

Institution: London School of Economics and Political Science
Unit of Assessment: 23: Sociology
Title of case study: Influencing the history curriculum at the local and national levels through oral histories about Bengali migration and settlement
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>An Ofsted review of the National Curriculum found that diversity and multiculturalism is taught poorly in British schools and recommended that personal, family and local history be included in the curriculum. A joint project between LSE and Cambridge University, in partnership with Runnymede Trust, used underpinning research on Bengali migration and settlement to develop a new approach for teaching history that is effective in addressing Ofsted's concerns. The project produced a website and educational resources for teachers and students, tested and proved the new approach in three diverse cities, and influenced Government revisions to the National Curriculum to ensure that important diversity and multicultural elements were retained. The website has received over 66,500 visits (one-third UK, two-thirds international), has been selected by the British Library for the permanent UK Web Archive, and has become an inspiration and template for other diversity-related knowledge transfer projects such as 'Revealing Romans'.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Over the past decade there has been ongoing debate in the UK about national identity and multiculturalism, reflected in the tightening of immigration and citizenship requirements and in attempts to redefine the role of history in the National Curriculum. Within this broader context Dr. Claire Alexander and Dr. Joya Chatterji conducted research exploring the link between the 'big histories' of nations and the 'little histories' of individuals, families and communities, whose voices and perspectives are often not reflected in national policies or in the 'grand narratives' of national histories.</p> <p>The project was an interdisciplinary and comparative study that combined Alexander's sociological research on ethnicity and identity in Britain with Chatterji's historical expertise in Partition history in Bengal. In particular, the project linked sociological, historical and anthropological analysis through oral history, interview and archive research in India, Bangladesh and Britain to explore the experience of migration and settlement within and from Bengal in the period after Partition in 1947. The project focused on eight sites - four in Asia and four in the UK - and documented the life histories of over 180 migrants who represented a range of ages, backgrounds and circumstances.</p> <p>The research produced a number of insights and findings, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and community (hi)stories play a role in making, claiming and defending spaces and developing a sense of belonging and 'home' [1] • four dimensions - transnational, national, community and individual - intersect and transform one another through the movement and settlement of people in social, cultural and political space and through community, family and individual networks [2] • "the <i>here and now</i> are both shaped by and shape the <i>there and then</i>" such that claim-making and claim-staking "locate, or <i>place</i>, the diasporic imagination within highly local histories, institutions and generational configurations" [3] • there is a strong emotional attachment to, and investment in, a particular place, which is forged over time and plays a role in forming individual and collective identities [1] • the making and claiming of space is a form of engagement with broader social structures and processes rather than a separation or withdrawal from them [1] • the voices and experiences of local people are often "erased, assumed or ventriloquized by others", e.g. South Asian brides or Bengali Brick Lane inhabitants [1,2] • oral histories can be a significant way to counter taken-for-granted and dehumanising beliefs and assumptions about migrants and immigrants and about the role and impact of migration in contemporary society [1,2,3]. <p><i>Key researchers:</i> The project team consisted of Dr Claire Alexander and Dr Joya Chatterji as co-PIs</p>

and two researchers, Annu Jalais and Shahzad Firoz. Chatterji left for Cambridge in 2007 and Alexander joined the University of Manchester as Professor of Sociology in October 2012.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Alexander, C. (2011) 'Making Bengali Brick Lane: claiming and contesting space in East London', *British Journal of Sociology* 62(2): 201-220 DOI no.10.1111/j.1468-4446.2011.01361.x
2. Alexander, C. (2013) 'Marriage, migration, multiculturalism: Gendering "the Bengal diaspora"', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39(3): 333-352 DOI no. 10.1080/1369183X.2013.733857
3. Alexander, C. (2013) 'Contested memories: the Shahid Minar and the struggle for diasporic space', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(4): 590-610 DOI no. 10.1080/01419870.2012.674542

Evidence of quality: Peer-reviewed articles. The research project was funded by a three-year (2006-2009) AHRC grant called 'The Bengal Diaspora: Bengali Settlers in South Asia and Britain' (AH/E508588/1) for £619,386 awarded to Joya Chatterji as PI and Claire Alexander as Co-PI.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Developing educational resources for teachers and students

The richness and significance of the oral histories generated through the underpinning research led the research team to seek additional ways to disseminate the stories, the methodology and the findings to a broader audience. They were particularly keen to do this with young people who had not experienced migration themselves but whose multicultural lives and communities had been shaped and influenced by it. Dr. Alexander was awarded £28,600 by the LSE Heif4 Knowledge Transfer Fund in 2009 to use the underpinning research to develop a website and educational resources that would engage students in questions about migration, settlement, culture, identity and citizenship. Dr. Alexander and the research team collaborated on the project with Runnymede Trust, an independent think tank that uses research and thought leadership to influence policy and social change and that had produced a report titled "The Future of the Multi Ethnic Britain".

