

Year 9 students' perceptions of the history of minority ethnic groups in the UK in the history curriculum, and how they can be improved

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A Research & Development Project

Submitted for the MSc Learning & Teaching 2021

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this research and intervention is to improve the provision of ethnic minority history at Key Stage Three (KS3) at a predominantly ethnic minority grammar school in North London. This practitioner research has come out of both a professional interest in addressing inequalities in education as well as the significant coverage of these issues in the national press over the last 12 months (Turner, 2020; Leach et al., 2020). In my context most of the students are from ethnic minority backgrounds – predominantly South Asia. This intervention follows on from my Part Two research into how South Asian students viewed history as a subject (Author, 2020).

The findings of this earlier practitioner research indicated some negative perceptions of the KS3 history curriculum and the students’ expressed a desire for greater diversity in the curriculum and the chance to study their own ethnic minority heritage. There was also a noticeable difference between the different South Asian ethnic groups – with Pakistani and Bangladeshi students having noticeably more negative perceptions of history at School X than Indian and Sri Lankan students. However, given the small sample size it was hard to draw concrete conclusions regarding the differences between the ethnic groups. Having identified key issues in the history curriculum, I decided to diversify the history provision for Year Nine students at School X as part of a collaborative effort in the department to improve the diversity of the curriculum (School X, 2020a).

The existing provision at KS3 at School X was, like many other schools' history curriculums, an overwhelmingly white narrative of history – with only sporadic and isolated considerations of ethnic minority history. Successive national curricula have been highly criticised for being overly white and British-centric (Race, 2005; Hawkey, 2015; Harris, 2013; Arday, 2020a). The Department for Education (2020) issued a statement regarding the importance of history education's role in tackling racism and social issues in response to the increased coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. The problematic nature of history curriculums is both enduring and multinational (Harris, 2013), and at a time when promoting social cohesion and diversity are at the forefront of educational objectives, diversity within the curriculum is a topic worthy of greater consideration than has traditionally been the case (Alexander et al., 2015).

Some would argue that using history education to shape society at all is inappropriate. Attempts by the Conservative government post-2010 may reflect the dangers of teaching ardent nationalism and mono-cultural history (Hawkey, 2015, Harris, 2013). However, I think that Lee and Shemilt (2007) make good points that despite the difficulties of using history to teach citizenship and social issues, to simply avoid these issues in the history classroom is more problematic. History education will always be political as it involves teaching students about societies, individuals and nations – core aspects of politics. Invariably students will draw comparisons and contrasts to what they see around them in the world today. It is far better for the teacher in the classroom to address these head on and to try to promote positive societal values.

However, I do accept that “positive social values” is a very contestable concept. Nonetheless, I tend to agree with Lee and Shemilt's conclusions that good history teaching may be a necessary condition for students to understand the societies that they live in and what has

shaped their development over time, thus allowing them to make informed decisions about the possible outcomes of actions in the present. As such, whilst history education can be politicised and be used as a tool in seeking to build particular kinds of society, these do not have to be bad things. I would consider a key part of positive history in this sense to be focused on responding to important contemporary issues. It is also about giving students the tools to question claims about the past and present in a critical and evidenced based way.

This research was focused upon trying to bring in greater ethnic minority history into the curriculum in order to try to increase the engagement and positive perceptions of history from the students. The aim to was increase the coverage of the history of minority groups within the UK and of the roles that they have played in British history. Having a focus on Britain is not necessarily a bad thing nor does it inherently need to exclude ethnic minority groups. The important consideration here is that the national identity being encouraged (Barton and Levstik, 2004) needs to be one that is multicultural and truly reflective of Britain's ethnically diverse history. The issues around creating a national identity arise when undue political pressure is placed on the history curriculum to focus only on the overwhelming white, "traditional", elements of British history (Alexander and Weekes-Bernard, 2017; Hawkey and Prior, 2011; Harris, 2013). This leads to the content not giving an accurate reflection of the huge diversity that is a part of British history. This project focused on creating a unit of work based upon the role of the British Empire in WWI and through this showed how the history of Britain includes the history of many different ethnic groups. A good history curriculum needs to be adaptive and needs to reflect the key things students need to learn about to understand the present (Kitson et al., 2011). This new unit of work sought to achieve this through helping the students to understand that Britain's history and ethnic minority history are not mutually exclusive. Ethnic-minority history is Britain's history and is in fact a key part of the "island story" which former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove (2012) regarded as being vitally important.

1.1 Definition of “ethnic minority history”

The terminology used when discussing issues around race and ethnicity faces problems of clarity and precision. The report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (Sewell et al., 2021) indicated that “BME” and “BAME” are not adequate terms as they are exclusionary to some ethnic minority groups and are not well understood. Whilst the overall findings of this report were widely contested; I believe that its discussion of terminology remains useful. The confusion around terminology can be seen in the wider literature on ethnicity and history education with a wide array of terminology being used to describe groups who constitute an ethnic minority within a particular nation. When discussing the history of groups that constitute an ethnic minority in Britain this research will use, “ethnic minority history”. The term here refers both to the interactions these groups have had with Britain prior to colonisation and to the history of these groups in Britain. This term has been chosen as I will also be using the term “ethnic minority student” to discuss students who come from an ethnic group that constitutes a minority in Britain at present. No term is perfect at encapsulating the diversity within this huge and diverse group. However, for the purposes of the literature review it is necessary to have consistent terminology.

2. Literature Review

2.1 School Context

The purpose of this literature review was to inform my research into my own school context - where School X has a majority South Asian pupil population. This was important to consider since the literature suggested that ethnic minority history is side-lined in the national curriculum, which School X largely follows at KS3, and as such most students at School X may have felt uninspired by and unrepresented in the history that they have been taught.

A second point to consider concerning the literature review in the context of School X is that uptake and attainment of history at School X is high at GCSE and A-Level compared to national averages. History consistently has 90+ students (in a year group of around 180) at GCSE and two AS and A-Level classes, in which most students attain level 9s and A/A*s. Whilst this data obviously is not the norm in the vast majority of state-maintained schools, it is more in line with grammar schools who consistently have higher uptakes and greater attainment in history (Harris et al., 2013). Furthermore, after the reforms to GCSEs in 2015, including making history more academically rigorous, the differences between uptake and attainment in state comprehensives/academies and grammar schools widened substantially due, at least in part, to the new performance measures introduced (Harris et al., 2018). As a result, the findings of this research may not be fully comparable to all UK school settings.

