.

The opening section of Jenny's interview is reproduced below.

Why do historians disagree?

... Well if it's about two different sides of an event then they could just have come from... different sides or they could have been educated in the manner of the two... sides... they could have just grown up thinking two different things...

Could you give me an example?

Like the Peterloo Massacre.

Right.

Or like if two different countries had been at war someone who had been educated in one country could grow up thinking completely different things from the other side.

Right. Are there things where there aren't two sides that there might be disagreement about?

Well... they just have different beliefs. Depending on how they want to interpret the sources, they could interpret them to fit their beliefs, well not entirely but to an extent. Yeah when they are just trying to get across their beliefs.

Okay so you could have this idea of taking sides. Are there any other reasons why people might draw different conclusions or come to different assessments other than being one-sided or having something to prove?

Well if they just have interpreted things, like not with a certain hypothesis but if they just happen to see it differently. Like the same as the one before but without a set out plan.
So without intending to see it differently they just do?

Right.

Jenny Year 1

The extract suggests that, although Jenny was reluctant to claim that historical disagreement was a simple matter of deliberate imposition, she understood historical interpretation in impositionist terms as an expression of identity or personal agendas.

My next question asked Jenny to explain the reference to “interpretation” in her previous answer.

*Could you tell me a bit about this idea of interpretation?
Could you give... an example... or explain what it means to
interpret things differently?*

Well it could be to do with... The way sentences are written.

Right

Or something, just the way the words are placed they can kind of lean towards certain things, like, yeah, if you just want to break it down to how they have used the language and stuff

Right

Jenny Year 1

At first it looks as if Jenny was moving into hermeneutic territory here, however, it becomes apparent that Jenny understood interpretation as *shaping sense* rather than as *making sense*.

[I]t can kind of be moulded... or just they could take different parts. Like if you have a whole lot of writing or an account of a diary entry or something.

Right.

You can just take different parts that just agree or just take on part that just agrees with what you are saying and ignore the other bits.

That's coming back to the idea of being one-sided isn't it?

Yeah.

Jenny Year 1

For Jenny, then, historical disagreement was either arbitrary or driven by conscious or unconscious imposition of preconceptions and agendas and imposition operated through selection – tendentious selection of materials or selective ‘seeing’.

Similar explanations for disagreement appeared in many responses, alongside a range of other moves: three examples follow.

Some way into his explanations for variations for accounts Adam (Year 1), observed that

Some people may want to... be patriotic and make their country look good and stuff and may already be biased in a way and...try to swing the data and make it look good for their country.

Mark (Year 2) made similar suggestions:

[A] German historian is not going to... want to accept that his country were responsible for killing millions... and... the British cream over the idea of colonisation, what they did to Africa and places like that.

George (Year 2) provided theoretical motivations for imposition:

If you are a Feminist then you are going to see the Suffrage movement in a much different way to if you are a conservative man. If you set out to try and show that men were dominating and repressing women and it was right and proper for women to stand up and try and get the vote then you are obviously going to try and interpret the information that you are given as that perspective. You're not going to say this is what I set out to do and then start looking at things. You're going to see what you want to see. You're going to take the information and present the information that upholds your side of the argument and conveniently ignore anything else.

We have already seen that Ruth suggested that historians are driven to impose meaning by psychological need. Edward (Year 1) developed psychological explanation for imposition in a number of directions:

Perhaps some historians are out there to make this claim for themselves, to make themselves famous maybe... It's also perhaps the need to get clarity about something. So this is it, this happened, I say this happened, look at my example, everyone learn from that...

The motors of imposition vary between these examples but the mechanisms seem constant: interpretation is tendentious selection or presentation.

Impositionist approaches no doubt have application and it is easy to find cases where historical writing has been shaped by author bias.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Allegations of bias are common in historiography (for example, Thompson, 1994, pp.168-192, Lindgren, 2002 and Evans, 2000, pp.116-128); as these examples show, however, the interpersonal nature of historical practice places constraints on 'seeing what you want to see'.

However, there are serious limitations to the impositionist model of historical interpretation.

Firstly, reference to individual biases foregrounds individual subjectivity and thus fails, as Goldstein put it, ‘to attend to history as a discipline, seeing instead only *historians* in conflict’ (Goldstein, 1976, p.132).

Subjectivity clearly plays a crucial role in history and, as Schama puts it “claims for historical knowledge must always be fatally circumscribed by the character and prejudices of its narrator” (1991, p.32). However, as has been noted in Chapter 3 (pp.53-54), history is an interpersonal practice and texts become historical not by being authored but by being structured around an ‘infrastructure’ of citation and argument, running alongside their ‘superstructure’ of substantive claims and narration (Goldstein, 1976, pp.140-143; Grafton, 2003, pp.231-233). By definition, then, history constrains subjectivity and to foreground subjectivity is to underestimate the disciplinary nature of the historical enterprise.

Secondly, impositionist explanations presuppose but do not provide a theory of interpretation. To make tendentious selections from sources to support presuppositions one has first to *perceive meaning* in the relics and reports surviving in the present: there has to be meaning before it can be manipulated. There is little explicit discussion in these

responses of how meaning might arise and, as we will see further below, impositionism and 'scissors and paste' thinking are often connected.

Kim's interview was very probably the most sophisticated in the data set. Kim articulated a developed theory of interpretation and one that made plentiful contrasts between historical knowing and other forms of knowledge. However, Kim's underlying model of historical sense making ultimately appears to have been impositionist.

Kim (Year 2)'s starting point was that history is about judgment
— about evaluating the actions of other people.

Why do historians disagree?

Probably because they are human... Well we all make judgements... depending on our own beliefs and values... so the same would apply to how we judge other peoples' actions and that's what history is, basically, the actions of other people. It's not so much about things as in science... You can't really judge an atom because it just is whereas you can judge Napoleon because he existed, he had his own values and judgements and it's really easy to super-impose our own ones on top of theirs so that's why you can have lots of different interpretations of the same thing. That would be my reason.

For Kim two worlds of meaning were involved in historical interpretation, the world/s of past actors, who have their own 'values and judgments' and the world/s of historians who similarly have 'beliefs and values', and historical disagreements arose because individual historians' 'beliefs and values' differed from those of past actors and other historians. Although this may be an over-interpretation, it looks as

if Kim modelled historical writing as the re-evaluation by historians of decisions made by past actors, in the light of historians' criteria of evaluation and, as will appear below, of what historians now know in their present.

Kim explicitly used impositionist language to describe the interactions between these two worlds of meaning: historians "super-impose" their value orientations on the past actors that they write about and the interactions between the historian and the past are one-way, preconception acting on the archive but not vice versa.⁸⁸ It is apparent, however, that Kim was not thinking in terms of deliberate and witting distortion: she set out with the premise that history is an activity of a particular kind (judging what other people have done) that cannot be conducted without criteria of judgment (beliefs and values): it was not a matter of historians recognising actions shaped by past 'values and judgments' which they then deliberately construed in anachronistic terms; it was rather that historians construe meaning using their own categories.

I challenged the idea that history was simply about judgment – offering explanation as an alternative also – to which Kim replied:

Yeah but it is still in the same way because you could explain the actions of an atom in a way that would mean that everyone could more or less agree on it because you can say it acts... in

⁸⁸ It is worth noting that Kim does not rule out non-imposition, since to say that 'it is really easy to super-impose' anachronistic values is not to say that it is impossible to avoid such imposition. Kim's interview responses, however, focus on imposition and do not address the possibility of non-imposition.

like a rational logical way... by a set of rules. There is no set of rules for human actions. So I wouldn't say judge but explaining it would still impose your own values and how you view things because we have hindsight and which obviously the people living at the time wouldn't.

For Kim cognitive activity involved procedures: scientific interpretation was the application of laws and rules and historians could not have these, she argued, because of the nature of their object; instead they use variable values and theories to make sense of the actions of past actors.⁸⁹ There is clearly a hermeneutic insight here and one that echoes debates on the role of interpretation in the human sciences (Callinicos, 1988).

Kim also referenced hindsight and, presumably, the fact that the meaning of things past is inherently open because conditioned by subsequent events: as well as having different theories and values, therefore, historians had information about consequences, that they could draw upon when evaluating past actions, that could not have been available to past actors.

Modes of historical reading, drawing upon reflexivity about historical knowing, followed from Kim's model of how historical accounts were created.

You know everybody, all history students get taught how to analyse sources. Well you don't have to learn that skill in science

⁸⁹ I construe Kim's 'how you view things' to denote theories about how the world works.

or maths. In Chemistry I get given a set of results... the model results... that theoretically you should get... In history I don't have a nice model theoretical set of results to which I can work... It is simply a case of 'okay his opinion is this, his approach is this, he's a Marxist he would take this view, he's right wing he would take this view', therefore... how much value should I place on this source, for this particular argument coming from this approach. It's much more complex and you don't have any straightforward evidence most of the time because, you know, all evidence can be interpreted.

Since, for Kim, historical interpretation involved the interpretation of the past by the imposition on it of variable values and theories in the present, understanding historical writing entailed being reflexively aware of the values and theories that had been used to create it.

It is apparent, from the above, that Kim had a very sophisticated understanding of historical writing. It is equally apparent, however, that there were a number of problems with Kim's ideas, as they are stated here.

On the one hand, although Kim did not acknowledge that there was more to historical interpretation than evaluation, Kim clearly understood history as primarily about judgment. Explanation and description are no doubt impossible without tacit evaluation but they are in principle distinct from evaluative judgment (Megill, 2007). There are also alternative accounts of why things happen in history (for example) and rival explanatory theories are not in the first instance evaluative theories (Callinicos, 1995, pp.95-109). What appears to be missing from

Kim's responses is an account of the theoretical equipment that historians would need in order to describe, explain and so on (Megill, 2007), and these operations are logically prior to evaluation.

On the other hand, ultimately, for Kim, history was about the imposition of judgments on the past. Kim is not alone in talking in this way, of course and there is a very real sense in which history does indeed entail imposition of precisely this kind.⁹⁰ However, the ideas that historians bring with them to the archive are neither monolithic nor impervious to revision. As Richard Evans' explains:

Of course you set out with all sorts of assumptions... you go into the archives with a set of these ideas, derived partly from your reading of the secondary work, and then... you start reading through the files... Ferdinand Braudel has a wonderful image. He says that theory for historians is like a boat that you send back down the river of time. Eventually it will founder on the rocks of evidence, but you see how far you can send it. (Richard J. Evans, quoted in Kustow, 2000, p.28).

⁹⁰ This is a key theme in postmodernist critiques of historical practice (Daddow, 2004; Jenkins, 1991).

5.5 Hermeneutic Explanations for Historical Disagreement

As Figure 5.1 indicated, historians' background beliefs played an important role in non-impositionist explanations for disagreement, as well as in impositionist explanations. Authorial explanation played a key role in the initial responses of both Peter and Elizabeth and was linked, in Elizabeth's case, to archival explanations for disagreement. Non-impositionist explanations for disagreement also combined reference to archival factors and hermeneutic factors, as the coding of Adam and Stuart's responses shows. As Figure 5.1 suggests, references to hermeneutic themes were not confined to respondents whose initial response to the interview questions was hermeneutic – indeed, as will become apparent below, the most developed discussion of how sources can be interrogated appeared late in Mark's interview, which began in an impositionist manner.⁹¹ The discussion that follows examines some straightforwardly non-impositionist explanations for disagreement as well as hermeneutic elements of responses that were predominantly or initially impositionist.

As was the case with the respondents discussed in section 5.4, there are clear limitations to the conceptualisation of historical interpretation offered by the respondents discussed below: the discussion will identify where respondents do and where they do not appear to have the tools to hand that they need to make sense of what historians do.

⁹¹ Mark's initial response to the interview question is discussed at pp.177-178 below.

Both Adam (Year 1) and Stuart (Year 2) explained historical disagreement by making initial reference to hermeneutic and archival factors. I will discuss each interview in turn.

Why do historians disagree?

I think some people give their different interpretations from different sources and, they all have their different theories and they put this on paper and stuff and that's why you've got different ideas.

*Could you take me through some of that in a bit more detail?
So you were saying that they will interpret things differently?*

Interpret sources and stuff.

And you mentioned different theories, so could you take me through that in a bit more detail?

Well if the source is quite general and isn't specific enough then they may think that in a different way another historian would and the problem is they conclude things already.

Right

And they... use other sources and data to back up the conclusions they have already got.

Adam Year 1

This is a compact explanation and there are problems with seeking to draw too much from it. Nevertheless, there clearly is a hermeneutic process here. Adam started with sources and this is where Adam saw historians' ideas as originating. For Adam, and in clear contrast to the impositionist proposition that historians' conclusions precede this encounter, historians examined sources *and then* began to

form ideas. These ideas were likely to be highly variable where the record was thin. Once historians have formed their initial ideas they return to the archive and interpret what they then see there in the light of the conclusion that they have already formed and Adam's language implied imposition from here on. It is clear that Adam saw meaning as constructed *through* a process of interaction between an archive and an historian rather than something that historians preconceive and rigidly impose.

Like Adam, Stuart's response began by making reference to archival considerations.

I am interested in why historians disagree. Can you give me your thoughts on that?

Because they will be looking at many different types of... Some historians will look at some types of document and others will look at different ones and even if they look at the same ones they will interpret them differently because it's the very nature of a document that you can interpret it differently, because different people are looking for different things.

Could you explain that a bit to me? So, basically, different documents or the same documents. Why is it inevitable that people interpret them differently? Could you give me some examples of that?

There could be bias. So if you are biased towards a certain thing you might look for the positives in something which you might see as overshadowing the negatives or if you were just looking for different things, if you were looking for more social things, other people might look for more political things in a document then you are going to come up with some differences.

Right. Okay... Are there any other factors?

Political, social pressures, the society you are living in, or is that the same as bias? I don't know you might interpret

something differently if there is a different climate of feeling at that time towards something, so... if there's an anti-communist feeling you might just be predisposed to... follow that feeling

Stuart Year 2

Stuart's initial answer clearly showed hermeneutic and inquisitorial awareness of the nature of historical interpretation: for Stuart, documents did not speak for themselves and had to be made to speak and historians approached documents with questions and might seek out different documents depending on their questions. His response did not give us detailed insight into why this might be, however. Stuart suggested two explanations for enquiry variation: an impositionist explanation, in which bias drives tendentious selection and an underdeveloped theoretical explanation, in which historians look for different categories of evidence or at different aspects of evidence. It is possible that we had reached the limit of Stuart's thinking here and it is equally possible that his responses could have been developed further by more effective follow up questions (such as 'Why might historians look for different kinds of thing?').

Peter's (Year 2) response raised similar issues, by talking about the fact that historians often chose to approach data or problems in different ways. It was clear, however, that Peter has only a very general explanation available for why historians might make such choices. Peter's response begins with a principle – reminiscent of many of the comments in the written task data. Historians may disagree, Peter argues

Because things can be interpreted in different ways. Some people may have different beliefs and therefore they look at things and someone may look at things a different way to another person

Peter gave a number of examples, drawn from everyday life, before giving the following example in reply to request to be more history specific.

Well evidence can be interpreted in different ways, for example the Gestapo in Germany was very short numbered and some people could say they could still terrorise because there's people in camps, but Gellately said well they can't because it's structurally impossible. People have different opinions and will interpret evidence in different ways so opinions can be different.

Peter then glossed this example with the observation,

[I]f it is a source or evidence it... people can interpret it in different ways because people have different thinking methods and no one's the same.