The Banglasteries website was designed for young people at Key Stage 3 and was accompanied by a teacher resource pack for use in the English curriculum [A,B]. It encouraged young people to understand how contemporary multicultural Britain was formed as well as illuminating the history of the Bengali community in Britain and its links to Britain's Imperial past. The website was launched at Runnymede's Jim Rose Memorial Lecture by novelist Amitav Ghosh to a general audience of 350 people in December 2009. The associated education resource was launched at the House of Lords in July 2010 with the participation of 30 Bengali young women from Mulberry School in Tower Hamlets. It was covered by BBC Asia Network, BBC World service, four Bengali TV stations and *Eastern Eye* newspaper (20,000 copies weekly). The Banglasteries site also featured in the Runnymede Bulletin (Autumn 2010), an online publication that reaches over 3,000 subscribers, including government departments and third sector organisations.

The Banglasteries website has had over 66,500 'hits' since 2010. The impact has been international, with 33% of the 'hits' from the UK, 33% from South Asia, 10% from North America, and about 13% from mainland Europe, the Middle East, East/SE Asia and Australasia. The teachers' pages have been viewed over 4,100 times. In 2012 the Oral History section of the British Library, as part of a project called Curator's Choice, requested permission to include the Banglasteries website in the permanent UK Web Archive. Websites are selected that "publish research, reflect the diversity of lives, interests and activities throughout the UK, and demonstrate web innovation", with the purpose being to preserve them and ensure permanent access by future generations. Since March 2013 a 'snapshot' of the website is being taken every six months and added to this accessible and permanent Oral History archive [C].

Developing a new approach to history and diversity in the school curriculum

A follow-up project in 2011-2012, called 'Banglasteries: telling community histories about migration and belonging', was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (ARHC) for £93,281, with Dr. Alexander as PI and Dr. Chatterji as Co-PI. Continuing their highly productive partnership with Runnymede Foundation, the project team worked in four schools and a youth centre in three

cities - Leicester, Cardiff and Sheffield - that presented diverse demographics and histories of migration. They worked with over 120 young people aged 12-15 to introduce them to family and community history research using a variety of social research methods, with an emphasis on using oral histories to better understand the history of migration and its effects in contemporary society. Advisory groups composed of historians and representatives from local museums, race equality organisations and universities were established in each city to provide advice and support. The students involved in the project produced films, animation, journalistic pieces, poetry and artwork. The final material was edited by Runnymede and Feedback Films and uploaded to a new website called Making Histories [D]. Students learned presentation and public speaking skills, first by sharing their experience with fellow students, then through their involvement in community launches of the website involving local institutions and in a national launch at the House of Commons in November 2012, attended by MPs and community activists.

The project had impact at four different levels: individual, school, community and society. According to involved teachers, the project was an effective vehicle for helping individual students to develop "countless new transferrable skills" [E], including research (e.g. modelling questions), listening, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, using digital media, filmmaking and public speaking. The project also bolstered student's pride, self-esteem and confidence, engaged them more deeply with learning and with their schools, reinvigorated their interest in history and enabled them to meet a number of the requirements for their Baccalaureate qualification [E]. "Their knowledge and understanding of migration stories relevant to their family, their local community and Britain as a whole was greatly increased", which according to MPs Jenny Willott and David Blunkett is "the first step to tolerance and cohesion" amongst individuals and communities [F].

In terms of school impact, the Making Histories approach was integrated into the history curriculum in Cardiff at the middle and lower school levels and in Leicester at the community college level, demonstrating that this approach could be effective with students of different ages, abilities and backgrounds. The project therefore established Making Histories as an effective model for responding to Ofsted findings that diversity and multiculturalism is taught poorly in British schools, as well as addressing the Ofsted recommendation that personal, family and local history should be taught in UK schools, a recommendation supported by Education Secretary Michael Gove.