2.2 Outline of literature review

The first area considered in this literature review is the debate around diversity in history education and its politicisation. The overarching message here is that whilst educational academics consistently criticise and point to the problems within the history curriculum, their recommendations largely go unused by policymakers.

The second focus is on the causes and degrees of disengagement of ethnic minority students with history. Here it is made clear that students from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to engage with the content being delivered in the classroom as it does not reflect their own heritage.

I will also consider some of the practical strategies that have been employed to create more engaging history curriculums. A lot of these strategies are small scale in nature and show the impact that individual teachers can have in improving the history curriculum.

Finally, I will briefly consider the perspective offered by critical race theory and the importance of the considerations it raises for this, and all, research. The main elements of note here are that racism is not just an overt practice but can be seen in more covert ways. As such, teachers and researchers alike need to be conscious of the language they choose, topics they teach and the rationales that underpin their decision-making.

2.3 History education, diversity and politics

This section provides a broad analysis of ethnic minority history education and how history education is used as a political tool. The purpose being to contextualise and demonstrate the scale of the problems at hand.

2.3.1 How diverse is history education in the UK?

The growing critique of the lack of diversity in history education is something that has been discussed frequently for the past 20 years, with an apparent lack of improvement to date (Arday, 2020a). In recent years Jason Arday has been one of the most vocal critiques of; the treatment of ethnic minority individuals in education, the content of curriculums in higher education in the UK and the narrow conception of what “Britishness” means (Arday, 2019; Arday, 2020b; Arday et al., 2020). As such, his work (2020a) with the Black Curriculum Group in producing a holistic critique of the treatment of ethnic minority individuals in history education was built upon a sustained and developed understanding of the problems the current system faces.

The main problems Arday (2020a) highlighted in this report were; the lack of black history educators, the failure to interweave the history of minority groups into topics being taught and the whitewashing of Britain’s past. Of particular interest to this research project are Arday’s discussions of the failure to teach histories in which ethnic minority history is interwoven and the need to challenge the whitewashing of Britain’s past. These two core issues provided the starting point for the design of my intervention unit of work.

One of the seminal texts mentioned by Arday was Alexander, Weekes-Bernard and Chatterji’s (2015) report for the Runnymede Trust on how to improve teaching provisions in secondary

classrooms. This report was written in direct response to the new national curriculum for history published in 2013 (Department for Education, 2013). It outlined the same issues and gave broadly the same solutions as Arday – namely that the history of our “island nation” must reflect the lives of ethnic minority students in order to engage them and instil in all students a more accurate conception of British identity and promote greater diversity in history educators and academia. Alexander et al.’s (2015) report followed on from a previous report by the same authors for the Runnymede Trust (Alexander et al., 2012) about the formation of that very national curriculum. Yet again, this earlier report highlighted similar issues with the overly white nature of British history education and the obsession with a “monoculture narrative” that was consistently espoused by both Gove and prominent British historians, such as David Starkey (Alexander et al., 2012). This first report pointed to the need for substantial changes in the way diversity and British identity were understood. Unfortunately, the conceptions around British history appear incredibly entrenched in political circles and critiques get little traction with politicians.

Richard Harris’ huge contribution (Harris and Clarke, 2011; Harris, 2013; Harris and Reynolds, 2014; Harris and Burn, 2016) to this field has been particularly important in challenging the entrenched conceptions around the role of history in education. Harris and Clarke (2011) demonstrated that content choices can have an intrinsic impact on the way students perceive history. They also pointed to a key problem in delivering a more diverse curriculum being that most history teachers had very little experience learning a diverse curriculum themselves so were not able to deliver one. Harris and Burn (2016) further suggested that whilst teachers often believed that the curriculum was too narrow, their views counted for little in the wider (and very politicised) debate on what content should be delivered in schools.

Harris and Reynolds (2014) pointed out that it was far easier, and as a result more common, to present the history of Britain as being that of a “progressive nation”. This cherry-picking and whitewashing of history are things that Harris and others have discussed on multiple occasions and have indicated that they could be some of the key reasons for why ethnic minority students have been disengaged from, and have underperformed in, history (Traill, 2007; Harris 2013; Harris and Reynolds, 2014; Atkinson et al., 2018; Doharty, 2019). The history they learn needs to reflect their identity. The work of Harris over the last decade has illuminated the consistent demand and desire for change among history education academics. However, this perspective has yet to have gained any of the significant political momentum that would be required to put changes into practice nationwide. This academic interest has also not traditionally manifested itself amongst many history teachers. For example, in 2019 only 8.3% of students were entered for the Migration, Empires and People: C790 to Present Day module that AQA offer (AQA, 2019). Though it should be noted that over the last 18 months diversity in the curriculum has been increasingly discussed among history teachers and departments.

2.3.2 How does the politicisation of history impact the classroom experiences of the students?

For widespread positive change to occur in history education, it will require some degree of political willpower. For the last half a century history education has been used as a political tool as a part of the wider process of nation building and creating a national identity (Race, 2005). This process has become entrenched in our system and since 2000 it has been given renewed emphasis due to a need to create greater “social cohesion” from successive Labour and Conservative governments (Hawkey and Prior, 2011; Hawkey, 2012; Hawkey, 2015). Kate Hawkey has written widely about the politicisation of the history curriculum. She suggested that this process escalated in the early 2000s, following increased global fears of terrorism, and

subsequently argued that ethnic minority students did not buy into the government-directed narratives presented by schools and were more likely to engage with the history they learned at home (Hawkey and Prior, 2011). A second key finding was that ethnic minority students did not form a uniform and monocultural group themselves and that any attempt at “diversity” needed to consider this (Hawkey and Prior, 2011). It is worth noting that this research was carried out in the context of the 2007 national curriculum, introduced under a Labour government, so some of the specific critiques of the political direction of history may not be as relevant today.

