

Using history in public policy development

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Abstract

This thesis addresses two key problems: that historical practice in the academy is largely disengaged from politics as a domain of public purpose and that policymaking remains fixed on a very narrow (and quantitative) definition of evidence, although the “policy-relevant” disciplines have not proved able to solve long-standing policy issues. It inspects both phenomena with the aim of describing the space in which the two problems can be brought into a workable accommodation.

The argument is made that public policy should be regarded as an important concern of academic history, and policymakers themselves as people with legitimate interests that historians should take seriously. Public history provides a helpful framework and set of concerns to work with in this respect. Given that the social and natural sciences have not been able to solve the pressing policy problems with which governments are faced, a certain obligation may be claimed for historians to reconsider their stance. The *re*-connection of history and policy – the nineteenth-century discipline clearly discerned a public-political purpose for history – requires attention to be given to articulating and demonstrating the distinctive cognitive tools of the historian and their distinctive value to the policymaking process.

The thesis addresses two primary fields, whose interests and professional practices appear divergent such that both the principles and the terms of collaboration are difficult to imagine: academic history and government policymaking. The primary material on which the research draws is accordingly the products of these constituencies: works of historiography and policy documents of various kinds. Also of relevance are commentaries and analyses that address these domains, whether from other disciplines with an interest in political decision-making, from the media or from other organisations with a professional stake, such as think tanks.

The originality of the research lies in conceiving of the question of the uses of history for public policy as one of integration of “supply” and “demand” perspectives. It seeks clarity on the distinctive value of historical skills and approaches, but not as an end in itself.

Rather, the case is assembled for the affinities between history and policy as processes and hence that the two can be brought into a productive alignment. So, instead of history providing pre-packaged accounts *for* policy, it can be embedded as a way of thinking and reasoning *in* policy.

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Introduction

This thesis is primarily located within the genre of history writing concerned with the identity and purpose of the discipline of history. Writing on history as a narrative interpretation of past events clearly has a longer history – Thucydides is often invoked – than that conceived within the structures of an academic discipline.¹ It is the latter that this thesis addresses. Names such as R.G. Collingwood, E.H. Carr and Geoffrey Elton can be easily called to mind, although a richer and more extensive body of work exists than is perhaps recognised. Of particular interest and relevance to this thesis is recent scholarship, which has taken on elements of vindication, apology and advocacy. There are a number of strands to this genre.

One strand addresses a primarily academic audience, and engages with a set of challenges to the discipline's sense of its own integrity and stability that have emerged and been debated over the last forty or so years. Perhaps most visible among those challenges was a scrutiny of the authority and objectivity of the historian and of the idea of a retrievable, knowable past. These challenges are perhaps best understood as points of departure, in that they put pressure on assumptions about the preoccupations and priorities of history and thereby led to the development of what Jordanova terms 'fresh fields'.² So, for example, world history can be seen as a response to the 'disruption' of 'institutional and intellectual pathways' as it questioned the status of the nation and of established periodisations as "natural" units of historical enquiry.³ Forms of "identity history" can similarly be seen as arising from these challenges to question fundamental assumptions about the nature, purpose and practice of history. Some historians have taken the challenges to history as a primary concern. Hence Jenkins, Morgan and Munslow can situate their edited collection, *Manifestos for history*, in the context of a 'massive contemporary growth in probing the very "idea" of history'. They propose that 'historical studies is... now much changed and deeply contested, resulting in even its *raison d'être* being raised to the

¹ Kenyon takes us back to Vergil, Camden et al: Kenyon, *History men: the historical profession in England since the renaissance*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983). On Thucydides as father of applied history: Achenbaum, 'The Making of an Applied Historian: Stage Two', *The Public Historian* 5 (1983).

² Jordanova, *History in practice*, (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), p. 47. Due to distinctive approach and the wide range of concepts being used, adapted and proposed in this thesis (see methodology and key concepts sections below), two different forms of quotation marks are employed for clarity. Single quotation marks enclose direct citation; double quotation marks indicate a concept or position (or, less often, a quote within a quote).

³ Northrop, *A companion to world history*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 1.

level of the questionable'.⁴ Although they set their arguments in conscious contention with the political impetus of the *Manifestos*, Richard Evans, Keith Windschuttle or Gertrude Himmelfarb, in different national-disciplinary contexts, also take the "state of history" as their organising principle.⁵

Others, such as François Bédarida, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, have sought to bridge or mediate between often dichotomous positions of "defence" or "critique" of history. So the former can conceive of the 'historian's responsibility' to bring together the 'requirements of learning and those of social needs', warning that the alternative is a retreat: 'a dignified retreat, but leading inexorably to despair and decrepitude'.⁶ Lasch-Quinn and Fox-Genovese's collection, *Reconstructing history*, makes the case that 'respect for the integrity of our craft and for the intellectual potential of all our citizens commands us to reject false dilemmas. Above all, the challenges of our times require nuanced distinctions that transcend received categories, but conform to our common sense as historians.'⁷ Most recently, David Cannadine has shown how historians have also been implicated in reinforcing dichotomies – 'divisive collective identities', such as class, race and gender – through their scholarship, and called for the 'very different sorts of solidarities' to instead be recognised.⁸ The challenges to history can also be used as a frame, a way of providing structure and indicating significance for the task that is then undertaken. Ulinka Rublack thus introduces her edited *Concise companion to history* as a 'guide to be inspired by and rethink history'. She poses the 'unsettling question' of what may be put in the place of earlier "certainties" now that history is not only a 'comforting companion' but also an 'uncanny shadow we often struggle with'.⁹

There may be profound disagreement about what the discipline of history is and what histories are for, but this very diverse body of scholarship can be characterised by a certain *introspection*: a discipline in conversation with itself. While there has been, particularly more recently, an interest in examining who the makers of and audiences for history are (or

⁴ Jenkins, Morgan and Munslow (eds.), *Manifestos for history*, (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 5-6.

⁵ Evans, *In defence of history*, (London: Granta, 2001); Windschuttle, *The killing of history: how a discipline is being murdered by literary critics and social theorists*, (Paddington, N.S.W.: Macleay, 1994); Himmelfarb, 'Some reflections on the New History', *The American Historical Review* 94 (1989).

⁶ Bédarida, 'The Modern Historian's Dilemma: Conflicting Pressures from Science and Society', *The Economic History Review* 40 (1987), p. 342.

⁷ Fox-Genovese and Lasch-Quinn (eds.), *Reconstructing history: the emergence of a new historical society*, (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁸ Cannadine, *The undivided past: history beyond our differences*, (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 8.

⁹ Rublack, *A concise companion to history*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vii.

should be), it has not been widely assumed that such an interest may confer an obligation to open up the debate beyond the boundaries of academe. While this disconnection is interesting, it also can be problematic where an overtly political case is being made for a democratisation of history. So the emancipatory imperative for a critical historical consciousness identified by Jenkins, Morgan and Munslow seems strikingly at odds with the format and tone of the discussion. The stated intent of an ‘accessible and student-friendly’ style somehow implies the preservation, rather than dismantling, of scholarly authority; “accessibility” is achieved through the mode of transmission not than the history-making itself.¹⁰ This points to one of the major themes of my thesis: that historians need to give some serious attention to concepts and practices in engagement with constituencies outside academe, rather than seeing accessibility as an end in itself.

Another strand of the genre aims to set the questions of the nature, purpose and practice of history within a broader frame of reference, making sense of history for people’s lives, collectively and as individuals. John Tosh and Margaret Macmillan have sought to present a strong case for history in public life, emphasising the critical and conceptual resources that understanding of the past offers the citizen.¹¹ In doing so, they both draw attention to the ways in which history is absent or abused in political decision-making and rhetoric. John Lukacs and Jorma Kalela have recently offered thoughtful reflections on the discipline that invite consideration by a wide audience.¹² John Lewis Gaddis has persuasively used the metaphor of the map to show how history as representation can ‘lift us above the familiar’ enabling us, meaning all of us, not just historians, to ‘interpret the past for the purposes of the present with a view to managing the future’.¹³ All of these works address a broad readership of the intelligent and interested, of which fellow academic historians are only a sub-set.

Despite the different assumed audiences for the two strands – the mainly academic audience for one, and the broader interested public for the other – they both tend to be based on reflections from within the discipline, and understandably so. Such reflectiveness, shaped by the transformation of the discipline over the last forty or so years, can be highly

¹⁰ Jenkins, Morgan and Munslow (eds.), *Manifestos for history*, pp. 6-7.

¹¹ Tosh, *Why history matters*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); MacMillan, *The uses and abuses of history*, (London: Profile, 2009).

¹² Lukacs, *The future of history*, (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2011); Kalela, *Making history: The Historians and the Uses of the Past*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹³ Gaddis, *The landscape of history: how historians map the past*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 5, 10.

productive. It demands we inspect our working habits, our historianship (to borrow Lukacs' term), with a critical and enquiring mind, and bring these more clearly to the surface. Further, it puts pressure on the field's boundaries and looks for greater permeability to the questions and concerns of those adjoining it, as well as to those of our audiences and partners. Historians are conscious of *looking out* from the discipline, of connecting history to the interests and needs of a much broader range of constituencies. Although rich and nuanced, responses to the challenge of "why history matters" that are articulated entirely from within the discipline cannot satisfy all those *looking in*. Such responses offer, in essence, "supply side" perspectives. No value judgement is thereby implied. The point being made is that they proceed from the basis of academic history, and represent an engagement of that community (a broad and diverse one) with the various challenges to its status and identity.

By contrast, the potential to think through the nature and purpose questions with what can be termed a "demand side" in mind, is underexplored. Such a task is not so much about looking from the outside in; it would be rather difficult and problematic to develop an intellectually persuasive case about a discipline without *any* anchor point within it. Rather, it can be seen as one that gives significance to the perspectives and contexts outside the academy in which history may be used or applied. This approach is underexplored despite recent emphasis – shaped by funding policy as well as by the particular forms and identities public history has taken in England – on collaboration in historical activity between academics and community groups.¹⁴ While there is a pervasive language in which historians can talk about the presence, production and presentation of history outside the academy, this has not as yet generated an active new strand of scholarship. We can as historians be highly self-conscious of a more dispersed authority in making history and that various "publics" can legitimately ask that we address a range of shared concerns; but *reflecting* on those powerful new themes is not the same as *integrating* them. What is the potential of integrating the internal (or supply-side) dimensions of history with their external (or demand-side) counterparts: here, in policymaking?

These two dimensions of history – the "internal" and the "external" – would need to be balanced so that there is a workable accommodation between their concerns and requirements. This is the fundamental project with which the thesis is concerned. So understood, the thesis is itself, among other things, a work of advocacy for history. As

¹⁴ This will be explored in Chapter 2 as part of a "sketch" on public history in England, set alongside those on the USA and Germany.

Kraemer notes, ‘the temptation to assert the importance of one’s discipline to the making of “better” policy is almost irresistible’.¹⁵ Advocacy of a position does not, of course, necessarily mean it is a weak one, and, indeed, we are far more conscious of the advocacy inherent, or even declared, in any work of historianship. But the approach taken here provides in this regard a source of distinctiveness from other considerations of the purpose and value of history in consciously integrating supply- and demand-side interests, concerns and perspectives.

This project is able to draw on a body of academic history writing that has acknowledged and specifically focused on the demand side. The public history field that has emerged in North America is oriented to the uses of history in professional settings, with university programmes structuring the supply of graduates attuned to and skilled for application, and of academics trained for hybridity. Within a diverse field – embracing museums, historic preservation, interpretation and education, government and federal agencies, journalism and many more domains of practice – there has been space and recognition for scholarship informed by professional experience as well as academic insight.

Most important for this thesis is the work on the uses of history in policymaking (and, to a lesser extent, in business), which was particularly rich in the form of “applied history” in the USA in the 1980s and early 1990s.¹⁶ This receptivity to policy as a source of demand for history was conditioned by both “push” factors internal to the discipline and by “pull” factors from the external environment, a significant feature of which was a plural and dispersed political system. I wish to recover and re-engage with this scholarship with a view to animating debate about the uses of history in policymaking in the very different political and disciplinary context of England.

The project to integrate supply-side and demand-side perspectives in relation to history and policy involves two further activities. The first is to engage with scholarship concerned with

¹⁵ Kraemer, ‘Policy advisors: historians and making policy’, in *Public history: essays from the field*, eds. Gardner and LaPaglia, (Malabar, Fla., 2004), 218-219.

¹⁶ Achenbaum, ‘The Making of an Applied Historian: Stage Two’; Rousso, ‘Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker’, *The Public Historian* 6 (1984); Stearns, ‘Applied history and the problems of social security’, in *History and public policy*, ed. Mock, (Malabar, Fla., 1991); Stearns and Tarr, ‘Curriculum in Applied History: Toward the Future’, *The Public Historian* 9 (1987); Stearns and Tarr, ‘Applied History: A New-Old Departure’, *The History Teacher* 14 (1981); Vertzberger, ‘Foreign Policy Decisionmakers As Practical-Intuitive Historians: Applied History and Its Shortcomings’, *International Studies Quarterly* 30 (1986); Ryant, ‘The Public Historian and Business History: A Question of Ethics’, *The Public Historian* 8 (1986); Graham, ‘The Stunted Career of Policy History: A Critique and an Agenda’, *The Public Historian* 15 (1993); Mandelbaum, ‘The past in service to the future’, in *History and public policy*, ed. Mock, (Malabar, Fla., 1991).

the analysis, understanding and enhancement of the policymaking process. The textbook-type works that guide academic training on policy in political science and other fields (such as sociology and economics) proceed from a strong social science identity. They introduce and critique various models of the policymaking process and techniques for policy analysis and choice.¹⁷ The quest for generalisability, in which dependent and independent variables must be isolated, is fundamentally incompatible with historical methods. As Gaddis has argued, the methodological line is now drawn not between history and the sciences, but between history and the “historical natural sciences” on one side, and the social sciences on the other.¹⁸ Even where a role for history is recognised in social science scholarship, the nature of its involvement is limited, as Paul Pierson has pointed out: ‘in contemporary social science, the past serves primarily as a source of empirical material, rather than as a spur to serious investigations of how politics happens over time’. A ‘historical turn’ may be evident in the social sciences, but ‘to assert that “history matters” is insufficient’; we need to be able to articulate ‘why, where, how, and for what’, a task for which serious engagement with the temporal dimensions of social processes is needed.¹⁹ Economic history may be a field where some of the theoretical integration that concerns Pierson has occurred, through addressing issues of path dependency, institutional context and the use of historical data.²⁰ Pierson’s call for a more constructive intellectual dialogue notwithstanding, academic writing on policy is a genre from which historians are largely absent, whether excluded or having excluded themselves. This thesis aims to propose terms on which the “history gap” in policy can and should be bridged.

Policymaking is both a focus of academic enquiry and the core “business” of government. Bridging the “history gap” requires attention to the latter as well as the former. Hence, the second activity required for the integration of supply-side and demand-side perspectives is

¹⁷ Kingdon, *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*, (New York: HarperCollins College, 1995); Anderson, *Public policymaking: an introduction*, (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 2003); Bochel and Duncan, *Making policy in theory and practice*, (Bristol: Policy, 2007); Dorey, *Policy making in Britain: an introduction*, (London: SAGE, 2005); Hill, *The public policy process*, (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2009); Parsons, *Public policy: an introduction to the theory and practice of policy analysis*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995); MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice: analysis and discourse*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, pp. 54-58.

¹⁹ Pierson, *Politics in time: history, institutions, and social analysis*, (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 4-6; Also: Pierson, ‘Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics’, *The American Political Science Review* 94 (2000); Pierson, ‘The study of policy development’, *Journal of Policy History* 17 (2005).

²⁰ Guinnane, Sundstrom and Whatley, *History matters: essays on economic growth, technology, and demographic change*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004).

to take the *practice* of policymaking seriously. That is, to give attention to policymaking not as an arena for testing models or as an archive for investigating past decisions, but rather as a live, complex, multi-layered and multi-party process, in which governments are engaged on a daily basis (and many other constituencies seek to shape). Woodrow Wilson placed an early emphasis on the importance of administration as a 'field of business', calling for questions of how to implement policy 'with enlightenment, with equity, with speed, and without friction' to be raised alongside those of political theory.²¹ Although the Wilsonian division of "politics" from "administration" – the latter being 'removed from the hurry and strife' of the former – no longer seems tenable, public administration scholarship has taken on his recognition of the need to pay attention to the business of policymaking. Recently, Christopher Hood has defined public administration as the 'substantive activity of studying executive government and of institutional arrangements for regulation, public policy and the provision of public services'.²² As a field it has aimed to bridge academic study and practice, which has enabled it to take on issues such as the influence and role of think tanks.²³ The adoption of social science methods, noted by Hood in positive terms, may have led, however, to a shift in emphasis in recent decades from practice towards theory, as well as drawing the field away from the historical, comparative perspectives advocated by Wilson in the late nineteenth century. Here, Pierson's critique of the social sciences as only using history for case studies, illustrative material or as a source of data would therefore be relevant.²⁴

Investigating the core business of government cannot be seen as a purely academic exercise. That is, it is possible to approach such a task in an *academic manner*, and here history provides a valuable disciplinary framework for doing so: all the tools in the historian's "cognitive toolbox" – the concern of Chapter 5 – being put to use. But conducting that task must involve reaching beyond academic scholarship. Government policy documents, select

²¹ Wilson, 'The Study of Administration', *Political Science Quarterly* 2 (1887), pp. 219, 198-219.

²² Hood, 'It's public administration, Rod, but maybe not as we know it: British Public Administration in the 2000s', *Public Administration* 89 (2011), p. 128.

²³ James, 'The idea brokers: the impact of think tanks on British government', *Public Administration* 71 (1993); James, 'Capturing the political imagination: think tanks and the policy process', *Public Administration* 76 (1998); Stone, 'Recycling bins, garbage cans or think tanks? Three myths regarding policy analysis institutes', *Public Administration* 85 (2007).

²⁴ Hood, 'British Public Administration in the 2000s'; Pierson, *Politics in time: history, institutions, and social analysis*, pp. 4-5. An interesting exception is offered by Brändström, Bynander and Hart; their more nuanced approach echoes Neustadt and May's *Thinking in time*: Brändström, Bynander and Hart, 'Governing by looking back: historical analogies and crisis management', *Public Administration* 82 (2004); Neustadt and May, *Thinking in time: the uses of history for decision-makers*, (New York: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1986).

committee evidence and reports, public comments, interviews and speeches by political leaders, political manifestos, and the like, all, therefore, contribute important primary material for this thesis. These sources allow issues such as the requirements for effective government policymaking, the balance between political, policy and expert advice and the role and place of history in political thinking to be explored through the lens of the “business of policy”. Journalism also has a role. Critical commentary on policy decisions and their potential implications is now immediate and immediately available for the widest possible dissemination. A sense of “public opinion” can be rapidly built through social media, on which basis a level of consensus can be claimed – and that claim seem politically persuasive – even if it would not stand up to any analytical inspection. The intersection of history and policy has been the site of much media “traffic”, perhaps most notably on the issues of school history and citizenship: what should we *know* about *our* past to be part of that collective “we”?²⁵ The Iraq War stands out in recent British history as a moment when history was at the same time both present and absent in significant ways.²⁶ Any research concerned with policymaking in practice in recent times must acknowledge the role of journalistic sources and the effect of opinions articulated in the media.

A concern to take the business of policymaking seriously is also informed, in this thesis, by professional experience in policy work. The bridging of supply and demand side perspectives has been thus far proposed as an intellectual imperative arising from the project itself. It is made possible *as a project*, however, by drawing not only on several genres of academic writing but also on the *cognitive and functional bridging* that is developed while engaged in both academic (history) and professional (policy) pursuits. This represents a powerful reason for locating the research relative to public history as well as to academic history. Public historians, at least in the North American tradition, with its fundamental connectivity to professional settings, have made such bridging standard practice. The public historian integrates “theory” and “practice” and is trained to do so through university programmes that bring historical study together with practical skills development and work experience. This integration is not yet an established feature in the much younger and more tentatively defined English field. What is distinctive in this thesis is

²⁵ Newspaper articles on this theme are far too numerous to identify the most significant - a selection concerned with the proposals of the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, from different newspapers: Vernon, 'School history gets the TV treatment', *The Guardian*, 16th November, 2010; Adams, 'Churchill and Cromwell returned to history curriculum', *The Telegraph*, 30th December, 2012; Rawlinson, 'Coalition set to clash over removal of 'greatest black Briton' Mary Seacole from National Curriculum', *The Independent*, 29th January, 2013. All retrieved 18th February 2013.

²⁶ Tosh, *Why history matters*, pp. 1-3.

that the bridging of supply/demand, academic/professional perspectives is in the foreground, and, further, that policy and politics are the focus of enquiry.

Methodology

The thesis draws on concepts and models from different fields of knowledge and domains of practice, and seeks to find new points of integration and lines of distinction in order to improve the policymaking process. It is in part, therefore, a work of synthesis, comparison and critique of several genres of academic writing relating to the purpose and value of history and the theory and practice of policy. In this regard a comparative angle is necessary throughout. At points this is explicit, most clearly in the development of three case studies of public history in national contexts in Chapter 2. The aim is not to offer precise or comprehensive accounts of the emergence and development of public history in those contexts – the USA, Germany and England – but rather to draw out themes, features and concerns over the three “sketches”, from which affinity and counterpoint can be identified.

The comparative angle is also implicit in the ways in which knowledge and understanding drawn from other countries and from other disciplines has shaped the research. The USA provides much of the material. This is due in part to the extent of the scholarship in public history broadly understood, but also to the existence of a body of work that deals with the uses of history in policy and decision-making (sometimes termed “applied history” or “policy history”, although the latter should not be confused with the history of policy). These works provide a picture of the orientation of American historical practice to place alongside that of its English counterpart. It is also due to the connections that can be made between “supply side” and “demand side” features; the comparative mode is particularly useful in that American and English historiography can be located within the respective political systems and culture. The dispersed and plural nature of US political institutions and processes helps bring into sharper relief the implications of Westminster and Whitehall’s closed, centralised and executive-led system for its permeability to sources of external expertise, such as from academic disciplines. The potential influence of the historian in government can be explored by setting the specialist roles for historians in American federal and state agencies against the generalist culture of the British civil service, which has come to recognise specialist status primarily in terms of professional (lawyers, actuaries), technical (IT, engineering) and quantitative skills (economists, statisticians).

My research is also in dialogue with other disciplines – most notably the social sciences – that are interested in common themes: how governments make policy and how institutions

and organisations function (given that the primary locus in Britain for policy development is the government department). There is no intention to make a *contribution* to those disciplines. The task is rather to try to make sense of the roles they have played in addressing these two questions, given that the social sciences – particularly sociology, political science and economics – have taken a leadership position and, further, that the premise of their leadership appears to have been assimilated into political understandings of the evidence needed for the development of effective policies.²⁷ The implicit comparative mode is again helpful. The contributions of the social sciences to policymaking – the terms on which they conduct their enquiries and therefore the *capacity of the evidence* they provide to policymaking – provide a form of case study. The case study points to what the social sciences cannot do alone; it exposes a “history gap”. My approach suggests that policymakers may need to revisit assumptions of the kind of expert input required for policymaking, the social sciences to explore the potential complementarity of methods with history in respect of both of scholarly understanding and practical support of policy, and historians to consider the implications of their relative absence from the disciplinary mix in those undertakings.²⁸

The concern to bridge supply and demand perspectives shapes the methodology in an important way. It focuses attention on reaching beyond the descriptive question *what* to the more practical *how*. That is, this thesis seeks to address *how* to make historical thinking an effective influence on policy development; the aim is to be constructive and collaborative. A core premise is thus that policymakers have legitimate interests in the insights of scholarly disciplines, which suggests that certain moral and intellectual obligations on academics to respond to those interests may follow; such engagement between policy and academe is, I argue, best conceived as dialogic and integrative. A critique of the issues in both academe and government that inhibit the effective use of history in policy is not an end in itself. Instead, it serves to identify similarities between the intellectual tasks involved: the *affinity* of history and policy as *processes* that can serve as a basis for greater integration of history *in* policy.

To this end, it is necessary to inspect assumptions held within the two settings: academe and government. So, within academe, assumptions include that of an intellectual and moral gradient from truth to power, of the uncertain validity and integrity of policy work, and of

²⁷ The problematic concept of “evidence-based policymaking” is discussed in Chapter 4.

²⁸ Comparison is thus an important approach for this thesis and, indeed, it is also addressed as one of the five “tools” in the historian’s toolbox for policy work.

the place and status of the “uses of history” in its evolving disciplinary identity. In policymaking, the evidential clarity and therefore primacy of quantitative forms of evidence, the understanding of history as a repository of discrete case studies, and the demarcation of boundaries between expert analysis and policy judgement, all call for challenge.

The pluralisation of the discipline of history since the 1960s and the emergence of social, gender and identity histories have given us an intellectual framework with which to work and historians are becoming comfortable with ideas of shared authority and the agency of their “subjects”. Public history is distinctive, however, in having recognised *policy* as a legitimate constituency for such forms of engagement and collaboration, at least in the US. So locating “history in policy” conceptually within public history is a helpful step, as it allows government to be conceived, not as a funder or regulator remote from practice, but as an audience, partner or client within a broad public realm. Such an understanding is not without issues, and particularly in an English context. Outreach to a local historical association, for example, is a form of engagement and collaboration that can be assimilated into existing academic models. An approach more explicitly geared towards co-production and practical outputs may require substantial on-going investment and a rethinking of issues of authority and reciprocity, but it is nonetheless an extension, or a progression, rather than a remodelling. The equivalent tasks with policymaking groups raise, by contrast, some fundamental questions.

A more collaborative approach to working with central government policymaking means confronting the historiographical trend that has rejected to a great extent thinking in terms of “the national” in favour of the local and the global (and the local in the global). As such, it involves pushing scholarly comfort zones much further than does public history as engagement, co-production and representation on heritage projects, exhibitions and commemoration. The turning away, dis-regard or disengagement from the national level can be seen as a corollary of the pluralisation of the discipline, and perhaps sharpened in English historiography by the need to respond to post-colonial imperatives. Pressure has rightly been put on the idea of the nation as the natural unit of historical analysis, and historians are alive to the many other meaningful loci for human identity, as well as to the significance of the lives, experiences and decisions of people far from the corridors of power. But the *polarisation* of historical attention into global and local levels, and the implicit negative charge attached to political elites as the focus of enquiry, leaves an unstable and unsustainable gap. The continued relevance and resonance of the nation both in a political sense – the state as the locus for policymaking – and in a personal sense – in

terms of identity and belonging – remains largely unaddressed as a theme for historians’ attention.²⁹ The disjuncture between what historians’ intellectual inclinations lead them to want to *supply* and the terms in which national policymakers must frame their *demands* raises a methodological challenge for this thesis. It has been addressed by working with the *processes* involved in “doing” history and policy (and the affinity thereof), rather than with the *content*. Fundamental issues about the methodological integrity of applying history, and about the legitimacy of the external (specifically policy) audience, have also been pursued.

Public policy pervades public debate, sometimes subtly, sometimes dominating the field of vision. It occupies a prominent position in the news, speaking to people’s interests, concerns and values. Journalists, experts, spokespeople as well as politicians themselves comment, challenge and analyse policy commitments and decisions and the public’s presumed viewpoint may be invoked in the process. No policy is completely uncontentious; both evidence and opinion can suggest alternative directions, and these have multiplied with the emergence of lobbying capacity within trade associations, charities, interest groups and individual organisations. Electoral timescales and the pressures arising from a highly centralised and adversarial system and a media sector known for its keen scrutiny of politics make policy development challenging. The responsibilities of government have tended to increase, particularly since the end of the Second World War, and rhetoric about localism, empowerment and choice has often involved an extension rather than a reduction of the remit and reach of the centre. Policies, whether in development or implementation, often cut across (government) departmental, professional and organisational boundaries, calling for input, advice or compliance from many different constituencies.

This thesis proceeds from a recognition that public policy development is a highly important but also highly problematic process; it involves many agents and interests, with different degrees of influence, as well as negotiation, persuasion and accommodation. On this basis, three main proposals arise, which have shaped the research. First, that improving policy is a legitimate and important task for academic, and specifically historical, attention. Second, that the methodologies that have taken up hegemonic positions in policy development – most notably from economics and from social and political science – have not been able to

²⁹ David Cannadine has recently exposed in compelling terms that the nation is not a stable concept, nor a modern invention, a welcome engagement with a category of identity that seems now an uncomfortable topic of enquiry: Cannadine, *The undivided past*, pp. 53-92. My point here is largely a pragmatic one; the orientation of our politics is (currently) at national level, so influence over policy calls for acknowledgement of that. The interrogation of dichotomous categories is also, however, a powerful application of history with political import.

provide the definitive evidence to enable pressing and often long-standing policy problems to be solved. That is not to say they have been ineffective; rather that their insights and approaches have proved insufficient. Third, that history has a significant and under-explored potential for contributing to the policymaking processes as offering a distinctive set of cognitive tools within a disciplinary framework and mind-set. Although some historians have sought to inform policy (and some politicians have consulted historians), the discipline of history has not gained any apparent traction or influence on policy.³⁰

From this basis, it can be seen that the thesis speaks to current debates, both within the discipline and in public policy. Within the discipline, it addresses discussions about the nature, boundaries and concerns of public history, the impact of historical research and the responsibilities or obligations of historians that set academic endeavours in societal contexts. It also concerns itself with the methods and practices of policymaking, under particularly close scrutiny with the pace and scale of change – for example in health, education and welfare policy – and with on-going issues around the sense of trust in politicians and the operation of government and of Parliament.³¹

³⁰ Also to be noted is that, although central government policymaking is the focus for this research for the reasons discussed above, the centrality of process and method means that the recommendations could be adapted for any large and complex organisation; as such, this thesis builds on scholarship on the uses of history in business (see footnote 16 above).

³¹ Polling data indicate low levels of trust in politicians; the Ipsos-MORI veracity index, last assembled in 2011, places “politicians” in general at the bottom of 16 professions in terms of whether they would be generally trusted to tell the truth (although over the 28 years of polling there is no evident trend: the 14 per cent recorded in 1993 recurs in 2011): Ipsos-MORI, *Trust in Professions 2011*, (2011). There is a perceptible downward trend, however, in satisfaction with the way the Westminster Parliament is doing its job (polling since 1973): Ipsos-MORI, *Three in four believe Britain’s governance needs improving*, (2009).

Key concepts

The distinctive character and methodology of this thesis means that it must handle a wide range of concepts. Some emerge from the genres of academic and policy writing outlined above, such as “applied history” or “evidence-based policymaking”. Others have been formulated or redefined specifically to serve the purposes of the thesis, often to capture distinctions between prevailing forms of practice in history or policy and alternative forms arising from the research; hence, “adjunct” historical evidence supplied to policy is contrasted with an “embedded” or “integrated” approach to history in policy. It is challenging to make sense of the many concepts relevant to the research, recovered or adopted from different disciplines and domains, and to give sense to those created or remodelled. Realising the aims of the thesis means getting past the impasses, disjunctures and conflicts that the terrain presents; greater conceptual clarity can only help. To this end, key concepts and distinctions are explained and explored in the context of the discussions to which they relate. Two fundamental concepts call, however, for some initial remarks to be made: history and policy.

The genre of writing concerned with the identity and purpose of history is also, to a great extent, concerned with boundaries: what is contained within (and what lies outside) the parameters of history; who can claim to be a historian (and who cannot). Phillipa Levine’s *The amateur and the professional* provides a historical account of the debate, tracing how early affinities between overlapping communities of scholarship in history, antiquarianism and archaeology in the early nineteenth century had become clear divides by its end.³² The latter part of the twentieth century has seen some inclination to create cross-channels between disciplines and to open up the navigation to a much broader range of audiences and participants. As noted above, however, historians working with policymakers is a rather more problematic proposition than working with community history groups; it requires a fundamental rethinking of how historians, and why, historians “do” history.

There is no equivalent in the British context of the US federal historian.³³ As a consequence, any initial drive for innovation in Westminster and Whitehall would need to come, it seems,

³² Levine, *The amateur and the professional: antiquarians, historians and archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³³ The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does employ historians, tasked principally with publishing the official record of British foreign policy. Previous attempts to “fund experience” in the Treasury and Foreign Office are explored in Chapter 4 below, drawing on Beck’s study: Beck, *Using history, making British policy: the Treasury and the Foreign Office, 1950-76*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). The limited roles of the FCO historians cannot be seen as equivalent to federal

from academic history, particularly given a broader economic and political context in which the civil service is unlikely to expand. So while James M. Banner's call for a distinction between "discipline" and "profession" is valuable, thoughtful and well-made, for the purposes of the thesis, they have largely been elided. That is not to reject his argument, although it is admittedly more resonant in the USA, that 'neglecting the distinction... is more than an innocent terminological error... It fatefully affects the development of the discipline's structure and hierarchies, the training and employment of historians, the honors and compensation extended to individuals, and the aspirations and sense of self-worth of those who contribute... to history's welfare'.³⁴ Rather, it is due to an acknowledgement that, in England – towards which the conclusions and implications of this thesis are oriented – the centre of gravity of historical expertise remains in academe. At present, innovation has nowhere else to come from. So "history" here generally means the discipline of history, understood as a community of scholarship whose members are trained in and strongly connected to higher education (henceforth, HE).

There are many definitions of public policy. Sylvia Kraemer's training as a historian and her employment in federal government is perhaps evident in her pragmatic statement: 'After all, "policy making" is just a more elegant name for *politics*'.³⁵ But most definitions are to be found in political science. They tend to feature, in essence, the formulation and implementation of proposals by government towards identified goals, with the distinction often made between the singular "decision" or "action" and the more strategic "policy", which may consist of a number of inter-related decisions or actions.³⁶ An ideological component, which conditions the government's goals and hence its proposals, is also acknowledged: ideology as a particular understanding of the values and characteristics of a better society and of the role of government therein. Policymaking is usually seen as a process, although opinions differ as to how structured or rational it is, or how amenable to modelling or intervention; the policymaking process is the central concern of Chapter 4.

In terms of the way the concept of policy is used in the thesis, it is a *contextual* rather than a *definitional* point that needs to be made, informed by both scholarly and professional

historians, employed in many departments and agencies in the US; they even have their own occupational code. See the discussion of public history in the USA in Chapter 2 below.

³⁴ Banner, *Being a historian: an introduction to the professional world of history*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), xii.

³⁵ Kraemer, 'Policy advisors: historians and making policy', p. 219.

³⁶ Every public policy textbook addresses definitions. See for example Hill's synthesis of 'the meaning of "policy"': Hill, *The public policy process*, pp. 14-15.

understanding of policymaking in England. Reference is usually made to “England”, in recognition of the devolutionary settlement – still not settled, of course – that places authority for significant policy areas, such as economic development and social policy, with the devolved administrations. HE policy is also devolved, so the importance of universities as the organisational setting for academic practice in this thesis gives further support to the focus on England (although there will be similarities; disciplines clearly do not end neatly at political borders).³⁷ “Britain” or “British” is used, however, where it seems appropriate, and defensible from a political standpoint. The political system and culture in Westminster and Whitehall is the primary context with which the thesis is concerned, and against which comparisons are made. The “closed” nature of that system and culture gives the concept of policy a particular, organisational inflection and gives the government department a significant role.³⁸ So policy is best understood here as the “business of government” at the centre. This business includes both strategic, politically-conditioned, goal-oriented development and more tactical, short-term action, in response to crises, domestic and international.

The thesis has a fundamental concern with the identity and purpose of the discipline of history. It is therefore of value to begin by exploring the emergence of the academic profession in the nineteenth century. Of particular import is how historians understood the political relevance of the study of their subject as, in John Robert Seeley’s phrase, a ‘school of statesmanship’, as well as of citizenship, and how that orientation changed as the discipline developed. The shift away from application towards introspection and specialisation since the 1960s establishes the nature and extent of the disciplinary challenge to the idea of using history in public policy. The pluralisation of academic history has been part of this process, which has also involved the emergence of a new sensitivity to diverse historical voices and audiences that had previously been largely unrecognised.

Although its boundaries remain subject to redefinition and incursion, public history – the concern of Chapter 2 – has become a useful concept with which to work on questions of

³⁷ The term “universities” is, for simplicity, mostly used, although “higher education institutions” (henceforth, HEIs) would be more proper.

³⁸ On the closed system of government: James, ‘The idea brokers: the impact of think tanks on British government’. By comparison, see Smith on the more dispersed US system (and the greater permeability of that system to academic advisers: Smith, *The advisers: scientists in the policy process*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1992).

audience and of application. Engagement with public policy can be addressed through the framework that the concept provides. It is recognised that there are both theoretical-methodological issues raised by public history, as well as those of practice. Drawing out particular features in terms of the practice of public history in the USA, Germany and England provides useful insights through comparison into how the different national-disciplinary contexts have conceived of a political role for history. Understanding the potential for such a political role calls for an examination of the ways in which not only the discipline (the supply side) but also the government (the demand side) has defined its concerns and priorities. The post-war, post-imperial context is described in Chapter 3 in which the status and purpose of history came into question. School history, particularly through the National Curriculum, proved to be an arena in which encounters between neoliberal and neoconservative strands of thinking were played out, revealing both expectations of and anxieties about history in the nation state.

The status of history as a form of evidence or expertise useful and accessible for policymaking has come under further pressure from the emergence of a “quantitative imperative” in policymaking, where those disciplines that express their meanings in numerical forms have come to assume an ascendant position. General defences of the humanities, or history in particular, would be inadequate. We need to understand and work with the policy process – the focus of Chapter 4 – that is, to engage with the “business” of policymaking through an “embedded” or “integrated” approach to history *in* policy. Such an approach stands in contrast to that of history *and* policy, where historians package up their research for dissemination, but preserve their distance.

If historians are to be involved in the process of policymaking itself, attention must be given to the precise nature of their involvement. Two key questions are addressed in Chapter 5: how can we do history in policy and what might the outputs of our efforts be? The historian can be seen as having a distinctive set of “tools”; my concern is to define these tools while viewing them through the lens of their application in policy development. Both existing and past practices in government provide useful material for reconfiguration and reimagination in terms of “products” or outputs. This theme of practical application is further developed in the conclusion through an outline of the implications and recommendations arising from the research.

The democratic imperative: history and public purpose in historical perspective

The instrumentalisation of higher education, driven by a political conviction running across Party-political lines about the link between skills and economic strength, is a recurring theme. It is evident in scholarly literature and in journalism, and in the opinions expressed in reply by viewers and readers. The ‘hegemony of instrumental reason’ has emerged in response to the increasing pace and scale of change and the level of uncertainty and instability in a globalising world, resulting in the loss of the tradition of enquiry.¹ Alongside such narratives and interconnected to them are those concerned with the status, significance and value of arts and humanities disciplines, for which such an instrumental or utilitarian view of the purpose of education has proved more problematic than for the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) or for the social sciences.² History has not been any more vulnerable in this context than other humanities, but has, however, been rather more visible. It seems to be the subject that, with maths and English, is most often invoked in debates on levels of knowledge, particularly in schools; but it also occupies a distinctive space due to its links with issues of (often national) identity and character and also those of political judgement and democratic participation. When the then Education and Skills Secretary, Charles Clarke, needed an example of a subject without uses, it was to medieval history he turned: ‘I don’t mind there being some medievalists around for ornamental purposes, but there is no reason for the state to pay for them’.³ In the same year, 2003, Tony Blair argued in the context of Iraq that history had now little instruction for the present day.⁴

¹ Blake, Smith and Standish, *The universities we need: higher education after Dearing*, (London: Kogan Page, 1998). Recently also on instrumentalisation: Collini, *What are universities for?*, (London: Penguin, 2012).

² Bate (ed.), *The public value of the humanities*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

³ Woodward and Smithers, 'Clarke dismisses medieval historians', *The Guardian*, 9th May, 2003. Clarke studied mathematics and economics at university. His father, Sir Richard Clarke, was Third Secretary at the Treasury and Head of the Home and Overseas Planning Staff at the time of the “funding experience” initiative, which was concerned to use history to improve the machinery of government. He was a strong early advocate, making his son’s comments rather interesting. See Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, p. 62. “Funding experience” will be discussed in later chapters.

⁴ Blair, *Speech to Congress*, (17th July, 2003).

The impetus behind the research presented in this thesis is derived largely from the questions posed by these two, linked, sets of narratives, which are being lent a greater sense of urgency by the reforms to higher education funding and student finance initiated by the Coalition Government through the 2011 White Paper, *Students at the heart of the system*.⁵ There are historical questions to be asked, which put pressure on the idea of the recent political invention and imposition of an instrumental purpose for higher education. There are also theoretical, methodological, political and cultural questions to be asked and these are the concern of later chapters. The focus for this chapter is on the historical, on the contexts, both institutional and disciplinary, for the uses of history. A rather longer and more nuanced history of what universities are for – envisaged in local as well as national terms – can productively be recognised, within which historians have engaged with the relationship between (academic) practice and (public) purpose since the beginnings of the academic profession. Indeed, there is a case that the post-war discipline, fractured into specialisms and inclined to introspection, has to a large extent *rejected* a “democratic imperative” held by its nineteenth- and early twentieth-century predecessors. It may be that a modern discipline seeking to affirm the integrity of its own history under pressure from the claims of “hard” disciplines, as well as from challenges from within, has found a Rankean lineage more conducive than early conceptions of a public purpose for history, bound up as they were with elite politics and the enterprise of empire. Pluralisation may have opened up the discipline in some ways – to new perspectives, new insights – but it has also arguably closed it down in others.

John Robert Seeley’s (1834-1895) concept of history as a ‘school of statesmanship’ is easily dismissed from our perspective, sensitive as historians now are not only to questions of power, agency and voice but also to the ways in which history has been implicated in the justification of aggression, colonial or otherwise. Seeley, the first Regius Professor of the subject at Cambridge and author of *The Expansion of England* (1883), is known primarily as an imperialist historian. As his biographer notes, the work is seldom recognised as ‘an essay on the practice of history’. Seeley was a critic of an English historiography that was so preoccupied with chronological order and accurate representation that it could not address significance nor history’s essential connection to politics.⁶ Indeed, it is the latter insight that

⁵ Department for Business Innovation and Skills, *Higher education: students at the heart of the system*, (London, 2011). Note formation of bodies such as the Council for the Defence of British Universities <http://cdbu.org.uk/>.

⁶ Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the uses of history*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 94-95.

represents Seeley's vital contribution to this chapter as the basis from which the rest of the thesis proceeds.

It is worth noting that this essential connection between politics and history as 'only different aspects of the same study' was not only a challenge to the historical profession.⁷ He was also a critic of the politician who acquires 'finesse, adroitness, eloquence', becoming 'acute in party tactics, ready in popular arts, skilful in scaling the ladder of power' but lacking the 'knowledge that is indispensable and fundamental' for seeking higher ends in politics. 'What is primary,' he contended, 'is a solid knowledge of political and social well-being in its nature and causes, and more particularly a strong apprehension of the place of government in human affairs, of its capacities and the limits of its capacities'.⁸ Here, Seeley is pointing to what I place as one of the five key "tools" in the historian's toolbox for policy work: context; here, it is the *contextualisation* of government as operating with temporal, social, cultural, organisational features and constraints.⁹ In privileging the quantitative outputs of the sciences and social sciences, modern "evidence-based policymaking" tends to address the first half of Seeley's precept without considering the second, or indeed the need for contextualisation more broadly. I will contend that there is an underexplored alignment between history and policymaking; both are essentially human, centrally conditioned by and concerned with how people act and think.

The recovery of Seeley's (and others') thinking on the purpose of history in and for politics during the early stages of the professionalisation of academic history is an important exercise in the context of this thesis. It provides a more productive point of departure for considering the uses of history in policy than does recent historiography, as well as establishing that purpose and application are ideas with a long history in the discipline. The role of the *university* as the institutional context within which the *discipline* comes to its independent academic status – and that of the state in its relations to and demands of both – are necessary dimensions to this endeavour. Changes in the orientation and commitments

⁷ Seeley, *The expansion of England: Two courses of lectures*, (London: Macmillan, 1895), p. 193. He goes on to argue: 'There is a vulgar view of politics which sinks them into a mere struggle of interests and parties, and there is a foppish kind of history which aims only at literary display, which produces delightful books hovering between poetry and prose. These perversions, according to me, come from an unnatural divorce between two subjects which belong to each other. Politics are vulgar when they are not liberalised by history, and history fades into mere literature when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics'.

⁸ Seeley, 'The teaching of politics', in *Lectures and Essays*, (London, 1870), p. 304.

⁹ See Chapter 5 below on the historian's 'cognitive toolbox'. The phrase is borrowed from Staley: Staley, *History and future: using historical thinking to imagine the future*, (Lanham, Md.; Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2006), p. 47.

of both the discipline and the institutions in which it was pursued during the twentieth century are explored below. The aim is to come to a better understanding of a modern practice of history in England that has found reconciling the idea of a public-political use for history into its new plural and self-conscious identity problematic.

History, the university and the making of a public ethos in the nineteenth century

While the early identity of academic history in the latter half of the nineteenth century is the main concern of this section, it is worth approaching that discussion via a consideration of the universities in which the discipline emerged. Royal intervention and pressure can be traced back to Henry VIII's break with Rome and the need to uphold theological orthodoxy through the preparation of young men for the cloth. But it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the sense of universities as national institutions was crystallised and a marked shift in their relationship to the state occurred.¹⁰ The founding of the universities of London and Durham and, later, the civic institutions and the reform of Oxford and Cambridge, were realised in an intense political context: the extension of the franchise; demands for the professionalisation of the machinery of government; secularisation but also religious revival and the challenge to Anglican dominance of public position; the reform of schooling as part of a broad Liberal modernising agenda.¹¹ Although new institutions for higher education were being founded, the enduring status of Oxford and Cambridge ensured a high level of cultural homogeneity between elite institutions: schools; universities; public service. This 'unusually cohesive set of shared values and social habits' contributed towards the emergence of a national identity and purpose for higher education.¹² This is the framework within which Seeley's case for history as political science must be understood.

Reba N. Soffer has described the development of the university into an (English) 'national institution', committed to 'nurturing an elite meritocracy', as being realised through the transformation of the values 'encoded in the concept of "liberal education" into a licensing

¹⁰ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), pp. 5-15. Anderson argues that the crown was satisfied of universities' loyalty and role in sustaining the social order by the early eighteenth century, so was less concerned to exert control over the universities for the next century (until the pressures of the mid-nineteenth century).

¹¹ On civic institutions: Owens College in Manchester was founded 1851; civic foundations were then established in 1871 in Newcastle, 1874 in Leeds and Bristol, 1880 in Birmingham, 1881 in Liverpool and Nottingham. NB: Vernon rejects the term 'civic' for these colleges as it 'masks the role of state grants and...regulations... in helping significantly to mould the provincial colleges as local versions of established models of the university' Vernon, *Universities and the state in England, 1850-1939*, (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), p. 94. On the "civics": Jones, *The origins of civic universities: Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool*, (London: Routledge, 1988).

¹² Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 22.

system'.¹³ The meritocratic dimension to the work of the universities from mid-century involved not only the preparation – or licensing – of students for public service, but also their role in creating a new cohort of professional academics.¹⁴ In both cases, standardisation in examination played a role. The emergence of the written examination in place of the spoken in the early century, and of a broad understanding of the criteria by which to judge quality and competence, helped shape an institutional context of fairer competition.¹⁵ With a new emphasis on the honours degree in the reformed universities of the second half of the century, the educated middle classes could now gain 'a passport to the highest public and private offices, even without the advantages of good connections or money'.¹⁶ The same system allowed candidates to prove their intellectual ability and therefore capacity for professional achievement and helped develop a new cohort of academics (as did a growth in student numbers). Universities, by virtue of their national importance, were able to confer social status on these professional academics, establishing a new career path for the able and ambitious.

The fundamental beliefs and understandings that were cultivated in the public schools – of civic responsibility and personal character, of faith in the providential emergence of English power and in the enduring beneficence of the constitution – were reinforced in the universities and brought to bear on the conduct of public office.¹⁷ This cultural cohesiveness set England apart from countries such as France and Germany in terms of the basis on which a national consciousness could emerge. When taken in the context of the autonomy of English institutions, it also conditioned a view of the state not as an authoritarian threat to

¹³ Soffer, *Discipline and power: the university, history, and the making of an English elite, 1870-1930*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 5.

¹⁴ The civic colleges in particular looked to practices in Scotland and Germany in developing models for a professionalised academic class, including open competition for fellowships and expectations of a 'lecturing professoriate': Jones, *The origins of civic universities*, p. 15.

¹⁵ Levine, *The amateur and the professional*, pp. 158-159. Rothblatt has argued however that examinations were no good for preparing for public office. See Rothblatt, *The modern university and its discontents: the fate of Newman's legacies in Britain and America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 189.

¹⁶ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 22.

¹⁷ Anderson argues that the 'connection between Oxbridge and the public schools tightened in the late Victorian years: they set the social tone'. They never had a monopoly, however, providing about 65 per cent of Oxbridge students in 1904; there was also variation – as there is today – at college level, with some colleges taking the majority of students from grammar schools: Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 56. The new civic institutions drew a wider range of students, including from the great Dissenting academies in the Midlands and North: Jones, *The origins of civic universities*, p. 10. So the suggestion being made is not that the public school-Oxbridge story is the only one, rather that that is where the centre of gravity remained through this period and that it is worth exploring, particularly given the concern in this chapter to consider understandings of purpose and application in English universities.

individual and civic freedoms, but as a set of evolving institutions that advanced them.¹⁸ The theories of natural selection developed by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace in the 1850s, as well as advances in anthropology and sociology, could be assimilated into this view of English politics. In *The English Constitution*, published in *Fortnightly Review* between 1865 and 1867, Walter Bagehot was able to draw on this language. The polity of the day can thus be described as a product of evolution, in which the inherited characteristics of the English – such as a ‘dislike of the executive government’, a ‘natural impulse... to resist authority’ and an ‘inbred subordination’ – have played determining roles.¹⁹

That Oxford and Cambridge were university constituencies, sending MPs to Parliament until 1950, gave formal structure to this alliance of fundamental interests and values. It was an alliance that was to prove resilient when the state began to take a formal role in the funding of universities with the establishment of the University Grants Committee (UGC) in 1919. Civil servants for the UGC, recruited principally from the ancient universities, had a community of interest with the dons that shaped Government policy to protect autonomy (as had nineteenth-century alumni in Parliament during the reform of Oxbridge).²⁰ The significance here is that, from the beginning of the development of the modern university system in England, many of those in academic and in political life could share a national discourse that integrated the educational and the political. Further, they could sustain an engagement with each other that allowed the discourse to persist and evolve over an extended period of time. The sense of cultural and intellectual integration has since broken down – most clearly after the Second World War as entry to political office and to higher education was opened up – but the traces are discernable; universities and governments continue to articulate an attachment to and expectation of national roles for the sector even while disputing the terms that such a status would involve.²¹

¹⁸ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 20.

¹⁹ Bagehot, *The English constitution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). See Editor’s introduction, viii, and ‘Its History, and the Effects of That History – Conclusion’, p. 180. Mandler argues that it is in 1850s-1870s that ‘the idea of the national character developed for the first time into a serious and respectable category of self-analysis for the writing and reading classes’: Mandler, *The English national character: the history of an idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair*, (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 59. Also on English traits, pp. 52-58.

²⁰ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, pp. 114-115.

²¹ Nostalgic references to the UGC are rather striking in this context and suggest a submerged ambivalence to the “massification” of HE. The model for the expansion of HE from an elite to a mass to a universal system was developed by Trow: Trow, ‘Reflections on the Transition from Mass to Universal Higher Education’, *Daedalus* 99 (1970); Trow, *The expansion and transformation of higher education*, (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1972).

This orientation of institutions towards a national understanding of purpose provided the context within which the discipline of history developed. According to Anderson, history ‘flourished because of its relevance to the training of men destined to be politicians, diplomats, civil servants or imperial proconsuls’.²² Seeley’s references in his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor in 1870 to history as the school of statesmanship, as essential to preparing the politician for office as legal studies for the lawyer or divinity for the clergyman (‘our University is, and should be, a great seminary of politicians’) certainly aimed to make that case. History’s emergence to disciplinary independence and a position of strength within the universities requires further exploration, however, not least as Seeley himself felt impelled to establish ‘the place of History in education’ alongside the ‘great subjects’, whose utility recommends them for attention: mathematics and classics in particular, but also physical science and philosophy. By contrast, ‘the claims of History are practically very little admitted, not only in this University, but in English education generally.’²³

An argument can be made that the development of academic history owes much to its capacity not only to align with the cultural grain but also to bring it into sharper relief. The way history was practised and taught embraced and reflected back deeply-held values within the elite. Peter Burke has argued that the discipline took on the prevailing empiricist cultural attitude and was hence resistant to the apparatus of German scholarship.²⁴ The study of historical method was caught up in debates about the role and relative status of research and teaching. The former was regarded as practical or utilitarian in purpose, while the latter contributed to formation of character, a function central to the development of Soffer’s elite meritocracy. She relates the incident in 1877 when Edward Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew, rebutted a German professor’s criticism of the lack of serious scholarship at Oxford with the dictum: ‘we make not books but men’.²⁵ Newman’s advocacy of liberal education as making the gentleman, with a ‘cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life’ was strikingly resilient and retains its currency today.²⁶ Almost a century later, Glover, a

²² Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 47.

²³ Seeley, *Lectures and essays*, (London: Macmillan, 1870), p. 296.

²⁴ Burke (ed.), *History and historians in the twentieth century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 232.

²⁵ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 14.

²⁶ Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University: defined and illustrated*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), Discourse 5, § 120. Levine notes that the new class of academics sought to consolidate their status as a profession through embracing these same gentlemanly ideals, which underpinned the established careers such as the Civil Service: Levine, *The amateur and the professional*, p. 159.

fellow of St. John's, expressed relief that the Cambridge college was, 'in spite of imports and Ph.D.'s, research and practical people... still a nursery of culture and character'.²⁷

The study of history, with its concern with tracing continuity and evolution and its reliance on set secondary texts, contributed in a discipline-specific way to the development of the gentleman's character. Respect and imitation – as a route to self-development – were to be promoted, rather than criticism and debate; the potential for controversy and challenges to established thought was consciously minimised in the curriculum. The Reformation or the Thirty Years War were avoided as topics, due to their capacity to provoke passions or invoke comparison with present circumstances; the more distant past, or issues such the Tudor development of liberty that fitted into an uncontentious narrative of constant advance, were preferred.²⁸ Those whose minds had not yet been fully disciplined through the process of education should not be encouraged to engage in original thinking, speculation and dispute. Violent revolution in France and subsequent war with Britain could only strengthen such convictions.²⁹ Writing in 1810 in defence of the Oxford system, Professor of Poetry (later Provost of Oriel), Edward Copleston, was clear that a university education was about received knowledge. Turning out 'an annual supply of men, whose minds ... are impressed with what we hold to be the soundest principles of policy and religion' was more important than a few great minds 'exploring untrodden regions'.³⁰ The shift from viva voce to written examination was in accord with these aims, which were reinforced by the belief that knowledge was no longer uncertain; what was not yet known was at least within reach. It is striking that this question of imitation versus criticism in history education has retained its sharp edge in on-going and highly political debates about "knowledge" versus "skills".³¹

The methods and approaches of university history thus contributed to the development of the gentleman, who would go on to serve crown, country and empire; so did its "content". History, like other humanities, recognised and explored human agency and reinforced beliefs in the power of the rational and resolute individual to overcome adversity or to

²⁷ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 28. Citing: Glover, *Cambridge retrospect*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), pp. 110-111.

²⁸ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 35.

²⁹ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 44; Anderson, *British universities: past and present*.

³⁰ Rothblatt, *The modern university and its discontents*, pp. 162-165. Copleston quote: p. 164. By contrast, history at Owens College in Manchester developed under Tout's leadership a distinctive position in the emerging field with a focus on handling original sources rather than relying on set texts. See Soffer, *Discipline and power: the university, history, and the making of an English elite, 1870-1930*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 159.

³¹ This is pursued in Chapter 3 below.

achieve great things. For Matthew Arnold, this gave them a higher claim within the academy than the sciences, which were preoccupied with universal laws and with forces beyond human control: the 'realm of human limitation and passivity'.³² But history's particular status lay in its appreciation of the temporal dimension, not so much of change but of *continuity* over time, which provided assurance of the resilience of political institutions. Rapid technological innovation and industrialisation, widening of the franchise in 1832 and 1867 and the Chartist pressure for more radical electoral reform, expansion of and conflict within the empire, and revolution on the continent in 1848 all drew attention to concepts of England and Englishness.³³ History anchored those concepts in a long narrative of institutional evolution in which longevity proved rectitude. Its emergence to disciplinary independence (and also to prominence in political discourse) can be associated with this important social and political role.³⁴ The historian of political thought, J.G.A. Pocock, has suggested that it is at times when *traditional* statements of continuities with a society's past are exposed to challenge that *historical* explanations are sought by way of replacement. Hence the historical is a critical restatement of the traditional; its function is to ensure the continuity of the society. As the structure of a society, expressed in its institutions and laws, is the most important element in the society's continuity, it is the continuity of the structure that the past is designed to ensure. The 'workings of social institutions' (and the records thereof) take on more significance in this respect than the 'possession of narrative histories'.³⁵

For Pocock, the English sense of the past in the late eighteenth century was traditional; it had, in his analysis, not yet encountered challenges that would compel the formation of a historical awareness. The need for a historical explanation did emerge in the nineteenth century; Pocock states that it is not clear, however, when or why the discontinuity or shock occurred that gave rise to it.³⁶ Although a single moment or event may be difficult to isolate, it is possible to recognise in the 1850s a period in which history became common currency in the political world, from new stylistic conventions that made 'sustained historical resumé's' the stuff of polemic, to the conditioning of parliamentary debates on the Crimean War by

³² Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, pp. 105-106.

³³ Mandler, *The English national character*, especially pp. 39-72.

³⁴ On history in political discourse: Anderson, 'The Political Uses of History in Mid Nineteenth-Century England', *Past & Present* (1967).

³⁵ Pocock, 'The Origins of Study of the Past: A Comparative Approach', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (1962), p. 243. See also pp. 211-2.

³⁶ See also: Woolf, *A global history of history*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chapter 7.

historical precedents.³⁷ The 1850s also saw an ‘unprecedented flurry of governmental activity in the field of record and manuscript administration’, involving the building of the central record repository, the opening up of private manuscript collections and the introduction of major publishing projects. Government intervention in this area was part of a wider drive to rationalise and reform public service, but it was also bound up with the emergent academic discipline in the discourse of national pride.³⁸ The creation, following the establishment of the Civil Service Commission in 1855, of a class of specialist record scholars in the new Public Record Office – a development in tension with the Civil Service preference for generalists – was another outcome of this political imperative to preserve and organise the historical record.

So history explained and defended present structures; in doing so, it promoted the ideals, values and obligations that created and sustained them. Study of the past suggested human control over change and hence addressed fear of conflict and revolution.³⁹ In learning history, the future MP or civil servant gained assurance – given weight by evidence and scholarly judgement – not only of the legitimacy of the English constitutional model through its long evolution, but also of England’s continued pre-eminence; the historical perspective stretched both forward and backward in time.⁴⁰ In terms of the development of character, history developed confidence – in English political institutions, in her imperial dominion and expansion, in her culture and values – but it also developed an important sense of duty and commitment. Knowledge of history would not just equip a person intellectually; an understanding of its import would be evinced through action and conduct in life.