Peter Year 2

Peter was clear here about the fact that history involves argument and his example showed how a fact can be interpreted to support more than one inference – in this case a fact about the Gestapo (they 'were very short numbered') that, in conjunction with assumptions that Peter did not reference here, can yield the conclusion that terror was 'structurally impossible' or that, when interpreted in conjunction with other facts (there were 'people in camps') can yield another conclusion. This is an important insight and clearly recognises that facts do not

‘speak for themselves’ or even speak at all without intervention.⁹²

However, Peter’s explanation of the fact that historians can use the same fact about the past to ground variable inferences is vague at best (‘different thinking methods’ of what nature?): further observations, that Peter did not deploy here, about the ways in which historians’ theoretical frameworks and concepts shape and enable their interpretation of data need to be adduced to fully make sense of his example. It is apparent that Peter was aware that the meaning of the data depends upon the apparatus that historians bring to bear on it but it is equally apparent that he lacked an analytical vocabulary to develop this awareness.

Similar references to theoretical dimensions of historical interpretation were apparent in comments in Mark’s interview.

... a Nazi sympathiser is likely to have a different perspective to say a communist... because they’ve got their own bias, their own political views which influence their opinions.

Right. And you are saying that comes through in the sources? Or is it in the historians’ writing as well as the source material?

Yes depending on what sort of ... Like there’s structuralists, intentionalist historians who put more weight on different opinions.

Both Mark and Peter glossed complex theoretical questions, that ultimately relate to philosophical and methodological propositions as well as to political and moral stances (Kershaw, 1993, pp.5-15), in terms

⁹² Student debate focused on this issue is exemplified in Chapman and Hibbert, 2009, at pp.141-142 and teaching strategies to engage students with assumptions are discussed in Chapman, 2006(a).

of everyday ideas: in Peter's case in terms of generalised subjectivity and in Mark's case in terms of opinion and bias.

Mark returned to similar ideas later in his interview and again understood theoretical questions in essentially personal terms.

It just depends on subjective ways of analysing... stuff. They might analyse things differently and put more weight on different evidence....

Could you explain why that is? It is a rather interesting idea... why is it that they give different weight to different things, why do they analyse things differently?

Some people might give more weight to accounts by everyday people and they might see them as the unbiased accounts and put more weight on it and other people might put more weight on say Nazi reports.

So is it to do with historians' evaluation of the evidence then?

Yes.

Why might they put more weight on one kind? Top-down / bottom-up evidence for example? Every day sources versus government sources? Why might they make the decision that government sources were more reliable?⁹³

Well because it depends on the historian. For example in our class we all do the same coursework but we all come up with different conclusions from the evidence we have read. We have all had the same sources the same material but we have all come up with different conclusions and also a lot of it can be influenced by preconceptions. Before studying it you've got preconceptions of what happened and also your opinions on things. Like before you study Nazism you might have preconceptions about the Nazis or preconceptions about Communism.

Mark Year 2

⁹³ This is a poorly phrased and possibly leading question and 'reliability' is not the issue here, however, Mark appeared to cope.

On the one hand we have a sophisticated description of different things that historians may *do*, including the claim that historians may use different methods and / or analyse different archives. On the other hand we have relatively naïve explanations of *why* historians might do things differently, including everyday subjectivity and the notion of preconception (which would probably lead us back to the idea of imposition). What was missing here? On the one hand, the notion of a *rationale* for choices of methods, or, in other words, the idea that methods may be linked to methodology or to assumptions about how the world works that lead historians to chose methods of different kinds and / or to select archival material of varying types. It is notable, in fact, that Mark's historians did not *choose* to do things differently and simply did things differently in an apparently arbitrary way without any clear rationale: "it just depends on subjective ways of analysing... stuff."

Elizabeth's response developed hermeneutic insights in a different direction, referring us to many of the issues we have encountered already but also to the *activity* of interpreting documentary text.

Why do historians disagree?

Historians have access to different sources.

Right

Sources differ and it depends on where they take their information from and how many sources they take their information from

Right

As to the different views they have

Right

And it also depends on the way they have thought about the topic before they started studying it. Because if they already have an idea or a view on something then the way they interpreted the sources would be different.

Okay

And people don't interpret sources in the same way and so they pull out different ideas from the sources

Right... So you might come along and pick out different sources to study the past and then people interpret sources in different ways

Yes

What does it mean if you interpret something?

...Some people might read into something more than others and some people take things at face value whereas others will like 'read between the lines' and take out ideas that aren't explicit in the writing.

Elizabeth Year 1

In contrast to Jenny's account of reading, in which historians simply selected and moulded text, Elizabeth talked about different ways of reading – depth and surface reading (or perhaps inferential reading) – and clearly showed that she did not construe historians as using documents in a simple 'scissors and paste' manner. Again, however, this observation was under-theorised and no indication was given of why historians might adopt different reading strategies.

The most sophisticated and detailed account of the kind of reading that historians can engage in was found in Mark's interview. As Figure 5.1 indicates and as is discussed further at pages 177-178 below, Mark's initial position on historical disagreement was impositionist in character. Mark began his interview with the same approach that he had taken in his answers to the written tasks (and even using some of the same phrases) but subsequently, and in response to interviewer questioning, Mark went on to develop observations that clearly showed that he recognised that meanings can *emerge through* research as much as be imposed by researchers.

I am still intrigued by this question of why people analyse things differently.

Well... some people might be more critical, whereas some people might take a source and take it on face value other people might take certain aspects of a source. Say if it's a report... and it is going one way, it might infer something else. One small aspect might stand out to someone else and they might draw on that as opposed to what the source is trying to sum up. Like it could be a source about Hitler's daily life and it could be going towards his dislike for the Jews that might be where the source is going but one historian might read into it that he spends three hours in the morning reading newspapers as opposed to what the source is actually trying to tell. It depends how you analyse it. People read in things differently.

So you can use the same piece of information to draw quite a lot of different kinds of conclusions depending on...

And also the way it is written.

How does that come into it then?

Well not necessarily the source itself but the structure of the source, how it is written, the tone of the source: that can infer more than the actual content.

Right.

How it's written... it could be quite aggressive towards the Jews, or it could be that from the structure of the source you could tell more about the situation than the actual content which could be quite bland.

Mark Year 2

This passage contrasted dramatically with Mark's thinking elsewhere in his interview and written tasks. It will be recalled, and as we shall see further below, that Mark's initial response when asked to explain variation or disagreement was an impositionist explanation linked to a 'scissors and paste' testimonial theory of evidence (pages 111-112 above and pages 177-178 below). It is quite clear, however, that this default position was in tension with the sophisticated notions of reading presented here. He was referring here to the notion of 'reading against the grain', or of making meanings from testimony or data other than the meanings that those who constructed it intended to communicate. In other words, Mark articulated an inferential or, in Collingwood's terms, 'scientific' reading of sources even though his default position on historical reading was a scissors and paste and testimonial one: Mark's practice, therefore, conflicted with his theory of practice.⁹⁴

5.6 Informatic Explanations for Disagreement.

⁹⁴ Collingwood's ideas are described at pp.57-58 above. Reading evidence against the grain is discussed and exemplified in Mukherjee (2007).

As Figure 5.1 showed, reference to Author Background Beliefs, (or Authorial explanations for disagreement) in respondents' initial responses to the interview question was found in responses categorised as impositionist and in responses categorised as hermeneutic. Previous sections of this chapter have explored how these ideas fitted together. As Figure 5.1 also showed, reference to ideas coded under Variable Sources and Limited Sources in respondents' initial responses to the interview question occurred in two cases categorised as impositionist (Mark and Ben) and in two cases categorised as hermeneutic (Elizabeth and Peter). We have already discussed Elizabeth and Peter's interviews (at pp.165-167 and 169-170 above). The ways in which archival explanations relate to impositionist explanations for historical disagreement will now be explored.

It is clear from a number of Ben (Year 1)'s comments during his interview that he modelled historians' practices in an impositionist manner as the following passage demonstrates.

[T]he historian, like all the other historians who had written before him, is probably going to write from a certain angle and perspective. And even now about the Second World War a historian who is English would write completely and totally pro-English but a Nazi... or even someone who lived in Germany would probably make Germany out to be not such a bad country... and show different points... you can't help but, when you are spending a lot of time on a subject, take a certain side. You are going to form your own ideas from it all and that's maybe based on your upbringing and your own ideas that you already have...

Ben's interview, however, began with other considerations and, as Figure 5.1 shows, his initial response began by discussing archives and their limitations, and, uniquely in the interview data set, Author Error.

Why do historians disagree?

Okay. I would say that reasons why historians disagree is well firstly that they obviously are historians because they weren't around at the time.

Right.

And they are basing what they do know on sources that have been written by past people who were around at the time and it is very debatable... how reliable they are and whether it is totally true or not and a historian can easily misinterpret something that is false to be true... while the historian who is perhaps true and does have the right view does not have the evidence because these people aren't around anymore.

Right.

In order to be able to prove them to be totally wrong.

Okay, so is that basically just an evidence issue? It is in the past, it's gone, we have only got bits of it left and they're not necessarily...

Yeah.

Why is it? Can you tell me a bit about this reliability idea? So the bits that were left may not be reliable you were saying: you might be mistaken therefore about what was going on?

The only example that comes straight to mind was that there was a diary entry by Hitler claiming that he never wanted a war and he never wanted any of this to happen. Whereas someone who was pro-Nazi... may to support their views use this and say that this is true because this was written by Hitler, he never wanted it, he was pushed by the Allies of the First World War or something... but it is still a source.... It's a question of whether it was valued or not and whether if he was... I would say that Hitler was obviously lying and that he

wanted to make them... He didn't want to go down as evil as he has done.

Ben Year 1

It is apparent that Ben's formulation of the historians' epistemological predicament tended to a testimonial position: given that the 'ideal' mode of knowing (direct experience) is not possible, historians must rely on witness reports by those who had direct experience, reports whose truth-value remains questionable. In this situation, we can expect historical disagreement to arise for two reasons: historians' errors (mistaking a false report for a true one) and historians' biases (distorting the assessment of testimony).

I asked Ben follow up questions to probe and develop these ideas. The first question addressed the archival problem and Ben's answer demonstrated the extent to which his historical epistemology depended on experiential / testimonial models of knowing.

Does that mean it's much easier to write recent history then? It's not so long ago: there should be more 'stuff'?

I would say perhaps that's true because more recently we have better methods of archiving, of keeping track of everything that happened, and also, seeing as it wasn't all that long ago, we can still see clearly some of the direct results of historical events... if you are talking about medieval times it is very difficult because the direct evidence of what happened isn't really clear anymore and we have to rely solely on texts written a very very long time ago... We don't have relatives, much older relatives, who might know them or something like that, because it's such a long time ago so I would say perhaps it was a bit easier to find out a lot more about more recent history rather than medieval history or ancient history.

It is apparent here, from Ben's decision procedure for verifying claims (asking people who experienced events), that he was thinking in experiential / testimonial ways about historical knowing. My second question aimed to explore the issue of tendentious testimony.⁹⁵

You were saying that people often have motives for what they say and that sort of thing and therefore we shouldn't take what they say at face value. But if we know this doesn't that help us?

If we know that... [Long pause]

If we have as a general principle 'whenever you are looking at a source, consider the possibility that they are up to something'.

Yes we can see that but obviously if every single one of them is like that you always have to take one side eventually.

Right.

If you have 100 sources each and everyone has got their own agenda.

Yes.

And you're going to be taking to one side and your mind's going to swing to one way of thinking whereas a different person may see sense in a slightly different way because it's not always the fact that they are lying, it's that they are bending the truth and adding their own actual thoughts about it.

Ben Year 1

Two things are apparent here. Firstly, Ben's responses confirm that he was thinking in testimonial terms: when faced with conflicting witness reports, historians have to decide *who to believe* and thus which 'side' to 'take'. Secondly, Ben returned to the idea of distortion and

⁹⁵ The question was, as is apparent from the need to reformulate it, poorly phrased.

bias: different people may 'see sense' in different ways and for Ben such sense making amounted to distorting the record by adding 'thoughts' to it. For Ben, then, we can say that historical knowing was a process through which historians collected information from witness reports which they then simply collated in a 'scissors and paste' manner and variation in accounts and arguments, whilst ideally eliminable, was in practice inherent to historical knowing because it is very difficult to control two variables – bias and partiality in reports and bias and partiality in historians. As we have seen and in contrast to Ben's notions of 'seeing sense' through distortion, Mark developed sophisticated notions of what historians might do when reading archival materials. As has been noted, however, these comments of Mark's only appeared late in his response and only after prompt questions designed to see if he could offer any alternative to his initial response. Mark's initial response follows below.

Why do historians disagree?

What generally? Because it's retrospective. There are always going to be two angles and your subjective opinion might already be biased. Also the evidence that you look at because there are always two sides to the coin and different people have different perspectives on events and there are going to be different records of events depending on which you think are more reliable...

Can you tell me about this retrospective thing?

Because it's happened in the past therefore you've got to rely on other peoples' opinions and largely a lot of them are dead or they have been influenced by subsequent events, so you are going to have to take... You don't know the situation, you don't know what their influences are, you've just got a record of what they saw and you weren't there and there's no 100% proof of anything

So how does that lead to different versions?

Because what you've got is records from different people with different views about things and their views are going to differ and depending on what evidence you read you are going to get different pictures of the event.

Mark Year 2

It is evident, from the above, that very similar ideas to those developed by Ben were articulated here. Mark's comments also echoed the phrasing of his written responses, as the following example shows.

History is retrospective, we rely on reports and accounts from which we may interpret. It is often difficult to ascertain an author's views or obtain information about his social standing or political ideas. This means that an historical event or period often has differing accounts due to bias... This means that historians today are faced with differing interpretations of the same account and so they must decide which is to be believed. But even modern historians are subject to bias... which may lead to different interpretations from different historians.

Mark Year 2 Ranters

Mark clearly had a default position on historical knowing – a script even. According to this model, historians laboured under parallel disadvantages - limited and biased information and their own bias. Like Ben, Mark had an articulated theory of what historians do and the theory mirror's Collingwood's 'critical historian' who operates in a scissors and paste manner on testimony deciding which 'picture' to accept, which testimony 'to believe' and which side 'to take': the meaning is 'out there' but hard, or even impossible, to find and, for both Ben and Mark, the historian is as much an impediment as a means 'finding' it.

5.7 Conclusions

This chapter has shown that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, respondents' approaches to explaining account variation were consistent across both the interview and written tasks and thus supports the robustness of the ideal typical model suggested in Chapter 4. The analysis has also supported the suggestion of a master opposition between impositionist and non-impositionist explanatory moves.

The chapter also supports the suggestions made in the conclusion to Chapter 4 about the links between these types and ideas posited in progression models about evidence and accounts. The suggestions that impositionism was closely linked to testimonial conceptions of historical evidence and that the hermeneutic respondents in this data set had limited understandings of historians' conceptual apparatus, and thus foregrounded the person rather than the criterion or concept relativity of accounts, are both supported here. Again, it is apparent that respondents who approximated to the impositionist type needed to think further about historical evidence and that the students who approximated to the hermeneutic type had a limited conception of paradigmatic aspects of historical practice. It is also apparent, in the data set as a whole, that this group of students had a limited conception of history as an interpersonal practice whose infrastructures put limits on the play of subjectivity and where traditions and research programmes shape interpretation.

In addition, two features of the interview data seem to me to be particularly striking.

On the one hand, as the case of Kim's interview shows, highly sophisticated performance and understanding can, given unchallenged assumptions about evidence, remain structurally identical in key respects to relatively unsophisticated thinking. Conversely, as the case of Mark shows, highly sophisticated notions of what historians *do* can exist alongside less sophisticated understandings of why historians might *chose* to do the things that they do.

The other very striking feature of the interview process relates to the interview as process. Mark's interview suggests that some respondents can deviate significantly from an initial script when pushed to develop initial or default positions by questioning.