Hawkey’s later research (2012) continued her critique of the over-politicised nature of the national curriculum and suggested that the identities of students and what they wanted to study were ignored – particularly where ethnic minority students were concerned. However, despite her continued overarching critique of the national curriculum, she also pointed out that teachers did have a degree of freedom to deliver the content they want. Alongside this however, she gave a warning to avoid tokenism or a mishandling of diversity through oversimplifying the identities of minority students. Trying to engage with as many students from different ethnic minority backgrounds as possible with my new unit of work was in fact one of the greatest challenges when designing the unit.

Terry Haydn (2012) echoed many of Hawkey’s sentiments and pointed out that the problem of politicisation of historical narratives became worse after 2011 with the new requirement to teach explicitly “British values” in the classroom. Whilst this article was not focused on ethnic minority students, the general discussion around what should be in the (then upcoming) 2013 national curriculum was an excellent commentary on the drawbacks of creating a narrow and overtly positive and nationalistic history curriculum. Haydn (2014) made this same case in his discussion of the way the British Empire was taught in schools. He explained that the British

Empire was an excellent example of how politicisation of the history curriculum could lead to an unrealistic and glorified version of the past being taught. This critique is extremely important given that the British Empire is the topic of my intervention. Haydn's comment that history should avoid the narrow conceptions of politicians with a, "very limited understanding of the discipline of history", (2014, p.30) highlighted one of the core problems with the politicisation of history education.

Both Hawkey (2015) and Haydn (2014) have briefly spoken of the role of the teacher in challenging the narrow political conception of history that the government adopts, whilst they also recognised that this was not necessarily straightforward. Teachers frequently find themselves working within quite rigid practices and curriculums in their schools that mirror the recommendations from politicians and national curriculums. This research project was conducted during a two-year period of reflection within my own department where we critically assessed our topic choices at KS3 with a focus of trying to include greater diversity.

2.4 What impact does a lack of ethnic minority history have on students?

Having established that the history provision in the UK may lack diversity and that politicisation impacts curriculum planning, it is worth now discussing the research into the impacts of these issues. The first major aspect to consider for this study is the link between educational attainment and ethnicity. This is something that has been covered widely in research into education in general, but there has been very limited research into subject specific attainment. The second point of discussion will try to unpick the limited research into history education and ethnicity specifically. There is some large-scale research into history uptake and perceptions amongst ethnic groups, but this is very limited in terms of quantity and is rather dated. Data on attainment in history and ethnicity is almost non-existent. The significance of this is that it

becomes harder to quantify the wider impact of the limitations of the current state of history education nationwide.

There are a few pieces of research from Epstein (2009), Grever et al. (2011) and An (2009), that are commonly cited in a large proportion of the research into ethnicity and history education in the UK. These are useful to this research project as they provide scope for comparison in relation to engagement and students' views of their history curriculums. As these studies looked at other countries (and one also compared experiences with those in the UK), they demonstrate the scale of the issues around ethnic minority history education. However, it remains that there is still a distinct lack of research of this magnitude in this area, and these studies are a decade old now and based upon old curriculums.

Finally, this section of the literature review will consider the contribution of teachers to this debate through the professional journal *Teaching History*. Whilst not peer-reviewed, these small-scale case studies can teach us a lot about the realities of teaching ethnic minority history in classrooms and are valuable to this study's intervention planning.

2.4.1 What research has been undertaken around ethnic minority education?

Most of the analysis from the government, educational foundations and academics into ethnicity, and attainment and engagement is generalised across all subjects (Tomlinson, 1990; Abbass, 2002; Tackey et al., 2011; Department for Education, 2015). Finding specific data on ethnicity in relation to attainment and engagement in individual subjects is difficult (Henderson et al., 2018). The most recent large-scale research conducted into attainment was the government's analysis of ethnicity and other social factors' impacts on under-attainment in schools; this research found that, in general, ethnicity was becoming a less significant factor in

attainment and, when controls were applied for socio-economic factors, ethnicity alone was even less significant (Department for Education, 2015). These findings were echoed in other areas of the literature (Tackey et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2018). However, it is worth noting here that recent research by the ONS (Antonopoulos et al., 2020) argued that negative socio-economic factors are more likely to be seen in ethnic minority groups. This suggests that the link between ethnicity and under attainment in education may still exist in a less direct way. Whilst none of this research specifically pertains to history education it is still worth considering here. It presents the case that other factors aside from ethnicity may be important to acknowledge, and potentially should be considered alongside ethnicity when researching engagement in any subject. It was difficult to assess the impact of socio-economic factors in this research as I did not have access to data on the FSM status of individual students at School X. However, the most recent data available for the whole cohort at School X indicated that the students did not typically represent the most disadvantaged in society in terms of economic factors as only 2% of students were eligible for Free School Meals in the 2020/2021 school year (Department for Education, 2021). Whilst assessing the impact of socio-economic factors is outside the remit of this research, it could be something for later research to comment upon.

The empirical data which bears consideration here is the diversity in attainment between different ethnic minority groups. Research has consistently shown that attainment and ethnicity is an incredibly complex picture with significant differences between the performance of minority groups who are not a uniform population (Ofsted, 1999; Department for Education, 2006; Tackey et al, 2011; Department for Education 2015). The data on overall attainment by ethnic groups shows these differences clearly. Data from 2013 indicated that Indian students were 14.2% more likely to attain 5 A*-C GCSE grades than Pakistani students, and almost twice as likely to do so than white British students (Stokes et al., 2015). The same report commented upon the role of parental perceptions of education as a factor for why some ethnic groups

perform better than their counterparts. The report suggested that South Asian and Chinese parents were among the most likely to have high aspirations for their children academically and that this may have been a factor in their high overall attainment relative to other ethnic groups. However, it should also be noted that the report did point to inconsistencies in this data – black parents were likely to have high academic aspirations for their children, but black students were amongst the lowest attainers. There may be differences in the perceptions of history at School X between parents of different ethnicity, which could be reflected in the different perceptions from their children.

2.4.2 What research has been conducted in relation to ethnic minority groups' attainment and perceptions of history education in the UK?

