Usable Historical Pasts:

A study of students’ frameworks of the past

ESRC Award Number RES-000-22-1676

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End of Award Report
July 2008

(4,979 words)
Background:

Routinely politicians, public figures, academics and the media lament that young people today ‘don’t know any history’. In making this criticism commentators typically focus on students’ alleged lack of knowledge of specific content items (e.g. the dates of the Second World War, the names of Henry VIII’s wives).

This is a weak conceptualization of what may be an important problem. It is weak because, as Wineburg has pointed out, the same criticism has been made for at least a century despite the fact that schools, teaching and society have all changed radically (Wineburg 2000). We need to understand what students do know. But the conceptualization is weak for a more important reason: adolescents’ memory of discrete items of information may be a poor indicator of their ability to use knowledge of the past for orientation in time. We cannot tell from tests of ‘key facts’ whether students leave school with a coherent framework of knowledge linking past, present and future which they can use to make sense of their place in the world. The overarching purpose of the proposed research was, therefore, to explore in more detail how students’ frameworks of the past are structured and employed.

Objectives:

The specific objectives of the research were to produce:

1. categories for analysing ways in which (if at all) students refer to the past when considering questions about the present and future;
2. categories for differentiating degrees of organization displayed by students’ pasts as they develop over time;
3. a conceptual apparatus for categorizing ontologies underlying students’ available pasts;
4. an assessment of the kinds of internal relationship (if any) between students’ conceptions of change and their propensity to refer to the past for purposes of orientation;
5. an assessment of the degree to which students’ available pasts privilege particular societies.

In general, despite some small considerations outlined below, all the objectives of the research were successfully achieved. It should be noted, however, that two adjustments to the original proposal were made. First, objective 5 was slightly re-focused to address current debates surrounding the relationship between history education and national identity. Second, due to methodological constraints it proved difficult to assess in robust ways the views of “non historians” and the extent to which students’ ideas developed over time.¹ Overall, however, the study provided numerous interesting and

¹ The process of data collection was frustrated by two problems. First, although it was possible to collect data from students who elected to study history at GCSE, it proved difficult to gain access to and collect data from students who did not elect to study history at GCSE (i.e., “non historians”). As a result we only collected written task and interview responses
relevant findings that potentially have important implications for history education.

Methods

Influenced by findings from two pilot studies, the study employed a qualitative, longitudinal design in which data was collected from students through written tasks and group interviews. A purposive sample of 472 students was drawn from three London schools. Twelve students from each school participated in 2006 and a maximum of 16 students per school in 2007. The three schools selected for the study were broadly representative of institutions with high, average, and low national examination results in history. The schools also reflected the broad range of socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural diversity typical of the London area. The students were given a written task and interviewed in groups at the beginning of Year 10. The student sample was then given a further written task and interviewed again during Year 11. New instruments specifically designed for the study were developed, building on experience of those used in the pilots (Lee, 2002, 2004a). Furthermore, the research instruments were piloted at an inner London comprehensive school and subsequently modified. The semi-structured interviews were conducted at each of the 3 London schools with all students participating in groups of four people. Students were given 45 minutes to complete the written task and typically group interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes (See Appendix B for written tasks and interview questions).

The theoretical framework that underpinned the research was drawn (a) from a qualitative research paradigm based on grounded theory (e.g., Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), (b) the theoretical propositions and constructs advanced in the philosophy of history (e.g., Oakeshott, 1933, 1962, 1983; Rüsen, 1993, 2005), and (c) the work of other philosophical and psychological theorists (e.g., Borries, 1998; Wertsch, 2002). The overall aim of the study was to map the various and complex ways that students refer to and access the past for orientation in time. “Mapping” students’ perspectives on, and reference to, the past necessitated the construction of exploratory inductive categories. Coding categories informed by the work of Barton (2001), Rüsen (1993, 2005), Shemilt (1983, 2000) and Wineburg (2001) were ultimately developed from ongoing and systematic analysis of the students’ written responses to tasks and the transcripts of semi-structured interviews.

2 The same 33 students took part in both 2006 and 2007. In total 36 students took part in 2006 and 47 in 2007. Note, there were 12 students who participated in 2007 who had not elected to take GCSE History.