It seems probable that there is significant scope for targeted teaching interventions, informed by diagnostic thinking linked to what is known about progression, to move student thinking on and that the typology proposed here has heuristic value as a diagnostic tool.

Chapter 6. Conclusion: Towards an Accounts Heuristic

6.1 Evaluating the Typology

The ideal typical model proposed above has evident limitations. Firstly, the model is developed from and grounded in a small and unrepresentative sample of students. Secondly, the model simplifies respondent thinking, which it models, in any case, on the basis of performance in discrete tasks, which may not capture it fully.

However, and has been shown, the ideal typical model of explanatory moves clearly has heuristic value, not least as a way of operationalising key ideas about progression grounded by existing studies, and it seems probable that a revised model, developed in dialogue with a broader data set, would have similar heuristic value.⁹⁶ The typology appears to have analytical potential: it was possible to model what all students in this case study were doing using it, either in terms of respondent types or ideal typical moves. Furthermore, the majority of respondents fall on one or other side of the master opposition posited above, between impositionist and non-impositionist approaches to explaining account variation, which suggests that the typology has

⁹⁶ As has been noted in the conclusions to Chapters 4 and 5, the analysis offered here is consistent with many of the claims advanced in existing research literature: this study, therefore, adds further support to claims advanced elsewhere, for example, about the importance, in the development of understandings of accounts, of shifts from experiential or testimonial to inferential conceptions of evidence.

value in identifying broad as well as specific differences in understandings of historical accounts.

Analytical potential is of limited interest, however, unless it has pedagogic application. We have seen, however, that the typology is likely to have diagnostic uses of at least two kinds. Firstly the types can be used heuristically to gauge progression in a general sense: it is likely for example that a student who tends to offer impositionist explanations for account variation is operating a testimonial model of historical evidence. Secondly, the typology can help identify specific blocks to progression: we have seen that some students operate at impressive levels of sophistication but also that particular aspects of their thinking, for example, relating to historical evidence or to historians' concepts, need to be challenged and developed.

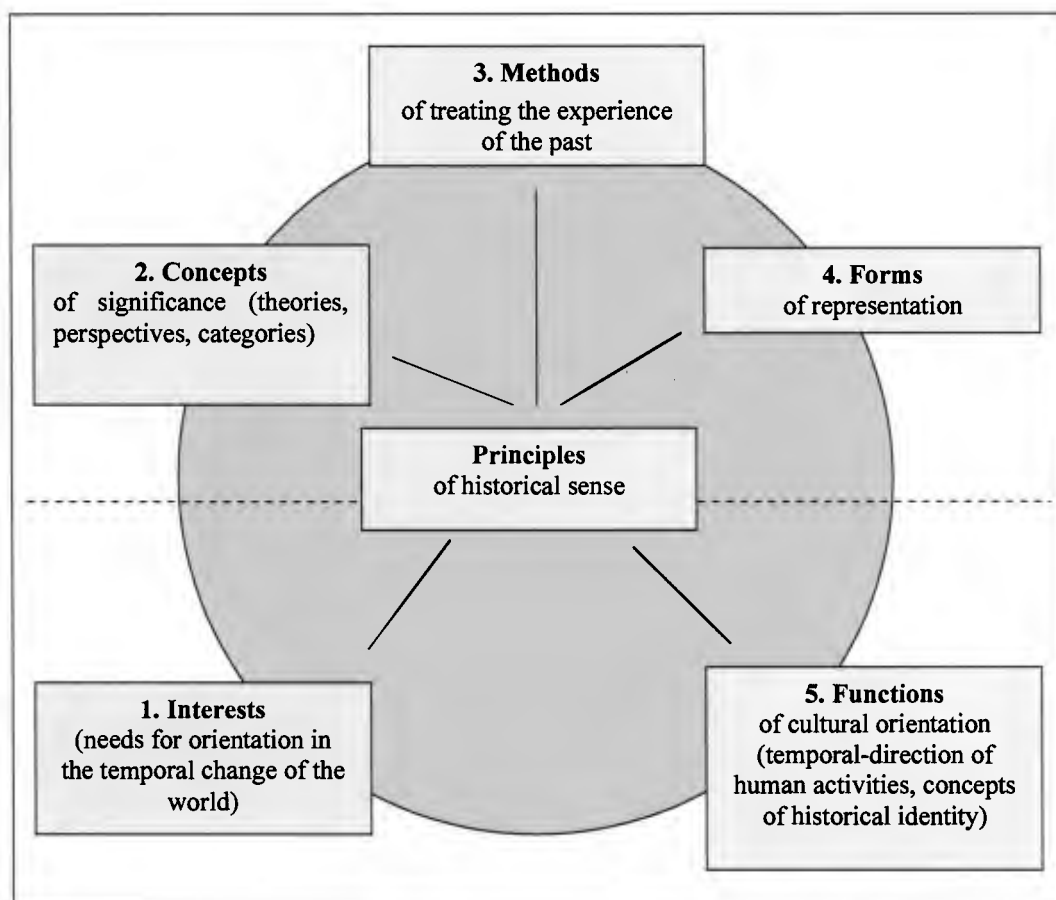
The typology foregrounds conceptual dimensions of historical practice, however, and, as Chapter 2 showed, although conceptual dimensions are essential to the understanding of accounts they are not sufficient to the task.

6.2 Towards an Accounts Heuristic

Jörn Rüsen's 'disciplinary matrix' (Rüsen, 2005, p.132) is much discussed in the literature. The "disciplinary matrix" is a "model of historical studies" that aims to think historical practice as a "cognitive

strategy for getting knowledge about the past” but also to show “how the work of historians is influenced by and related to practical life” (Rüsen, 2005, p.135).⁹⁷ Figure 6.2 presents and simplifies a recent formulation of the “matrix”.

Figure 6.2 Jörn Rüsen’s “disciplinary matrix”
(Adapted from Rüsen, 2005, p.134)



The matrix operates in a circular manner as the numbering in the figure indicates. For Rüsen, history arises from a practical human need (1. Interests) to deal with the temporal change (Rüsen, 2005, p.10) and it answers the *questions* arising from the challenging experience of time by

⁹⁷ Rüsen’s work is discussed in Ankersmit, 2002, pp.262-280 and Megill, 1994 and its educational implications are explored in Chapman and Facey, 2004; Lee, 2002, 2004 and 2005(b); Lee and Howson 2006; Seixas (Ed.) 2004; Seixas, 2005; and Seixas and Clark (2004).

providing orientation through narration (points 4 and 5 in the figure): so far history, like myth, is a form of ‘time management’. For Rüsen, disciplinary history is differentiated from other modes of dealing with time by methodological rationality (the ‘concepts’ and ‘methods’ identified in the figure), which Rüsen understands very much in terms of the interpersonal norms of history as academic practice (Rüsen, 2005, p.134).

Rüsen’s model is a fruitful resource for history education, not least as a corrective to constructions of history that privilege the practical and represent history as a rhetoric of domination, or that, on the other hand, privilege the cognitive, constructing history as disembodied theoretical activity.⁹⁸ It is also useful as a way of thinking about student thinking: students who model history, for example, as a form of positioned rhetoric are operating “below the line” (Lee, 2002) in the matrix and need to engage with theoretical dimensions of historical practice.

The matrix can also serve as a heuristic, providing, as Megill has suggested, “a reminder of what sorts of metahistorical questions we can and ought to ask when we confront works of history” (Megill, 1994, p.58).

⁹⁸ The former stance is typical of many postmodernist historiographers (for example, Jenkins, 1991, pp.6-32) and is also apparent in Davies (2006). The latter stance is, arguably, apparent in the Olympian position that Oakeshott takes on the ‘practical past’ (Oakeshott, 1991 and 1999) and is characterised by Jenkins as ‘ownsakism’ (Jenkins, 1997).

Metahistorical questions that the matrix can be used to scaffold include the following.

How is this historian, in writing this work, influenced by his or her society and by his or her place within that society? What social agenda does the work implicitly or explicitly attach itself to? What overall vision of history informs the work? What type or types of method does the historian deploy? What forms of representation? (Megill, 1994, p.59)

Again, it is apparent that the matrix has diagnostic value: how many students, after all, ask all of these questions? There is not space here to develop all the dimensions of the matrix and, in any case, there is no need, since existing approaches to interpretations pedagogy already sketch ways in which we might address a number of them.

There has been significant pedagogic debate about how to develop understandings of interpretations since the introduction of ‘interpretations’ as a key element of assessment in the 1991 National Curriculum and a number of approaches to interpretations have been proposed.⁹⁹ A number of approaches focus, as it were, “below the line”, locating interpretations as texts in contexts and treating them as ‘rhetorical’ objects or historicizing them. The work of McAleavy (1993, 2000 and 2003) is particularly associated with the first of these approaches and has been influential in shaping practice (for example, Banham and Hall, 2003). A number of creative practitioner strategies,

⁹⁹ For example, Card, 2004; Banham, 2003; Davis and Williams, 1998; Fordham, 2007; Hammond, 2007; Haydn, et al. 2008; Howells, 2005; McAleavy, 1993, 2000 and 2003; Mastin and Wallace, 2006; Moore, 2001; Ofsted, 2004; Phillips, 2002(a); Sinclair, 2006; Wrenn, 2001 and Ward 2006.

for example Card (2004) and Maston and Wallace (2006), illustrate an historicizing approach. There is much to recommend these approaches, however, as will be recalled from the discussion of authorial explanation above, students can grasp practical dimensions of account variation without engaging with the nature of accounts, as criterion relative theory-like structures offered in answer to delimited questions. It is possible, in other words, to have a developed sense of interpretations as texts doing work in particular historicized contexts and still to think of accounts, as Mark did, as reducing to “subjective ways of analysing... stuff” (p.168 above).

A number of recent practitioner articles have focused on the historical logic of interpretations and, to cite the title of one of these articles, on historians’ “theories and methods” (Hammond, 2007): these approaches clearly target cognitive dimensions of historical practice. Recent work has aimed to engage explicitly with historians’ arguments *as arguments* and with the ways in which historians’ claims are put together (Fordham, 2007)¹⁰⁰ and to think about the ways in which choices of method reflect historians questions and decisions (Howells, 2005; Hammond, 2008).¹⁰¹ In addition, Ward (2006) exemplifies an approach that focuses on ‘aesthetic’ or ‘formal’ aspects of historical practice by attending closely to historians’ representational strategies. As

¹⁰⁰ My own work in this area has endeavoured to focus student thinking on concepts and claims (Chapman, 2003; Chapman and Facey, 2009; Chapman and Hibbert. 2009), on assumption and argument (Chapman, 2006(a); Chapman, 2009(b)), on evidence and research methods (Chapman, 2007) and on forms of historical consciousness (Chapman, 2008; Chapman and Facey, 2004).

¹⁰¹ Advice offered by OCR, in support of teachers working on *Specification B* (see above p.18) also focuses on issues of this nature (OCR, 2007(b), pp.10-11).

Howells has observed, a focus on historians' questions and methods can focus students on "genuine historical controversy" and place "the process of historical research and evaluation at the heart of... investigation" (2005, p.33). Recent practitioner work on historical significance also has a similar intention, in the sense that it firmly focuses students' attention on the criteria of significance that are in play when judgments of significance are made, thus foregrounding the conceptual rather than the practical (Bradshaw, 2006; Counsell, 2004; Phillips, 2002(b)).

There are potential dangers in focusing on methods and concepts, however, as Lee and Shemilt note,

if students are taught these things before they recognise and understand the theory-like nature of historical accounts, they will simply assimilate what we teach them to ideas in which bias and ulterior motives distort the 'real past'. (Lee and Shemilt, 2004, p.117)

As we have seen above, developing student thinking about interpretations entails challenging preconceptions about evidence and a focus on questioning and on the relationship between questions, the evidence adduced to answer them and their conceptual and criterial presuppositions (Lee 2001; Lee and Shemilt, 2004).

The following questions, developed through recent online teaching activities and drawing on insights developed through this thesis, indicate how Rüsen's 'cognitive strategy' (points 2 and 3 on the matrix)

might be operationalised in practical teaching contexts in ways that keep students focused on the key questions that Lee and Shemilt argue are fundamental (p. 187 above).¹⁰²

Figure 6.2 Ideas for thinking about why interpretations might differ.
(Adapted from Chapman, 2009(c), p.134)

... It is important to read... interpretations very closely and to reflect on *both* evidence *and* argument. Here are some questions you might ask to help you do this.

- Are the historians asking the same questions or are they in fact answering different questions about the past? (It is possible to set out with different aims - to set out to describe something in the past, to explain it, to evaluate it and so on.)
- Do the historians examine the same source materials as they pursue their questions about the past?
- Do the historians ask the same questions of their source materials?
- Is there common ground between two historians – do they agree on basic facts for example?
- Where exactly does disagreement arise – it might be about some basic facts or it might be that disagreement arises when conclusions are drawn from agreed facts.
- Where different conclusions are drawn from similar facts or sources it may be because the historians disagree about what these things *mean*. There are many reasons why they might. Consider these possibilities (and others that you can think of!):
 - Do they have differing understandings of the *context* (the period, the background situation and so on)?
 - Are they defining *concepts* in different ways (if we disagree about whether a ‘revolution’ has occurred, for example, it may be because we are using different criteria to define the concept ‘revolution’)?

¹⁰² These are questions that I asked students, in the midst of their efforts to answer explanatory questions about variations in the Ranter Task in a recent experiment in online discussion (see pp.44-45 above). Preliminary analysis of outcomes is encouraging but not sufficiently developed to fully ground conclusions about the effectiveness of this approach. (Chapman, 2009(c)).

6.3 Conclusions

This study builds on my previous work, which modelled progression in the understanding of accounts in terms of broad contrasts in student thinking about accounts but that did not engage in detailed conceptual consideration of the evidential understandings underlying them (Chapman, 2001), by providing descriptive tools, in the form of a typology that allows student explanations for variations in accounts, and hence their underlying conceptualisations of interpretation, to be modelled with some precision. The study also provides a theorisation of historical practice, drawing on relevant literature in the philosophy of history and history education, to link the typology to key conceptual shifts central to progression in developing understanding of accounts, a linkage that gives the typology a diagnostic value. Recent work, emerging out of this thesis, has begun to explore teaching interventions focused on developing pupil thinking about the concepts necessary to the understanding of accounts and a sketch of the dimensions that a comprehensive accounts heuristic would need to address has been made.

Future research could develop the analysis outlined in this thesis in a number of ways, for example through work:

- that asks students to think about account conflicts of a broader variety of kinds than the three written tasks presented them with;

- that tests the diagnostic potential of the typology in contexts where follow-up interventions can be implemented and assessed;¹⁰³ and
- that broadens focus to address the range of dimensions of historical practice articulated in Rüsen's matrix and the kinds of metahistorical questions that Megill proposes in order to put the matrix to work.

¹⁰³ Such as discussion board environments (Chapman, 2009(c)).

7. References

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8. Appendices

8.1 Written Task Instruments

Note:

The three written tasks are reproduced below in the order in which they were administered.

Task questions and answer sheets were identical for each task and are reproduced here only in the case of the first task.

The Ranters: Myth or Reality?

Thank you for taking part in this research. This exercise focuses on interpretations. The aim of this research is to explore the ways in which A and AS Level students approach historical interpretations. The pack contains two differing accounts of the same historical issue and four questions. This task should take about 50 minutes.

Please: -

- (a) Fill in the box below
- (b) Read the two extracts
and
- (c) Answer the four questions that follow in the
boxes provided.

Please give all of the questions equal attention.

Personal Details
Name:
Gender:
Other examination subjects:
Are you a first or a second year student?
Did you study History at GCSE?