There was an elitist cast to this view, even among those committed to social progress. Seeley was able to contend that history was a ‘school of statesmanship’ as well as to maintain that instructing the people in the laws by which states evolve or decline would inculcate quiescence and political moderation.⁴¹ His argument, however, seems to be about the degree to which history is studied, rather than the form it should take, according to the prospects of the student. A ‘rational interest in politics’ is only possible with ‘at least a little knowledge of history’, while a ‘rational judgment about them’ requires ‘a good deal’. And

³⁷ Anderson, ‘The Political Uses of History in Mid Nineteenth-Century England’, p. 92. See also David R. Jones’ description of the ‘stressful’ character of the mid-century as the essential context in which the new civic colleges should be understood: Jones, *The origins of civic universities*, pp. 5-9.

³⁸ Levine, *The amateur and the professional*, p. 122.

³⁹ Levine, *The amateur and the professional*.

⁴⁰ See discussion of the ‘stream of time’ below and in subsequent chapters.

⁴¹ Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the uses of history*, p. 22.

thus: 'If [history] is an important study to every citizen, it is the one important study to the legislator and ruler'.⁴² Seeley's interest in the education of the people was genuine; he was active in the movement to reform secondary schooling and his emphasis on utility in learning (i.e. that it should have a practical bearing) conditioned his thought both on school education for the middle classes coming to participate to a greater extent in the democratic process and on university education for those destined for political leadership. He condemned 'indirectness in education' as 'a great evil... not merely because it wastes time and energy, but still more because it conceals from the student the end of his studies'.⁴³

Historical education of the people and of the elite may take place in different institutions and be translated into different forms of political expression, but the tasks were, for Seeley, complementary and essentially linked. The 'goal in writing and teaching history was to create in the British people a single national consciousness with respect to the past, their mutual obligations and the destiny of the state'.⁴⁴ It is interesting to note the affinity with German Romantic conceptions of the *ganzes Haus*, the organic community in which social harmony and prosperity were interwoven with and dependent upon social hierarchy and resilient definitions of status.⁴⁵ Seeley certainly admired German, particularly Prussian, culture and education, and his first major work was a biography of Heinrich Friedrich Karl Reichsfreiherr vom Stein, who led a programme of major reforms of the Prussian state after the catastrophic defeat by Napoleon at Jena in 1806.⁴⁶ Seeley strongly identified with his subject ('our hero'), whom he regarded as a man of 'stainless virtue', and conceived his study of Stein's life as a 'guide to policy-making as well as an object-lesson in the virtues of nationalism'.⁴⁷ While we would now take issue with the terms in which Seeley's thinking was expressed, the thinking itself merits consideration. He contended that citizenship and political office call on similar intellectual capacities and that the education system should develop those capacities to the end of more informed and more consensual government.

⁴² Seeley, 'The teaching of politics', pp. 298-299.

⁴³ Seeley, 'The teaching of politics', p. 310.

⁴⁴ Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the uses of history*, p. 111.

⁴⁵ These were mobilised with effect by nobles opposing the reforms of Stein and Hardenberg, led by Friedrich August von der Marwitz. See Green, *Religion, Romantic Politics and Jewish Emancipation in Prussia, 1840-1847*, (University of Cambridge: M.Phil., 2001, unpublished dissertation), pp. 35-37, 44.

⁴⁶ Seeley, *Life and times of Stein, or, Germany and Prussia in the Napoleonic age*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1878). Stein himself has been driven into exile by the time, but the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810 – regarded as the model for the German model of a university – is essentially connected with this programme of reform for national reconstruction, See McClelland in Bender, *The university and the city: from medieval origins to the present*, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 181-197.

⁴⁷ Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the uses of history*, p. 78.

These may, strikingly, be more challenging propositions in the context of universal adult suffrage today – given the strength of the executive, the relative absence of dynamic public debate on policy issues and the orientation of the education system – than was the case in 1870.⁴⁸

(Modern) history and the stream of time: considering “usable pasts”

Seeley’s concept of the centrality of history to politics is worth exploring further as it contains issues of significance to the broader thesis: the role and orientation of historians and the ways and forms in which history is “usable”. If, to address the first issue, history provided a vital training to enable both citizens and public servants to discharge their respective political roles, then the new discipline had a responsibility – a “democratic imperative” – that would need to be met through its work. Seeley had a clear sense of the division of historical labour. In a series of essays and addresses between 1879 and 1882, he outlined his views on the scientific study of history and how it could be usefully applied. He envisioned two distinct types of historian. Academic history, like all sciences, must ‘separate itself boldly from practice at the outset in order to influence practice all the more decisively in the end’.⁴⁹ The readership for the academic historian’s scholarly works would be an ‘aristocracy’ of students – statesmen, civil servants, teachers – who would form an appreciative and receptive audience and then, presumably, apply the lessons learned to their respective domains. The enlightenment of the general public would be taken on by a second class of historians, men with literary skills such as Macaulay, who would distil and diffuse the scholarly works, thereby supplying the ‘intelligent popular narrative’ that Seeley saw as currently lacking.⁵⁰

Seeley’s typology is of particular interest and relevance in terms of thinking about the uses of history. The modern discipline has arrived at a more polarised interpretation of the divide between “scholarly” history and forms of historical activity in and for the public. Public history as a field has only recently started to emerge and to define its parameters and concerns in England; it has neither taken on the breadth, reach or ambition of its American counterpart, nor claimed a distinct role alongside academic history. Public history is the focus of the next chapter, in which theoretical and methodological issues will be considered,

⁴⁸ On the executive and public debate, see further discussion in Chapter 4; on education, see Chapter 3.

⁴⁹ Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the uses of history*, p. 121. Citing Seeley writing in Macmillan’s Magazine in 1879.

⁵⁰ Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the uses of history*, pp. 120-121.

alongside a comparative exploration of forms of “history in public” in the USA, Germany and England. For present purposes, however, it is worth noting the questions raised by Seeley’s model. The late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century academy seems to have focused on the first of Seeley’s categories of historian to the exclusion of the second. The issue for me is not that *categories* are absent (there seems no reason for scholars to confine themselves to one audience, or to one mode of research and development, or for the academy more broadly to separate itself from practice). Rather, it is that the *commitment* is absent: the democratic imperative.

There is a task to be done in terms of reconceptualising that second category of historian to fit the demands of the modern political and social context. Having forgotten or rejected an important dimension of our own professional past, historians are having, in the words of the American scholar, James M. Banner, to ‘reinvent their discipline’s involvement with fellow citizens rather than building on earlier achievements’.⁵¹ We have not made use of the history of our own discipline. Seeley’s idea of the ‘enlightenment of the public’ itself certainly calls for critical reformulation. Although new attention is being drawn to the agency of people outside the academy as makers of, as well as audiences for, history, the idea of the academic’s intellectual hegemony has not been put under enough pressure. ‘The historian’s job is not to disseminate absolute and unconditional versions of the past,’ the Finnish historian Jorma Kalela has recently argued, ‘but, rather, to furnish materials for serious debate’.⁵² This can be seen as a clear expression of a public and political ethos for the discipline, but even where historians are intending to connect with policymakers and the media, enlightenment, even admonishment, is the tone of the engagement.⁵³ Rather than take a place at the forefront of debate, public history in England seems pre-occupied with matters of heritage and community identities, a highly circumscribed, domesticated and often *apolitical* role outside of established channels for recognition, profile and influence.

To come on to the second issue – the *form* of a usable past – Seeley’s understanding of the practical purpose of historical study led him to outline a proposition for prioritising *relevance* in assessing phenomena for historical significance. In his inaugural lecture, he attempts to balance intrinsic and chronological arguments for significance. So, he rejects a concept of

⁵¹ Banner, *Being a historian*, p. 30.

⁵² Kalela, *Making history*, p. 45.

⁵³ See comments re: Simon Szretzer, History and Policy (www.historyandpolicy.org) and what I have called the “knowledge transfer” model of history in Chapter 4 below. Szretzer, ‘History and Public Policy’, in *The public value of the humanities*, ed. Bate, (London, 2011).

history as “the past” (in scientific as opposed to common usage), contending that ‘there are multitudes of past occurrences which do not belong, in my view, to history, and there are multitudes of phenomena belonging to the present time which do. Phenomena are classed together in science according to resemblances in kind, not according to date’. In line with his understanding of history and politics as two aspects of the same study, political institutions are his primary example of historical phenomena; they present ‘perfectly similar problems’ to the scholar, whether long since eclipsed or at the height of power: problems of ‘advance and decline... stability or transience...the character and qualifications of public men’.⁵⁴ Seeley is at the same time a passionate advocate for contemporary history as enabling the application of knowledge in ‘after-life’ (meaning career after university). Unlike the scholar of the past, who learns only ‘principles’ and remains ‘a stranger to the age’, the student of contemporary history is able to put his learning to use immediately, as it shapes his ‘views and judgments of things around him’.⁵⁵ Seeley reconciles the intrinsic and the chronological arguments with a test of relevance; if a historical study leads to greater understanding of the present it is a worthwhile endeavour. Relevance is the lens through which we should view the past as history, a lens that tends to bring recent times into sharper focus.

By the time *The Expansion of England* was published in 1883, Seeley was rather more adamant about the importance of modern history; ‘The interest of English history ought... to deepen steadily to the close,’ he stated, going on to decry the practice of ‘our popular historians’ in whose accounts English history grows ‘feebler and feebler, duller and duller, toward the close, that one might suppose that England, instead of steadily gaining in strength, had been for a century or two dying of mere old age’.⁵⁶ Seeley’s commitment to the contemporary may have put him at odds with scholars concerned to avoid challenge and debate among students, but it was not without resonance. William Stubbs, Seeley’s counterpart in the Regius Chair at Oxford, characterised the study of ancient and of modern history as the study of death compared to that of life. While studying the languages, histories and philosophies of ancient history reveals ‘the most elegant, the most compact, the most ingenious systems on which the mind of man can be exercised,’ these systems stand in ‘such isolation, so set apart altogether from personal or party or national or scholastic propensions, that the lessons to be drawn from them are for the most part as

⁵⁴ Seeley, ‘The teaching of politics’, pp. 302-303.

⁵⁵ Seeley, ‘The teaching of politics’, pp. 312-313.

⁵⁶ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, pp. 2-4.

safe, as unexciting, as far removed from the heart and interests of life, as any proposition in mathematics.’ Modern history, by contrast, is concerned with the ‘living, working, thinking, growing world of to-day’. Stubbs drew a similar distinction to Seeley about application. While the student of ancient history could ‘amuse himself with principles’, modern history trained the judgement: ‘the practical judgment at work among matters in which its possessor is deeply interested, not from the desire of Truth only, but from his own involution in the matters of which he is to judge.’⁵⁷ So, for both Stubbs and Seeley, studying modern history was essentially purposeful; the modern past is a “usable” past. It should be noted that both were relatively broad in their definition of modern history. Stubbs referred to medieval and modern as if a single category, demarcating them from ancient history; Seeley divided them, describing the transition from the medieval nation, circumscribed by its knowledge and capacity to its immediate environs, to the modern one, able to realise global, expansionist ambitions.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, Seeley recognised 400 years of a modern, usable past, and its utility was based on the idea of the unity of history. This was encapsulated in the argument he made towards the beginning of *The Expansion of England*: ‘since, the future grows out of the past, the history of the past of England ought to give rise to a prophecy concerning her future’. Stubbs was rather more politically circumspect, but expressed the same fundamental understanding of history: ‘in this new and modern and living world there has been since the era began, such a continuity of life and development that hardly one point in its earliest life can be touched without the awakening some chord in the present.’⁵⁹ Both Seeley and Stubbs were indicating their consciousness of the “stream of time”, a concept that remains vital for articulating the use of history for decision-making today.⁶⁰ Seeley’s linking of past,

⁵⁷ Stubbs, *An Address delivered by way of inaugural lecture - Revised*, (Oxford: J. Parker, 1867), §18-19

⁵⁸ In Seeley’s view, the transition from medieval to modern occurred during the Elizabethan age for England, with the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada standing as a symbol for its emergence as an ‘oceanic’ nation. Scotland came to modern maturity rather later, with the union with England in 1707, that settlement marking ‘the entrance of Scotland into the competition for the New World’. Seeley, *Expansion of England*, p. 152.

⁵⁹ Stubbs, *Inaugural lecture*, §17. Stubbs was concerned that history, conceived scientifically as a source of deterministic prophecies, could become a political weapon (See: Soffer, *Discipline and power*, pp. 31-32.), a view that was at odds with Seeley’s sense of the practical political object of historical study in the context of a ‘great colonial extension of our state’ that ‘exposes it to new dangers’ (Seeley, *Expansion of England*, p. 2.) The key point, however, is that there seems to be a shared conception of the stream of time, or unity of history, among historians of this period.

⁶⁰ Seeley uses the phrase: Seeley, ‘The teaching of politics’, p. 306. It is also a central concept used by Neustadt and May in their book on the uses of history for decision-makers; they identify this consciousness as key to the application of historical thinking to the decision-making process: Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 247-270. See discussion in Chapter 5.

present and future served a particular purpose: to draw a distinction between ‘popular’ history – immersed in the distant past and holding no ‘practical purpose’ – and his own approach to the study of history, informed by a ‘rational spirit’ with a ‘definite object’. Despite his trenchant criticism of certain fellow historians, Seeley’s emphasis of the idea that the past and present (and, implicitly or explicitly, the future) were linked through the continuum of time, would have found consensus. Indeed, the study of the constitution as the institution at the core of the national narrative and the dominant theme of historical teaching and scholarship, demonstrates a comfort with the concept. Over a quarter of a century before Stubbs’ articulation of ‘the modern world in its living unity’, Edward Shepherd Creasy had spoken of the study of the past acting as qualification for ‘our high prerogative of controlling the Present and moulding the destinies of the Future’ in his inaugural lecture at University College, London, in 1840.⁶¹

A distinction needs to be made between the values and understandings behind nineteenth-century concepts of the stream of time and those that can inform present purposes in terms of informing and shaping public policy and decision-making. The former can best be explored by reference to the idea of the constitution, which was central to explanations of the development, indeed, the success, of the English model. The constitution had adapted to and embraced change over time, while remaining centred around a stable core of English values. It carried and reconciled both the recognition of tradition and the potential for reform, and hence appealed to both the liberal- and the conservative-minded, inside and outside the academy. In the context of rapid industrialisation and the widening of the franchise, the study of constitutional history offered conservatives a clear sense of the inheritance that had been conferred on the present and therefore the responsibility for its protection and preservation for the future. It gave liberals an idea of the parameters within which social and political reform could take place to achieve greater individual and collective freedoms without violent upheaval.⁶² So nineteenth-century assumptions of evolution and progress can be recognised as shaping the way in which contemporary historians saw time as a stream. The opening lines of *The Expansion of England* capture this constellation of concepts well:

It is a favourite maxim of mine that history, while it should be scientific in its method, should pursue a practical object. That is, it should not merely gratify the

⁶¹ Creasy, *The Spirit of Historical Study: an inaugural lecture delivered at University College, London*, (London: Taylor & Walton, 1840), p. 31.

⁶² Soffer, *Discipline and power*, pp. 63-64.

reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his view of the present and his forecast of the future. Now if this maxim be sound, the history of England ought to end with something that might be called a moral.⁶³

Nineteenth-century confidence in grand narratives of rise and fall and in the nation state as the natural unit of human identity and historical analysis has since been eroded.

Developments in the discipline since the 1960s have been valuable and necessary in transforming the practice of history, making it self-conscious and receptive to different perspectives and to the approaches and insights of other disciplines, but they have also tended to pull practitioners away from the kind of public engagement that Seeley valued. The historian's claims to objectivity in the interpretation of evidence and construction of historical accounts – the truths that Seeley sought to disseminate – have been subject to productive challenge, but with them the acceptance of and commitment to the *use* of historical understandings to inform present debates have receded. If we cannot be sure of what actually happened, would be the argument, we have nothing to contribute but our uncertainty and appreciation of complexity. In recovering his thinking on the purpose and use of history for political life, this thesis explores whether Seeley's "democratic imperative" can reinterpreted for our current context.

Modern advocates of seeing time as a stream, Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, are cautious. They seek only a marginal improvement in decision-making using their approaches for 'thinking in time'. It is interesting that they redefine the idea of time as a stream in a way that does not presuppose teleology or development along evolutionary lines towards greater complexity and civilisation. For them, time-streams do not imply any unfolding of patterns or destinies in human affairs. Indeed, rather than confining thought, seeing time as a stream is about 'opening one's mind to possibilities as far back as the story's start and to potentialities as far ahead as relevant':

To link conventional wisdoms of the present with past counterparts and future possibilities; to link interpretations of the past with the experience of interpreters; and both with their prescriptions; to link proposals for the future with the inhibitions of the present as inheritances from the past – all these mean to think relatively and in terms of time...⁶⁴

⁶³ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, p. 246.

Thinking in time-streams is not one of Neustadt and May's seven steps, or 'mini-methods' for using history in decision-making; rather it is a 'talent' that can be developed into a 'habit', a mind-set that aids decision-making by acting as a counterbalance to the tactical, reactive mode that can only address one problem at a time. For our purposes, the stream of time is a useful concept for two reasons. The resonance of the concept between the nineteenth-century discipline and (a part of) its modern counterpart opens up a point of comparison and contrast in terms of the openness of those contexts of practice to taking the long view and applying its insights to practical, including political, purpose. Secondly, it prepares the ground for a discussion about what 'thinking with history' involves and how the composite elements can be defined.⁶⁵ Are they skills that can be acquired, techniques that can be applied or attitudes of mind that are far more elusive? The contents of the historian's cognitive toolbox will be addressed in chapter 5.

Public ethos, institutional culture and the shifting binary divide

Oxford and Cambridge were valued for their capacity to produce trained minds for public service, men of 'a particular sociomoral type whose behaviour could in some sense be guaranteed'.⁶⁶ Although they can be seen in this regard as fulfilling a public *duty* (at least as defined by contemporary commentators), in terms of public *engagement*, or, to use Seeley's term, *enlightenment*, their reach was very limited. Even after the reforms of the mid-century that opened up scholarships to competition, fees of around £200 per annum excluded the working-class products of the new elementary schools or self-taught artisans.⁶⁷ Indeed, the cost of pursuing a university education at Oxford and Cambridge was one of the main reasons alternative provision was proposed. The first Statement by the Council of the University of London in 1827 laid out the 'various causes' by which 'a very large proportion of the youth of England, who from their station in society ought to have received an University education, have... been cut off from that most important benefit'. Religious tests, prohibitive cost, insufficient capacity and the absence of a 'professional education' at the ancients all pointed to the 'necessity' for the 'foundation of another University in England'. It would serve not only the wants of the capital's population but also those of the provinces

⁶⁵ The phrase is Schorske's: Schorske, *Thinking with history: explorations in the passage to modernism*, (Princeton, N.J.; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁶⁶ Rothblatt, *The modern university and its discontents*, p. 167.

⁶⁷ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 58.

and colonies.⁶⁸ University College (as it was renamed) and King's College (itself established in 1828-9 as the Anglican counterbalance to the 'Godless institution on Gower Street') became the founding colleges of the University of London proper in 1836.⁶⁹

The particular significance of the University of London can be seen in its role, from 1858, as an examining and degree-awarding body for students external to the institution. London was 'precedent and exemplar as well as certifying agency' for the civic colleges.⁷⁰ The extent to which the new institutions of the nineteenth century were indeed 'protest alternatives' has been called into question; the Oxbridge model provided a powerful precedent.⁷¹ Yet there was an emerging sense of a distinctive ethos and identity, given structure through the professionally-oriented curriculum, subject portfolio, student profile and organisational characteristics. A question raised by this thesis is the extent to which this early commitment of London and the civics to the purpose and application of learning has been set aside as the higher education sector has expanded further and their status has been consolidated on the "right side" of the binary divides.

The people of 'easy yet moderate means' for whom the Council aimed to open up university education were also largely the beneficiaries of university extension movement from the 1870s, due to the charging of fees for lectures. The movement aimed to take university teaching into the 'great centres of industry' and address the gap between the number requiring university education and the number that receive it. 'What connection have the Universities with our mercantile classes?' Gladstone had challenged during a Parliamentary debate in 1867: 'are these classes to be excommunicated from the higher education of the country? And does there not then exist a very strong necessity for providing for them the

⁶⁸ University of London and Council, *Statement by the Council of the University of London, explanatory of its nature and objects*, (London: 1827), pp. 7-12.

⁶⁹ The phrase is Thomas Arnold's, see: Walvin, *English urban life: 1776-1851*, (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 58. On the emergence of the University of London and the renaming of UCL, see: Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, pp. 27-28.

⁷⁰ Jones, *The origins of civic universities*, p. 16; See also: Vernon, *Universities and the state in England*, pp. 52-53. Although the larger civic colleges received their charters at the beginning of the twentieth century (Manchester and Liverpool in 1903, Leeds in 1904, Sheffield in 1905), smaller provincial colleges (such as Nottingham, Southampton, Reading and Exeter) offered University of London degrees well into the twentieth century: Thompson (ed.), *The University of London and the world of learning, 1836-1986*, (London: Hambledon, 1990), xvii. The students of the London institutes, such as Birkbeck, also gained access to degree examinations through the 1858 establishment of external system.

⁷¹ Sanderson (ed.), *The universities in the nineteenth century*, (London: Routledge; Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 79. See also: Jones, *The origins of civic universities*, p. 10. Both authors make the point that new institutions, such as Durham (founded 1832) and Owen's College (1851), did not initially thrive due to the Oxbridge characteristics they took on.

means of participating in its benefits?’⁷² This raises the issue of the place and role of contexts for adult learning – and for the ‘enlightenment’ Seeley associated with informed citizenship – outside the universities. The education and engagement of the wider public was taken up most explicitly by the technical institutes that were founded in the final decade of the century. Birkbeck, established as the first Mechanics’ Institute in 1823, and the Polytechnic Institution, founded 1838 and later to become the University of Westminster, anticipated this role. The latter offered technical and commercial education and becoming a focal point for public contact with discoveries in science and technology. Visitors could be submerged in the diving bell, have their photograph taken in Europe’s first photographic studio, or watch a lantern show on planets and eclipses, current armed conflicts, or life in other countries in the Polytechnic Theatre.⁷³

The Technical Instruction Act of 1889 enabled the newly-formed county and borough councils to support the provision of evening classes for working people. These had previously been dependent on voluntarism and charity, with the Mechanics’ Institutes that developed in the second quarter of the century being an example of how working-class aspiration and middle-class philanthropy could come together to extend learning to a wider public. The term “polytechnic” was embraced for all adult and technical colleges in London.⁷⁴ In 1890, changes to customs and excise legislation made “whisky money” available to the new local authorities to support technical and scientific education.⁷⁵ Kingston Technical Institute was one of those colleges later to become universities that emerged as a result, with the town corporation seeking Surrey County Council’s permission in December 1890, ‘to apply the sums that will come into its possession under the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act, 1890, for the purposes of Technical Instruction’. The School of Science and Art and Technical Institute opened its doors in 1899, building on the existing voluntaristic base of social, sporting and educational societies.⁷⁶

⁷² See: Gladstone, *Oxford and Cambridge Universities Education Bill: Second Reading*, (5th June, 1867), Column 1640. The Bill aimed to open up an Oxbridge education to students without requiring them to be Members of a College or Hall.

⁷³ Weeden, *The education of the eye: history of the Royal Polytechnic Institution 1838-1881*, (Cambridge: Granta Editions, 2008). On the magic lantern shows at the Royal Polytechnic Institution: *Making History*, (BBC Radio 4: 21st June, 2011).

⁷⁴ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 75.

⁷⁵ Green, *Further Education: a historical perspective*, (London: NRDC, Department for Education and Skills, 2005, unpublished memorandum), pp. 3-4.

⁷⁶ Gibson, *A History of Kingston University*, (Kingston upon Thames: Kingston University Press, 2001), pp. 4-10. Oxford Brookes took a similar trajectory in that existing provision in the form of a School of

Although established by bequest rather than appropriation in 1895, the London School of Economics (LSE) also evinced a sense of public ethos, with its founding vision of applied social science for the betterment of society. It is of particular interest here due to the early social history that emerged from the School that aimed to exert a practical, political influence. Sidney Webb was chief executor for the bequest, a self-taught, self-made man who passed civil service tests without having attended university and who had been elected chairman of the Technical Education Board of the London County Council in 1892. He was committed to the discovery of concrete facts about the 'nature and condition of modern social and economic life' in order to 'lay the evidential foundations for incremental progress towards practical, collective improvement'.⁷⁷ His wife, Beatrice, with whom he authored influential works such as *The History of Trade Unionism* (1894) and *Industrial Democracy* (1897), advocated the pursuit of a 'science of society', with that science having a clear political application. Although scientific in intent, their work was historical in practice.⁷⁸ Webb consciously oriented the LSE as an institution of higher education towards practical relevance, including in terms of policy: this at a time when concepts of evidence-based policy-making were emerging. Also significant was that he associated relevance with the *non-partisan* pursuit of knowledge and truth; 'dispassionate enquiry and engaged action' were both possible and necessary.⁷⁹ The view that the potential for intervention and influence would be most effectively realised when emerging from intellectual rather than political thinking processes is one that remains pertinent today. In a context of government proposals for radical reform of the HE sector, vocal exponents of academic opinion tend to proceed from ideological premises, and thereby run the risk of undermining the potential for influence on which Webb was so focused. Early social histories that emerged from the LSE and its network of associates – such as J. L. and Barbara Hammonds' *The Village Labourer* (1911) and *The Town Labourer* (1917) and R. H. Tawney's *The Agrarian problem of the Sixteenth Century* (1912) – can be understood in a similar way to the Webbs' 'science of

Art, with a School of Science later incorporated, was taken over in 1891 by Oxford City Council's Technical Instruction Committee and renamed Oxford City Technical School.

⁷⁷ Vernon, *Universities and the state in England*, p. 88.

⁷⁸ Collini has termed it 'a somewhat simple-minded but very energetic historical empiricism', involving collecting and assembling facts into a chronological narrative: Collini, 'Review - The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb', *The Economic Journal* 89 (1979), p. 184.

⁷⁹ Soffer, 'Review - LSE: A History of the London School of Economics and Political Science', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 28 (1996), p. 360. The phrase is one Soffer uses in relation to former Director, Lord Dahrendorf, in reviewing his history of the LSE, but captures well this interlinking of academic endeavour and political application.

society', as examples of academic pursuit with political intent.⁸⁰ They were *using history*, and, in doing so, anticipated some of the social and urban history work that focused attention on poverty and conflict in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The technical institutes of the late century, some of which, alongside newer technical colleges, became the polytechnics of the Crosland era, and then new universities in 1992, were founded with a clear sense of public purpose and engagement.⁸¹ But founding visions do not necessarily shape institutional culture in the long term. The drift towards a more self-contained, more self-consciously academic identity – remote from practice but without Seeley's aim of influencing it 'all the more decisively in the end' – seems to have become a defining feature of the English HE sector. This drift in institutional culture is central to understanding the historical discipline's turn away from the democratic imperative. It can be explored by tracing the history of the binary divide, a concept that is usually applied to the university/polytechnic division from 1965 to 1992, but has its origins in the apparent demarcation between Oxbridge and the (then) new institutions of HE in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As universities, these institutions have since integrated into a historic elite in terms of institutional identity. They were intended, however, to be culturally distinct from Oxbridge, 'embodiments of a modern, utilitarian, scientific spirit which has its own historical roots'. In the case of the civics, they were also proud 'expressions of a provincial ethos': truly tertiary institutions, the pinnacle of a rationalised local education system.⁸² The binary divide was subject to much shifting in the 1960s as the sector began its transformation from an elite to a mass system. Ten Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs) that been founded from existing colleges in 1956 became universities (such as Loughborough, Brunel and Bath) in 1966, with the first polytechnics having been named a year earlier. The establishment of the institutions of the Robbins expansion (including Essex, Lancaster and Sussex) and the award of university status to the CATs redrew the binary line again between old and new.⁸³ It shifted again in 1992 when the polytechnics became

⁸⁰ Kenyon notes that the Labourers 'can not unfairly be regarded as historical prefaces to the Rural and Urban Reports of Lloyd George's Land Enquiry Committee': Kenyon, *History men*, p. 239.

⁸¹ Anthony Crosland was Secretary of State for Education and Science in the Labour Government that came to power in 1964. In 1966, he published the White Paper that envisaged a binary HE sector where technical education, led by 30 polytechnics, would gain equal status to the established universities. See: Department of Education and Science, *A plan for polytechnics and other colleges: higher education in the further education system*, (London: H.M.S.O., 1966). See further discussion below.

⁸² Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 77.

⁸³ Lionel Robbins had been Professor of Economics at LSE, but had resigned to take up the chairmanship of the *Financial Times* in 1961 (although he continued to lecture until the 1980s). The

universities through the Higher and Further Education Reform Act. The abolition of the divide in law has not, however, resulted in a secure consolidation of status for the former polytechnics within a single university sector; their status and purpose as universities, unlike that of other institutions that have crossed the divide, is still called into question. It is rather ironic that the civic institutions are now, as members of the Russell Group of 'leading' universities, lobbying for the concentration of funding away from the former polytechnics, although the two sets of institutions were founded with a comparable ethos of localism and of utility.

A proud 'polytechnic philosophy' of solving problems, applying knowledge and self-directed study was developed by George Brosan, Director of the North-East London Polytechnic (N-ELP, later a constituent of the University of East London)⁸⁴ and, taking a retrospective look in 1995, captured by longstanding N-ELP academic, Tyrell Burgess.⁸⁵ Burgess and his co-authors transformed the deficit model of the binary divide into positive construct, celebrating the 'responsive, vocational, innovating and open' character of the institutions in the 'service' tradition of HE, as compared to those in the parallel 'autonomous' tradition, which were 'aloof, academic, conservative and exclusive'. Academic drift had, they argued, taken the civics away from this core mission and purpose to serve society and solve practical problems.⁸⁶ When Burgess died in 2009, one of his obituaries noted that there was 'more than a touch of the great Victorians about him... He thought it was possible and necessary to apply rational thought to social and political problems.'⁸⁷ The resonance here with Seeley's thinking a century earlier is striking. Seeley had called for the historian to 'break the drowsy spell of narrative' and instead 'ask yourself questions, set yourself problems, your mind will at once take up a new attitude, you will become an investigator, you will cease to be solemn

same year he was approached to lead the committee on higher education. His report recommended the expansion of higher education, from 216,000 places in 1962/63, to 372,000 one decade, and 627,000 two decades, later: Robbins, *Higher Education: Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins, 1961-63* (London, 1963), table 30, p. 69 Further discussion of Robbins below.

⁸⁴ Brosan and Carter, *Patterns and policies in higher education*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971). UEL shares a similar historical background to Westminster, Kingston, Oxford Brooks et al with its origins in the technical institute founded by the newly formed Borough of West Ham in 1892 (building was opened 1898).

⁸⁵ Burgess moved to N-ELP in 1970 and set up the Centre for Institutional Studies there.

⁸⁶ Burgess, *Degrees east: the making of the University of East London, 1892-1992*, (London: Athlone, 1995).

⁸⁷ See: Pratt and Travers, 'Tyrell Burgess : Educationalist who favoured excellence without elitism', *The Guardian*, 13th February, 2009.

and begin to be serious.’⁸⁸ A distinction between tradition and innovation can be discerned in Seeley’s words that is echoed by Burgess.

The idea of the binary divide has been part of higher education policy vocabulary for over a century. With the publication of Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government’s proposals for the reform of the sector in 2011, it has gained a new prominence. It is invoked as an encapsulation of historic inequity, but also as a lost marker that sensibly kept different institutions focused on their core purposes. Its resilience and conceptual power may reside in it being amendable both to right-wing politics that are intolerant of protectionism and favour responsive, market-oriented models of public service, and to left-wing ideals of equal access to the transformative capacity of education.⁸⁹ Bringing a long view to contentious concepts such as the binary divide is a task not only of historical but also of political interest.⁹⁰ In the case of current HE policy in particular, a capacity to historicise both institutions and ideas would add vital nuance to a debate in which the rhetoric of competition and choice is concealing resilient beliefs about dividing lines within the sector. A historical perspective may also enable institutions to use their own histories re-imagine high-status missions where academic insight and expertise – indeed, the academic *process* of thinking, imagining, interpreting, resolving – are applied to societal and economic challenges and are responsive to individual and community needs.

Consolidation and withdrawal? History, science, meritocracy and competitiveness in the first half of the twentieth century

Until the expansion of the 1960s, the higher education sector was characterised more by continuity than by change. The essential social and intellectual character of universities was retained from the nineteenth-century inheritance, with early pressure for democratisation left unrealised after the First World War and only modest expansion in student numbers.⁹¹ Even those committed to social reform relied on the idea of a leadership composed of the educated elite. Meritocracy was the concept that bound the consensus between liberal and conservative together, having emerged in the reforms to universities and to public careers,

⁸⁸ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, pp. 202-203.

⁸⁹ “Binary divide” may be in this sense akin to “postcode lottery”, which seems similarly capable of exercising political opinion among advocates of universal provision and those of local decision-making.

⁹⁰ ‘Time’ will be discussed in Chapter 5 below as one of the tools in the historian’s toolbox for public policy.

⁹¹ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 113.

such as the civil service, in the second half of the nineteenth century. It promised a framework for social mobility for the able working- and middle-classes, while retaining the stability of the whole system by acculturating them into the patterns of behaviour and belief that characterised elite education and careers.⁹² Hence meritocracy was conceived as a carefully managed process of social engineering through education and selection, which would create a new intellectual aristocracy of able, and dependable, leaders. The idea of the intellectual aristocracy that blended the best and brightest of the old and new elites was a powerful one, and was expressed in visionary terms by Matthew Arnold in the mid-nineteenth century, when he saw a 'cultured, liberalised, ennobled, transformed middle class' could 'lead working class down the path of civilisation'.⁹³ In the early twentieth century, the meritocratic system took on a rather more pragmatic function, at least according to Haldane, the Liberal Minister of War closely involved in university policy, who saw the recruitment and acculturation of the clever working-class student into the university as a safety valve for social unrest. Local Authority scholarships (1400 by 1911) did start to send some of the products of the grammar schools to university, mostly the civics, but the impact of such numbers is questionable.⁹⁴

The enduring conservatism of academic history can be understood in this context; Soffer notes that 'admiration of English history tended to transcend party in the university'.⁹⁵ It can also be argued that history's emphasis as a discipline on the enduring and evolving character of institutions lent further resilience to the conservatism of the university culture. That is, not only did (most) historians train and practice within institutions that had demonstrated resilience and adaptability over time, their practice *as historians* was oriented to trace such narratives in the records of the past. Hence, 'during the first three decades of the twentieth century, just as in the greater part of the nineteenth, the study of history

⁹² Soffer, *Discipline and power*, pp. 205-206; Hoppen has noted the limited impact of civil service reforms, due to limited numbers of openings as well as to the ability of those who would previously have entered through patronage to access preparatory training for the new examinations (a critique of a meritocratic system that is made today regarding public school applicants to university): Hoppen, *The mid-Victorian generation, 1846-1886*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 45.

⁹³ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 104. Indeed, Seeley's concept of an aristocracy of students – the readership for scholarly historical works – is an antecedent.

⁹⁴ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 86. Richard Haldane was Minister of War 1905-1912, when he became Lord Chancellor. On the eve of war, Haldane was chairing the committee looking at extending provisions for equality of opportunity that had been initiated by the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act 1907, which stipulated that all grant-aided secondary schools were required to provide at least 25 per cent of their places as free scholarships for students from public elementary schools, providing a route through the system to university.

⁹⁵ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, pp. 36-37.

guarded, transmitted and promoted fundamental conceptions which resisted radical revision', although the reign of orthodoxy could be seen to have lasted a further three.⁹⁶

The understanding of university education, and particularly historical training, as a preparation for civic duty was pervasive, with Herbert Butterfield in 1963 echoing Seeley in arguing that 'the point of teaching history to undergraduates is to turn them into public servants and statesmen... I happen to think history is a school of wisdom and statesmanship'.⁹⁷ The context was a critique of Namier's 'rationalisations', which he saw as undermining national myths and destroying fundamental ideals of the continuity of, and progress in, history, without replacing them.⁹⁸ Yet Butterfield's words also indicate the persistence of nineteenth-century thinking on the role and purpose of history, set consciously within an English national-political framework. Indeed, this thinking has recently re-emerged to prominence with Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove's, particular focus on history in reforms to the National Curriculum. Responding during education questions, he outlined the intention to 'ensure that history is taught as a proper subject, so that we can celebrate the distinguished role of these islands in the history of the world, from the role of the Royal Navy in putting down the slave trade, to the way in which, since 1688, this nation has been a beacon for liberty that others have sought to emulate. We will also ensure that it is taught in a way in which we can all take pride.'⁹⁹

The experience of the First World War strengthened rather than challenged this relationship between history and the state. Historians were actively involved in writing pamphlets and articles and delivering lectures that denounced German aggression and militarism and defended Britain's involvement in a just war. The enthusiasm for political engagement and public education was less evident, however, in the years that followed. In the 1940s, C. V. Wedgwood condemned 'the greater number of historical writers,' who 'failed entirely to understand what was expected of them. They turned their faces away from their audience and towards their subject, turned deliberately from the present to the past'. In a

⁹⁶ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 36. Banner argues from an American perspective that 'well into the 1960s one could prepare to be a historian without being exposed... to any major alternatives to reigning intellectual orthodoxies... Universities [saw] themselves... as the residence of knowledge and thinking that, while open to challenge and correct, had stood the test of time' – the echoes of the nineteenth century are evident: Banner, *Being a historian*, p. 32.

⁹⁷ In Mehta, *Fly and the Fly-bottle. Encounters with British intellectuals*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963), p. 196; Cited in: Kenyon, *History men*, p. 263.

⁹⁸ Kenyon, *History men*, p. 273.

⁹⁹ See: Gove, *Oral answers to questions: education*, (15th November, 2010), Column 634. Retrieved 13th February 2013. History education and the place of history in political culture will be explored in Chapter 3 below.

particularly pointed comparison given the recent history, she went on to say: ‘they are no more concerned with the ultimate outcome of their studies than is the research scientist with the use of poison gas in warfare’.¹⁰⁰ These comments are helpful in identifying a shift in historians’ orientation towards a more introspective, self-referential scholarship. While academic history may not have been characterised by dynamic change during the first half of the twentieth century, it did, however, become established as a strong, independent field of study, attracting increasing numbers of students and often more than other humanities subjects. Soffer contends that ‘the study of history appeared most capable of explaining apparently inexplicable events’, and, although the trauma of war gave rise to ‘disillusionment with the pre-war world and those who had led it into disaster,’ there was no loss of faith in national history, which still promised to guide its practitioners to ‘overcome the errors of the past’.¹⁰¹ National history is essentially a collective history, a shared past that defines identity through heritage. In England, this sense of a “public past” survived two world wars; it was not until the late 1960s that it started to break down, a process of ‘privatisation’ that accelerated under the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 90s.¹⁰²

History may have claimed a certain status amongst the humanities as a subject of study during the first half of the twentieth century, but the rising prestige of science at this time merits exploration. The status of the sciences as ‘highly authoritative knowledge forms’ is a significant theme when considering the capacity for history as a discipline to contribute productively to policymaking.¹⁰³ The Great Exhibition of 1851 and the subsequent development of the South Kensington site with museums, learned societies and colleges, supported by the profits of that event, had been key moments for the public prestige of science. The role of Prince Albert has been emphasised, with his vision of ‘a metropolis of learning, organised around the production of useful knowledge and benefiting the entire nation.’¹⁰⁴ The Royal School of Mines was founded in 1851, the Royal College of Science in 1881 and the City and Guilds College in 1884, all of which were incorporated into the

¹⁰⁰ Wedgwood, *Velvet Studies*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), pp. 155, 157; Cited in: Kenyon, *History men*, p. 272.

¹⁰¹ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, pp. 51-52.

¹⁰² See: McCulloch, ‘Privatising the Past? History and Education Policy in the 1990s’, *British Journal of Educational Studies* 45 (1997). The transition from a “collective” past to “personal” pasts is a key theme of Chapter 3, with the argument that it has undermined the capacity for external expertise in general to influence policy and history as a discipline specifically.

¹⁰³ The phrase is Jordanova’s: Jordanova, *History in practice*, pp. 88-89. See further discussion in Chapter 2 below.

¹⁰⁴ Robertson, ‘The South Kensington Museum in context: an alternative history’, *Museum and Society* 2 (2004).

Imperial College of Science and Technology in 1907. The establishment of Imperial College seems particularly significant, not least its name. The College's motto translates as 'knowledge is the adornment and protection of the Empire,' associating scientific and technical knowledge specifically with the capacity to fulfil the demands of imperial dominion: a task for which Seeley had considered history centrally important.

This investment, both cultural and material, in the development of science and technology reflected not only a desire to consolidate Britain's efforts in this area, but also a consciousness of the rising capabilities of Europe. The Paris Exhibition of 1867 had exposed the more rapid progress of Switzerland, Belgium, France, Austria and the German states since 1851. The prestige of German science in particular was recognised by those involved in the South Kensington legacies. Dr Lyon Playfair, a prominent chemist, was a commissioner of the Great Exhibition and went on to lead the science side of the South Kensington Museum. He was instrumental in bringing German chemical methods to Britain, which had helped to drive the industrial development of that country, and had also warned in 1853 that Britain was falling behind those countries with more developed technical education systems.¹⁰⁵ By the end of the century, Germany's growing economic, imperial and military presence, and the scientific and technical expertise that its education system was producing, were causes of real concern.¹⁰⁶

The destructive potential of this knowledge was later demonstrated during the First World War. In 1915, chlorine gas was first deployed as a weapon at Ypres, having been developed for the purpose by the chemist Fritz Haber. He personally oversaw the attack, which killed around five thousand French and Belgian soldiers, six months after he had added his signature to those of 92 other eminent scientists, scholars and men of letters on the *Appeal to the World of Culture*.¹⁰⁷ The *Appeal* argued for the necessity of war and denied German army atrocities; as such, it provoked condemnation in the Allied and neutral countries, but particularly, as Kramer notes, amongst the academics and intellectuals to whom it was directed.¹⁰⁸ The British war effort came to rely increasingly on the application of advanced scientific and technical knowledge, and there was an awareness that higher learning in these fields was vital not only for the progress of the war, but also for the country's longer-term

¹⁰⁵ Robertson, 'The South Kensington Museum in context: an alternative history', p. 8; Green, *Further Education: a historical perspective*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Vernon, *Universities and the state in England*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁷ *An die Kulturwelt!*, (1914).

¹⁰⁸ Kramer, *Dynamic of destruction: culture and mass killing in the First World War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 29.

future.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, historians' offers of specialist expertise were not accorded the same recognition; R. W Seton-Watson, who had unparalleled knowledge of Austria-Hungary and the Balkans, based on extensive travel and study, proposed working for the Foreign Office without pay, but was declined.¹¹⁰ After the war, state funding for scientific research emerged as part of national reconstruction, as did an expansion of institutional capacity in HE. The beginnings of evidence-based policymaking can be discerned here, and perhaps also the conflation of "evidence" with "science" that has since defined the interface between policy and the academy.¹¹¹

The status and significance of science may have been enhanced through its connections to national success in war and competitiveness in peace, but Germany had shown that the possession of scientific and technical capacity alone was potentially dangerous. A new recognition of the role and importance of history and cognate disciplines emerged; they contributed to a university education that would combine advanced knowledge with civic and humane values to create 'leaders of vision, inspiration and moral courage'.¹¹² The Oxbridge college was the model to deliver this aim, the body corporate within which students lived and studied, their interactions with peers and tutors allowing them to develop these values through the practice of inquiry, debate and informed judgement.

In the fifteen or so years after the war, there was an emphasis on investment in the infrastructure – physical, social and intellectual – that supported the community of scholars. Halls of residence were central to this; indeed the granting of a university charter to Reading in 1925 was due, at least in part, to the Principal's focus on building halls. In the five years from 1923/4, accommodation for men outside Oxbridge increased by over forty per cent, and for women by seven per cent.¹¹³ Students' unions and societies were encouraged in the effort to foster the collegiate spirit. The interaction of students and scholars from different disciplines would exert a positive influence on the character of the individual and the collective. Indeed, the commitment to all students taking a course of Liberal Studies

¹⁰⁹ Vernon, *Universities and the state in England*, p. 176. Anderson argues that victory in the Second World War 'seemed to reinforce the prestige... of science': Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 131.

¹¹⁰ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 49.

¹¹¹ Vernon, *Universities and the state in England*, pp. 182-184. Now, 'investigation by the quantitative and reductionist methods of the natural sciences is accorded a greater level of trust' than historical understanding, and its 'dominant intellectual authority' drives the flow of funding from Government and from business, see: Smith, 'Science', in *A concise companion to history*, ed. Rublack, (Oxford, 2011), p. 296. Evidence-based policymaking is discussed in Chapter 4 below.

¹¹² Vernon, *Universities and the state in England*, p. 177.

¹¹³ Vernon, *Universities and the state in England*, p. 193.

amounting to ten per cent of their study time at the then Hatfield Technical College in the early 1950s had a similar inspiration, which blended ambition for the students and for the nation.¹¹⁴

The Robbins Report of 1963, still celebrated for the principle that ‘courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so’, evoked the language of the interwar period. The aim of HE ‘should be to produce not mere specialists but rather cultivated men and women’ and ‘the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship’ should be understood as a fundamental function of the university.¹¹⁵ The resonance and reach of these ideas is further demonstrated in the work of the University Education Commission, convened by the new Indian government a year after Independence, with two academics from England, one of whom was Chair, and two Americans, among the nine members. The Commission saw the university environment as developing in students ‘the spirit that counterbalanced a narrow vocational and technical education. In the absence of that counterbalance, a society risked having ‘scientists without conscience, technicians without taste’.¹¹⁶

Since then, the idea of disciplinary “ecology” that was consciously sought after the First World War, not only *in* higher education but *for* broader national purposes, seems to have been lost. Monotechnics such as the College of Law are gaining university title and STEM disciplines have become dominant in policymaking.¹¹⁷ For present purposes, the question is how history as a discipline responded to the shifts and pressures of the post-war period, in which Britain had to renegotiate and reimagine its identity and place both in the world and at home, and presumed stability in the configuration of nation-states broke down. The expansion of higher education transformed the field of history; the 300 students registered for research degrees in 1940 had risen to 1,200 by 1960 and 3,000 by 1975, their numbers

¹¹⁴ Davies (ed.), *The University of Hertfordshire: sixty years of innovation*, (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2012), p. 19.

¹¹⁵ Robbins, *Higher Education: Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins, 1961-63* §31, 26, 28. The “Robbins principle” has become particularly relevant in recent years with the cap on student numbers, see for example education journalist and broadcaster Mike Baker’s commentary: Baker, *More students to be denied university places*, (2011).

¹¹⁶ Green and Renton, ‘Higher education as an instrument of social change: educational means to political ends?’, (Vilnius: European Association for Institutional Research, 2009, online publication only), p. 6. Original documentation in: Aggarwal, *Documents on higher education in India, 1781 to 1992. Selected educational statistics: world overview*, (Delhi: Doaba House, 1993), pp. 99-122.

¹¹⁷ The implications for the value and status accorded to historical understandings in policymaking that will be explored in the chapters below on history in the political culture (3) and on the policymaking process (4).

providing the candidates for new academic posts.¹¹⁸ The capacity of the discipline to engage with the implications of these shifts and pressures was greatly increased, as was its potential for intellectual dispute, for specialisation and fragmentation. Writing from an American perspective, Banner has drawn attention to how the same period that saw the strengthening of the discipline through expansion was also one in which it was withdrawing from public engagement, and that ‘the two processes were not unrelated’.¹¹⁹ So, have valuable and necessary developments to pluralise historical practice shut down as well as opened up opportunities for reinvigorating and reconceptualising what the subject is and what historians can do, particularly in terms of the public and political use of history? Can there be a basis and a purpose for a usable past?

Expansion and fragmentation: efficiency, uncertainty and the “licence” of history in the post-war period

The emergence of the contemporary historical discipline, pluralist in its outlook and practice and self-conscious about its claims, methods and commitments, is a post-war story. Indeed, the case has been made that full-scale professionalisation of the subject did not happen until this point.¹²⁰ It is important to recognise, however, that history had shown some capacity for innovation since the beginning. Economic history had emerged from the 1880s, with Arnold Toynbee and W. J. Ashley at Oxford and William Cunningham at Cambridge, the latter the author of the first textbook, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, in 1882. It became a central focus at Manchester under George Unwin, who held the first full Chair in economic history from 1910, and at the London School of Economics.¹²¹ There had also been some recognition of the need for historians to extend their studies beyond England. The first Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, H. M. V. Temperley, said in 1930: ‘it might be said that a history school here will only be of national importance when it has something of an international outlook’.¹²² Disciplinary conservatism may have ensured that curricula did not readily respond to these new currents, but history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – although closely bound up with nationalist and

¹¹⁸ Cannadine, *Making history now and then: discoveries, controversies and explorations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 24.

¹¹⁹ Banner, *Being a historian*, p. 31.

¹²⁰ Cannadine, *Making history now and then*, p. 25.

¹²¹ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 229. See note 34.

¹²² Temperley, *Research and Modern History: an inaugural lecture*, (London: Macmillan, 1930), p. 20. Cited in: Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 51.

chauvinist thinking – was less monolithic than we might assume if we look back with too great a sense of certainty in our own reflexive and pluralist credentials.

Nevertheless, the discipline did not arguably come under sustained challenge until after the Second World War as the HE sector expanded and diversified. Growth in student numbers and government spending began as soon as the war ended, as greater numbers of qualified pupils were coming out of the post-1944 Education Act system. In line with a belief in centralised planning and enlightened state intervention only reinforced by victory in war, proposals for eight or nine new universities were being developed before the Robbins Committee reported in 1963.¹²³ Robbins built on the recommendations of the 1960 Anderson Committee, which led in 1962 to the introduction of a national student finance system. Local authorities were to administer the system for students in their areas, dispensing a standard entitlement of payment of fees plus a maintenance grant. These reforms had the effect of consolidating the English model of the three-year, specialist undergraduate degree, in contrast to Scottish, European and American models. Through making living away from home financially accessible to a greater proportion of students, the reforms also helped shift the identity and sense of purpose of the civic universities away from their localities and towards national, and then international, status and ambition. The translation of the “Robbins principle” into reality, while maintaining the unit of resource and universities’ involvement in research – on both of which Robbins insisted – promised to be a highly expensive enterprise. The report projected that there should be 507,000 students in the whole higher education system (346,000 in the universities) by 1980 (a 17 per cent participation rate) or 558,000 including overseas students. The projections were followed until the later 1970s, when numbers tailed off, so the 1980 target was missed (524,000 or 13 per cent participation).¹²⁴

The expansion took place largely in Crosland’s polytechnics, and particularly in humanities and social science subjects, which were popular and cheaper to teach than the sciences. Parity of esteem was as important a principle for Robbins as access to HE, and he sought academic awards of equal standing for institutions with different missions and functions within the system. He was concerned to avoid the ‘freezing of institutions into established hierarchies’ and to promote the ‘recognition and encouragement of excellence wherever it

¹²³ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 131.

¹²⁴ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 158.

exists and wherever it appears'.¹²⁵ Twenty-first century debates about the impact of concentration of research funding and, most recently, about the implications of new student number controls that would allow expansion for universities recruiting the highest-achieving students, invoke the same language.¹²⁶ Robbins was perhaps prescient of some of the consequences of a mass system, where there are often tensions between the funding imperatives of the state, the demands of social equity and the diverse interests and priorities of HEIs. Robbins was not in accord with Crosland's plans for a binary system, which he saw as introducing a more rigidly hierarchical 'caste system' at 18 than the 11-plus had imposed.¹²⁷

Both Robbins and Crosland were considering their recommendations at a time of falling competitiveness as Britain's GDP fell first below that of Germany, then France, then Japan and Italy.¹²⁸ Education, and particularly science and technological education, would be part of the solution.¹²⁹ The rhetoric of British industrial decline continued, however, into the 1970s. The economic crises of the early decade made a Conservative government already ideologically inclined to spending cuts further committed to reducing funding for a sector that had not proved able to reverse that trend. Cuts that were made in the 1970s under economic pressure were applied more harshly in 1981 for ideological and political reasons.¹³⁰ It may be argued that this rhetoric has continued to influence HE policy, with variations in expression and emphasis, until the present day.

The concern with international competitiveness remains a theme, emerging, for example, in successive reports on university-business collaboration. The accepted narrative seems to be

¹²⁵ Robbins, *Higher Education: Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins, 1961-63* §37. Interestingly, Vince Cable in first speech as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills in July 2010 made a similar point about hierarchies ('the elite must be permeable and changeable and indeed it must be a status that can be lost as well as won' – see: Cable, *Oral statement to Parliament: a new era for universities*, (15th July, 2010). His government, however, went on to make proposals that would seem to solidify the elite status of those institutions recruiting the highest-performing students in the 2011 White Paper: Department for Business Innovation and Skills, *Higher education: students at the heart of the system*.

¹²⁶ See for example: University Alliance, *Funding research excellence: research group size, critical mass & performance*, (London: 2011).

¹²⁷ Robbins, *The university in the modern world, and other papers on higher education*, (London; New York: Macmillan; St. Martin's Press, 1966), p. 158.

¹²⁸ Smith and Langslow, *The idea of a university*, (London: J. Kingsley, 1999), p. 97.

¹²⁹ Robbins projected an increase in science places from 39 to 42 per cent of enrollments by 1980; they fell to 34 per cent.

¹³⁰ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 169.

that while we excel in research, our record in development and commercialisation is poor.¹³¹ The rhetoric of decline also leads to the demand that efficiency in the use of funds – value for money and return on investment – should be sought. Pressure was put on the unit of resource, which fell by 40 per cent between 1977 and 1997, and emphasis laid on business-like managerial practices. The arguments made more recently for the radical concentration of research funding are informed by essentially the same concern. The focus on science and technology in government policy has, if anything, grown stronger. “STEM” acts not only as a convenient and onomatopoeic acronym, but also as an encapsulation of “what matters” economically, and therefore politically, in HE, setting up the idea of a new binary divide with the arts and humanities. This is an important aspect of the context with which this thesis seeks to engage: how can and should historians make their claims to an alternative and valuable intellectual authority with and for public policy development?

One critique of these trends towards a narrower, more economically-focused and competitive sector is that it has undermined the public service ethos that infused the developments of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries.¹³² Although universities were not largely state-funded until the mid-1960s, there had been a sense that they represented the integration of collective and the individual good. As the student came to be regarded as the principal beneficiary of HE – with the concomitant shift in the burden of funding – universities’ role as institutions in and for the public domain was reduced. Given the emphasis placed by Seeley and his contemporaries on historical study as preparation for citizenship and public service, it is of interest and relevance to explore how far this movement from public to private good is evident in the discipline of history specifically. Wedgwood’s comments suggest a movement away from the use of history in a public capacity began rather earlier – predating the post-war expansion of HE – but what were the developments that influenced the discipline’s openness to such engagement over the decades that followed?

Since the late 1950s, there have been many challenges and counter-challenges within the discipline: the role of quantification and the ‘return to narrative’; social and urban history; ‘identity’ histories that pluralised historical perspectives and disrupted power relations; post-modernist thought that undermined the basis for historical claims. Rather than seek to

¹³¹ See for example: H.M. Treasury, *Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration: Final Report*, (London, 2003); Sainsbury, *The Race to the Top: A Review of Government's Science and Innovation Policies*, (London, 2007); Wilson, *A review of business-university collaboration*, (2012).

¹³² Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, p. 181.

trace all these internal debates in a chronological way, taking a thematic approach allows the implications for the application or use of history in the public realm to be drawn out. Until the Second World War, Soffer has argued, historians could not conceive of a historical practice that generated 'impotent' or 'equivocal' knowledge. But afterwards, there was a different 'response to the threat of uncertainty'. No longer able to 'subsume troubling issues within a larger, more reassuring consensus,' a new generation 'came to see that if there was no fit between the ideological container and the evidence gathered within it, they must jettison the theory and try another, better fitting analytical device'.¹³³ In the absence of a larger consensus, such devices tended to become more diverse.

A strong empirical strand developed in a broader context of optimism about what could be done with computers, combined with concern about the future, both in a social and in a global sense. Writing in 1967, Olaf Helmer, co-founder of project RAND, envisaged a near future when the social sciences would have the mathematical models, simulation procedures and data-processing capacity to answer our questions about the future.¹³⁴ This faith in the predictive power of data has been understood in relation to a paradigm shift in academic culture. Disciplines pulled apart from one another, as they strengthened their autonomy 'with theory and self-oriented critical analysis', a dehistoricisation of their meaning-making was also involved.¹³⁵ History itself became "harder", with the emergence of cliometrics and a "new history" that used computer technology to analyse census, tax and other data, available from the second half of the nineteenth century, in order to generate social-historical accounts of ordinary life. These 'pioneer quantifiers' aimed to take historical data on the individual into the social scientist's realm of generalisability, and the intention was political: 'the pragmatic empiricism of the methodology reflects the interpretive ends that it was fashioned to serve'.¹³⁶ In the context of the breakdown of post-war optimism and economic success, social history focused attention on poverty – particularly urban poverty – and the social conflicts arising from class or race (the latter more in the USA than Britain). A 'new urban history' was formally defined in 1969 by

¹³³ Soffer, *Discipline and power*, p. 210.

¹³⁴ Green, 'Continuity, contingency and context: bringing the historian's cognitive toolkit into university futures and public policy development', *Futures* 44 (2012). Citing: Helmer, *Analysis of the Future: The Delphi Method*, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1967), pp. 3-4. RAND stands for Research And Development, and is a think tank founded in 1948 to focus on defence policy, although its remit is now much more extensive; see: <http://www.rand.org/>. Retrieved 19th March 2013. On the role think tanks in policymaking more generally, see Chapter 4 below.

¹³⁵ Schorske, *Thinking with history: explorations in the passage to modernism*, p. 228.

¹³⁶ Anderson, *British universities: past and present*, pp. 114-115.

Stephan Thernstrom, although the differentiation from broader social history appeared to lie in the urban setting, and perhaps a more evident infusion of Marxist thinking, rather than any methodological divergence; Thernstrom gave its three traits as being: 'the linkage of sociological theory to historical data, the use of quantifiable sources, and concern for the history of ordinary people.'¹³⁷

Social history – and urban history with it – took a turn away from empiricism and towards experience around the end of the 1970s, although Le Roy Ladurie could still announce in 1979 that history that is not quantifiable cannot claim to be scientific.¹³⁸ The same year, Lawrence Stone announced the revival of narrative, led by another group of 'new historians' interested in mentalities.¹³⁹ The political imperative, however, remained. Getrude Himmelfarb, the conservative critic of new historiographies, has associated social history with identity history, arguing that the framework of social history has allowed historical subjects to claim unique histories of their own, and with them a space in wider historical narratives.¹⁴⁰ There is a democratising ethos behind this aspect of social history, but the idea of democratisation is problematic. It implies a version of Himmelfarb's 'condescension', by which the historian gives voice to those in the past whose views were unspoken, and, in the commitment to doing so, also decides whose more dominant views can be reconsidered or ignored. As Christopher Clark has sharply observed, elites can be rendered anonymous and faceless by historians writing against the gradient of power.¹⁴¹

Democratisation is also problematic as it calls upon an uneasy reconciliation of the particular with the general, so, for example, of claims for the distinctive character of the black, or

¹³⁷ Conzen, 'Quantification and the New Urban History', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 13 (1983), p. 656. Citing: Thernstrom and Sennett, *Nineteenth-century cities: essays in the new urban history*, (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 1969), vii-viii.