The most recent wide-scale research into ethnicity and history education has come from the Royal Historical Society (Atkinson, 2018). This research provided an excellent analysis of government data on uptake of history but did not have any specific analysis of historical attainment by ethnicity, with the only data cited being on “Ebacc subjects” and “Progress 8” more generally (Atkinson, 2018). Other research by Henderson et al. (2018) focused on subject choices at GCSE and found that some ethnic minority groups were more likely to choose what they perceived as prestigious or more demanding subjects - though other factors appeared more significant to overall subject choice. Furthermore, a 2006 report into ethnicity and education included survey results that indicated that history was not among the favourite subjects of any ethnic group, and was among the least favourite subjects for Indian, Pakistani and black African students (Department for Education, 2006). These findings around the lower uptake of history by ethnic minorities were echoed by Sullivan et al. (2011) in their analysis of the social factors that influenced subject choice at GCSE – though they suggested that it was the links between ethnicity and economic factors that were crucial here.

All of this paints a worrying picture of history education. Large numbers of ethnic minority students dislike the subject and given that we have already seen a serious lack of positive reform in terms of engaging ethnic minority students in the curriculum, there is little to suggest much progress has been made in this regard.

The only definitive analysis of grades against ethnicity that I found from the last 10 years came from a request in the House of Commons for Nick Gibb (then Minister for Schools) to provide data on specific attainment in history education in relation to ethnicity (and free school-meals) (Hansard HC Deb, 19 July 2011). Gibb supplied data that demonstrated that in 2009-2010 black students achieved a lower proportion of A*-C grades in both GCSE and A-Level history than that achieved by “Asian” and “white” students (who performed similarly) and by Chinese students who performed the best. However, this data is now more than ten years out of date, based on previous specifications and a different examination system. It also did not break down the category of “Asian” into its constituent parts, so is again limited in its analysis.

2.4.3 What are the most cited pieces of research on ethnicity and history education?

The two most cited pieces of research into ethnicity and history education in this country are Epstein (2009) who worked with black students in the US and Grever et al. (2011) who worked with both Dutch and English students. To a lesser extent the work of An (2009), who looked at Korean students in the US, is also mentioned in the literature. These pieces of research emphasised student voice in their analysis and demonstrated the globalised nature of the problems in history. They have helped in forming a more well-rounded analysis of the scale and types of issues that exist in the education of ethnic minorities and ethnic minority history education.

It is worth starting with the work of Epstein (2009) which is the most widely cited case study of the last decade in this country regarding ethnicity and history education. Epstein has been researching race and education for some time. An earlier piece that she wrote (Epstein, 1998) on the role of personal experiences and legacies of race and their relationship with history education provided the basis for much subsequent study. Epstein writes from a US perspective and in the context of the more overt and pervasive racism that exists in US society (when compared to the UK) and America's far more widely understood history of black slavery and persecution. Nonetheless, her research has provided an excellent insight into how black students, and their parents, viewed the history that they studied. The overwhelming findings from her later study were that black students did not engage with the content as they did not see it as 'their' history and did not value it as a result; the students were far more likely to listen to parents and other outside sources – many of whom also did not buy into the schools' history curriculums (Epstein, 2009). This is useful to consider here given that the majority of history taught in UK secondary schools, as suggested by the national curriculum, is white-centric, with only cursory looks into ethnic minority history. As a result, it is fair to question whether our ethnic minority students feel similarly to the black students in Epstein's study. Her study also showed that when extra effort was put into giving black students lessons or content related to black history, they bought into it and associated with it (Epstein, 2009). This finding gives support to the value of this study and its strategies to improve ethnic minority students' engagement.

A similar study into students' views of history curriculums was conducted by Grever et al. (2008) who studied the views of Dutch and English students on history and its perceived value. The key findings considered here were that, despite both indigenous and ethnic minority groups seeing history as valuable (over 80% in both instances and in both countries), ethnic minority students were more likely to value the history of their families, less likely to take pride

in the history of Britain/the Netherlands and tended to have a stronger affinity for religious history (Grever et al., 2008). This study usefully focused on urban populations which reflected a similar context to that of the students at School X. This research also considered the significance of the politicisation of history and concluded that without substantive change, student enjoyment of history and the benefits of history education could be lost (Grever et al., 2011). Given that this research is 12 years old and that the same problems still exist, this could suggest that these problems are deeply embedded in education systems.

The focus and administration of the national curriculum did shift when the coalition government came to power in 2010 as the QCDA was abolished and the DfE, under more direct government control, took over the design and review process of the new national curriculum and examinations (Gillie, 2010). Perhaps the most significant shift was the desire to make the curriculum more “academic”. For history education, this meant a focus upon the narrative of British history (Gillie, 2010). However, the first version of the new history curriculum, which mandated an increased number of compulsory topics and was entirely Eurocentric, was quickly amended as the DfE was forced to compromise on many of its policies – the end result being a curriculum where teachers had a degree of autonomy in the topics that they chose to teach (Smith, 2017). Thus, despite the government post-2010 having continually championed the “island nation” story, it should be noted that teachers have retained a degree of choice in relation to curriculum content. It remains to be seen how influential the suggested content in the national curriculum is on teachers making decisions around subject content in history.

Finally, it is worth considering a final piece of literature from An (2009) on the attitudes of Korean students in the US. The value of this work is that she looked at Korean students who were considered “model-students”. It is widely acknowledged that East-Asian students typically attain highly in educational settings and are not frequently the focus of research

when compared to other ethnic minority groups in the US (An, 2009). This is extremely useful given that the students at School X are high attaining. An's (2009) study found that the predominantly first-generation students were not engaged with US history but given their relatively high socio-economic status and limited personal connection to US persecution of ethnic minorities, they often bought into white-centric narratives of history quite easily. The findings here presented the importance of considering divergence between ethnic groups based upon other key characteristics such as generational factors or socio-economics.

These studies have reached many of the same conclusions that have been presented in the rest of the literature and their findings are still widely reported today despite their age. It appears that the same issues remain pervasive and still need addressing. Given the Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that ethnicity should not impact a child's education, it would be useful for more recent data on subject choices and attainment by different ethnic groups to be made available to researchers. Without this data it is hard to quantitatively analyse whether children's rights are being infringed.