The data collected during this research will be kept confidential. If any of it is published at any time in the future names will be changed to ensure anonymity.

Background Information

In the years during and immediately after the English Civil War (1642 To 1648) there were numerous groups of religious radicals active in Britain. Many of these groups held beliefs that threatened the established order of things. There is controversy amongst historians about one of these groups in particular – a group called the Ranters.

Line Number	Account One
	Based on Christopher Hill's <u>The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution</u> published by Penguin Books in 1975.
1	It is very difficult to define precisely what the Ranters believed. Most of the evidence is from hostile witnesses and the Ranters had no recognised leader or organisation. Nevertheless, for a brief period between 1649 and 1651 there was a group which contemporaries called Ranters. We hear constant reference to them in the years following the King's execution in 1649 and, a contemporary play announced in 1651, 'All the world is now in a Ranting humour!'
5	
10	
15	
20	
25	According to Bunyan the Ranters denied the existence of sin. Some are described as atheists, denying the existence of God. Samuel Fischer stated that the Ranters denied 'that there is any second coming of Christ at all'. According to Ephraim Pagitt they argued that everything came from nature not from God and drew the conclusion that all things were pure including 'hideous blasphemy and continual whoredom'. John Holland quoted a Ranter as arguing that God was in every 'man, beast, fish, fowl, every green thing from the highest cedar to ivy on the wall' in 'this dog, this cat, chair, stool, and tobacco pipe'. At one Ranter meeting of which we have a hostile report, the mixed company met at a tavern, sang anti-religious songs and partook of a communal feast. One of them tore off a piece of beef, saying 'This is the flesh of Christ, take and eat.' Another threw a cup of ale in the chimney saying 'There is the blood of Christ.' Even their enemies expressed what is almost a grudging admiration for Ranter high spirits: 'they are the merriest of devils for songs, drinking, music, bawdy and dancing'.
30	Ranter promotion of swearing and blasphemy was symbolic of their belief in freedom from moral restraint. Abiezer Coppe was alleged to have sworn for and hour on end at a church altar and to have concluded: 'a pox on God and all your prayers!' Swearing was an act of defiance, both of God and of middle-class society. It was a proclamation of equality and a protest against middle

35	class attempts to control the pleasures of the poor. Coppe's 1649 pamphlet <u>Fiery Flying Rolls</u> made the Ranter challenge abundantly clear: 'Have all things in common, or else the plague of God will rot and consume all that you have!' he pronounced.
40	The authorities were not slow to respond to the Ranter challenge. Coppe's pamphlet was condemned to be publicly burned and the Blasphemy Act of 1650 was aimed especially at attacks on religion and morality. Ranters were expelled from the Army in 1649 and 1650 and Cromwell declared of a Scottish Ranter that
45	'she was so vile a creature as he thought her unworthy to live'. Ranters were not willing martyrs however, and the movement faded into obscurity from 1651.

Line Number	Account Two Based on J.C.Davies' <u>Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians</u> published by Cambridge University Press in 1987. ¹⁰⁴
1	The Ranters are a fiction. The evidence for their existence as a group is minimal and that evidence comes, almost without exception, from persons writing against 'Ranting'. The direct evidence for the existence of Ranterism is almost non-existent.
5	Historians who argue that the Ranters were a real phenomenon have only four direct Ranter sources from which to construct their arguments – and one of these sources is anonymous. What do these sources allow us to conclude? Certainly, there were authors, such as Coppe, who set out beliefs that could be called
10	Ranter – in the sense that they denied religion, advocated sinning and so on.
15	These texts do not prove the existence of anything resembling a Ranter movement, however. We have no evidence of any substance to suggest that Ranterism was anything more than a series of postures struck by a handful of writers. We do not even have compelling evidence that these authors themselves practised the beliefs that their pamphlets expressed. Coppe, for example, changed his name, became a physician and was eventually buried in 1672 in a churchyard in Barnes.
20	Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence of an organised movement seeking to put into practice the beliefs expressed in these pamphlets. A movement needs adherents and followers to

¹⁰⁴ This text was based on Aylmer (1987): see n.14 on p.27 above. The publication date of Davies' book was in fact 1986.

25	deserve the name and there is next to no direct evidence of such adherents and followers in the case of the Ranters.
30	It is true, however, that there was much talk about Ranters in 1649-51 and for some years afterwards. Most of this talk comes from the lips of writers condemning Ranting. What can we conclude from this? There was a moral panic about Ranterism – collective fantasy and paranoia gripped public discussion and debate. In part this was fuelled by the gutter press: tales of Ranterism made good copy and amounted, in the hands of some of the more imaginative hacks, to a form of ‘soft-porn’. In part
35	tales of Ranterism were fuelled by opponents of the English Revolution and supporters of the King: it suited their purposes to present the new regime created by the revolution as one that spawned sinning, swearing, irreligion and depravity. Once the seeds of the Ranter myth had been planted by these sources, others pitched-in. The authorities had to be seen to respond to this new ‘problem’ and they were quick to condemn Ranting. Religious radicals and non-conformists condemned Ranterism also – since if they failed to do so they feared that they too might be branded as Ranters.
40	
45	Ranting disappeared rapidly not because it was suppressed but because it had never really existed. The government’s grip on reality was never entirely lost. It is true that they enacted a Blasphemy Act in 1650 but, crucially, the Act made no direct mention of Ranters.

THE QUESTIONS

Please give all of the questions equal attention.

Question One

How do the two accounts differ?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

Question Two

How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

Question Three

Can both accounts be true?

If they can, in what ways?

If they cannot, why not?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

Question Four

Is it possible to decide between the two accounts?

If it is possible, how can this be done?

If it is not possible, why is it not possible?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

Peterloo 1819

Thank you for taking part in this research. This exercise focuses on interpretations. The aim of this research is to explore the ways in which A and AS Level students approach historical interpretations. The pack contains two differing accounts of the same historical issue and four questions. This task should take about 50 minutes.

Please: -

- (a) Fill in the box below
- (d) Read the two extracts
and
- (e) Answer the four questions that follow in the
boxes provided.

Please give all of the questions equal attention.

Personal Details
Name:
Gender:
Other examination subjects:
Are you a first or a second year student?
Did you study History at GCSE?

The data collected during this research will be kept confidential. If any of it is published at any time in the future names will be changed to ensure anonymity.

Background Information

“Peterloo” was a term coined to describe events that took place at St Peter’s Fields in Manchester in 1819. A mass meeting was held by “Orator” Hunt, a political radical. The meeting’s purpose was to demand political reforms. The meeting was dispersed by the Manchester Yeomanry (the local militia) and by the Hussars (regular cavalry) and casualties resulted. The term “Peterloo” was coined sarcastically by the radicals. It mocked the “bravery” of the army who had recently won a victory over Napoleon at Waterloo (1815).

Line Number	Account One Extract from E.P. Thompson’s <u>The Making of The English Working Class</u> (published by Penguin books in 1968).
1 5	There are two points about Peterloo which have, somehow, become lost in recent accounts. The first is the actual bloody violence of the day. It really was a massacre. The second point about Peterloo is the sheer size of the event, in terms of its psychological impact and repercussions. It was without question a formative experience in British social and political history.
10 15	Whatever some of the marching weavers had in mind, Hunt had exerted himself effectually to ensure obedience to his request for “quietness and order” and a “steady, firm and temperate deportment”. The leaders of the contingents had warned their followers to ignore all provocations. Many staves - or ‘walking sticks’ – had been left behind. The presence of so many women and children was overwhelming testimony to the peaceful character of the meeting. The attack was made on this multitude with the venom of panic.
20 25	But the panic was not the panic of bad horsemen hemmed in by the crowd. It was the panic of class hatred. It was the Yeomanry – the Manchester manufacturers, merchants, publicans and shopkeepers on horseback – which did more damage than the regulars (Hussars). In the Yeomanry (a middle class reformer testified) “there are... individuals whose political rancour approaches to absolute insanity”. These were the men who pursued the banners of the radicals, knew the speakers by name and sought to pay off old scores, and who cheered at the end of their triumph. We may get a feel of the confused field from such as passage as this: “When I got to the end of Watson-street, I saw ten or twelve of the Yeomanry Cavalry and two of the Hussars cutting at the people who were wedged close together. An officer of the

30	Hussars rode up to his own men, and knocking up their swords said, ‘Damn you what do you mean by all this work?’ He then called out to the Yeomanry, ‘For shame gentlemen; what are you about? The people cannot get away.’ They desisted for a time, but no sooner had the officer rode to another part of the field, than they fell to work again.”
35	
40	There is no term for this but class war. But it was a pitifully one-sided war. The people, closely packed and trampling upon each other in the effort to escape, made no effort at retaliation until the very edges of the field, where a few trapped remnants – finding themselves pursued into the streets and yards – threw bricks at their pursuers. Eleven were killed or died from their wounds. That evening, on every road out of Manchester the injured were to be seen. By the end of 1819, 421 injured had been identified and a further 150 cases awaited investigation. Of this overall total, 161 cases were of sabre wounds, the remainder were injuries sustained while lying beneath the crowd or beneath the horses’ hooves.
45	

Line Number	Account Two Extract from Norman Gash’s <u>Aristocracy and People</u> (published by Edward Arnold books in 1979).
1	On the 16 th of August occurred the confusion, errors and bloodshed at St Peter’s Field. The magistrates decided to arrest Hunt on the field before he could speak. The size of the crowd, probably about 60 000, made the use of the military for this purpose necessary. By accident the local Yeomanry arrived before the regular force of Hussars. The Yeomanry almost instantly got into difficulties from the denseness of the crowd, obstructions on the ground and their own indiscipline. They were believed to be under attack and the Hussars were sent in to extricate them. When it was all over about a dozen people were dead or dying, some hundreds badly injured. The country was shocked by the news; and within a week ‘Peterloo’ had passed into the political vocabulary of the British nation.
5	
10	
15	Peterloo was a blunder; it was hardly a massacre. Possibly half the deaths, probably even more of the non-fatal injuries, were trampled underfoot by horses and the crowd in the panic that ensued. The public indignation was a mark of the strong liberal feeling in the country and the general restraint normally exercised by the authorities in dealing with the large political assemblies. It was because Peterloo was uncharacteristic that it
20	

25	<p>achieved notoriety. The magistrates had made two mistakes: in endeavouring to arrest Hunt at the meeting, and in sending in the amateur, unpopular and politically minded Manchester Yeomanry, a raw volunteer unit formed two years earlier. The magistrates were men of only ordinary ability; they shared the alarms and credulity of their class. Their nerves had been stretched by the protracted disputes among the cotton weavers and the series of political meetings in 1819. The radicals had been using increasingly inflammatory language. Hunt had spoken in defence of defying the laws.</p>
30	
35	<p>There had been actions as well as words. The presence among the radical clubs of army veterans made their behaviour take a pronounced military form, even to the extent of marching, carrying sticks and clapping their hands to simulate musket fire. The day before Peterloo, in the small hours of the morning, a constable with a few companions came across a body of several hundred men marching on White Moss, some five miles from Manchester. He was attacked, beaten with sticks, and made to swear that he would never be a King's man.</p>
40	<p>Given the atmosphere of panic and revolution in Manchester at the time, the conduct of the magistrates on the 16th of August was understandable. It was foolish but not vindictive. To have penalised the Manchester magistrates for an error of judgement committed in trying circumstances would have shaken the morale of magistrates all over the kingdom. As it was, the government was already finding considerable difficulty in getting magistrates to act.</p>
45	

Britain and the Holocaust

Thank you for taking part in this research. This exercise focuses on interpretations. The aim of this research is to explore the ways in which A and AS Level students approach historical interpretations. The pack contains two differing accounts of the same historical issue and four questions. This task should take about 50 minutes.

Please: -

- (a) Fill in the box below
- (f) Read the two extracts
and
- (g) Answer the four questions that follow in the
boxes provided.

Please give all of the questions equal attention.

Personal Details
Name:
Gender:
Other examination subjects:
Are you a first or a second year student?
Did you study History at GCSE?

The data collected during this research will be kept confidential. If any of it is published at any time in the future names will be changed to ensure anonymity.

Background Information

During the Second World War, and particularly between 1941 and 1945, the Nazis developed a policy of systematic genocide of the Jewish population of Nazi-occupied Europe. This policy has come to be known as the “Holocaust”. The Nazis had followed policies of increasingly extreme discrimination against Jews in Germany between 1933 and 1940. At least 5 million Jews died as a result of the Holocaust. In recent years a controversy has developed about British policy during World War Two and in the 1930s. The dispute focuses on British policy towards Jewish refugees and other matters. The key issue in the debate is the degree of British responsibility for the suffering of the Jews of Europe.

Line Number	Account One
	From an article by W.D.Rubinstein published in <u>The Modern History Review</u> in Britain in 1999 ¹⁰⁵
1	Although it would be wrong to claim that Britain’s priority in the 1930s was the Jewish question, it would be equally inaccurate to argue that Britain ignored this issue: Britain played a crucial part in wiping the Nazi regime off the face of the earth. However, this outcome was by no means clear in the early 1930s. British policy towards Germany, like her policy towards Jewish refugees, evolved in reaction to events whose pattern is only obvious in hindsight.
5	
10	
15	
20	
	Many factors determined British foreign policy, the most important of which were her responsibilities as a centre of empire. Events in Europe were important but Britain had also to consider her interests in other parts of the world – in India and in Palestine for example. It is in the light of this fact that British policies in Europe should be judged.
	Most British leaders believed that an injustice had been done to Germany by the Versailles Treaty and that allowing Germany to incorporate other German-speaking areas of central Europe would remove the cause of another war. It was also widely believed that Nazi anti-Jewish rhetoric was simply rhetoric. Britain did not want a repetition of the First World War, in which 920,000 British troops had died. Once it became clear that Hitler wanted to conquer Europe, Britain turned against

¹⁰⁵ The journal was recorded erroneously here: *The Modern History Review* should be *History Review*.

25	Germany. Near-total British opposition to the increasing violence of Nazi anti-Semitism contributed to the growth in British hostility to Germany in the late 1930s.
30	In the 1930s there were millions of refugees in the world. Very few were allowed to settle in Britain, although the lives of many were in danger. Britain's treatment of German Jews was relatively generous particularly in the last few years prior to the war when it became increasingly clear that the Nazis were pursuing a course of brutality towards the Jews. At least 55,000 German, Austrian and Czech Jews were permitted to enter Britain, a larger number than any other group of refugees. Over 100,000 others fled to parts of the Empire (including Palestine). Britain took in substantial numbers, especially bearing in mind that surprisingly few actually wished to leave until 1938. Furthermore, efforts on behalf of Jewish refugees were greater than those on behalf of any other group. Thousands of British people took Jewish refugees into their homes and after retiring as Prime Minister in 1937, Baldwin became head of a fund which raised £600,000 for Jewish refugees, despite the economic depression. This was the only charity of any kind permitted to use the Post Office Savings Bank network, allowing it to receive weekly contributions from hundreds of thousands of ordinary people. If the outbreak of war had been postponed for another year or two, it seems likely that virtually every German Jew would have fled to safety. Once the war had started it was not the democracies that stopped the Jews from emigrating: they were no longer refugees but the prisoners of a psychopath who was intent on killing them.
45	
50	In 1939, Britain turned against Germany with a vengeance, with Winston Churchill leading a united British nation, fighting alone against the victorious Nazis for a year between June 1940 and June 1941. There could no longer be any uncertainty about the nature of Hitler's regime, however, it is difficult to see what Britain could have done to rescue the Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe. Britain simply lacked the military power to be able to stop the Holocaust.