3 All interviews were recorded and transcribed. To assist and strengthen the analytical process data from the written task and interviews were entered into NVivo 7.
Results in Relation to Objectives:

Objective 1

A central focus of this study was to explore the kinds of pasts available to students for orientation in time. More specifically it aimed to investigate the degree to which and the ways in which students used their understanding of the past in thinking about the present and future. As a consequence achieving Objective 1 was central to realising the study’s broader research aims.

Embedded within the rich data collected from the study’s written tasks and in-depth interviews were a complex range of ways in which students “used” or referred to the past when considering current and future issues. One interview question, however, was explicitly targeted to explore the ways in which students made reference to the past when thinking about the present and the future: “People say that the USA is the most powerful country in the world. Will the USA always be the most powerful? How do you know?” Analysis of students’ responses must, of course, take into consideration its methodological limitations. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that in the context of group discussions and in response to a specific interview question a range of interesting and relevant patterns of response did emerge.

In overview student commentary was analysed and classified into seven analytical categories as exemplified in Appendix C. One of the most significant findings was that of the 81 recorded temporal references to the question, 76% offered no explicit historical perspective. The most common response was for students to present-reference by simply assessing the relative strength of the US in the contemporary world without drawing on any historical knowledge or understanding (for examples of these categories, see Appendix C). Perhaps not surprisingly almost all students talked about the present or a backward projected present. Indeed, although some demonstrated an ability to connect the present and future, many students never left the present. Above all, responses revealed that many students did not instinctively think in a way that allowed them to connect past, present, and future.

In direct contrast, however, some of the most interesting responses and discussions were those in which students were able to relate the past and the future to present considerations (Category 1.6). Thus, in discussion about whether or not the USA will always be the most powerful nation, a small

\[4\] Coded for 36 students in 2006 and 47 students in 2007. The same 33 students completed these tasks in 2006 and repeated in 2007 – Interview Questions 1A, 1B & 2.

\[5\] Undoubtedly student responses were conditioned by the dynamics of the group interview; it is possible, for example, that some students harboured understandings that were, for a variety of reasons, not exposed in the flow of discussion. Furthermore, specific analysis of student responses to only one type of question may not have revealed other different or more complex ways that students “use” their historical knowledge in other circumstances.

\[6\] In other words student responses demonstrated they believed the past was like the present.
number of students (providing 8% of the total references) were able to draw on informed historical knowledge and understanding to illuminate perspectives on the present and the future. As one student argued, “if we look at history then…there’s not one country that’s been the most powerful for ever…so if we judge from that then it must change.” As evidence to support such a perspective students variously pointed to the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the British Empire, and the USSR to illuminate both present and future possibilities. Furthermore, some students used specific historical references (e.g., “the Wall Street crash,” “the Depression” and “the Vietnam War”) to illustrate the fragility of American dominance and to raise serious questions about the “inevitability” of American supremacy in the future.

It is important to note that the aim of the research was not to explicitly “test” students’ historical knowledge. Nevertheless it is perhaps significant that among those who did try to past, present, and future reference (4% of the total references), many appeared frustrated by their lack of substantive knowledge. As a result they found it difficult to produce a plausible or coherent response to the question (see Appendix C).

Overall, therefore, three main conclusions can be drawn from this aspect of the study. First, responses revealed that the majority of students did not instinctively draw on historical knowledge to inform contemporary and future perspectives. Second, students who offered the least sophisticated responses to the question found it difficult, even when prompted, to connect the past, present, and future in any meaningful way. Third, the responses of only a small minority of students demonstrated a capacity to refer to the past to inform contemporary and future perspectives. Among these responses some students drew on a range of historical knowledge and understandings, whereas others offered less sophisticated responses that often drew on national characteristics and stereotypes.

By its very nature this is a small-scale exploratory study that makes a first attempt to consider the ways and extent to which (if at all) students refer to the past in thinking about the present and future. Certainly, larger scale and more detailed studies will be required to substantiate the findings and patterns revealed above. However, these tentative and preliminary findings raise serious issues for history educators, policy makers and curriculum developers. At the heart of this is the issue of what type of history education and history curriculum are best suited to ensure that students develop more sophisticated temporal understandings and “usable” historical frameworks?

Objective 2:

Objective 2 required the creation of categories for differentiating degrees of organization displayed by students’ pasts as they developed over time. As a means to develop such categories analysis was focused on a written task that broadly required students to tell the story of British History in the last 2,000
Although the list is not exhaustive and potentially requires further exploration, analysis of the data suggested 4 overarching categories.