2.4.4 Previous small-scale curriculum interventions

Given the lack of apparent top-down efforts to improve diversity in the history curriculum, one solution has been for individual teachers to push forward positive change in their individual classrooms and departments. Ofsted's (2011) survey of LEAs showed that ad hoc solutions by individual schools and teachers to engage ethnic minority students through more relevant and diverse history (and other subjects) for their individual school contexts were some of the most useful strategies to improve engagement. This emphasis on teacher-led solutions echoed parts of the research by Haydn (2014) and Hawkey (2015).

Most teachers want to teach a curriculum that is interesting and broad, and that can facilitate teaching valuable concepts like diversity and tolerance (Husbands et al., 2003). However, Husbands et al. also pointed out that teachers had very different approaches to achieving these aims whether it was through teaching history as a, “warning”, or through an, “empathy”, approach. Whichever approach was chosen, both could have been effective and there was no reason that they could not have been used alongside each other. The important consideration was that history teaching must address the problems both in the modern world and the past (Lee and Shemilt, 2007). Kitson et al. (2011) suggested that each country had issues that were given status that made them essential to understanding the story of the country – in the UK this included topics such as the Home Front which have been afforded a central place in the “island story”. However, a modern and successful history education needed to also engage with topics that were controversial and were more accurate representations of both Britain and the world (Kitson et al., 2011). Thus, one of the problems that emerges when designing a curriculum is that history is subject to contestation – there are not clear and definitive answers. Deciding what to teach requires teachers to make value judgements about what is significant to teach given their classroom context. However, to further problematize these decisions, teachers must also consider the practicalities of resourcing topics and exam board specifications.

A final point on designing a history curriculum raised by Kitson et al. was the need for history to be made accessible to all. They argued that whilst the study of history was intrinsically complex and difficult, it should not be oversimplified. Instead, the social benefits of a well-rounded history education that enabled students to both understand the past and the world they live in were crucial to a successful curriculum.

Teaching an ethnically diverse curriculum is a key strategy for achieving this. Such a curriculum needs to directly challenge students to consider a diverse history, which would include ethnic minority history, to deliver on the social benefits of history education.

There is limited academic literature on specific teaching strategies and their classroom application regarding ethnic minority history. However, in professional journals such as *Teaching History* we can see a diverse range of strategies have been used by individual teachers to solve problems in their specific school contexts. The articles in *Teaching History* provide a wide range of different styles of writing. Some are by professional researchers and others are by teachers (sometimes as part of a PGCE or Master's degree). Usefully, they often provide a range of practical solutions to classroom problems. Individual teachers' small-scale projects have been useful in highlighting key methods for improving the provision of ethnic minority history education (Haydn, 2014; Hawkey, 2015). In this literature review I will discuss four articles as a representative sample from *Teaching History* to illustrate the sorts of practical strategies that are covered in this professional journal.

Dennis' (2015) work creating a post-14 curriculum that had a "multi-directional" approach presented brief, but clear, examples of how to include ethnic minority stories into some of the most popular existing GCSE and A-Level units on Nazi Germany and Medicine Through Time in a non-tokenistic way. He suggested that there were huge advantages to keeping history broad and looking for connections between different components of history and the present. This could be done alongside the need to teach towards an exam and could enhance the students' understanding of the content through a more nuanced and complex view of history. Dennis explained how he improved a GCSE unit on the treatment and persecution of minorities in Nazi Germany. He explained that the previous lessons on this topic did not fully address the wide range of ethnic groups that Germany had in the early 1900s. Dennis described his decision to

focus upon Afro-Germans through a case study of how an Afro-German was treated by an SS officer and how this case study reflected the broader goals of African colonisation of the Nazis. This integrated approach linked clearly with the curriculum and at the same time pushed students to consider a wider view of history that included minority groups throughout. This then could push students to consider a topic's relevance in the modern world. Arguably this new unit of work would be more complex, but as Kitson et al. (2011) have suggested, good historical study is by its nature complex.

A second example given by Lyndon (2006) showed that ethnic minority history can be taught within Britain's story with relative ease. Lyndon presented case studies on both black Elizabethans and the role of black and Asian soldiers in World War One. The focus on both occasions was the normalisation of non-white faces appearing in history. Lyndon described the surprise of his students on seeing non-white Tudors in places where they had not expected to do so. His approach used both a thematic historical study (Elizabethan poverty) and focused on a specific event (WWI) which allowed the students to interact more consistently with more ethnically diverse history and fostered a new understanding of British history.

Another piece from *Teaching History* worth considering here comes from Mohamud and Whitburn (2014) who discussed a unit of work they created on British-Somalian communities. Their unit of work is useful to consider as it was created to address a specific imbalance in the curriculum at their school and for the 30,000 ethnic Somali students in London. Their article was written in part as a response to the work by Lyndon (2006) and his focus on ethnic minority individuals in Britain. They focused on creating a rigorous scheme of work, that did justice to the subject matter, and which enabled the students to appreciate the content in the same way as other history that they had studied. They used an enquiry question to underpin their unit of work and focused on making sure it was accessible to their students. One of the

key findings here was that this sort of history can create a sense of unity in the classroom and that students of all ethnicities enjoyed studying this content.

The final article that I will discuss by Kerry Apps (2021) came from the most recent issue of *Teaching History* which focused entirely on the issue of race in history education. As this is a professional journal with working teachers amongst the contributors, the fact that this entire issue is full of excellent ideas shows that teachers potentially are playing an increasingly active role in improving history curriculums from the ground up.

In Apps' article she outlined a problem that many history teachers have had; students becoming confused by the seemingly episodic study of history. In her example, her students had spent time studying black Tudors and Stuarts through four case studies of individuals. They then went on to study the transatlantic slave trade and were left confused by this sudden shift in the treatment of black people. Having been so engaged learning about John Blanke, a black Tudor court musician, and Diego, a former slave turned crewmember of Sir Francis Drake, the students were left confused by what appeared the universal and abhorrent mistreatment of black people throughout the transatlantic slave trade. Her new enquiry addressed these issues through focusing on the gradual shift in the way ideas of race were constructed through a study from the early 1500s through to the late 1600s. A key aspect of this for my own practice is that I must be conscious of episodically teaching ethnic minority history and that these topics need a substantial unit of work to do them justice. A final point that Apps made in her conclusion was that teaching this unit of work allowed her students to see the constructed nature of race as a concept. This is an excellent example of the positive impact of history can have on society that I referred to earlier.