Line Number	Account Two From David Ceserani's <u>Britain and the Holocaust</u> published Britain in 1999 ¹⁰⁶
1 5	The Holocaust is part of British History, yet Britain's involvement with the Jewish people during the Nazi period is poorly understood. After 1945 British people comforted themselves with the idea that they had had a "good war". There was little awareness that Britain's record towards the Jews was mixed.
10 15 20	When Hitler came to power the Government was well informed about his world-view and objectives. Nevertheless, it continued to regard disarmament as the most appropriate foreign policy. It made no public protest against the early violence and discrimination against the Jews. British public opinion was disturbed by the conduct of the Nazis but it believed that it would blow over. Elements of British society sympathised with Hitler. Many politicians felt guilty about the peace settlement imposed on Germany after the First World War, and others admired Nazi unemployment policies. The former Prime Minister Lloyd George's verdict was "Hitler is a great man". The persecution of Austrian Jews and The Night of Broken Glass in November 1938 provoked outrage, but public anger soon faded and only a few MPs tried to raise concern about the treatment of Jews. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was rigidly committed to appeasing Germany and the Government discouraged the expression of anti-German feeling.
25 30 35	Britain had strict immigration controls. Ministers feared that a generous response to the refugee problem would encourage other countries to expel huge numbers of Jews. Between 1933 and early 1938, only about 11,000 German Jews settled in Britain. Many more found refuge in France and Holland. Between 1933 and 1936 35,000 Jews were admitted to Palestine, however, the British restricted access in 1936 as a result of Arab protests about the expanding Jewish population. Britain modified its stance on Jewish refugees between 1938 and 1939 and allowed around 40,000 to enter the UK. This change resulted from outrage over German take-over of Austria and over the Night of Broken Glass. By 1940, the Government was supporting the Jewish refugee agencies.
	Throughout the war, the Government was worried about the level of anti-Semitism in Britain and feared that it could turn into anti-war and pro-Nazi sentiment. It ordered that the

¹⁰⁶ The publication date is in error: this pamphlet was published in 1998.

40	suffering of the Jews should not be highlighted in BBC Broadcasts. It wanted to avoid creating sympathy for the Jews as this might encourage Jewish emigration to Palestine. It instructed banks to freeze the assets of Jewish refugees from enemy countries. In 1940 it ordered the mass internment of all
45	groups of refugees in case they might harbour spies.
50	The amount of information that reached Britain during the war about atrocities was plentiful. Government officials treated such news with scepticism, particularly because atrocities had been exaggerated during the First World War. Some officials were prejudiced against the Jews. More often it was felt that the fate of the Jews should not be stressed more than that of other citizens. In the summer of 1941 Winston Churchill learned about the scale of the massacres but he could make few practical responses and to acknowledge what was happening publicly
55	would have alerted the Germans to the fact that the British had broken their codes. It was not until December 1942 that the Government openly acknowledged what was happening and this was only as a result of pressure from Jewish and church leaders and after it had been exposed in the press.

8.2 Exemplar Written Task Answers

Note:

Two complete sets of written answers to all three tasks are reproduced below.

The first set is by a Year 1 student and the second set by a Year 2 student.

As is explained, at pp.35-36 above, this thesis focuses on answers to one of the four questions (Question Two) only.

Ranter Task: Adam Year 1

Question One

How do the two accounts differ?
(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

The two accounts differ a lot as one argues that the Ranters were non-existent made-up form and the other source states that they were an important part of history at that time.

Both agree that there is a certain lack of evidence to prove the theories and existence of these people yet they both disagree completely upon whether they were a myth and was just heard about by word of mouth.

Another difference is that, how valued the evidence they do have, is. Davies says that it is insignificant whereas Hill bases most of his writing upon it.

Question Two

How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

Both sources have said that they have found little evidence upon the subject of the Ranters. When there is not much to go on, there would always be a question upon how and whether these people existed. This where the two conflicting views come from.

Whereas Hill argues towards their existence, Davies argues against. This means that their views are always going to have the opportunity to clash.

An example of this is that of the evidence they have got. Hill uses it to back up his evidence compared to Davies who decides to say it is useless and just dismisses it.

Question Three

Can both accounts be true?

If they can, in what ways?

If they cannot, why not?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

These two accounts can't be both true as they are too contradictory to one another. You cannot say that they are existent, yet they never existed. There is only a single part that maybe both parts agree on, this is the fact that pamphlets were made up. Whether, this is conclusive evidence, both

accounts can't be true but both agree there is a pamphlet.

Question Four

Is it possible to decide between the two accounts?

If it is possible, how can this be done?

If it is not possible, why is it not possible?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

I personally find it impossible to determine which is true as although there is a strong argument for their existence, there is too a strong argument against it. There is not a sufficient amount of evidence for either to have a defining case.

Peterloo Task: Adam Year 1

Question One

How do the two accounts differ?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

Account one shows that there was an extreme amount of violence used during the event whereas account two says that violence wasn't used and that panic and accidents were the main cause of the deaths. This is compared to Thompson's account that says that violence was used by the horsemen.

The clearest difference is the authors' use of language especially when they brand Peterloo. Account one writes that it was a "massacre" whereas account two writes that it was a "blunder".

Question Two

How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

There are a few similarities of the two accounts which illustrate some truth is written. There points may have then been played upon by authors or story tellers creating two different accounts. This could happen or it may be the case that new evidence has been uncovered as one of the two sources was written eleven years after the first. This last possibility is unlikely due to both sources being written many years after the event took place

consequently making the chances of new evidence coming forward increasingly unlikely.

Question Three

Can both accounts be true?

If they can, in what ways?

If they cannot, why not?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

To a certain extent they can, as the few points that they pick up on such as the fact that there was a great deal of panic with people being trampled, being quite likely. Yet, the core reasons such as the idea of who was to blame and whether the violence was necessary, I don't think can both be true. These though seem to be matters of opinion rather than matters of fact and I think will always be scrutinised.

Question Four

Is it possible to decide between the two accounts?

If it is possible, how can this be done?

If it is not possible, why is it not possible?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

I don't think that it is possible as there is no real hard evidence that is shown in both these documents. The only evidence that is shown at all is in Account one with the quote. Yet, there is no information upon the quote and it isn't even that good at enlightening us with more information. With this lack of solid evidence and the two sources contradicting one another it is very hard to establish which source is more valid.

Holocaust Task: Adam Year 1

Question One

How do the two accounts differ?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

The two accounts differ as within the first account it says that Britain was allowing many Jewish people to settle within Britain. This is compared to the second account which writes that the immigration was extremely strict and is criticised.

This is clearly demonstrated with the figures as they about 15,000 people out from one another. Yet there is a similarity as both accounts say that the Jews did not really want to leave until the late 30s.

Question Two

How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

The two writers may have opinions themselves on the situation, of which would be reflected within their books. These opinions would change the approach of which they would say whether Britain could or should of done more to help the refugees of that time.

They may have also looked at different sources to find some figures. These may have then been interpreted in a different way to that of the author. This therefore may have give us two slightly different accounts.

Question Three

Can both accounts be true?

If they can, in what ways?

If they cannot, why not?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

To a certain extent both accounts can be true but not entirely. It cannot be claimed that both sets of figures are correct and that the dates that are shown are also completely correct. Yet most of the other things that are written can be interpreted in a different way. This is because there is not much hard evidence within these articles and that it is very difficult to see what part of these accounts are based upon fact. When these things are taken into account it is clear to see that a valid conclusions cannot be taken out of these accounts.

Question Four

Is it possible to decide between the two accounts?

If it is possible, how can this be done?

If it is not possible, why is it not possible?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

I do not believe that it is possible to choose between these accounts as both differ so much. These differences are also not clearly backed by any solid evidence that isn't contradicted by the other account. When this is taken

into account it is clear that neither article provides any clear result on what happened to the British policy on Jewish refugees for the years in debate.

Ranter Task: Mary Year 2

Question One

How do the two accounts differ?
(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

The two accounts differ in belief of what the Ranters were and whether they actually existed. Account one is also written 12 years previously to the second account and therefore may have had less sources / hindsight to call on. However account 2 states on line 3 that the 'evidence' for 'Ranterism' is almost nonexistent. This differs and contrasts with the first account that begins with attempting to define what the Ranters believed and not whether they actually existed. The first account deals with a different issue than the second, a main difference between the two. Another difference between the two accounts arises with the issue of source depicting the Ranters. Though Account two states (line 5 + 6) that only four sources are available but account one draws on more than four people to back its argument. True, some would have been written at a later date but they still have enough relevance for Christopher Hill for him to include them. In conclusion the two accounts differ in issue, archive available and belief of whether the Ranters ever existed.

Question Two

How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

It is possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue because, as in all history, different opinions and viewpoints are being expressed. Any source can be interpreted in many different ways and it is only when cross-referenced with other relevant materials that a kind of truth can emerge. Reliability of sources is something that can be debated endlessly because there are so many elements that could have affected the writer that historians might not know about. In these examples the debate between the two accounts stems from the interpretations of the writers. The first account examines the beliefs of the Ranters and so therefore it has to be assumed that Hill believes they existed. The range of sources in the archive that have relevance to this issue have obviously been interpreted differently by Davis and though both accounts call on the Blasphemy Act of 1650 it is a clear example of their different interpretations. Hill sees it as linked to the Ranters whereas Davis sees it as a 'crucial' point that the Ranters were not named in it. It is therefore very possible for there to be two such differing accounts because of the fact that the human is an individual who interprets and sees things in a different light.

Question Three

Can both accounts be true?

If they can, in what ways?

If they cannot, why not?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

It is not possible to answer the question can both accounts be true without siding with one or other account. It is not possible for them both to be completely true, it is the debate between the two that is interesting. They cannot both be completely true because one is a contradiction of another! If the debate centred around the groups of people, who may have been called the Ranters or then again maybe not, it would have been different. Returning to my first point, to decide if either account is true it would be necessary to investigate it singularly, before cross referencing it with other articles / sources / accounts. They cannot both be true because of the lack of sense it would make, elements of each account could be put together to form a third account which addressed the debate in full, and this would probably be nearer to the truth than choosing one or other account. However more sources etc would be needed to reach this decision as an informed choice.

Question Four

Is it possible to decide between the two accounts?

If it is possible, how can this be done?

If it is not possible, why is it not possible?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

It is not possible to decide between the two accounts with the amount of information supplied. What is displayed is two separate accounts, that contradict each other and so the basis of a debate. To conclude the debate and decide which of the two accounts has the most truth in it a lot of further study would be required. This is because both accounts present the viewpoint and argument of a single historian. Neither are the sources from the era, and though these are mentioned they would have been carefully done so to help the argument of the writer. For me to make an informed decision between the two accounts I would need to develop my own opinions and views which collectively would either link to Hill or Davies' account. Only then would I be able to decide between the two, though I suspect there is an element of truth in both accounts.

Peterloo Task: Mary Year 2

Question One

How do the two accounts differ?
(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

The two accounts differ in both their belief of what actually took place at Peterloo, and their own interpretations of the significance of it. Source A strongly believes that what took place was a “massacre” whereas Source B states it “was hardly a massacre”, the two accounts also differ in opinion about the scale and importance of the event. Source A defines it as a “formative experience”, Source B however calls it a “blunder” that only gained “notoriety” because it was “uncharacteristic”.

The two sources also differ in the ‘side; with which the author sympathises. Source A takes the side of the ‘people’, placing the emphasis of violence and blame strongly on the ‘Yeomanry’ (and though less so) the ‘hussars’. Source B however takes the opposite viewpoint stating the size of the crowd demanded military presence, and including a report within which ‘the people’ had violently attacked a constable – without provocation.

Question Two

How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?
(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

It is possible for there to be two such differing accounts because as with all historical events, inferences are made by historians. The person who is writing about the events will obviously be influenced by the kind of person they are. Their background interests and political views for example will affect the way that they view / interpret information & facts. E.P.Thompson’s book *The Making of the English Working Class* is a clue to the fact that his interest lies within the working classes. He has chosen to specifically focus on them so it is fair to say they are his main interest, and this comes across in his extract which clearly favours the people and places them as the ‘victims’ of the event. Norman Gash’s extract on the other hand is taken from his book *Aristocracy & the People* suggesting that it is the relationship between the two that he is focusing on. However from his extract we can infer he has more sympathy with the upper classes, especially in this case with the yeomanry & hussars used to defuse the situation. Another possible reasons for the fact that the two accounts differ so much is for the fact the two accounts differ so much is the possibility that not much reliable information is available on the event – so inferences have to be made in order to attempt to find out what happened.

Question Three

Can both accounts be true?

If they can, in what ways?

If they cannot, why not?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

It is not possible for both accounts to be 'true' but it is possible for them both to have elements of truth within them. As it stands both have very different versions of what happened so it is logical to infer that the truth is somewhere between the two. It is unlikely that either author is completely right & the other completely wrong, as both will have (we assume) researched into the events, perhaps drawing on information taken from different archives. They cannot however both be true because they paint such different pictures of the events that day. Although different incidents reported in each, e.g. the officer of the hussars telling the yeomanry to stop (A) or the constable getting attacked (B) might very well have happened and be true it is the overall picture that needs to be concluded by drawing information from both sources, and any others relevant to the event. Cross-referencing them together would provide a clearer, and perhaps more truthful account.

Question Four

Is it possible to decide between the two accounts?

If it is possible, how can this be done?

If it is not possible, why is it not possible?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

It is not possible to decide between the two accounts on the little information given here. As said in question 3 a more balanced conclusion could be formed with the help of more sources, relevant to their reliability etc. Through cross referencing these added sources, taken from both contemporary accounts of the event and other historians conclusions a more effective conclusion could be reached. As it is, it is not possible to decide between the two accounts as not enough information is given, however, with further sources etc it will still probably not be possible to decide between the two, as neither are balanced enough to properly consider the other 'side' with which they are not sympathising with.

Holocaust Task: Mary Year 2

Question One

How do the two accounts differ?
(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

The two accounts differ in their opinions about the extent to which Britain helped stop the Holocaust. Source One tends to take a more favourable view of the situation – preventing Britain in a stronger light. It states positive input and uses strong language to support this. It doesn't however ignore problems and facts about the number of Jewish refugees – something Source Two does as well. Source Two also provides an outline of the British response and explanations about why the British government did as they did. The main difference therefore is the overall impression that the sources make – with the first differing from the second in its highlighting of positive action – such as the fund for Jewish refugees.

Question Two

How is it possible for there to be two such differing accounts of the same issue?
(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

It is possible for there to be two such differing accounts because each was written by a different historian. And each historian has a different approach which can be influenced by their (1) original ideas, e.g. what they were looking for when researching their accounts, in turn effected by their education, status, ethnic group, etc. (2) their evidence – which archive they have looked into – giving different evidence, and the amount of sources they have looked at – and cross referenced.

(3) The fact that both sources are written with hindsight puts the accounts in a position where the only way to give an account is through interpretation. Interpretation of what happened, and how etc. Neither authors were there – experiencing it and so neither have had the same experience finding out about it (however I feel I must also note had both been there – accounts would still differ as both historians are individuals).

Question Three

Can both accounts be true?
If they can, in what ways?
If they cannot, why not?
(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

Both accounts can be true in the eyes of the historian. Just as any source can be – the source cannot be crossed off – or ignored as unreliable evidence because it may be a true representation of the feelings / experience of the person who wrote it. In this sense both accounts can be true accounts of the message that the historians are trying to convey. Both contain factual evidence that could be cross-referenced with other material in order to find out truth.

It is therefore necessary as a reader to evaluate the material in the two accounts to form a third personal opinion about the truth of the subject matter.

Question Four

Is it possible to decide between the two accounts?

If it is possible, how can this be done?

If it is not possible, why is it not possible?