The first category “unsubstantial” included the responses and narratives of those students who offered vague, unsupported or incomplete answers. For example, one student commented, “I can’t do this. My knowledge does not stretch out as far as 2000 years (see Appendix D for other examples).

The second organizing category, named “topics”, included those students whose responses indicated that history consisted of unconnected and arbitrary events. Typically these students produced random topic lists or partial or truncated narratives. The extract below provides one representative response, other examples are included in Appendix D.


The third category included those responses in which students constructed an “and then” narrative which typically began with the Battle of Hastings and continued to advance by attaching a detailed range of events thereafter. This effort always ended abruptly at the point where students (a) encountered significant gaps in substantive knowledge or (b) students realised the enormity of the task on which they had embarked. Examples of this are also seen in Appendix D.

The fourth category conflated those responses in which students offered either an explanatory or thematic account of British history. It included the responses of those students who were able to address the question in terms of broad patterns of change over the whole period. Often these patterns focused on individual strands (political, social, or economic) or partial themes such as the decline of Empire or advances in technology (see Appendix D for examples).

Although analysis provided us with four possible categories for differentiating degrees of organization displayed by students in their accounts of British history, it must be acknowledged that further research is required in this area. In particular the robust nature of the categories would need to be further examined with a much larger sample of students. In addition, our preliminary research suggested that a degree of overlap existed between categories and

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7 More specifically in the written task students were asked: “Tell the story of British History in the last 2,000 years or so up to now. Try and give a big picture of what was going on (By the way when we say ‘going on’ we mean that we don’t want just facts and dates but are interested in a big picture of what was happening)."
that within categories a complex range of responses often was evident. Nevertheless, despite these considerations the four broad categories identified in the study offer a useful way for educators to begin to conceptualise and categorise how children account for the past.

In relation to the broader aims of the study it is also possible to conclude, albeit tentatively, that (a) that degrees of organization displayed by students did not appear to significantly develop over time and (b) that in general the responses of non historians appeared less sophisticated than those who had elected to study history at GCSE. However, due to the small sample size and other methodological considerations these observations must be considered tentative and preliminary at this stage.

In summary the study revealed that some student responses demonstrated considerable (if inaccurate) knowledge of historical facts. Others could go some way towards organizing these facts in a sequential, story-like, account in which one thing led to another (but the antecedent did not explain what followed it in any other way).

Another group of responses offered a thematic or explanatory account, but two points should be made in connection with this group. Being able to think in terms of themes should, in principle, allow students both to make more meaningful connections between past, present and future, and to remember more historical information (more facts). The latter is attested by cognitive research over the past three decades and more (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2000). However, in practice (a) some students could ‘thematise’ on the basis of little historical knowledge, and (b) others who may have had considerable knowledge appeared to find it difficult to make that knowledge evident in writing or talking about a long span of time.

On the basis of this data we cannot say that the categories outlined here amount to any kind of progression model. Clearly the four categories cannot easily be delineated as a linear hierarchy and further larger scale research...
would be required to develop a more robust progression model. However, analysis suggests that the basis of such a model may be visible, and that more research on this may prove very productive.

**Objective 3**

A central concern of the research was to explore in more detail what kind of past students addressed and to ascertain the extent to which it was coherently organized. We also wanted to understand more fully the ontologies underlying students’ understanding of the past. In other words, what did students perceive to be the “building blocks” of history (i.e., the “stuff” of which history is made)?

To explore this issue we again focused on the written task which asked students to tell the story of British History in the last 2,000 years. In addition we analysed an interview question with a similar focus. In overview, the research revealed a complex range of ontologies. Viewed in substantive terms common approaches were to see a past that included individuals, groups, dynasties, nations, peoples, and institutions. Considered from a conceptual or second order perspective student accounts variously included events, actions, periods, topics and colligations (e.g., the Industrial Revolution, the Renaissance). Less typical within this group were students whose conceptual ontology included reference to trends, themes, turning points, change, development, process, and patterns. These categorisations are outlined more robustly in the chart in Appendix E.

As the research developed, however, it emerged that it was possible to capture students’ generalized understandings of the past by focusing analysis of their accounts of British history on two broad ontological categories that were defined as ‘event like’ and ‘process like’.13

The first coded category, ‘event like’, was defined as those accounts that gave priority to events, topics, and ‘and then’ narratives. Of the 83 recorded student responses 49% were categorised as “event like”.