These small-scale interventions were all driven by the desire of teachers to broaden their students' understanding of history and incorporate greater diversity within their curriculums. Effective teaching of ethnic minority history needs to demonstrate that ethnic minorities have always played a role in history, and in British history specifically. It is also clear that there is a place for teaching this content alongside the standard national curriculum topics, but also for specific case study units of work. One key issue that has been considered previously is that doing all this consistently as suggested by Lyndon (2006) achieved the best results. It cannot simply be a single focus like Black History Month (Mohamud and Whitburn, 2014). In terms of my scheme of work, this was extremely useful to consider as whilst my unit of work was only eight lessons long, it was part of a department-wide effort to include more ethnic minority content in history.

2.5 Critical Theory Framework.

Finally, it is worth discussing the theoretical framework through which I will view this research and my intervention. I have chosen Critical Race Theory (CRT) as it provides a means of reviewing and conceptualising the pervasive role that racism plays in education. However, CRT is not just a theory of education; it has been used increasingly frequently over the last 20 years as means of discussing the pervasive role that racism plays in society and its institutions. CRT was developed in the US in the 1980s in response to the ongoing debate around race in America and in particular the experiences of African Americans. It came to prominence in Britain in the 2000s – in no small part due to the government enquiry into Stephen Lawrence's death that found that several public institutions, including education, were institutionally racist (Gillborn, 2004; Gillborn, 2008a). CRT is not a theory like Neo-Liberalism or Marxism in that it does not attempt to offer clear and definitive explanations of society or individuals, and instead is a way of collating the beliefs about the scale of the problem of racism (Gillborn,

2006). Gillborn further suggested that solutions needed to be radical in their approach and that society could not rely on the existing institutions of government to solve the problems of racism in the UK.

More recently Meghji (2020) presented an argument for the utilisation of a, “racial social systems” approach within CRT to further enhance its critiques of society. She argued that a more relational approach be taken when looking at racism in the UK – that racism is not a fixed concept nor is, “race”, as a concept natural – it was created as a means of creating a hierarchy. This hierarchy is reflected in our society all the time and it is constantly being reinforced – she gave multiple examples of black people in Britain being stigmatised as lazy in school, as criminals or even being mistaken for each other at work. The social systems approach can effectively spot acts of racism that otherwise may go undetected and emphasises the incremental effect of daily racism.

Discussions around CRT in the UK have emphasised the role that educational institutions play in the wider issues of racism in society. In the USA, some of the earliest and most important work in this area came from Ladson-Billing and Tate IV (1994). They discussed the centrality of race as factor, when compared to class and gender, in the educational outcomes of students in America. They suggested that claims of colour-blindness in classrooms fundamentally missed the pervasive nature of racism and the insidious way that this affected all areas of life. Gillborn has been amongst the most vocal and influential writers about CRT in the UK and built heavily on the work already done in America (Meghji, 2020). Gillborn (2006) argued for a complete shift in the narrative of society that more explicitly recognised the racism in societal institutions. CRT has often referenced this shift in narrative, and the importance of minority voices in challenging the existing narrative and formulating a more accurate one (Gillborn, 2006; Rollock and Gillborn, 2011). Gillborn (2008b) went on to argue that in the UK there was a

significant backlash to attempts to recognise the importance of race and racism in education and the way in which policies and individual decisions by key actors (teachers, head teachers etc.) reinforced these institutionalised problems. In particular, the narrative that it was white working-class students who were the sole victims in education and that ethnic minority students got too much focus. Gillborn (2008b) outlined the problem with using some ethnic minority groups as, “model minorities” to show that racism did not exist in education – Indian and Chinese students have out-performed all other demographics repeatedly. He argued that this fundamentally missed the point of racism in schools, and that daily experiences and marginalisation have had a far more pervasive impact than just grades. He also highlighted that these high attaining minority groups could have been used to hide other groups who did not perform well in education.

The classroom is one of the places that a new, more racially inclusive narrative of society can be developed to replace the pre-existing narrative and societal views that continue to marginalise ethnic minority students. Doharty (2018) in her discussion of micro and macro aggressions provided an excellent critique of the current state of history education in particular. She referenced the idea that society is full of racist structures and institutions and showed how these “macro-aggressions” then filtered down to education and individual classrooms. In individual classrooms, we can see “micro-aggressions” where things like the everyday language used to discuss history is full of meaning and implicit assumptions. She pointed to the design of many curriculums as being systematic of these problems of racism – the delineation between “black history” and otherwise “normal” history which did not include the history of ethnic minorities has created a two-tiered system. Ethnic minority history has then become perceived as less valuable than the white, Eurocentric history that students have become more familiar with.

Fundamentally, CRT in education challenges the vague and non-committal government assertions and policies aimed at addressing racism and instead argues that the whole system needs reform: the curriculum, teacher education and the testing system that marginalise disadvantaged and ethnic minority communities (Gillborn, 2006). Furthermore Gillborn (2005) and Doharty (2018) have both argued that the history curriculum that is covered in schools in England is one that has been sanitised incrementally to exclude the real history of minority communities. It is clear that according to CRT the whole system needs overhauling and that racism, however discrete, needs to be challenged and corrected. Furthermore, this issue is vital to society as racism is central to understanding other forms of discrimination in our education system, not just that based on ethnicity (Ladson-Billing and Tate IV, 1994; Gillborn, 2015).

However, CRT is not a universally accepted concept in the UK and its role in education has become fiercely contested. Kim Badenoch, the Secretary of State for Equalities, argued in 2020 that CRT and its affiliated criticisms of the narrowness of the UK curriculum, and in particular, history, were unfounded and that teaching white privilege as a fact was against the law (Hansard, 2020). In response to this, academics and educators at the Institute of Education wrote an open letter where they argued for greater consideration of the importance of CRT and the value to be had from redesigning and refocusing the history curriculum (The Guardian, 2020). CRT was also critiqued by Marxist academics like Cole (2009) who argued that CRT, as explained by Gillborn, has overemphasised the role of race in social inequality and that it has mischaracterised all racism as “white-supremacy”. He argued that from a Marxist standpoint inequality is reproduced through the unequal ownership of the means of production and that CRT grouping all white people into the same category has oversimplified the problems in society and in fact made it harder to solve the inequalities in society. Meghji (2020) responded to Cole’s critique by suggesting that he had oversimplified the literature on CRT and misunderstood the discussion of “white-supremacy”. She suggested that he had

mischaracterised CRT through claiming that CRT suggested that, “white-supremacy”, should replace, “racism” as the term for understanding societal inequality because of race. Instead, she suggested that the terms are actually synonymous with each other, as “white-supremacy” was a descriptor of the system of social inequality.