¹³⁸ Le Roy Ladurie, *The territory of the historian*, (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1979).

¹³⁹ Lloyd, 'The Methodologies of Social History: A Critical Survey and Defense of Structurism', *History and Theory* 30 (1991), p. 181. Stone, 'The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History', *Past & Present* (1979).

¹⁴⁰ Himmelfarb, 'Some reflections on the New History', p. 664.

¹⁴¹ Clark, 'Power', in *A concise companion to history*, ed. Rublack, (Oxford, 2011), p. 153. See also Zelizer: 'Government elites, institutions, and public policies were of marginal concern' in a context where "bottom-up" history dominated. Zelizer, 'Clio's Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978', *Journal of Policy History* 12 (2000), pp. 370-371; Zelizer, 'Introduction: New Directions in Policy History', *Journal of Policy History* 17 (2005), p. 2. This turn away from political elites is particularly problematic given the political drive behind much social and urban history. If we are aiming for social change, if we are to be 'engineers' in terms of policy then we need to develop an understanding of the 'physics' involved. This is Hill's position on policymaking: Hill, *The public policy process*, p. 6. It is one that this thesis has appropriated and adapted for the purpose of arguing for the legitimacy and importance of historians working in and for policy (see Chapter 4 below).

female, or Jewish experience, with “mainstream” history. It is the same dilemma that has been faced by minority groups pressing for rights and representation. Megan Vaughan has explained how leaders of nationalist movements in African colonial contexts employed a ‘dual discursive strategy’, demonstrating a ‘commitment to a progressive notion of modernization’, which is universalist in spirit, while at the same time asserting a claim to self-determination based on the distinctive character of the people’s traditional culture.¹⁴² The campaigns for Jewish emancipation in pre-1848 Prussia similarly relied on resolving and dissolving the duality between Enlightenment understandings of universal human dignity and equity – on which previous demands for citizenship had been based – with a Romantically-inspired assertion of Jewish religious distinctiveness and integrity.¹⁴³ As Lasch-Quinn has argued, it is difficult to see democracy in action where multiple claims for historical distinctiveness and integration are made, each on the basis of being as valid as any other. ‘The unchallenged self-expression of self-righteously subjective perspectives is an impoverished notion of participation,’ and therefore undemocratic in essence, she contends.¹⁴⁴ It is also to be noted that functional democracies tend to be based on representative, rather than direct, systems. As voters, we acknowledge that priorities for political action or for public funding will emerge from the process; we may not as individuals or groups agree with those priorities or the policies that follow, but we do not expect that all subjective demands are met. So, there is a certain pragmatism in our political participation as citizens that might productively inform our engagement with policy as academic historians.

This discussion raises the question of the usability of multiple and contested pasts. An implication of the Lasch-Quinn argument is that the drawing out of histories of race, class and gender is ahistorical; individuals and groups are decontextualized economically, socially, politically, intellectually in the effort to discern for them a distinct and stable narrative. The value of such histories as usable pasts must therefore be questioned. Policy is not made or implemented in racial, class or gender vacuums; it is the interaction between different levels and categories of human collectivity and structure that policymakers need to understand in order to inform vital details of allocation and delivery. Historians can have an important role in explaining these interactions and the complex processes of accommodation and

¹⁴² Vaughan, ‘Culture’, in *A concise companion to history*, ed. Rublack, (Oxford, 2011), p. 233.

¹⁴³ Green, *Religion, Romantic Politics and Jewish Emancipation in Prussia, 1840-1847*.

¹⁴⁴ Lasch-Quinn, ‘Democracy in the Ivory Tower?’, in *Reconstructing history: the emergence of a new historical society*, eds. Fox-Genovese and Lasch-Quinn, (New York, 1999), pp. 25-26.

negotiation that happen at the interfaces, but only if they can move between and engage with these levels and categories.¹⁴⁵

The nation remains a significant level and category of human identity and action for many people, perhaps particularly in highly centralised polities. The rejection of the nation as the main unit of historical thinking in favour of the local and the global (and the local in the global), which can also be associated with the broader post-war challenge to the orthodoxies of historical practice, therefore presents a further problem to historians' fulfilment of this interpretive role. It also as limits their potential, more broadly, to engage with a policymaking system that is oriented to national decision-making. Decrying the resilience of concepts of the nation, and people's investments in those concepts, would seem to entail that the historians that first turned 'away from their audience and towards their subject' in the 1940s, remain so oriented.

The "usability" of the past may also be seen to rest on its claims to truthfulness. Certainly, Seeley's division of historical labour into the discovery and the dissemination of knowledge relies on the ability of historians to uncover "truth" and then bring it to bear on matters of practical politics. Postmodernism, or rather, the post-structural strand of postmodernism, informed by the revival of narrative and a rejection of progressivism, sought to dismantle the foundations of such claims, as well as to deny the possibility of drawing any constructive lessons from history.¹⁴⁶ In this view, the historian has no special access to an objective account of what actually happened; the texts on which historical analyses are based represent nothing but themselves. We can thus approach them only as readers, whose values and commitments necessarily produce multiple interpretations of relative value. Any attempted imposition of an absolute understanding – a truth claim or a categorisation such as a period – is artificial but also potentially authoritarian. The internal inconsistencies of more extreme postmodernist positions have been explored at length, perhaps most persistently by Richard Evans, but also by others such as David Roberts. But it is the implications for the use of history that are of relevance here. Both structural (such as practised by Fukuyama) and post-structural postmodernism (e.g. Jenkins') imply the end of history; the historical age of modernity has been superseded. The postmodern world does not need history to understand, locate or guide itself in the ways its predecessors did, nor

¹⁴⁵ The policymaking process is the concern of Chapter 4 below. "Integration" as including the capacity to work with different levels of human activity and collectivity is discussed as one of the tools in this historian's toolbox for policy in Chapter 5.

¹⁴⁶ Roberts, 'Review: Postmodernism and History: Missing the Missed Connections', *History and Theory* 44 (2005), p. 245.

can it lay any weight on historians' claims or accounts. So what currency do the latter hold as sources of expert advice for policy-making?

The sense of crisis that moved Evans to write *In defence of history* in 1997 has since passed; an accommodation seems to have been reached, whereby historians can engage creatively and productively with the challenges of new perspectives and methodological approaches, with the aim of convincing others, and inviting conversation should there be difference of opinion. 'What we need,' Roberts argues, 'is greater attention to the new roles, the deeper roles, above all the plurality of roles that open to historiography in the light of the newly evident complexity of the human relationship with history.'¹⁴⁷ This understanding is a productive one. It indicates the creative contribution that the pluralisation of historical practice since the 1960s has made, and also embraces a historiographical complexity that should help license a re-engagement with using history. Any such re-engagement depends, however, on practitioners, who tend to be located within HEIs. Questions are therefore raised as to how conducive such institutions are to innovation – in their internal infrastructures, in their systems for reward and recognition, in their cultural features – and how receptive their history departments are to reconsidering the idea of application. Writing from a US perspective in 1999, Jacoby sees universities' capacity to confer institutional support and advancement as stifling of intellectual activity. Over-professionalisation, over-specialisation and political timidity are the consequences. If we accept this account, this trend would take historians further along the path indicated by Wedgwood. Greater pressure for conformity would entrench the practice of history; for Jacoby, it would prevent the writing of 'bold works' by affirming the role of archival work as the 'defence' of the historian.¹⁴⁸

The collaborative approach to working with policymakers would, in such an environment, seem a risky type of scholarship to undertake, particularly for historians earlier on in their careers, as well as for Heads of Department conscious of the need for both recognition and income. And it is not just mind-set or methodological concerns that are at issue. Although historians' skills are largely shared, over-specialisation may attune them in such a way that 'the implications of history for understanding humanity, its context, and its predicaments' cannot be approached.¹⁴⁹ It may also prevent the discipline from considering how history

¹⁴⁷ Roberts, 'Review: Postmodernism and History: Missing the Missed Connections', p. 251.

¹⁴⁸ See: Lasch-Quinn, 'Democracy in the Ivory Tower?', pp. 28-29. Citing Jacoby, *The last intellectuals: American culture in the age of academe*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

¹⁴⁹ Lasch-Quinn, 'Democracy in the Ivory Tower?', p. 29.

can develop the *public's* skills 'to understand, evaluate and make decisions based on knowledge' in the undemocratic ferment of competing perspectives.¹⁵⁰

The idea that academic activity should be oriented to a greater extent towards its users and towards the public has become highly politicised today. The rhetoric of efficiency and return on investment that emerged under the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s was embraced by their New Labour successors. Economic pressures now reinforce ideological inclinations as the Coalition Government looks for discipline and prioritisation of public spending. HE had already been exposed to the effects of this thinking – for example, through cuts to the unit of resource and the introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise in 1986 – but it is only relatively recently that pressure has been focused, through funding policy, on impact and public engagement. The context in which these policies have been developed, and, accordingly, the tone of debate, are highly charged, making a certain presentism a real risk. The idea of the impact of research, which, for the humanities has been connected with public engagement, can easily become bound up with a political agenda. It then becomes difficult to keep a sense of a discipline's own understanding of these concepts, and therefore to engage productively with the policy process. History has a long history of public purpose, but that history is itself implicated in the politics of its day, a politics of empire and expansion that is problematic and uncomfortable for historians today. The question is whether we as historians can 'gain nourishment' from our professional past and 'adapt the achievements of one age to another', unlike the pioneers of the newly-defined American public history movement of the 1970s, whose 'lapse of memory and purpose' ensured public involvement had to be recreated rather than reconfigured or reimaged.¹⁵¹ How do we re-engage with "using history" in public, with the public and for public purposes? Given that public history as such is still at a very early stage of development in England (despite the rather longer history of a democratic imperative outlined in this chapter), both theoretical/methodological and comparative dimensions are helpful here. How can we make a claim for the integrity and legitimacy of using history in public? In what ways have national disciplines understood the nature of the public/s they

¹⁵⁰ Fox-Genovese and Lasch-Quinn (eds.), *Reconstructing history: the emergence of a new historical society*, p. 26. Also Tosh on history as the citizen's resource: Tosh, *Why history matters*, pp. 120-139.

¹⁵¹ Banner, *Being a historian*, pp. 30-31.

face? What historical tasks follow those definitions, and, critically, in what forms does a democratic imperative manifest itself in those tasks, if at all?

Public History: theories and contexts for public purpose

Seeley set for the discipline of history a sense of public purpose, with an animating interest in political institutions and processes. Recovering that “democratic imperative”, or re-engaging with the idea of the uses of history, do not in themselves require the framework of a new sub-field committed to “public history”. Indeed, the argument can be made that demarcating a boundary between work directed outside the disciplinary community from that within undermines the integrity and identity of historical methodology. Whether public history is viewed as impoverished or enriched by its status as “non-academic”, such deficit models are rarely productive. Although public history has emerged in different contexts and has taken different forms, it is an area of historical activity influenced by ideas of public purpose in fundamental and productive ways. As such it does, I suggest, provide a set of structures – in terms of both concepts and practices – with which to work on the tasks of recovery and re-engagement.

One of the major difficulties in approaching public history as a topic is the on-going issue of definition. Alfred J. Andrea’s understanding is helpful in its breadth of scope. He sees public history as the application of ‘historical skills and perspectives in the services of a largely non-academic clientele,’ and of ‘the dimension of historical time in helping to meet the practical and intellectual needs of society at large’. His range of examples take in public policy analysis; the understanding of cultural heritage; and helping a corporation ‘plan its future through an understanding of its past’.¹ Yet it is easy to become overly pre-occupied with defining a concept or field, with the problematic and sometimes contested nature of the task acting as a barrier to further investigation. A focus on the *activities* that can be labelled “public history”, is one way to address the question of definition but leave more problematic issues to one side. So, rather than ask ‘what is’ or even ‘what constitutes public history?’, it may be more fruitful to reframe the initial question as ‘*why* is public history as it is?’ What are the drivers shaping a field of historical practice oriented towards public value? The latter mode of enquiry informs the comparative consideration of the three national contexts for public history – the USA, Germany and England – which forms the second half of this chapter. This consideration aims not to set the boundaries for the field, but to analyse what motivating or animating dynamics may be involved: within the discipline; in universities; in

¹ Andrea, ‘On public history’, *Historian* 53 (1991), p. 381.

the political environment. The exercise cannot embrace the full breadth of public history, but must focus on exploring, on both the supply and demand sides, the potential for a history conditioned by public purpose and directed towards public policy.²

The three national case studies of public history are an exploration of the *dimension of practice*. History is a discipline but also a profession.³ The university has a central status for academic history, and the imperatives, incentives and cultural features of the institutions in which academic historians practise their craft all influence how they approach their history-making: what themes or topics are valued; what forms of output are privileged; which relationships and conversations are encouraged; and what kinds of achievement are rewarded. The university retains this status, even as we come to recognise the many forms and settings in which history is made, discussed and presented, most clearly through the training and certification of students, who then use their degrees as passports to start on a wide range of professional pathways. Universities are themselves located within complex environments, where corporate autonomy, such as in Britain, involves both formal regulatory and funding controls. and often elusive influences and pressures arising from configurations of political, economic and social factors. For these reasons, a comparative perspective on *practice* in public history is illuminating.⁴ Of particular interest are the ways in which public histories have set their own parameters and, as part of that process, approached and interpreted the question of political engagement.⁵

The *dimension of theory and methodology* also calls for consideration in the re-engagement with the uses of history. Here, movements in the discipline over the last forty years and, in particular, the problematisation of the historian's authority in giving accounts of the past, are of relevance. If history can no longer offer the certainty of the past as it was, in what terms can it make its claim for public purpose? The challenge to objectivity, the retreat from the nation as the natural unit of historical thinking, the pluralisation of perspectives – all

² This chapter therefore connects thematically with chapters 3 (on the changing status and purpose of history in post-war English politics) and 4 (on history in the process, practice and culture of policymaking).

³ Banner persuasively argues that 'History is a single discipline practiced in many professions – in many places, in many ways, and through many means'. Here I use his distinction consciously to draw attention to the domain of practice – for the profession of academic history in universities – as an area of interest. Banner, *Being a historian*, p. 1.

⁴ On practice as the 'fourth dimension of history... and where one begins to understand what sets public history apart,' see: Conard, 'Public History As Reflective Practice: An Introduction', *The Public Historian* 28 (2006). Cited passage p. 11.

⁵ By which is meant engagement with political processes and policy development, usually at state or national levels, and thus distinct from the kind of political commitments and purposes behind many forms of public history, concerned with expressions, formal and informal, of reparation and redress.

valuable developments – seemed to erode the capacity of historians to recognise and pursue a use for their discipline. The retreat to the archive, to more specialised and discrete topics, and to an audience of academic peers, may be seen as responses to these challenges.⁶ The archive, in this account, becomes the final point of defence of the historian’s authority, as far removed from the outposts of application as can be imagined. In practice, historians work with more complex understandings of the theoretical bases for their work that the concept of the “archive as defence” implies. The argument, and the military imagery in which it is cast, does however expose the vulnerability of the defensive position. The pursuit of evidence in ever more narrowly defined fields can only produce ever more narrowly defined expositions. The reach and resonance of such works is circumscribed, not only outside academe but within it. It is not a position from which the importance of history for public and intellectual life can convincingly be made. If the archive alone is not sufficient to support the discipline of history or the claims and accounts of historians, we need for new theoretical resources.⁷

This need is pressing for the uses of history, and particularly for history in policy; as interpretations of the past multiply and the basis for interpretation itself is challenged, what credentials do historians present to their audiences for attention? With the complexity of the problems facing governments (the impact of an aging population, global warming, the resilience of social inequalities, and so on), how can historians articulate the value of history to addressing them? These tasks are made more problematic by being undertaken in a context in which the evidential power of numbers is prized.⁸ In terms of the theoretical dimension to re-engagement with public purpose, the concern must be with questions of credibility and integrity, which involve the status and purpose of history from outside and within the discipline. Can history be *relicensed* for use in what Leffler and Brent term ‘the world of affairs’, and within that, for use in public policymaking?⁹

⁶ See Lasch-Quinn, ‘Democracy in the Ivory Tower?’.

⁷ The emergence of new approaches such as world history and long-range thematic histories can be seen as a response to these challenges. See, for example: Bayly, ‘History and World History’, in *A concise companion to history*, ed. Rublack, (Oxford, 2011); Bayly, *The birth of the modern world, 1780-1914: global connections and comparisons*, (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Diamond, *Guns, germs and steel: a short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years*, (London: Vintage, 1997). Also the “biographies” of goods, a relatively recent phenomenon and one that often bridges academic and wider audiences: Kurlansky, *Cod: a biography of the fish that changed the world*, (London: Cape, 1998); Kurlansky, *Salt: a world history*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002).

⁸ The “quantitative imperative” in policymaking is a theme that will be pursued over subsequent chapters.

⁹ The term is Leffler and Brent’s, who may be the only historians to lay out a ‘philosophy and paradigm’ for academic and public history, and is adopted here as a neat encapsulation of a realm of

Relicensing history

The rehabilitation or relicensing of history has been taken on by a number of historians seeking to make the case for “why history matters”, and to confront an apparent paradox between public appetite for history and a perceived decline in the discipline’s status. Some have made expansive and persuasive cases for the value and purpose of history, skilfully negotiating the difficulties posed by the challenge to academic authority and the pluralisation of history-making.¹⁰ Others have taken on the relicensing of history as more of a campaign. For John Lewis Gaddis and Charles Hoffer, the question “why history matters” is more pressing and challenging now in a context where history seems impossible (because it is contested) and often irrelevant.¹¹ Neither couches his argument in terms of public history – perhaps because that is a disciplinary demarcation and wider audiences are sought – but for both of them the public realm is the clear context in which history’s value must be understood. History matters in that it informs and nourishes a wider historical consciousness, enabling us to manage our present and future. John Tosh’s answer to the same question, posed in the title of his book, also orients the discipline towards a public value.¹² History matters as a set of tools and a training that allows people to participate as citizens in public discourse. Argument, critique, persuasion are, or should be, part of how a democracy functions. Hence the idea of using history is animated by being set in a context of purpose, and that purpose can be understood as essentially public in character. Phyllis Leffler and Joseph Brent’s ‘reconciliation of academic and public history by means of their common methodology’ speaks to a similar concern with the “decline of history” as a discipline and the disjuncture between narrow academic specialism and diverse public interests.¹³

This literature is useful in laying out the arguments made by historians on behalf of and in defence of the discipline, in response to the disconnection between the introspection and fragmentation of academic history and the need for an integrated “history in public”, accessible and available for use. There is a need, however, to move beyond the “case for history” and to develop an understanding of the intellectual resources needed to relicense

purposeful public activity: Leffler and Brent, *Public and academic history: a philosophy and paradigm*, (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger, 1990), p. 3.

¹⁰ See for example: Banner, *Being a historian*; Kalela, *Making history*; Lukacs, *The future of history*.

¹¹ Gaddis, *The landscape of history*; Hoffer, *The historians' paradox: the study of history in our time*, (New York; London: New York University Press, 2008).

¹² Tosh, *Why history matters*.

¹³ Leffler and Brent, *Public and academic history: a philosophy and paradigm*. Cited passage on p. 3.

history for public purpose. Such an endeavour is necessarily concerned with the credibility and integrity of the discipline *as a whole*; public history may involve different constituencies, address different audiences and employ different modes of enquiry and expression from “academic history”, but they both depend for their reach and traction on fundamental issues of credibility and integrity. A discipline that is unable to articulate why its methods, and therefore its outputs, have integrity will find it difficult to establish a public remit. In this sense, it is important to consider, as Leffler and Brent term it, the ‘methodological value of history’, as a way of accessing the more focused discussion about the purpose and potential of public history.

Relicensing history would seem to depend on negotiating a way back from the rear-guard position of the “archive as defence” (which leads to the production of ever more specialist and obscure historical works), while not abandoning the distinctive identity and capability of the discipline in handling and interpreting historical evidence. A shift in emphasis from “product” to “process” may offer that opportunity. Can we reframe the way in which we articulate the value of history, from being contained in the product to being expressed in the process of *working historically*? This manoeuvre allows us then to consider the ways in which the historical process can contribute to addressing the problems of the ‘world of affairs’ (Andrea’s ‘practical and intellectual needs of society at large’).

This shift in emphasis towards process draws attention to methodology; the claims of history to be a discipline of distinctive value for public purposes rely on the weight that can be placed on the ways it makes its meanings. Here, an exploration of the alignments between history and certain natural sciences offers insights. Methodological innovations from the 1960s in both history and the natural sciences were driven by new understandings of uncertainty, complexity and the inseparability of observer and observed. Yet the two fields of knowledge seem to view their parallel paths in very different terms in: a retreat for historians but an advance for scientists. Michael Shermer notes the striking irony. Historians were giving up on their quest for universal laws, returning ‘to narratives filled with capricious, contingent, and unpredictable elements that make up the past’ and ‘resigning themselves to the fact that they would never be as good as scientists’ at the same time as ‘a handful of scientists, instead of chasing the elusive universal form, began to write the equivalent of scientific narratives of systems’ histories, integrating historical contingencies with nature’s necessities’. He gives Stephen Jay Gould’s analysis of the findings from Voyager’s fly-by of Neptune and its moon, Triton, as an example. Gould reported the lack of anticipated regularity in the moon’s surface and concluded that ‘to

understand planetary surfaces, we must learn the particular history of each body as an individual object - the story of its collisions and catastrophes, more than its steady accumulations'.¹⁴

In the same year (1989) as Gould was discussing the new paths for scientific research suggested by the approaches and insights of history, Frank Ankersmit could only recognise the circumscription of his own discipline. In a context of the decline of history, he emphasised the distinction with science. Autumn has come to Western historiography, he argued; what remains now 'is to gather the leaves that have been blown away and to study them independently of their origins'. In this postmodernist mode, attention is paid 'to the seemingly incongruous but surprising and hopefully even disturbing detail... in short, attention to everything which is meaningless and irrelevant precisely from the point of view of scientific historiography'.¹⁵ Ankersmit is equating 'scientific' to 'positivist' – and therefore 'worn-out' and 'traditional' – an understanding that is seemingly impervious to methodological developments in the sciences. At the time he was writing, incongruity and non-linearity had been embraced, and 'meaningless noise' recognised as 'meaningful data' in fields such as physics for over a decade.¹⁶ The contrast in the mood of the two articles is striking, reflecting perhaps an implicit understanding of the direction in which the gradient of disciplinary power has, and has continued to, run. Indeed, over twenty years later, historians still express concerns about the status of the discipline and of historical knowledge, particularly with reference to the sciences. The fractured nature of the discipline, the lack of consensus between professionals and the impact of these both on how academic history is perceived and how history is handled in the public realm, are all causes for apprehension (although the adage about three economists and four opinions does not seem to have affected the prominence of that discipline in policymaking).¹⁷

Efforts such as Gaddis' and Hoffer's to relicense history are, of course, a recognition and a direct response to these concerns. The accommodation and interpretation of the co-existence of order and chaos, of evolution and entropy, may be taken to indicate that *history*

¹⁴ Shermer, 'Exorcising Laplace's Demon: Chaos and Antichaos, History and Metahistory', *History and Theory* 34 (1995), pp. 69-70. He also notes Katherine Hayles' 1990 work, *Chaos Bound*, which recognises a 'simultaneous development of chaos theory and postmodern culture, including literary deconstructionism.'

¹⁵ Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism', *History and Theory* 28 (1989), pp. 149-150, 153.

¹⁶ Shermer, 'Chaos and Antichaos, History and Metahistory', p. 62.

¹⁷ See for example the editor's preface in Rublack, *A concise companion to history*; Smith, 'Science'.

is providing the model for *science*.¹⁸ Such an argument is helpful in terms of the specific task of relicensing history, in which the primary audience is historians themselves; it makes the case that there is more that can be done than gathering the remnants of a long-past summer. It does not, however, challenge the status of the sciences as, in Jordanova's expression, 'highly authoritative knowledge forms'; the gradient is no less steep.¹⁹ History is still, in such efforts, dependent on science to provide external reference points – the standards of quality – by which its credentials are established. That is not to say that the methodological alignment with the sciences is an invalid or ineffective strategy, although Roth and Ryckman have critiqued both the 'scientistic illusions of understanding' and the intellectual desires behind them.²⁰ Nor is it to say that Jordanova's alternative – that standards be drawn entirely from within the discipline – should be preferred. It may be that it is through the methodological dialogue between "history" and "science" that we are able to make progress in rethinking not (or not just) the claims that history can make, but rather the potential of those claims to be put to work. Indeed, the argument about alignment should not be seen as an end in itself, but instead as a means of getting past persistent distinctions between the authority of science and the inconclusiveness of history.²¹

Central to the argument about methodological alignment between history and science is that proposition that the integrity of the intellectual *processes* in the natural sciences – and therefore also in history – demonstrates the integrity and authority of the *products of those processes*. The trust that is placed, for example, by a policymaker, in the findings of a scientific investigation is an extension of the trust laid implicitly on the rigour of scientific

¹⁸ Clearly, the term "science" conceals a wide range of disciplines and methods and so the premise of a methodological alignment between science and history is inherently problematic. There is, however, a case for working with the concept of an alignment not as a formal analogy but as a way of approaching critical questions about the way disciplines understand their identity and value (and how they are valued by others) as being essential connected to methodological propositions.

¹⁹ Jordanova, *History in practice*, pp. 88-89.

²⁰ 'The promised benefits of chaos theory vis-a-vis history are at best an extremely loose heuristic which easily seduces the unwary into taking at face value terms and concepts that have a specifiably precise meaning only within the confines of mathematical theory... [T]he promotion of the chaotic paradigm in historical studies seems to be spurred by desires to resist the tired hegemonies of "global" meta-narrative histories, whether by driving yet another nail in the coffin of the Hempelian covering-law model of historical explanation... or by opposing the viability of structuralist or "social force" theories of historical determinism.' Roth and Ryckman, 'Chaos, Clio, and Scientific Illusions of Understanding', *History and Theory* 34 (1995), p. 44.

²¹ The implications of the "inconclusiveness of history", as contrasted with the "authority of science", for the discipline's status, influence and purposeful application (for example in "evidence-based policymaking"), are discussed in Chapter 4 below.

methods.²² In doing so, no distinction is made between process and product; the *functional value* is integrated with the *methodological value*. A equivalent integration in history would not only make visible the disciplinary craft involved in the historical process, but also open up a more productive debate about the final product than history as instruction – essentially the old line of “lessons from history” – can support.

The need for such integration in the specific context of policymaking is well illustrated by the terms in which the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, referred to history. In 2003, just after the invasion of Iraq, he addressed the US Congress as recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal, and made the following assertion: ‘there has never been a time... when, except in the most general sense, a study of history provides so little instruction for our present day.’²³ The statement can be taken as indicating only a willingness to engage or to dismiss history to justify contentious political decisions. Historians have been quick to decry such practices, and, indeed, to supply historical “correctives” to such “bad history”, a practice that will be examined in subsequent chapters.²⁴ Blair’s formulation is rather more illuminating in that it exposes a linear and instrumental understanding of history; history as process (‘the study of history’) leads to, and is then obscured and rendered redundant by the emergence of, history as product (‘instruction’). So, if the *process* does not generate the required *product*, the discipline has no intellectual currency. In this model, the past is a repository, and the value of the whole enterprise of “doing history” lies in the extent to which historians as archivists can turn the holdings of the repository (the “content” of history) into products of direct relevance for present issues, presumably through analogies.

The issue here is not with the concept of products of direct relevance, but with the elision of the historical process. This elision has two, connected, implications of relevance here. First, it conceals the main benefit of history to policy. A central contention of this thesis is that the process of thinking and working historically is useful for policy, and particularly so as it embraces and accommodates the complexities and challenges of making policy. Second, it conceals the main opportunity for history in policy. If historians confine themselves to calling attention to the ways in which history’s ‘instruction’ has been abused or found

²² “Trust” is also the key issue for the expert witness in court; Conard has pointed to how judgements of *methodological* integrity have become central, rather than an expert’s conclusion, which puts pressure on historians to equate their methods with those of scientists: Conard, ‘Facepaint History in the Season of Introspection’, *The Public Historian* 25 (2003), pp. 19-20.

²³ Blair, *Speech to Congress*.

²⁴ See for example: Tosh, *Why history matters*; MacMillan, *The uses and abuses of history*; Szretzer, ‘History and Public Policy’.

wanting, they are effectively accepting the model: history is a “product”, the value of which is determined by the “content” of the past. The capacity for historians as expert practitioners of the historical process to influence policy is accordingly limited. It may be an important task to replace negligent or distorted representations of the past with more careful and scholarly versions, although the whole notion of “good” versus “bad” history is rather more problematic than historians’ correctives tend to imply.²⁵ The underlying idea, however, remains unchallenged: the study of history provides ‘instruction’ (content, product). A discipline entirely dependent for its value on “content” that can readily be identified, extracted and deployed, however careful and scholarly that content may be, is in a relatively weak position, and particularly with regard to being put to coherent, meaningful use in the world of affairs. In thinking about new resources for history, we need to find a way to recover the value of the *process* that links the content of the past with the product of historical work.

John Dewey’s pedagogical work in history at the University of Chicago’s Laboratory School is illuminating in terms of developing an integrated appreciation of process and product. Dewey went to Chicago in 1894 with a dual appointment in philosophy and education, yet one of his main concerns was the use of history: how the ‘critical study of the past could provide models of action for the solution of contemporary social and philosophical problems’.²⁶ What is interesting about Dewey’s work at the Laboratory School is the way education and the philosophy of history came together in his focus on pedagogy, on the *process* of learning history.²⁷ Dewey saw an ever-increasing gap between the ‘immaturity of the child’ and ‘comprehensive, complex, remote, and subtle conditions which he needs to master’.²⁸ This insight led to him laying particular emphasis on reconstruction and the use of primary source material to allow pupils to experience vicariously the emergence of their civilisation. ‘Constant creative enquiry’, within a course structure that was improvisational in character, helped the child to make the transition from a world of limited experience to

²⁵ With regards to the inspection of analogies, Stearns highlights that no other policy discipline can do this job: Stearns, ‘History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity’, *The Public Historian* 4 (1982), pp. 15-16.

²⁶ Provenzo, ‘History as Experiment: The Role of the Laboratory School in the Development of John Dewey’s Philosophy of History’, *The History Teacher* 12 (1979).

²⁷ The German field of *Geschichtsdidaktik* (historical didactics: there is no neat translation) embraces this connection between understanding history and *developing* understanding of history, the product and the process (see the section on public history in Germany below).

²⁸ Provenzo, ‘History as Experiment: The Role of the Laboratory School in the Development of John Dewey’s Philosophy of History’, p. 381. citing Dewey’s review of E. Dopp’s *The Place of Industry in Elementary Education*, *The Elementary School Teacher*, III (June 1903), 727.

the highly complex world of the adult.²⁹ Dewey went on to commit a chapter of his 1916 work, *Democracy and Education*, to history and geography, which he saw as playing a particularly important role in realising an ideal of education ‘as a freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims’.³⁰ He argued that ‘with every increase of ability to place our own doings in their time and space connections, our doings gain in significant content’.

Dewey’s pedagogical approaches and philosophy of education indicate a way in which the process of studying history can have value that is supportive of, but not entirely subordinate to or hidden behind, the intended outcome or product. But they are also of interest here for identifying a public use for history. For Dewey, the ‘true starting point of history is always some present situation with its problems...’; history ‘is an organ for analysis of the warp and woof of the present social fabric, of making known the forces which have woven the pattern. The use of history for cultivating a socialized intelligence constitutes its moral significance.’³¹ Whether in the context of the history classroom or in life more broadly, the process of historical enquiry, of using history, is inseparable from the outcome. Debates about school history have, however, tended not towards such integration but its opposite. Since the 1980s and the introduction of a National Curriculum in particular, the relative importance of “knowledge” and “skills” – as if one precluded the other – have been contested in highly charged terms, a theme that will be explored in the next chapter.³² In emphasising history’s role in education, and that of education in democratic life, Dewey can be seen as taking up themes central to Seeley’s thinking. The affinity is particularly striking as their very different contexts make it rather unexpected.³³ Yet both ascribe an educative

²⁹ Gaddis also touches on the connection between maturity and historical consciousness, characterising the former as ‘the arrival at identity by way of insignificance’ and the latter as ‘the projection of that maturity through time’. Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, p. 6.

³⁰ Dewey, *Democracy and education: an introduction to the philosophy of education*, (New York: Macmillan, 1916), chapter 7, section 5.

³¹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, chapter 16, section 13.

³² As Sam Wineburg has highlighted in an American context, concerns about the state of children’s historical knowledge have a longer, often unremembered, history of their own and recur in very similar configurations, in which the connection is made between knowledge of history and national identity: Wineburg, *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: charting the future of teaching the past*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), vii.

³³ Dewey published *Democracy and Education* in 1916 and, looking across the Atlantic from a then still neutral United States, offered a sharp critique of the aggrandising and expansionist nationalism of the nineteenth century with which Seeley is so closely associated. Dewey argued that this nationalism had turned the eighteenth-century philosophy of humanitarian and cosmopolitan ‘personal development’ into ‘disciplinary training’ for the subordinate citizen, and ensured that ‘each nation lives in a state of suppressed hostility and incipient war with its neighbors’.

role to history, set consciously within a framework of democratic purpose.

So, valuing the process of thinking historically, and integrating the process and the product of history, can together aid the development of a stronger and more purposeful understanding of history's potential role in the world of affairs. This understanding can, however, have broader and more ambitious aims than what John Tosh terms the 'independent-minded citizenry'. For Tosh, such a citizenry is created as historians, motivated by a sense of social obligation, disseminate relevant findings and promote thinking with history.³⁴ Can, instead, a "policy-minded" historical class emerge, with historians bringing 'thinking with history' to public issues, whether working between academe and government or wholly in policymaking teams and advisory groups? The political arena and the policymaking process would then become a domain for historical practice; hence, there is also a need to establish the legitimacy and value of directing efforts to problems and priorities outside the academy. Here, both arguments internal to the discipline of history and those relating to the external environment emerge.

Within the academic discipline, a *historical* case can be made: that engagement by historians with matters of public policy, in particular, is a long-standing – if not foundational – practice.³⁵ The echoes of Seeley's democratic imperative can be discerned in work of the historical economists centred around Sidney and Beatrice Webb, a form of "applied history". In the United States, the contributions of historians such as Charles Beard to social reform can be seen in similar terms; the policy relevance of the 'new social history' and the influence of other historians on foreign policy debate are also worthy of note.³⁶ From this perspective, it is not that "public" or "applied history" requires a form of intellectual justification for its work to match that of academic history, rather it needs to re-emphasise the discipline's integrity, in both senses of the word. Indeed, if public history is actually co-extensive with "mainstream" history, that may help account for the difficulties in defining the former as a field:

³⁴ Tosh, *Why history matters*, p. 142.

³⁵ This focus on public policy is a feature of literature on public and applied history from the USA, an emphasis that is of interest and relevance to the dissertation and will be explored in more detail in the subsequent section on public history in America.

³⁶ Offer, 'Using the Past in Britain: Retrospect and Prospect', *The Public Historian* 6 (1984), p. 27; Achenbaum, 'The Making of an Applied Historian: Stage Two', p. 22; See also Stearns, 'History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity', p. 7.

Beyond its [public history's] innovating and stimulating appearance, it conceals an eternal debate on the ends of history as an intellectual and scientific approach... without knowing it, we are all "public historians".³⁷

Associated with this argument is the contention that the risks and challenges in public history are in essence the same as those faced by the mainstream. Professional credibility and the representation of interests are probably the most significant among these, raising the whole issue of ethics. The academic historian faces them no less than the public historian.³⁸ Writing in 1984, Rousso presents the matter in caricature, drawing equivalence between a communist historian writing the history of the French Communist Party and a public historian writing a hagiographic history of a major business.³⁹ Since then, historians are more willing to disclose, even explore, personal and political commitments with greater ease and awareness of their obligations to the reader; it would now seem somewhat excessive to invoke 'militant history' as an example of how academic outputs can be conditioned by bias. The distance travelled by the discipline in that time can, however, only serve to reinforce Rousso's fundamental point: that professional history requires attention to credibility and to honesty, irrespective of the context in which it is practised, the impetus behind a specific piece of work, or the intended audience or the form of expression.

Credibility and honesty may, however, need to be demonstrated in rather different ways in public history. For Tobey, the public historian is necessarily an advocate, and hence the procedural and behavioural codes of the courtroom provide an appropriate and helpful model. He sees three dimensions to this codification of ethics for public historians: to make a declaration of interest i.e. of the party s/he was representing (and to represent only one); to ensure procedural fairness, by opening evidence and interpretation to a 'contest of competing interests in the public arena', an equivalent to peer review; and a professionalisation of status, which would require training in ethics and adherence to a statement of responsibility.⁴⁰ The issue of professional ethics has been a particularly pressing one in the USA, where an adverse academic job market led to the early

³⁷ Rousso, 'Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker', p. 85.

³⁸ Indeed, one of the main objections to early attempts to define a set of principles and standards for federal historians was that there was no need to demarcate the territory: 'The conduct proscribed should come naturally to any professional historian'. See Reuss, 'Federal Historians: Ethics and Responsibility in the Bureaucracy', *The Public Historian* 8 (1986).

³⁹ Rousso, 'Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker', p. 84.

⁴⁰ Tobey, 'The Public Historian as Advocate: Is Special Attention to Professional Ethics Necessary?', *The Public Historian* 8 (1986), pp. 27-29.

development of graduate programmes in public history – and codes of conduct to guide the ensuing professional practice – ‘before solid theoretical concepts were even defined’.⁴¹

To pursue the legal analogy, the potential influence of public history work can be seen to be conditioned by the extent to which intended audiences are persuaded, firstly, of the historian’s credibility and honesty and, secondly, of the integrity of the process (as a jury is persuaded of the reliability or otherwise of a key witness and the fairness of the trial procedures). So, in the case of policy work, the primary task for the public historian would not be to persuade political decision-makers of the *likelihood* of a particular train of events (although that may be a secondary one). Rather it would be to assure them that the advice will be informed by professional credibility and honesty, and that the historical process, upon which that advice is grounded, has integrity. Indeed, this analogy with the courtroom is further helpful in indicating a further, and more practice-oriented, way in which the problematic issues around “truth” and “objectivity” can be resolved and dissolved.⁴² This may be a challenge relevant to the whole discipline, but it was recognised early in the development of public history as one that could critically undermine the new field.⁴³ Writing on business history in 1986, Ryant called for an emphasis on honesty, rather than objectivity, and warned that, ‘to assume that no ethical problems are involved, however – or to refuse to discuss them – will not promote honesty, scholarship, or the professionalization of public history. Nor will the market for public historians be protected or enlarged’.⁴⁴

A further argument internal to the discipline in support of historical work in the world of affairs relates to concerns with the state of academic history. Rousso is trenchant in his assessment of the drivers for public history:

It is not a superficial reaction of frustrated academics or would-be self-made men. It is a scientific reaction against the stagnation of a discipline, against the isolation of

⁴¹ Rousso, ‘Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker’, p. 73. See also the American Historical Association’s publication: American Historical Association, *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*, (Washington, D.C.: 2011). The statement was wholly revised in 2005 from an earlier statement adopted in 1987 and subsequently amended eight times before the 2011 version, indicating the rapid development of the ethics agenda in history.

⁴² See also Gaddis on the need to ‘convince’: Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, p. 45. Kraemer argues that the process in which historians and trial lawyers are engaged is the same and they both ‘struggle with the burden of proof’: Kraemer, ‘Policy advisors: historians and making policy’, p. 225.

⁴³ See for example: Jordanova, *History in practice*, pp. 88-89.

⁴⁴ Ryant, ‘The Public Historian and Business History: A Question of Ethics’, p. 37.

historians from the great problems of the day, against the religion of “knowledge for its own sake” and the tyranny of gratuitous erudition.⁴⁵

The decline in tenure-track positions for history PhDs may have provided a particular impetus for innovation: by departments in their development of graduate programmes; by established academics becoming involved in public history projects and consultancy; and by the PhDs themselves in applying their skills to roles in both public and private sectors. But by this account, the decline was a catalyst rather than a cause. Powerful intellectual imperatives were pushing historians from “mainstream” academic work into the wider world, to tackle problems that had proved resilient to ‘many of the conventional attempts deriving from other disciplines’.⁴⁶ This perspective is of significance here for two reasons.

First, it indicates that, as well as the more conventionally understood “negative push” of an adverse labour market, there was a “positive push effect” from academe and into the world of affairs in the US, associated with a desire to bring the distinctive insights and approaches of history to pressing social and economic issues. The exploration of different national contexts for public history in the second half of this chapter will take up the discussion from a comparative perspective. In Britain, for example, has professional history identified an equivalent positive push effect or is there a tendency to focus on the negative, such as new research funding requirements to demonstrate impact and public engagement? But second, Rousso’s articulation of the intellectual imperatives for public history also points to the key argument *external* to the discipline: that there was also a “pull effect”, resulting from unresolved issues in government, in business and in communities. There will be differences between national contexts here too, in the extent to which a need for historical skills in particular was recognised and articulated by organisations, or the initiative taken by historians themselves in response to latent demand. That some kind of pull effect is evident would seem to support the contention that there is legitimacy and value in historians directing their efforts to problems and priorities outside the academy, whether or not such work is conceived in terms of a “public history”.

Dewey saw a moral significance in the use of history ‘for cultivating a socialized intelligence’ in the individual and so, by extension, a democratic society. This understanding makes historians not just custodians of the past and its interpretations – called upon to correct abuse of the record and to enrich the cultural life of communities and individuals – but also

⁴⁵ Rousso, ‘Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker’, p. 72.

⁴⁶ See Joel Tarr’s comments in: ‘First National Symposium on Public History: A Report’, *The Public Historian* 2 (1979), p. 9.

as guides, advisers, advocates, even pathfinders. That is not to say that historians, uniquely, have a social or public role, rather that a distinctive contribution may be possible to define, to which a sense of obligation could be attached. For historians employed in universities, such an obligation could be seen to derive from an educational responsibility to students and from an accountability, for those supported by public funds, in terms of public benefit arising from scholarly activity. “Public” here can be widely interpreted, including public policy and government, charities and public services, business and industry, communities of place and of identity, sites and activities connected with heritage and memory, and international engagement and understanding.

To focus on policy – one of the first fields explored by public historians, at least in the USA and probably the least developed dimension in England – the obligation can be articulated from two perspectives. One concerns a moral and social imperative of the kind suggested by Dewey’s concept of the relationship between democracy and education. So, if the practice of policymaking can, as is the contention of this thesis, be enhanced through the embedding of historical thinking processes, then there is surely a sense of public duty attached to the discipline. That is not to say that *all* historians must discharge this duty, but that it should be seen as a vital and valuable pathway within the discipline, which opens up, not restricts, peer recognition and professional advancement. The other could be termed enlightened self-interest, both as historians and as citizens. A vital discipline, interlocking with and acting to enhance the structures and processes that shape a society, would be the prize.

Realisation of this aim is about changing practices: those of historians; those of policymakers; those of the wider community of people and organisations that influence decision-making. “Relicensing” the discipline of history for use in the world of affairs is a vital task, but licenses only stand as documents of entitlement; it remains with their holders to translate that entitlement into action. The discussion that follows addresses three national contexts to explore the different forms that public history has taken in practice. The aim is not definitional. It is instead to understand how different drivers have led to different practices, and, hence, what the factors are that encourage or divert public history as a field – and historians as professionals – from engagement with public purpose, and with public policy in particular.

Thinking about public history in international contexts

Public history has no unifying agenda nor its practitioners a unifying identity.⁴⁷ This lack of consensus on the bounds or the purpose of public history appears to exist not only between national contexts, but within them. Divergence may be due to the political character of, or at least the influence of politics on, many of the factors that seem to have shaped the emergence of a public history field. Most overtly political among these factors is the role of national governments in focusing effort on record collection, official histories and commemorations, institutional memory or regeneration through heritage and tourism, whether by legislation, example or funding. There can also be a legal dimension where governments are engaged in reparations, for example, to indigenous peoples over land; the public historian provides research expertise and expert testimony. Indeed, the origins of the German discipline – often seen as providing the model of the “authentic” academic practice, from which public history had moved away – lie in just this domain. Eighteenth-century historical scholarship served public law and politics, providing evidence for legal disputes within the Empire. The veneration of scholarly precision and erudition arose in a context of political and legal application.⁴⁸ From this perspective, the archive is understood not as the defence of the isolated scholar producing work destined for a closed community of fellow specialists, but a resource that is preserved, interpreted and made available for public use. Fredric Miller’s conception of archivists as the quintessential public historians is apposite here.⁴⁹ Sub-national government can also frame the field of public history, and perhaps most strongly in federal states where legislative, tax-raising and some policymaking powers are devolved, and often also responsibility for areas such record-keeping, historic preservation and school curricula.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a role as providers of general historical education and of more specific professional training, such as archive and records management, museum studies and so on: the certification that represents the credentials for practice. Here too, there is a political dimension, which the term “providers” – rather passive in

⁴⁷ Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh and the intellectual foundations of public history*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), pp. 174-175; Gardner and LaPaglia (eds.), *Public history: essays from the field*, (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger, 2004), pp. 14-15.

⁴⁸ Stuchtey and Wende, *British and German historiography, 1750-1950: traditions, perceptions, and transfers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 6.

⁴⁹ Miller, ‘Archives and Historical Manuscripts’, in *Public history: an introduction*, eds. Howe and Kemp, (Malabar, Fla., 1986), p. 38.

implication – conceals.⁵⁰ HEIs are political organisations, often founded, as noted above, to meet local or national needs. They operate within a politicised environment of regulation, quality assurance and funding. Strategic decisions about the orientation and culture of the institution are informed by that environment, from which further decisions around the type and portfolio of programmes offered, the character and focus of research pursued, or the criteria for reward and promotion will flow. Declining government finance has led, at least in the USA and England, to a greater focus by institutions on outreach and public engagement, guided in the latter by targeted funding, where such engagement can be framed as legitimate spend from the public purse.⁵¹

The implications of such a drive can, however, be problematic. It can preserve, somewhat paradoxically, what I will discuss in chapter 4 as a “knowledge transfer” model of history in public; academic historians disseminate their findings in accessible ways to various constituencies. The drive for public engagement also encourages historians to guide community heritage groups and museums through the process of “doing history”, often oriented around the preservation or celebration of their past. Of particular relevance to this thesis is the way in which this latter configuration of history as heritage domesticates and depoliticises public history, directing the attention of historians away from matters of public policy (in the British case often at the national level) and towards a kind of denatured (often localised) activity-based history. History as heritage does, however, at the same time provide an interesting model for history and policy. Developing concepts of co-production, and co-curation in museums, point to a collaborative relationship between historians and their constituencies. Such a relationship stands in clear contrast to the view of policymakers as passive audiences for the policy-relevant by-products of academic research. This merits exploration.

The discipline of history itself, which can be represented by the views of academic historians expressed in forums such as conferences and publications, is also a factor in shaping the form of public history. Frustration with a stagnated discipline may be the key driver for the development of public history for Rousso, but such a ‘scientific reaction’ has political dimensions too. Conard makes an interesting connection between public history and new

⁵⁰ See Chapter 3 below for a consideration of the politics of the terminology of “producers” (such as universities, but also more broadly public services).

⁵¹ See: Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, pp. 174-175. On UK research funding, see for example the cross-Research Council funding stream, *Connected Communities*, in particular the *Research for community heritage* strand, co-funded with the Heritage Lottery Fund: Arts and Humanities Research Council, *Research for Community Heritage*, (2012). Retrieved 2nd February 2013.

currents in the mainstream discipline and contemporary political thought. As early twentieth-century applied history was explained 'as an extension of the New History associated with the progressive era', so the 'updated concept linked applied history with the new social history that emerged in the 1960s'.⁵² Public history by this account goes further than the academic, picking up the challenge posed by political thinking and making engagement and response a defining priority. In choosing to do so, many historians were themselves expressing political commitments. Raphael Samuel declared his 'allegiance to those whose lives are still excluded from historical practice', a legacy embraced by public historians such as Kean and Stanley, who emphasise the democratising drive behind the field and an ethical duty for fairness and inclusivity.⁵³ There are implications for the field in orienting itself to correct or rebalance injustices, biases and absences of various kinds.

Brief sketches of the features of public history in particular national contexts are presented in the sections that follow. The first is on the USA, which has an established and structured public history field. It will be used to identify themes in the emergence, configuration and expression of public history, so that those that follow can clearly address the counterpoints, rather than endeavour to describe the fields in the respective countries. There is no claim to provide a comprehensive account of the various national fields of public history. The aim is instead to build an analysis of public history cumulatively, using the second sketch (on Germany) and then the third (on England) to reflect on issues raised and to contribute towards a final synthesis of the field's meaning, imperatives and status. An orientation towards public policy provides a bridge to the next chapter, on the challenges presented by a changing political culture to using history in policy in England.

USA: History as profession – preserving and presenting the past

The history of American public history is often traced back to the 1970s; explanations tend to refer to a job crisis, as history PhD students found university departments under budgetary pressure unable to offer the academic roles for which they had been trained.⁵⁴ This situation emerged in a context of increased state attention to history and heritage, with the 1966 National Preservation Act having given federal government a leading role in

⁵² Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, p. 172.

⁵³ See: Kean, Martin and Morgan (eds.), *Seeing history: public history in Britain now*, (London: Francis Boutle, 2000), pp. 16-17, 95.

⁵⁴ See for example: Stanton, 'The Past as a Public Good: The US National Park Service and "Cultural Repair" in Post-Industrial Places', in *People and their pasts: public history today*, eds. Ashton and Kean, (Basingstoke, 2009); Rousso, 'Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker'; Howe, 'Reflections on an Idea: NCPH's First Decade', *The Public Historian* 11 (1989).

supporting, co-ordinating and accelerating historic preservation activities. Jobs were created as all federal agencies became required by law to develop and implement a plan for their historic resources, a new Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and a national register of historic places were established, and the National Park Service (NPS) assumed responsibility for most cultural resources programmes.⁵⁵ Fulfilling the duties of the Act and subsequent amendments also led to new roles for historians in state preservation and archaeological resource management programmes; with State Historic Preservation Offices administering federal grants and identifying and registering new historic sites, money and jobs flowed down to local level.⁵⁶ Academic history departments began to respond to this new market, with Robert Kelley's programme at the University of California Santa Barbara credited as the trailblazer. As graduates took on roles in public and commercial life, issues of professional identity emerged, to which the launch of the journal *The Public Historian* in 1978 and the foundation of the National Council on Public History (NCPH) and the Society for History in the Federal Government (SFHG) a year later, responded.⁵⁷

This rapid development of an identifiable public history field and community of practice must, however, be seen as part of a much longer trajectory. As Rousso argues:

contrary to a widely held opinion, history has always been a matter of concern for the average American citizen. For a long time, the universities and the centers of political or economic decision-making have collaborated closely. History, in fact, has had a recognized social duty in America. If the term "public history" is very recent, the field of application it covers is much older.⁵⁸

His comments also expose another striking feature of the history of public history in the USA, one that is of particular significance for this thesis. Not only did the field of public history pre-date the term, but early work was also oriented towards public policy

⁵⁵ Boland, 'Federal Programs in Historic Preservation', in *Public history: an introduction*, eds. Howe and Kemp, (Malabar, Fla., 1986), pp. 131-132.

⁵⁶ Tise, 'The Practice of Public History in State Government', in *Public history: an introduction*, eds. Howe and Kemp, (Malabar, Fla., 1986), p. 330.

⁵⁷ All of which are now strongly established: <http://ucpressjournals.com/journal.asp?j=tph> , <http://ncph.org/cms/> , <http://shfg.org/shfg/> . All retrieved 2nd February 2013.

⁵⁸ Rousso, 'Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker', p. 69. See also: Fishel, 'Public history and the academy', in *Public history: an introduction*, eds. Howe and Kemp, (Malabar, Fla.). Gordon will argue that the bicentennial celebrations in 1976 gave historians a new visibility in public at the same time as innovation in public history programmes was occurring and new communities were being drawn into history-making through the new social history. This constellation of factors may explain why public history gained traction in the 1970s in a way such work had not before: Gordon, *The spirit of 1976: commerce, community, and the politics of commemoration*, (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, forthcoming).

development and animated by interest from both academic and governmental domains.⁵⁹ This account offers an interesting counterpoint to critiques, such as Mooney-Melvin's, that the professionalisation of American history in the early twentieth century involved the discipline turning inward, not only excluding amateurs but also rejecting engagement with school history, the reading public and those who visit and learn from historic sites.⁶⁰ At the same time as university professors were consolidating academic leadership of the discipline, Progressive Era pragmatism was inspiring efforts within that leadership 'to make American history relevant to the political and intellectual issues of the moment'. These historians were looking for a usable past: 'to make history an active instrument of self-recognition and self-improvement.'⁶¹ The emergence of the New History movement around the turn of the century is part of this story. Its main proponents recognised the value of recasting historical research to understand and address 'the problems and prospects of mankind' while being very much of the new academic establishment: Frederick Jackson Turner (1910), James Harvey Robinson (1929), and Charles Beard (1933) all served as President of the American Historical Association (founded 1884).⁶² Indeed, the commitment expressed by Turner to the 'union of public service and historical study' can be seen as an intellectual preface to the public history field that emerged in the 1970s.

A more explicitly political purpose for history was described by Benjamin Shambaugh, another example of a university professor actively involved in redefining the purpose of historical study in the early century. He introduced the term "applied history" in 1909, which he defined as the 'use of the scientific knowledge of history and experience in efforts to solve present problems of human betterment'. It was, according to his biographer Conard, 'policy analysis with a mission – to uplift the political, social and economic institutions of democracy'. Shambaugh believed that reliable historical information, particularly legislative reference work, was necessary for policy to address the great public

⁵⁹ On this theme see also: Zelizer, 'Clio's Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978', p. 371.

⁶⁰ See: Novick, *That noble dream : the "objectivity question" and the American historical profession*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 49. Professionalisation is taken to have occurred within the rather precise time-frame of 1907-1927, using the presidency of the American Historical Association as an indication of where power within the discipline lay. On the discipline turning inward, See: Mooney-Melvin, 'Professional Historians and the Challenge of Redefinition', in *Public history: essays from the field*, ed. Gardner, (Malabar, Fla., 2004).

⁶¹ Hofstadter, *The progressive historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington*, (New York: Knopf, 1968); Cited by: Mattson, 'The Challenges of Democracy: James Harvey Robinson, the New History, and Adult Education for Citizenship', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 2 (2003), p. 48.

⁶² See: Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, pp. 7-11; Also: Mattson, 'The Challenges of Democracy: James Harvey Robinson, the New History, and Adult Education for Citizenship'.

problems, envisaging that a 'rational program of progress may be outlined and followed in legislation and administration'.⁶³ He is of particular interest due to his efforts to translate those beliefs into actions, the most notable being the publication of the Iowa Applied History Series (AHS) from 1913, and the convening of the Commonwealth Conferences in the 1920s, which brought together 'a broad cross section of Iowa citizens in discussions of policy and governance'.⁶⁴ It was Shambaugh's dual role as Professor of Political Science at the University of Iowa and Head of the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI, which had been created by an act of the state legislature and hence had an official status and function) that allowed him to put applied history into practice:

He groomed graduate students for applied historical research; routinely consulted with legislators and other prominent people in state affairs to cultivate an on-going list of contemporary issues; then co-ordinated research assignments and supervised the research, writing and editing.⁶⁵

Shambaugh's School of Iowa Research Historians (SIRH), established as such by 1910, was perhaps the first example of an initiative that bridged the domains of academe and government and focused on the use of history in public policy development.⁶⁶ The case also suggests that the origins of public history in the USA were in political engagement rather than in the preservation and interpretation of historic sites, which developed later and in the particular political and economic context of the Depression. Exploring this question means looking at both the academic and the governmental dimensions. That historians such as Shambaugh, Turner and Robinson identified a role and purpose for history in securing better democratic processes indicates an intellectual openness to application, a "positive push effect"; but there also appeared to be "pull effect" from policymakers. From the 1906 Antiquities Act, successive pieces of legislation enshrined responsibility for managing historic cultural resources, with funding and tax incentives supporting these efforts.

A striking feature of government involvement in heritage is the linking of preservation to economic policy. During the Depression, New Deal money flowed into the newly established

⁶³ Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, pp. 33-34, 83.

⁶⁴ Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, p. 101.

⁶⁵ Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, p. 78.

⁶⁶ Conard does not pursue the question of how influential the work of the SHSI research staff was on state legislation, suggesting that it would make an interesting case study; she does, however, refer to a significant boost in the Society's annual appropriation in 1921 (from \$24,000 to \$44,500), maintained until fiscal pressure began to mount in 1925, as an indication of the value placed on the publications by policymakers.

National Archives and into the NPS for the development of parks, monuments and sites, leading to the employment of historians to ‘research, restore, interpret and administer’.⁶⁷ The arts also received support in ‘the most ambitious, innovative, and intensive effort that the federal government had undertaken to foster artistic and cultural activity’:

... artists painted murals on the walls of small-town post offices, interviewers collected the life stories of former slaves, symphony orchestras performed in medium-sized industrial communities, photographers captured the faces and landscapes of rural America, and theater companies dramatized social problems in “Living Newspapers”.

The major arts projects and the Historical Records Survey were known collectively as “Federal One” (Federal Project No. 1 of the Works Progress Administration), indicating a connection between heritage and the arts in economic regeneration efforts.⁶⁸ The arrival of New Deal funding and establishment of new national structures signalled a shift in the ‘locus of historical activity outside academe... from the state to federal level’. This was consolidated and extended during and after the Second World War, as federal agencies established historical units and conducted archival and institutional history projects.⁶⁹ More recently, historic preservation has again been given an economic value, in supporting the regeneration of the downtown commercial centres that had been damaged in the urban renewal projects of the 1950s and 1960s and the consequent ‘flight to the mall’.⁷⁰

A distinction should be drawn, however, between heritage and preservation efforts on the one hand and policy advice and development on the other. The former would embrace most of the activity in which public historians are involved in state and federal government,

⁶⁷ Rousso notes that the depression of the 1930s had a similar catalytic effect for the social sciences in France. Rousso, ‘Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker’, p. 78.

⁶⁸ Rosenzweig and Melosh, ‘Government and the Arts: Voices from the New Deal Era’, *The Journal of American History* 77 (1990), p. 597. It is hard to imagine such a connection now being made in the context of an adverse economic climate; this can be connected to a shift from a collective sense of the past to a personalised and privatised one, see Chapter 3 below.

⁶⁹ Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, pp. 151-157; See also: Boland, ‘Federal Programs in Historic Preservation’. Conard also notes (p. 136) that this marks the point of Shambaugh’s disengagement. Although his applied history ‘would have seemed to have been perfectly synchronised with the brains-trust approach to planning and governance’ under Roosevelt, Shambaugh was not inclined to make the shift towards federal programmes. The relationship (or even tension) between the ‘local’ and the ‘national’ is an important one for public history, and will be pursued both as a point of comparison with other national contexts, and in the synthetic discussion in the final section of this chapter.