In terms of community impact, the project was a catalyst for collaboration amongst a number of community and national organisations, including Runnymede Trust, The Swadhinata Trust (the Bengali community history and campaigning organisation), local Race Equality Councils, local and national museums (Museum of Wales, the Cardiff Story Museum, Museum of London), universities and other organisations (e.g. the Somali Community and Parents Association). Several national organisations – Runnymede, Swadhinata and the 'Making History' charity led by actor Colin McFarlane – were able to extend their reach to new and often hard-to-reach audiences, create lasting links with schools and community organisations and even raise new funding to expand project coverage [G]. The collaboration also became a model for the AHRC and Runnymede. The AHRC views it as a new template for research and knowledge transfer and an example of a 'high impact' case study. For Runnymede it "has led to additional interest from other academics to replicate the high levels of dissemination to non-academic groups that we have achieved on both projects", and has already resulted in a second successful collaboration that has produced another educational website resource focused on diversity issues called Romans Revealed.

In terms of broader impact, "The projects conducted by the young people on the Making Histories project provided much needed insight into the migration journeys and hidden histories of the very diverse communities that have settled across the UK, including those of Yemeni, Somali, Togolese, Pakistani, Caribbean, Zambian, Indian, Irish and Italian backgrounds among others." [G] The website has had nearly 900 visits to date, the majority from the UK, but some from North America, mainland Europe, Australia, Brazil, South Africa and the UAE.

Influencing policy around history teaching and the National Curriculum

Based on the underpinning research and the development and testing of a new approach for teaching history, Alexander, Chatterji and Weekes-Bernard (from Runnymede) wrote a paper to

influence policy and practice called *Making British Histories: Diversity and the National Curriculum* [H] as part of the Runnymede Perspectives series. The paper suggested reform of the National Curriculum to redraw the boundaries between British and World Histories, to give schools the resources to develop courses that engage students in living history, and to include family and community research as part of the curriculum. It was launched at a high-profile roundtable of policymakers, teachers, historians and community representatives at the Museum of London, held as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science, where prominent historians engaged in a debate about the role and purpose of history drawing upon the findings described in the paper.

The paper and the underpinning research have proved influential in discussions and debates about policy and practice in both Britain and Asia. They have been presented to a range of non-governmental organisations and community groups in the UK, India and Bangladesh. They have informed the thinking of religious authorities, including the Archbishop of Canterbury's Office and the North Herts Interfaith Forum, which believes that the history curriculum is causing social division because "the Asian story is missing" and that "the making history project is finding a gentle way through a fraught subject" [I]. They have fed into discussions with policymakers from the UK Department of Education in terms of how to make history teaching more inclusive, and Dr Chatterji has been invited to policy discussions regarding future curriculum development.

The report also had a more direct influence on the National Curriculum. In early 2013 the Department of Education proposed to remove key historical figures from minority ethnic backgrounds (Mary Seacole and Olaudah Equiano) from the history curriculum for ages 5-14. This spurred Runnymede, Operation Black Vote (OBV) and race equality organisations to respond with an online petition that gathered 40,000 signatures (including 72 MPs), and Runnymede produced a policy briefing paper based on the Making British Histories research that was shared with Education Secretary Michael Gove in an invited briefing and that was used to influence parliamentarians and policy advisors. The briefing paper proved to be "significant in influencing the revised school history curriculum in which both historical figures were retained" and was used "to make a strong and ultimately convincing case to also ensure that African and other world histories were part of the pre eleven National Curriculum" [J]. OBV considered "these achievements as some of our greatest endeavors in our 18 year history" because they "ensure our National Curriculum, particularly around history remains diverse and reflects a UK and global history that will inspire all children" [J].

Wider implications: There are over 270 nationalities represented in the UK and the world, and each nationality - not to mention each individual - has its own unique history. Rather than teaching a monolithic, and therefore by definition misleading and inaccurate, history of Britain and the world, the National Curriculum can instead encourage the use of teaching methodologies, such as the Making Histories approach, that capitalise on diversity and multiculturalism for better learning, that instil critical thinking, and that ultimately lead to a more tolerant and cohesive society.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

All Sources listed below can also be seen at: https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/case_study/view/66

- A. Banglasteries website: <http://www.banglasteries.org>
- B. Teaching resources: <http://www.banglasteries.org/for-teachers.html>
- C. British Library: <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/ukwa/target/128712709/source/search>
- D. Making Histories website: <http://www.makinghistories.org.uk/>
- E. Email from History Teacher, Cardiff. Source file: <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/916>
- F. Statement by MP for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough Source file: <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/909>
- G. Statement, Director of Runnymede Trust Source file: <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/910>
- H. *Making British Histories* policy paper. Source file: <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/913>
- I. Statement by Chair, North Herts Interfaith Forum. <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/911>
- J. Statement by Director, Operation Back Vote <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/912>