(Please explain your answer as fully as you can)

Answer

It is not possible to decide between these two accounts with no other accounts / sources / evidence to compare them to. With further material cross referencing and comparing would be able to help form an opinion about which of the two accounts I would empathise more with. It is not possible to decide on this information alone because all that is provided is two peoples differing interpretations. I am sure if it was looked into there would be other further differing account / interpretations which could / should be taken into account.

8.3 Written Data Coding

Note:

The coding system developed to code the written tasks, described at pp.33-34 above, is exemplified in this appendix.

Written Data Coding: Codes and Code Categories

1. Introduction

The process of coding the written task data has been described in the Methodology Chapter. This appendix reports and exemplifies the coding system developed to code the written task data set. As was explained in the methodology chapter a system of thirty four **codes** was developed and these codes were then grouped under seven **code categories**, on the basis similarities in the explanations for variation that the codes identified. Respondents' responses were then re-coded in terms of the codes that were judged to have **major** and **minor importance** in their responses.

The coding system is reported below in four ways:

- Firstly, the codes and code categories are presented and exemplified;
- Secondly, code counts and their incidence by task and year are presented in tabular form;
- Thirdly, code category counts and their incidence by task and year are presented in tabular form; and
- Fourthly two full sets of responses for two respondents are presented exemplifying coding and also, in the form

of a commentary after the responses, an explanation of the major and minor importance coding is provided.

2. Codes and Code Categories: Presentation and Exemplification

2.1 Code and Code Categories: Presentation

The table that follows lists the thirty four codes developed to code the written data set.

Codes	Instances
1. The authors are biased.	10
2. The authors have interpreted material to support their preconceived views.	13
3. The authors have simply presented material in ways that support their preconceived views.	11
4. The authors take the side of one group in the past.	9
5. The authors have simply selected material that supports their preconceived views.	6
6. The accounts are one-sided / imbalanced.	3
7. The authors look for different material to support their preconceived views.	1
8. One could be lying.	1
9. The sources have been interpreted in more than one way.	23
10. The sources have been evaluated in more than one way.	11
11. The facts have been interpreted in more than one way.	3
12. One source is more factual and the other more inferential.	1
13. They make different comparisons.	1
14. All depends on the value and importance that is placed on the various facts.	1
15. The authors classify things differently.	2
16. They may have consulted different sources.	27
17. The author's enquiry determines the selection of sources, which differ.	2
18. The amount of sources available varies over time.	6
19. One author may have better resources (institutionally).	1
20. The authors have different backgrounds/beliefs/opinions which will have shaped how they interpreted sources.	20
21. The authors are different people and will make different inferences and judgments.	12

22. Time changes how things are viewed – new ideas arise.	5
23. The authors have filled in gaps in the record with opinion.	1
24. Historians have differing views of the time period/context which impact their views.	2
25. They are different texts with differing focus/scope.	22
26. The authors take different perspectives.	7
27. The sources are biased.	18
28. There is very little evidence/thin evidence.	14
29. The archives are a selective record and will have been shaped.	2
30. The issue is complex, large or controversial and accounts differ because of this.	6
31. One or both may have made mistakes.	5
32. They are secondary sources – they did not experience the event and therefore their accounts vary.	4
33. The accounts are tailored for different audiences.	2
34. The differences are in narration - differences in detail / emphasis create different accounts.	2

The table that follows lists the code categories and indicates which codes were grouped under each code category.

Code Categories	Codes grouped under each code category	Instances
Author Bias	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	40
Author Interpretation	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	32
Author Background / Beliefs	20, 21, 22, 23, 24	31
Variable Sources	16, 17, 18, 19	31
Author Focus	25, 26	27
Limited Sources	27, 28, 29	26
Minor Codes	30, 31, 32, 33, 34	18

2.2 Codes and Code Categories: Exemplification and Explanation.

The Author Bias Code Category

The Author Bias code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that account authors had preconceptions about the historical topics or personal or political agendas and that they *imposed* these *preconceived meanings* through their accounts by, for example, intentionally misrepresenting the record.

Code	Exemplification
1. The authors are biased.	Mark Year 2 Peterloo Bias is also a reason why the accounts may differ... on the part of the historian
2. The authors have interpreted material to support their preconceived views.	Edward Year 1 Holocaust Bias is really a large factor... the information is interpreted differently to fulfil a writer's views or feeling.
3. The authors have simply presented material in ways that support their preconceived views.	Mary Year 2 Holocaust ... the 2 sources have different outlooks.... they are... simply manipulating the language they use and the figures to suggest their opinion.
4. The authors take the side of one group in the past.	Beatrice Year 1 Peterloo Source 1... is far more sympathetic to the working class. Source 2 – more sympathetic to the armed forces ...
5. The authors have simply selected material that supports their preconceived views.	Frank Year 1 Holocaust ...neither account shows the whole story but shows aspects of it...in order to back up their own opinion...
6. The accounts are one-sided / imbalanced.	Jenny Year 1 Holocaust ... neither historian has acknowledged the sources that <u>do not</u> support his / her opinion, so they have not argued their cases very well.
7. The authors look for different material to support their preconceived views.	Dan Year 1 Holocaust It may be that the author... was looking for evidence to support the view that Britain held little blame...
8. One could be lying.	Vicky Year 2 Ranters One of them could be lying...

The Author Interpretation Code Category

The Author Interpretation code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that the authors had *made emergent sense* of their archival materials in differing ways through processes of meaning construction.

Code	Exemplification
9. The sources have been interpreted in more than one way.	Beatrice Year 1 Ranters The two accounts occur due to the different interpretations made... the two historians... have looked at the evidence, and formulated different ideas.
10. The sources have been evaluated in more than one way.	Elizabeth Year 1 Ranters Both accounts agree that evidence is 'minimal'... the two writers have interpreted this in different ways; one questioning the evidence, one cross-referencing.
11. The facts have been interpreted in more than one way.	Stuart Year 2 Holocaust [T]he facts are just interpreted in different ways... just because... there were some anti-Semitic sections of the public and government does not mean that there could not have been pro-Jewish feeling too. The discussion of the censoring of news broadcasting during the war does not rule out pro-Jewish feeling in Britain... the anti-Semitic element could have been limited to just a few.
12. One source is more factual and the other more inferential.	Edward Year 1 Holocaust Account two also seems to make less inferences than Account 1.
13. They make different comparisons.	Christine Year 1 Holocaust The situation can be seen in 2 very different lights... account one... concentrated more on comparing what Britain did to help in comparison to other countries. Whereas account 2 may have concentrated on what more Britain could have done and not what they did do. The accounts differ as they take 2 different perspectives.... and concentrate on the differing points which they feel are most important.
14. All depends on the value and importance that is placed on the various facts.	Ben Year 1 Holocaust For such an expansive subject, there is plentiful room for differing opinions based on how much

	value and importance is placed on the various facts... Rubinstein uses facts like the fund raised for Jews and the lack of military forces. These facts are not used by Ceserani who instead uses the fact that the Jews suffering was not highlighted by the BBC, and the same vice-versa.
15. The authors classify things differently.	George Year 2 Ranters Both appear to confirm that Ranters as individuals existed so it is not as clear cut as one claiming that they existed and one claiming that they didn't. The confusions just come in whether they were a group a club or merely individuals with strong opinions. This subtle difference could be made just by the specific wording of texts being misinterpreted, people will always have differences of opinion.

Author Background / Beliefs

The Author Background / Beliefs code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that account authors had differing backgrounds or differing beliefs and that this fact explained differences in their accounts.

Code	Exemplification
20. The authors have different backgrounds / beliefs / opinions which will have shaped how they interpreted sources.	George Year 2 Peterloo It seems that Thompson is likely to have come from a lower class and therefore have less sympathy for the aristocracy... it seems logical that he would read into this a struggle between the lower classes and the upper's "fierce oppression"... if Gash came from a family of higher standing then he would be likely to develop an argument that supports his beliefs. In any argument concerning divisions of this kind there is bound to be difference of opinions depending on who is arguing. It seems unlikely that if someone furtively believed in upper class dominance, they would argue that this was a case of

	brutal repression of the lower class.
21. The authors are different people and will make different inferences and judgments.	Hannah Year 1 Ranters The two accounts are extracts from books written by two different Historians, different people have different opinions and the way that they interpret information may be different also.
22. Time changes how things are viewed – new ideas arise.	Trina Year 2 Ranters [T]hey are... written at different times... Perhaps, in this time...there was room for differing opinions to come to light that perhaps would have influenced...the author of Account Two, or not been accessible to the author of Account One.
23. The authors have filled in gaps in the record with opinion.	Edward Year 1 Peterloo [W]hen looking back on badly documented history a lot of guess / opinion will end up as a means to establish a conclusion or understanding.
24. Historians have differing views of the time period/context which impact their views.	Elizabeth Year 1 Ranters Both writers would have differing opinions on other events at that time that might have affected the way they interpreted the information, and their views on the topic.

Variable Sources

The Variable Sources code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that differences in the accounts arose because the authors had based their accounts on different sources. As the examples show, in some instances this is simply presented as fortuitous and in other instances as following from decisions that the historians have made.

Code	Exemplification
16. They may have consulted different sources.	Hannah Year 1 Ranters [T]he two accounts are so completely opposite, I would say that the Historians used differing evidence and sources when researching the Ranters.
17. The author's enquiry	Vicky Year 2 Holocaust

determines the selection of sources, which differ.	[T]heir books have different focuses... so the author will have examined a greater amount of evidence relating to this subject and so this could account for the difference...
18. The amount of sources available varies over time.	Trina Year 2 Ranters [T]hey are... written at different times... Perhaps, in this time difference, there was room for differing opinions to come to light that perhaps would have influenced... the author of Account Two, or not been accessible to the author of Account One... differing ranges of research may have been used to by the two historians that influenced their conclusions... Therefore, both historians would have perhaps had a range of different and contradicting evidence and research to draw on...

Author Focus

The Author Focus code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that account authors had asked different questions and that this fact explained differences in their accounts.

Code	Exemplification
25. They are different texts with differing focus/scope.	Frank Year 1 Peterloo The two accounts focus on different issues. Account 2 writes about the atmosphere leading up to the event how a constable was attacked by people who were against the king. Account 1 talks about the event itself and how the yeomanry attacked a peaceful meeting.
26. The authors take different perspectives.	Alice Year 1 Peterloo [T]hey are written by different people with different perspectives. Account 1 is an extract from a book <i>The Making of the Working Class</i> from this we can conclude that the author would be sensitive and sympathetic to the abused working class, as he, in his books is evaluating and explaining the social class divide of the time. Therefore creating account that is more likely to emphasise the mistreatment of the lower classes by Upper and Middle Classes. Account 2 is an extract from <i>Aristocracy and People</i> . It was

	obviously then written from a different perspective than the 1 st Account, as he is concentrating on the lives of the Upper Class and not the injustices of the Lower Classes, therefore it is very likely that it will not focus on the “violence” of the event.
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Limited Sources

The Limited Sources code category identifies explanations for variation that suggest that differences in the accounts arose because the archive available was limited – unreliable or thin.

Code	Exemplification
27. The sources are biased.	Jenny Year 1 Ranters It is possible for there to be 2 such differing accounts of the same issue, because the reliability of the sources is questionable.
28. There is very little evidence/thin evidence.	Amy Year 2 Peterloo Another possible reason for the fact that the two accounts differ so much is the possibility that not much reliable information is available on the event – so inferences have to be made in order to attempt to find out what happened.
29. The archives are a selective record and will have been shaped.	Kim Year 2 Peterloo The events at Peterloo were created by fear and panic on the part of the aristocracy and upper middle class... Afterwards they would try to cover their actions and therefore we have two widely different sets of primary sources to work from, that of the upper class and that of the working class.

Minor Codes

The Minor Codes code category identifies a number of explanations for variation that figured in a small number of responses

only, such as the suggestion that author incompetence or error explained differences in accounts.

Code	Exemplification
30. The issue is complex, large or controversial and accounts differ because of this.	Dan Year 1 Holocaust Whilst, as I have mentioned previously, both historians should be strictly unbiased with such an important issue it would be hard not to be. The degree of responsibility for the death of over 5 million people is not something to be taken lightly.
31. One or both may have made mistakes.	Vicky Year 2 Peterloo One historian could be incompetent and not have done thorough research.
32. They are secondary sources – they did not experience the event and therefore their accounts vary.	Christine Year 1 Holocaust Both accounts were written after the event at the same time, meaning neither is first hand evidence, which means it is easy for their opinions to be biased due to differing accounts they have heard.
33. The accounts are tailored for different audiences.	Jane Year 2 Ranters The most likely cause of inconsistency is the motivation of each source, in short the ‘target audience’ of each source... Account 1 is published by Penguin Books, had Christopher Hill denied the existence of the Ranters a large part of his narrative would not exist, and so may not have been published, while Account 2 in a sense has more freedom to be critical of the Ranters’ origins as it is an internal release.
34. The differences are in narration - differences in detail / emphasis create different accounts.	Adam Year 1 Peterloo There are a few similarities of the two accounts which illustrate some truth is written. These points may have then been played upon by authors or story tellers creating two different accounts.

3. Code Counts by Year and Task (Written Data)

This table counts the number of responses in which an idea coded by a code appeared across the data set, analysed by task and by year. (N= 72)

	Year 1		Year 1		Year 1		Year 2		Year 2		Year 2		Overall	
	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Year 2 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 2 Total	Total	Total
1. The authors are biased.	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	6	10		
2. The authors have interpreted material to support their preconceived views.	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	6	7	13		
3. The authors have simply presented material in ways that support their preconceived views.	0	3	1	1	2	4	1	2	4	4	7	11		
4. The authors take the side of one group in the past.	0	4	1	0	4	0	0	4	0	5	4	9		
5. The authors have simply selected material that supports their preconceived views.	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	3	3	6		
6. The accounts are one-sided / imbalanced.	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	3		
7. The authors look for different material to support their preconceived views.	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1		
8. One could be lying.	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1		
9. The sources have been interpreted in more than one way.	10	3	2	5	1	2	5	1	2	15	8	23		
10. The sources have been evaluated in more than one way.	6	0	0	4	1	0	4	1	0	6	5	11		
11. The facts have been interpreted in more than one way.	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	3		
12. One source is more factual and the other more inferential.	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1		
13. They make different comparisons.	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1		

3. Code Counts by Year and Task (Written Data) (Continued)

This table counts the number of responses in which an idea coded by a code appeared across the data set, analysed by task and by year. (N= 72)

	Year 1		Year 1		Year 2		Year 2		Year 2		Overall	
	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
14. All depends on the value and importance that is placed on the various facts.	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
15. The authors classify things differently.	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2
16. They may have consulted different sources.	6	4	7	3	4	3	17	10	17	10	27	27
17. The author's enquiry determines the selection of sources, which differ.	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
18. The amount of sources available varies over time.	1	1	0	3	1	0	2	4	2	4	6	6
19. One author may have better resources (institutionally).	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
20. The authors have different backgrounds/beliefs/opinions which will have shaped how they interpreted sources.	3	2	4	2	5	4	9	11	9	11	20	20
21. The authors are different people and will make different inferences and judgments.	2	2	3	1	2	2	7	5	7	5	12	12
22. Time changes how things are viewed – new ideas arise.	1	0	0	3	1	0	1	4	1	4	5	5
23. The authors have filled in gaps in the record with opinion.	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
24. Historians have differing views of the time period/context which impact their views.	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	2	2
25. They are different texts with differing focus/scope.	3	3	5	0	5	6	11	11	11	11	22	22

3. Code Counts by Year and Task (Written Data) (Continued)

This table counts the number of responses in which an idea coded by a code appeared across the data set, analysed by task and by year. (N= 72)

	Year 1		Year 1		Year 2		Year 2		Year 2		Overall	
	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
26. The authors take different perspectives.	0	3	0	1	3	0	3	3	4	7		
27. The sources are biased.	3	2	1	4	6	2	6	6	12	18		
28. There is very little evidence/thin evidence.	6	1	0	5	2	0	7	7	7	14		
29. The archives are a selective record and will have been shaped.	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2		
30. The issue is complex, large or controversial and accounts differ because of this.	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	3	3	6		
31. One or both may have made mistakes.	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	4	5		
32. They are secondary sources – they did not experience the event and therefore their accounts vary.	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	2	4		
33. The accounts are tailored for different audiences.	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2		
34. The differences are in narration - differences in detail / emphasis create different accounts.	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	2		

4. Code Category Counts by Year and Task (Written Data)

This figure presents the 7 code categories used to analyse the written task data set and shows the distribution of ideas coded under the categories by task and by year. The year totals (106 and 99) and the overall totals (205) of instances of ideas coded do not correspond to the number of student responses (72) because most responses made reference to more than one explanation for variation. The code categories are presented in order of their numeric importance in the data set.