⁷⁰ Howe, ‘Historic Preservation: an interdisciplinary field’, in *Public history: an introduction*, eds. Howe and Kemp, (Malabar, Fla., 1986), p. 170.

including: public engagement and outreach by museums and historic sites; registration, restoration and protection of historic sites; working with schools and curriculum design; records management; editing of official document series and production of institutional histories (war and foreign policy often providing the impetus for historical projects in government).⁷¹ With legislative requirements in many of these areas, training, recruitment and career progression pathways for public historians in government seem to be well-established; this stands in contrast to the way in which central funding in England has shaped the work of historians in public as outreach and public engagement through heritage. What is more difficult to assess is the extent to which a similar claim could be made for public historians in policy advice and development. This may be due, at least in part, to such work being embedded in larger policymaking activities, and hence less readily discernable as “history”. Surveys conducted in 1989 and 1991 revealed few federal historians acting as policy advisers, although the author of the latter report, Roger Trask, saw such activity as constituting ‘one of the strongest arguments for the existence of federal historical offices’.⁷² The recognition of history as a specialism in government does not necessarily mean history has a presence and influence on policy.

A Canadian perspective offers some insight. John R. English charts the decline of public history from a heyday following the granting of autonomy from the British Empire in 1931, as government bureaucracies – and the universities that educated young people for public service – expanded. During this period of growth, the intellectual adaptability of the generalist was in demand, particularly in the Department of External Affairs (DEA). Historical questions featured in selection examinations for the DEA, and historians took up senior posts. When the government recognised the need to establish an Intelligence Division within the DEA early in the Second World War, a historian from the University of Toronto was appointed. For English, the beginning of the end for historians in government was the mid-1970s. Later than in the USA, an academic job crisis developed, but, more importantly for the purposes of this discussion, a preference for specialists emerged. Economics, business studies and political science graduates entered senior roles, including in the DEA.

Federal and provincial government did continue to recruit historians, but did so *as specialists*. A new category of post – historical researcher – was created and these

⁷¹ On historical work in relation to war and foreign policy, see for example Beck, *Using history, making British policy*; MacMillan, *The uses and abuses of history*; Tosh, *Why history matters*.

⁷² Stiller, ‘The practice of public history in federal history programs’, in *Public history: essays from the field*, eds. Gardner and LaPaglia, (Malabar, Fla., 1999), p. 361. Stiller is Office of the Comptroller of the Currency’s Historian and Special Advisor for Executive Communications.

researchers 'worked on official histories, in departmental archives, in museums, and on historical sites'.⁷³ The codification of historical roles also occurred in the USA, with the GS-170 occupational series for federal historians. While the acknowledgement of the distinctive character of historical skills and their value to government may be seen as positive for public history, specialisation meant compartmentalisation. As English notes: 'the usefulness of those skills in deciding what a government must do was no longer much respected... The past belonged to history, but not much else did'.⁷⁴ His account would suggest that the distinction in terms of historical work between heritage and preservation on the one hand, and policy advice and development on the other, is a useful and relevant one. And further, that the existence of historical posts in government, or, indeed, more widely, such as in business, cannot be taken as an indication of history's reach and influence in decision-making.

The downward trend in terms of numbers of posts in the US federal government also raises questions about the extent to which historians have managed to establish the importance of their perspective to government. While an expansion in federal posts 'somewhat mitigated the collapsing academic job market' in the 1970s and early 1980s, since then, a number of factors have contributed to a period of decline. The downsizing of government in the 1990s led to large job losses (250,000 by 1997), with those functions deemed 'peripheral or optional' the most vulnerable. Both labels seem to have been apt for history. Jesse Stiller, a federal historian himself, points to a gradual 'estrangement between historians and the people' and also the emergence of a new, dismissive attitude towards history and its 'relevance and predictive power'. Blair's comments on history in his speech to Congress in 2003 may well have found resonance. Although Stiller does not draw out the point explicitly, the two phenomena appear to be linked. As academic history became more specialised and atomised, more internally-focused and remote, historians were less equipped and less inclined not only to value policy work, but also to perform such work in a way that would bring influence. Stiller points to particular skills and qualities needed for 'applied policy history' (meaning contributing *to* policy rather than knowing *about* it), all of which are potentially challenging to the traditional academic historian: a multidisciplinary approach; an 'activist frame of mind and... taste for bureaucratic combat'; an 'uncommon

⁷³ English, 'The Tradition of Public History in Canada', *The Public Historian* 5 (1983), p. 58.

⁷⁴ English, 'The Tradition of Public History in Canada', cited passage p. 59.

assertiveness about evidence'; a willingness to take risks and to operate in close proximity to power.⁷⁵

Stiller was writing in 1999 and, as yet, we have no answer to his question: 'what judgment will we pronounce [on the fortunes of federal history] when we revisit the subject ten years from now?'. He does suggest that 'peace and prosperity have always argued for little government', whereas in a time of crisis an organised response will be required and expected.⁷⁶ President Obama's creation of federal jobs in his first term – the figure is contested, but over 100,000 – might suggest that the economy has provided enough of a crisis to stimulate the expansion in government necessary to coordinate a response.⁷⁷ Yet the challenge surely remains to establish "centrality" and "essentiality"; if jobs are going to be added, what is the imperative for historical posts? For Stiller, it is about historians proving their worth when the opportunity arises; agency heads are managers, who will respond to effective performance. This may well be possible in a national government where historians have a track record and established professional structure. More problematic are contexts, such as Britain, where historians have not been employed in government in a systemic way. The absence of defined and specialised professional roles could, however, represent an advantage, by opening up the potential for historians to work in broader, advisory capacities.

Despite concerns from the inside about the decline in federal history, the distinctive characteristic of public history in the USA does seem to be the extent to which the practice of history has become embedded in the practice of government. As Rousso neatly encapsulates it: 'The innovation lies in the will to institutionalize the phenomenon [of collaboration between researchers and decision-makers] and to respond to a traditional demand by structuring the supply'.⁷⁸ That structure has been assembled by universities, which have developed programmes – mainly at Master's level – to offer the necessary credentials for employment. Equipping students to translate their historical training into public policy work has been a focus and concern from the outset for these programmes, responding to an identified need not just among new graduates, but also established professionals. Indeed, one of the earliest developments was a 'uses of history' course aimed

⁷⁵ Stiller, 'The practice of public history in federal history programs'.

⁷⁶ Stiller, 'The practice of public history in federal history programs', p. 357.

⁷⁷ Figure checking in: Jacobson, *John Boehner says 200,000 new federal jobs have sprouted since start of Obama's term*, (2011). Retrieved 2nd February 2013.

⁷⁸ Rousso, 'Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker', p. 70.

at senior officials – ‘legislators, bureau chiefs, colonels, generals, ambassadors and the like’ – offered at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government from the 1970s. The convenors were Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, who went on to co-author the key text in this area:

*Thinking in Time: the uses of history for decision-makers.*⁷⁹ Now, 57 undergraduate and 91 graduate programmes in public history are offered by American HEIs (plus an additional 20 and 39 respectively in related fields).⁸⁰ The commitment to the practical remains a central feature, with work placements and projects integrated into many curricula.⁸¹ Shambaugh regarded applied history education as a legitimate function of state-supported HEIs, drawing an equivalence between the training it provided for public service with that of lawyers, doctors and engineers.⁸² The role of universities, both in the educational supply chain and in terms of academic engagement with the themes and challenges of public history, will be an important point of comparison with other national contexts.

Germany: History as education – understanding and theorising the past

A helpful starting point for this first comparison of public history fields is that drawn by Simone Rauthe in her published doctoral thesis, *Public History in the USA and the Federal Republic of Germany*.⁸³ The American and the German manifestations are not analogues. Yet both be understood against the background of an intellectual paradigm shift of 1960s and 70s, which rejected the premises, techniques and scholarly products of established academic history and brought in the methodologies of the social sciences. So, the New History in the USA – which she does not differentiate from the movement of the same name in the early century – can be seen as a parallel to Historical Social Sciences in Germany. For Rauthe, however, they are fundamentally different phenomena; indeed, she sets them up in

⁷⁹ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*. See preface. Neustadt and May’s ‘mini-methods’ will be handled in some detail in Chapter 5.

⁸⁰ Source: NCPH Guide to Public History Programs (<http://ncph.org/cms/education/graduate-and-undergraduate/guide-to-public-history-programs/>). Retrieved 2nd February 2013. The list also includes programmes in other countries: Canada (6 in total), Australia (4), UK (9), Germany (1), China (1), Netherlands (1), India (1), Ireland (2) and Belgium (1). Programmes are, however, submitted by HEIs themselves and therefore the data cannot be definitive. The fact that the UK has the second-highest number of reported programmes gives a good indication of the provisional nature of the data.

⁸¹ Rauthe characterises public history in the USA as a ‘pragmatically-oriented study path’. See Rauthe, *Public History in den USA und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, (Essen: Klartext, 2001), p. 17; See also: Hanover Research, *Doctoral Programs in Heritage and Public History: An International Review*, (2011).

⁸² Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, p. 83.

⁸³ Rauthe, *Public History in den USA und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. This remains untranslated, so all cited material is my rendering from the German; the original text is given in footnotes. I have also employed current orthography (ss for ß) except when quoting directly from an original text.

binary opposition. American public history is described as an entirely pragmatic, instrumental enterprise, arising from an employment crisis for historians caused by the expansion in university education. In Germany, by contrast, she sees an academic enterprise resulting from a disciplinary crisis, a crisis of historicism. With intense debates conducted both inside the academy and in public, a new discipline was carved out – *Geschichtsdidaktik* – bringing together historical pedagogy with historical theory, psychology, and social and cultural studies.⁸⁴ She draws a further distinction between a sub-field looking for independence from mainstream history in America – and losing thereby the connection with academic research and practice – and the integrative intentions of the German *Geschichtsdidaktiker*, who sought ‘to reinforce the unity of historical theory, research and didactics’.⁸⁵

Both of Rauthe’s dichotomies are open to challenge. As has been explored above, there have been efforts by American scholars to articulate a rather more complex environment for the emergence of public history, involving intellectual and policy pressures as well as the more practical concerns about graduate employability. And perhaps more concertedly, emphasis has been placed on the integrity of historical training and process, with public service, commercial work or consultancy constituting different *contexts* – rather than different *fields* – of practice. Indeed, demonstrating such integrity has been fundamental to establishing the credibility of historical roles outside the academy, and is reflected in the codes of conduct that have been drawn up. Here, however, Rauthe’s characterisation of American public history as *Dienstleistung*, or service, is indeed apposite; Stiller captures this sense of vocation in citing one of the founders of the field, Robert Kelley’s, solemn injunction: ‘what lies before us in policy history is not simply an interesting challenge. It is a duty and an obligation’.⁸⁶

This mentality, informed by a commitment to put the historian’s skills and insights into service outside the academy, does not appear find an equivalent in Germany. The responsibility to students in preparing them for the next stage of their lives is one form of service, and here Rauthe questions whether the initiatives for enhancing the employability

⁸⁴ This does not lend itself to meaningful translation (“historical didactics” is the literal rendering), so it will be left in the original (indeed, Rauthe leaves “Public History”, in the English original throughout). But the German nomenclature is interesting, and suggestive of very different academic and cultural features; this will be discussed below.

⁸⁵ Rauthe, *Public History in den USA und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, pp. 242-245. Quote on 243: ‘*Geschichtsdidaktik... suchte... die Einheit von Geschichtstheorie, -forschung und -didaktik zu stärken.*’

⁸⁶ Stiller, ‘The practice of public history in federal history programs’, p. 367.

of history graduates are sufficient. She also accounts briefly for the main domains of practice (*Praxisfelder*) in which historians are employed: libraries and archives; historical preservation and tourism; journalism and publishing; consultancy of various kinds (political advice receives a paragraph). Yet the main role and contribution of *Geschichtsdidaktiker* seems to be as public intellectuals: to lead and guide public debate and to shape public forms of historical consciousness (*Geschichtsbewusstsein*) such as history education, commemorations, interpretations and renderings of history, and expressions of political and historical identity. As public intellectuals, their identity and status were located in the university. Indeed, the fundamental linguistic apparatus of the field seems clearly to express the primacy of the educational establishment in intellectual affairs. For example, the adjective *ausserschulisch* (extra-curricular) bundles together “everything else” outside educational institutions. “Public” is a contestable concept – and we may now prefer to pluralise the noun – but the word does at least invite consideration of who and what it might include.

The term *Geschichtsdidaktik* also seems significant. Rauthe’s description of Karl-Ernst Jeismann’s conceptualisation of the field exposes this, although this is not her intent. ‘Jeismann understood *Geschichtsdidaktik* as a discipline that addressed the use of history in society’ and as a result ‘the close connection between *Geschichtsdidaktik* and school was dissolved, new spaces for the communication of history outside school opened up *and Geschichtsdidaktik as an exclusively theoretical discipline established*.’⁸⁷ It is the grouping of those three developments that is striking, and particularly in the context of comparison with American public history. It seems to imply that the work outside the academy, now more diverse than the pedagogy-oriented field from which it had emerged, is linked to, if not intellectually reliant on, scholarly activity in the domain of theory. The gradient of power from the university to the public realm being emphasised by the term *Didaktik*. The resonance of language is well demonstrated here, as, indeed, it is with the inflection of public history towards *heritage* in Britain.

The dominance of university history did come under challenge in Germany, most clearly by the *Alltagsgeschichte* movement, which emerged in the mid-1970s and can be seen as another dimension to the German manifestation of public history. *Alltagsgeschichte* is

⁸⁷ Rauthe, *Public History in den USA und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, p. 226. ‘Jeismann verstand die *Geschichtsdidaktik* als eine Disziplin, die den Gebrauch von *Geschichte* in der Gesellschaft untersucht. In der Folge wurde die enge Verbindung von der *Geschichtsdidaktik* und Schule gelöst, neue Bereiche der *Geschichtsvermittlung* außerhalb der Schule erschlossen und die *Geschichtsdidaktik* als ausschließlich theoretische Disziplin begründet.’ Emphasis mine.

translated literally as the “history of everyday life”, but is also rendered as “history from below” due to its dependence on foreign models, or even as the “new history”.⁸⁸ It is relevant here as an expression of the impulses, interests and practices most identifiable with those that have shaped public history in America, and also in England, for example in History Workshop. There are two aspects to this affinity that are of particular interest. The first is the reach of the movement outside academe, involving university historians, the historically-trained ‘semi-professional’ (Geoff Eley’s term) and amateurs (*‘barfuß’* – ‘barefoot’ – historians, an appellation that seems to be used both in celebration and derision). Eley, the British historian of Germany now based in the US, makes the analogy explicit in referring to *Alltagsgeschichte* as encompassing ‘a much larger domain of public history, from museums, exhibitions, adult education, and the activities of local government cultural offices to the media, local publishing, and self-organized local research.’⁸⁹

As in America, pressure on academic jobs provided a pool of graduate recruits. Roger Fletcher’s rather charged characterisation of this group suggests, however, a different mood and motivation for historical work outside the academy than the sense of *Dienstleistung* attributed to American public historians: ‘a large unemployed academic proletariat’ of ‘tens of thousands of frustrated schoolteachers, former Assistenten (junior professors), restless booksellers, and the like who are interested in history but who have no prospect of conventional employment as professional historians.’ Such ‘hapless professional underdogs’ were resolute outsiders, in his view, with little prospect of security of position or promotion in the universities, but able, as a result, to bring more independence and flexibility to their work than their colleagues established in academe. These were the “public historians” who ‘provided the new history movement with much of its initiative, enthusiasm, and mass base’; they were active in the emergence of *Geschichtswerkstatt* (History Workshop, based on the English model), a registered association co-ordinating *Alltagsgeschichte* groups and activities.⁹⁰

American public history is clearly not a direct analogue for the *Alltagsgeschichte* movement, any more than is *Geschichtsdidaktik*. The ideological and political imperatives behind *Alltagsgeschichte* – to correct power imbalances through focusing on the history from below

⁸⁸ Fletcher, ‘History from Below Comes to Germany: The New History Movement in the Federal Republic of Germany’, *The Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988), p. 378. Fletcher uses both terms.

⁸⁹ Eley, ‘Labor History, Social History, “Alltagsgeschichte”: Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday - a New Direction for German Social History?’, *The Journal of Modern History* 61 (1989), p. 298.

⁹⁰ Fletcher, ‘History from Below Comes to Germany’, p. 560.

– may explain in part the different mood noted above. But also to be considered is the resilience of academic conservatism in Germany, reinforced by a higher education system in which academic (and teaching) posts are civil service appointments. ‘Progressive energies’, such as they were, tended to be preoccupied with ‘more with matters of general interpretation and political development’, for example, the Fischer controversy of the early 1960s on the German *Sonderweg* (special path), ‘than with the fundamental realignment of historical inquiry’.⁹¹ It is in this context that Rauthe’s cautious critique of the responsiveness of university provision to the new demands of multiple career tracks for historians can be better understood. There certainly seems little evidence of universities ‘structuring the supply’ of publicly-engaged historians, as in Rousso’s analysis of the USA.

Alltagsgeschichte may also have struggled to sustain the challenge it mounted in the late 1970s and 1980s. Social historian, Hans Ulrich Wehler, wrote its obituary in 2002, although Steege et al suggest such reports are exaggerated, and that a ‘second chapter’ is being written. The terms in which they make their case would find resonance in certain aspects of current public history practice in the US or England, suggesting there may be potential for a greater alignment between *Alltagsgeschichte* and public history. The central ‘acts’ of *Alltagsgeschichte*, they argue, are criticism and translation: criticism in ‘subjecting their [historical actors’] myths (and our analysis as well) to critical scrutiny, attempting to disclose their contradictions and to identify their human consequences’; translation ‘between divergent languages: academic and ordinary’. These processes enable practitioners of *Alltagsgeschichte* to ‘write histories of everyday life to encourage our readers, and ourselves, to see the possibilities for recreating their everyday life in the present’.⁹² Steege et al, all US-based, envisage the potential for a publicly-oriented history from below to develop in Germany, with the broader engagement of professional historians outside the academy. Nonetheless, *Alltagsgeschichte* seems to be a somewhat circumscribed as a form of public history, particularly given the low, or rather contingent, permeability of the border between the university and *ausserschulische* realms.

Also to be considered in examining *Alltagsgeschichte* as public history is its spatial orientation. Based on the articles in *The Public Historian*, it could be argued that American public history is largely preoccupied with the local, or at least the sub-national, domain. Contributions explore how museums bring together artefacts relating to a place or locate a

⁹¹ Eley, ‘Labor History, Social History, “Alltagsgeschichte”’, pp. 313-314.

⁹² Steege, et al., ‘The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter’, *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008), p. 378.

person of historic interest in a place with which s/he was associated, heritage trails guide visitors around a site explaining its development and use in the past, preservation and regeneration efforts focus on a site or quarter, and how oral history projects gather the stories of people with a common experience, such as a workplace, club or school. Legislative requirements around historic preservation have consolidated much activity into sub-national structures. Also a federal state, Germany has placed most official regulation of preservation activities at provincial level (the *Länder*).⁹³ In *Alltagsgeschichte*, Eley saw a 'flourishing universe of locally based discussion and research' and also footnotes the importance of the term *Provinz* to the movement, 'implying the return to a certain kind of grass roots activity and the simultaneous validation of rural and small-town concerns and aspirations that historically have been neglected'.⁹⁴

Yet neither the heritage-oriented work of the public historian, nor the socially-engaged endeavours of the *Alltagshistoriker* – both of which are highly focused on local contexts – seem to fit easily with the role of historians as public intellectuals in Germany. And understanding this role calls for attention to the particular context in which history is practised. Germany's Nazi past has shaped a context in which history and politics are inseparable: 'Partisanship and moralizing, public pedagogy and political urgency have been there from the start'. Taking a position in the many debates about "the German question" 'is invariably tantamount to a larger statement of principle, because taking a position on the origins of Nazism means simultaneously placing oneself in a present-related discourse about the bases of legitimacy in contemporary Germany'. A 'methodological fight', such as that concerning the status of social history over political, becomes a 'battle of faith' (*Glaubenskampf*).⁹⁵

Hence, history *is* national history, and national history *is* present politics in Germany to an extent and in a form perhaps not found in any other country. Certainly, in the area of reparations, history has become present politics elsewhere.⁹⁶ In a similar mode to the Adenauer government's signing of a Reparations Agreement with Israel in 1952, to provide indemnity for material losses suffered by the Jews during the Holocaust, other countries

⁹³ Levinger makes some interesting comments on national vs. provincial 'optics' in historic preservation in his review essay: Levinger, 'Memory and Forgetting: Reinventing the Past in Twentieth-Century Germany', *The Public Historian* 24 (2002), p. 120.

⁹⁴ Eley, 'Labor History, Social History, "Alltagsgeschichte"', pp. 297, 336.

⁹⁵ Eley, 'Viewpoint. Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German Historikerstreit 1986-1987', *Past & Present* 121 (1988), pp. 207, 172, 199.

⁹⁶ An interesting discussion on the broader issue of apology is to be found in: Weyeneth, 'The Power of Apology and the Process of Historical Reconciliation', *The Public Historian* 23 (2001).

have set up restorative tribunals, treaties and schemes of various kinds. Some address land taken by white settlers, for example the Waitangi Tribunal in New Zealand, established as a permanent commission in 1975 to consider cases where 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, which guaranteed Māori ownership of lands and other properties, had not been observed.⁹⁷

Others offer recognition or compensation for assimilation programmes, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada, which is concerned with the residential schools that took children away from their parents following the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857.⁹⁸

Still others allow claims to be made for financial disadvantage resulting from discriminatory legislation, although the question of reparations for wages withheld from slaves in the USA remains highly contested.⁹⁹

In terms of the profile and persistence of the public debates about reparation and apology, and also the prominence of historians in those debates, Germany does, however, seem distinctive. Indeed, Thomas McCarthy, writing on the memory of slavery, looks across to Germany's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) and the way 'the links between changing public memory and changing political culture and collective identity' appeared in sharp relief during the *Historikerstreit* of the late 1980s. He sees a constructive process, from which the US would benefit: 'it may well be the only way that the descendants of the victims will be able to breathe freely in our country.'¹⁰⁰

So, while it may be difficult to identify a single analogue to the American field of public history, it is possible to recognise that history, and historians, are *in* public in a powerful way in Germany. Historians' debates about the existence of structural and cultural continuities

⁹⁷ See: <http://www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/>, also: Hickey, 'Negotiating History: Crown Apologies in New Zealand's Historical Treaty of Waitangi Settlements', *Public History Review* 13 (2006). New Zealand also has structured historical work in Government with the History Group of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, which bears comparison to federal government historical units in the USA. The Group run the website www.nzhistory.net.nz/ and are responsible for official publications such as the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography and the New Zealand Historical Atlas. See also: Dalley, 'Shades of Grey: Public History and Government in New Zealand', in *People and their pasts : public history today*, eds. Ashton and Kean, (Basingstoke, 2009). There is also a Professional Historians Association of New Zealand/Aotearoa, analogous to NCPH: <http://www.phanza.org.nz/>. All retrieved 2nd February 2013.

⁹⁸ On recognition without compensation: Australia's first 'Sorry Day' was held in 1998 and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made an official apology in 2008 for the lost generations of Aboriginal children taken from their parents between 1860s and 1960s. Individual cases have, however, gone through the courts. On the Canadian Commission, see: <http://www.trc-cvr.ca/>. Retrieved 2nd February 2013.

⁹⁹ For example the Wages and Savings Claim Scheme (reparations) that ran in Queensland: <http://www.datsima.qld.gov.au/atsis/government/programs-and-initiatives/wages-and-savings-claims-scheme-reparations>. Retrieved 2nd February 2013.

¹⁰⁰ McCarthy, 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung in the USA: On the Politics of the Memory of Slavery', *Political Theory* 30 (2002), pp. 623, 643.

with Nazism in German history, about the exceptionalism of Jewish suffering and of the Holocaust as a mass extinction programme, about the status of German victimhood, about the place of the Nazi era in modern German identity formation and about the form of commemorative sites and acts – to name some of the most pressing questions – are conducted in a highly charged public political sphere. The *Historikerstreit* is perhaps the best-known of these debates, both within and outside Germany, although the name suggests an intellectual dispute within the discipline rather than the very public and intensely contested phenomenon it was. For the purposes of this discussion, there does not seem to be a need to review the *Historikerstreit* itself, the adversaries involved and positions taken. Rather, it is mentioned as an illustration of the way in which (to paraphrase Eley) history and historians *occupy (national) public space* in Germany.¹⁰¹

In this context, the concept of a “usable past” has a rather different meaning from its American or English equivalents. Shambaugh had a clear sense of the usability of the past for informing democratic processes and shaping the on-going development of institutions. This understanding drew on ideas of the unity of history so resolutely advocated by Seeley (‘since, the future grows out of the past, the history of the past of England ought to give rise to a prophecy concerning her future’).¹⁰² In this account, the cognisance of continuity in the stream of time is one of the most important intellectual faculties that history brings to political life. A modern version might be less focused on the political, and involve a more complex interplay of continuities and change to recognise the roles of one-time immigrant populations, moments of shame or failure as well as of advance or achievement, or relationships between local or community levels and the national. Yet even a more complex sense of continuity seems highly problematic in Germany, with every strand leading to the Nazi period and the implication of ordinary Germans in the horrors of the Holocaust.¹⁰³ The

¹⁰¹ ‘The clash of professional historians occupied public space between summer 1986 and the elections of January 1987 with an intensity that is hard to imagine in the English-speaking world’: Eley, ‘Viewpoint. Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German Historikerstreit 1986-1987’, p. 177.

¹⁰² Seeley, *Expansion of England*, p. 2.

¹⁰³ On “ordinary Germans”: Goldhagen, *Hitler's willing executioners: ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (London: Abacus, 1997). Goldhagen’s thesis was a response to: Browning, *Ordinary men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the final solution in Poland*, (New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992). See also: Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution*, (Jerusalem; New Haven, Conn.; London: International Institute for Holocaust Research; Yale University Press, 2008), chapters 5-9; Johnson and Reuband, *What we knew: terror, mass murder, and everyday life in Nazi Germany. An oral history*, (London: John Murray, 2005). H. Glenn Penny has recently sought to outline ways of ‘decentring the nation, National Socialism and the Holocaust in German history’: Penny, ‘German Polycentrism and the Writing of History’, *German History* 30 (2012).

search for a usable past becomes a pressing concern of the present given its centrality to national identity formation. This process that now has both “post-war” and “post-wall” dimensions, with the need after 1989 to interpret and come to terms with a ‘*double past* of National-Socialist and Socialist dictatorship’ and to locate the experiences of East Germans both during and after the war.¹⁰⁴

Historians may not have an institutionally structured public policy role in Germany as the federal historians have in America, but the visibility of history in public and in politics means that they may have a profile and influence that their counterparts lack. Such a status does not imply direct engagement with policy development, although one of the main protagonists of the *Historikerstreit* on the conservative side, Michael Stürmer, served briefly as Helmut Kohl’s adviser.¹⁰⁵ But it can be seen as a way in which specialism can co-exist with a capacity for participating in broader national-political debates, as opposed to being confined to specific tasks. Further, although removed from the almost vocational character of public history in the US (as *Dienstleistung*), *Geschichtsdidaktik* does seem to offer an approach and perspective of fundamental importance to public history in integrating ‘the forms and the functions of historical knowledge and reasoning in daily, practical life’. It unites the generation of historical *knowledge* and the generation of historical *understanding*; or, rather, it reunites them, according to Rüsen, in a striking point about the adverse effect of professionalisation on the core didactic principle of history.¹⁰⁶ Rüsen sums up the field as follows:

Its goal is to investigate historical learning. Historical learning is one of the dimensions and manifestations of historical consciousness. It is a fundamental process of human socialization and individuation and forms the core for all these operations. The basic question asks how the past is experienced and interpreted in order to understand the present and anticipate the future.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ See: Rauthe, *Public History in den USA und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, pp. 46-47. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁵ Eley, ‘Viewpoint. Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German Historikerstreit 1986-1987’, p. 180.

¹⁰⁶ See: Rüsen, ‘The Didactics of History in West Germany: Towards a New Self-Awareness of Historical Studies’, *History and Theory* 26 (1987), p. 276. ‘During the nineteenth century, when historians defined their discipline they began to lose sight of one important principle, namely, that history is rooted in the social need to orient life within the framework of time.’

¹⁰⁷ Rüsen, ‘The Didactics of History in West Germany: Towards a New Self-Awareness of Historical Studies’, p. 286.

The question that emerges from examining the German alongside the American fields of history oriented to application in the world of affairs, is whether it is possible to combine the former's theoretical integration of knowledge and understanding and profile in national-political debate with the latter's practical orientation and vocational mind-set. And can it be done in a meaningful way to provide a model for an effective "public history in public policy"? The final sketch in this section will bring these reflections to bear on a consideration of public history in England.

England: History as heritage - pluralising and depoliticising the past?

The academic origins of public history in England can be recognised, as with its American equivalent and the German *Geschichtsdidaktik*, in the 1970s, and associated with developments within the discipline of history and challenges to established ideas of historical agency, authority and objectivity.¹⁰⁸ Earlier traces can be discerned, for example in the work of Tawney and Sidney and Beatrice Webb in the early twentieth century; Avner Offer gives a rather positive assessment of their 'historical economics' as applied history against his two tests of 'intellectual validity and institutional success' and 'actual impact on debate and influence on policies'.¹⁰⁹ While an emergent field of public history is evident in the inter-war years in America, with the structuring of heritage and preservation into federal and state activity and the concomitant flow of money, such a case is difficult, however, to assemble for England.

Germany provides perhaps a more useful comparator here, with the connection made from the late 1960s and early 1970s between an emergent interest in history in a public role and a social-political commitment to recognise and amplify the voices of ordinary people. The connection between the academic and the political is explicit in the idea of the *Werkstatt* or workshop approach to history. As the editorial collective stated in the introduction to the first edition in Spring 1976, the *History Workshop*, subtitled 'a journal of socialist historians', was committed to 'making history a more democratic activity and a more urgent concern'.¹¹⁰ It challenged the 'comparatively recent' claim of "'serious history'" as a 'subject reserved for

¹⁰⁸ The focus here is on England, recognising that the complexities and sensitivities of the histories of devolved administrations (the 'home international' dimension) could not be adequately covered in a sketch of a singular British public history, but also that such a division is not ideal given both ambivalence and ambiguity around English/British identity are very much part of the debates around history in public.

¹⁰⁹ See: Offer, 'Using the Past in Britain: Retrospect and Prospect', pp. 23-28.

¹¹⁰ The collective consisted of Sally Alexander, Susan Bullock, Anna Davin, Alun Howkins, Andrew Lincoln, Tim Mason, Raphael Samuel, Sten Shipley, Gareth Stedman Jones and Anne Summers.

the specialist'. This restriction was attributed 'to the consolidation of the historical profession; to the increasing fragmentation of the subject, especially as it approaches more modern times; and to the narrowness of historians' preoccupations, along with the way that research is organized and shaped.' The term "workshop" stood as a signal of the character of the history being advocated, a collaborative historical *labour* that stands in clear contrast to history simply disseminated to more democratically-defined audience. The journal would 'present the working of historical inquiry not just the results' and act as a focal point for the activities of historians of all kinds, offering 'solidarity and practical help'.¹¹¹ What is interesting is how the highly political dynamic behind forms of "history from below" can sometimes be in tension with the nature of the historical project actually conducted. So, "history from below" can end up being expressed in terms that aim to satisfy other historians. Bill Schwarz' foreword to the 2012 revised version of Raphael Samuel's *Theatres of Memory* notes that Samuel was 'drawn to the lure of the occult' of the academic discipline, cherishing the extensive footnote as a 'defining sign of professional mastery' even as he launches guerrilla attacks against on professional norms.¹¹²

This idea of the "workings" of history, although conceived in a specific context of the 'internationality of class experience', is helpful for the task of thinking about public history more broadly, as well as that of the use of history in public policy specifically. For public history, it sets up a model where the public purposes of the endeavour condition not only the *form* of history – how it is disseminated or expressed to reach audiences outside academe – but also the *process*. A usable past can be understood as involving an integrated process of assembly, in which the "users" actively participate, and use, rather than a more restricted meaning focused on the mobilisation of a received history. Where the users are policy-makers, the distinction can be made between their engagement in the process of interpretation of historical evidence to inform policy development, and a system in which they are *provided with* the interpretations of historians. This is essentially the distinction between "knowledge exchange" and "knowledge transfer" that will be pursued in later chapters.

The avowedly political socialism of the *History Workshop* that informed the editors' democratised vision of history as common property may no longer be placed so prominently in discussions about the purpose and nature of public history in England. Yet the field does

¹¹¹ 'History Workshop Journal', *History Workshop* (1976), pp. 1-3.

¹¹² See Schwarz in Samuel, *Theatres of memory: past and present in contemporary culture*, (London: Verso, 2012), vii-viii.

seem to retain a underlying imperative for the perceived rebalancing of power or restitution of identity and agency.¹¹³ The organising principle for such effort may be geographic (a village, town, city or region); it may be gender, religion, ethnicity or class. As such, Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn's critique from an American perspective seems relevant. The drawing out of a narrative thread for the particular identity group from the historical material requires a measure of decontextualisation for that narrative to be coherent. Although all historymaking involves selectivity, the argument would be that the (politically-informed) demands of securing a coherent narrative account are too great. Lasch-Quinn's further contention is that those demands create 'unchallenged' forms of self-expression, separate but equal, which constitute an 'impoverished notion of participation' and are undemocratic in essence.¹¹⁴

There is an important dimension to "identity history as public history" in England that is distinctive from the American analogue. A rejection of the nation, of thinking in national categories or narratives, seems to be an implicit, if not explicit, characteristic of much history, whether labelled as public history, or conducted with an agenda of broader debate around historical themes. The reach and cost of federal government may be a contested and controversial issue in the USA – as it has been since it was created in 1787 – but there seems to be little evidence that the *ideas* of nationhood face the same degree of scrutiny. It may be that a federal structure, by protecting a level of provincial autonomy and distinctiveness, removes some of the political charge from such ideas of nationhood, at least in domestic politics. Or perhaps the case could be made that the "charge" has not been removed, but rather transferred into the foreign policy arena, given American intervention to secure democratic regime change in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly under the 'Bush doctrine'.

A further factor could be the imperatives within settler colonies to pursue nation-building, in a political and a cultural sense, as a more defined "project" than in England. Although those projects involved the perpetration of many forms of aggression and injustice against aboriginal populations, efforts in recent decades (such as in Canada and Australia) to resolve issues of outstanding grievance have adopted the language of reconciliation *with* the modern nation, rather than a renunciation and atomisation of the latter. Official history in

¹¹³ See for example: Kean, Martin and Morgan (eds.), *Seeing history: public history in Britain now*; Ashton and Kean, *People and their pasts: public history today*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

¹¹⁴ Lasch-Quinn, 'Democracy in the Ivory Tower?', pp. 25-26. See discussion in Chapter 1 above.

the New Zealand national government began with a Centennial Branch, convened in 1937 to support celebration of the founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi, in 1940. It became a War History Branch in the Department of Internal Affairs and then the History Group in the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, its current manifestation. This evolutionary path would seem to indicate a capacity for national history to adapt to a changing political and social climate and to more complex notions of identity and citizenship; the Māori name for the Ministry appears first in the logo on the website. National history in these contexts becomes a source of evidence, investigated to ascertain land entitlements or to corroborate claims of discriminatory treatment, but the process of restitution can itself be assimilated into the narrative.¹¹⁵ That is not to say that such a process is unproblematic; these comparisons serve to open up a discussion about why ideas of the nation appear to have a very different status in public history in England than in the other countries addressed.

It is in ideas of the nation that a striking disjuncture between public history as an extension of the academic discipline of history and what could be termed “history in public” or, indeed, “history from below” is evident. Recurring debates about the content and approach of history teaching in schools and the great popularity of series charting the broad sweep of British history suggest that national narratives retain meaning, whether as expressions of identity for individuals or groups, or as part of public debates that engage with national and international culture and location. The attention of many historians has shifted to the local and the global, and the local in the global, such that national history may appear, at least in the academic press, as the preserve of the apologists of empire.¹¹⁶

A recent piece in the Australian open-access journal, *Public History Review*, on the British Museum as ‘an imperial museum in a post-imperial world’ exposes the tensions and contradictions that seem to characterise ideas of nationhood in English public history. For Emily Duthie, the collections were assembled as part of an imperial project of ‘national self-congratulation and self-satisfaction’. At the same time, however, she accepts a connection between the ownership and display of artefacts and national self-esteem; so, the desires of other countries to repatriate objects held by the Museum are, by contrast, legitimate *because the objects contribute to ‘the formation of historical and nationalist narratives’*.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ ‘The Treaty sector is the single largest employer of New Zealand historians in the country’: Dalley, ‘Shades of Grey: Public History and Government in New Zealand’, pp. 80-81.

¹¹⁶ See for example: Rublack, *A concise companion to history*. Particularly: Bayly, ‘History and World History’.

¹¹⁷ Duthie, ‘The British Museum: An Imperial Museum in a Post-Imperial World’, *Public History Review* 18 (2011), pp. 19, 22. Emphasis mine. Duthie explicitly associates Director Neil McGregor’s recent

Collection and interpretation of artefacts to serve nationalist ends constitute an entirely justifiable use of history by this account, as long as nationalism does not carry an imperial taint and some sort of “authenticity of claim” can be made. Given that nations are constructions (whether ‘forged’, ‘imagined’ or otherwise) the idea that any repatriation for national ends is somehow “authentic” and “clean” (in contrast to the predations of the British empire) seems rather more problematic than Duthie’s argument can accommodate.¹¹⁸

The legitimacy of repatriation requests need not be denied to recognise the dissonance between a challenge to the motivations behind the collection and display of historical artefacts and an affirmation of the importance of such displays to public life; both involve the cultivation and celebration of a sense of national identity through a shared culture. Contextualisation of the collecting practices and engagement with some of the key issues, such as how interpretation of artefacts shifts with the location of presentation and the commitments and intentions of curators, owners and funders, could be understood as an alternative, and constructive, contribution to the development of history and histories in public. That colonial history is central to the creation and development of the British Museum is more helpfully seen as a point of departure than a final verdict.

The point being made is about the relationship between developments in academic historical interpretation and the terms under which debates about and representations of history in public can occur. Historians may rightly question the status of the nation as a “natural” category of human collectivity and historical analysis, and also be concerned to avoid the distortions of a Western paradigm. Such a historiographical framework need not, however, require either the identification of the national as carrying an inherent (negative) moral charge, or that it be extracted from interaction with other categories and levels of meaning. Certainly such a move is problematic where it does not correspond with the ways in which the people being studied locate themselves. In terms of public history, there is the potential for a double disjuncture: not only between historians and their subjects, but also between historians and their audiences.

This disjuncture between the concerns and sensitivities of academic history and the ways in

work to redefine the British Museum as a universal museum with the imperial temper of his predecessors by placing a comment of his immediately after the statement on ‘national self-congratulation and self-satisfaction’.

¹¹⁸ Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992); Cubitt (ed.), *Imagining nations*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

which public participants engage with history can also emerge at local level. Paul Long's discussion of public history and local identity in Birmingham reveals the conflict that can occur between the perspectives offered by the public (here to do with attitudes to race among the working-class population) and the social and political mind-set that had led the historian to pursue the study in the first place.¹¹⁹ Doing "history from below" carries some risks on both sides. The link between heritage and regeneration lays weight on the past, and may lead to polishing and self-censorship in the effort to create a narrative that supports the aspirations of an area.¹²⁰ Long cites Carol Kammen's view that divisive issues such as race and crime can be avoided as 'they do not promote a picture of a unified community consciousness and of a harmonious past'.¹²¹ The local can no more carry an automatic positive moral charge than the national a negative one. And, indeed, consideration needs to be given to the effect on the field of public history if it is preoccupied with a form of practice that smoothes and depoliticises in its (conscious or unconscious) aim to celebrate or elevate the local and the everyday.

A connection between the academic emergence of public history and broader shifts in the national environment has been made in many contexts. One such shift is an economic one, as contracting university budgets in the 1970s and 1980s put pressure on the employment market for historians, noted particularly in the US but also in Canada and Germany. The influence of political shifts may be less well acknowledged. Eley sees the *Historikerstreit* as representing not just 'the most recent instalment in a continuing debate about how the German past is to be addressed for public pedagogical purposes', but also 'a particular moment in West German intellectual and political life, in which questions of national identity have returned to the centre of public discussion'. This moment he associates with the *Tendenzwende*, the conservative turn German politics took at the end of the 1970s, which gave greater licence to a more right-wing historiography.¹²² Priscilla Boniface sees a similar shift in Thatcher's Britain, although she does not name the then Prime Minister, rather referring to the emergence of a commercially-driven and individualistic society, which she characterises as 'Victorian-style' modernism. For Boniface, the political climate

¹¹⁹ Long, "'But it's not all nostalgia": public history and local identity in Birmingham', in *Seeing history: public history in Britain now*, eds. Kean, Martin and Morgan, (London, 2000), pp. 142-146.

¹²⁰ See also in US context: Stanton, 'The Past as a Public Good: The US National Park Service and "Cultural Repair" in Post-Industrial Places', pp. 68-69.

¹²¹ Long, "'But it's not all nostalgia': public history and local identity in Birmingham', p. 146. Citing: Kammen, 'On doing local history', *Local History Magazine* 53 (1996), p. 13.

¹²² Eley, 'Viewpoint. Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German Historikerstreit 1986-1987', p. 178.

influenced not so much the parameters of academic or indeed public historical debate, as in Germany, but rather how history was conceived and understood, hence: 'the past became regarded, therefore, both as an attractive commodity itself and as a very good tool for use in marketing other items'.¹²³

Heritage, by this account is a product of history, in which the latter is bound up with 'emotion and sensibility' and sold to a public anxious for comfort in a 'postindustrial, postcolonial... postmodern, postboom situation'. For Boniface, heritage is the form in which British historians put the past to use, through activities that share the same inspiration as public history in the USA, 'if not necessarily the manner of manifestation'.¹²⁴ She identifies eight 'main uses' for history and six 'main trends and approaches' to history in the UK, some of which would resonate in other national contexts: changes in work and leisure and to the role of women in society, and greater availability of information in the former category; popularisation, greater interdisciplinary study and the use of new communications technologies in the latter. Others seem distinctive, most notably the loss of empire and reassessment of a national past in a context of decline (although the attendant reorientation to Europe she envisages – the article being published two years after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty creating the EU – now seems rather less persuasive, as does the possible abolition of the monarchy). The role of the heritage industry has been, for Boniface, 'as a medium to allow us capacity for dealing, quite peaceably, with stressful issues' such as the loss of empire.¹²⁵

"Heritage as comfort" suggests a rather different motivation and expression from the US model of public history as a vocation, or the German focus on methodology and the generation of public understanding. It also has different implications for the academy, neither requiring a structured supply of historians trained for roles outside HE, nor exerting enough pressure on the discipline to generate new theoretical or hybrid approaches to public engagement with history. The University of Sheffield's applied history course in the mid-1980s (within the Department of Economic and Social History, led by urban historian Anthony Sutcliffe and based on the Carnegie-Mellon model) was held up as a 'major new

¹²³ Boniface, 'History and the Public in the UK', *The Public Historian* 17 (1995), p. 21.

¹²⁴ Boniface, 'History and the Public in the UK', pp. 21-24. The analysis is entitled 'History and the public in the UK,' but the argument is made that history of and in the UK is essentially about the culture and values of the white, middle-class south-east of England.

¹²⁵ Boniface, 'History and the Public in the UK', p. 26.

training program' in public history by a contemporary American observer.¹²⁶ But the recognition was premature and, with the exception of specialist qualifications in areas such as archival and curatorial work, it is only very recently that courses have started to emerge again. In 2011, the Higher Education Academy produced a set of case studies of public history in UK HE (although all are in England). The introduction's statement that 'in truth, public history is perhaps best defined as the *transmission of historical research*, whether it has been done by academic historians and archaeologists, professional archivists and curators or enthusiastic and diligent amateurs, to the public in any of a variety of formats' is revealing in its narrowness.¹²⁷ It is a clear "knowledge transfer" model. Indeed, the case studies themselves show the limited extent to which public history teaching had developed (involving single undergraduate modules and one M.A.) or, indeed to which the academy had engaged with the purpose, meaning and interaction of public and academic history.

The absence of an academic base for public history in England, whether in programme delivery or in scholarship, presents a challenge for connecting history to policy. In the absence of a career pathway for historians in government, the provision of a professional historical perspective on policy issues has to come from the academy. The development of public history scholarship so conceived is at a very early stage in English institutions. In contrast to the US, where the development of effective democratic processes and institutions was one of the defining concerns of public history from the outset, policy has not as yet been drawn into the emerging field in England. Longer traditions in local, social and urban history, as well as a funding policy focused on public engagement and community involvement, are shaping the form that scholarship is taking. Where historians have sought to have a voice in policy debates, most notably through the History and Policy network set up in 2002 by Cambridge historians Alastair Reid and Simon Szretzer, the work is not identified with public history.¹²⁸ One factor may be the perceived association of public history with local and community outreach activity, with museums and heritage, and with forms of popular history (film, TV, fiction and so on). Defined in such terms, public history is

¹²⁶ See: Johnson, 'An American Impression of Public History in Europe', *The Public Historian* 6 (1984). Both Beck and Sutcliffe also reference the programme in articles to *The Public Historian*: Beck, 'Forward with History: Studying the Past for Careers in the Future', *The Public Historian* 6 (1984); Sutcliffe, 'Glens and Echoes of Public History in Western Europe: Before and after the Rotterdam Conference', *The Public Historian* 6 (1984).

¹²⁷ Beals, *Public history in UK higher education*, (2011), p. 2. Emphasis mine.

¹²⁸ See: www.historyandpolicy.org.

peripheral, domesticated and contained; its apparent low intellectual status makes the potential for the development of scholarship within a valued sub-field in academic departments seem limited. In this context, historical perspective comes from historians who want to contribute to policy debate, but are generally proceeding from knowledge and expertise that were developed in mainstream academic contexts for mainstream academic purposes.

Hence, historical input into policy takes the form of *translations* of academic research and insight rather than *advice* informed by them. Indeed, it could be argued that the primacy of the academic mainstream has focused attention on the communication of messages and the presentation or packaging of history, with the criteria for evaluating history in public being those that prevail in that mainstream. So TV series such as Simon Schama's *A History of Britain* become controversial because they do not, and cannot, 'satisfy the historian as historian', yet the controversy does not become the stuff of serious and engaged historiographical debate.¹²⁹ This preoccupation with how history is transmitted stands in contrast to an concern, such as that explored in *Geschichtsdidaktik*, with the nature and practice of history in public and how this enquiry connects with the generation of historical understanding. Thus the absence of an academic base for public history also gives rise to a disconnect between disciplinary theory and practice and the many activities that constitute history in public.

A new historical class in government is unlikely to be created in the short or medium term, in a context where the civil service is being cut and the hold of quantitative expertise remains strong. Initiative in terms of bringing history into policymaking can, therefore, only come from the academy. But that must surely be an academy that contains a dynamic public-oriented field; as Offer contends, 'historians can help to create the climate in which their work is needed by discovering what questions really matter.' Those questions have then to matter *inside universities*; that is, pressing policy issues need to be reflected in the framing of academic priorities, recognition and reward. Offer places the onus on historians to 'stimulate demand; supply will then take care of itself'.¹³⁰ The "demand side" is therefore a vital area for investigation. Can the role and status of history in English political culture be understood, so that the constraints on the emergence of demand for history in public policy can be identified and, indeed, the permeability of political structures to history assessed?

¹²⁹ Champion, 'Seeing the past: Simon Schama's "A History of Britain" and public history', *History Workshop Journal* (2003), p. 154.

¹³⁰ Offer, 'Using the Past in Britain: Retrospect and Prospect', p. 31.

This exercise necessarily embraces history both as “the past” and history as a discipline with distinctive ways of working and making meaning.

Public past, private pasts: the changing status and purpose of history in post-war English politics

The previous chapter considered the factors within national contexts that have shaped the ways in which academic history has approached the issue of a public role for the discipline. This could be characterised as an exploration of the “supply side”, of how historians, working mainly within institutions of HE, have engaged with pressures to reconceptualise the purpose of training and practice in history, and the contexts in which historical perspectives can be usefully and meaningfully expressed. The question of a political “demand side” – for history as a resource for political thinking and policy development – is a critical one for this thesis. In essence, this is a question about political culture, about the permeability to history of what is a highly centralised and also “closed” system concentrated on Westminster and Whitehall.¹ “History” here must be understood in two senses. It is, first, “the past” and so my concern is to consider how politicians viewed the past: benign or hostile; held in common or individually; of contemporary significance or irrelevant. While attitudes are more complex than such dichotomies suggest, it is nonetheless helpful to consider the categories into which conceptions of the past might fall. In terms of the sense of the past in politics, the weight has shifted over the last forty years, from that of a “usable” collective past, vital for the shaping of policy developments, towards ambivalence – the past as ‘something dangerous and alien, to be controlled or expunged’ – and towards a more privatised and deintellectualised understanding.²

History is, second, a subject of study, a discipline, embracing “the past” as a body of knowledge, but also, importantly, the skilled process of making meanings from it. I am, also, therefore, concerned with how politicians view history as a specialism: to what extent is *doing history*, whether at school or professionally, regarded as important, and how is that importance derived? Is it associated with the “products” of doing history, or with the

¹ See Chapter 4 below on the “closed” system and an exploration of the implications for the capacity to assimilate external expertise into the policymaking process.

² McCulloch, ‘Privatising the Past? History and Education Policy in the 1990s’, p. 74. Beck's term is the ‘pathologised past’, set against an ‘enlightened present’: Beck, *Meritocracy, citizenship and education: New Labour's legacy*, (London; New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 93.

capacities that the “doing” develops? These two definitions of history are essentially connected, but the distinction between them is an important one for this thesis; the capacity of history as an archive or repository of “the past” to provide a resource for policymaking is very limited; it is “content” that is not readily available for policy development, and easily dismissed as irrelevant to present circumstances or mis-used through poor analogising. My central contention is that history as a distinctive *process* of *working historically* (or ‘thinking with history’) carries by contrast great potential for enhancing the *process* of making policy.

The distinction between “content” and “process” – and the implications of emphasising one or the other – can be explored within the context of a consideration of history in political culture by looking at education policy, and particularly history education. The idea of a national curriculum began to be debated in the late 1960s and was finally realised for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). History was, and remains, a, if not the most, contentious subject, implicated as it is with questions of identity and citizenship. The highly politicised tensions between “content” and “process” are played out in the statements, discussions and altercations on the purpose of history teaching: the inculcation of essential historical “facts”; the development of historical reasoning; or, indeed, the acquisition of generic skills. Contributions to these debates from politicians, particularly Ministers, offer insights into the prevailing political culture with regards to history (in both definitions). There is an extensive literature on the emergence of the National Curriculum, and the ways in which debates about the nature and purpose of the discipline of history were ‘inevitably bound up with issues relating to nationhood, cultural politics and identity’ as Robert Phillips, author of the compelling and most comprehensive account of the pedagogy, propaganda and politics of National Curriculum history, has put it.³ I will not go over this ground. Rather, debates around history education and, in particular, history in the National Curriculum, provide a point of access to changing

³ Phillips, *History teaching, nationhood, and the state: a study in educational politics*, (London; Herndon, Va.: Cassell, 1998), p. 126. On the development of and debates about the History curriculum in contemporary perspective and retrospect, see also: Prochaska, ‘The History Working Group: Reflections and Diary’, *History Workshop* (1990); Little, ‘A National Curriculum in History: A Very Contentious Issue’, *British Journal of Educational Studies* 38 (1990); Ball, ‘Education, Majorism and ‘the Curriculum of the Dead’’, *Curriculum Studies* 1 (1993); Dunn, ‘The Making of a National Curriculum: The British Case’, *The History Teacher* 33 (2000); Haydn, ‘History’, in *Rethinking the school curriculum: values, aims and purposes*, ed. White, (London, 2004); Waldman, ‘The Politics of History Teaching in England and France during the 1980s’, *History Workshop Journal* 68 (2009). Ashby and Edwards also offer an extensive bibliography: Ashby and Edwards, ‘Challenges facing the disciplinary tradition: reflections on the history curriculum in England’, in *Contemporary public debates over history education*, eds. Nakou and Barca, (Greenwich, Conn., 2010).

political attitudes to history (in both definitions). These attitudes provide insights into the issues within the contemporary political culture in Westminster and Whitehall, with which any proposition about a new form of “history in policy” needs to engage. The next chapter will then offer a detailed analysis of the policymaking process to pursue the fundamental issue of the permeability of policymaking to external, expert advice in general, and to historical advice in particular.

This chapter addresses a series of central distinctions or dichotomies relating to history and policy apparent in the political culture of the post-war period. These can be understood as divides that will need to be bridged – or at least brought into a workable accommodation – if history is to be admitted and embedded within the policymaking process. The distinctions already mentioned between public and private pasts, and between content and process in history, point to two further distinctions or dichotomies that are of interest and relevance here. The idea that the “consumption” of public provision, such as education and healthcare, is equivalent to that of private goods and services has been embraced by governments since Thatcher’s. In this view, consumers play an inherently “virtuous” role in the system by disciplining the market of “producers” through their choices. Further, the professional expertise of producer communities takes a lower priority than their capacity to “respond” to consumer preferences. The authority of producer communities, such as teachers, nurses, social workers and officials, as public-oriented groups is marginalised in favour of private individuals. It is worth noting, however, that the use of targets for service delivery, or requirements for incorporating service-user “voice” in decision-making, actually involves an aggregation that subdues rather than channels the individual experience.⁴ To critique the privileging of the consumer is not to propose that it is the “producers” who are instead “virtuous” in their roles as expert practitioners. Rather, the issue is that the *setting up of a dichotomy* – where virtue in policy terms resides with one side – is highly problematic, and not least *for policy itself* as it provides an imbalanced basis for making policy decisions.

The ideological nature of the producer/consumer divide points to the other dichotomy that arises from this discussion: between evidence and emotion or instinct. The former is associated with the collective endeavours of producer groups, where new research, new theories have to contest with established knowledge for new forms of consensus, or new lines of division, to emerge. The latter, by contrast, is the currency of a system focused on private experience and individual choice. The then Prime Minister, John Major’s, comments

⁴ See Chapter 4 below on the issue of aggregation in the context of evidence-based policymaking in healthcare.

in *The Times* in 1995 expressed a telling disregard for expertise in favour of populist sentiment: 'There is a feeling in the country that we listen too much to the experts and too little to ordinary people. Now the people with the facts tend to sound sharper, but the people with the instincts are often wiser. We ought to pay more attention to instincts.'⁵ As I will argue in the next chapter, the advent of "evidence-based policymaking" under Blair did not in reality provide the fundamental challenge to this mind-set that its premise implies.

These dichotomies frame a political context, within which the question of the status of history as evidence and as a subject suitable for use in policy development has to be located. Again, a broadly chronological approach interwoven with thematic analysis will be taken. In a sense, the approach chosen here is a response to historical work that highlights political leaders' careless, ignorant or wilfully distorted use of the past (one striking formulation being the "bad history" series on the History and Policy network website).⁶ While there is certainly a role for historians in providing a public corrective to such errors as a service to informed debate on policy issues, to stop there seems insufficient. Correctives raise the central policy question: *so what?* What can policymakers *do* with the "good history" offered in place of the "bad"? How can it shape and guide a more historically-aware policy process? In essence, correctives and policy-oriented syntheses of academic research are what can be termed "adjunct" models; historical evidence is packaged and presented to the policymaker, usually not directly, but rather widely disseminated in print or online. An "embedded" approach to history *in* policy is posited in this thesis as a constructive and targeted alternative to "adjunct" models. But what is also needed is a more nuanced and indeed more historical exploration of politicians' use/abuse of history than one based rather simplistically on their facility for seeking rhetorical advantage; the current chapter addresses that issue.

Blair's New Labour has been called 'very present-centred', and certainly Blair set up a 'double standard' in his references to history in the context of Iraq, arguing simultaneously that 'after 9/11 everything has changed' and that 'there are these enduring lessons of history that we can valuably refer to' (the Hitler analogy as a case for pre-emptive war).⁷ But

⁵ Hollindale, 'Subversive texts', *Times Education Supplement*, 22nd September, 1995.

⁶ See: <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/badhistory/index.html>. Retrieved 8th February 2013. Interestingly, this page is no longer visible through navigation from the homepage. The reference is to Goldacre, *Bad science*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2008). On "correctives", see in particular: chapter 6 of MacMillan, *The uses and abuses of history*; Also: Tosh, *Why history matters*; Szretzer, 'History and Public Policy'.

⁷ Sutherland, 'The ideas interview: David Runciman', *The Guardian*, 25th July, 2006.

the political ambivalence towards history encapsulated in Blair's comments to the US Congress in 2003, following the invasion of Iraq, about the study of history providing 'so little instruction for our present day' is not a New Labour phenomenon.⁸ There is, I will argue, an essential post-war, post-imperial context for understanding the status of history in policy, in which neoconservative and neoliberal strands of thinking both came into conflict and were brought into alliance at various points. History education, and particularly through the National Curriculum, proved to be an arena in which these encounters were played out, revealing both expectations of and anxieties about history in the nation state.

Making history safe for consumption in post-war Britain

The sense of a "public past", a common national history that defined identity through heritage, survived two world wars. A broadly consensual, 'progressive public past', consisting of 'partial, selective, and often simplistic renderings of historical change' was 'incorporated and ingrained in state policy, validated by it and contributing actively towards it'. This past was safe and stable, a foundation for the cultivation of shared national values as well as for the furtherance of existing developments. Hence, the reforms that culminated in the 1944 Education Act could be described as both having a 'radical stance' and being 'rooted in this awareness of continuous development', a benign reconciliation of change and continuity that echoes nineteenth-century historiography on the constitution.⁹ In the late 1960s, however, confidence in the idea of a 'gradual evolution towards social improvement' began to ebb away, a process that gained momentum in the 1980s, when the past came to be viewed as the problem, the obstacle to national success rather than the basis for it. The erosion of national confidence and of the status of history can be set in the context of Britain's changing position in the world at the end of empire. A rhetoric combining notions of "national decline" and Britain's "productivity problem" became prevalent from the late 1950s. Responding to these issues and repositioning the country came to be perceived as 'the defining national predicament and political challenge of the 1960s and 1970s'.¹⁰ So

⁸ Tosh sees Blair's comments as reflecting 'a much more widespread scepticism about the practical benefits of historical perspective': Tosh, *Why history matters*, p. 5. This should be set within a broader argument about a lack of critical engagement with the uses of history; history cannot yield 'practical benefits' if it is confined to being a packaged form of the past, historical "content" that offers instruction (or not). This discussion will be pursued in the next two chapters.

⁹ McCulloch, 'Privatising the Past? History and Education Policy in the 1990s', pp. 72-73.

¹⁰ Tomlinson has highlighted the connection between notions of productivity and national decline, making the case the 'the concern with economic "modernization" is over-identified with debates about the purported "scientific and technological revolution"': Tomlinson, 'The British "Productivity Problem" in the 1960s', *Past & Present* 175 (2002), p. 194.

