

Institution: University of Lincoln
Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural & Media Studies, Library & Information Management
Title of case study: Women, Press and Protest in French India
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Broadly the impact of the research discussed is that of the provision of knowledge of 'hidden histories' that illuminate the contribution of specific groups towards 'cultural citizenship'. Research examined how newspapers in British and French India acted as a public voice for mass protest by ordinary people. Impact activities relate to the Indian project (2009-11) that extended awareness of the sub-continent's contribution towards gendered empowerment to a new audience. An invitation to disseminate this research came from Macquarie University Art Gallery in Australia (2011/12) as part of their public exhibition 'India – Past Present and Abroad' which contributed towards an increasing awareness of Indians' national heritage during a sensitive period in Australian multi-cultural politics.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Indian research was conducted over a two-year period in a total of thirteen different local newspaper archives in North and South India, France and London. This contributed to comparative trans-national research about the development of gendered citizenship in local colonial communities and demonstrated female influence on both economics and ideology – a neglected aspect of Indian history. Research used an interdisciplinary approach of linking content analysis with more established economic history approaches in order to examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship between press, economics and ideology in specific politically charged contexts, with two case studies – one on British India and one on French India. • the role of women using the press - a fresh contribution to the heritage of citizenship • the hidden history of disempowered indigenous people, their emergence from private to public spheres and their counter hegemonic use of communications - in a context where this past has been largely forgotten or overlooked (e.g. Tamil speaking French India). <p>Research on French India established that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • factors such as severe economic deprivation and protracted textile strikes were crucial to the origins of the freedom movement. Lack of civil liberties and an unfair voting system disenfranchised the majority of the population. • the development of a significant workers' public voice for the first time represented a move from private to public sphere for disenfranchised Tamil working class women with only limited literacy. • sporadic censorship and class solidarity led to the origins of nationalism emerging in communications, representing a politicising move from private to public spheres. • communications were frequently read out loud during illegal mass outdoor meetings, then they were destroyed – but those records that remain reveal the roots of anti-colonialism. <p>Research findings for dissemination centred on revealing information gathered for the first time from unpublished, lesser-known local records (mainly in Hindi, Tamil, French and other local dialects) about female peasants, workers, Tamil and other ethnic minorities and lower castes. These also included women who had been previously confined to the home and who were, in the main, illiterate. Interpretation of these archives by the research team suggest how, through their use of printed press, such disenfranchised groups of women were both actively involved in challenging colonial hegemony and in contributing to the beginnings of a civic identity. Visual and</p>

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textual reproductions of selected archive material were systematically gathered in order to construct the historical narrative, 'Press and Protest' <http://pressandprotest.com> for public dissemination through a public exhibition in a region where this 'history from below' of a minority ethnic group is largely hidden from view.

3. References to the research

Chapman, J. L. (2013) *Gender, Citizenship, and Newspapers: Historical & Trans-national Perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Chapman, J. L. (2011) 'Counter-hegemony, newspapers and the origins of anti-colonialism in French India', *International Journal of Social Economics*, vol.38,(2) pp.128 – 139.

Chapman, J. L. (2010) 'The origins of a public voice for marginalized workers and anti-colonialism in French India, 1935-37', *Web Journal of French Media Studies (WJFMS)*, no.8.

Chapman, J. L. (2009) Introduction to 'Hegemony and Counter - Hegemony in Communications History', guest editor of special edition of *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 19, no.1, Jan - June (Bahri Publications, New Delhi).

Grant:

Jane Chapman (PI) WOMEN, Press and Protest in British and French India 1928-48
ESRC £71,380.03 Dates: 1.8.2009 - 31.7.2011

4. Details of the impact

The exhibition, 'India – Past, Present and Abroad' was mounted at Macquarie University Art Gallery; 24 January – 4 March 2011, and curated by Jane Chapman, Rhonda Davis and Leonard Janiszewski. Members of the public were invited to the opening of the exhibition and the Gallery's evaluation of the 4 week exhibition is as follows:

The attendance figures:

- Opening: 200
- Public Programs: 150
- Overall visitation 2000

Extracts from the visitors book include: 'powerful'; 'stimulating'; 'brilliant exhibition'; 'excellent and inspiring'; 'extensive'; 'thought provoking and innovative'.

The exhibition also attracted feedback from:

- Senior Curator, Macquarie University Art Gallery
- Indian Consul, Amit Das Gupta
- Indian media in Australia
- Representatives of community groups and the general public

Indian visitors to the exhibition learned about their own history and roots in their mother country at a time when India's identity as an independent nation was being articulated. Rhonda Davis, Senior Curator, Macquarie University Art Gallery reported in her feedback on 'A highly successful exhibition in terms of visitor engagement, enquiry and responses, engaging the public into a positive reaffirmation and perception of Indian identity and culture as a means of encouraging local understanding of Australia as a tolerant society. Jane delivered an informative and engaging talk that prompted discourse and dialogue. A Q & A session sparked many questions and comments creating space for an open-ended dialogue to occur. It was interesting to witness this level of engagement and I believe this was largely due to the quality of the research undertaken' (Rhonda Davis 31.10.12).