Code Categories	Year 1			Year 2			Year 1	Year 2	Overall
	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Ranter Task	Peterloo Task	Holocaust Task	Total /106	Total /99	Total /205
Author Bias	2	10	8	4	9	7	20	20	40
Author Interpretation	11	4	6	6	2	3	21	11	32
Author Background / Beliefs	6	4	6	4	6	5	16	15	31
Variable Sources	6	6	7	5	4	3	19	12	31
Author Focus	3	5	5	1	7	6	13	14	27
Limited Sources	6	3	1	7	7	2	10	16	26
Minor Codes	0	3	4	3	4	4	7	11	18

4. Written Data Coding: Exemplification

Two examples of coding are provided here for two reasons: firstly to exemplify how individual answers were coded using the code categories and, secondly, to show how the relative importance of code categories in particular responses was determined (see p.34 above).

Two examples of coded responses are provided below, one from the first and one from the second year students in the written task data set. In each case, Question Two answers from each of the three written tasks are exemplified.

Coding is reported under the seven Code Categories. Text is colour coded to indicate the code category under which it was coded using the system explained in the following table. Six code categories group together explanations on the basis of similarity and these are colour coded as follows:

Author Bias	Author Interpretation	Author Background / Beliefs
Author Focus	Limited Sources	Variable Sources

A number of codes were of minor importance in the data set as a whole and were grouped together under the code category Minor Codes. These are all colour coded also, as follows (code numbers are given because code titles are abbreviated in the key).

Topic (30)	Author Error (31)	Secondary Sources (32)
Audience (33)	Storytelling (34)	

4.1 Ben Year 1

Ranter Task Question 2

In both accounts, it is agreed that there is a shortage of sources from anyone other than hostile witnesses. Different historians can, therefore quite easily disagree with the value of the sources available. The author of Account 1 finds that the sources of these “hostile witnesses” to be proof enough of their existence, and manages to quote from arguing Ranters, stating their beliefs and reasons for their actions. No such quotes are evident in Account 2, but in its place, are examples, such as proof that not all writers actually practiced Ranterism, such as Coppe who became a physician and was eventually buried in a churchyard. This can raise the question of whether the two authors of the two accounts had any of the same sources, as they were written 12 years apart, so there is a strong possibility that the sources used were very different.

Ben’s response was coded as explaining variation by making reference ideas coded under three code categories. He explains variation in terms of Limited Sources, Author Interpretation and Variable Sources. Although these ideas are developed at variable length, the Limited Sources reference being the shortest, all ideas were deemed to be of equal importance in his response: the first two ideas are interlinked and therefore mutually dependent and the last idea is explicitly flagged as a strong possibility.

Peterloo Task Question 2

It is quite possible for differing accounts such as these to be made about the same issue. It is unknown what sources the writers have used to form such opinions. It is also a matter of whether each author is pro or anti such cases as volunteer, inexperienced, local militia taking on such matters. For instance, if Thompson was very opposed to such groups, it is likely that he would emphasize the "massacre" that took place without going into lying about events.

Ben's response was coded as explaining variation by making reference ideas coded under three code categories. He explains variation in terms of Variable Sources, Author Background / Beliefs and Author Bias. The first idea was deemed to have minor importance: the idea is simply a suggestion and is not developed. The second two ideas were deemed to have major importance in his response: the two ideas are developed and they are inter-related.

Holocaust Task Question 2

For such an expansive subject, there is plentiful room for differing opinions based on how much value and importance is placed on the various facts. The reasons for the two accounts is that totally different facts are used to illustrate their points. For example, Rubinstein uses facts like the fund raised for Jews and the lack of military forces. These facts are not used by Ceserani who instead uses the fact that the Jews suffering was not highlighted by the BBC, and the same vice-versa. There is so much information on the subject as a whole that it [is] easily possible to simply gather a 'pick n mix' of appropriate information suitable to support your views.

Ben's response was coded as explaining variation by making reference to ideas coded under three code categories. He explains variation in terms of Minor Codes (Topic), Author Interpretation and Author Bias. The first idea was deemed to have minor importance: he is simply noting the complexity of the topic here and the idea is not

developed further. The second idea was deemed to have major importance in his response: he places emphasis on the fact that the authors have placed different weight on different facts and elaborates this point. The final suggestion (that authors have selected material in a biased way) was deemed to have minor importance: the idea is not developed further and is simply added at the end of the response.

4.2 Jane Year 2

Ranter Task Question 2

Such differing sources could be explained by when each account was produced. Notably, Account 2 was written over a decade after Account 1 perhaps rendering it better informed, as discoveries over the nature of sources (such as Coppe) are likely to have been made during this 'gap' period. Resources available could also be accountable for the great difference between the two sources. It could be that J.C.Davies' account is better informed simply due to the resources available to him / her through Cambridge. However this is unlikely as some of the 'facts' such as the 'Blasphemy Act of 1650' are consistent though the two sources. The most likely cause of inconsistency is the motivation of each source, in short the 'target audience' of each source. Account 1 is published by Penguin Books, had Christopher Hill denied the existence of the Ranters a large part of his narrative would not exist, and so may not have been published, while Account 2 in a sense has more freedom to be critical of the Ranters' origins as it is an internal release.

Jane's response was coded as explaining variation by making reference ideas coded under four code categories. She explains variation in terms of Variable Sources, Author Background / Beliefs, Minor Codes (Audience) and Author Bias. In this case the idea that gets the most space (that variation is linked to sources) was deemed to have minor importance: the modality of Jane's language indicates that although she develops this as a possible explanation she does not deem it to be a

probable explanation. The reference to Author Background / Beliefs (that they may have had differential knowledge about sources due to developments in the scholarly community) was also deemed to have minor importance since this suggestion was linked to Jane's suggestions about sources which, as we have seen, she dismisses as improbable. Two linked ideas were deemed to have major importance in her answer: the proposition that the one author was biased (by vested interests linked to publishing and therefore to audience) to present their account in a biased manner.

Peterloo Task Question 2

Both accounts are secondary, therefore in this context they are of equal reliability. So their differing accounts are likely to be due to their purpose. Indeed the subject matter of the two sources differ greatly. The issue of "Peterloo" appears to be surrounded with class conflict therefore the social "position" or stance one adopts when reviewing the event is crucial to the interpretation of it. Interestingly account one is taken from "the making of the English working class" and therefore was clearly adopted a pro-working class stance. Indeed the working class are presented with a "peaceful character" so clearly E.P. Thompson is implying the working class had no intention of escalating the meeting into the "cruelty" mentioned in account two. Account two is, therefore, adopting a pro-Yeomanry and so pro-Aristocracy stance, as revealed in the title "Aristocracy and the People". This account places emphasis on the "restraint" of cavalry and moreover, the "uncharacteristic" nature of "Peterloo". Therefore the differing accounts are a different response to the social situation of each source.

Jane's response was coded as explaining variation by making reference ideas coded under four code categories. She explains variation in terms of Minor Codes (Secondary Sources (32)), Author Focus, Author Bias and Author Background / Beliefs. The first idea was deemed to have minor importance: the idea is simply a suggestion and is

not about explaining variation but about the reliability of the sources. The references to Author Focus were deemed to be minor references also since, as the rest of the answer demonstrates, the author's background is invoked here to explain biases rather than to develop observations about differential focus as such. Author Bias and distorted perspective taking gets the most attention here and, in this case, this was held to be the major explanatory move made in this response. The final lines simply refer to the personal backgrounds of the authors and thus reinforce the importance of the bias explanation: this reference was held to be minor in itself therefore.

Holocaust Task Question 2

It is difficult to determine why the two sources have such differing accounts. However there is an evident manipulation of statistics present in both. While source one considers the number of Jews arriving in Britain from Germany, Czechoslovakia and Austria which adds up to a substantial total of 55,000 refugees, source two, on the other hand, mentions only the number of German Jews which amounted to only 11,000 thus supporting the writers assertion that Britain did not accept German Jews into the country. Therefore source one is considering the Holocaust and its affects on Jews throughout the "Greater Germany" such as Austria and Czechoslovakia, whereas source tow limits its evidence only to German Jews. Moreover one must consider the motivations for each historian's conclusions, this too may have affected their manipulation of sources.

The opening line of this response was not coded, as it is not offering an explanation for variation. The remainder of Jane's response was coded as explaining variation by making reference to ideas coded under two code categories. Jane explains variation in terms of Author Bias and Author Focus: the former is clearly the key move here and this idea was coded as having major importance in her answer; the second

idea is integrated into Jane's explanation in terms of bias and was therefore deemed to have minor importance only in itself.

8.4 Exemplar Full Interview Transcript

Note:

This appendix reproduces a complete interview transcript.

The main questions into which the interview was organised, explained at p.30 above, and the structure of the interview have been highlighted in the text by the use of bold type face and underlining and line breaks.

As is explained, at pp.35-36 above, this thesis focuses on answers to one of the four questions (Question Two) only.

Interviewer questions are identified by italics and interviewee answers are in normal type.

Interview Transcript: Edward Year 1
01/07/2002

Preamble

Okay so if I just explain what I want to do. It's just to ask you some really general questions very similar to, identical in fact, to those ones that were in those written tasks that you completed.

Right.

And then I have some other questions which. If I do have other questions they will just be picking up on what you said in reply to those questions, trying to clarify and whatever.

Question 1

So my question is really broad and it is Why do historians disagree?

I think historians disagree mainly due to the fact that there are different motives behind maybe research or er an event. And certain historians have other purposes, like are there three types you could sort of say? One that goes for one opinion. No sorry two types. One that goes for one opinion. Like there's two opinions, there's always going to be more than one opinion to an event, so one historian will go to one opinion and the other one will go to the other. But then, or there could be the type that just takes a look at the facts from both sides maybe. I don't know that's why I think there's always going to be conflicting views on why historians may disagree.

Right, erm, so if I could just be clear about that you said that there were conflicting motivations and then you said behind research?

Yeah behind maybe. The historians personal motivation could be say to prove a certain, er, disprove or prove a certain act.

Okay so you are saying there are two kinds of mind out there. The one that goes for more than one opinion?

Yeah say like it was something to do with I don't know the Nazi party if you had I don't know a Nazi sympathetic historian.

Yeah.

They are going to try their best to make the Nazis come out.

Right.

It's like with the Holocaust thing isn't it? There's so much evidence saying that it happened but this guy is saying it didn't happen because he's already a Nazi sympathiser.¹⁰⁷

Right.

So it's bound to get conflicting views depending on the historians' personal views.

Right, so some people go for extreme views and other people try to balance all the evidence?

Yeah, yeah exactly.

And is it just about politics?

Uhm.

So you were saying that one reason you might be motivated to go for extreme views is that you have politically extreme views so you might want to go for the extreme version?

Erm, well no there's also going to be the type of research no sorry the quality of the research could be and I suppose if you've got, if you are a lazy historian you might not look at every single individual bit. I suppose you could say that one skill of the historian is to say what is important and what is not important but if you don't look at everything then how can you get the whole picture, how can you start to say what is important and what isn't important and yeah it may matter on how this person is researching.

So is it. Stop me if I am getting this wrong, so far it's basically your political views may drive you to take an extreme stance?

Yeah.

And lack of research?

Or quality of.

Right.

So the evidence you could be using could be pretty poop.

Ok.

Compared to somebody else.

¹⁰⁷ This is a reference to David Irving (Evans, 2001; Guttenplan, 2001).

Okay. Let's imagine if you have balanced historians with no particular political views?

Right.

If that's possible.

[Laughter]

And imagine a group of people who are very balanced in their approach and also extremely hard working quality researchers, could they disagree about things?

Erm.

Let's say 'event X' or something, they are all students of this event like your proposed idea of the fall of communism.¹⁰⁸

Right.

If you have a pretty non-biased, hardworking researchers, could they tell different stories about that event?

Ideally no, they shouldn't but they probably would.

Uhuh.

Maybe, I don't think it would necessarily be a different erm. I'll start that again. Now what am I trying to say? Basically they will all come to the same conclusion but they will probably get there in a different way. No basically the same way but I reckon they might get more sympathetic to certain angles of a, er, of the subject.

Right.

Like when we do the class discussions like when we were doing "why did the BUF fail" and we wrote out those big sort of brainstorm things erm some people would argue, you know the two guys who would sit there, they would always argue a certain point more than the other side of the group even though we all took into consideration. It's just personally what you think. I think it just comes down to in a way maybe the person's gut feeling. That doesn't sound very professional but do you know what I mean it's like what that person thinks is more viable as compared to another.

¹⁰⁸ This student had proposed to study aspects of the fall of communism for their Personal Study (a component of students' courses started in the second half of the summer term in their first year and completed in the first half of their second year studies).

So does that... Are you saying that ultimately an element of all this is just very personal?

Yes.

Because people are all different persons?

Yeah.

Okay. Why is that then? What is all this. Why must there be gut feeling? If you see what I mean.

I think it's just more useful because people are personal. Perhaps they're trying, perhaps some historians are out there to make this claim for themselves, to make themselves famous maybe or, I don't know, that's one idea!

I am sure that's true.

But.

Because a book makes your career so.

Yeah exactly, but I think a lot of it at the end of the day does come down to again to the politics of it all to your way of thinking. And because history being quite an argumentative subject. It's also perhaps the need to get clarity about something. So this is it, this happened, I say this happened, look at my example, everyone learn from that and you are always going to get. That's why you get conflicting views maybe. Does that make sense?

Er. I think so, yeah. So it's a combination of different things.

Yeah.

Question 2

Erm, okay so my next question is about the implications of the fact that you get different opinions. If you have two different versions or accounts that disagree in a number of ways can you just accept that or do you have make some kind of a choice? Can they both be true if they conflict?

Yes they can both be true because if, say all the research all the evidence being used, all the sources and whatever being used is good, erm, and all the researchers are relatively unbiased then it, you are going to get. What you. What they've found out must be true. It cannot be disputed that it's not if all these, if all the checks. Let's say.

Right.

Have been done. So, perhaps in a way that actually would show you better why events happen like if you've got two sides to a certain event like the Cuban Missile thing you know, something like that, the Russians didn't know what the Americans were thinking, the Americans didn't know what the Russians were thinking so who was to know what the other one group were feeling.

Right.

Because you're always, you're going to get. If you are talking about something where there are two hostile parties and then some event happens.

Yes.