Wilson's Labour was elected on a modernising ticket, and expanded HE. As the institutions that would help forge a new Britain in the 'white heat' of the scientific and technological revolution, the polytechnics were where expansion was primarily realised.¹¹ Heath's Conservatives sought to 'turn the nation away from its disintegrated imperial past towards what seemed a brightly beckoning European future'.¹²

The shift from a safe and domesticated to an alien and hostile public past – the site of the 'disappointments and betrayals' of a former imperial power – was realised in the 1980s and consolidated in the 1990s. Reporting to the mainly North American audience of *The Public Historian* in 1995, Patricia Boniface saw a country afraid that the best is behind it: 'postindustrial, postcolonial... postmodern, postboom'.¹³ History had become a source of anxiety, to be overcome and consigned firmly to the past. Indeed, consigning history to the past has a double meaning. With a flight to heritage as a source of comfort, the domesticated and nostalgised past become a safe haven from the instability of the present and the uncertainty of the future.¹⁴ As faith in a propitious national public past was eroded, so it was replaced by an increasingly private or personalised past in policy discourse, a development that seems caught up with the emergence of a 'confessional culture': a 'drive to openness [that] would eventually colonize the past as well as the present' as Deborah Cohen puts it in her recent book on shame and family secrets.¹⁵ That is, neither personalisation nor privatisation as notions imply self-containment or silence, but rather an individualisation of perspective. It can thus be argued that the same cultural shift produced both Cohen's inclination for revelation and McCulloch's privatised political past. In this context there was a 'marked absence of explicit historical discussion in most policy documents on education' from the 1970s, while the school experiences of MPs (and commentators, such as the authors of the 1969-1977 Black Papers on education and influential right-wing think tanks like the Centre for Policy Studies, founded by Margaret

¹¹ Harold Wilson's famous 'white heat' speech was delivered on 1st October 1963; Anthony Crosland as Secretary of State (appointed January 1965) announced the designation of the polytechnics on 27th April that year (see Chapter 1 above).

¹² Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon, *The right kind of history: teaching the past in twentieth-century England*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 140.

¹³ Boniface, 'History and the Public in the UK'.

¹⁴ Boniface, 'History and the Public in the UK'. Later, Lowenthal expressed it in this way: 'heritage, roots and historic preservation assuaged present sorrows and future perils': Lowenthal, 'The past of the future: from the foreign to the undiscovered country', in *Manifestos for history*, eds. Jenkins, Morgan and Munslow, (London, 2007), p. 212.

¹⁵ Cohen, *Family secrets: living with shame from the Victorians to the present day*, (London: Viking, 2013), p. 244.

Thatcher and Keith Joseph in 1974) gained prominence in political debate.¹⁶ These were recollections serving as rationalisations, attaching ‘to the policy argument a certain moral force to augment its political potency’.¹⁷

That a more individualised, private perspective would replace a collective, public one is not a striking conclusion in itself given the Thatcherite ideology of there being ‘no such thing as society’.¹⁸ Thatcher brought her own educational history into her political positioning; as Leader of the Opposition, she had made strident use of a personal past to disrupt assumptions on Party/class divides addressing the Conservative Party Conference in 1977: ‘People from my sort of background needed Grammar schools to compete with children from privileged homes like Shirley Williams and Anthony Wedgwood Benn’.¹⁹ Michael Howard – also as Leader of the Opposition – was later to make the same move when taking on Blair with regard to tuition fees in 2003: ‘this grammar school boy will take no lessons from that public school boy on the importance of children from less privileged backgrounds gaining access to university’.²⁰ The invitation inherent here, and indeed, generally when personal history is invoked by a political leader, is for “people like me” (‘defined as such through their childhood and schooling’) to identify at an emotional, unthinking level with a particular, relevant policy proposition.²¹ This has made education, and particularly selective education, rather more problematic for old Etonian David Cameron, both in Opposition and in coalition Government, than for either Thatcher or Howard.²²

¹⁶ The emergence of think tanks and of special advisers is discussed in Chapter 4 as evidence of more politicised, more ideological policy advice and influence, which I think is caught up with this shift from collective understandings of identity and meaning to more personal ones.

¹⁷ McCulloch, ‘Privatising the Past? History and Education Policy in the 1990s’, pp. 75-76. McCulloch cites many examples from speeches and interviews etc., including James Callaghan, Margaret Thatcher, Kenneth Baker and journalist Michael Jones. See also: Haydn, ‘History’, p. 90.

¹⁸ In the interview, conducted at No. 10, the Prime Minister actually said: ‘they [people with problems] are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first.’ Thatcher, *Interview for ‘Woman’s Own’*, (23rd September, 1987).

¹⁹ See: Thatcher, *Speech to Conservative Party Conference: confrontation with reality*, (14th October, 1977). On Thatcher see also: McCulloch, ‘Privatising the Past? History and Education Policy in the 1990s’, pp. 77-78. Interestingly, as Secretary of State in Heath’s government, Thatcher had allowed more local authorities to go comprehensive than any other Education Minister: Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon, *The right kind of history*, p. 144.

²⁰ See: Howard, *Prime Minister’s Questions*, (3rd December, 2003), Column 498. Retrieved 13th February 2013.

²¹ McCulloch, ‘Privatising the Past? History and Education Policy in the 1990s’, p. 78.

²² Cameron condemned supporters of grammars as ‘inverse class warriors’ in 2007, severely reprimanding Graham Brady for publishing a pro-grammar article in the *New Statesman*. He has

In making an argument about a cultural shift towards a more privatised understanding of the past, we need to be mindful that writing about education policy as a historian tends to draw out the personal history in the politics. In reviewing Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon's *The right kind of history*, Peter Mandler notes: 'the social backgrounds and political careers of every one of the 55 education ministers between 1900 and 2010 are elaborately rehearsed, even though as the book says most of them paid little attention to schools and often saw their time in education as a mere political stepping stone.'²³ Mandler ascribes this practice to 'Cannadine's preferences as an historian of British elites', but it surely reflects more clearly a wider historiographical attentiveness to biography. Further, the personalisation of the past was happening at a time when not only was there an increasing interest in subjective experience in the academic discipline of history, but also an emerging concern with reflexivity in the social sciences, and with reflective practice in professional spheres, such as education and health.²⁴ Conditioning these developments is a certain confessional or revelatory spirit, the idea that if we speak or act we must expose the personal connections and commitments that inform our speech or action. So, there seems to develop in many spheres a new focus on the individual rather than the collective, emphasising agency and the capacity for self-determination.

This discussion returns us to the dichotomy between content/knowledge and process/skills, which has been a particular feature of political debates on history education in this period. Before moving on to a consideration of the Thatcher, Major and Blair governments, it is worth noting that this new interest in individual experience and choice came into tension in the formulation of the National Curriculum with neoconservative understandings of history as inheritance. The latter's focus on the transmission of a canon of (British) historical knowledge to pupils is not easily reconciled with subjective concerns. The National Curriculum has been critiqued for its emphasis on the transmission of knowledge rather than the development of skills, and the ideological impetus behind that orientation. It amounted, for Keith Crawford, 'to a moral cleansing of the school curriculum, freeing it from the spectre of diverse curriculum areas, particularly those which have as their focus

tried to detoxify the Etonian legacy, once claiming to be a member of the 'sharp-elbowed middle classes'. See: Cameron, *PM Direct in Manchester*, (10th August, 2010).

²³ Mandler, *Review of The Right Kind of History: Teaching the Past in Twentieth-Century England*, (2012).

²⁴ Bolton, *Reflective practice: writing and professional development*, (London: SAGE, 2005); Finlay and Gough, *Reflexivity: a practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences*, (Oxford: Blackwell Science, 2003).

pedagogical and epistemological principles which include the *questioning of values* such as national culture, social cohesion and economic equality'.²⁵

In terms of history, while historical *knowledge* appears to have been regarded as stable (as well as safe, and in a sense culturally necessary), historical *skills*, by this argument, were seen as potentially undermining of that stability. A focus on skills might lead to children being 'taught to question and interpret the validity and coherence' of the knowledge.²⁶ It is striking that personalisation as a policy principle can be sustained by a government at the same time as it is evincing anxieties about individual agency; indeed, personalisation can be seen as ambivalent, if not inimical, to individual agency. New Labour's focus on skills preserved if not extended the distancing of pupils from critical engagement; a shift from the language of "knowledge" to that of "skills" does not necessarily reflect an education policy concerned with developing students' critical capacities.²⁷ In the case of history, it may even inhibit them by fragmenting the curriculum and dissociating the "skills" from the "knowledge" that constitutes the raw material with which historians work. For Marxist historian Terry Wrigley, this is a deliberate programme: 'Certainly in an era of multiple global crises – environmental, economic, military – the last thing capitalism can afford is an education that enables young people to make sense of the world, a schooling in which their voice and agency is encouraged'.²⁸ An account based more on Blair's New Labour and the political accommodations and amalgamations that brought it into power and kept it there might be more persuasive.²⁹ Wrigley's analysis is still helpful, however, in drawing out the continuities with the preceding Tory administrations; these continuities provide vital context for the broader discussion of the barriers to using history in policy today.

²⁵ Crawford, 'A History of the Right: The Battle for Control of National Curriculum History 1989-1994', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 43 (1995), p. 438. Emphasis mine.

²⁶ Crawford, 'A History of the Right: The Battle for Control of National Curriculum History 1989-1994', p. 446. Also: Ball, 'Education, Majorism and 'the Curriculum of the Dead'', pp. 202-204.

²⁷ See on literacy education: Wrigley, 'Curriculum change and the Blair years', in *Blair's educational legacy. Thirteen years of New Labour*, ed. Green, (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 128-133. On enterprise education: Beck, *Meritocracy, citizenship and education*, p. 120. The discussion on skills and agency under New Labour will be pursued below.

²⁸ Wrigley, 'Curriculum change and the Blair years', p. 139.

²⁹ Pugh makes the point that it was Blair's pursuit of continuities with Conservative policy, especially with Thatcherism, that underpinned his appeal for confidence in New Labour as a governing party: Pugh, *Speak for Britain!: a new history of the Labour Party*, (London: Vintage, 2011), pp. 397, 401-392. Wrigley points to the single-minded pursuit of economic competitiveness through education, a further line of neoliberal continuity that needs to be seen as part of the New Labour claim to the credentials of government, especially in economic terms: Wrigley, 'Curriculum change and the Blair years', pp. 128-129.

The arguments made thus far have implications for the use of history in policy. If history is confined to providing referents in the past, and those referents are personal in nature (although deployed for wider appeal), it is hard to see any potential for a systemic and systematic role for historical thinking in policy development. It is, indeed, possible to go further, and argue that the privatisation of the past involved, even required, a *de-intellectualisation* of history in politics. The personal-historical images invoked in political positioning work emotively, privileging (selective, idealised) memory and common-sense beliefs over theory and research; they seek to override, dismiss or displace processes by which evidence is analysed and implications assessed.³⁰ The neoliberal elevation of enterprise, technology and vocational skills during Thatcher's early years was clearly a challenge to the status of history. Yet the neoconservative concern to preserve a canon of sanctioned historical knowledge was no more conducive to the idea of history as "usable" and relevant for policy. So the present-centred character of New Labour does not provide a sufficient explanation for the "history gap" in modern British politics. There is a rather longer account to be recognised, one that connects to questions of national status, of economic and social changes and of the role and reach of government as well as of the character and purpose of education.

History as expertise and the definition of the National Curriculum under Thatcher and Major

Although realised through Baker's 1988 Education Reform Act, the origins of the National Curriculum lie in discussions that began at the end of the 1960s. Concerns about education were raised across the political spectrum, yet the debate became highly charged and politically polarised. Labour became associated with the education establishment – teachers, inspectors, Local Education Authority (LEA) and Department of Education and Science (DES) officials – and "progressive" approaches to teaching, Conservatives with a sharp critique about standards, essential knowledge and national standing. For history, progressive approaches drew on "new history", which influenced secondary education in particular through the syllabus produced by the Schools Council History Project (SCHP). The Project had been set up by the Schools Council in 1972 to revitalise a subject with which pupils struggled to engage. By the end of the 1980s over a third of schools were teaching

³⁰ On the theme of anti-intellectualism and the cult of common sense see: Ball, 'Education, Majorism and 'the Curriculum of the Dead'', pp. 207-208. It should be noted that certain forms of research (particularly the "hardest" quantitative methods) have policy credibility, at least under Blair's evidence-based policymaking, itself a highly problematic idea, see discussion in Chapter 4 below.

the syllabus, which became a GCSE in 1986. The emphasis in the SCHP was on the development of historical skills and understanding, and the plurality of interpretations of historical evidence was recognised and explored. In-depth studies of historical moments were preferred to chronological surveys, and pupils challenged to consider the perspectives of people that had traditionally not been given historical attention.³¹ For the Right, history as a subject was implicated in the ‘moral panic’ about standards in schools not only for its methods – the emphasis on “processes” rather than “facts”, empathy rather than knowledge, plurality rather than coherence – but also for the *implications* of teaching history using them.³² As Margaret Thatcher wrote in the forward to a Centre for Policy Studies publication in 1979: ‘a whole generation has been brought up to misunderstand and denigrate our national history . . . for the blackest picture is drawn by our Socialist academics and writers of precisely those periods of our history when greatest progress was achieved compared with earlier times, and when Britain was furthest in advance of other nations’.³³

A similar constellation of issues and ideologies is evident during John Howard’s premiership of Australia (1996-2007). Howard pursued a mix of neoconservative social and cultural policy and neoliberal economic policy; he also made both contributions to and decisive political interventions in the “History Wars”. Early in his administration, he echoed Thatcher in condemning a “black armband” view of our past... a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination,’ going on to argue that ‘the balance sheet of our history is one of heroic achievement and that we have achieved much more as a nation of which we can be proud than of which we should be ashamed.’³⁴ History as a subject assumed particular importance, a site in which the influence of the left-wing intelligentsia – the “producers” – was both evident and inherently damaging. Howard also initiated the development of a national curriculum, in 2006, criticising school history for being ‘taught without any sense of structured narrative, replaced by a fragmented stew of “themes” and “issues”’ and informed by a ‘culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement

³¹ See: Crawford, ‘A History of the Right: The Battle for Control of National Curriculum History 1989-1994’, pp. 435-436; Waldman, ‘The Politics of History Teaching in England and France during the 1980s’, pp. 202-203; Dawson, ‘The Schools History Project: A Study in Curriculum Development’, *The History Teacher* 22 (1989).

³² On the ‘moral panic’ on school standards: Crawford, ‘A History of the Right: The Battle for Control of National Curriculum History 1989-1994’, p. 434.

³³ Thomas, *History, capitalism and freedom*, (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1979), v.

³⁴ Howard, *The Liberal Tradition: the beliefs and values which guide federal government*, (18th November, 1996).

is questioned or repudiated'.³⁵ Strikingly, in France, in the context of a consensus on republican citizenship, the political polarisation on school history evident in England and Australia did not emerge. Reforms to restore a chronological and celebratory national history in schools – initiated in 1984 and arising from similar fears about the impact of “new history” on national memory, identity and values – were developed and implemented by Education Ministers from very different positions on the political spectrum. So ‘what appeared a profoundly Tory project in England was accomplished by the Socialists in France, with politicians from the Gaullists to the Communists applauding what all saw as a battle for the salvation of a threatened national identity.’³⁶

Howard was, however, operating in very different circumstances from Thatcher, who was able to call on a sense of crisis – economic and social – to lend political weight to views that had popular and emotive resonance (which may help explain why an Australian national curriculum remains in development, with history only partially implemented). The Black Papers had ‘captured a critical mood about education’, sharpened in the early 1970s in a context of economic downturn as Britain’s post-war boom came to an end with rising inflation and unemployment and the decline of manufacturing industries as a result of international competition.³⁷ It was not just school education that caused concern; in 1974, the rediscovery of low levels of adult literacy led to the launch of a major campaign, *A right to read*, by the British Association of Settlements. Government funding followed through the newly-established Adult Literacy Resource Agency, later to become the Basic Skills Agency.³⁸ In October 1976, a month after Chancellor Denis Healey had been forced to approach the International Monetary Fund for a loan of \$3.9bn, Prime Minister James Callaghan launched a ‘great debate’ on education, an inquiry that included the establishment of a core curriculum for schools.

A proposal for such a curriculum – including English, maths, science and perhaps a foreign language, and to take up half of the teaching timetable – was then made in Shirley Williams’ Green Paper, *Education in Schools*, published in 1977.³⁹ As John Beck points out, ‘there is a huge leap’ from the tentative terms in which Labour’s reforms were presented and the

³⁵ Bonnell and Crotty, ‘Australia's History under Howard, 1996-2007’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617 (2008), pp. 152-154, 161.

³⁶ Waldman, ‘The Politics of History Teaching in England and France during the 1980s’, pp. 211-212.

³⁷ Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon, *The right kind of history*, p. 179.

³⁸ Green, *Further Education: a historical perspective*, pp. 7-8.

³⁹ Department of Education and Science, *Education in schools: a consultative document*, (London, 1977).

'extensive and highly prescriptive national curriculum' introduced by Baker in 1988.⁴⁰ One factor is the very different views of the teaching profession held by the Labour administrations of the 1970s and Thatcher's government. Callaghan had asked Williams to open up a broad debate to inform her inquiry through a series of conferences with 'teachers, employers, parents, trades unionists and other interested parties'.⁴¹ By contrast, Conservative policy thinking, both neoliberal and neoconservative in emphasis, was influenced by suspicion of the motives, intentions and professionalism of the education establishment: teachers; Local Education Authorities; inspectors; academics; even civil servants.⁴² So while there was a level of shared concern between Labour and the Conservatives to monitor standards in schools more closely, there was a marked departure in views about the role and responsibility of educationalists – and of government.

The particular significance here is that such suspicion arguably reflected and reinforced the anti-intellectual, anti-expert inclinations that characterised the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s (and, indeed, were evident in the Blair era interventions in teaching methods as well as content).⁴³ This shift in how policymakers regarded the education establishment can be crystallised in the emergence of an apparent dichotomy between "consumers" and "producers". Choice is perhaps one of the most powerful policy concepts of the last forty years and is applied to almost every area of public service. The choices of individuals, informed by their "private pasts", can be understood as disciplining and shaping producer groups and their offerings. There are implications here for the capacity of specialist forms of knowledge, such as history, to inform the policymaking process. If policy development is seen as an ideological process led by government, from which producer influence must be marginalised in order to meet consumer choice, a political culture is created that is not conducive to the provision of evidence, expertise or professional advice.

Interestingly, Thatcher did seek the advice of historians on one significant occasion, convening a seminar at Chequers on 24th March 1990 on 'the German question': what history could reveal about the national characteristics of Germany that might indicate whether a reunited Germany could be trusted by Britain and what the most appropriate

⁴⁰ Beck, *Meritocracy, citizenship and education*, p. 99.

⁴¹ Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon, *The right kind of history*, p. 180.

⁴² Crawford, 'A History of the Right: The Battle for Control of National Curriculum History 1989-1994', p. 437. See also: Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon, *The right kind of history*, p. 186. Interestingly, this suspicion has resurfaced, see: Shepherd, 'Michael Gove labels professors critical of new curriculum as "bad academia"', *The Guardian*, 21st March, 2013.

⁴³ On the Blair government's centralised control of teaching methods see: Wrigley, 'Curriculum change and the Blair years', pp. 129-130.

stance might be in terms of relations.⁴⁴ The terms set for the discussion indicate Thatcher's own position – she had sought to stop reunification – and the challenges of the experts seem to have made little impression on her conviction that Germany was 'historically a dangerous power', likely to embrace another mission in Europe. George Urban, the Hungarian-born writer and broadcaster (and only non-historian invited to the seminar) noted the Prime Minister's 'emotional tone and her reluctance to go along with some of our reasoning', as well as her 'highly personalized' attitude to the world's politicians.⁴⁵ The minutes of the meeting, later leaked to the press, managed to contrive the experts' endorsement of Thatcher's fears about Germany and the German national character, indicating No. 10's willingness to claim private opinion as evidence. His comments to *The Times* cited earlier – about listening 'too much to the experts' and the need to 'pay more attention to instincts' – suggest her successor, John Major, was prepared to be more forthright; they seem to reveal a Westminster environment rather unresponsive, and consciously so, to the provision of external, expert advice.⁴⁶

The appeal to 'instincts' – which seems to mean a common-sense, populist perspective – as a basis for policy development has found resonance more recently in government appointments of "celebrity" tsars, reviewers or advisers. These high-profile appointees can be seen as mediators, chosen to connect the government with the public on an issue, rather than to marshal evidence and advise accordingly. It may be that expertise is indeed brought to bear on these reviews, whether through working groups and panels or through consultation responses. The perceived need for a figurehead with popular or sectoral appeal does, however, suggest the primacy of the private, emotive/common-sense views of the "consumer" in political thinking over the collective, professional expertise located in "producer" communities. Under the Coalition, Mary Portas has led a review into the future of high streets and Carol Vorderman was designated mathematics tsar. Advisers need not, however, be figures with mass popular appeal to fit this model; the endorsement of particular sectors can also be sought through the nomination: for example, of Arcadia Group

⁴⁴ Hugh Trevor-Roper, Timothy Garton Ash, Norman Stone, as well as American academics Fritz Stern and Gordon Craig and broadcaster and writer George Urban, who left a detailed account of the seminar and the 'fallout' from it: Urban, *Diplomacy and disillusion at the court of Margaret Thatcher: an insider's view*, (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 118-159. Also present were Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, and Thatcher's foreign policy adviser, Charles Powell. See also: Young, *This blessed plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair*, (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1999), pp. 359-362. I am grateful to Nick Blackbourn for pointing me to the Chequers seminar.

⁴⁵ Urban, *Diplomacy and disillusion*, pp. 141, 147.

⁴⁶ Hollindale, 'Subversive texts'.

CEO, Sir Philip Green, to conduct an efficiency review of Government. Expertise is not enough, it seems, but must be led, and visibly so, by an individual with a personal “brand” and status.

History education has also received attention in this way. Simon Schama was appointed by Education Secretary, Michael Gove, to look at ‘how we can put British history at the heart of a revived national curriculum’, a role with which Niall Ferguson’s name had also been connected.⁴⁷ In his speech to the first Conservative Party Conference since the General Election that brought in the Coalition Government, Gove had expressed regret that ‘the current approach we have to history [teaching] denies children the opportunity to hear our island story’. And so ‘the sundering of our society from its past’ was, for him, ‘one of the under-appreciated tragedies of our time’. As the historian James Vernon, writing in the *Guardian*, has pointed out, neither Schama nor Ferguson has any experience of schools, nor are they ‘scholarly experts’ in the field of British history; rather, ‘it the popularity of their TV shows that has commended them to Gove. Expertise is now a matter of television ratings.’⁴⁸ While Vernon’s sharp characterisation aims for effect, it does point to a redefinition of the qualifying characteristics of the government adviser that is significant here. Parliament has also expressed concern; during Brown’s administration, the Public Administration Select Committee conducted an inquiry on extra-Parliamentary appointments within government.⁴⁹

In terms of education, the role that expertise was able to play in policymaking was conditioned by the relative influence of neoliberal and neoconservative thinking in the Tory governments of the 1980s and 1990s. The “producers”, the educational establishment, remained visible during the first phase of reform following the 1988 Act, through involvement in the two newly-established agencies leading the process: the National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council. Given that successive Education Secretaries, Keith Joseph and Kenneth Baker, were hostile to the establishment as being, in the former’s words, ‘anti-excellence, anti-selection, and anti-market’, the presence of people regarded as complicit in the decline of the education system

⁴⁷ Gove, *Speech to the Conservative Party Conference*, (10th May, 2010).

⁴⁸ Vernon, ‘School history gets the TV treatment’.

⁴⁹ Public Administration Select Committee, *Goats and Tsars: Ministerial and other appointments from outside Parliament*, (London: House of Commons, 2010).

within the bodies charged to reform it, seems surprising.⁵⁰ When Baker took over from the more neoliberal Joseph in 1986, the balance of power shifted towards neoconservatives, but it was the sudden accession of Major following Thatcher's resignation in November 1990 that provided their real opportunity, beginning a second phase of reform.⁵¹ By 1992, the neoconservative 'cultural restorationists' were in the ascendancy and had become the 'new educational establishment'.⁵² It was this second phase that saw the real marginalisation of professional expertise. The revision of the national curriculum between 1991 and 1995 has been described as a story 'of systematic rejection of the experts, disregard of facts, indulgence of prejudice, nostalgia and instinct'. It was the 1995 revision that made history no longer compulsory after 14.⁵³

The curriculum that first emerged following the 1988 Act had combined features of the "new history" that had so concerned politicians, historians and commentators of the Right – for example the inclusion of non-British history from non-British perspectives – and those of more traditional teaching. This combination has been described as an 'uneasy mix' or, more appreciatively and probably appropriately, a 'compromise'; it was the product of negotiation between the History Working Group (HWG), established in January 1989, and the Education Minister. John MacGregor took on the brief in July 1989, intervening to ensure British history occupied at least fifty per cent of course content, rather than the forty initially proposed. Pressure to include essential historical knowledge – dates, events, people – in the Attainment Targets, which all subjects were required to set, was, however, successfully resisted. The Final Report of the HWG, published in March 1990, thus saw the purpose of history to develop in pupils a 'critically sharpened intelligence *with which to make sense of current affairs*', through introducing them to the 'distinctive methodology of historians', as well as an understanding of their roots and 'shared inheritances'.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Cannadine citing Joseph's memoirs: Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon, *The right kind of history*, p. 186. Joseph was Secretary of State for Education and Science from 11th September 1981 to 21st May 1986; Baker succeeded him and stayed in post until 24th July 1989.

⁵¹ According to Crawford, 'during the early 1980s it was the vocational elements of neo-liberalism, eagerly supported by Keith Joseph, which were at the forefront of curriculum development'. His 1985 White Paper, *Better schools*, reflected his emphasis on vocational learning: Department of Education and Science, *Better schools*, (London, 1985). See: Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon, *The right kind of history*, p. 185. The shift towards neo-conservatism occurred under Baker, and the policy battle for a link between education and vocationalism and enterprise had been lost by 1987: Crawford, 'A History of the Right: The Battle for Control of National Curriculum History 1989-1994', p. 438.

⁵² Ball, 'Education, Majorism and 'the Curriculum of the Dead'', pp. 197-198.

⁵³ Hollindale, 'Subversive texts'.

⁵⁴ Department of Education and Science, *National Curriculum History Working Group: Final Report*, (London, 1990), pp. 1-2. Emphasis mine.

'Inheritances' was itself a compromise, chosen, in the words of HWG member, Alice Prochaska, as 'distinct from the more homogeneous and rather overloaded word heritage. The pluralism of British society, now and in the past, seemed to us to be important.'⁵⁵

Although the history curriculum arrived at a functional accommodation of "skills" and "knowledge", the tension between them remained unresolved. This connoted another 'uneasy mix' – that of neoliberalism and neoconservatism – in which the purpose and character not only of education, but also of history, was in question. Neoliberalism recognised a need for intellectual autonomy, and hence looked for education to broaden horizons, while neoconservatism sought a 'kind of closure, to socialize children into the acceptance of a set of more specific and pre-selected beliefs and values, constructed around a highly selected, conservative, and idealized version of the nation's past'.⁵⁶ This mix of "old" and "new" approaches to history was reaffirmed in revisions to the curriculum, maintaining, as Terry Haydn has put it, a 'dissonance' between the aims of the curriculum and the 'arrangements and systems for delivering them'. He points to 'the corrosive influence of "coverage" and "the canon"', which, once established, ensures the persistence of debate about what should be included.⁵⁷ That is not to say that coverage as a notion can be dispensed with in history teaching: rather, that it can be pernicious if seen as an end in itself.

A central irony, I would argue, of the on-going and often highly-charged altercation in history education between the proponents of knowledge-based and skills-oriented models, is that the very same critique in terms of the effects on *learning* can and is levelled at both. Whether teaching is focused on the transmission of a body of "content" or the exploration of themes to cultivate skills, students are left without the resources to develop and articulate a coherent sense of continuity and change over time. The polarised terms in which school history is discussed seem particularly unproductive from an educational perspective, although these are indicative of the politicised nature of history as a subject.⁵⁸ Political interest in, and contest over, history education does not, however, necessarily indicate that the subject was seen as holding significance and value. While the National Curriculum consolidated the primacy of traditional subjects – the list being almost identical

⁵⁵ Prochaska, 'The History Working Group: Reflections and Diary', p. 87.

⁵⁶ Beck, *Meritocracy, citizenship and education*, p. 104.

⁵⁷ Haydn, 'History', pp. 91-92.

⁵⁸ Clark makes the point that some of the core questions in history education are not methodological but political: Clark, 'National Identity, State Formation and Patriotism: The Role of History in the Public Mind', *History Workshop* (1990), pp. 97-98.

to the 1904 Secondary Regulations – the influence of new economic competitiveness arguments is evident in the balance between them, with more than half the curriculum time taken up by maths, science and technology.⁵⁹ It seems as if, at least in the case of history, there was little capacity for overlap between the categories of education, with a clear distinction made between the “academic” and the “applied”.

Two important, and interlinked, implications for history arise from this analysis, both of which are significant for the broader question of thinking with history in policy. First is the impact on the form, remit and purpose of history teaching if the subject is regarded as detached from contemporary relevance, requiring a body of knowledge of the past to be transmitted from teacher to pupil. This detachment was a literal one in the original formulation of the curriculum following the 1988 ERA. Kenneth Clarke, who took on the Education brief in Major’s incoming reshuffle, ordered political history to stop twenty years before the present, a striking example of Haydn’s ‘dissonance’ between ‘aims’ – which include understanding the present in the light of the past – and ‘arrangements’. Although this particular stricture was removed in the 1995 revision, pupils’ difficulties articulating the point of studying history and the ‘usefulness’ of their work may be seen as a product of the way history as a subject was set up in the curriculum. Teachers under pressure to cover the ‘mass of content’ and to prepare students for high-stakes tests are perhaps not well-placed to counteract this perception; they are also in compliance mode.⁶⁰ The second implication is the primacy of “knowledge” in such a system. In a context in which singular narratives are unproblematic and simply transmitted from teachers to pupils, historical *skills* are concealed. The teacher is no more engaged than the pupil in the construction of the narratives, nor in the analysis and synthesis of evidence, the questioning and puzzle-solving, that construction entails.⁶¹

The transmission/reception model of history teaching can be located within a broader populist political philosophy. David Marquand has argued that the ‘populist centrism’

⁵⁹ Wrigley, ‘Curriculum change and the Blair years’, p. 125.

⁶⁰ Haydn, ‘History’, p. 88. Wrigley argues that ‘lists of content to be covered and complex assessment demands... focused their [teachers’] attention on compliance with the standardised curriculum rather than reaching out to learners’. My suggestion is that both teachers and learners are placed in a position of compliance due to the marginalisation of ‘skills’: Wrigley, ‘Curriculum change and the Blair years’, p. 127. See also Seixas on the exclusion of history teachers from the academic community of enquiry also places them as passive receivers and transmitters of facts and explanations: Seixas, ‘The Community of Inquiry as a Basis for Knowledge and Learning: The Case of History’, *American Educational Research Journal* 30 (1993).

⁶¹ On the exclusion of school history teachers from the academic ‘community of inquiry’, see Seixas, ‘The Community of Inquiry’. This discussion is pursued further in the chapters that follow.

common to Thatcherite Conservatism and Blairite New Labour ‘has no place for the civic ideal of open debate and public engagement... Citizenship is hollowed out. The people are passive, not active – consumers of public policy, not participants in shaping it’.⁶² If history is one of the subjects most closely associated with the development of citizenship, then it is likely to be conditioned by how citizenship is understood. A history education oriented to the socialisation of pupils into a set of common understandings and values would align with a ‘hollowed-out’ form of citizenship; in Thatcherite Conservatism and Blairite New Labour such citizenship involved the exercise of market choices and circumscribed forms of civic engagement such as volunteering, with little active democratic participation. Although pupils’ limited political understanding was a problem identified by politicians in the 1990s, a more critical history curriculum, encouraging connections between past and present, was not seen as a solution.⁶³ History as a school subject was *depoliticised*, and not just through elimination of contemporary “content”, but also, I would argue, more significantly, through the marginalisation of skills: skills that would help – in an updated version of Seeley’s ‘school of statesmanship’ – to develop the political, cultural and economic literacies and critical capacities needed for informed decision-making and participation in public life.

The cultural restorationist influence on the development of the National Curriculum in the late 1980s and early 1990s was part of an international phenomenon.⁶⁴ In the US, Arthur Schlesinger published *The disuniting of America* in 1991, and the 1994 standards for teaching history gave rise to a ‘storm of protest’ – including a 99-1 vote in the Senate in condemnation – about the emphasis given to minorities and not to ‘heroic figures’ and the ‘special qualities of Western civilization’.⁶⁵ Australia’s “History Wars” began in 1993 with Geoffrey Blainey coining the term ‘black armband history’ later picked up by Howard to describe accounts where the balance was shifted too far towards white Australian blame and shame. Keith Windschuttle’s *The killing of history*, came out the following year, its title echoed in 1998 by Jack Granatstein’s polemic *Who killed Canadian history?*⁶⁶ The debates

⁶² Marquand, *Decline of the public: the hollowing-out of citizenship*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), p. 128; cited in: Beck, *Meritocracy, citizenship and education*, pp. 38-39.

⁶³ Haydn, ‘History’, p. 93.

⁶⁴ See: Stuurman and Grever, ‘Introduction: Old Canons and New Histories’, in *Beyond the canon: history for the twenty-first century*, eds. Grever and Stuurman, (Basingstoke; New York, 2007).

⁶⁵ Stearns, ‘History debates: the United States’, in *Contemporary public debates over history education*, eds. Nakou and Barca, (Greenwich, Conn., 2010), pp. 47-48; Schlesinger, *The disuniting of America*, (Knoxville, Tenn.: Whittle Direct Books, 1991).

⁶⁶ Seixas, ‘A modest proposal for change in Canadian history education’, in *Contemporary public debates over history education*, eds. Nakou and Barca, (Greenwich, Conn., 2010), p. 12; Windschuttle,

in these countries were perhaps sharpened by federal/local divides – in Canada these also had a linguistic dimension – and by unresolved questions associated with white settler and governmental treatment of indigenous populations. What is particularly interesting for our purposes is not so much the commonality in terms of cultural restorationism, but the nature of the governmental responses: how they approached the reform of school history following the restorationist challenge. An affinity is evident between Peter Stearns’ discussion of the increasing emphasis on ‘habits of mind’ in American history education and Peter Seixas’ account of the Canadian focus on progression in ‘historical thinking’. Seixas is clear about the need to shift the terms of the debate and hence the problem from one of ‘which story should we tell in our history texts and classes?’ to ‘students’ understanding of how to handle the different and sometimes conflicting stories of the past’. The Canadian curriculum and assessments aimed, in his account, to equip teachers and students to explore exactly those questions that have proved so contentious politically.⁶⁷

The 1999 revisions to the National Curriculum for England, Wales and Northern Ireland set similar aims, with pupils required to ‘assess the validity of differing claims about the past, to critique interpretations... to detect flaws and elisions in arguments, gaps in evidence, and awareness of the extent to which they have been presented with all the evidence available’.⁶⁸ The framework of interpretation, significance and enquiry spoke to concerns about recognising the relevance of history and the capacity of students to make sense of the present in the light of the past. Thinking about significance draws out the ‘so what?’ question, vital for the development of critical thinking – but also for making connections between history and policy.⁶⁹ ‘So what?’ is the question at the heart of policy work. It challenges the person to whom it is directed to go beyond the evidence and the interpretation, to make sense of them, not in their own terms, but in the context of the relevant policy issue and for the decision-maker and the decision-making process. As with previous versions of the National Curriculum, unless “aims” are in alignment with the delivery “arrangements”, they are unlikely to be achieved; a reconciliation between content/knowledge and process/skills remains absent. This absence needs to be understood in political as well as pedagogic terms, as a challenge to reconcile conflicting political conceptions about the character and purpose of education and history. This

The killing of history: how a discipline is being murdered by literary critics and social theorists; Granatstein, *Who killed Canadian history?*, (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998).

⁶⁷ Seixas, ‘A modest proposal for change’, p. 20.

⁶⁸ Haydn, ‘History’, p. 94.

⁶⁹ Haydn, ‘History’, p. 98.

challenge persisted into the New Labour administrations; a “Third Way” of emphasising transferable skills emerged, a concept that overrides discipline-specific notions knowledge and meaning-making.

Skills, trainability and education as economic policy under New Labour

The combination of neoliberal and neoconservative agendas in a ‘popular and politically potent’ yet ‘ideologically impure’ way can be seen as a ‘key political achievement’ of the Thatcher and subsequent Tory governments. It allowed the introduction of quasi-markets while permitting the strengthening of the state. Beck proposes that the accession of the New Labour government in 1997 ‘did relatively little to change the fundamentals of this potent if partially contradictory mix’ of liberalisation/marketisation and centralisation/intervention.⁷⁰ This contention could, however, be put in rather stronger terms, as the extension of Conservative policy. Local government serves as a compelling case study here, as it represents one of the most significant lines of policy continuity with Thatcherite Conservatism; its implications reach far beyond local government into major policy areas, such as education and health. It is also a line that has been picked up by the Coalition Government.

The alliance of neoliberal and neoconservative agendas in the area of local government policy allowed market pressures to be brought to bear on councils, while also imposing an interventionist regime of inspection and regulation. Local authorities were cast as implementers of national policy, inviting citizens to ascribe any failings, for example, in terms of access to services – these being clearly identifiable through performance against target data – to the failings of the authorities themselves, rather than to resourcing or policy issues.⁷¹ Such a regime thereby places Local Authorities in an equivalent position to “producers”. New Labour appropriated and reconceived that ‘popular and politically potent’ mix to produce ‘new localism’.⁷² Both Conservative and Labour manifestations of this policy demonstrate that there is considerable rhetorical power in the language of choice, devolution and empowerment, and that it can be deployed where governments ‘also evince

⁷⁰ Beck, *Meritocracy, citizenship and education*, pp. 105-106.

⁷¹ Hill, *New Agendas in the Study of the Policy Process*, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), pp. 7-8.

⁷² See: Communities and Local Government, *Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper*, (London, 2006), . The Lyons Inquiry into Local Government was also commissioned by Labour, reporting in 2007.

a lack of trust in local capacity and capability, particularly those of local authorities'.⁷³ This internally contradictory stance on local government is relevant here as it represents the ideological backdrop against which reforms to education can be understood. So, the 1988 ERA aimed to deliver greater autonomy to schools, while centralising authority over the curriculum and delegating considerable powers to the Secretary of State.⁷⁴ The Act also provided for schools to opt out of local authority control, a policy drive that was embraced by New Labour through the City Academies – created by the Learning and Skills Act 2000 for failing schools, later the broader Academies programme – and accelerated under the Coalition Government by Gove.⁷⁵

The continuity in thinking on local government can be seen as another dimension to the argument about the consolidation of the power of the centre, the marginalisation of external expertise and the privileging of the consumer over the producer, the individual over the collective. In essence, this is about trust, and in what structures, groups and processes it can be placed. When looking at education, New Labour did not just perpetuate Conservative policy – by retaining central oversight despite commitments in Opposition to increasing teachers' flexibility – but took it a stage further, by intervening in teaching methods.⁷⁶ The issues of pupil agency and the development of critical thinking skills, explored above with regards to the development of the National Curriculum under Conservative governments, remain relevant. Although the discourse was one of "skills" in the context of education as 'our best economic policy', the pedagogical strategies promoted

⁷³ Green, Lloyd and Parham, 'Living heritage: universities as anchor institutions in sustainable communities', (Porto, Portugal: Heritage 2012, 2012, unpublished conference paper).

⁷⁴ Wrigley, 'Curriculum change and the Blair years', p. 125. This approach has continued under the Coalition with the abolition of the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA) and the absorption of its work into the Department for Education.

⁷⁵ The Conservative manifesto for the 2010 general election included the commitment to allow all schools the chance to achieve Academy status, with pre-approval for all outstanding ones. Academy status would also be imposed: 'any school that is in special measures for more than a year will be taken over immediately by a successful academy provider'. See: Conservative Party, *Invitation to join the government of Britain*, (London: 2010), p. 53. These policies are being taken forward in the Coalition government. In January 2012, Gove announced that 1529 academies are now open in England, with one in three pupils in state secondaries attending an academy. Gove, *Speech on academies*, (4th January, 2012). The threat of forced conversion to academy status of Downhills Primary School in Haringey and the dismissal of the governors has led to protests by teachers and parents, with industrial action possible and extensive media coverage. On the tensions between central control and the rhetoric of freedom for schools: Berry, 'Does Gove really want to set us free?', *Forum* 54 (2012).

⁷⁶ Wrigley terms this structural oversight the 'machinery of surveillance': Wrigley, 'Curriculum change and the Blair years', p. 128.

by government did not encourage intellectual autonomy.⁷⁷ Hence, in literacy, these strategies reinforced patterns of question and response, rather than the exploratory conversation that would support critical engagement with texts. Wrigley's 'tentative' conclusion is that 'the attempt to increase "efficiency" of skills transmission aligns with a neoliberal policy direction, and the stripping away of the critical-cultural aspects of reading is a local manifestation of wider neoconservative political disempowerment'.⁷⁸ Labour's education policy produced another 'uneasy mix'.

The concept of the *efficiency* of skills transmission is an interesting one, and points to a distinction in the definition of skills that is of relevance to this thesis. *Disciplinary* skills – the tools and techniques specific to a discipline, central to the US and Canadian reforms to history education mentioned above – are rather different from the *generic* skills associated with "trainability". Part of the discourse established by Thatcher and developed by Blair, through concepts such as the "knowledge economy", is the imperative to respond to the market. In educational terms, this requires adaptability and a more instrumental and short-term mind-set. This stands in contrast to 'more stable bases of identity formation', such as those associated with subject-specific academic training. Such a view places the market – or the government, intervening to ensure an effective accommodation of market needs – in control: a very different model from 'progression in historical thinking', where the student's intellectual development is in the foreground.⁷⁹

Hence, Labour's extension of the curricular structures put in place by Conservative governments can be seen as a further instrumentalisation of education, involving what could be termed a "de-disciplinisation". It is this latter dimension that has since made discussing the question of skills more difficult. "Skills" as a concept has acquired, for some in the education sectors, a certain toxicity, by being associated not with disciplinary proficiency and identity, but with generic trainability. The connection between education and economic policy is a long-standing one and, as a broad understanding about the realisation of human potential within society, is not necessarily in tension with a concept of disciplinary skills. But the neoliberal emphasis on enterprise and competitiveness evident in the early Thatcher

⁷⁷ Education as 'our best economic policy' is from Blair, *Speech to constituency Labour Party*, (10th April, 2005). The speech was part of the General Election campaign. Early in his third term, a further speech in Sedgefield emphasised the message: This country will succeed or fail on the basis of how it changes itself and gears up to this new economy, based on knowledge. Education therefore is now the centre of economic policy making for the future': Blair, *Speech in Sedgefield: education and regeneration*, (18th November, 2005).

⁷⁸ Wrigley, 'Curriculum change and the Blair years', pp. 128-129, 133. Quote on 133.

⁷⁹ Beck, *Meritocracy, citizenship and education*, pp. 93-94.

years – although most clearly captured in policy by the Blair governments – seems to pull skills away from specialist and towards generic and transferable definitions.

To pursue this line of enquiry a little further, it can be argued that it is only those subjects that have a “direct” claim to economic value, such as science and technology, that can retain their disciplinary integration of knowledge and skills in education. Others, including history, must define their role in economic policy by linking individual disciplinary skills to the generic features of “trainability”. If history is valued not as a specialism, but only insofar as it supports the achievement of broader educational goals – citizenship could be included here alongside trainability – then the potential for history and historians to influence policy is likely to be limited. Making a case for the value of “history in policy” means making a case for the distinctive disciplinary skills, approaches and attributes of the historian and articulating their value and relevance to policy. And there is a case to be made not just to politicians and policymakers. The challenge is also to “detoxify” the language of skills, to recover a vocabulary that historians themselves can use to discuss and explain the character and purpose of history, a task important in education, in policymaking and, indeed, in public debate.

History as a concept, issue and educational subject has become highly politicised, and in a divisive and debilitating way. The polarised debate on school history is the most visible, and audible, manifestation of a political culture deeply ambivalent about history. Both history as “the past” and history as a way of thinking and making meaning, are implicated in contested notions of national identity, the role of government, the nature of citizenship and the purpose of education. The closed and adversarial nature of British political system may well have pulled opinions into diametric opposition. The comparison can be made with the USA, for example, where the development of the National Standards was outside the federal government remit and adoption of the autonomous task force’s output was to be voluntary not statutory, or with France, where the concept of republican citizenship created political consensus for a chronological and celebratory account of the national past.⁸⁰ Unlike in Australia, Thatcher and her successors were able to assert the control of central government over education, using the 1988 ERA to introduce a standardised curriculum based on an argument of pupil entitlement. The history curriculum that emerged from the process, even

⁸⁰ Dunn, ‘The Making of a National Curriculum: The British Case’, p. 397.

if an uneasy mix of “old” and “new” approaches to history, was nonetheless a mix. It reflected, in Phillip’s view, the ‘broad substance’ of the HWG’s final report, which had sought a negotiated balance between political demands for (British) content coverage and disciplinary concerns for the development of intellectual tools and more pluralist perspectives.⁸¹

It is evident, however, that the compromise was not a reconciliation of the dichotomies explored in this chapter. In history education, facts and chronology are still set against skills and activities, and the primacy of the British story against the inclusion of other, often challenging, perspectives. Political rhetoric still invokes ideologically charged images of the public sector “producers”, the efficient and responsive private sector and the legitimate demands of the individual “consumer” of services. The power of opinion and emotion is perhaps greater than ever, as technology has made statement and response possible in a matter of seconds and within the reach of anyone with access to a device. The claim may now be made that “evidence” informs and guides the policymaking process, but a divide between forms of evidence relevant to, and those remote from, policy has emerged; history and the humanities are too often on the wrong side. History as a way of thinking seems to have been lost in history as “the past”. Both historians and politicians appear unwilling to consider in a productive way how historical skills could be useful, not only for policymaking, but in a broader public sense, which pushes beyond the dissemination of research and community engagement with heritage.

In a sense, we return in this chapter to Seeley’s insistence that the study of history should have an object, and one that is clear to the student. The perceived irrelevance of history is a challenge not just for school or even university history, but also for the discipline as a whole. Responding to this challenge means confronting both the ‘derision’ of government and the ‘defensiveness’ of academe. It calls for the recovery of what Rosalyn Ashby and Christopher Edwards term a ‘disciplinary approach to knowledge’: a ‘*framework and big picture agenda*’ to ‘help strengthen the symbiotic relationship between disciplinary understanding and historical knowledge’.⁸²

This, for me, is an agenda of integration – knowledge/skills, content/process – but it calls for a greater focus on the skills and process dimensions, and for three main reasons. First, there is a need to “detoxify” the language, so that there can be an open and constructive debate

⁸¹ Phillips, *History teaching, nationhood, and the state: a study in educational politics*, p. 126.

⁸² Ashby and Edwards, ‘Challenges facing the disciplinary tradition’, pp. 39-40.

about “doing history” and the tools that involves. Second, the prominence and contentiousness of “knowledge”, its status and meaning, has dominated debate for some time and is worthy of inspection. Third, with the resources of history as “the past” limited to providing case studies for comparison, the dimensions of skills and process must surely offer the greatest potential for bringing history into policy. Realising that potential means thinking about the process of policymaking itself, the concern of the next chapter. How can we come to an understanding of that process so that we can recognise the ways in which the process of thinking and working historically can align with and enhance policy development?

Evidence or advice? Exploring the potential for history in the process, practice and culture of policymaking

Writing on ‘expert advice for policy choice’, MacRae and Whittington define the problem in the following way:

A basic science contributor [an academic proceeding from a “pure” rather than applied disciplinary basis] may be tempted to think of a “spectrum from truth to power”, and to conceive of the succeeding parts of the “spectrum” as a one-way conveyor belt for knowledge that is in place and functioning.¹

Academics tend to frame the relationship with policymakers, as was once the case with business, as one of knowledge transfer, with a clear gradient from the intellectual authority of academe down to the domain of implementation. The transition to “knowledge exchange” in university-business collaboration has been made in Britain – at least in conception if not always in operation – premised on the recognition that both parties bring distinctive and important strengths and capacities to the process. It is a transition that has been driven through a funding policy oriented towards value for (public) money; in the humanities, knowledge exchange activity has been shaped by an interpretation focused on public engagement with research, an educative purpose that seems rather unambitious for the potential of the humanities in public life. There is little evidence that the relationship with policymakers has undergone even this very limited progression.

The History and Policy network stands as a good example of the persistence of the knowledge transfer model. Co-founder Simon Szretzer, writing in Jonathan Bate’s collection on *The Public Value of the Humanities*, contends that ‘what is intellectually distinctive about the History and Policy initiative is its ambition to *bring to the notice of policymakers and the wider public* an understanding of the implications for contemporary public policy discourse of any and all kinds of historical research and of the historical perspective’. He goes on: ‘Having done the painstaking historical research, we believe that the fruits of our labours *merit being shared* more widely’. This is history as broadcast; there is no evidence of the collaboration or co-production that now characterises discussions of university-business

¹ MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice*, p. 336.

engagement, or, increasingly, museums and community heritage work. The expectation is that policymakers will “receive” this ‘painstaking historical research’ so worthy of wide dissemination, and be able to make better policy as a result.² I would term this an “adjunct” model – historical evidence supplied *to* policy – which can be contrasted with an “embedded” or “integrated” model of historical advice *in* policy, consciously premised on exchange. To return to MacRae and Whittington, the challenge to the academic is to be receptive ‘not merely [to] requests for information’ but also to ‘suggestions of new problems for analysis and political constraints’.³

The transition from knowledge transfer to knowledge exchange is fundamentally one of culture and mind-set, and it is one that concerns both parties: policymakers and academics. The challenge for the former is an ambivalence, scepticism or even aversion not only towards history as “the past”, but also towards history as a discipline remote from, and therefore irrelevant to, effective policy development. The doctrine of evidence-based policymaking, which was formalised and promoted by the Blair governments, relies on a very particular, quantitative, concept of evidence located within the domain of economics and the natural and social sciences. But even such evidence that is valued as a basis for policy does not necessarily drive decisions; the personalisation and politicisation of advice through think tanks and special advisers further affects the permeability of the Westminster/Whitehall “village” to external expertise. The issue of policymakers’ receptivity to historical evidence and advice is compounded by its reciprocal: that of the responsiveness of academe to policymakers’ interests and requirements as users of such work. For historians, loss of autonomy can be an anxiety – if, for example, policymakers have a role in the formulation of research questions.⁴ There are also concerns about the misinterpretation and misapplication of history, through inappropriate analogies or through attempts to predict reaction to or the impact of a policy, which make engagement more problematic.

Engagement by historians with policymaking will, arguably, remain problematic as long as history is taken to be historical “evidence” or “content”; a single account of a past event necessarily excludes others, and can only serve as a kind of counterpoint to present

² Szretzer, ‘History and Public Policy’, p. 222.

³ MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice*, p. 336.

⁴ Although, as noted above, co-production is at least acknowledged, if not always practised, with community groups, museums and heritage organisations (and funding has provided incentives to do so). I would suggest that this argument is now mobilised with particular reference to policymakers, but with little awareness of the inherent inconsistency.

considerations. Szretzer indicates the scale of the task of making the transition from an “adjunct” model offering a historical perspective to an “embedded” one, involving the integration of historical thinking, in his further comments about history and policy. The History and Policy network, he states, seeks to improve the policymaking process: ‘policies for change in the future are much more likely to bring about their intended outcomes if formulated on the basis on an informed, open and critical perspective on the past’. But he is clear that it does not offer policy-relevant research in history, the latter described as ‘narrowly conceived, instrumental’ and attended by ‘un-historicist problems of presentism, anachronism, teleology and selectivity’.⁵ This implies that defining and conducting a historical research project are entirely separate from the dissemination phase. Policymakers should, by this account, be expected to make use of the by-products of research, but have no claim to involvement in structuring the enquiry itself: terms that surely no business would accept.

This chapter proposes that if historians want to contribute effectively to policymaking, they need to understand and work with the policy process. This requires an appreciation of the “business” of policymaking – particularly in the government department, as the main institutional context for policy development – and an engagement with those fields that are concerned with policy as an object of scholarly study. Both of these areas are explored in this chapter. Before proceeding with that task, it is worth addressing the fundamental question of why historians should engage with the business of and the scholarship on public policy. I offer a number of (connected) lines of argument. The first contends that it is in the interests of every citizen that the quality of policymaking is improved, and the second that historians have a capacity to do so, but their potential has not yet been realised; Seeley’s ‘school of statesmanship’ has not been reconfigured or reimagined for a contemporary democracy. A third is that other disciplines have secured much stronger connectivity with policy, particularly economics but also the social sciences, yet the evidence they supply has not led to the resolution of society’s most pressing policy issues.⁶ Fourth, politicians are going to “use history” regardless of historians’ principles, legitimately as well as illegitimately; it is surely preferable to bring those principles explicitly to bear on political thinking through direct engagement than to confine ourselves to the retrospective

⁵ Szretzer, ‘History and Public Policy’, pp. 221-222.

⁶ Stearns, ‘History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity’, p. 12.

“corrective”.⁷ Fifth, if we are to be ‘engineers’ (to adopt Michael Hill’s analogy) of the policymaking process, we would do better to develop an understanding of the ‘physics’ involved than rely on assumption or intuition.⁸ Historians have a number of cognitive “tools” that are, or should be, of great value to policy – the subject of the next chapter – but without the interest in or understanding of the process, practice and culture of policymaking, they will find it difficult to put the tools to effective use. Critiquing “bad history” from the sidelines may be more comfortable than collaboration with policymakers for academics conscious of their status at the top of the truth/power gradient, but influence is unlikely to accrue to the former position.

In the discussion that follows, reference is made to historians as academics, the apparent assumption being that sources of historical expertise, or, indeed, other disciplinary forms of expertise, are located within HE. This is partly for ease of use and partly in recognition that the England has not developed either a strong academically-trained, professionally-practising community of historians, or the structures for the employment of such people within government or other policy-oriented bodies. There is no reason why historical evidence and advice could not become internally resourced – as was attempted in the Treasury in the 1950s and 1960s – or contracted to specialist consultancies. In the absence of these structural features, innovation will need to come first from within academe as a form of “proof-of-concept” to the demand side; indeed, it is a theme of this thesis that such innovation has both legitimacy and importance in the continued development of the discipline, connected as it is to broader questions of the role of “history in public”.

The policymaking process: rational models and political realities

The distinction between the analysis *of* policy and analysis *for* policy is a useful one to make here to clarify the concerns of this chapter at the outset. The former is concerned with furthering understanding of policy, whether of a specific policy area – such as environmental policy, education or welfare – or of the processes or stages involved in development and implementation. The latter is focused on how the quality of policymaking can be improved, for example, through the provision of evidence to inform choice or the enhancement of

⁷ See: Mandelbaum, ‘The past in service to the future’, p. 51; Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, pp. 8-9; Graham, ‘The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking’, *The Public Historian* 5 (1983), p. 12; Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, p. 1. Garner makes the same point with reference to managers: Garner, ‘History for the Corporate Executive: Cultivating the Historical Imagination in MBA Students’, *The History Teacher* 18 (1985). “Legitimacy” in analogising also has a psychological basis, see: Hofstadter, *Analogy as the core of cognition: Stanford Presidential Lecture*, (6th February, 2006).

⁸ Hill, *The public policy process*, p. 6.

systems and structures.⁹ Analysis of policy, including studies of policy content and accounts of the policymaking process, is of interest to the extent that it helps to structure and guide enquiry into analysis for policy; it is the physics that aids the engineering. Thus my intention here is not to rehearse the various accounts and models of the policymaking process, particularly given the many textbooks on the topic (Hill's is currently in its fifth edition since 1997). Rather, the purpose of this section is to address the policymaking process in terms of the influences on it. This then provides a basis for my later consideration of the potential for historical thinking to enhance the quality of that process and appreciation of the barriers that may be involved.

It is worth noting that academic policy analysis (both "of" and "for" and blends thereof) is a field to which different disciplines have contributed, but where history is not as visible as might be expected given the importance of change, continuity, context and agency as concepts. As an extension of political science, the construction of models to capture the sequences and iterative loops involved in policymaking is a key task. Writing in this field can be prescriptive in intent, although more recently emphasis has been placed on the descriptive mode, drawing attention to 'the complexity and ambiguity of the concept of policy' and suggesting we need to be 'sceptical' of rationalist claims that 'a policy-making process is organised and has specific goals'.¹⁰ The incorporation of ideas from organisation theory and from public administration and management has challenged sequential or "stages" models of policy development. The complexities and ambiguities in the demands made by the "top" on the "bottom" are such that policy development is regarded by some as still going on during implementation, hence Michael Lipsky's 'street-level bureaucrats'.¹¹ Whatever the approach, an underlying interest in the field is in influence and agency. Where does it (or should it) lie? At what points and how is/should it be exercised? Sociologists and economists have played key roles alongside scholars in comparative political science in the "'rediscovery" of institutions' and their role as (changing) contexts in which political struggles are mediated.¹² Although this mode of enquiry is clearly historical – a sub-field 'historical institutionalism' has emerged, discussed below – intellectual leadership does

⁹ Hill, *The public policy process*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ Hill, *The public policy process*, pp. 18-19.

¹¹ Hill, *New Agendas in the Study of the Policy Process*, pp. 2-3.

¹² Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth (eds.), *Structuring politics: historical institutionalism in comparative analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1-2.

not seem to lie with historians. Both history and policy as scholarly domains would be enriched by an interdisciplinary engagement in this area.

The stages model of policymaking has, in various versions, survived critiques of its validity and effectiveness; the logical sequence of activities (agenda setting, problem recognition/definition, consideration of options, policy choice, implementation, evaluation) has an intuitive appeal. But it cannot capture a highly political and problematic reality, nor admit the role of ideas or of complex or dispersed forms of agency. Iterative loops and overlaps mean 'public policy is being formed as it is executed and ... likewise executed as it is being formed'.¹³ Key questions cannot be answered. How do issues emerge and what factors ensure one is taken up as a policy problem but not another? Why do some policies "succeed" and others "fail" on implementation? An overarching critique would be that no model could account for the policymaking process, as context is critical. We cannot understand the emergence and take-up of an issue unless we ask questions about the settings and the terms in which it is discussed, and how those connect both to broader policy agendas and to concerns, priorities and capacities in those bodies involved in policy development.

All of this points to the *human* character of policymaking; it is complex, problematic and political, because so too are the human relationships and interactions at the core of the exercise of power. Sequential models downplay, if not exclude, that human dimension. For example, the implication, if not the requirement, of such a model is that there is a division of competency into *politics* and *administration*, following Woodrow Wilson.¹⁴ The mandate for the initiation and development of policy conferred, in this view, through democratic process. Ministers, as MPs called into the executive, would be the holders of such a mandate in Britain, although elevation to the House of Lords has proved a convenient direct route to government. Implementation is then the domain of officials: the permanent civil service. The interplay of influence and agency is however far more complicated. Hill notes that governments have had to consult or negotiate with various organised groups, such as worker or employer associations, consumer groups and parents, in order to retain office. Dorey points to the role of the Select Committees and the growing significance of special advisers to Ministers ("spads") since the Blair governments.¹⁵ Indeed, policymaking has

¹³ Hill, *The public policy process*, p. 143. Citing C. J. Friedrich's *The nature of administrative responsibility* (Public Policy, 1: 3-24)

¹⁴ Wilson, 'The Study of Administration'.