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11 Coded for 36 students in 2006 and 47 students in 2007. The same 33 students completed these tasks in 2006 and repeated in 2007 – Written task B2. For Written task B1, ten students were selected as case studies. As examples as they are seen to represent a range of responses.

12 In addition to the written task (see objective 2) students were also asked in interview, “If you had to sum up the story of British history so far, from what you’ve done at school or from home (including TV, movies, books, or anything else) what kind of story would you say it was?"

13 In addition, a third category was created in which 16% were categorised as outliers. This category included accounts in which students did not answer the question, could not understand it, claimed that it was impossible to answer for various reasons, or indeed wrote an account that was not historical, but addressed only current events.

14 The complex use of the term “topic” needs further research. It is difficult here to clarify response components where more or less conventional names were used to label events or clusters of events of disparate temporal and spatial extents.

15 83 responses were received out of a possible 84.
Often these students constructed accounts made up of random topic lists or partial narratives. For many students the task proved very difficult and revealed a lack of substantive and disciplinary understanding. For example, one student, echoing the views of others in this category, candidly remarked:

I am struggling with this question because it is a long period of time to condense. If the question gave a shorter period of time, then it would be easier, but as it stands, I feel that after Jesus was crucified, that I miss out a great deal of time because I can only seem to remember the titanic sinking in 1912, the russian revolution, England winning the world cup, 9/11, 7/7.

Other students offered more substantive detail, but in so doing exposed a lack of deeper historical understanding. These students provided a catalogue of historical topics, events, individuals, and miscellaneous material, but often behaved as if history consisted of unconnected and arbitrary events. Their responses to this task also exposed a general lack of sophisticated chronological or conceptual understanding (see Appendix E for an example of this type of account).

In contrast some students were able to conceptualise 2,000 years of British history in more sophisticated ways. A number of student responses (35%) appeared to move beyond producing random topic lists or partial or truncated narratives and provided some indication that they construed history as an unfolding process of change and development. These accounts were categorised as “process-like”. As exemplified by the extract in Appendix E, some students made an elementary attempt to describe history as an unfolding process shaped by slow, processional, and evolutionary change. In one case, however, they were hampered by a specific lack of historical information about the twentieth century and generally displayed a degree of naïve substantive knowledge.

In fact only 10 student responses (or 12% of the total) moved beyond recounting discreet and unconnected events to offer a sense of important themes, trends or processes in the passage of British history. These students appeared to have a conceptual apparatus that enabled them to make connections across time, but did not necessarily have the substantive knowledge to produce a convincing account.

Overall, therefore, this preliminary exploration revealed that the small minority of students who appeared to have a richer historical ontology saw history as a process involving change and development. If this finding was supported by further more detailed and large-scale research the implications for history education are profound. In particular it raises questions about how the history curriculum can avoid providing students with a fragmented conception of the past. It also suggests that a logical and productive way forward is to consider more closely the conceptual apparatus with which students are able to think about history.
Objective 4:

In his most recent book, *Why History Matters*, the historian John Tosh argued,

> The most valuable objective of history teaching is to enable young people to situate themselves in time, to recognise the centrality of change and development in accounting for the world around them, to grasp the merits – and drawbacks – of historical comparison, and to draw on the past for a richer sense of the possibilities of the future (Tosh 2008, p. 127).

In keeping with the exploration of this educational goal an important element of this study was to explore the kinds of internal relationship (if any) that existed between students’ conceptions of change and their propensity to refer to the past for purposes of orientation.

This study cannot (and was not designed to) demonstrate statistically significant relationships. Moreover, it has proved more difficult than we had hoped to infer conceptions of change from narrative accounts of British history, and analysis is therefore still in progress. Nevertheless, preliminary findings suggested that those students who accounted for 2,000 years of British history in a “process like” manner (see objective 3) appeared more inclined to invoke the past in thoughtful ways when addressing questions of future and present concern. There are indications that students who produced informed future projections using the language of developmental change tended to use historical perspective to address contemporary issues. In addressing the question of whether or not the USA would always be the most powerful country in the world (see objective 1), students who linked past, present, and future also drew on a conceptual apparatus of processes and trends.

Furthermore, links between students’ conceptions of change and their propensity to refer to the past for purposes of orientation were apparent in all aspects of the study. For example, when asked to consider whether to preserve the burial site of an ancient Briton king or sell it to another country for £100 million, students with a more developed historical consciousness (past, present, and future referenced) provided some interesting arguments for preserving the burial site.