In history education, Doharty (2018) has made a significant contribution analysing how black students have had negative experiences of history lessons in the UK. In her *Teaching History* article, she picked up on the work of Gillborn and others around CRT and focused on the role of macro and micro-aggressions. She first explained macro-aggressions as being the institutionalised whiteness of society which has fed down into education, in a similar way to how Gillborn explained the role of the government and policy makers (2006) and the incremental nature of whitewashing (2005). These macro-aggressions are wider issues, whereas the micro-aggressions are activities inside individual history classrooms (Doharty, 2018). These micro-aggressions are the results of the larger macro-aggression that embed these issues into the system. She focused her analysis on the way Black history is too often just seen as a US civil rights topic (Doharty, 2018). This is similar to the critique presented by Hawkey (2012) on the oversimplifying of minority history. She also pointed out the significant role that teachers have played in this through their own micro-aggressions through the language they use and the way they deliver content (Doharty, 2018). This is interesting as whilst teachers have the chance to make positive changes (Haydn, 2014; Hawkey, 2015), it is clear that they can also be part of the core problems.

Doharty’s (2018) conclusions provided a final useful comment on the nature of curriculums and the lack of significant ethnic minority history. She suggested that black history has only ever been taught as a tool for achieving political objectives. She highlighted the need to cover ethnic minority history in a substantive way, recognising that merely adding more tokenistic or

anecdotal elements had not served the students well. At School X previously US civil rights was the only ethnic minority history topic covered, but the department is now taking steps to address this in each KS3 year group.

2.6 Overall findings from literature review and implications for this research

The key findings of this literature review are:

1. The teaching of ethnic minority history is not placed at the forefront of either the national curriculum or practice of most teachers, and instead there is an overwhelming white monocultural narrative presented.
2. History has the capability to be used to help unify society when used appropriately.
3. Ethnic minority students, who under attain and do not enjoy history, will benefit from a more diverse curriculum.
4. Ethnic minority students are not a homogenous group and need to be engaged in different ways.
5. The role of ethnic minority history is widely discussed but there is limited practical research into solving the issues that are apparent.
6. A new curriculum will need to avoid the pitfalls of tokenism or the creation of two separate strands of history – white and the other.
7. The scale of the problem that the curriculum faces need to be acknowledged and solutions need to be large scale and substantial to tackle problems regarding ethnic inequality in history education.

2.7 Research questions

The research questions that have emerged from this literature review are:

1. Are students currently engaged with the history that they study?
2. Do the students feel they are taught and understand non-white history?
3. Do the students want to study more ethnic minority history?

These research questions will form the basis of the research design and the subsequent analysis of the data. They aim to analyse the change in students' attitudes towards history as a result of the intervention unit of work on ethnic minority history. This should provide a clear way of assessing the success of the intervention.

3. Research Methods and Design

3.1 Context, and the design of the intervention unit

The purpose of this intervention was to improve perceptions of history amongst Year 9 pupils at School X. The school is majority ethnic minority students and the literature suggested that the white-monocultural curriculum that School X follows, based on the current national curriculum, is not engaging for these students. As a result, I was interested to find whether there would be any variance between ethnic groups either in their initial perceptions and any change in perceptions towards history as a result of a targeted intervention. This intervention was a new scheme of work that focused on the role of the British Empire in WWI.

There were a few reasons for choosing Year 9 for the intervention. Firstly, I oversee Year 9 history, and I had the scope to change lessons and the foci of the units of work. This made it easier to make alterations to the existing Scheme of Work and my Head of Department gave me a lot of freedom when implementing this new unit. Finally, it was done in term two prior to the Christmas break, when the students would soon be choosing their subjects for GCSE. This provided a good opportunity to engage as many students as possible to try to bolster history uptake at KS4.

This mini-unit was eight lessons long (see Appendix 1): three 70-minute lessons, three 35-minute lessons, a lesson devoted to formal assessment and finally a feedback lesson. There were also two pieces of homework, with one being formatively assessed. Figure 1 gives an outline of the lessons and a brief description of each lesson. The lessons looked at different parts of the British empire from around the world and the roles they played in WWI. There was also the opportunity for the students to complete independent research on any part of the empire of their choosing and see what role it played in WWI. This unit of work followed on

from the first term when the students studied a very European-centric narrative of WWI. This unit of work was taught by four different teachers, including a trainee teacher.

Figure 1:

Lesson	Focus of the lesson
1 What is an Empire (Single)?	A broad overview of different empires throughout history from around the world and looking for common elements.
2 The Empire and WWI (Double).	An outline of the different empires involved in WWI and a detailed account of the scale of the British Empire's involvement.
3 The Empire and WWI – the role of India (Single).	A case study focused on the role of Indian troops as part of the British Empire.
4 The impact of Empire troops on WWI (Double).	A case study focused on the role of West Indian troops as part of the British Empire and a comparison to Indian troops.
5 Analysing sources (Single).	A source analysis lesson focused on GCSE exam technique.
6 Analysing the empire's role in WWI (Double)	Using sources that the students had found researching British empire troops from different countries in WWI, the students practiced source analysis skills.
7 Test (Single)	The students completed a test. One source analysis question on the significance of the British Empire.
8 Feedback (Double)	Whole class feedback and time to individually respond to comments on the students' work.

3.2 Practitioner Research

Practitioner research in education involves teachers actively reflecting on educational issues in their own classrooms (usually) and then using their research to improve their own teaching, and support the wider educational community (Menter et al., 2011). As such, it is important that the research is shared in order to get the most out of it. This research has involved a lot of collaboration within the department in terms of both the design of the unit of work and research methods. It has been a good example for the department as we are in the process redesigning our KS3 Schemes of Work to better reflect a more diverse history – it has also been used by my Head of Department collaboration meetings with other schools.