¹⁵ Hill, *The public policy process*, p. 27; Dorey, *Policy making in Britain: an introduction*, pp. 1, 74-78.

become a crowded space as Britain has become a 'post-parliamentary democracy'.¹⁶ The 'core executive' (Dorey's phrase) now takes a stronger lead on policy development emergence of policy advisers, both in government and in the organisations, pressure groups and public affairs agencies looking to influence it.¹⁷ These features of modern government can be contentious and contested, as is evident in the debates about Cameron's choice of Andy Coulson as the No. 10 Director of Communications, then the government's highest-paid special adviser, the calls for a register of lobbyists following allegations about access to the Prime Minister, or, indeed, the appointment of "celebrity reviewers" mentioned earlier.¹⁸ In essence, we cannot rely on understanding extrapolated from a model; we need to pursue a historian's line of enquiry, just as Stephen Jay Gould recognised with regards to planetary surfaces.

The distinctive importance of that line of enquiry is most clearly evident when it is recognised that 'the policymaking process ... has an inherent time dimension'.¹⁹ It is a recognition that creates an alignment between history and policy but also strategy: strategy because, as Anderson explains, policy 'encompasses a flow and pattern of action that extends over time and includes many decisions, some routine and some not so routine'.²⁰ The strategic character of policymaking can thus be understood by contrast to the more tactical "decision-making". Policymaking is strategic, both in the sense of being 'stable' and 'purposive', and in having a temporal dimension; it unfolds over time. This definition of policy can be problematised; policy need not involve action, and indeed outcomes may arise that are not claimed as purposive, hence studying public policy is 'essentially the study of the *exercise of power* in making policy'.²¹ Nevertheless, the differentiation of "policy" from "decision" as a project that extends over time is a helpful one and demonstrates the three-

¹⁶ The terms is Richardson and Jordan's: Richardson and Jordan, *Governing under pressure: the policy process in a post-parliamentary democracy*, (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979).

¹⁷ This includes the emergence of policy roles in universities, many of which include engagement with and influence of government and other political actors.

¹⁸ The Public Administration Select Committee conducted an Inquiry on special advisers, see final report: Public Administration Select Committee, *Special advisers in the thick of it*, (London: House of Commons, 2012). "Celebrity reviewers" should be distinguished from expert reviewers. Wells points to examples of high-level reviews commissioned under Labour (such as Leitch on Skills, Lyons on local government, Stern on climate change). The choice of reviewer would imply rather different motivations than in the cases mentioned in chapter 3 above. Nevertheless, such choices do not imply that resulting policy will be evidence- (or expertise-) led. Wells, 'New Labour and evidence based policy making: 1997-2007', *People, Place & Policy Online* 1 (2007).

¹⁹ Achenbaum, 'The Making of an Applied Historian: Stage Two', p. 22.

²⁰ Anderson, *Public policymaking: an introduction*, p. 14.

²¹ Hill, *The public policy process*, pp. 17, 25. Emphasis mine.

way alignment of history, policy and strategy. This alignment is explored by Neustadt and May, who contrast their approach with the problem-solving, case-by-case style of decision-making that tends to plunge towards action without a 'clear sense of the long past from which [possible] futures would come'.²² They stress the importance of thinking in streams of time; so what seems to be a present problem becomes a strategic issue and can be addressed accordingly.

It is worth noting that Neustadt and May are concerned with 'practice in government service', a broad categorisation embracing both 'decision situations' and policy development. They see a role for their historical methods in contexts of real and immediate pressure on a government to take a decision, as during the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as those where longer-term projects are being pursued or positions formulated, for example, social security reform or policy towards communism. For them, *both* the core business of government in exercising power *and* high-stakes decision-making require a shift from tactical to strategic thinking. The timescale for historical work and the level of pressure would be very different for policy development and 'decision situations', but the principles are the same. By locating a situation in the stream of time, the historian as adviser lengthens the perspective on that situation and enables the response to be strategic. This contribution could be made not only in political environments, but in many others, such as business, public services, education institutions, charities and so on, where the "downstream" implications of decisions are significant.²³

Spads, Tanks and Wonks: evidence, analysis and policymaking in the post-parliamentary democracy

The 'post-parliamentary democracy' can be associated with the privatisation of political culture discussed in chapter 3 above; special advisers ("spads") occupy positions of great influence outside the structures and scrutiny of Westminster and Whitehall, organisations and interest groups hire specialist policy staff ("wonks"), consultants and agencies to inform engagement with MPs and think tanks act as political Parties' policy units. Rather than being located in an identifiable collective (the legislature, or cabinet), policy development is dispersed and personalised; *policy advice* comes now from many sources, disrupting the

²² Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, p. 248. Neustadt and May's work is discussed further in Chapters 1 and 5.

²³ Some brief comments will be made below reflecting the potential implications of the chapter's themes for universities as institutions with equivalent "policymaking" processes.

established channels from the permanent civil service.²⁴ In this context, it might be inferred that specialist expertise more broadly would have gained traction, given the proliferation of sources of policy input available to politicians, but also the latter's greater responsiveness to a plurality of different interests and perspectives. There is, however, a political inflection to policy advice in this system, which is in tension with concepts of expertise, particularly of academic expertise, held by both policymakers and by the experts themselves. A policy process that draws in the particular perspectives of individuals and groups from a more dispersed policy-active environment is not necessarily any more permeable, either to expertise or the expert, than in rationalist models of the government machine. Indeed, the personal-political character of modern policymaking in England may instead make access to policymakers and the take-up of advice based on expertise more challenging.

Here, a historical context of the marginalisation of "producer" communities over the last forty years is relevant. If policy is better guided by 'instincts', to use John Major's formulation, than by 'facts', the concept of expertise and evidence for policymaking is politicised and de-intellectualised in ways highly problematic for academic disciplines, which are defined and licensed by internally-derived and perpetuated codes of conduct and practice. Indeed, it is problematic in both directions: for academics reconciling the requirements and parameters of policy work with the demands of professional standards and recognition; for policymakers looking for responsiveness from academe to pressing policy issues. History is faced with its own particular issues, given concerns about the application – especially in political contexts – of its insights, but also as a discipline fractured into specialisms and perspectives that open up greater diversity in interpretations of the past. It is for both these reasons that a new model for history in policy is needed: to integrate historical advice into policymaking; to address responsiveness; and to shift from historical "content" to historical "thinking".

The personalisation and politicisation of the influences on policymaking and the distancing of academic and "producer" expertise from the process seem to be factors in the emergence of a political culture that struggles to handle evidence and advice effectively, or the boundary between them. Considering the interaction of these factors gives us greater insight into what is apparently a paradox:

²⁴ See Dorey on the reduction of the Cabinet's role as a policymaking body in the core executive as 'alternative arenas' (plural) have emerged such as cross-cutting working groups, committees and task forces (independent reviews would be another example). Dorey, *Policy making in Britain: an introduction*, pp. 275-276.

In recent decades, although ministers have paid less attention to the claims of their departments' client pressure groups, paradoxically they have shown a greater desire to look for comment and ideas beyond those proffered by their civil servants.

Hence, for Simon James, there is a relatively new phenomenon in the 'demand for wider sources of external advice' both from Government and Opposition; the 'appointment of special political advisers to ministers' is one 'unusually institutionalized, symptom of this', the emergence of think tanks is a more 'guerrilla' alternative.²⁵ It is worth exploring both of these 'symptoms' as features of a policy culture and environment that is oriented towards politicised, often partisan, sources of advice and input. "Wonks" can be cast more in the expert mould; it is a term that suggests a geek-like commitment to the evidence and to process and method, setting the wonk apart from the political orientation of the "spads" and the "tanks".

The role of special adviser dates back to Harold Wilson's government in 1964. They are usually appointed on an individual basis by Ministers, and may be staff who have held roles as researchers, advisers or chiefs of staff in MPs' offices in Opposition or on the backbenches. This number includes Adam Smith, former special adviser to Jeremy Hunt, MP, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (now running the Department for Health). Smith served as a Parliamentary Researcher, then Chief of Staff, to Hunt when he became Shadow Minister, developing a 'very close working relationship' with him.²⁶ In his written evidence to the Leveson Inquiry on the culture, practice and ethics of the press, Smith identifies 'helping the Department in the development of policy' as part of his role: 'Policy officials would ask my opinion as to what the Minister might think about certain issues or ask for guidance on how best to frame a certain position.' He also points to communications between special advisers 'to help speed up the policymaking process':

On some cross-departmental issues it is easier and quicker for Special Advisers to speak to each other in order to learn Ministers' views rather than go through policy officials or private offices. I was often the first "port of call" for officials or Special

²⁵ James, 'The idea brokers: the impact of think tanks on British government', p. 505.

²⁶ Also Nick Hillman, special adviser to David Willetts, MP, Minister of State for Higher Education and Science (previously Chief of Staff).

Advisers from other Government departments who had questions on culture, media and sport issues or who were working on related matters.²⁷

These elements of the statement are of interest here not as evidence *of* Smith's conduct, but rather *for* the status of the adviser, and hence also for the precedence of personal-political forms of influence on policymaking over collective processes or structures.²⁸ This is also apparent in the task of building relationships with external bodies relevant to the policy portfolio.²⁹ Although Smith refers to organisations rather than to people, a personal dimension is unavoidable; indeed, it was his relationship with Frederic Michel, former Director of Public Affairs at News Corp – revealed through email and text correspondence provided to the inquiry – that constituted the main criticism of Smith's conduct in post. Acknowledging the personal-political dimension to policy development also allows opportunities for policy entrepreneurship, where people have policy issues they want to put on the agenda, but need to be alert to conducive combinations of public concern and political interest in order to do so.³⁰ Hence personal interests can disrupt, or even invert the rationalist “stages” model, by placing policy formulation before problem definition.

Think tanks pre-date the term itself, which in its original American context described organisations providing contract research on military matters, RAND being the most notable example, founded 1948. The transatlantic transfer of the concept involved adaptation for a very different, more centralised and “closed” political culture. The Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS, known as “the Think Tank” or just “the Tank”) was created within the Cabinet Office under Heath, following a recommendation in the 1970 White Paper *The Reorganisation of Central Government* for ‘a small multi-disciplinary central policy review staff in the Cabinet Office’.³¹ The British concept of the think tank thus emerged *within* the

²⁷ See: Smith, *Witness statement of: Adam John Smith*, (Leveson Inquiry, 2012). Paragraphs 17, 27.2 and 27.3. On the Leveson Inquiry, see: <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/>. Retrieved 31st March 2013.

²⁸ The distinction between ‘evidence of’ and ‘evidence for’ is the subject of an interesting discussion in Staley in the context of an exploration of the capacity of historians to apply their evidence-handling and interpretation skills to drawing ‘ampliative inferences’ about the future from evidence (or ‘traces’ of the future) in the present. Staley, *History and future*, pp. 48-50. I address this in Green, ‘Continuity, contingency and context: bringing the historian’s cognitive toolkit into university futures and public policy development’. The theme will also be picked up in Chapter 5.

²⁹ See: Smith, *Witness statement of: Adam John Smith*. Paragraph 27.4.

³⁰ Hill, *The public policy process*, p. 157; citing on policy entrepreneurs: Kingdon, *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*, p. 225. The raising and expression of ‘public concern’ is clearly also a dimension of a more personalised political culture, and can involved an appeal to a personalised past, as discussed in chapter 3 in relation to teaching.

³¹ Civil Service Department, *The reorganisation of central government*, (London, 1970).

machinery of government; indeed, the criticism of CPRS as staffed with ‘Oxbridge generalists’, with a bias in favour of economists, rather than ‘hard-edged policy analysts’ reflects the continued influence of the civil service-led model of policy advice as laid out by the Fulton report in 1968.³² From the 1980s, however, new ‘ideologically-charged, free-market bodies’ were established as the post-war consensus crumbled, shifting the concept towards the American understanding. Indeed, it has been argued that right-wing think tanks, such as CPRS, were active in supporting Thatcher to ensure that consensus was left behind.³³

James – along with other scholarly commentators on think tanks such as Diane Stone – draws a distinction between more academic and politically objective organisations and those, often newer, smaller and more intellectually ‘lightfooted’ outfits with an ideological commitment. The Institute for Fiscal Studies, which has come to prominence in recent years with analyses of Budgets and of reforms to HE funding and student finance, or Chatham House on international affairs, would stand as examples of the former. In terms of the latter, Policy Exchange has strong connections with the Conservatives, whereas the Institute of Economic Affairs promotes a particular policy principle: free markets.³⁴ These “advocacy tanks” offer a safe (i.e. deniable) testing ground for more radical ideas and a political lens through which to view relevant evidence. Independence of government brings a licence to imagine – and open up for debate – the unorthodox alternative, while the ideological slant, often facilitated through personal connections, ensures resonance with political agendas.³⁵ The selection of particular think tanks as partners for organisations looking to secure

³² Williams, *Washington, Westminster and Whitehall*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 73. The reference to ‘hard-edged’ indicates the American emphasis on quantitative techniques (‘the application of the normative framework of economics and statistical decisionmaking techniques’); since then it has become more sophisticated, with organisational studies and the integration of policy and political factors (p. 68) ; Civil Service Commission and Baron Fulton of Fulmer, *The Civil Service. Vol. 1 Report of the Committee 1966-68*, (London, 1968). The White Paper followed and complemented the Fulton Commission report (see below for further discussion of Fulton) in addressing the machinery of government.

³³ Denham and Garnett, *British think-tanks and the climate of opinion*, (London: UCL Press, 1998), pp. 7-8.

³⁴ See, alongside James: Dorey, *Policy making in Britain: an introduction*, p. 19. The term think tank now refers to a wide diversity of organisations and hence the term is ‘elastic’ (particularly outside the Anglo-American contexts). Nevertheless a broad distinction between those oriented towards advocacy and profile and those focused on the pursuit of high-quality policy research (often labelled ‘institutes’) can be defended: Stone, ‘Recycling bins, garbage cans or think tanks? Three myths regarding policy analysis institutes’. Denham and Garnett, following Weaver, see a third category of ‘universities without students’: large institutions producing book-length studies. They do not recognise any instances in the UK, although universities themselves could develop such capacity: Denham and Garnett, *British think-tanks and the climate of opinion*, p. 8.

³⁵ James, ‘The idea brokers: the impact of think tanks on British government’, p. 505.

political profile, for example, by hosting a fringe event at a Party Conference, indicates the wider recognition of this role.

In the US context, Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett suggest that one of the main reasons for the proliferation of think tanks ‘to an extent unknown elsewhere’ is that that ‘they fill certain gaps in the American political structure’. Hence, there is a strong demand side given that ‘the fragmentation of the system creates a vacuum, resting as it does on the constitutional separation of powers’. The permeability – and relative weakness – of those powers gives think tanks space for policy entrepreneurship, as well as enabling greater movement of external experts in and out of the system, than in Britain.³⁶ It can be argued, however, that the “closed” system of Westminster and Whitehall has itself generated a form of demand. With academe generally not geared towards policy as a domain of application, one, rather uncritical, account of the rise of think tanks would identify their role as ‘bridges’ between the knowledge base and policy.³⁷ A sharper assessment would see think tanks as creatures of the market, responding to the politicisation of policy advice over the last forty years, which has involved, as noted above, an inclination to look outside the civil service. Further, the contained and centralised nature of British policymaking makes the targeting of think tank efforts rather more straightforward than is the case for their US counterparts. Indeed, the American phenomenon noted by Denham and Garnett – for political appointees to have come from think tanks and roles working with decision-makers – is a live issue in Britain. Being a special adviser is an established route to elected office, and one that had been taken by both the current Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition.³⁸

The metaphor of the bridge implies linearity, with think tanks ‘editing and re-shaping’ knowledge and acting as an ‘intermediary or interlocutor between knowledge and power, science and the state’. They are interpreters, or ‘recyclers’ of ideas. Such a definition pre-supposes, as Diane Stone points out, the existence of boundaries between the two domains that calls for inspection.³⁹ What is particularly striking in think tanks’ own statements is their

³⁶ Denham and Garnett, *British think-tanks and the climate of opinion*, p. 5.

³⁷ See: Stone, ‘Recycling bins, garbage cans or think tanks? Three myths regarding policy analysis institutes’.

³⁸ David Cameron was special adviser to Norman Lamont as Chancellor of the Exchequer (1992-3) and to Michael Howard as Home Secretary (1993-4); Ed Miliband was special adviser to Gordon Brown as Chancellor of the Exchequer (1997-2002).

³⁹ Stone, ‘Recycling bins, garbage cans or think tanks? Three myths regarding policy analysis institutes’, pp. 272-273. Szretzer’s comments indicate that such boundaries can also be vigorously defended by academics.

identification as knowledge *producers*.⁴⁰ They see themselves as owning *both* the domain of objective and rigorous research expertise usually accorded to universities *and* the political understanding and engagement necessary for influence on policy.

This claim raises two issues of relevance to this thesis. First is the invisibility of academe. Individual academics may contribute to particular projects; Nick Barr and Tim Leunig have both contributed to publications on HE finance from their positions at the LSE, but they should be seen as exceptions. That think tanks do not see any need even to allude to anchoring their work in academic research suggests there is little challenge to the notion of the distance of such research from policy relevance. It also suggests there is, at some level, an acceptance that the form of research and analysis conducted within think tanks can stand as intellectually self-sufficient, and hence provide a stable enough platform for advice and policy proposals. This is not to say that policymakers “receive” the products of think tanks in a simple and direct way. But the growth of think tanks in Britain is indicative of increasing investment from sponsors looking for profile and influence on a particular policy area, particularly given the dependence of the think tanks on project-based funding.⁴¹ Indeed, rather than accepting the proposition that it is research that ‘empowers think tanks in agenda setting’, we should rather recognise their ‘management of expert discourse’, involving the ‘use of personal contacts, networking, media strategies and the creation of powerful policy narratives that simplify technical issues into manageable items of public policy.’⁴² Think tanks have managed to use their skills in *advocacy* to claim ownership of a much more substantial field of *policy research and development*, and without real challenge from academe.

Second is the tension between the tasks of access to policy and broader public involvement in policy debate. Think tanks are ‘elite-centred’. A key element of think tanks’ ‘management of expert discourse’ is the adoption of what Stone terms ‘codes’: forms of conduct, interaction and language shared with the administrative elite. These ‘help to demarcate the boundaries of the policy community’. It may not always be an intended outcome to exclude the general public, but a consequence of providing a safe space for

⁴⁰ See for example www.ippr.org/about_us ‘We produce rigorous research and innovative policy ideas for a fair, democratic and sustainable world’ and <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/about-us> ‘The authority and credibility of our research is our greatest asset’.

⁴¹ This is in contrast to the ‘stronger tradition of corporate, foundation and individual donations’ that has led to US think tanks holding assets of more than \$150bn in 1991: Denham and Garnett, *British think-tanks and the climate of opinion*, p. 6.

⁴² Stone, ‘Recycling bins, garbage cans or think tanks? Three myths regarding policy analysis institutes’, p. 275.

radical thinking is the cordoning of public debate, so that only those with knowledge of the codes may participate; the opposite of 'bridging', as Stone notes.⁴³ In claiming the domain of knowledge production from universities, think tanks can also be seen as adopting the codes of academe. References to research methods, particularly those located in the social sciences and capable of quantitative expression, act as credentials that implicitly connect think tanks with the academic domain. Such rhetorical appeals to the apparatus of academic research also exclude those without the necessary "methodological literacy", or at least they are invited to accept the policy propositions that follow as rigorously based.⁴⁴

In England, Stone's model of think tanks' social practices that aim to achieve a 'patina of scientific objectivity and technocratic neutrality' by publishing in peer-reviewed journals, does not, I would argue, hold true. They mostly could not do so, as the standards of research would not be adequate, and reaching them would require different types of staff and a costly diversion of resources. More importantly, they do not need to. Think tanks' claim to intellectual credibility seems to require only an *allusion* to academic rigour, as it is not on *intellectual* but on *political* credibility that their status depends. The focus of British, or perhaps more appropriately, English, think tanks on the "Westminster Village" may make their elite-centredness more pronounced, and public involvement a more remote prospect. Here, however, the record of the think tanks may well reflect equivalent challenges in HE, where the demands of user communities – in the humanities this includes a strong public engagement dimension – can pull in different directions from those generated internally by universities and by disciplinary cultures.

If historical thinking is to be aligned with policy development and reach beyond the input of evidence into the shaping of advice, then similar issues and tensions are likely to arise for the historian-adviser. Such an alignment would also involve a claiming of think tank territory by an academic discipline or sub-field of academic practice, which raises interesting questions about the future relationship between universities and think tanks. The gradual absorption of the think tanks by universities, as the latter become more attuned to policy-relevant research is one scenario. Another is that universities will come to supply 'a

⁴³ James, 'The idea brokers: the impact of think tanks on British government', p. 498.

⁴⁴ Stone, 'Recycling bins, garbage cans or think tanks? Three myths regarding policy analysis institutes'. On the coded language of policy analysts in the US, see: Williams, *Washington, Westminster and Whitehall*, pp. 84-85. 'One result is to block information and variables that do not fit well with the predominant analytic techniques and variables' (p. 84), an issue that has implications for the potential for inter-disciplinary work in policy advice, particularly for disciplines that do not express their findings numerically.

declining share of the market for policy advice', as think tanks capitalise on their 'flexibility and ability to innovate'.⁴⁵ In the English context, neither type of organisation can foreseeably assume the capabilities of the other; think tanks lack the budgets and absorptive capacities to take on academic forms of enquiry, and universities, even where policy institutes are active in relevant research, remain remote from the "business" of policymaking.⁴⁶ A scenario in which new models of employment for academics and for policy staff allow greater movement in and out of government and of policy-oriented organisations, including think tanks – as well as the creation of hybrid or dual roles – is worth considering.

Special advisers and think tanks can be seen as part of a system of politicised policy advice that emerged from the 1970s, but became prominent in the 1980s and 90s. We can also regard political demand for such advice not only as a *response* to a perceived lack of appropriate resources for policymaking, but also as an attempt to *define* what resources are indeed appropriate. Whether formally or informally, they are structured into the system, and hence are part of the 'physics' of the policymaking process. The structural features of academic practice are, however, also part of this consideration. Some brief comments will be made about universities as institutions and the organisational capacity for expert advice below. Of greater immediate relevance are the issues arising for the academic as expert adviser. The legal analogy of the public historian as advocate is useful in recasting disciplinary notions of integrity and credibility for professional purposes.⁴⁷ Policy development is one such purpose and is not, in principle, any more problematic than other contexts of practice; the character of the political culture in Britain has, however, an important, if not decisive, role. 'Constitutional, judicial, administrative, partisan, and electoral institutions appear so well suited to adversarial politics', making the boundary between the expert informing policy and the adviser supporting a political agenda rather unclear.⁴⁸

The perception may therefore be that taking a role in policy development is a statement of (Party-) political affiliation, presenting a conflict with ideas of the independence of academic

⁴⁵ Denham and Garnett, *British think-tanks and the climate of opinion*, vi.

⁴⁶ There may be more blurring of the boundaries between academe and policy in certain fields, such as medicine, yet I suggest that the argument being made is nonetheless sustainable as a characterisation of the constituencies involved.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 2 above.

⁴⁸ Ashford (ed.), *History and context in comparative public policy*, (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), pp. 15-16.

enquiry. Affiliation has itself become more problematic as membership of political parties declines and assumptions about voting behaviours and ideological commitments break down. Further, if the very policy questions raised have been shaped by adversarial politics, the ability of external experts to challenge the terms or parameters of their involvement, or, indeed, those of particular policy issues, is constrained. Here, politicisation and personalisation of the routes to policy influence is a factor, in contrast to a US system structurally dependent on outside advisers. Not only do American departments and agencies have in-house capacity to look for external input to 'validate internal decisions or to act as a link to an important constituency', but the existence of an independent legislature offers multiple invention points in the policymaking process. External experts are involved as initiators, witnesses or advisers.⁴⁹ A more pluralist and dispersed polity, such as the USA, may be able to accommodate academic concerns about professional integrity; a clearer demarcation between "policy" and "politics" can be sustained and roles more easily confined to "technical" areas. But being the *external* specialist may actually *inhibit* the assimilation of their expertise. Politics is inescapable if expertise is to become influential advice. Discussing science advisers in America, Bruce L. R. Smith argues:

They are called about to blend the purely technical issues into a larger, more confused, and value-laden whole where there are no precise answers... There is no way for science advisers to escape the conceptual problems and the confusions of politics if they are dealing with the agency's true problems and are seeking to give truly useful recommendations.

Historians may not now claim to be 'providing the facts' – the 'pretense' that persists in science advice, according to Smith – but the almost ideological demarcation between the academic "outsider" and the political "insider" is equally relevant. Unless historians are prepared to forgo the role of 'schoolmasters' explaining the historical perspective on an issue (or providing "correctives"), and instead 'attempt to make judgements and fit the issue within the total context of the aspirations, constraints and trade-offs facing the policymaker', there seems little prospect of systemic involvement in policy development of the kind prevailing in the US.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Smith, *The advisers: scientists in the policy process*, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁰ Smith, *The advisers: scientists in the policy process*, pp. 201-202. On historians behaving like 'schoolmasters', Ogilvy-Webb was criticised for taking a "High Priest" line' in a lecture to Treasury staff in 1966, see Beck: Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, p. 127. Citing original source: communication from James Collier, Deputy Establishment Officer, to Peter Vinter, one of the Treasury divisional heads, 21st November 1966.

Stories and numbers? The “quantitative imperative” in evidence-based policymaking

Those who work in policy roles learn early the need to present “stories and numbers” as a coherent package for a position to be politically persuasive. The two are, however, not equal; the role of the former seems to be to bring human resonance to the latter as the real basis of decision-making. In the context of cuts in government spending, the “quantitative imperative” seems even more powerful as the Treasury’s ascendancy becomes more apparent. Evidence-based policymaking was not crystallised as a policy concept until Blair’s project for modernising government, but research for policy has a history of at least half a century; it has taken the form of units within government departments, as well as the funding of external programmes and the commissioning of major surveys.⁵¹ A historical perspective is instructive here, as it offers a counterpoint to what is a highly problematic concept presented, however, as not only as intellectually but also politically *unproblematic*: ‘what counts is what works’. No form of “evidence” speaks for itself and ‘changes in tense – from “worked” to “work” to “will work” – are not just a matter of grammatical detail’.⁵²

The first clear statement of the need for research to help meet the demands of modern government was made in the report of the Fulton Committee on the Civil Service in 1968. Significantly, the Committee emphasised the strategic nature of such work; without targeted resources, ‘long-term policy thinking and planning’ would get ‘crowded out’ by the ‘more immediate demands arising from the parliamentary and public responsibilities of Ministers’.⁵³ The Committee therefore recommended the creation of ‘Planning Units’, with research as their ‘indispensable basis’. The description of a Planning Unit seems to draw on the think tank model, particularly those dedicated to military strategy in the US, such as RAND: ‘its main task should be to identify and study the problems and needs of the future and the possible means to meet them’. Significantly, connectivity with external experts was advised, so that staff were not only aware of new thinking in their field, but contributed to it. Short-term contracts and secondments would bring “outsiders” together with ‘young

⁵¹ On modernising government, See the 1999 White Paper: Cabinet Office, *Modernising government*, (London, 1999). Also the response from the Cabinet Office’s Strategic Policymaking Team: Cabinet Office, *Professional policy making for the twenty-first century: a report*, (London, 1999). On research for policy, see Bulmer, Coates and Dominian, ‘Evidence-based policy making’, in *Making policy in theory and practice*, eds. Bochel and Duncan, (Bristol, 2007), p. 87.

⁵² Cartwright and Hardie, *Evidence-based policy: a practical guide to doing it better*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), ix.

⁵³ The tension between the need for a ‘long view’ and the demands of the ‘in-tray’ is a key factor in the relative failure of the Treasury’s Historical Section. See: Beck, *Using history, making British policy*.

civil servants' (the Committee was explicit about staff being 'comparatively young' as well as 'able' and 'vigorous') in an environment in which their 'qualities of imagination and foresight' could be developed. After a period of service, they would be expected to move, 'returning to work outside government' or into the operational side of their department.⁵⁴

The Planning Unit can be seen as a model of knowledge exchange; such movement and interaction between civil servants and external specialists as a systemic feature of government practice remains unrealised over forty years later. Mechanisms for secondments in and out of the civil service exist through the "interchange" programme, but agreements rely on the individual business case. The importance of the Planning Unit in policy development is indicated in the recommendation that its head should be an official designated as Senior Policy Adviser, with direct access to the Minister. The Senior Policy Adviser would focus on 'longer term policy questions and their implications for day-to-day policy decisions', essentially fulfilling the role of a special adviser, but with access to a dedicated team. In recommending the establishment of the Units, the Fulton Committee were recognising a need for Ministers to have access to a more specialist and research-informed source of advice, although, significantly, they located that source within the civil service, as opposed to a personal appointment.

The Fulton report was informed by the multiplication of government responsibilities: 'a century ago the tasks of government were mainly passive and regulatory. Now they amount to a much more active and positive engagement in our affairs'. Such engagement included the nationalised industries and a more interventionist industrial policy, but also duties relevant today, such as the provision of social services, the control of public spending and the realisation of economic aims. The increasing complexity of the tasks, and also the impact of 'technological progress and the vast amount of new knowledge' on both the tasks themselves and on the process of decision-making, called for new skills and competencies in government staff.⁵⁵ In this analysis, and indeed, in the recommendations around the recognition and promotion of specialisms, Fulton laid the foundations for later understandings of evidence-based policymaking.

⁵⁴ Civil Service Commission and Baron Fulton of Fulmer, *The Civil Service. Vol. 1 Report of the Committee 1966-68*. Paragraphs 172-7.

⁵⁵ Civil Service Commission and Baron Fulton of Fulmer, *The Civil Service. Vol. 1 Report of the Committee 1966-68*. Paragraphs 7-8. Interestingly, the Northcote-Trevelyan report used a very similar argument over a century earlier ('the great and increasing accumulation of public business') to make the case for the professionalisation of the permanent civil service: Northcote and Trevelyan, *Report on the organisation of the permanent civil service*, (London: 1854), p. 3.

Steven Brint has suggested that the political context is 'most congenial' to the uptake of professional expertise 'before the consolidation of power by the state in a particular policy domain... that is, before the state has become organized to provide its own structure for initiating, mediating, and monitoring policies.'⁵⁶ The context for Fulton can certainly be interpreted in this way. Wilson announced the review of the structure, recruitment and management of the civil service in early 1966, responding to a Select Committee report recommendation the year before. State ownership and planning, combined with reform of and investment in public services, particularly education, were to deliver a modern economy and a fairer society. Economic pressures were building, however, as Britain's balance of payments looked increasingly unsustainable. Between the commission and publication of Fulton, Wilson secured a workable parliamentary majority and devalued the pound. The planned approach continued, for example, in the acceleration of comprehensive schooling and the introduction of polytechnics: a new model of government for which the process and basis of policymaking needed to be revisited and revised.

Three decades later, the 1999 White Paper, *Modernising government*, echoed the Fulton report in contending that the demands of the present are such that 'old ways of government' are no longer relevant. It also brought the dimension of ideological change to the fore, a dimension only implicit in Fulton (perhaps appropriately as a commissioned review rather than a White Paper). Hence, it is not just 'new ideas, partnerships and opportunities for devising and delivering what the public wants' that are needed, but also a 'new and better' concept of government itself, as 'most of the old dogmas that haunted governments in the past have been swept away.' This new concept is crystallised in the declaration made in the 1997 Labour Manifesto that 'what counts is what works'. The formulation is striking in that it makes an *anti*-ideological claim: government based on pragmatism, strategy and evidence rather than values. A problem-solving, outcome-oriented approach can be seen as part of the reinvention of Labour as a party of government, a move which involves breaking down historical demarcations between parties: 'We know now that better government is about much more than whether public spending should go up or down, or whether organisations should be nationalised or privatised.'⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Brint, 'Rethinking the Policy Influence of Experts: From General Characterizations to Analysis of Variation', *Sociological Forum* 5 (1990), p. 376.

⁵⁷ Cabinet Office, *Modernising government*. Chapter 1, paragraph 2. The foundations had been laid with the revision of the Labour Party constitution in 1995 to remove Clause IV, which referred to 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'.

The call for evidence-based policymaking is, of course, itself ideological. It invokes rationalist principles, which define a system in which information drives decisions and context and judgement are subdued. As Peter Wells notes: 'in the model of instrumental rationality, [evidence-based policymaking] is closely tied to the politics of a strong central state, of centralisation, and of command and control.'⁵⁸ It can therefore be seen as a further line of continuity with the preceding Conservative administrations, in which modernisation in public services was to be driven through regimes of audit and inspection. This continuity suggests that the rhetoric of evidence-based policymaking did not mark the emergence of a broader political environment congenial to professional expertise, as in Brint's conception. Power had already been consolidated to the centre; New Labour did not dismantle, but rather reinforced the infrastructure involved, showing more interventionist inclinations, for example, through the setting of targets, and the designation of performance-related statuses ("beacon" or "failing").⁵⁹

The preference for personal-political perspectives was similarly consolidated, and it was under Blair that the number of special advisers reached its peak, with 84 in 2004/5, from 38 in 1997. Despite the Coalition Agreement committing to put a limit on the number of spads, in July 2012 the government employed 81, one more than were in post at the last General Election in 2010. It is worth noting that Ministers in the central government departments are far less well resourced than those in other Westminster-style democracies; the two special advisers for Secretaries of State, and one for Ministers attending Cabinet, compares to a ratio of 10:1 in Australia and 20:1 in Canada, although the rule of two is apparently due to Harold Wilson wanting to block Tony Benn's third appointment in 1974.⁶⁰ The persistence of the "spadocracy" suggests it remains the case that individuals can acquire privileged position, in terms of access to and influence on Ministers, in ways no longer possible for groups, a phenomenon Dorey captures in the term 'destabilized policy communities'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Wells, 'New Labour and evidence based policy making: 1997-2007', p. 27.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 3 above on the national curriculum. Also Flynn, 'Modernising British Government', *Parliamentary Affairs* 52 (1999); Gray, 'Blair's Project in Retrospect', *International Affairs* 80 (2004); Green, Lloyd and Parham, 'Living heritage: universities as anchor institutions in sustainable communities'.

⁶⁰ Comparative data comes from University College London's Constitution Unit, who submitted evidence to the Public Administration Committee Inquiry on Special Advisers: Hazell, et al., *Submission to the Public Administration Committee Inquiry on Special Advisers*, (The Constitution Unit, University College London, 2012). On the rule of two special advisers per Cabinet Minister, see Andrew Blick's evidence to the Public Administration Committee: 'Corrected transcript of oral evidence: special advisers', (Public Administration Committee: 12th June 2012)

⁶¹ Dorey, *Policy making in Britain: an introduction*, p. 279.

The “transparency agenda” of the Coalition Government is also a form of rationalism in policy. The proposition is that, if data on performance and outcomes of public services are given to consumers, they will drive informed choice, and therefore improvement, in the quality of provision. These assumptions have become a central feature of major reforms to HE funding and student finance.⁶² Rationalist models involve a *mechanisation* of policy both conceptually and in implementation, and hence a marginalisation of professional judgement and the particular context. A good example of this is the policy to allow universities unlimited recruitment in 2012-13 of students with at least AAB grades or equivalent (ABB in 2013-14), a metric-led system that cuts across advice and guidance in schools, outreach work by university staff to help guide student choice and the use of contextual data for admissions.⁶³ The privatisation and personalisation of political thinking from the 1980s – which was caught up with an ideological scepticism, if not suspicion, of professional “producer” communities – combined with a rationalistic rhetoric under Blair, to give rise to a new “potent though impure” policy amalgam. This amalgam has formed the basic matter of policymaking since. This interpretation clearly has implications for the permeability of policymaking to external sources of expertise, and particularly to those forms of expertise that do not primarily express themselves in numbers.

Quantitative data have become a policy tool in evidence-based policymaking, essential for regimes oriented around targets and audit.⁶⁴ Inputs, outputs or, more problematically, outcomes, can be checked, compared and presented, for example in league tables, and used to monitor performance and prioritise funding. The attention given to enhancing capacity in economics, statistics and social research evident in developments following the 1999 White Paper indicate the strength of the identification of research and analysis as a quantitative domain: the report *Adding it up* on analytical quality and capacity in 2000; the launch of *Professional Skills for Government* in 2004; the creation of the National School of

⁶² Department for Business Innovation and Skills, *Higher Education: Students at the heart of the system*, (London, 2011), pp. 25-32. See chapter entitled ‘Well-informed students driving teaching excellence’.

⁶³ On the AAB+ policy, see: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/howfund/studentgrades/>. Retrieved 13th February 2013.

⁶⁴ The references to ‘quantitative’ here refer to forms of evidence and analysis involving numbers, rather than specifically to research methods. The distinction is between those disciplines that can express their findings numerically based on empirical analysis of data (even if employing qualitative or mixed methods) and those, such as history, involving narrative accounts, either on their own or alongside numerical data.

Government in 2005.⁶⁵ The employment of specialists within the civil service goes back much further, and it was the Fulton report that consolidated their role in government by integrating them into a single grading structure. This recommendation was part of a set of proposals to remove the classes of official – administrative, executive and clerical – and replace them with a more flexible system of occupational groups, which would allow movement and promotion based on ‘end-results’, rather than staff category. In recognising the contribution of specialists to policy development and giving them access to management roles, Fulton can be seen as initiating a trend that led to the privileged status of the quantitative specialist.⁶⁶ As discussed in chapter 2, the introduction of an occupational pathway in government may, however, actually confine specialists to the provision of the evidence and analysis that are fed into the policy process, rather than allowing them to shape policy advice. The “bedding out” of analytical teams in policy directorates, which has become standard practice in central government, rather than maintaining separate service units, may have helped address this issue.

The fact that specialist pathways now exist – for economists, social researchers and statisticians, as well as professionals such as lawyers and accountants – surely captures and promotes the forms of expertise valued by government. The privileging of the quantitative in evidence-based policymaking has implications for the breadth and usefulness of the input received by government, and hence for the quality of the policymaking process. Martin Bulmer, Elizabeth Coates and Louise Dominian, synthesising others, have laid out the types of research evidence available for policymaking. Under the sub-heading ‘A pluralistic notion of evidence?’, they discuss the need to capture public attitudes, explore political positions, understand the ethical dimensions of issues and conduct descriptive-analytical work. Yet neither the authors nor their sources suggest that pluralism need extend beyond the social sciences.⁶⁷ The narrowness of the range of reference is not the core problem, however, but

⁶⁵ Cabinet Office, *Adding it up: improving analysis and modelling in central government*, (London, 2000).

⁶⁶ Beck notes that the Treasury had ‘encountered difficulties in integrating professional economists into an administrative machine’ still dominated by the cult of the “generalist”. Economists therefore faced similar problems to the staff of the Treasury Historical Section. The “quantitative imperative” had not yet emerged; the main divide was between expert and policymaker, not the quantitative and the non-quantitative expert: Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, p. 182.

⁶⁷ Indeed, scholarly writing on policy tends to elide any issues relating to conflating “social science research” with “research” as a category of input into policymaking as if self-evident that these disciplines can account sufficiently for the needs of that process. MacRae and Whittington and Wells do so while challenging narrow notions of evidence for policy: MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice*; Wells, ‘New Labour and evidence based policy making: 1997-2007’; Bulmer et al highlight that ‘much social science knowledge is historically contingent’ yet make no reference to

a symptom of it. The fundamental issue lies with the concept of evidence-based policymaking itself. The idea that quantitative data “take the politics out of policymaking” – by providing an incontrovertible account of “what works” – is problematic on a number of fronts. For scientific disciplines, carefully delineated caveats about causation or correlation, and about the limitations arising from the parameters of a study, are liable to be lost. The democratic processes, by which policy emerges from Parliamentary debate, are marginalised: “what works” is definitive and admits no challenge. It is also, of course, problematic for the humanities, which bring to the surface and explore in human terms the caveats of quantitative research methods that can remain unassimilated in the policymaking process. Incorporating the humanities, therefore, complicates the picture, suggesting that “what works” may only work in certain settings, or that certain groups may respond differently to a particular intervention, or indeed that local circumstances may affect how implementation can be realised.

History’s explicit concern with the implications of context and agency does place the discipline at odds with the models provided by the social sciences, and valued by policy, which seek to isolate independent variables and produce generalisable statements; Gaddis conceives this as the contrast between ‘ecological’ and ‘reductionist’ views of reality.⁶⁸ It is a contrast that is manifested in the tension between evidence-based policymaking and another key strand of New Labour policy picked up from Conservative predecessors: personalisation. While the former prioritises large-sample quasi-experimental data, the latter is oriented to the individual. The tension is probably best illustrated with health policy. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) evaluates new technologies at aggregate level i.e. it looks for evidence of significant health benefit, across the National Health Service (NHS) and for all patients at whom a technology is targeted. On this basis, it produces guidelines. As in many public service fields, there is scope, or requirement, for user involvement; users are, however, ‘treated as a collectivity’. Hence, ‘the acceptability of an intervention would reflect an aggregate assessment of patient views’. This aggregative approach becomes problematic when individual patients who may benefit are unable to access a particular technology due to data collected in a large-scale randomised control trial (RCT).⁶⁹ RCTs are at the top of the hierarchy of evidence (NICE level

history as a complementary discipline: Bulmer, Coates and Dominian, ‘Evidence-based policy making’, in *Making policy in theory and practice*, eds. Bochel and Duncan, (Bristol, 2007), p. 102.

⁶⁸ Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, pp. 54, 60.

⁶⁹ Cutler, Waive and Brehony, ‘A new epoch of individualization? Problems with the ‘personalization’ of public sector services’, *Public Administration* 85 (2007), p. 851-852.

1), but they can only answer very specific questions, due to the need to control the variables. Systematic reviews, although starting with a 'map of the evidence available in a broad area', also focus down on a 'tightly defined question', and hence are not able to provide the breadth required for the consideration of a range of policy options.⁷⁰

One way of conceiving of this problem is in terms of divergent and convergent thinking.⁷¹ Convergent thinking is analytical and problem-solving; the perceptive field is narrowed to contain the task at hand, which is pursued as a discrete entity. Divergent thinking may start with a specific issue or task, but looks to widen the scope to recognise context and connectivities. Handling evidence-gathering and interpretation with a divergent approach seems to fit better the policy process, which cannot be isolated from its institutional and political contexts, or from the those in which it will be implemented. Here, Richard Barry's research on the academic backgrounds of FTSE 100 company board members provides a useful interpretation of divergence/convergence. Leadership in business involves similar challenges to policy development: the use of evidence to inform foresight; a strategic rather than a tactical mind-set; the need to understand and deal with multiple constituencies and interests. 'The only surprise' for Barry that emerged from analysis of relative performance – the number of directors in proportion to the number of graduates in each subject – was 'the very strong showing by historians.'⁷² To attempt to explain this finding, Barry conducted further research on personality types of boys studying A-levels, comparing 'convergers' (high IQs, highly focused on problems) and 'divergers' (usually lower IQs, but with a wider-ranging approach and often more innovative). David Nicholls reports Barry's findings that the gap between history and the hard sciences was the most marked, the former tending to be divergers, the latter convergers. His hypothesis about stark personality differences found some confirmation in a profile of a small sample of first-year undergraduates in engineering and history. The results transcended gender. Barry's conclusion was that 'convergers were particularly well-suited to middle managers. However, at boardroom level different

⁷⁰ Bulmer, Coates and Dominian, 'Evidence-based policy making', p. 89. Cartwright and Hardie's book is a direct response to the dominance of the RCT and other methods from medicine as applied to policy: Cartwright and Hardie, *Evidence-based policy: a practical guide to doing it better*.

⁷¹ Simplification is an almost unavoidable consequence of borrowing the concepts from another field - here, psychology - and employing them out of their disciplinary context. That acknowledgement made, they do provide a helpful device and should be understood as operating within the parameters of this discussion.

⁷² Barry, *The one thousand: the men and women who command the heights of the UK's economy*, (Coventry: Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick, 1998), p. 8.

qualities are called for – especially the ability to make sense of poor data and conflicting demands – and this is where the skills of the diverger come into their own.⁷³

Interestingly, there is a recognition of the need for a form of divergent thinking within the proposals for professional ‘modernised’ government. “Understanding of context” is one of the new skills required of policymakers in the Cabinet Office’s response to the 1999 White Paper:

This means understanding not only the way organisational structures, processes and culture can influence policy making, but also understanding Ministers’ priorities (such as the importance of constituency concerns or impending elections or re-shuffles) and the way policies will play in the ‘real’ world where they will make an impact... Fuller understanding of the broad context within which policy works should help policy makers both when thinking about possible approaches to tackling a given problem and when they come to consider putting a particular solution into effect.⁷⁴

This could be seen as a model for embedding at least one form of historical thinking into the policymaking process. It is ironic, however, that it was ‘organisational structures, processes and culture’ that ensured the demise of the Treasury’s Historical Section, as the ‘endless rustle of the in-tray’ kept officials away from looking ‘back to historical precedents and warnings’ and ‘tackling the fundamental questions’.⁷⁵ Provision of context is one important way in which the quantitative evidence assembled by the natural and social sciences can be enhanced, not only for use in policy, but also for public understanding. Indeed, “context” is one of the five “tools” in the historian’s “cognitive toolbox” that is the focus of the next chapter. In the case of policy issues with a complicated and technical dimension – climate change would be a prominent example – it is not ‘the lack of scientific knowledge’ that prevents thoughtful consideration of the issues: ‘Far more important than facts and figures is a *framework within which the issue can be assessed*’.⁷⁶ Hence “scientific literacy” is not

⁷³ Nicholls, *What’s the use of History? The career destinations of History Graduates*, (2002), p. 25.

⁷⁴ Cabinet Office, *Professional policy making for the twenty-first century: a report*. Paragraph 2.8

⁷⁵ Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, pp. 208, 184. Beck is citing original sources: first, comments made by Rohan Butler in his history of the Abadan crisis for the Foreign Office in 1962; second, communication from N. Forward, a member of Treasury divisional staff, to Collier, 2nd May 1969. Despite the Cabinet Office’s call for contextual thinking, a National School for Government report highlighted the same issue: civil servants are rewarded for dealing with the immediate task at hand: Lusk, *The relentless unforeseen: the case for strategy in government*, (National School for Government, 2009). See further discussion of government departments as institutions below.

⁷⁶ Smith, *The advisers: scientists in the policy process*, p. 203. Citing a Charles F. Kettering Foundation study on the public understanding of climate change and disposal of solid waste. Emphasis mine.

constituted from science alone, but involves historical, sociological, philosophical, psychological and other components that situate ‘facts and figures’ in the context of human beliefs, practices and behaviours. Politics itself adds a contextual complexity to the interpretation of evidence that quantitative methods cannot accommodate: ‘issues such as power, politics and people remain critical... understanding and identifying what works is not a simple technocratic task, but a tellingly reflexive one.’⁷⁷

Power, politics and people: institutional culture in government policy

If we accept that policymaking is not a purely rationalistic and mechanistic process but that ‘power, politics and people’ can have various effects – accelerating, diverting, blocking, shaping, steering – then we need to consider the organisational structures within and through which such influences are expressed. The role of the Minister as the visible and accountable representative of government policy in a particular area is often emphasised.⁷⁸ Ministers operate, however, not only within broader political and economic circumstances, such as size of government majority or national balance of payments, but also within departments with sets of formal and informal “ways of working” that condition the policymaking process. Even if a Wilsonian model is accepted, in which officials are only “agents” who implement what the political leader has initiated, organisational configuration and culture can inflect that implementation, particularly given the iterative loops and overlaps between formulation and execution of policy. Further, as Hill points out, any agent charged with a specific task is a politically interested party.

A central contribution of new institutional theory within sociology, which emerged in the 1950s and 60s, has been to foreground the concept of organisations as political actors in their own right; they structure political situations and leave their imprint on political outcomes.⁷⁹ The term “institution” is consciously taken up here with regards to the government department, in preference to “organisation”. The distinction can be made between the organisation as a ‘system of consciously co-ordinated activities’ and the institution as a ‘product of social needs and pressures’. Policy processes may therefore be conceived as organisational processes, ‘consciously co-ordinated’, systematic, rational in

⁷⁷ Wells, ‘New Labour and evidence based policy making: 1997-2007’, p. 22. Wells gives examples including foxhunting which were claimed to be evidence-based but where ‘power, politics and people’ exerted considerable influence, alongside contingency and expediency.

⁷⁸ For example, Cannadine on the Ministers for Education (see chapter 3 above) Cannadine, Keating and Sheldon, *The right kind of history*.

⁷⁹ Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth (eds.), *Structuring politics*, p. 9.

design. But the government departments in which they happen are not just machines, but ‘adaptive social structures’ that have to ‘sustain their legitimacy’; they are institutions.⁸⁰ The idea of government departments as institutions is particularly helpful in that it incorporates the dimension of time into consideration of policy development. Social needs and pressures change, wider political and economic circumstances change, as do the constraints on action and implementation.

Tracing such change over time to understand the trajectory of certain policies has become a task of “historical institutionalism”, which developed as a sub-field of new institutionalism in the 1970s, although these demarcations are always fuzzy. Historical institutionalism recognises that ‘both institutions and individuals are historical phenomena’ and, hence, that ‘if we wish to understand them, we must see where they come from and why they develop as they do’.⁸¹ Comparison between case studies is a vital tool as institutionalists seek to explain why policies have different effects in different contexts. Taking the long view means that path dependency – the proposition that current options are limited by the effect of past decisions – becomes a central concept; constraints rather than the potential for major shifts are emphasised.⁸² This exposes a fundamental challenge for aligning historical thinking with policy development. If the contribution of history is to set parameters on the capacity for policymakers to effect decisive change, it may be seen as a form of knowledge incompatible with policy formulation. So, rather than provide a divergent perspective, history becomes a convergent lens that narrows the policy field of vision. Historical institutionalism does allow for innovation, but change is either incremental and bounded or happens at critical junctures. Indeed, it is this sense of the terms under which change happens over time that has been history’s major contribution to theoretical advances in the sciences, such as the “punctuated equilibrium” of evolutionary biology based on the paleontological record.

⁸⁰ Hill, *The public policy process*, pp. 69-70. Citing Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots. A study in the sociology of formal organization*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949), pp. 5, 251. The point about legitimacy is made in: Kloppenber, ‘Institutionalism, Rational Choice, and Historical Analysis’, *Polity* 28 (1995), p. 125. The distinction between organisation and institution is helpful in clarifying thinking about how a body works; however, once made, it should perhaps not be laboured, hence ‘organisation’ and ‘organisational’ are used with reference to government departments (and universities).

⁸¹ Kloppenber, ‘Institutionalism, Rational Choice, and Historical Analysis’, p. 125.

⁸² On path dependency, see also: Peters, Jon and King, ‘The Politics of Path Dependency: Political Conflict in Historical Institutionalism’, *The Journal of Politics* 67 (2005); Pierson, ‘Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics’.

If 'human history is human behavior writ past,' there is a good case for using history in and for the study of policymaking and politics.⁸³ Historical institutionalism may be one framework with which to do so; but it would benefit from becoming a more genuinely interdisciplinary enterprise, with historians and social and political scientists all investing in the development of greater understanding of the distinctive methods and approaches of each other's fields. It could also become an inter-*professional* enterprise, with the involvement of policy experts to help its insights become more attuned to the political context in which they could be applied. Bringing more history into historical institutionalism will require historians to offer more than just a sense of the long view and the constraints on change. Indeed, a broader problem for history in its integration with other disciplines and methods is that it tends to be confined to providing a starting point or preface: a fixed narrative of the past as a preamble to the analysis of present policy; a base line for trend data and forecasting; a shared world-view from which to create scenarios of the future.⁸⁴ If a central concern of institutionalism is 'to improve the *substance* of public policy choice by improving the *procedures* used to make these choices', then a more integrated *historical* contribution must focus on that task of process improvement. This important discussion will be picked up in chapter 5.⁸⁵

Although the roles of the Minister, special adviser, senior civil servant or "street-level" official may be given different levels of emphasis, we can recognise that the main "business" of policy development happens at departmental level. It is the institutional context in which a consideration of policymaking as an organisational process can be usefully considered. The concern here is to take forward earlier discussions on the permeability of government departments to external expert advice in general, and to history as a particular form of such advice. The Fulton report looked to create greater flexibility in the government department by giving high-performing specialists access to management positions previously dominated by the generalists of the administrative class. This recommendation responded to the increasing, and increasingly complex, demands on government, and therefore also on the

⁸³ Shermer, 'Chaos and Antichaos, History and Metahistory', p. 61. See also discussion of methodological alignments between history and science in chapter 3 above.

⁸⁴ See for example chapter 2 (A History of recent government policy on business-university interaction): Wilson, *A review of business-university collaboration*, pp. 18-23; On history as preface, see: Green, 'Continuity, contingency and context: bringing the historian's cognitive toolkit into university futures and public policy development', p. 178; Stearns, 'History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity', p. 9.

⁸⁵ Immergut, 'Institutional constraints on policy', in *The Oxford handbook of public policy*, eds. Moran, Rein and Goodin, (Oxford, 2006), p. 562. Italics in original.

civil service. The “generalist-generalist” official becomes obsolete in such a context, the American observer of British politics, Walter Williams, has argued. The context calls instead on the ability to generalise, synthesise and make connections across and between broad policy areas. This requirement favours the “generalist-specialist” – the specialist promoted and equipped with generalist skills and knowledge – who has the advantage of ‘a strong technical base so as to be skilled in the uses of the products of specialists’.⁸⁶

The hybridity of the “generalist-specialist” may, however, be difficult to sustain. Work in the sociology of organisations suggests ‘there is likely to be a conflict within a bureaucratic organisation between the principle of hierarchy and the need to maximise the use of expertise’. The breadth of the remit held by senior managers and the consequent need for delegation mean that subordinates will hold more detailed knowledge of delegated areas; hence, ‘expertise resides to a large extent in the lower ranks of a hierarchy’.⁸⁷ As “experts” join the “elite” the source of their authority changes and they lose the ability to function *as* experts: ‘the empirical evidence strongly suggests that differences in outlook and interest often follow from these differences in organizational power and responsibilities’.⁸⁸ These could include control over budgetary resources, final authorisation for changes in rules and so on. Universities may provide an analogous context here in that academics as quintessential specialists cannot sustain immersion in their discipline on promotion to senior management, and must also privilege the “corporate” perspective over faculty-level interests. The “generalist-specialist” may therefore bring a certain “literacy” for the specialism once held, but also find it difficult to reconcile the demands of the evidence and advice emerging from that domain with the pressures and constraints of institution-level decision-making. Historically-trained senior officials, or university managers, may possibly be more inclined to request briefing on the narrative of a particular decision or event, but nevertheless find it difficult to bring historical awareness to bear in the conduct of their core functions.

A further complication in terms of thinking of history as a form of specialist expertise in government is the lack of a structural recognition for history equivalent to the American occupational codes in the British civil service. A historically-trained individual is likely to be working as a generalist, and hence promotion does not present the same issue in terms of

⁸⁶ Williams, *Washington, Westminster and Whitehall*, p. 83.

⁸⁷ Hill, *The public policy process*, pp. 221-223.

⁸⁸ Brint, ‘Rethinking the Policy Influence of Experts: From General Characterizations to Analysis of Variation’, p. 364. See also: Smith, *The advisers: scientists in the policy process*, p. 7.

the transition from one form of authority to another. The ability of such individuals, whether as subordinates or as leaders, to bring their historical “literacy” to bear on the tasks with which they are involved is conditioned, however, by political and institutional cultures. For history, there is a clear tension between the kind of contribution it can make – which tends towards destabilising certainty and generalisation and involves interpretation and judgement – and a cultural emphasis on the efficiency of the bureaucratic machine through the application of “what works”. This tension is similar to that between rules and discretion. Rules are essential to a bureaucracy as a complex organisation and as one with a high level of visibility and accountability; procedural justice is only possible with clearly articulated rules. Rules cannot, however, anticipate every eventuality; discretion also has a role and may be embedded into the rule structure to a greater or lesser extent.⁸⁹ Following empirical evidence of ‘what works’ is a rule-like formula; it requires, at least in principle, ideology and interpretation to be set aside in policy development. Adopting a humanities-based perspective is likely to involve problematising such formulae and to emphasise judgement and discretion; indeed, that perspective is vital for a democratic political system.

If an individual’s position within an organisation affects their outlook and interests, it is reasonable to consider potential differences between the levels of roles, in terms of the capacity to assimilate history as a form of expertise. In what ways are roles ‘conditioned by political and institutional cultures’? As the “funding experience” experiment with the Treasury Historical Section (THS) in the 1960s and 1970s showed, the pressures on the “man at the desk” to maintain and prove operational efficiency by keeping the in-tray clear made taking the long view of an issue difficult. Lusk’s analysis of the need for strategy in government suggests that compliance and completion remain part of the institutional culture in modern departments. Given the breadth of portfolio handled by Ministers and senior civil servants, middle-ranking officials may take on much policy formulation, using sensitivity to various “cues” from their environment. These would include ‘the perceived thrust of government policy’, whether gained through interaction with Ministers or by reference to documents, and their understanding of departmental priorities. Policy development based on such “cues” or “steers”, as opposed to clear directive, involves balancing and mediating between potentially conflicting views and interests in a particular area. “Consensus-mongering” thus becomes a key skill for middle-ranking officials.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Hill, *The public policy process*, p. 225.

⁹⁰ Hill, *The public policy process*, p. 188. Discussing: Page and Jenkins, *Policy bureaucracy: government with a cast of thousands*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Building policy proposals within boundaries that are intuited rather than defined relies on collaboration within a team and the development of close working relationships with senior staff and Ministers. From that perspective, the absorption of evidence from the *external* environment may seem less feasible. Here, the work of the historian may be particularly problematic. Margaret Gowing, who produced the first Treasury Historical Memorandum (THM) in 1957, having worked previously on official histories of the Second World War, was criticised for unacceptable value judgements in her final project on the history of exchequer aid to colonies approaching independence. A. Peck, the head of the Imperial and Foreign division, expressed a disinclination to release the introduction as drafted for (internal) publication for this reason. He pointed to a 'lack of balance', which presented the Treasury and successive Governments 'in a rather odd light'.⁹¹ Later, another divisional head stated that it was for officials to supply the 'critical analysis' or commentary on the historical evidence; historians should 'stop short at presenting the critical questions which their analysis reveals'.⁹² History, even though in these cases confined to the provision of memoranda as a 'quick and accurate conspectus of all that has gone before', is a form of knowledge liable to bring contentious issues to the surface and destabilise consensus based on the political judgement of the officials. The boundaries between "facts" and interpretation are at best fuzzy; history may be distinctively difficult to adapt to the "consensus-mongering" of practical policy development in the middle ranks.