16 Coded for 36 students in 2006 and 47 students in 2007. The same 33 students completed these tasks in 2006 and repeated in 2007 – Written task B2. For Interview question 5, five students 2006 & 2007 responses were used as case studies based on their responses to Written task B2 and are seen to represent a range of responses.

17 Change language identified in more sophisticated accounts included such phrases as, “the development of”, “leading to”, “the beginning of”, “resulting in”, “more recently”, “after several decades”.

18 The “Ancient Briton” interview question specifically provided students with the following scenario: “The burial site of an Ancient Briton king has been discovered. It contains the remains of a chariot and some ornaments. They are all fairly well preserved. They would normally be put in the British Museum but another country wants them and offers the British government more than £100 million for them. What should the government do? Should it (a)
In contrast, and as already discussed, some students offered narrative accounts of an event like British past and a few had difficulty understanding how or why they needed to account for 2,000 years of British History. Their responses suggested that the past was dead and gone and held no usable or significant bearing on present or future issues and concerns. Accordingly, in their responses to the “US question” and other tasks, an historical perspective was not apparent. Similarly, most of these students saw no value in preserving an ancient burial site and accounted for the past in terms of discrete unconnected events.

To explore more fully students’ conceptions of change responses to the “2000 years of British history” task were also coded against theoretically and empirically informed progression models principally developed by Shemilt and Lee (see Appendix F for the “change” progression model). Initial analysis suggested that students whose responses placed them on the higher levels of the change progression model seemed more likely to draw on the past for purposes of orientation.

The study’s findings suggest that, in keeping with the aspirations identified by John Tosh, students who are able to think of a past in terms of more sophisticated conceptions of change and significance appear better equipped to consider issues of present and future concern. The implications of this preliminary finding if supported by further work are potentially very important for the development of a more meaningful history education.

Objective 5

During the period in which this study was devised increasing public attention was drawn to issues related to diversity, ethnicity, and identity in British society. Vigorous debates raged about notions of “Britishness,” Britain’s relationship to Europe and to the wider world, and to the efficacy of immigration. A prominent feature in public deliberation concerned the relationship between history education and national identity. In this context a decision was made to slightly re-focus objective 5 (which called for “an assessment of the degree to which students’ available pasts privilege particular societies”) in order to explore the relationship between history education and students’ sense of identity.

We recognised that this is a complex and nuanced topic that would require more detailed attention. Nevertheless through both interview and written task
questions we explored the issue as an element of the broader study by focusing not only on (a) how students defined or perceived their identity, but also on (b) whether or not students believed history played any part in shaping it.

Accordingly, a specific interview question asked students: Do you consider yourself to be English, British, both or someone else? Perhaps not surprisingly for students, nearly all of whom were born in the UK, most principally considered themselves to be either British (49%) or English (29%). The two other main categories of identity that emerged from student responses were “Black” (18%) and African (10%).

Significantly, however, although 78% declared themselves to be either British or English in some measure, closer examination revealed a more complex picture of identity as only 42% declared themselves to be exclusively English or British. For many students their sense of self was complex and indicated hybrid and multiple identities in which “Englishness” or “Britishness” often was combined with other national, regional and ethnic characteristics (e.g., Black, African, Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Indian, Irish, Russian).

To investigate this issue further, rather than present the question in a way that led students to think of identity in national or ethnic terms, in the written task students were invited to more broadly explain, “who they were”. In response, all students, in varying degrees, replied in the first person and provided facts about age, sex, address, national, religious denomination, cultural or racial characteristics. Occasionally a few students offered personal glimpses into their character. For example,

My name is xx I am 15 years old, nearly 16, and I live in London. I enjoy school and I am musical.

I am from a mixed heritage of Jamaican, Irish, and Cuban. These are important as they play a big part in what I look like and my upbringing.

I am a Christian, a Jehovah Witness; this is a very big part of my life, as I have to do certain things to stay true to God.

In general two striking features were evident in these responses. First, only one student from the whole study answered the question with anything other than a personal biography. Typically students did not problematise the

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21 Coded for 36 students in 2006 and 47 students in 2007. The same 33 students completed these tasks in 2006 and repeated in 2007 – Written task C1 & C2.