The other group doesn't know what the other group's doing so if you were trying to point the finger of blame at someone maybe in a similar type of situation you couldn't really do that until you knew exactly what the other group were trying to do, were wanting to do. And if you do and if you do, and if through research you will find that when historians do research so if we can actually sort of sit down and say well this group did this, which was bad, but this group were doing this and this, so it, not cancels each other out but. I'm not really making much sense

No I think I. Correct me if I am wrong but I think you are saying that you can have different versions of it that are perfectly true by historians because there are different perceptions of it?

Exactly yes.

So as long as someone has done good research. You know I might have done research on the Russians, I might have a really good book on the Russian perception of this, the Russian version of events, whereas someone else might have done an equally scholarly book on the American version of events.

Yes and then you could always pick out bits and say well that corresponds to that and if they knew about this then you know would the same thing have happened and it would cause you to ask more questions.

What about if you have. Can you have two books about the American view?

Yes.

That say different things but that are nevertheless both credible good books?

Well yes if you can have them for the large issue then definitely for the same reasons.

Right. So they would be different aspects to that as well?

Yeah. You just keep on going down and down and down I suppose.

Okay is there any situation in which you can't have that?

[Laughter]

Until someone says "stop" maybe I don't know, not that I can think of.

So basically there always are different perspectives on events?

Yeah. But even like with whole groups of people who agree with each other there's always going to be someone sort of saying "Well actually we'll do it this way". They are all going for the same goal but it's just the way people want to go about doing it I suppose.

Question 3

Okay, my next question only makes sense if you have to choose.

Okay.

If you had to make a decision between two accounts of something, for whatever reason, how might you do this?

Erm, I think reliability would be the key one erm, and perhaps, perhaps the only one because admittedly I'd probably want to find something that automatically backs up what I want to hear erm, but then you'd have to get rid of that. But I think reliability, because, reliability would effect everything else erm.

Could you explain what it means, this 'reliability' idea?

Erm. Firstly the opinion behind the research, if it's going to be biased to one person. The actual, maybe the timing or the usefulness of the evidence used. Whether it's you know something that's just so unimportant or something that's, because you know you may have a cartoon of the time you were looking at so I don't know when we were doing the Nazis stuff you have a cartoon of the time but that's only, that was like maybe only one group's personal opinion on that matter, whereas, if you take a look at an analysis of a few year's later of the event that might, that could in some way be a bit more useful

Yes.

So you would have to look at that.

So it would be a judgement about the quality of the evidence?

Yes I think that would be a definite criteria, er.

So basically ask yourself questions about what motivates the author?

Yes.

And also look at the kind of quality of the evidence that they have?

And I know you don't, I mean you don't particularly want to read something that will just leave you with no real answer. You do want something that, actually that goes back to one of the earlier questions you were asking. People don't want to read an article saying, that doesn't answer a question. They don't want it to sort of flounce around they want a definite answer and maybe that puts pressure on historians to actually, "Ah well yes it definitely happened because of this", or, to what extent, you know you get the question to what extent can this be done to or whatever. Just by putting that on makes, you are being certain but ambiguous at the same time to compensate maybe.

That's the problem with a lot of human life isn't it. That you want the world to make sense but it doesn't.

Exactly, so.

So history has to make sense even though it doesn't?

Yes. How philosophical.

So evidence and motives of historians?

Yes. I think they are the ones.

Question Four

*Okay. Just a question about history and the other subjects that you do and history. **Do you get the same sort of issues in other subjects in the same way about different accounts, different interpretations?***

In Politics we. It. Because a lot of the stuff we do is recent, erm, I think people already have their opinions on it and we do have certain accounts like certain things. When we were doing the 80s we were looking at like Thatcherism.

Yes.

And we were looking at videos by Margaret Thatcher where she was like commenting on her time in office and of course the majority of it was her saying how good it was and everything.

Surprising!

And then you would have interjections from other people in the class, also on the video and different texts we were reading but basically with a thing like politics it's just base facts, particularly in the first year, they don't expect you to do any more analysing of your own opinions.

Right.

Only a little bit. It's more just base facts – what happened and how it happened so not that much. That's only in classroom discussion we get to look at stuff like that.

Right

In Theatre Studies not really because it's just group work and working with the text.

Right.

And English Language, I do that as well.

Right.

When maybe analysing text and stuff like that you have to look at the purpose which ties in with looking at sources and evidence and stuff and looking at historians.

Okay so why do you think it... Why is it so important in history then? Basically you are saying this whole business of different accounts and interpretations and so on is more prominent in history than in other things

Because you need to be sure of your past in a sense. You need to know why you are doing what you are doing now, why you are here. That's why people want to know how true.

Don't you need to be sure what the government is doing if you see what I mean?

Well you do. I definitely agree with that but people don't necessarily care about that type of. Not care but it's not something that they can really influence.

Right.

Because if you are not in a position of power you can't really influence that whereas you can look back at history and sort of say "Well that happened for that reason and I can say why it's like this now".

Right.

And in a way maybe pointing a finger to blame.

So interpretation is to do with human motivation then?

Yes.

It's that. Can you give me an example of that? I just want to make sure I. Or maybe perhaps explain it a bit more?

I can't think of one example, erm. With what we know about Nazi Germany, for a long time it was always based on, for a long time it was thought that the German people never really went along with the bad side of the Nazi way of life, erm, but now we are starting to find new evidence after the fall of communism to suggest that actually a lot of people went along with it, and in fact not enjoyed but took part in the sort of more violent aspects of the Nazi regime.

Uhuh.

Er, why didn't we know about this before? Because of the political situation of the Cold War.

Right.

We don't want to condemn the people of West Germany, or the people who were under the control of the Nazis and say "you were all mean people". You don't want to do that because you don't want to start another war, you don't want your new allies to put their backs up and go to the communists.

Right.

So I reckon yeah, that's an example of motivation of historians.

Right.

Of people saying "We don't want to rock the boat so we had better come to this conclusion" and then when everything's settled and it doesn't matter anymore that's when the conclusions come.

Can you relate it to any of the ideas you might have for your study? This idea of motivation, interpretation?

Erm, yeah, you could say. I could imagine a lot of the books saying that these are popular peoples' revolutions.

Uhuh.

That got rid of communism and stuff like that, er, because we live in a growing globalised world where capitalism doesn't want to go back and they want their power.

Okay.

So perhaps these books that I am going to start reading are influenced.

Ideological?

Yeah

Yeah. Well I think that was what I was going to ask so thank you for that.

8.5 Interview Data Coding

Note:

The system of coding used to code the interview task, described at pp.34-35 above, is exemplified in this appendix.

Interview Data Coding: Code Categories

1. Introduction

The process of coding the interview task data is described in the Methodology Chapter. As is explained there (at pp.34-35), the interview data was coded using the Code Categories developed in the coding of the written task data. This is exemplified below and examples of data coded under the Code Categories are presented. The Code Categories have been defined at pp.247-254 above. The definitions are not reiterated here. As noted at p.34 above, two additional minor codes were developed in the interview data coding process: these codes are presented and exemplified below.

No data tables summarising the data are presented here. As noted above at pp.34-35 and p.142, the interview data was coded ordinally, in terms of the order of appearance in the interviews of ideas coded by the Code Categories. A data table summarising this coding has been presented above (at p.147).

2. Code Categories: Presentation and Exemplification

The Author Bias Code Category

The following exemplify transcript segments coded under this category.

Er, there might also be bias and there might be like a reason for trying to, erm, have, to put their view across. There might be, like, a reason why.

Elizabeth Year 1

Like the historian will look at things like events in the way they perceive it and quite often they can like distort the information or you know get what they want from the information to suit their way of thinking.

Ruth Year 2

The Author Interpretation Code Category

The following exemplify transcript segments coded under this category.

[P]eople don't interpret sources in the same way... And so they pull out different ideas from the sources.

Elizabeth Year 1

Yes, I guess that's like... Well evidence can be interpreted in different ways, for example the Gestapo in Germany was very short numbered and some people could say they could still terrorise because there's people in camps, but Gellately said well they can't because it's structurally impossible. People have different opinions and will interpret evidence in different ways.

Peter Year 2

Author Background / Beliefs

The following exemplify transcript segments coded under this category.

Well if it's about two different sides of an event then they could just have come from two different sides or they could have been educated in the manner of the two different sides.

Jenny Year 1

Some people may have different beliefs and therefore they look at things and someone may look at things a different way to another person and so they need to.

Peter Year 2

Variable Sources

The following exemplify transcript segments coded under this category.

I think some people give their different interpretations from different sources.

Adam Year 1

If you go and study Nazi Germany a lot of the new Gestapo reports that have just been made public and things and also especially in American history because a lot of stuff remains classified for 30-40 years before it gets available for things, so work that's released straight away after the event is less likely to have less access to government files and stuff, so your point of view can vary depending on what information you have access to I think.

George Year 2

Author Focus

As was noted, at pp.149-150 above, there was only one example of an Author Focus explanation in the interview data set. This example is reproduced below.

[I]t's the very nature of a document that you can interpret it differently, because different people are looking for different things.

Stuart Year 2

Limited Sources

The following exemplify transcript segments coded under this category.

Well if the source is quite general and isn't specific enough then they may think that in a different way another historian would.

Adam Year 1

And we can't go and count the number of Gestapo there are in Germany. So a historian has limited evidence... Whereas an economist can count the number of people who don't like Wembley Stadium in Germany now... So the limited evidence means that you have to take what you can.

Peter Year 2

Minor Codes

The table below counts the ideas that were coded under Minor Codes in the interview data set. The second and third columns identify new minor codes developed during the coding of the interview data set. All three minor codes are exemplified below.

Year	Respondent	Author Error / Competence	Author Psychology	The Climate of the Time
1	Ben	1		
1	Edward	1	1	
1	Jenny		1	
2	George			1
2	Ruth		1	
2	Stuart			1

The following exemplifies the suggestion that historical disagreements may result from author error or differences in author competence.

[A] historian can easily misinterpret something that is false to be true.

Ben Year 1

The following exemplifies the suggestion that historical disagreements may result from author psychology.

People have always got like their own needs and desires and they are going to want to satisfy that in the way that they examine things.

Ruth Year 2

The following exemplifies the suggestion that historical disagreements may result from the climate of the time in which accounts are produced.

Political, social pressures, the society you are living in... or is that the same as bias? I don't know you might interpret something differently if there is a different climate of feeling at that time towards something, so, if you... if there's an anti-communist feeling you might just be predisposed to that then kind of follow that feeling

Stuart Year 2

8.6 Progression Models: Evidence and Accounts

Note:

Two progression models were presented in summary form in Chapter 3. These models are presented in full below.

Progression in Ideas about Evidence

(Adapted from Lee and Shemilt, 2003, p. 114)

1	<p>Pictures of the past</p> <p>The past is viewed as though it were the present, and students treat potential evidence as if it offers direct access to the past. Questions about the basis of statements about the past do not arise. Stories are just stories.</p>
2	<p>Information</p> <p>The past is treated as fixed and known by some authority; students treat potential evidence as information. Given statements to test against evidence, students match information or count sources to solve the problem. Questions arise about whether the information offered is correct or incorrect, but no methodology is attributed to history for answering such questions beyond an appeal to books, diaries or what is dug up. These, although sometimes seen as being connected with the past, provide transparent information that is either correct or incorrect.</p>
3	<p>Testimony</p> <p>The past is reported to us by people living at the time. Like eyewitnesses today, they do this either well or badly. Questions as to how we know about the past are regarded as sensible: students begin to understand that history has a methodology for testing statements about the past. Conflicts in potential evidence are thought appropriately settled by deciding which report is best. Notions of bias, exaggeration and loss of information in transmission supplement the simple dichotomy between truth-telling and lies. Reports are often treated as if the authors are more or less direct eyewitnesses: the more direct, the better.</p>
4	<p>Scissors and Paste</p> <p>The past can be probed even when no individual reporter has told us truthfully or accurately what happened. We can put together a version by picking out the true statements from different reports and putting them together. In one student's words: 'You take the true bits out of this one, and the best bits out of that one, and when you've got it up, you've got a picture.' Notions of bias or lies are supplemented by questions about whether the reporter is in a position to know.</p>
5	<p>Evidence in isolation</p> <p>Statements about the past can be inferred from sources of evidence. We can ask questions of sources that they were not designed to answer, so that evidence will bear questions for which it could not be testimony. Many things may serve as evidence that do not report anything. (Nineteenth Century rail timetables were not constructed for the benefit of historians.) This means that historians may 'work out' historical facts even if no testimony survives. Evidence may be defective without questions of bias or lies. Reliability is not a fixed property of a source, and the weight we can rest on any piece of evidence depends on what questions we ask of it.</p>
6	<p>Evidence in context</p> <p>A source only yields evidence when it is understood in its historical context: we must know what a source meant to those by and for whom it was produced. This involves the suspension of certain lines of questioning and a provisional acceptance of much historical work as established fact (a known context). We cannot question everything at once. Contexts vary across time and place and thus a sense of period is important.</p>

Progression in Ideas about Accounts

(Adapted from Lee and Shemilt, 2004, p.30)

1	<p>Accounts are just (given) stories</p> <p>Students treat accounts as stories that are just ‘there’. Competing stories are just different ways of saying the same thing. If two stories are ‘about’ the Romans, then they are both about ‘the same thing’. We can say ‘the same thing’ in different ways, just as at school we sometimes have to tell the same story ‘in our own words’.</p>
2	<p>Accounts fail to be copies of a past we cannot witness</p> <p>Accounts cannot be ‘accurate’ because we were not there to see the past and therefore cannot know it. If accounts differ, this is because they are just a matter of opinion, where ‘opinion’ is a substitute for knowledge we can never have.</p>
3	<p>Accounts are accurate copies of the past, except for mistakes or gaps</p> <p>The past determines accounts: the latter are fixed by the information available so that there is a one-to-one correspondence. (This is the positive correlate of the previous position.) If we know the facts, there is just one proper account. Opinion is a result of <u>gaps</u> in information and mistakes.</p>
4	<p>Accounts may be distorted for ulterior motives</p> <p>Accounts are copies of the past that can be more or less distorted. The past is reported in a more or less biased way. Where accounts differ, this is not just a problem about our knowledge of the past, but about the role of the author as an active contributor and therefore also and necessarily as a distorter of the past. Opinion takes the form of bias, exaggeration and dogmatism (and also lies that stem from partisan positions). These all ‘twist’ stories. Ideally a story should be written from a <u>position of perspectiveless neutrality</u> (or no position at all).</p>
5	<p>Accounts are organised from a personal viewpoint</p> <p>Students who think like this have made a major break with previous ideas by abandoning the idea that accounts should have a one-to-one relationship with the past. Accounts are not just copies of the past, but arrangements of significant parts of it. A viewpoint and selection are legitimate features of accounts. Opinion re-appears here as something controlling the selection that historians make; it is a matter of personal choice, but this does not mean that it is partisan. A historian may, for example, answer a question about housing or about work and education, because he or she is interested in that <u>question</u>.</p>
6	<p>Accounts must answer questions and fit criteria</p> <p>Differences in accounts are not just a matter of authors deciding to make choices; accounts are necessarily selective, and are necessarily constructed for particular themes and timescales. The past is (re-) constructed in answer to questions in accordance with criteria. There can be no complete account. It is in the nature of accounts to differ $\frac{3}{4}$ legitimately $\frac{3}{4}$ from one another. Accounts are assessed against criteria in order to determine their admissibility and relative worth. The aim of this process, however, is not to select a single best or most valid account of a given topic or period of history. Contrary accounts of the same topics and periods may be accepted because they address and answer different but equally worthwhile questions about that topic or period. The criteria of the discipline, the ‘rules of the game’ for doing History, knock out many possible accounts of the past but do not prescribe a fixed number of admissible accounts. The latter depends upon the sorts of questions that we deem to be worth asking and to which valid answers can be <u>given</u>.</p>