At senior level, there is a more personal-political dimension to historical work. Ministers are reshuffled, governments lose power; history can embarrass, unsettle and expose. Indeed, access to a three-volume set and a shorter THM on wages policy in 1962 was confined to Treasury officials and classified as secret; 'it is not proper to show the material to Ministers' it was ruled, as the documents 'inevitably contain material that it would be tactless (to say the least) and irrelevant to circulate elsewhere', a deft understatement of the significance of this decision.⁹³ The closeness of the most senior officials to Ministers should mean their understanding of ministerial priorities is sharpest. Where Ministers are themselves receptive to history as an input into their thinking, appropriate "cues" may be sent into the department. Beck points to the direct impact of history on foreign policy on Douglas-Home,

⁹¹ See: Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, p. 66. Citing original sources: first, communication from Peck to P. Nicholls, 5th August 1959. Although official histories and internal memoranda served different purposes and addressed different audiences, a common concern to present a "good case" seems evident.

⁹² Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, p. 149.

⁹³ Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, pp. 80-81.

Heath and Stewart without filtering up from officials; a more recent equivalent would be the initiating of strategy and scenario-planning activities.⁹⁴ The time and commitment that would be required to bring about cultural change is, however, likely to be incompatible with political cycles and ministerial appointments, and particularly given the scale and complexity of a bureaucratic organisation like a government department.

Also to be considered is the hierarchy of ministerial positions, not only within departments – Junior Ministers, Ministers of State and Departmental Ministers, often termed Secretaries of State – but also conventionally between them, with the four Great Offices of State considered the senior roles: Prime Minister; Chancellor of the Exchequer; Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary. Ambitious Ministers may therefore be focused more on behaviour that enables them to be considered for promotion than on the strategic direction, capacity and performance of their current department. The ‘plunge toward action’ becomes more persuasive than the reflexive and contextualising approach that history encourages.

The discussion thus far has focused on policy development, and hence on the government department as the primary institutional setting. It is, however, an organisational process and hence there are equivalents in other types of large and complex bodies, where decision-making has a strategic dimension. Changes of leadership and major shifts in the external environment or in mission and orientation would be points at which history could help organisations think through and prepare for change. History and strategy can come together more explicitly where organisations use archival or other sources of information on their history for brand or product development; “heritage” can be a powerful marketing tool. As with government departments, the public or visible history of a large organisation, marked as it is by milestones in its development, is a different prospect from the internal history. While the two histories are clearly connected, it is the latter that is of interest from a process improvement perspective. The field of futures studies has already made the connection between history and strategy for businesses and public services.⁹⁵ But organisations vary in

⁹⁴ Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, p. 232. Also: Beck, ‘The Lessons of Abadan and Suez for British Foreign Policymakers in the 1960s’, *The Historical Journal* 49 (2006). Referring to Rohan Butler’s history of the Abadan crisis: Alec Douglas-Home as Foreign Secretary 27th July 1960 – 18th October 1963; Ted Heath as Lord Privy Seal 14th February 1960 – 18th October 1963; Michael Stewart as Foreign Secretary 22nd January 1965 – 11th August 1966. Butler went on to become historical adviser to the Foreign Secretary from 1963-1982.

⁹⁵ Wagar, ‘Past and Future’, in *Advancing futures: futures studies in higher education*, ed. Dator, (Westport, Conn.; London, 2002); Van der Heijden, *Scenarios: the art of strategic conversation*, (Chichester: Wiley, 2005); Green, ‘Continuity, contingency and context: bringing the historian’s cognitive toolkit into university futures and public policy development’. The journal *Futures* provides a scholarly forum for the field.

their propensity to think strategically (or historically, or to link the two) and here cultural factors and leadership may be as relevant as in government.

Universities *as institutions* may be a meaningful analogue for government departments, with strong internal cultures and memory that contribute to a sense of continuity, even as leaders change. But beyond such cultural affinities there are structural differences. Government departments are set up to make and deliver policy; there are large numbers of staff available to provide briefing and conduct research in support of those goals. Universities have, of course, their own purposes and staff are organised differently.⁹⁶ Although many universities have history departments, the discharge of duties for an academic historian is usually disconnected from institutional strategy. Non-academic staff tend to work within professional directorates – finance, HR, marketing, estates, IT, and so on – and in roles whose parameters are well-defined. Policy roles are relatively new in universities and staff tend to have access to leaders and influence on decision-making processes; the ‘isolation’ of life at the top means Vice-Chancellors as well as Ministers are seeing a need for special advisers. The historian’s ‘investigative and analytic techniques’ could help leaders avoid the ‘misjudgments, misstatements, and incontinent thinking’ that isolation can cause.⁹⁷ Given that the remoteness of the historians from the business of Treasury policymaking was a key factor in the demise of the THS, the Vice-Chancellor’s office may be the most appropriate and effective location for historical advice in universities. Treasury historian, Ogilvy-Webb, had called – in a 14-page memorandum – for historians to become an integral part of the Planning Units recommended by Fulton, a model of the interdisciplinary strategy team that could translate well to HE.⁹⁸

The THS was closed in 1976, after its early advocates moved on and long-standing concerns about timeliness and relevance of its work were brought to the fore. Even for those senior

⁹⁶ While many produce institutional histories that “make a good case”, it is difficult to investigate the influence of history at the “policy” level; the historical memoranda and associated minutes and notes from the Treasury and Foreign Office’s experiments with “funding experience” are now available under the 30-year rule, however there are no equivalent obligations with regards to access to university documentation.

⁹⁷ Pinsdorf, ‘Hedgehogs and Foxes: Historians in Management’, *The Public Historian* 3 (1981), pp. 149-150.

⁹⁸ Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, pp. 153-155. Otis L. Graham, Jr from a US perspective see planning as a ‘more promising route of infiltration’ into policy than ‘some sort of institutionalized adjunct of executive decisionmaking, labelled History Office’: Graham, ‘The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking’, p. 13.

staff relatively well-disposed towards the concept of “funding experience”, the question of how to balance investment of time into the historical perspective and the pressures of dispatching current business remained unresolved. History did not establish itself as a form of knowledge that could be usefully applied to the churn and change of policymaking. Responsibility lies on both sides: with historians who did not respond to tight deadlines and produced lengthy academic histories; with officials who were unclear about their requirements and did not allocate time to comment on drafts or act on completed reports.⁹⁹ These factors are symptoms of a common cause: that history was not part of the policymaking process. Ogilvy-Webb could claim that the THS was investigating ‘the process of policy formulation and execution *from the inside,*’ and indeed the historians’ access to Treasury files was privileged, but their work was only ever an adjunct source of information.¹⁰⁰

“Advice” may be no more comfortable a term for historians than for scientists, yet it captures the rather different nature of the contribution made from an expert perspective as part of the policy process from the provision of “evidence” to it. As Smith notes, this is a necessary challenge, to reconcile ‘the integrity and disciplined search for truth of science with the openness and procedural fairness of democracy’.¹⁰¹ We may choose to take issue with the language of “truth”, but the underlying idea remains significant and places an obligation on both academe and policy to pursue a more effective integration of expert advice and policy formulation. Two dimensions to this task can be discerned.

The first dimension can be termed *mind-set*. To return to Szretzer, his almost *moral* demarcation of the boundaries between “academic” and “policy-relevant” research defines a very clear position. This has implications, I would argue, for the role of history in policymaking that should be recognised. His demarcation ensures that history as a discipline can only ever supply “adjunct” sources of evidence, and hence must be further removed from the process than the THS. Even Szretzer’s limited goals of changing perceptions and expanding imaginations in policymaking are unlikely to be achieved. The potential for any systemic influence seems even more remote; this would require a more dialogic approach, in which the discussion is shaped by the goals of a particular policy area and the questions arising from its consideration, rather than by the research interests of the historian. Kalela

⁹⁹ Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, p. 186.

¹⁰⁰ Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, P. 174. Citing Ogilvy-Webb’s communication to Vinter, 3rd November 1966.

¹⁰¹ Smith, *The advisers: scientists in the policy process*, p. 207.

urges historians to avoid ‘arrogance and condescension’ towards the people addressed by their work, a position that few would now challenge. But it is inconsistent to celebrate the sophistication that allows us to honour and value perspectives “from below”, while maintaining the view that policymakers need informing and correcting.¹⁰²

Further, whatever our personal views about “politics”, they animate the legitimate democratic processes by which policy is made and implemented. There is ‘no way’, as Smith argues, for expert advisers to ‘escape the conceptual problems and the confusions of politics if they are dealing with the agency’s true problems and are seeking to give truly useful recommendations’. And there should not, arguably, be one either. Our representational democracy runs, and must run, on judgement and belief as well as “evidence”. Historians should be among the best-equipped academic experts to speak to, engage with and advise on judgements and beliefs. An integrated approach to history in policy does not, however, imply subservience; ‘treating a policymaker as a client does not mean accepting the initial framework of concerns and the specific questions it poses,’ Seymour Mandelbaum points out. The dialogue, like that between doctor and patient, is a process of ‘separating underlying interests from the particular formulation and remedy first suggested’.¹⁰³ Such an approach would call on a capacity and willingness to understand the policymakers’ reality, the parameters and constraints – institutional, political, economic – with which they must work, but also to question, inspect and counter them. The way in which universities have come to develop much stronger forms of business engagement should provide a model, a process which has involved a broad conceptual shift from knowledge or technology transfer to knowledge exchange. Consultancy, collaborative research and development and employee training provision are now established activities in HE; they are dependent on a mind-set that recognises client needs and seeks integration with, rather than demarcation from, academic methods and processes.

The second dimension can be termed *application*, and this will form the substance of the following chapter. If a policy-oriented mind-set is in place, how can the historian’s toolkit be put to use in policy development so that it becomes an integrated and valued part of the process? This discussion falls into two parts. The first is a methodological consideration of the techniques and approaches of historical practice that could enhance the policymaking

¹⁰² Kalela, *Making history*, p. 57.

¹⁰³ Mandelbaum, ‘The past in service to the future’, pp. 51-52.

process. The second looks at the more tangible products of historical involvement in policy development.

History *in* policy: defining and using the historian's cognitive toolbox

If we can recognise policymaking as a complex and unfolding organisational process in which 'power, politics and people' take influential roles that shift and evolve, then a discipline able to handle the interplay of many interdependent variables and change over time should be well suited to support that process. The methods of historians, as the 'principal practitioners of an ecological approach to the study of human affairs', should constitute a valuable set of tools for policymakers, distinctive from the reductionist approaches of the social sciences, which have come to dominate the domain of evidence-based policymaking.¹

As the previous chapters have explored, the British central government is a policy context that presents a specifiable set of challenges to the use of history in policymaking. A broad issue concerning the permeability of government to forms of external and specialist expertise is of long standing. It was associated initially with the closed cultures of a highly centralised government bureaucracy, in which the discharge of operational duties and the skills of the able generalist were prized, and indeed, such preferences were encoded in the structures and processes of the civil service. Over the last forty years, however, changes in political attitudes have created a climate in which history as a particular form of such expertise is viewed with ambivalence, scepticism, even aversion. Over a similar period, the discipline itself has evinced its own apprehensions about policy, as the emergence of social and cultural history has turned attention away from "elites", and pluralisation and specialisation have rendered academic practice more inward-looking.² Public history in England is largely preoccupied with matters of heritage and education – an interpretation of public engagement reinforced by funding strategies – and is oriented around museums, historic sites and the media. There is little evidence of serious intellectual or practical involvement with the uses of history for policy development; activities such as the work of the History and Policy network follow an "enlightenment" model, pushing out the products of existing academic research or correcting "bad history". The alternative, proposed in this

¹ Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, p. 62.

² Zelizer, 'Clio's Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978'; Lasch-Quinn, 'Democracy in the Ivory Tower?'

thesis, is an integrated approach, in which historians are part of the policymaking process or there is, at least, an on-going dialogue between historians and policymakers that can inform the scholarly agenda.

The historical perspective has found some representation in the thinking of sociologists and political scientists. Those interested in institutions as the essential context for policy development and implementation recognise the importance of tracing change over time and of analysing the contextual features that define the parameters of political action. Those concerned with the policymaking process can point to history as an aid to problem definition – the first, exploratory stage – or as a ‘preface’ to ‘real policy work’ involving the summarising of past political developments.³ “Historical perspective”, or “background”, is, however, a rather limited form of contribution; the models and theories of the social sciences continue to provide the methodological structures for enquiry.

This chapter is concerned with how history as a discipline with a set of defined techniques and approaches can have an integrated role in policy development. It is informed by the contention that history can and should offer more than “historical perspective”, whether such perspective takes the form of models sensitive to time and context, historical narratives to provide background on a problem or policy area, or indeed accounts produced by historians themselves. Indeed, while it is to be welcomed that some historians do address present policy problems, that is not what is at issue here. Such work may have a ‘focused purpose’ and even be termed applied history (at least outside Britain), but it breaks no new ground in a disciplinary sense; the historian produces records ‘that will be useful to policy analysts in the future... an important legacy whose value will be realized at some time in the future’.⁴ Even if the historian synthesises research for an immediate policy audience, as the History and Policy network does, the policy orientation is evident only in the presentation: not in the definition, conduct and objectives of the research itself. This chapter proposes that the core methods and processes of history can be applied to the tasks of policy development so that historical *work* – as opposed to *perspective* – forms an integrated part of the policy process.

Such work could be conducted in two main ways, which can be seen as potentially complementary, the choice or mix being a strategic decision. The first would be to use

³ MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice*, p. 70; Stearns, ‘History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity’, p. 9.

⁴ Stakenas and Soifer, ‘Models and historical data in public policy analysis’, in *History and public policy*, ed. Mock, (Malabar, Fla., 1991), pp. 71-72.

academic, or academically-trained, historians on appointments into government in a similar way to that described by Smith for science advisers in the USA or envisaged by Fulton for the Planning Units. The second would be to embed history into policy advice as an essential aspect of “good staff work”, following Neustadt and May’s model.⁵ Training and development of different kinds would be required in both instances, and here American experience would be instructive. The previous chapter raised the issue of the shift in mind-set – by both historians and policymakers – on which an integrated approach would rely. Policy development would need to be recognised by historians as a legitimate, indeed important, domain of activity, with policymakers regarded not as ‘patrons’ or subjects of enquiry, but as collaborating partners and people with ‘commanding interests’.⁶ Policymakers themselves would be called on to be intellectually open to history as a specialist form of knowledge, one that frames its questions and presents its arguments in narrative structures. An equivalent recognition of legitimacy and collaborative advantage would help avoid the marginalisation of historical work as occurred with the Treasury Historical Section (THS).

If mind-set is the first dimension of the task of pursuing a more effective integration of historical advice and policy formulation, the second is “application”. What tools are in the historian’s toolkit, and how do they relate to the tasks involved in the policy process? These questions inform the first half of this chapter. A “word in the ear” may often be the most effective form of communication between expert adviser and policymaker, but there are also more tangible products that can represent the formal, substantial and expected output of policy work. The second half of the chapter considers how distinctive historical policy products could be defined. The aim is to get beyond existing “adjunct” models that translate academic research into accessible language to enlighten or correct the uninformed policymaker, but are consciously disengaged and distant from the practice of policy.

The clear articulation of methods presents one of the main challenges for history as a discipline in establishing its credentials for utility in policy development. Gaddis has argued that historians leave themselves open to attack with their reluctance, or inability, to display the ‘ductwork’ of their methods. Indeed, his book, *The Landscape of History*, is largely preoccupied with restoring morale and purpose to the discipline by aligning it methodologically with the natural sciences that rely on virtual replicability – thought, rather

⁵ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, p. 2. Neustadt and May’s ‘mini-methods’ for using history in decision-making will be discussed below.

⁶ Mandelbaum, ‘The past in service to the future’, p. 51.

than lab, experiments – and are interested in change over time. Thus history and the historical sciences stand in contrast to the social sciences and their insistence on determining ‘immaculate causation’ and universal generalisations.⁷ The centrality of experience and judgement to professional history-making does, however, make the idea of historical ‘ductwork’ rather problematic; Ludmilla Jordanova has pointed to the complex and subtle skills involved in the interpretation and use of historical materials and the assembly of a plausible argument: one that elicits trust. She foregrounds writing as ‘the most important historical act historians perform’.⁸ The drawing of inferences from evidence is often ‘performed unconsciously,’ as David J. Staley argues, pointing, as do Gaddis and Jordanova, to cogency, plausibility and persuasiveness as criteria of effectiveness.⁹ These descriptions of historical work are thoughtful and resonant; they are not inferior for being less precise than equivalent descriptions (or prescriptions) of methods in the natural or social sciences. Rather, they are qualitatively different and that difference has a necessary disciplinary identity. They reveal the *humanity* of history, the ‘judgement, skill and wisdom’ (Staley), indeed, the influence of ‘power, politics and people’, involved in practising it. Its contingencies and complexities, its recognition of both structure and agency, its reliance on experience, accommodation and interpretation all ensure that history is, I would argue, at the same time the discipline with the greatest affinity to policy development *and* one of the most remote from it.

The rhetoric of evidence-based policymaking entailed taking politics out of decisions: evidence would provide clarity; the facts would speak for themselves. A fundamental incompatibility is apparent with the discipline of history as it has emerged over the last forty years. The challenge, therefore, is to break down the assumptions behind that rhetoric by establishing that the *affinity between policy and history* is a productive one, recasting the understanding of policy-relevant methods and evidence. This will be done by drawing out five distinctive approaches and qualities of history with specific reference to their usage in policy development.¹⁰ These can be seen as falling into two sets: the first of major structural

⁷ Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, pp. 63-64.

⁸ Jordanova, *History in practice*. See pp. 90-1, 150-1, 160-1.

⁹ Staley, *History and future*, p. 52.

¹⁰ Reference will be made in the sections that follow to other efforts that have been made to address the role of history in and for policy in a broad sense; all but one of the following typologies have come from historians located in America: Faber, ‘The Use of History in Political Debate’, *History and Theory* 17 (1978); Stearns, ‘History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity’; Achenbaum, ‘The Making of an Applied Historian: Stage Two’; Mandelbaum, ‘The past in service to the future’; Zelizer, ‘Clio’s Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978’; Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*.

features (time, context and comparison), the second of processes (handling and deploying evidence, the construction of argument). The exercise has a significant synthetic component – the theory and methodology of history have received substantial treatment – and this is most clearly the case with the first set of tools given they constitute the structural features of the discipline. What is distinctive about the analysis here is the focus on a specific domain of application; the synthesis is engaged and purposeful and the criticism turns on arguments about how a tool could be employed more effectively, could be sharpened, for use in the domain of policymaking.

History is, of course, not the only discipline concerned with the past or indeed with time; these characteristics cannot stand alone to define its distinctive identity.¹¹ History *is* distinct in being centrally concerned at the same time with diachronic and synchronic accounts in human affairs, which offer *temporal* and *contextual* counterpoints to social scientific approaches in policy work. These will form the first two applications. Analogy is perhaps the most visible and contested use of history in its susceptibility to ab-use.¹² Without comparison, however, historical practice – not just “applied history” – is impossible.¹³ We must inspect the use and purpose of comparison as a historical technique rather than just express professional disdain at historically-suspect analogies, usually in political rhetoric, and the ‘unreasoning’ that follows.¹⁴ Following Faber, we cannot be satisfied with simply condemning “bad history”, but must rather ‘make this link [between history and politics] the object of a study that is both historical and theoretical in scope’.¹⁵

A second set of applications are to do with the processes by which historians identify and interpret evidence and build a persuasive case on that basis. Here, the historian’s facility with gathering and drawing inferences from different types of evidence, with different levels of human experience and with the inevitable ambiguities and lacunae that are involved forms the fourth application. All of this intellectual activity must be rendered into a form in which it can contribute to knowledge and understanding in wider settings, whether that is academe, public life or a particular audience whose concerns it addresses. The final application to be considered is presentation and argument, which also forms a bridge to the

¹¹ Jordanova, *History in practice*, p. 170.

¹² MacMillan, *The uses and abuses of history*; Tosh, *Why history matters*; McGovern, ‘The Historian as Policy Analyst’, *The Public Historian* 11 (1989).

¹³ Jordanova, *History in practice*, p. 152.

¹⁴ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 34-57.

¹⁵ Faber, ‘The Use of History in Political Debate’, p. 38.

second half of the chapter, in which the potential outputs or “products”, broadly conceived, for history in policy are examined.

Time

In the search for parsimony in explanation, social science methods prefer limited numbers of variables; they can also tend to ignore the temporal dimension as an added source of complexity. A ‘contemporary cross-section’ or “snapshot” view of political life’ is taken ‘especially in areas of inquiry where “large-N” statistical methods and the analytic tools of microeconomics and game theory have been ascendant’. Policymaking, however, is a process that unfolds over time: ‘Attentiveness to issues of temporality highlights aspects of social life that are essentially invisible from an ahistorical vantage point. Placing politics in time can greatly enrich the explanations we offer for social outcomes of interest.’¹⁶ The cross-section or “snapshot” relates to the problematic concept of “policy choice”, that is, the idea that problems, actors and options can be analysed for a moment in time and a rational decision made. Pierson therefore posits *policy development* as an alternative idea, as a process in which we understand “choice” as an event located within a stream of time; we need to be aware, in Mandelbaum’s formulation, of ‘continuity in action’.¹⁷ There may be a long and complex “issue history” embracing factors that would not be immediately apparent in a snapshot view. Historians’ focus on the diachronic dimension means they are most clearly equipped to “handle” and account for change (and continuity). As Stearns notes, historians are able to *categorise change* ‘and give it coherence’, to assess ‘differential speeds’ of change, to distinguish ‘fundamental from superficial change’ and recognise the continuities ‘even in an apparently evolving environment’.¹⁸

At this point, the idea of “issue history” or indeed of providing a perspective on broad trends over time may seem the least challenging application of history to policy. It could be interpreted as a straightforward academic task: the supply of adjunct historical evidence, or perspective. But if we accept that such a model has limited capacity for influence, we need

¹⁶ Stearns, ‘History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity’, p. 13; Pierson, ‘The study of policy development’, p. 34.

¹⁷ Mandelbaum, ‘The past in service to the future’, pp. 40-43. ‘Continuity is action’ is one of three headings in Mandelbaum’s typology for history and policy. The psychologist Annette Karmiloff-Smith made the same distinction between “snap-shot” and “developmental” approaches in her discipline when interviewed: *The Life Scientific*, (BBC Radio 4: 22nd January, 2013).

¹⁸ Stearns, ‘History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity’, pp. 19-20. See also Graham, ‘The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking’. The works footnoted above by Achenbaum, Mandelbaum, Stakenas and Zelizer all highlight trends as a key element of the use of history in policy.

to be more ambitious for the concept. This means going beyond not only academic conceptions of the tasks of history, but also certain models proposed from the perspective of applied history or policy studies. Matrix techniques are common tools for policy analysis as they allow for a ready comparison of options and trade-offs between criteria to be made. MacRae and Whittington propose three key matrices for policy choice, of which one places time periods against alternatives; they also recognise a role for disciplines such as history in describing a problem condition and critically examining criteria for analysis. Stakenas and Soifer use a matrix of basic systems theory categories (antecedents, interactions and outcomes) against the five stages of the policy analysis process (problem identification, policy development, adoption, implementation and evaluation). They see potential roles for applied historians at each stage. Although their structured approach aligns clearly with the policy process, the formalisation of the historian's role does not necessarily make historical influence more effective.¹⁹

For neither MacRae and Whittington nor Stakenas and Soifer, however, does an acknowledgement of the need for a historical sense of time in policymaking provide a basis for an ambitious re-thinking of what such a contribution might be. They understand a role for "history as preface", part of problem identification/description. For Stakenas and Soifer, the historian assists by 'evaluating the context in which the issue was identified and ... determining how social, political, and economic factors influenced earlier policy choices', yet the prospects for historical "thinking in time" beyond that initial stage are rather limited. The next four stages involve collecting oral history interviews after the event, due to the presumed lack of written records, and they envisage difficulties in establishing the criteria for judgement of evidence. On-going engagement within the policy process itself – with the aim of enhancing it – is not considered. That is not to say that a matrix technique is incompatible with a more integrated approach to doing history in policy; clarity makes the matrix a useful tool for presenting specialist information to a non-specialist audience.²⁰ But the matrix may be better used as a tool for presentation than as a model for analysis; the applied historian implementing the matrix as model is there to document, not to advise,

¹⁹ See discussion of formal occupational structures for historians in US federal government and in Canada in chapter 2 above. Graham also speculates that 'some sort of institutionalized adjunct of executive, labelled History Office' would be less likely to be in the West Wing but in Suitland, Maryland, where historians would be 'writing largely unread institutional histories': Graham, 'The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking', p. 13. The resonance with the THS experience is evident.

²⁰ MacRae and Whittington's model for informing policy choice is built entirely on matrices: MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice*.

functioning 'much like an archivist'.²¹ Further, the matrix is liable to capture successions of snapshots rather than allowing the historian to contribute the distinctive appreciation of time. I would argue that, combined, these two factors ensure the applied historian is even further removed from the policy process than the academic historian providing "adjunct" evidence to it.

In contrast to both academic-historical and policy-theoretical approaches to accounting for the past, Neustadt and May are alive to the potential contribution to policy thinking of the historical capacity for working with time. 'The future has no place to come from but the past'; history remains as preface or adjunct to policy development if it is only concerned with the construction of historical accounts. So their "issue history" is not an end in itself; it serves to clarify objectives: to 'help define the desired future'. The historian needs to be mindful of the stream of time; it will continue after the policy decision has been taken, and the implications and effects of the decision will in turn condition other policy choices. The historian is not only setting the policy choice in historical context, but also history in a temporal context that stretches beyond the past. That mindfulness will mean that the issue history is pursued as a process, requiring a practice of 'continuous comparison, an almost constant oscillation from present to future to past and back, heedful of prospective change, concerned to expedite, limit, guide, counter, or accept it as the fruits of such comparison suggest'.²² Historians are, therefore, able to offer a 'special style of approaching choices'. This style consists of a 'mental quality that readily connects discrete phenomena over time and repeatedly checks connections'.

For Neustadt and May, issue history consists of three devices: pursuing the right story (reflecting the concerns of the policymaker, derived from the presumptions in the face of "knowns" and "uncertainties"); plotting the time-lines of the story, including trends and events; asking journalist's questions (where, who, how and why as well as the usual when and what) to 'illuminate ... potential incongruities in favorite courses of action'.²³ These devices make the historian an integral part of the policy conversation as the (historical) nature of the situation is explored and the options for action are arrayed. In this sense, it bears affinity with work considering the uses of history in business that had been emerging

²¹ Stakenas and Soifer, 'Models and historical data in public policy analysis', pp. 60-62, 71.

²² Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 236, 251. The idea of oscillation seems to echo that of the 'dialogue between past and present', the 'reciprocal questioning' that Bédarida argues has pedigree back to the liberal historians of the nineteenth century: Bédarida, 'The Modern Historian's Dilemma', p. 346.

²³ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 235-236.

over the previous two decades or so. This work explored the benefit of historical insight to strategy development and decision-making, activities that also align well with policymaking.²⁴ Les Garner lays out 'six premises about the role of historical analysis in decision making' and highlights how history sensitises the business executive to 'the dynamics of continuity and change within a decision situation'. These premises informed the development of an MBA course co-taught by faculty in Business and History at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.²⁵

What is particularly interesting about his description of the course is the way in which historical perspective destabilises students' understanding of how business works: what relationships and structures shape the business environment; what factors are most influential in negotiation and decision-making, with financial data emerging as possibly the least important, counter to expectations. The application of historical thinking to business tasks and processes remains a live topic of enquiry, both in methodological innovation in Business Studies and more broadly through futures techniques, particularly scenarios.²⁶ This longstanding engagement does not, however, appear to have an equivalent in the field of public policy, despite the affinities with decision-making. Initial explorations of applied history in the 1980s and early 1990s, led by Peter Stearns, have not been picked up in any substantial way by others.²⁷ The potential for reanimating this interest merits consideration, particularly in a HE policy context that places a premium on impact. If public history in England confines itself to engagement and concern with the heritage sector, it will miss opportunities for intellectual challenge, productive collaboration and for profile and traction.

In summary, the historian brings not only a sense of the past and of trends, disjunctures and lost alternatives, but, more expansively and purposefully, a sense of the dimension of time. This means constructing issue histories that open up for discussion the potential factors that

²⁴ Soltow, 'The business use of business history', *The Business History Review* 29 (1955); Pomeroy, 'Historians' Skills and Business Needs', *The Public Historian* 1 (1979); Ryant, 'The Public Historian and Business History: A Question of Ethics'.

²⁵ Garner, 'History for the Corporate Executive'.

²⁶ Jones and Khanna, 'Bringing History (Back) into International Business', *Journal of International Business Studies* 37 (2006); Van der Heijden, *Scenarios: the art of strategic conversation*; Wagar, 'Past and Future'; Green, 'Continuity, contingency and context: bringing the historian's cognitive toolkit into university futures and public policy development'.

²⁷ Stearns and Tarr, 'Applied History: A New-Old Departure'; Stearns, 'History and Policy Analysis: Toward Maturity'; Achenbaum, 'The Making of an Applied Historian: Stage Two'; Graham, 'The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking'; Rousso, 'Applied History, or the Historian as Miracle-Worker'; Stearns and Tarr, 'Curriculum in Applied History: Toward the Future'.

have shaped or are now influencing a situation, the past and on-going roles of individuals and groups, and the aims and requirements of the policymaking organisation. All of these involve an ability to integrate awareness of and engagement with the past with those of the present and the future: to think in time streams. The historian may produce a briefing note, comment on others' work, pursue critical questioning in a policy meeting to challenge assumptions or the perceived range of alternatives – or just offer a “word in the ear” to a Minister, special adviser or committee member. In whatever form advice is delivered, adding the dimension of time remains a vital contribution to policy thinking, which can otherwise readily focus on policy “choice” based on immediate problems, demands and pressures.

Context

Closely connected to time is context: the two ‘characteristic modes of thought among historians’. They are rather more difficult to disentangle than diachronic/synchronic, vertical/horizontal conceptions suggest.²⁸ But that entanglement is productive; the historian’s approach to time and context can resolve the apparent tension between structure and agency in political decision-making. The discipline’s attunement to structural factors allows the explanation of persistence and continuity as well as, and alongside, change, elements that may be missed in the search for immediate causes and catalysts. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, taking the long view might imply the identification of constraints on action, making the historian’s perspective an unwelcome one to the politician needing to act and be seen to be decisive and effective. Work on punctuated equilibria in the sciences addresses both stability and change and has implications for many fields, including history: ‘understanding the mechanisms that perpetuate order ultimately helps us to understand how it is that orders are transformed.’²⁹ So rather than offer a picture of structural constraints, historians are able to explore the circumstances in which structural features may be tending towards stability or liable for transformation. This explanation provides vital insight to questions of agency. In what situations can leadership make a difference? When are situations ‘open for movement and innovation’, and, conversely, when ‘jelled and stalemated against change’?³⁰ ‘The analytic

²⁸ Graham, ‘The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking’, p. 10.

²⁹ Masur, ‘Stephen Jay Gould’s Vision of History’, *The Massachusetts Review* 30 (1989), p. 472.

³⁰ Graham, ‘The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking’, p. 11.

task,' as Erwin Hargrove argues, is one that calls for political science to collaborate with history: 'to understand the dynamic relation between agency and structure'.³¹

So, returning to Neustadt and May, I would see a case for bringing the methods associated with time ("issue history") closer to those to do with context ("placement"). Placement involves, for them, 'probing presumptions about relevant people and organisations on whose active aid success depends'. This includes allies and agencies as collaborating or delivery partners, but also adversaries and interested parties or constituencies. Their proposals underline the inter-relation between time and context, prescribing the assembly of time-lines of events and details (Stearns captures this in his term 'constituency history').³² The details – 'discernible items of individual experience or of internal organizational development' – provide the contextual depth. Reviewing these allows the identification of patterns and the drawing out of inferences, with the aim of refining working hypotheses: the likely positions and behaviour of other parties, and the other parties' likely interpretation of yours.³³

The Neustadt and May model sees placement as part of *implementation*, to happen after the definition of the issue and the array of alternatives, and both before and after option selection. They acknowledge that the need for placement may arise earlier in the process 'if the boss is a stranger or his job unfamiliar'. But placement seems to me logically connected to issue history: both are tasks of location. A closer connectivity between the two may be particularly important when it comes to policy development, as opposed to decision-making under pressure. A thorough contextualisation of constituencies is a vital task of the policy process – from definition to implementation – when considering multi-faceted, multi-party, multi-factor themes, such as social security, education, justice and health. When doing so, the overall shape and purpose of services and structures are involved in the analysis, not just the resolution of the issue immediately presented.³⁴

Before exploring contextualisation as a tool for use in policymaking, it is worth considering what it involves. Context, as the educational psychologist and historian, Sam Wineburg

³¹ Hargrove, 'History, Political Science and the Study of Leadership', *Polity* 36 (2004), pp. 593, 582.

³² See: Stearns, 'Applied history and the problems of social security', pp. 108-114. MacRae and Whittington also feature a form of placement – political mapping: MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice*, pp. 256-257.

³³ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 238-239.

³⁴ On the importance of context in defining a problem: Garner, 'History for the Corporate Executive'. On the role of context in understanding how policies will be received: Stearns, 'Applied history and the problems of social security'.

argues, is not discovered but made: 'Context, from the Latin *contexere*, means to weave together, to engage in an active process of connecting things in a pattern' and the questions that historians ask are the 'tools of creation', mediating between 'present knowledge' and the 'circumstances of the past'. The process is thus a form of oscillation between past and present, a process which builds up a map or image representing the historian's understanding of the past in the present. What is important to note is that the historian's expertise in contextualisation lies in the use of questioning: 'getting a fix on' what is not known and using that to guide the learning.³⁵ Contextual thinking can thus be learned and then practised as a 'mental quality' (to use Neustadt and May's term); acquiring 'knowledge of historical specifics' may enlarge understanding of the options, but it cannot substitute for the skill.³⁶ The idea of mapping is a useful one, both as a metaphor for historical representation and as a "product" to delineate temporal and conceptual relationships and interactions between people and organisations. The cartographic process makes visible the contextual weaving described by Wineburg; the final map enables the viewer to see the overall shape of a topic, to follow the contours and identify the principal features of the landscape. Correspondence – the 1:1 scale – would not only be unfeasible but unusable, as Gaddis persuasively argues; maps, as historical accounts, are representations and designed to be used.³⁷ The map is a useful device here as it demonstrates that all history-making is representation, and therefore involves selectivity related to scale and to purpose: "academic history" no less than "applied history" or "history in policy". But, more importantly, the map also serves heuristic purposes. It does so in two main ways.

First, the contextual map can be seen as a representation of structure.³⁸ It cannot offer comprehensiveness (1:1 correspondence), but it can give the policymaker an 'image of controllable systemic relationships': both the more stable structural features and the 'broad variety of behaviour' that may occur within the framework.³⁹ The map thus suggests parameters for action; Fulbrook borrows the German word *Handlungsspielraum*, and both

³⁵ Wineburg, *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts*, p. 21.

³⁶ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 252, 245.

³⁷ Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, pp. 45-46. On historical narrative as mapping and the question of correspondence, representation and scale see also Louch, 'History as Narrative', *History and Theory* 8 (1969), p. 60; Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 191.

³⁸ Staley draws an equivalence between contextual thinking and structural thinking; even if a historian is committed to producing an account driven by the sources, structure must intrude to an extent. Periodisation implies coherence and a relationship between events within the temporal markers: Staley, *History and future*, pp. 72-73. See also: Jordanova, *History in practice*, pp. 113-119.

³⁹ Mandelbaum, 'The past in service to the future', p. 48.

main translations – “room for manoeuvre” and “sphere of influence” – are arguably relevant here.⁴⁰ This brings us back to the idea that contextual thinking allows historians to handle both structure and agency. Contextual thinking as structural thinking can also have a role in longer-term policy planning. While the prediction of *events* would seem futile, what can be described are coherent sets of *parameters or structures* (i.e. scenarios) within which events are likely to happen. The historian – trained to use the traces of the past in the present to produce a picture of that past – is well-placed, according to Staley, to identify the traces of the future in the present and so to imagine potential futures in a disciplined way.⁴¹

What is being imagined is not individual events, but the structures that shape and constrain events. Staley’s preferred metaphor is a sporting one. Describing the “rules of the game” does not allow us to predict the time when a goal is scored, how each player performs or the final score, but it does allow us to anticipate likely behaviours and occurrences, and also what is less likely to happen.⁴² The scenario is a description of context. For history in policy, placement or constituency history is as important in the long as in the short range. How influential might one interest group or organisation be in a particular scenario? What might another’s main concerns be in this policy area? Who would be advocates, allies, opponents and sceptics of our proposals? Each scenario provides a contextual framework to “test” a policy by thought experiment through all its stages. The process of contextual weaving through questioning is the same, giving the historian an important role not just in construction but also in use: for example, checking plausibility in the light of other evidence and identifying gaps or disconnects.

Second, the map as a visualisation of structural relationships offers a useful challenge to snap-shot or cross-sectional accounts that can tend to over-emphasise the intentional actions of individuals. Functionalist approaches, such as those employed by the policy sciences, can “mis-analyse”, if not get ‘the causal arrow backwards’ by assuming actors select policies, rather than being alive to how ‘the policy arrangements may have played a role in generating the properties of the actors’.⁴³ As the product of historical thinking processes, the map can be adapted and redrawn in response to new information from the policy environment that disproves or calls into question the features already described:

⁴⁰ Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, p. 130.

⁴¹ Wagar makes the same point, echoing Carr: ‘all one can say is that historians, even nonbelievers in progress, should have the future in their bones’. Wagar, ‘Past and Future’, p. 83.

⁴² Staley, *History and future*, p. 77. The same metaphor is used by Gaddis: Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, p. 11.

⁴³ Pierson, ‘The study of policy development’, p. 45.

'Preserving the historicity of the image allows the policy maker to treat a new set of observations as part of a larger pool. Structures and repertoires may be reconceptualized without necessarily challenging the guiding images and processes.' By contrast, the ahistorical models of the social sciences struggle to accommodate mistakes 'since they appear to threaten the entire conception of the world'.⁴⁴ Maps in this sense are pragmatic; they represent a negotiated balance between the necessarily provisional nature of knowledge about something and the need to put that knowledge to use. Indeed, it is this quality that makes maps a good metaphor for the historical enterprise in general.⁴⁵

So the historian's attunement to the need to *locate* events, issues, individuals, organisations in their contexts – involving both diachronic and synchronic elements – and the ability to "weave" those contexts through a cumulative process of questioning can serve important purposes for policy development. They allow the historian to describe coherent arenas for political action: coherent not only in the sense of internally plausible and intelligible but also in the sense of meaningful, capturing the complexity of individual and group interaction and of structure and agency. History as a discipline is able to bring to the practice of policy development tools such as contextual thinking that purposefully accommodate and engage with – rather than seek to subdue or control – the multiplicity of factors and influences on human behaviour and organisation. In policy terms, such work can cover past, present and possible alternative future contexts or scenarios. Narratives, including the short "sketches" of the scenarios, are useful to describe context and structure for policy audiences.

Maps, however, may be a category of product most amenable to interpretation and use; they are adaptable to purpose – to "place" an actor, to locate a policy problem, to understand potential impact of an initiative – and responsive to change, such as new information, evidence of "mis-analysis", shifts in political emphasis and so on. Mapping is also a task in which advisers from different disciplinary backgrounds may contribute, a characteristic important in contemporary policy analysis as 'an essential multidisciplinary activity'. This may be relevant in policy areas involving substantial technical or professional expertise, such as health, environmental or education policy.⁴⁶ The historian is well-placed to convene such a task; as Tosh notes, history is a synthetic discipline. What is needed, he

⁴⁴ Mandelbaum, 'The past in service to the future', p. 50.

⁴⁵ Perhaps a version of the Deweyan pragmatism that Seixas explores, in which knowledge is made through collective processes within the community of inquiry: Seixas, 'The Community of Inquiry'.

⁴⁶ Berridge and Strong, 'AIDS and the Relevance of History', *Social History of Medicine* 4 (1991), p. 138. Berridge and Strong argue for the 'vital and unique role' of the historian here, as theory, although present, does not dominate. This will be picked up below under 'Integration'.

argues, is the 'critical mind able to see the overall picture and to contextualise specialist knowledge in a way that bridges ... conventional boundaries'.⁴⁷

Context is also key to comparison. The contextual description allows for striking affinities or contrasts in behaviour, action/reaction and outcomes between settings to be exposed and analysed. When the analysis is historical, the dimension of change over time can be added.⁴⁸ In national policy terms, these settings will often be other states: Swedish education or Canadian deficit reduction to name two examples that have been the subject of discussion under the present government. But units of political interest could also be smaller – the region or the city – or larger: the EU or G8. In policy science, context is 'a conceptual device to compensate for the lack of behavioral rules and methods to compare behavior across time, space, organizations, and functions', yet we need not see it as a deficit model.⁴⁹ Historical thinking brings a far richer understanding, and application, of context and of comparison, which articulates well with the complexities of policy development.

Comparison

'Understanding implies comparison,' argues Gaddis.⁵⁰ We can only comprehend something by reference to other things, whether by distinction or similarity. We categorise living things, objects and ideas so as to make sense of what we know about, but also what we discover, name or invent. Hence many academic disciplines have a comparative dimension, whether implicit or explicit. History is impossible without comparison, unless historians, as Stefan Berger notes, 'restrict themselves to listing dates and events'.⁵¹ Comparison is embedded in the process and explanation of topic definition and can also be used as a method for organising evidence in pursuit of an argument.⁵² While acknowledging the

⁴⁷ Tosh, *Why history matters*, p. 39.

⁴⁸ Fulbrook outlines some of the 'large questions' this form of comparison considers involving concepts such as modernisation, revolution, democracy: Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, p. 116. These issues are of particular interest to historical institutionalism in terms of explaining differences in policy outcomes: Thelen and Steinmo, 'Historical institutionalism in comparative politics', in *Structuring politics: historical institutionalism in comparative analysis* eds. Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth, (Cambridge, 1992); Immergut, 'The rules of the game: The logic of health policy-making in France, Switzerland, and Sweden', in *Structuring politics: historical institutionalism in comparative analysis* eds. Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth, (Cambridge, 1992).

⁴⁹ Ashford (ed.), *History and context in comparative public policy*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, p. 25.

⁵¹ Berger, 'Comparative history', in *Writing history: theory and practice*, eds. Berger, Feldner and Passmore, (London, 2010), p. 187.

⁵² See: Jordanova, *History in practice*, pp. 152-153; Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, pp. 117-118. The theoretical/methodological "defence" of comparison as an essential part of the historical process will not be pursued here as the focus is on the application of thinking techniques. The issue is an

breadth and importance of comparison in history – and also that comparative history may involve different methods, approaches and purposes – the focus here is on analogy. This is due to the particular prominence of analogy as a historical tool in political thinking and decision-making; analogies are the most recognised, and most contentious, aspect of historical work in policymaking.

‘Analogies drawn from the past, or “historical parallels”, are nothing to with the proper working of the historical mind,’ declares Bédarida, and critiques of such “bad history” are praised.⁵³ Yet this condemnatory stance is unsatisfactory. It elides the central role of comparison in historical practice, as well as in human cognition and behaviour; the latter point is of particular relevance here.⁵⁴ If it is human to analogise, policymakers *will* do so and historians may object to the practice but not to the principle: ‘What decisions do *not* flow to some extent from assumptions about what the past appears to teach? History is useful, and utilized. It pervades the decision-making process of individuals and groups’.⁵⁵

Peter Stearns and Joel Tarr are rather more positive than many. They see the use of analogies in political thinking as hazardous but inescapable, with appropriate usage calling on ‘sophisticated historical understanding’.⁵⁶ But I would argue we need to be bolder than that. What follows from the recognition that comparison is a core human cognitive tool should surely be a much more collaborative attitude towards its employment in policymaking. We can even conceive of this as an obligation – intellectual and/or moral – on historians to help ensure the process is as historically structured and informed as possible. Indeed, Bédarida’s enthusiasm for May’s *Lessons of the Past* as a ‘brilliant illustration’ of the ‘abuses of history’ by American policymakers seems untempered by the latter’s publication with Richard E. Neustadt of *Thinking in Time*, which places analogical thinking at the core of improving decision-making.⁵⁷ Statements claiming the centrality of history as facilitating “an understanding of, and orientation in, the historically determined present” may be common, but they are often immediately followed ‘by the qualification that history cannot

interesting one and merits wider debate, exposing as it does the false divide between “traditional” and “applied” history (selectivity would be another area).

⁵³ Bédarida, ‘The Modern Historian’s Dilemma’, pp. 342-343.

⁵⁴ Hofstadter, *Analogy as the core of cognition: Stanford Presidential Lecture*.

⁵⁵ Graham, ‘The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking’, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Stearns and Tarr, ‘Applied History: A New-Old Departure’, p. 522.

⁵⁷ Bédarida, ‘The Modern Historian’s Dilemma’. Referring to May’s 1973 work, though Bédarida’s article was published in 1987, a year after Neustadt and May’s *Thinking in Time*; May, *The lessons of the past: the use and misuse of history in American foreign policy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*.

provide “formulas for acting in the present or planning for the future”.⁵⁸ This sequence of advocacy and caveat not only seems untenable but also counterproductive.

We may now hesitate at the term “formula” and prefer a rephrasing that invokes history’s capacity to pose pertinent and challenging questions, to suggest long-run themes and potential opportunities for shocks, or to highlight tensions and affinities between different constituencies and issues. Nevertheless, the point is clear; we cannot have it both ways. If we want history to be recognised as central to the vital task of making sense of the present, then we must acknowledge that the corollary of centrality is engagement with other parties to that task, and with the public more broadly. The democratic institutions of a state are very much parties to the task. Politicians in government and on the backbenches are constantly making sense of the present against their (very different) understandings of a “good” society, which often involves oscillation between past, present and future.

Analogies are everywhere. Neustadt and May categorise them in terms of their allure: the 1930s have proved ‘irresistible’; others can be ‘captivating’ (‘flu epidemics) or merely ‘seductive’; some are ‘so familiar that the attachment develops unnoticed’ (the political leader’s “honeymoon period”).⁵⁹ Breaking down the issue in question and then inspecting the analogies involved form their two-step process, which aids the definition of objectives as well as pointing to potential means for achieving them (and could include not acting at all). The first step involves disassembling the current situation, separating the ‘knowns’ from the ‘unclears’ and the ‘presumed’ from the perspective of the decision-maker (and taking care not to confuse the categories). Entries in the three categories can fall under different sub-headings; in the example of the invasion of South Korea by Northern forces in June 1950, “Korea”, “In the world” and “At home” are suggested. This process can expose analogies, which should then be subject to analysis in terms of likenesses and differences, both “now” and “then”; identifying differences is important to avoid confirmation bias. In terms of Korea, Neustadt and May refer to several potential analogues and suggest that these point to ‘a use of force to repel aggression’, but also that ‘thinking in detail about the analogues...

⁵⁸ Faber, ‘The Use of History in Political Debate’, p. 36.

⁵⁹ As Neustadt and May point out, ‘The “lessons of the thirties” have provided, among other things, the underlying theme for every argument supporting stern approaches towards Communist regimes abroad from Truman’s time forward’: Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, p. 47. (On the swine flu analogy see 48-57; on the honeymoon period see: 68-9) Blair and Straw’s usage expanded that definition, and it was challenged in the Chilcot Inquiry: ‘Evidence of The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair’, (Chilcot Inquiry: 21st January 2011)

would have emphasized that the purpose was “to repel”. It was not “to punish”...⁶⁰ This use of multiple analogues – which elucidate different aspects of an issue – is preferable seeking a single “match”, due to the complexity of policy issues.⁶¹ Comparisons need not be historic for the historian to have an important contribution to make. Should an analogy be contemporary – across space rather than time – the historian’s appreciation of continuity and change and of context will be vital for the inspection of analogical properties. This can be conceived as a form of cross-cultural comparison, as important in international business as in foreign policy.⁶²

In summary, the historian’s facility with comparison as a tool for defining topics, guiding research and shaping arguments, combined with the discipline’s enquiring scepticism of claims made out of historical context, should constitute a valuable asset for policymakers, if these qualities can be combined with a constructive mind-set. One of the challenges here is to analyse analogies from the perspective of the decision-maker. Historically crude analogies (“the 1930s” or “Depression”) may be rather easy to disassemble and dismiss, but more sophistication and commitment will be needed to inspect those calling on less immediate or familiar events or that involve hidden comparisons. Analogies that are particularly resonant for the decision-maker require particular care, using historical thinking, to “locate” the decision-maker both synchronically and diachronically, so that an appreciation can be developed of the influences and images that are powerful for him or her.

What is being suggested in my discussion of time, context and comparison, is that the core organisational processes by which policy is formulated and decisions made, or agreements negotiated, are ones that involve cognitive tasks of a historical character. That a conscious and disciplined approach to these tasks is absent – whether through omission, the “case-by-

⁶⁰ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, pp. 39-43. They point out that Truman himself had three analogous situations in mind: Japan’s seizure of Manchuria in 1931-1; Italy’s aggression against Ethiopia in 1935; Hitler’s annexation of Austria in 1938 (see: p. 41). The authors add the Rhineland crisis of 1936, the Czech crisis of 1938 and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-9.

⁶¹ Achenbaum, ‘The Making of an Applied Historian: Stage Two’, pp. 30, 34. Citing: May, *The lessons of the past: the use and misuse of history in American foreign policy*. For Achenbaum, the ‘static qualities’ of analogies mean they are not adequate on their own for policy analysis. He therefore proposes a second tool, trend analysis, to offer change over time. This maps onto Neustadt and May’s “issue history”, which should follow the inspection of analogies.

⁶² Salacuse, ‘Intercultural Negotiation in International Business’, in *Group decision and negotiation 8*, (Boston, 1999); Jones and Khanna, ‘Bringing History (Back) into International Business’. Zelizer’s ‘Lost alternatives’ constitute a further variation on the analogical theme: recovering policy alternatives and checking whether the circumstances suggest they would be viable. Zelizer, ‘Clio’s Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978’, p. 385.

case” style, or through careless or inappropriate practice, as in “bad history” – is an argument for more and different engagement by historians. This requires the use of tools already in the historian’s toolbox. An important task, at least within the discipline, is thus to affirm the methodological identity of history. In the world of policymaking, it is about methodological distinctiveness *in the context of the realisation of policy goals*. History here offers enhancement to existing processes of analysis, a dimension that cannot be offered by any of the existing policy disciplines.

Integration

History can blend in a meaningful way ‘economic, political, intellectual, cultural, climatic, geographic, demographic, scientific, technological, organizational, and psychological factors and concepts’ in order to ‘see matters whole’.⁶³ History’s inclination for integration is a great intellectual strength, but it offers challenges in terms of presenting that case. “Eclectic” has been used to capture this inclination but, as Jordanova points out, it is a word that can be interpreted not in positive terms, as pragmatic, flexible, accommodating of complexity, but rather as indicative of ‘untidiness’ and imprecision.⁶⁴ And it is in policy – where “evidence” has come to be construed as quantitative, with a hierarchy of research methods – that such a misconception about history is particularly striking and resilient. In a problem-oriented, decision-making context such as government, eclecticism suggests ambiguity, an unsteady basis for policy both in development and justification. Yet *policymaking itself is necessarily eclectic*; it is pragmatic and complex as well as “messy” and imprecise and none of these adjectives need be given a negative charge. If there is to be a rehabilitation of history for policy, the task surely involves a clear articulation of the extent of their alignment. The alignment is unmistakable in Bulmer, Coates and Dominian’s crystallisation of a central challenge in evidence-based policymaking: ‘the extent to which external evidence can be integrated with such experience, expertise and judgement exercised by those who are not professional analysts. This is not easy but logically demands policy makers weigh different sources of evidence against each other’.⁶⁵ It remains, however, unrecognised in a piece of writing that reflects the dominance of the social sciences as the policy-relevant disciplines.

⁶³ Graham, ‘The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking’, p. 11. See also: Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, p. 69.

⁶⁴ Jordanova, *History in practice*, p. 171; Graham, ‘The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking’, p. 11; Garner, ‘History for the Corporate Executive’, p. 205.

⁶⁵ Bulmer, Coates and Dominian, ‘Evidence-based policy making’, p. 99.

Both history and policymaking call for the solving of puzzles: issues or questions that qualify for attention not just because they exist, but because they present a problem. The understanding of a problem involves the three dimensions of historical thinking already discussed: time, context and comparison. An issue stands out as an anomaly or a surprise; there is something unexplained or unresolved by previous efforts.⁶⁶ It is accordingly unlikely that all the resources for addressing the issue lie neatly within one domain of human knowledge.⁶⁷ Eclecticism is as necessary for policy choice as it is for historical enquiry. It is perhaps easier to conceive of the “skills” involved in the assimilation and integration of different types of evidence than of “methods” per se, the former suggesting flexibility and judgement, the latter a more formal and rigid process. Two stages can be discerned, which can form an iterative loop: opening up the enquiry and “conceptually netting” (Fulbrook’s term) the evidence; synthesising and integrating what has been gathered, making sense of it to produce an account.

The absence of the past means that historians can only work with the traces or remnants of the past in the present.⁶⁸ Determining the meaning of a piece of evidence relies on the judgement of the historian; determining what is plausible and convincing requires a process of testing or triangulation with other accounts, mindful of the methods involved. According to Staley, the historian then engages in the generation of ‘ampliative inferences’ to produce a valid statement about it. Ampliative inferences add what he calls ‘extra content’ to the incomplete evidential record in a disciplined way.⁶⁹ History can therefore be understood as a collective endeavour; for these processes to work, openness is vital. We need ‘some guide as to how the bridges were constructed [between lost aspects of the past and diverse accounts in the present], and the types of materials from which they were built, so that others can retrace the steps, check for adequacy, and look at alternative routes over the chasm separating the present from the non-revisitable past’.⁷⁰

But here lies a challenge for history in policy. It may indeed be a strength that historians are trained to handle conflicting approaches and accounts and that they can assimilate and integrate evidence of many different kinds; they are ‘comfortable with becoming than are

⁶⁶ Jordanova, *History in practice*, p. 152. Also: Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, p. 53.

⁶⁷ MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice*, p. 2.

⁶⁸ On identifying remnants/traces as evidence: Staley, *History and future*, pp. 47-50; Kalela, *Making history*, pp. 28-33.

⁶⁹ Staley, *History and future*, p. 50-52.

⁷⁰ Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, p. 108. On the same theme of openness to evaluation: Staley, *History and future*, p. 65; Kalela, *Making history*, p. 41.

people in other fields' as John R. Gillis puts it.⁷¹ Yet how should the inevitable ambiguities, uncertainties and contingencies be presented to the end user? Or should they even be presented at all? Admitting ambiguity can be damaging in an adversarial political environment; clarity is sought by the politician from the policy analyst, and by the journalist or opponent from the Minister.⁷² One approach to this problem is to regard the traces of the process of historical thinking as – to switch metaphors – the ductwork or wiring that does not need to be seen by the end user. Historians tend to do this anyway; the reader generally does not see the 'steps and missteps' involved in the production of an article or book.⁷³

The question is how to construct an equivalent to Fulbrook's collectivity, which reduces self-confirmation by requiring new interpretations and accounts to persuade through their intellectual cogency. This presents a particular challenge in the policy domain, outside the boundaries of academe and demanding high degrees of confidentiality. Fulton-style strategy/planning units could serve as such a context. Their multi-disciplinary nature would mean historians making their case against and alongside economists, social scientists and others. Staff would need to gain an understanding of each other's methods and what those can and cannot claim. The Minister may not "see the wiring" in the final briefing note, but the process of evidence-gathering, integration and persuasion would have been visible within the unit. With movement between the strategy/planning units, government departments, academe and other fields employing the historically-trained, a community would emerge over time, one very different to the History and Policy network of academic historians who have only limited engagement with the actual business of policy development.

Such units should not be idealised as a community of scholarship and debate; their aim is practical and there would be organisational pressures as well as issues of responsibility associated with options, recommendations or advice. Historians' instincts for complexity and qualification might lead them to experience a sense of greater exposure to or conflict about these influences than practitioners of other disciplines.⁷⁴ Addressing this concern

⁷¹ 'We are more familiar with contingency,' he argues later in the passage, 'and therefore perhaps better equipped to deal with the unpredictable than are those who approach the world as a steady state of being': Gillis, 'Detours', in *Becoming historians*, eds. Banner and Gillis, (Chicago, Ill., 2009), pp. 172-173.

⁷² MacRae and Whittington, *Expert advice for policy choice*, p. 342.

⁷³ Wineburg, *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts*, xi, p. 52.

⁷⁴ Graham, 'The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking', pp. 15-16.

means the building of stronger connectivities between historical practice in academe and in policy, based on commonality of thinking processes and methods. Recovering and reconceptualising the scholarship on applied history from the 1980s would be a good start, as well as its animating force: 'it is possible for historians to enrich their own sense of purpose and their practice by directly and responsibly meeting the intellectual demands of policy formulation and implementation'.⁷⁵ These efforts could be particularly effective if they were collaborative not only in an inter-*disciplinary* but also an inter-*professional* sense, involving policymakers and the policy staff who advise them.⁷⁶

To conclude, the integration of different types of evidence at different levels of human experience and organisation is a skill at a premium for policymaking, which in both its formulation and its implementation must handle complexity and lack of clarity. It is perhaps best understood as a set of skills, and as such is less amenable to definition than contextualisation or comparison. But the inclination to 'see matters whole' offers an important counterbalance to the perspectives of the policy disciplines or of the policymakers themselves, which can be narrowed by their methodological training or organisational confines.⁷⁷ Indeed, the 'organising mind of the historian' may offer the best means of making sense of multiple perspectives when they are in conflict.⁷⁸ The challenge is how to present and accommodate these skills within a policymaking context that values the apparent clarity of RCTs or large-scale survey data above forms of professional judgement. The historian must pay attention to plausibility and persuasiveness; writing is 'the foremost act of interpretation' and the means by which others can apprehend the integrated whole of the historical account.⁷⁹ So it may help to see the task with regards to policy in similar terms: as the presentation of a case that seeks to convince, which brings us back to the metaphor of the historian as advocate first explored in Chapter 2. Can we use the historian's toolbox to *prove the concept* of history in policy? The next section addresses the theme of presentation as the fifth key application of history; as the interface between the

⁷⁵ Mandelbaum, 'The past in service to the future', p. 39.

⁷⁶ Seixas makes a similar argument about bringing together academic historians and teachers of history into a "community of professional inquiry": Seixas, 'The Community of Inquiry', p. 318.

⁷⁷ Graham, 'The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking', p. 12.

⁷⁸ The phrase 'the organising mind of the historian' is Fulbrook's: Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, p. 117.

⁷⁹ Jordanova, *History in practice*, p. 161. See also Banner and Gillis on the importance of credibility and of faithfulness to the *task* rather than remaining preoccupied with faithfulness to the "facts": Banner and Gillis, *Becoming historians*, (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press; Bristol, 2009), ix.

historian as specialist and the policymaker necessarily interested in cross-cutting themes and issues, it is of particular importance for informing policy.