22 Specifically the two questions were (1) People are often asked who they are. People usually answer by saying where they come from, or what beliefs and values they have, or even whom they consider to be friends or enemies. If you were asked who you were, what would you say? Explain your answer. (2) Do you consider yourself to be English, British, both or someone else? Does History play any part in who you think you are?

23 Responses were categorised based on 47 students. It is interesting to note that in their responses students made no real distinction between defining themselves as a member of a nation state, ethnic, or pan continental entity.
question or discuss in any broad sense how deeper cultural, historical, or societal trends might have shaped their identity. Second, as described below, the inward looking and personal nature of these responses paralleled their thoughts on the value of history and their own sense of identity.

When asked, “Does History play any part in who you think you are?” of those who responded 77% believed that it did. However, detailed analysis of responses revealed that the majority of these students narrowly conceived their notion of history. Most students only drew on personal and family history when explaining how the past shaped their identity and others extended this perspective by separating broader historical influences from personal ones:

Well, no I’m English by my family and family tree…so History does play a part in who I am'.

Family History plays a part in who I am but History itself probably doesn’t.

Not all students, however, saw broader historical influences as unimportant to their sense of identity. Indeed 25% of students who answered the question acknowledged that broader historical forces likely influenced their lives:

I pay attention to History and think events in History have shaped my views/opinions on certain issues.

Less than a quarter of students declared that history did not influence their identity (23%). Responses exposed a range of attitudes and perspectives; prominent among them was the familiar notion that as the past was dead and gone it did not affect their personal identity or the world in which they lived.

Overall, therefore, although the issue is unquestionably complex and requires further research, this exploratory investigation into the relationship between history education and identity demonstrated that typically students did not believe that history (beyond personal and family history) was a major factor in influencing their identity. Certainly, it would be wrong to conclude from this finding that students need a fixed, national story around which they can allegedly unite. Rather, it suggests that students require a history education that provides them with a rich and informed perspective on how the past has unavoidable influence in shaping their life and the lives of others both in the present and in the future.

Activities

Aspects of the study have been presented at important national and international conferences in Coimbra (Portugal), Istanbul, London, and New York. Dissemination of the preliminary results of this study has strongly indicated that it has widespread national and international interest (see Appendix G for further details).
Within the UK the results of the project also have captured the attention of senior figures within the Historical Association, OFSTED, and the QCA. Dissemination and discussion meetings with these influential bodies are proposed for 2008-09.

Issues raised by the study also have been featured in ongoing seminars held at the IOE and meetings are planned during 2008-2009. This is part of the strategy to ensure that research findings will continue to be made available to teachers and researchers in London and beyond.

**Outputs**

In addition to the four conference presentations outlined above (see Appendix G) a number of research publications and papers related to this research are available (see Appendix H). The research was also publicised in *The Guardian* newspaper and received favourable reaction and commentary. In addition, it is anticipated that further publications based on the results of this study will be submitted to a range academic and professional journals.

**Impacts**

Set within the context of growing national and international concerns over students’ historical framework knowledge, this study - the first of its kind in the UK – offers the potential to inform teaching and curriculum developments in history education. The findings relate to UK teachers’ concerns (expressed in INSET and conference sessions, and by MA students) that Key Stage 3 is fragmented and fails to raise ‘big questions’. Importantly, the results of the study have already aroused the interest of senior figures at the QCA and OFSTED and have led to support funding for a pilot research and teaching project. Furthermore, the project is connected to similar studies in other countries (e.g., Canada, the Netherlands, USA) and will contribute to greater international understanding of this vital issue in history education.

**Future Research Priorities**

As outlined above, many of the issues raised in this exploratory study warrant more detailed, larger scale analysis. In particular it would be helpful to know more precisely the conceptual basis that underpins students’ propensity to produce “event like” or “process like” accounts. In this respect it would be valuable to have a deeper understanding of the relationship between students’ substantive and conceptual knowledge.

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24 The study, *Historical Frameworks and the National Curriculum* (2007-2008), a pilot research and teaching project in which academics and teachers collaborated, arose largely as a result of the UHP project. This latter project promises to lead to further research and curriculum development that also is likely to impact both history teaching and the history curriculum in England.
More specifically intervention studies using an experimental design might be helpful in testing the efficacy of possible approaches to fragmentation and usable historical pasts. More focused studies on a wider range of specific circumstances in which students are likely (or not likely) to refer to the past when considering issues and concerns in the present and future are likely to prove instructive.

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