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Ms Davis commented on how the exhibition illuminated the ways in which disempowered women tried to get coverage of their campaigning by using newspapers as a vehicle for communication. This revealed a hidden aspect of history, but also suggested new methodological approaches to analysis of the press:

'The way of working with newspapers that enquires into their effect and the way they were used by disempowered people was also new to audiences, who were able to better appreciate historical method for 'hidden' history from below' (Davis op cit).

The Guest Speaker at the opening event was the then Indian Consul, Amit Das Gupta, who spoke about the research indicating its significance to contemporary issues of identity and belonging. He said *'The spate of attacks on Indian students and members of the Indian community in Australia in 2009-10 triggered outrage in Australia, India and among the global community. Institutions of higher education emerged as the ideal platform to nourish this dialogue and to trigger a debate. The Indian community has sought to not only draw on its 'Indianness' but also to embrace its new-found identity. The unique exhibition 'India: Past, Present and Abroad' explores precisely this theme, and the talk by Jane Chapman drew the audience into looking at the role the media played in India's struggle for freedom from British colonial occupation. Discovering identity or even revisiting ones roots is not an easy process. Such projects can only help build the foundations for a discovery by a continent of a sub continent and by a subcontinent of a continent (Amit Das Gupta (29.10.12).*

Non-Indian Australian visitors were introduced to aspects of Indian culture and history, knowledge of which is overshadowed by larger and longer standing immigrant communities such as those from China. A member of the general public said: *I was first drawn to the lecture because at that time, a number of distressing issues had occurred against immigrants from India in both Sydney and Melbourne. ...Little did I know India is a Nation of plurality, or sub-cultures within culture. Jane Chapman's work, helped dispel many of these initial thoughts or misconceptions that I had developed in my early life. The public lecture unearthed several confronting issues from a humanist perspective and the frailty of the human condition. In some ways the aftermath when cultures collide formed the symbolism I found by attending this public lecture, delivered a form of serendipity I least expected. This exhibition in many ways captured the essence of the numerous moments in time, in an artful way. The lecture altered my way of thinking and knowledge about India. I left the lecture and exhibition charged with the thought that unearthing and presenting these hidden histories are important' (Michael Bolton, 30.10.2012).*

The event also attracted attention from Indian media in Australia, as follows:

Following his attendance at the opening of the exhibition, Chandra Devudu, Executive Producer, of the Kannada Language Program for SBS Radio conducted an interview with Jane Chapman for his weekly network programme aimed at the Kannada Indian community in Australia. He said: *'It was educating and illuminating. Hope we will meet again to discuss about Indian history, again.'*

(Chandra Devudu, 23.2.11)

In addition, two feature articles were published in *India Link*, the weekly magazine for Indian immigrants in Australia. The Editor, Shivangi Ambani, noted; *'It's great to know the exhibition is getting such a good response'*. Shivangi Ambani, Editor, *Indian Link* (8 Feb. 2011);'

The exhibition also provoked suggestions from community leaders for future involvement with Indian artists in Australia: *Great exhibition and audience development. You might like to invite Barry Keldoulis as he represents some Indian artists and he might like to network at that level'*(Edwina Marks, Manager Community Services, City of Wagga Wagga, NSW, 27 January 2011).

In addition to the impact noted above, the Senior Curator of the Macquarie University Art Gallery noted how working with Jane Chapman had introduced her to new methods of presentation: *From a curatorial perspective, having the opportunity to work with Professor Jane Chapman on the exhibition introduced new methodologies and ways of thinking in contextualising the material to make those connections between the visual frameworks and text analysis. Working within an interdisciplinary curatorial team affords a unique transition between the research and images in creating entry points for visitors to engage at a much deeper level' (Rhonda Davis, op.cit.).*

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Report from Curator on the activities, including number of people who attended the launch, who visited the exhibition and who attended Jane Chapman's public talk (Ronda Davis, Senior Curator, Macquarie University Art Gallery 31.10.12).

Jane Chapman's public talk at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VtjnLGhoqE>, 1779 hits to 4.11.2013.

Art gallery visitor's book comments.

Email trail between curator and people who attended exhibition and talk, e.g. community leader in Wagga Wagga, NSW (Edwina Marks, 27.1.11).

Email trail from media (radio, press and magazines) who attended exhibition and talk, and followed up with special features (Shivangi Ambani, Editor Indian Link; Chandra Devudu, Executive Producer, SBS radio).

Letter of endorsement from the former Indian consulate to Sydney, Amit Das Gupta (29.10.12).

E-mail from Michael Bolton, member of the public, 30.10.2012.