Presentation

‘Logistics are not merely a matter of convenience; they are of the essence’.⁸⁰ So argues Avner Offer in his analysis of the ‘retrospect and prospect’ for using the past in Britain. Indeed, all disciplines have to communicate their messages; quantitative data do not speak for themselves any more than historical sources. But there is a case that the way history builds its meanings not only places a particular emphasis on presentation, but makes the latter integral to the historical process. Simplistic models of dissemination cannot capture the sense of writing – still the primary mode of communication, although it need not take the form of a scholarly book or article – as the ‘foremost act of interpretation’, where the historian mediates between subjects in the past and readers in the present.⁸¹ Although public historians do encounter some *particular* ‘problems of presentation to members of a community beyond itself’, I would argue that historians seeking to address only fellow academics can no more dismiss questions of presentation than can their more public-facing colleagues.⁸² In neither case is scholarship simply put on view; it ‘must be displayed by deploying it in a new impression that meets standards of vividness and coherence.’ This task not only involves the gathering of specialist knowledge but ‘skill in weaving it into an impression’ and it is the combination of knowledge and skill, evinced in the presented account, that is tested within the disciplinary community, the collectivity.⁸³

Writing skills – fluency, articulacy, a capacity to elucidate, illuminate and persuade – are undoubtedly vital skills for the historian. To this could be added spoken skills in discussion, critique and response, which enable an active engagement with locating work in the disciplinary collectivity and public debate, for example at conferences, lectures, on the news or, indeed, in the Minister’s office. But this is not enough to define “presentation as interpretation” as part of the historian’s toolbox. The whole process of historical enquiry is

⁸⁰ Offer, ‘Using the Past in Britain: Retrospect and Prospect’, p. 34.

⁸¹ The resonant idea of the historian as a mediator, translator or bridge is a recurring one. See: Bédarida, ‘The Modern Historian’s Dilemma’, p. 342; Gaddis, *The landscape of history*, p. 135; Conard, ‘Facepaint History’; Kalela, *Making history*, p. 37.

⁸² Seixas, ‘The Community of Inquiry’, p. 320.

⁸³ Louch, ‘History as Narrative’, p. 63; Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, p. 192. Jordanova has noted a curious displacement: although ‘texts are the primary means of communication’ within the discipline, ‘the practice of history has been identified much more with the archive than its results’. Jordanova, *History in practice*, p. 161.

purposeful; the historian deploys written and spoken skills in presentation to achieve the objective of the enquiry.⁸⁴ Defining the objective/s shapes and guides the project and is thus an important task for any history. Indeed, here may be another case where the identity of history needs to be emphasised. As Mandelbaum argues: 'since only human beings may have a purpose, grasping its central role in inquiry implies that knowledge must serve a client.' The disciplinary collectivity may indirectly 'assume the client role', although professionalisation and specialisation in the discipline has 'moved toward a conception of knowledge which obscures the role of purpose' (an issue that had been raised in the late nineteenth century by Seeley).⁸⁵

In public history, client relationships are often more overt, and hence the historian may address purpose as a fundamental aspect of the project and shape the presentation accordingly. The question of policy history requires specific attention. If policy history is understood as a purely academic endeavour, that is, it is conducted without a 'clear purpose and demanding client', the risk is that it becomes just another fractured specialism where the objects is obscured. Commissioners of historical work are, in this mode, treated as 'patrons' rather than 'men and women with commanding interests', making historians liable to forget the question and the 'reality of an interested questioner' in the course of providing an answer. The result is research that is 'trivial or irrelevant'.⁸⁶ Succinctly-written pieces, accessibility of style and wide dissemination cannot compensate fully for the effects of this disengagement of activity and objective. Identifying history in policy as a form of public history may help to reintegrate purpose into historical enquiry for that field.⁸⁷

This question of purpose is relevant to the discussion of presentation, as what we understand to be the purpose of our work will inform how we present it; the presentation is the vehicle for the project. Fulbrook asks 'what counts as an "answer"?', highlighting that the satisfaction of curiosity involves both producers and consumers of history.⁸⁸ Although she is doing so with a theoretical project in mind, her formulation crystallises this central

⁸⁴ Kalela emphasises purpose, urging historians to 'think about his or her actual reasons for doing it [a research project] at the outset: Kalela, *Making history*, p. 39.

⁸⁵ Mandelbaum, 'The past in service to the future', p. 50.

⁸⁶ Mandelbaum, 'The past in service to the future', pp. 50-51.

⁸⁷ Labelling or identification is important in terms of the vitality of an intellectual field: Zelizer, 'Clio's Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978', p. 382. In the UK, both policy history (as in policy-relevant history) *and* public history suffer from an unwillingness of historians to identify themselves as members of the field, although a small number of public history posts (usually fixed-term) have appeared in English universities.

⁸⁸ Fulbrook, *Historical theory*, p. 135.

question facing history in policy. The “answer” that the historian provides is, or should be, conditioned by the purpose of the enquiry, which is itself shaped by the dialogue between the historian as “producer” and the policymaker (or policymaking team) as “consumer”. It must be a dialogue, because although the consumer as commissioner has legitimate ‘commanding interests’ associated with the policy goals, the historian as an expert producer has a professional role to examine the ‘initial framework of concerns’ with a view to determining – and agreeing – the most appropriate course of action. It is this dialogic approach that seems to have been absent in the operation of the Treasury Historical Section (THS), where divisional staff were not always clear about what they wanted, or to what end, and historians were not always responsive to requirements for timeliness and usability. Reaching a working consensus on both the purpose of the historical task and the form in which the output will be presented would seem essential for a new model of history in policy to work. The concept of a “working consensus” is so formulated to recognise that complete correspondence between historian and policymaker is unlikely – although its absence may be productive – and also that it is not static, but the subject of on-going negotiation, like the maps discussed above. The working consensus can be defined as an *acceptable accommodation* between the needs of the policymaker for an output that can usefully contribute to the policy process and the expertise and judgement of the historian as a specialist practitioner.

‘What counts as an “answer”’, a key question in the dialogue between historian and policymaker, involves tackling the question of where “history” stops and “policy” begins. This border is of course a construct, and its existence and location were contested during the time of the THS as well as providing material for scholarship in applied history. For Zelizer, the distinction is between *edifying* and *instructing*: ‘prescriptions are best left to policymakers’.⁸⁹ This sets up a rather unhelpful dichotomy. “Edification” is a purpose so remote from policy development that its status as “policy history” is doubtful, although the Treasury divisional heads who claimed it was for officials to do the critical analysis would, presumably, have been satisfied with this definition. It is worth recalling here MacRae and Whittington’s critique of the ‘basic science contributor’, who conceives of a one-way conveyor-belt of knowledge from truth to power; this a “knowledge-transfer” model is apparently embraced by the History and Policy network, presupposing – unjustifiably I argue – an intellectual gradient from academe down to policy.

⁸⁹ Zelizer, ‘Clio’s Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978’, p. 382.

Nor is “instruction” a tenable alternative. No policy staff “instruct”, whatever the disciplinary background, and neither do special advisers, those with the greatest potential for influence on political decision-making. Kalela is also cautious about borderlines. His ‘expert as referee’ has a ‘mandate’ to judge the fairness of historical accounts but cannot determine their ‘meaning and importance’.⁹⁰ While acknowledging the value of this perspective in “locating”, and de-privileging, the historian’s claims alongside those of other ‘history-makers’, surely it is part of the historical task to present interpretations in which judgements of significance are proposed? In terms of history in policy, these judgements are particularly important, indeed it can be seen as the *primary* requirement of the historian as adviser to offer the policymaker a sense of meaning and importance, for example, the appropriateness of analogies. To return to Smith: ‘scientists are called on because they have special expertise, but they must think and act like politicians if there are truly to be useful’.⁹¹ If history is to influence policy, the border between them must be blurred by both sides; Szretzer’s rigid demarcations leave no room for the negotiation essential for advice.⁹²

So rather than try to impose a boundary between history and policy – often a defensive manoeuvre – it would seem pragmatic to see a spectrum ranging from the provision of essentially academic research to close advisory work as part of a policymaking team. The former would involve least disruption to current systems and structures; it is a dissemination, promotion and relationship-building activity, which accommodates the existing activity of History and Policy network. Along the spectrum, the importance of dialogue and collaboration grows, such that secondments, joint roles and appointments become necessary. As the purpose of the historical work shifts more towards advice, so different aspects of the historian’s skills in terms of the construction and presentation of argument will be emphasised. To return to where this section began, historical work places a particular premium on presentation as integral to the intellectual process and essentially connected to the overall purpose of the project. It is the final “tool” in the box to be discussed here as it is one that enables the others to be brought to bear on policy development.

⁹⁰ Kalela, *Making history*, pp. 35-36.

⁹¹ Smith, *The advisers: scientists in the policy process*, p. 201.

⁹² “Advice” is probably the best term for an integrated history in policy. Although it may imply instruction or direction, it has a distinct and established usage in policy circles, oriented towards understanding of a policy field, support and purposeful debate, arraying of options etc.

Having considered the outputs of historical work from the perspective of the skills involved, it makes sense to address what form such outputs might take. The case has been made that existing “adjunct” models for bringing history into policy are not effective in influencing the policy process in a systemic way. If that is accepted, we cannot be satisfied with “adjunct” products, such as the abridged journal article or synthesis as a policy paper. We need, in Stearns’ words of 1982, to ‘strike out towards new definitions of what policy products should be’; this is the concern of the following sections. For the purposes of this discussion, “product” needs to be understood in broad terms as a manifestation of historical work. While the historian – or the historically-trained adviser or official – may be using the same cognitive toolbox as their counterparts in academe, different outputs must arise from the work if it is to reach beyond historical “content” or “evidence” and become “advice”. The use of the term “product” should not imply that outputs are only documents, involving narrative accounts lengthy or otherwise and nor, indeed, that there is a linearity to the process of historical work in policy that leads neatly to a particular output.

There is an element of recovery in this analysis. Some products have been used before in British policy, for example, “seeded files” in the post-war Treasury; others were tried in different contexts, such as legislative reference work in early twentieth-century America. Still others have been discussed without being connected to history, such as strategy or planning units. The products have been viewed here through the lens of present purpose: not, therefore either as lessons on unrealised potential or as readily adoptable exemplars, but rather as instances, ideas or developments that can be interpreted and adapted for application today. Indeed, nothing proposed here is really “new”, but rather reconfigured or revisited. What *is* new is that the reconfiguration is approached with the aim of achieving an integration of history *in* policy, in contrast to attempts to recast historical accounts, understood in broadly traditional terms, as evidence *to* policy, such as the THS and History and Policy. All the “products” rely at a fundamental level on *historians as insiders*, working within the policymaking process – whether as advisers, appointments or secondees from historical professions, or as mainstream officials with historical training – and alongside people with other specialisms, politicians and political staff. In this sense, it is sometimes not the product itself, but the manner and context in which it would be produced that is new and challenging.

It may at first seem logical to categorise products by type, for example: “files and briefing”; “analysis and interpretation”; “advice”. However, such a model cannot readily factor in institutional setting; *where* a particular task is performed affects who is responsible, how it is

approached and thus ultimately the ways in which it can be put to use, and how effectively. The following discussion is therefore organised instead by *location* within the central government system. First are central Parliamentary services, available to politicians and their staff, and to the Committees, as a resource for the discharge of their legislative, scrutiny and representative duties. Second is the machinery of government itself, where the primary policymaking settings are the departments.

Parliament

When Benjamin Shambaugh was describing the term “applied history” in 1909, legislative reference work was the one ‘concrete expression’ of the concept he named. As his biographer relates, the State Library of Wisconsin had set up a legislative reference department ‘to collect and arrange research materials specifically for the use of state legislators’, a pioneering practice that Shambaugh proposed to extend in his work at the State Historical Society of Iowa through the investigation of ‘the historical development of current state legislative issues’.⁹³ In laying out his hopes for applied history, Shambaugh pointed to the idea of thinking in time streams in the service of democratic processes: ‘Applied History is not a dream but a sound and intelligent method of interrogating the past in the light of the conditions of the present and the obvious needs of the immediate future’.⁹⁴

Historians may now hesitate to talk with quite as concerted a sense of teleological progressivism as Shambaugh, who envisaged the purpose of such efforts as the development and implementation of a ‘rational program of progress’. There is a similarly resolute linearity in evidence-based policymaking, although it tends to lack the historical sensibilities and complexities that Shambaugh’s applied history could indeed accommodate.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the idea that the history of policy issues provides a resource that can enhance policymaking and legislative processes remains sound, and particularly so in legal systems based on precedent and common law. A key distinction here is between accessibility and availability, one that turns on the role of judgement, on the disciplined and purposeful application of both knowledge and skills.

⁹³ Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, p. 33. Citing Shambaugh writing on “Applied History” in the Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association for the Year 1908-1909.

⁹⁴ Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, p. 34. Citing Shambaugh in his ‘Editor’s Introduction’ to the first volume of *Applied History*, 1913.

⁹⁵ See chapters 2 on Shambaugh and applied history and 4 above on evidence-based policymaking.

This is clearly brought out by Herbert Putnam, who served as Librarian of Congress from 1899 to 1939. Writing in 1915, following the award of an appropriation of \$25,000 for Putnam to establish a legislative reference bureau, he described the 'situation that confronts every legislative body: the need of data sought out, digested, and brought to bear upon a particular subject'. To the 'history and theory of the subject' must be added 'the experience of other States and, optionally, in certain subjects, the experience of foreign countries'. As Putnam notes: 'accessible this mass of material has always been', but it 'has not been for the legislator fully *available*'. The legislative reference bureau must therefore go one step further than the library. Its role is not to supply the books, but 'to make the search, to assemble the data and to digest, compare and apply these to the subject of the inquiry'. He further proposes not just response to, but anticipation of demand, with bureau staff working on issues likely to come before Congress, each specialising in the field of a major congressional committee.⁹⁶ Over a three-month session, Putnam's office provided digests, compilations, memoranda, comparative studies, translations, extracts, statistics, legislative histories and precedents in response to requests, the projects ranging from an hour's work to several weeks'.

The British equivalent would be the research and information service of the House of Commons Library, which provides MPs – also political staff, and the committees and staff of the House – with confidential answers to queries, research papers and informal face-to-face briefing and advice. The service developed rather later in the Library's history than Putnam's bureau; although the first librarian was appointed in 1818, the collection remained 'largely divorced from the practical realities of government' until after the Second World War. The demands of expanding government responsibilities and of 'a great influx of new members imbued with a massive discontent with the state of existing institutions and a taste for radical reform' led to the launch of a Select Committee enquiry and recommendations for modernisation. It was at this point that traditional library duties of acquiring, cataloguing and storing books were extended into a research and information service.⁹⁷ The growth of the service, particularly in the final quarter of the twentieth century was, at least in part, as a counterbalance to the considerable resources available to government departments, both in terms of information and personnel.

⁹⁶ Putnam, 'Legislative Reference for Congress', *The American Political Science Review* 9 (1915).

⁹⁷ Murphy, 'Changing Visions: Parliamentary Libraries, Past, Present and Future', *Library Trends* 58 (2010).

In the Westminster system, the role of Parliament is best understood not as a legislature but as a scrutinising body, holding the government to account. The provision of research and information directly supports the dispatch of this responsibility, and perhaps particularly so when representatives are no longer drawn exclusively from among the wealthy. But the need may be less visible, less clearly articulated than in Congress. Individual initiative for legislation is limited in the highly centralised, “majoritarian” Westminster model; private members’ bills rarely succeed, a situation James McKirdy, Assistant Director of the Pennsylvania Legislative Reference Bureau, noted as ‘foreign to our notions’ when taking a look across the pond in 1910.⁹⁸ The pluralism of the US system creates a clear imperative for research and information services as the ammunition of legislative combat, and so Putnam was conscious of the need for opponents to have ‘an equal opportunity to secure the opposing facts on which to base an opposing argument’.⁹⁹ In both the American and the British case, however, *access* to such services is central to the effective functioning of democratic institutions and processes.

As the composition of strategy/planning units inside government departments should be revisited for disciplinary mix and balance, so is there a case for such attention in research and information services. The democratic system in Britain relies not just on the effective discharge of executive powers, but also on the capacity of the Opposition and of backbenchers of all parties to scrutinise government policy and decision-making, propose amendments and new directions, and to make representations on behalf of constituents, groups or organisations. Issue histories and short mapping exercises “placing” key players, products of the kind outlined above would represent a useful offering. It may be that, just as Mandelbaum’s physician does not simply treat the declared symptoms of the patient, some constructive challenging of user requirements will be needed, at least initially.

A final comment should be made on the connection between reference work and bill drafting. The drafting of bills was removed early on from the Library of Congress bureau, but its primary aim remained: to inform the development of legislation. This remit must be understood in the context of a political system that allows for considerable legislative initiative by political representatives (and, indeed, bill drafting had been a feature of a number of the bureau’s forerunners at state level). The British system is less plural, as I show in Chapter 4 above. Bill drafting is centralised through the Office of the Parliamentary

⁹⁸ McKirdy, ‘The Legislative Reference Bureau of Pennsylvania’, *University of Pennsylvania Law Review and American Law Register* 59 (1910), p. 154.

⁹⁹ Putnam, ‘Legislative Reference for Congress’, p. 547.

Counsel (OPC, founded as Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Treasury in 1869, transferred to the new Civil Service Department post-Fulton, then to the Cabinet Office in 1980). If legislation is required to deliver a policy agenda, departmental lawyers commission the OPC. Although bill drafting is thus led by the government, Parliament is properly interested in the quality of legislation in its scrutiny role.

Efficiency may be a key driver for having a central, specialist bill-drafting service, but in a team composed of lawyers, commissioned by their counterparts and policy officials in the department, there is potential for a “history gap”.¹⁰⁰ This could be bridged through input from the appropriate team in the Library research and information service, although perhaps most effectively in the departments themselves as part of the pre-commissioning work. The potential return could be that the commissions themselves are more clearly articulated, having been through a process of legislative reference: search; digest; compare; apply. Historical thinking, as Neustadt and May explore, can surface, isolate and inspect the unspoken assumptions and presumptions that often drive political decisions. Drafting will remain the province of lawyers, but historians in the policy teams commissioning the legislation may be able to enhance the quality of the commissions themselves, particularly given the importance of clarity and precision in making laws that can be enacted and effectively implemented.¹⁰¹

Government

The research and information services provided by Putnam’s legislative reference bureau and by the House Library may share many qualities with work done within government. Digests, compilations, memoranda and so on are the stuff of government business: the documents through which positions and policy are developed, and negotiations between departmental interests transacted. The distinction between them is, however, a fundamental one of context and purpose. It is a distinction that underpins the division of

¹⁰⁰ The efficiency of the British system is noted by McKirdy in the context of the early nineteenth-century innovations in legislative reference bureaux: McKirdy, ‘The Legislative Reference Bureau of Pennsylvania’, p. 162. Also see following footnote.

¹⁰¹ Legislative reference bureaux had been emerging through various mechanisms in State Libraries prior to the Library of Congress development, as reported in a ‘brief survey of the field’ in 1910, which presents such work as an interpretation of the libraries’ original purpose to serve their states. Seven states had bureaux involved in drafting bills, but is not clear whether state legislative reference bureaux took the extra step required by Putnam: Cleland, ‘Legislative Reference’, *The American Political Science Review* 4 (1910); Also: Cleland, ‘Legislative Reference’, *The American Political Science Review* 10 (1916). On the importance of ‘profiting by experience in legislation’, see also: Dunn, ‘Duty of the state to its history’, *The Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History* 6 (1910).

this discussion by setting, because it is at departmental level that research and information can become policy evidence and advice. That is not to say that it is necessarily a *politicisation* process. As was argued in Chapters 3 and 4, a politicisation of advice over the last forty years is evident through the emergence to prominence of think tanks and of special advisers as political appointments by Ministers; the latter in particular hold and look set to retain a strong influence on policy. It would indeed contribute to a more historically-minded policy environment if think tanks employed historians in their research teams or consulted them during the research process, or indeed if special advisers were asking historical questions of their Ministers and departmental teams as policy ideas were being shaped.

I would argue that this broader context for political advice is not the domain with most potential for realising recommendations around new policy “products”. The central government departments are the primary setting for policymaking (and here No. 10 should be included). If historical thinking can be integrated into the policy process in the departments – and expressed in policy products that are the currency of government business – then the shift will affect the terms in which policy is understood in the broader context. It may be subtle and incremental, but it would be a significant shift nonetheless. If history matters in government, it matters in public policy debate and exchange in the broadest sense: for the media; for think tanks; for businesses; for agencies; for the public sector. So what is being discussed in this section is the *business of government*, the politically-inflected, but more importantly policy-focused, work of the departments. It is this core purpose – conducting the business of government – that distinguishes the nature of the tasks performed, and therefore the products provided by expert staff in the departments from those offered by library reference services.

Information of whatever kind needs to be organised to be accessible and then put into a form that makes it available for use; effective filing and briefing are thus vital to any complex process involving multiple sources of information. The former in particular may sound like an intellectually passive process of processing documents according to pre-determined protocols (and this may indeed be the case in certain work settings). In the context of policymaking, however, relevance, significance and value to an issue or problem are matters of judgement, not compliance. And it was the production of so-called “seeded” or “selected files” that Richard Clarke – an influential advocate in the Treasury for “funding experience” following Sir Norman Brook’s 1957 policy initiative for departments to use history more systematically in their work – prioritised over historical accounts. Seeded files would consist

of the most important documents relating to a particular policy situation, such as ‘minutes of chief meetings, decisive analyses, correspondence and memoranda, and submissions to ministers’. To these would be added a chronological framework, so start, finish and key intermediate points could be grasped, and a ‘brief overall narrative of the project plus a retrospective comment written by a senior official’.¹⁰²

The leading role given to officials in seeding files is significant. It draws attention to the centrality of judgement to the process – higher-ranking officials produced a better quality of seeded file – as well as to the status of the Treasury historians as specialists and therefore peripheral to the business of policymaking.¹⁰³ That the designation of specialist pathways in government can mean that historians, or others, are compartmentalised rather than embedded in policymaking was discussed in Chapter 2. Yet this argument need not undermine the potential utility of seeding files as a way of incorporating historical perspectives and frameworks and prompting the posing historical questions. The proposal throughout this thesis is that historical thinking is more effectively realised if integrated into the policymaking process. Such integration places historians or the historically-trained not in a “history unit”, such as the THS, but in mixed teams, such as a reconfigured Fultonian strategy/planning unit, where individual roles and contributions are less rigidly demarcated. Such teams would be well-equipped to produce seeded files, now logistically far more straightforward with computers, with the team leader providing the strategic oversight valued by Clarke and his colleagues.

Seeded files had two primary purposes: briefing for officials new to a post, given the high mobility of staff within the department; and a policy resource ‘invaluable when the same or similar problems recur’. Clarke further recognised that ‘having this kind of material organised in usable form’ was so valuable that ‘the preparation of seeded files is really a prerequisite for any major review of policy’.¹⁰⁴ Later, the practical utility of seeded files was called into question, with divisional staff unable to find the time to produce them. But these

¹⁰² Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, pp. 12, 62. Brook was Cabinet Secretary (1947-62) and Joint Permanent Secretary of the Treasury and Head of the Civil Service (1956-62). Clarke, as noted above, was Third Secretary and head of Home and Overseas Planning Staff. Early seeded files included the European Nuclear Energy Agency, nationalised industries and the history of German support costs negotiations (see Beck: p. 73).

¹⁰³ On higher-ranking officials producing better seeded files: Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, pp. 89-90, 95.

¹⁰⁴ Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, pp. 62, 73. Citing original sources: two communications from Richard Clarke to Cabinet Secretary and Joint Permanent Secretary of the Treasury and Head of the Civil Service, Sir Norman Brook, who had instigated the “funding experience” initiative, 9th July 1958 and 30th July 1959.

concerns must be set in the context of the immediate post-Fulton Treasury. Affirmations of the theoretical benefits of an integrated use of evidence and more strategic approach to policy development were unable readily to transform a working culture that prioritised completion of operational tasks: the clearing of the in-tray. This is not to say that, by contrast, the modern government department could easily accommodate the concept and reality of producing historically-structured seeded files. As explored in chapter 5, capacity for and interest in strategic thinking remains an issue in a highly adversarial political system. The dominance of quantitative forms of evidence means that critiques similar to those expressed by Treasury staff would be likely to emerge: that identical historical circumstances will never recur; that events overtake history; that historians should describe not interpret. These are, however, critiques associated with a Historical Section that never managed to assimilate into the department, and whose work focused on the writing of often multi-volume memoranda. If seeded files can be reinvented and become part of core business for the policymaking team, contributing – rather than just supplying content – to the process, and assembled as an on-going task, the prospects would seem much more positive.

Consisting as they do of key documents relating to the emergence an issue, placed within a historical frame as a resource for current policy, seeded files can be seen as products that not only bridge history and policy, but also “history as content” and “history as process”. Indeed, their assemblage requires both a specific and general grasp of the former and the cognitive skills associated with the latter; good seeded files call for thinking in time streams, for oscillation between past, present and future, which only underscores the importance of judgement in their production. The challenge here, and, indeed, with all the “products” in this section, is how to achieve an *integration of forms of historical and policy judgement*. There was in the THS experiment too clean a line sought between the two, with ‘critical analysis’ – involved in seeding files, raising questions or implications arising from historical description – regarded as the preserve of the official.

It is a challenge that presents itself in particular with products that are distinctively historical in character, such as the THMs or the Applied Historical Series (AHS) produced by Shambaugh’s Iowa Research Historians, where specialist historical work is done at a remove from government. Such products must be disseminated to and assimilated by politicians or policy staff on completion, a sequential rather than an integrated approach. They can be successful; Conard footnotes an interesting case of a Senator averring that the acceptance of certain road legislation would have been ‘impossible without the preliminary work and

suggestions' offered by one of the AHS.¹⁰⁵ There are, however, risks. First, for such products to be effective, the historian needs to be able to make the material *available* for policymakers. This calls on policy awareness, if not proximity to policy, in terms of understanding not only presentational issues, but questions around political parameters and policy processes: how the history can be used in a specific policy context. Second, the receptivity and what could be termed the “absorptive capacity” of the policymakers to historical evidence are vital factors. There remains a place for the stand-alone historical memorandum in government, but the format offers limited potential for re-configuration and integration into policy.

This discussion returns us to the distinction between knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange, as examined in Chapter 4. The historical account is likely to fall into the former category, a linear concept of production and dissemination. The latter involves interaction and dialogue, and relies to a great extent on personal interaction. That is the idea behind Fulton's Planning Units, but also Foreign Office historian Rohan Butler's “continuity men”, proposed in his 1962 history of the Abadan crisis. The continuity men would be both historians and planners, tasked to look backwards and forwards in time and provide the kind of background briefing that proves valuable but is often lacking in a crisis, or, indeed, any fast-moving issue or series of events. They would also routinely review how the department had handled a particular crisis ‘in order to judge performance and to fund experience for future use’.¹⁰⁶ Continuity men embodied – but more importantly captured, analysed and put to use – institutional memory.

Strategy units do exist in government departments; the question is how to configure them for knowledge exchange, for multi-disciplinarity and for permeability, and then how to ensure history has currency in that process. The “continuity man or woman”, the historian as planner, is one way of doing so, and such staff could ensure the embedding of history in existing strategy development processes, such as Rapid Evidence Assessments. The combined role would place them well to lead on exercises such as scenario planning; the historian's capacity for contextual thinking can be applied within the framework of policy knowledge and experience to the disciplined creation of coherent sets of parameters or structures. The interplay of structure and agency is particularly important when considering the potential for and the appropriate form of policy interventions. Mapping exercises, both

¹⁰⁵ See footnote 16: Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁶ Beck, *Using history, making British policy*, p. 208.

synchronic and diachronic, would also fall naturally in the remit of the unit, perhaps adapting some of the visualisation techniques employed in intelligence analysis, such as in network or target profile analysis. Beck underplays Butler's work, referring to the difficulty of ascribing to it a 'clear-cut outcome'. I would argue *all* policy-oriented work faces such a challenge, but that does not render it ineffective. Indeed, what Beck goes on to say about the Abadan history captures this subtle, elusive power well: it 'fed into, guided, and influenced on-going discussions and reviews within Whitehall by juxtaposing the lessons of history, contemporary realities, and possible new directions for both foreign policy and methods.'¹⁰⁷ This conclusion stands as a strong testimony to Butler's success *as a policy adviser* as well as capturing well the importance of thinking in time streams for policy work.

To extend the idea of the historian-planner as a keeper and a mobiliser of institutional memory, oral history could be useful, not only as part of the crisis review but also as a routine part of departmental business. It could aid, for example, the compilation of seeded files, the handling of changes of leadership or key personnel, and the reviewing of evidence on policy issues. It could prove challenging, however, to obtain open and frank accounts from staff, particularly if the exercise is associated with a review of departmental performance; care would need to be taken in framing, structuring and conducting oral history work if the resulting evidence was to be of use. Less formalised discussions – the well-judged, well-timed "word in the ear" of the lead official or special adviser – can constitute a "product" with greater influence than the substantial, and higher-profile, report.¹⁰⁸ Thought must be given to the target of advice, as Smith notes in relation to committees in the US system: 'the most important result of advisory work may simply be what is communicated to the policymaker informally, usually through the chairman. The public report can often be merely a formality... the real message has been delivered and an impact has already been achieved'.¹⁰⁹ In such scenarios, a 'clear-cut outcome' arising from the expert adviser is unlikely to be discernible to those who were not party to the conversation, but a policy task has been effectively completed nonetheless.

Access and proximity to policy are essential for such opportunities to be available, whether that is as adviser to a committee or as a member of a strategy or policy team; historians with email addresses and security passes for Parliament or a government department as

¹⁰⁷ Beck, 'The Lessons of Abadan and Suez for British Foreign Policymakers in the 1960s', p. 545.

¹⁰⁸ The distinction between influence and profile is a critical one in policy work; securing the former without the latter may sometimes represent a compromise, but it is often a more desirable and workable, indeed powerful position.

¹⁰⁹ Smith, *The advisers: scientists in the policy process*, p. 205.

seconded are far better placed to generate an effective policy “product”, even if they work mainly from home or their university offices. The appointment of such historians would be associated with credentials external to the world of policy, but their status as insiders would offer them the chance for a quality of engagement with policymakers unavailable to their counterparts located entirely in academe. Being able to see and feed into the products of colleagues, to be present in and contribute to internal meetings, or to talk freely with a Minister’s adviser all rely on being part of the team. A more dynamic and pro-active approach to secondment in and out of government, particularly through strategy/ planning units, would allow government to benefit from such informal but nevertheless influential “products”, as well from the formal outputs of history in policy.

This chapter has been concerned with viewing the business of policymaking through the disciplinary lens of history. It has sought to articulate the distinctive capacities of historians, their skills, inclinations and approaches, and connect those with the policy activities and outputs that could be enhanced through the application of those qualities. Two key points emerge from this discussion. First, that the cognitive “tools” are powerful beyond the scope of “mainstream” academic practice and in ways that are particularly appropriate for policy work: the ability to handle structure and agency, to accommodate ambiguity and complexity, to integrate different forms and levels of evidence, for example. Second, that to put these tools to use to generate policy “products” that can – to appropriate Beck’s judgement of Butler – feed into, guide and influence policy development, historians need to be “insiders” of some form. The innovation lies most clearly in the integration of historical with policy work, not in the final form of the output. These points raise a number of questions and issues for historians, for the disciplinary and institutional contexts in which they tend to work, and for government. The final chapter will draw conclusions from the preceding discussion and suggest implications arising from the thesis.

Using history in public policy development: conclusions and implications

Three propositions were set out at the beginning of this thesis. First, that public policy should be regarded as an important concern of academic history, and policymakers themselves as people with legitimate interests that historians should take seriously. Second, that these imperatives derive particular force from the inability of the social and natural sciences – as the disciplines charged with providing evidence of “what works” – to solve the pressing and often long-standing policy problems that governments face. And third, that the distinctiveness of history has as yet not been articulated and demonstrated in such a way as to convince policymakers, or, arguably, the discipline itself, of the value of putting the historian’s tools to use in the context of the policymaking process.

The preceding chapters have sought to explore and address these propositions. The ‘practical spirit’ of the policy or applied historian was not just won and then lost in the 1980s and 1990s.¹ Rather, we can discern a “democratic imperative” that conditioned the identity and development of academic history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Hence it is a recovery rather than redirection of academic concerns that is here in question. Public history has provided a set of concepts to understand, define and explain how and why historians work with the past in the present, as well as a sense of a broad collective purpose. The ways in which fields of public history have emerged in different national contexts provides valuable comparative insights that can help structure the recovery efforts. Such efforts concern, however, not only what can be termed the “supply side” – historians as *providers* of historical skills and approaches – but also the “demand side”: the people charged to take a role in the development of policy, whether as officials, political advisers or elected representatives.

Significant challenges to the use of history in public policy are here evident. Most notable are the permeability of Westminster and Whitehall to external expertise and the

¹ Zelizer makes the case that policy historians have failed both in terms of providing ‘basic guidance about how their work might be used’ and in convincing ‘colleagues in history and policy departments that they had a special expertise which entitled them to claim any jurisdiction over policy issues’. He proposes that ‘policy historians were themselves to blame for failing to pursue many of the goals that inspired founders of the subfield (who established the *Journal of Policy History* in 1989): Zelizer, ‘Clio’s Lost Tribe: Public Policy History Since 1978’, pp. 381-382. A decline of the ‘practical spirit’ over this period can indeed be identified, although the history is rather longer.

ambivalence apparent in the post-war political culture about history as “the past” and its relevance to policy as a discipline. An *affinity* between history and policy *as processes* can, nevertheless, be identified. Both involve, for example: assimilating and synthesising often conflicting evidence of different types and sources; negotiating between structural constraints and the potential for change; and handling the difficulties of complex organisations and multi-party systems. This understanding points to critical shift in perspective: from history as expert content for policy to history as a set of distinctive cognitive tools that can be used in and with policy. So I am advocating that we move from concepts of *transfer* to those of *exchange*. In exploring the practical ways to realise such a collaborative approach to history in policy, it is possible to recover models from the past, and to consider how to reconfigure and integrate these with the realities of present practice.

Given that this thesis seeks to show how to make historical thinking an effective influence on policy development, the conclusion must necessarily focus on the *implications* that arise from addressing the three propositions with which I began. There is a fundamental interest here in opening up opportunities for exchange between history and policy rather than (re)defining boundaries. For this reason, implications are not divided in terms of audience, as is often the practice for policy reports, but rather in terms of the task: reconfiguring the strategy unit; reimagining the discipline; revisiting institutional structures; and reinterpreting evidence for policy.

The formulation of implications from the research involves a pragmatism that draws on arguments made earlier in the thesis. “Truth” is necessarily elusive, “what works” is far from definitive. So the public historian as advocate seeks to build a persuasive case from the evidence available, to provide a tenable assessment of the burden of proof. ‘Warrantability’, the ‘current best opinion’ that can emerge from the ‘community of inquiry’, is the goal of pragmatic historical practice.² Similarly, policy – like legal judgements – must be amenable to implementation.³ Commitments that cannot be implemented, or implemented well, cost political capital: for example, the Liberal Democrats’ pre-election pledge not to increase tuition fees, or the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer’s policy to reform child benefit. ‘History,’ Kraemer argues, ‘helps us to know the roots of a problem, and thus better appreciate what realities will need to be accommodated;... [it] educates the imagination, thus giving range to our sense of the possible’.⁴ This same mind-set informs the implications

² Seixas, ‘The Community of Inquiry’, pp. 308-309.

³ Kraemer, ‘Policy advisors: historians and making policy’, p. 220.

⁴ Kraemer, ‘Policy advisors: historians and making policy’, p. 221.

presented here. That is not to say that they are complete and concrete proposals; that would require a different kind of endeavour from doctoral research, one in constructed around active knowledge exchange and collaboration between history and policy. The implications are, however, shaped by an understanding and recognition of both the history and the politics of the issues, and by a pragmatic intent to integrate these into a set of ideas that could provide a structure for such an endeavour.

Reconfiguring the strategy unit

The awareness of the history and politics of history and policy and the pragmatic intent of the thesis together preclude suggesting that the civil service should introduce a new specialist historical stream, or that government departments should have historical units. Structures – such as those for federal historians in the US – can be important for securing recognition and status, but in doing so they tend to create rigidity. The historian as specialist may become isolated from the policymaking process, confined to a domain demarcated by the job description as the codification of expertise. The visibility of history, and historians, in policymaking through such structural markers can certainly make a statement about government's *demand* for history. Should a British administration give history a presence in departmental arrangements, it may be regarded as welcome recognition and profile, given the dominance of quantitative forms of evidence for policymaking. Profile is not, however, synonymous with influence. It may well be preferable to establish influence for history in policy before seeking to establish an organisational framework for it. Such an approach is a form of entrepreneurship; it is unstable and carries risks. That instability and risk can be seen, however, as necessary; the aim is to prove a concept, to expose and address problems, before going into larger-scale production.⁵ Profile and visibility may undermine the enterprise, rather than support it; they also tend to impose a formalisation that can inhibit innovation.

One such proof of concept project could involve a government department, for example, the Cabinet Office or No. 10, reconfiguring the strategy unit to take on some of the characteristics envisaged by Fulton. The most significant of these characteristics for present purposes is the mix of external professional experts and officials, a proposition that raises particular challenges, at least in terms of the transition from the entrepreneurial pilot to the established model. The movement of people in and out of government, whether from HE,

⁵ Entrepreneurship is, as Conard has reminded us, been a feature of public history from its 1970s emergence as a sub-field in the US: Conard, 'Facepaint History', pp. 17-18.

business or other sectors, is not an established practice. Experienced professionals can be recruited into the permanent civil service, particularly at senior level, independent reviews of policy issues are commissioned and the structure for an exchange programme is in place. These have not, however, contributed to the emergence of a highly permeable government. That is not to say that the American system, which sees each incoming administration making a large number of appointments – the Plum Book publishes details of around 7,000 presidentially-appointed positions every four years – is necessarily to be preferred. Concern about the number, status and conduct of special advisers in government, especially over the last fifteen years, suggests there would be aversion to shifting the balance between political and open selection roles.

Fulton's Planning Units therefore present an interesting model as they envisaged greater permeability but with "talent" ('imagination and foresight') providing the dynamic in the context of the internally-led reform of the politically neutral civil service. So, short-term contracts and secondments would offer 'opportunities both to young civil servants and to "outsiders" ' in the same way.⁶ As such, the proposal can be seen as an extension of the meritocratic ideal that had been central to the civil service since its establishment as an 'efficient body of permanent officers... possessing sufficient independence, character, ability, and experience to be able to advise, assist, and, to some extent, influence those who are from time to time set over them'.⁷ A look backwards at the Fulton proposals would be an interesting exercise in policy history but, more importantly, also provide material for a pragmatic review of the expertise available for the core business of government.

A framework based on the idea of the neutral civil service may help allay academic concerns that a government appointment in the British context implies political affiliation or endorsement. Operational issues do present themselves, such as the attraction and selection of "talented outsiders", pay and pensions, training, confidentiality and matters of conduct in government office. There are also issues relating to professional practice. To focus on the academic outsider, these include: negotiation between the demands of the

⁶ Civil Service Commission and Baron Fulton of Fulmer, *The Civil Service. Vol. 1 Report of the Committee 1966-68*, p. 58. Paragraph 175. Lord Heseltine's 2012 report revisits the theme by highlighting secondments between business and government as part of a project to create a 'credible partnership between government and business to drive growth'. He recommends that: 'Barriers to secondments between the public and private sectors should be removed and secondment programmes in government departments should be reinvigorated.' Lord Heseltine of Thenford, *No stone unturned in pursuit of growth*, (London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012), pp. 75-76.

⁷ Northcote and Trevelyan, *Report on the organisation of the permanent civil service*, p. 2.

discipline and those of the context of application; mediation between the approaches and insights of different specialists; recognition and promotion on return to the professional setting. These issues are of material significance, but are also, I would suggest, amenable to resolution in conducive cultural contexts. It is the creation of those contexts that presents perhaps the greatest challenge for reconfigured strategy units; here, leadership may be the most decisive factor. To emphasise cultural change is not an admission of intractability. University-business collaboration, in which organisational culture is fundamentally implicated, has undergone rapid transformation, even between the Lambert (2003) and Wilson (2012) Reviews. An activity that is valued and recognised at a strategic level is, arguably, more likely to receive the attention needed to resolve operational issues.

Reimagining the discipline

The other key challenge in terms of the realisation of the reconfigured strategy unit is the absence of an established skills supply chain. The American public historian is – at least in principle – a hybrid professional, a practitioner trained in ways that integrates the discipline and its application. While university programmes are now emerging in English universities, they do not and, indeed, cannot, offer structured routes into public service of the kind evident in the US. Further, public history in England has not taken on a core interest in policy or democratic processes. Notions of audience may be consciously plural, but, this thesis has argued, that plurality has a distinctly domesticated and depoliticised character, preoccupied with the recovery and recognition of forms of community and identity heritage; this orientation has been endorsed and supported through central funding streams. It is not apparent that those programmes that are emerging – or, indeed, those, often fixed-term, public history posts being established in university history departments – are concerned with policy as a legitimate or important setting for historical practice.⁸ So both the supply and the demand for historical skills in policy development are problematic. Who will the historians serving in the strategy unit be, and how will they work? But, again, this should present a challenge but not an impasse; Avner Offer's pragmatism seems productive, asserting that, with demand stimulated, 'supply will then take care of itself'.⁹ Proving the concept does not require a structural solution to professional training and preparation. If

⁸ King's College London has just started a series of postgraduate seminars on 'History and Policy in Practice' that bring in journalists and policymakers. It will be interesting to see how the programme develops and whether it has any discernible impact on students' career choices or on the scholarly orientation of the department.

⁹ Offer, 'Using the Past in Britain: Retrospect and Prospect', p. 31.

successful, a new form of demand should emerge to which universities – and disciplinary communities – will surely respond.

That response has a number of possible dimensions. Policy work carries, as with any professional setting, its own demands in terms of skills and attributes. As collections management and historic preservation are taught in public history Master's programmes in the US, so the case can be made for innovation in terms of preparing students for practice in policy. Applied history programmes such as the one described by Neustadt and May provide a model, but only partially so. They aimed to equip decision-makers – or rather their aides and advisers – with the historical skills to 'think in time' as a feature of, if only marginally, improved staff work. This approach – a form of high-level CPD – could well be pursued in an English context, with academic historians teaching alongside tutors in the National School of Government's successor organisation, Civil Service Learning, or indeed with Business School colleagues in corporate training programmes. But what would also require attention is the training of history students for practice in policy, a task that bears affinity with, but is distinct from, training for public history as it is broadly understood. Such training could take place within a public history programme – and there will be productive intersections and overlaps – but the particular requirements of the policy setting call for recognition within any course intended as a pathway.

The design of such training can usefully draw on material from the 1980s on the applied history programmes that had been emerging over the decade in American universities. Stearns and Tarr, the co-directors of the Carnegie-Mellon Applied History and Social Sciences programme, provide insights of which any new undertaking should take account. They highlight, among other things, the need for teaching to address questions of ethics, to emphasise the often under-valued core historical skills of writing, handling data and examining interpretations, to actively counteract perceptions of history as 'an impractical discipline' and to make serious investments in the development and delivery of a coherent, and interdisciplinary, offering.¹⁰ Their concerns about marketing and recruitment – particularly in a context of pressure on graduate employment – about the development of a facility with numbers and statistical methods in historians, and about the challenges of genuinely cross-departmental collaboration, are relevant and resonant today.

¹⁰ Stearns and Tarr, 'Applied History: A New-Old Departure'; Stearns and Tarr, 'Curriculum in Applied History: Toward the Future'.

Consideration needs to be given, however, to the failure of applied history, as then defined: the use of history 'directly toward the analysis of policy problems'.¹¹ Based on their early successes, Stearns and Tarr had envisaged in 1981 that '[w]ithin a decade we will be dealing with a significant number of historians specifically trained in the new genre'.¹² Yet there seems to be no evidence that this initial flow of applied historians generated any lasting momentum, either in terms of taught provision or scholarship. Indeed, it may be that applied history has been subsumed into public history, so that the particular concern to bring history to bear on policy issues is no longer readily discernible. A cursory Internet search for applied history programmes suggests that "application" now refers not to a particular domain (i.e. policy), but is informed by a more generic understanding of transferability of skills and experience to a range of domains in the established territory of public history: museums; archives; historic sites and so on.

Acknowledging the issues raised by Stearns and Tarr, there emerge from this thesis a number of points relevant to the development of history for policy training in an English context. Firstly, the "marketing" of such training is likely to be more problematic than in the USA, given that the broad *concept of applying history* cannot draw on an established and vibrant sub-field of public history. Indeed, it is worth considering whether this concept needs to be introduced at school level, so that by the time pupils are receptive to outreach and recruitment activities by universities in their final years of compulsory education, they can recognise and give due consideration to the distinctive proposition of studying public or applied history. The polarisation of the skills versus knowledge debate in school history does not provide a productive basis for such an initiative. There is perhaps a greater role for historians, whether practising in academe or in other settings, in making the case to prospective students, their parents, teachers, even potential future employers, for history as a discipline with many avenues to practical application. It is a task that cannot be left to marketing or outreach divisions.

Secondly, there are significant challenges posed by the orientation, preoccupations and mind-set of the academic discipline. The discomfort with working at the national level and with elites can only add to concerns associated with a centralised, adversarial political system. Working with and in policy may seem to be an act of collusion that denies pluralising developments in the discipline of history and also demands the ascendancy of

¹¹ Stearns and Tarr, 'Applied History: A New-Old Departure', p. 521.

¹² Stearns and Tarr, 'Applied History: A New-Old Departure', p. 530.

political interests over intellectual integrity. This thesis has inspected and sought to break down these apparent dichotomies. If we are concerned to recognise and address the legitimacy of different audiences, we cannot tenably impose a “democratising” agenda by only honouring that commitment when it comes to particular categories of audience. Indeed, the idea of a democratisation of history driven by how *historians* allocate their attention is more problematic than is perhaps acknowledged; Clark’s observations of the “faceless “elites”” created by working ‘in paranoid mode’ against the gradient of power are sharply made.¹³

The negotiation between political and intellectual interests would seem to call for particular consideration; in the absence of a culture in which external expertise is routinely drawn into policy development, any involvement can be seen as implicating the historian in the divisiveness of party politics. This is, however, an issue that arguably cannot be resolved entirely within the discipline. The case can be made to draw it into the process of determining a “way of working” for the reconfigured strategy unit; historians, experts from other disciplines and professions and policymakers would thus be engaged a collective and on-going task of an inherently pragmatic character. Although such a process would involve only a small number of historians, going through it may be productive in terms of innovation in training provision. In particular, it may suggest ways in which multi-disciplinary working can happen, pointing to the potential for collaboration between academic departments and with policy-relevant bodies in the development and delivery of new programmes. Placement opportunities for students in policy settings – properly integrated into programmes – will help them develop the skills and attitudes necessary to operate as historians in complex organisational environments. Whatever language we may prefer, the reanimation of scholarship in applied history in theory and in practice would be a welcome dimension of this endeavour. There is rich potential for exploring the relationship of applied to public history and to currents in academic historiography, the principles and parameters of multi-disciplinary, multi-professional work in policy settings, questions of ethics and professional values, or pedagogy and curriculum design.

Revisiting institutional structures

Significant tasks of reconfiguration and reimagination have been outlined, in which historians necessarily have a central role. Given that the main concern is with an English context, where universities are the primary professional setting for history, the implications

¹³ Clark, ‘Power’, p. 153.

for HEIs must be considered. One way of providing a framework for policy engagement in universities might be to set up policy institutes; the King's Policy Institute, Cambridge Public Policy, Public Policy@Southampton and the Salford Institute for Public Policy are examples of centres emerging in English universities to bring research evidence to bear on policy issues.¹⁴ Such models may indeed play a valuable role in terms of coordinating academic research in an interdisciplinary and policy-oriented way, and in making the results of the enterprise accessible to policymakers. If we can conceive of a policymaking ecosystem, in which organisations contribute in different ways to policy development, such institutes would certainly have a place. This thesis would suggest, however, that the creation of the specialist university centre may have its limitations, and hence that other configurations are worthy of consideration.

Although the work of such institutes is focused on policy, it is conducted within university structures and thus remains at a remove from the policymaking process; it is a knowledge transfer model, offering only incremental innovation. With such a model, the task remains to create the relationships necessary for the transition from transfer to exchange. This role could be played by "bridging" bodies, such as think tanks, although whether the "advocacy tanks", funded by sponsors seeking influence on policy and committed to particular ideological agendas, could perform that role is questionable. The politically neutral and more research-oriented think tanks may be better placed, but issues of intellectual property and of competitive advantage, as universities seek access to policy via these intermediaries, would be present. Further, the longer the processing chain, the greater the potential not only for distortion and misrepresentation, but also for a breakdown in the exchange mechanism. Policy institutes also leave frameworks for professional recognition essentially intact; staff may be appointed or seconded to the institute, but the university still confers promotion and reward. Recognition is necessarily determined by university's priorities, and the priorities themselves by the university's understanding of its position and ambitions in a complex and competitive environment. Unless esteem is attached to influence on policy at disciplinary, institutional and sectoral level, there would seem to be little scope for the cultural change needed to develop a knowledge exchange-based approach.

In this sense, it is not the policy institute as an organisational structure that presents a problem in terms of knowledge exchange. Rather, it is that such centres gather together

¹⁴ Others, such as the London School of Economics' Institute of Public Affairs, are focused on specialist postgraduate training, or on providing a structure for policy-relevant research, such as the Durham Centre for Public Policy and Health.

and demarcate off policy-relevant work from “core business”. They can therefore be seen to be in a similar position to historical units in government departments; if you define the space in which history – or policy – belongs, it can end up belonging there and nowhere else. So, the *intention* can be for the policy institute to coordinate policy-relevant work across the university, the reality may be that it instead contains and curtails it. Cultural change may be the critical factor, developing an attunement to policy needs, as is well underway for business needs in many institutions. The formal structure can – as with the strategy/planning unit in government – follow the “proof of concept”, and be designed to the requirements of the specific setting. Such structures could be established at academic department or faculty level, take the form of cross-cutting themes involving two or more Schools, or be centralised in a policy institute. A culture in which policy engagement is valued and recognised as a part of “core business”, with flexible processes to allow movement within and outside the university, would provide a supportive environment for a knowledge exchange-based approach.

The emphasis on impact in research funding policy (twenty per cent of the assessment rating in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, REF, with the intention that the proportion will increase) should provide an incentive for innovation. The closing of the current cycle of research assessment in 2013 presents the opportunity to think through how policy-relevant work in general, as well as secondment projects specifically, could be recognised in the next REF. Such a step should also contribute towards making issues of promotion and competition for awards and posts more tractable. The potential is particularly rich for the humanities, given the emphasis on impact as public engagement. Here, a further act of recovery and reimagination can be identified. Shambaugh’s Commonwealth Conferences of 1923-30 extended the conversation about progress in public policy beyond academics and legislators to include a broad audience of the electorate; it was, to blend Shambaugh’s and Seeley’s characterisations, a school of citizenship.¹⁵ The place of the *public* in debates on public policy is an underexplored issue, HE policy being one area where exchanges between universities, representative bodies and government on the terms of reform have been conducted in the apparent absence of serious public debate. However a university configures its policy engagement, there would seem to be an opportunity for giving that endeavour a broad and integrative character, one that recognises civic and collective as well as the specialist and professional interests therein.

¹⁵ Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, pp. 101-105.

This concept can be visualised as a triangle, with the domains of academe, policymaking and the public at the three points. The image is useful here not only for capturing the sense of a new space for the policy conversation, as compared to a linear connection between academe and policy. It also opens up the potential for reinterpreting impact for the humanities. This thesis has suggested that one of the challenges for public history in England is that it has taken on a rather domesticated, localised and heritage-oriented identity. Impact as public engagement tends, I have argued, to reinforce that identity, gearing academic activity towards projects concerned with revealing and celebrating community histories. So we can conceive of a line linking academe to the public (public engagement), and another linking academe to policy (knowledge transfer). If we draw a third line to form a triangle, a very different picture can emerge, in which impact can be understood in terms of a new, integrated public policy space. Such a move could address concerns not only with public disengagement from and disaffection with politics and Parliament, but also with the level of public recognition of the value of HE to society. The implications would seem particularly significant for public history in enabling the field to push against its parameters, rediscovering a connection with applied history and moving towards Andrea's ambition of meeting 'the practical and intellectual needs of society at large'.¹⁶

Reinterpreting evidence for policy

Stimulating demand for history would seem to depend on the assembling of a persuasive case for redefining the evidence in evidence-based policymaking. The current formulation, in which the quantitative imperative of Blairite instrumentalism has been sustained without serious challenge, is inadequate as a basis for supporting the policymaking process. The recent announcement of the establishment of evidence research centres – seemingly without any irony to be called “What Works centres” – does not suggest that the current political climate would be receptive to such a case.¹⁷ It is interesting that an emphasis on history as a core academic subject in schools, included in the English Baccalaureate proposals, is not connected to any concept of the subject's applied value distinct from rather nebulous notions of citizenship and national identity. A successful proof of concept would clearly make a significant contribution towards such a case. A reanimation of scholarly interest in applied history, and involvement in multi-disciplinary, multi-professional

¹⁶ Andrea, 'On public history', p. 381. See also Chapter 2.

¹⁷ Sarchet, 'Cabinet Office plans 'evidence' centres as government prepares to announce chief social scientist', *Research Fortnight*, 13th February, 2013.

collaboration in policy debate as well as in practical tasks such as preparing materials for training, whether of students or officials, would provide valuable indications of the discipline's serious engagement with policy. The specific ways in which history can be used as evidence in the policymaking process also needs to be addressed. Chapter 5 suggested that the historian's cognitive tools could be used to generate a number of "products", manifestations of historical work in Parliament and in government, such as legislative reference work, "seeded files" and the historian as planner. I shall not re-present that discussion here. It is, however, worth drawing attention to what is perhaps the central contention arising from the thesis.

The historian as policy adviser needs to be able to operate as an insider, as having a legitimate involvement in the policymaking processes and the closed-door conversations that shape both tactics and strategy. This is an argument not only about *access* but about *influence*. One of the main implications of the research presented in this thesis is that historians may be deploying the distinctive skills and approaches of the discipline, but they will probably be able to exercise greater influence if part of a policymaking team than as a member of a specialist stream. The *integration of forms of historical and policy judgement* therefore can therefore be seen as an overarching aim. This may mean that the contribution of history to the process of producing policy advice is not evident to the highest-level decision-makers; if history is just part of the wiring that is (necessarily) hidden from the Minister, proving value becomes challenging. The benefits of effective historical work, whether "bedded out" in policy teams or as part of a strategy/planning unit, should, however, be recognisable. Fully realised, the potential could include: a smoother transition for a Ministerial reshuffle through effective "seeded" files and other historically-informed briefings; the fuller development of policies using issue history and mapping to take account of the dimensions of time and context, making them more amenable to implementation; policies progressing to Bills (or not being commissioned at all) with fewer drafting iterations and subsequent amendments to legislation.

This is admittedly to outline an ideal, yet a partial or conditional achievement would nonetheless be significant; Neustadt and May aim only for marginal improvement in decision-making. The contribution of the historians would, further, be "visible" to the middle-ranking officials in a way that the THS, isolated from the business of policymaking, never really was. Once the endorsement of section and divisional heads had been lost, the departure of senior staff – the high-level advocates for "funding experience" – made the Section vulnerable. So, in a sense, reinterpreting evidence for policy is not about a campaign

but, again, a proof of concept. There remains a role for publications that “make the case” for the value of the humanities, particularly where these can be configured to engage identified audiences; the British Academy has taken on this advocacy role, and also produces reports linking academic insight to policy issues.¹⁸ Important though it is to be contributing on an on-going basis to public policy debate, this type of activity alone will not shift the terms in which evidence for “business” of policymaking is understood. A distinction between the *profile* of the lobbying mode and the *influence* of the insider can be made.

This thesis has laid particular emphasis on the integration of historical thinking and the embedding of historians in policymaking teams. It should be recognised that such an approach calls for significant cultural change: in government; in universities; in disciplinary communities. The scale and ambition of such a change is not to be underestimated, but nor should it be paralysing; the alternative is to remain outside the system and in campaigning, or complaining, mode. One way of approaching the project would be to identify aspects of the envisaged culture on which to work. Some effort, for example, could be put into developing a shared analytical vocabulary, so that historians, social scientists and policymakers can productively converse about how policymaking should be informed and shaped by expert advice. This would not be about the creation of consensus, but rather of a context in which differences can be constructively negotiated. This can be seen as an initial step towards creating a new “community of professional inquiry”—a more inclusive collective than the closed disciplinary community of enquiry – that brings these constituencies into purposeful dialogue.¹⁹

Most immediately, a community of professional enquiry would be serve pragmatic ends, supporting the development of functional working relationships in a setting where trust and confidentiality are paramount. Over time, with movement in and out of government, it is to be hoped that a much wider community would emerge: historians experienced in the application of their craft in policy; social scientists conscious of the complementarity of disciplinary approaches; policymakers appreciative of the distinctive contribution of historical thinking to policy development. The professional community of enquiry in

¹⁸ See: http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Public_Policy_Publications.cfm. Retrieved 31st March 2013. In advocacy mode, see: British Academy, *Punching our weight: the humanities and social sciences in public policy making*, (London: 2008). Also making the case for humanities is Bate: Bate (ed.), *The public value of the humanities*.

¹⁹ Seixas, ‘The Community of Inquiry’, p. 318. In this article, Seixas is making an argument for the inclusion of history teachers into the historical community of enquiry, but the concept is a useful and adaptable one. “Inquiry” is Seixas’ spelling.

policymaking can also serve as a conceptualisation of knowledge exchange in practice, indeed, it is a clear counter-model to knowledge transfer. The import of Seixas' persuasive argument on history teaching is readily discernible. Teachers 'receive history as inert, opaque information,' he proposes, so we should not be surprised if they can only 'reproduce those presentations when they turn to face the students in the classroom'. Their 'distance from the academic community of historians' has a debilitating effect, leaving history teachers 'unable to construct a classroom community around historical problems'.²⁰ If we just seek to transfer historical knowledge to policymakers as passive recipients, we not only confine history to being an 'inert' form of evidence, we also inhibit the latter's capacity to work actively with historical material.

Thirty years ago, in the Spring edition of *The Public Historian*, 1983, Otis L. Graham, Jr. – one of the pioneers of applied history – made the following emphatic statement:

It is much too late to debate whether history should serve power. Power answered that question a long time ago, and we who have a special relation to the past have not fully recognized its extent and meaning.²¹

Graham's article presented a challenge to historians, a call to action, to which there has not, as yet, been a commensurate response. The fragmentation and isolation of the field he described remains an issue, even as parts of the discipline in England, and elsewhere, are exploring the more blurred boundaries of our practice. Redefining our public obligations as historians can be a task taken on, not as a reaction to external pressures, but as a powerful act of reimagination. In this, we can draw not only on our distinctive skills and capacities as historians, but also on the history of the discipline itself. There is a history of historians' ambitions and purposes – a history of the democratic imperative – that merits our serious attention.

²⁰ Seixas, 'The Community of Inquiry', p. 320. Emphasis mine.

²¹ Graham, 'The Uses and Misuses of History: Roles in Policymaking', p. 8.

Bibliography

The nature of this research has required the use of a wide range of sources. I have, therefore, for ease of reference, divided these into categories, rather than adopt the conventional division into “primary” and “secondary”.

“Books and articles” contains the scholarly published scholarly literature.

“Newspaper articles” contains journalistic material, listed by name of reporter.

“Radio programmes” contains broadcast material.

“Web pages” contains material from the internet and URLs are given. Retrieval dates given in footnotes are not repeated.

“Speeches and hearings” contains references to transcripts of oral material. URLs are given for ease of reference.

“Other” is for all other types of material, including government documents, written evidence submitted to enquiries and unpublished material. I have given URLs where primary access is online.

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