Practitioner research can be framed in different ways, and it is different from an action research cycle due to the number of phases it goes through and the lack of repeated interventions (Nakamura, 2014). Confusingly, educational literature tends to use the various terms around research types interchangeably (Campbell, 2013). However, to be clear teacher/practitioner research does not include a series of research cycles in which successive interventions or refinements to them are tried following analysis of the effects of the previous cycle. Instead, it is one intervention, or set of interventions, that are then evaluated.

Nevertheless, it is still an effective way of addressing a small-scale issue and developing teacher pedagogy and practice (Punch and Oancea, 2014). The reason that an action research cycle was not used is that due to time and timetable constraints it would not have been practical to have multiple stages of research. This is often the case for teachers undertaking research (Taber, 2007).

A limitation to practitioner research is that it can lack objectivity (Menter et al., 2011). When it is teacher-led it can face this issue due to the research being undertaken in the researcher's

own classroom, in the context of their own practice and with their own students. However, collaboration can be an excellent way of balancing any issues around objectivity. As the researcher, I strove to be objective and accurate through collaborating with others at each stage of the process in order to help maintain a critical perspective. This collaboration – which began with a discussion in a department meeting regarding adding more diversity to the history curriculum also involved frequent discussions with my history colleagues regarding planning and curriculum content.

My colleagues in the history department all had knowledge of the context of the school and the focus of my research and as such were well placed to question the research throughout and spot any issues that arose (Menter et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2004). I particularly collaborated with one other history teacher at every stage of the research, but also with three others during the design phase of the unit of work and in the final analysis of the data. The reason I chose to collaborate with one teacher primarily was due to practical logistics of sharing the same office space and their experience teaching KS3 history. I was able to have regular discussions about the unit of work and ask for their input at multiple stages. This collaboration allowed me to address concerns of accessibility and appropriateness regarding the design of the questionnaires and interviews, and when analysing the data, I had multiple discussions regarding my initial inferences and final conclusions to see whether other staff members agreed.

3.3 Research methods

3.3.1 Timeline of research and analysis.

First group interview.

Six students from Year 9 from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds were asked to participate in a 15 to 20-minute group interview. During this semi-structured interview, the students were asked questions about their views of the history curriculum at School X and what they would like to study.



Pilot testing of first questionnaire.

Six students from Year 9 were asked to consider the questionnaire and complete it whilst making notes on any elements that they were confused by so that I could make changes as necessary.



First questionnaire.

The Likert-scale questionnaire was distributed to all 192 students in Year 9. These views were considered when designing the new Year 9 history curriculum.



Unit of work is taught.

Over a four-week period, an eight-lesson unit of work was taught on the British Empire and WWI. The emphasis was placed upon the roles of ethnic minorities in WWI and their vital roles in helping Britain in the war.



Second questionnaire.

A second questionnaire using the Likert-scale and similar questions to the first questionnaire was sent to the same 192 Year 9 students. The aim here was to be able to judge any change in perceptions of history and specifically ethnic minority history from the students.



Second group interview (Planned but not completed).

There was a planned second group interview with the same six students. This was going to follow the same structure as the first group interview. The purpose of this second interview was to see if any perceptions of history had changed as a result of this new unit of work.

Note: Unfortunately, I was unable to complete the second group interview due to the prolonged lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and then when students returned to school there was both very little time to complete the interview and the students were not enthusiastic about giving up their time to complete the second interview. I considered finding other students, but here I ran into problems of breaking up “bubbles” and covid protocols. It would also have been difficult to explore any changes in views if different students were involved in the two interviews. As a result, I was unable to complete this stage of the research.



Analysis.

The analysis of the data required me to first make initial inferences that would then shape the more detailed analysis that would follow. This was done for both the qualitative and quantitative data. When analysing the data in detail I broke the quantitative data down into the four ethnic groupings to see if there were differences between these groups as well as comparing responses to the two questionnaires to see if the intervention had had an impact. I also conducted triangulation analysis where I looked for patterns between the qualitative and quantitative data.

3.3.2 Triangulation

A critique of small-scale research could be a lack of rigour or objectivity (Campbell et al., 2013). However, these critiques can be avoided through various methods of triangulation which is the process by which multiple sources and types of information are brought together to provide a means of cross-comparison (Cohen et al., 2018). I focused upon three areas of triangulation: methodological, investigator and data (Campbell et al., 2013).

The primary method of triangulation in this study was data. I used a mixed methods approach which provides more meaningful and rigorous sets of data to analyse. However, as I am the researcher, I may well have been looking for these connections as a way of confirming my findings – especially given the inferential nature of the qualitative data in this research. I was able to mitigate this concern through my collaboration with my colleague who checked for any researcher bias in my findings and challenged me on inferences that she disagreed with. A further problem that was unfortunately unavoidable was being unable to complete the second interview which limited the amount of data triangulation I could use.

This lack of a second questionnaire also meant that my methodological triangulation suffered. I had planned to design the follow-up interview questions as means to directly test my initial inferential findings from the second questionnaire.

With regards to triangulation through investigator methods, the main method employed here was the collaboration with my colleagues that took place throughout. The other teacher that I collaborated with primarily, checked each stage of the research design and the unit of work to ensure it was both practical and valid. She also worked with me to check through the data component of the research and in particular my inferential analysis. I also consulted other teachers in the initial planning and once I had gathered the data to discuss their views on my findings.

3.3.3 Quantitative research design - questionnaires

Variables

This research project utilised quantitative data from two surveys of 192 students from Year 9. The first of these was carried out to determine pre-existing attitudes and the second was a follow-up to the unit of work. This study also looked for any differences that could be spotted between the different ethnic minority groups and how their perceptions changed as a result of the unit of work, so all other variables were controlled for as far as was possible.

Ethnic groupings are a categorical variable and this provides discrete data to be analysed – it is not a continuum (Punch, 2003). As such this was research was quasi-experimental as the independent variable was not assigned by me, and instead was a feature of the individual (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Each student at School X is taught the same content throughout

KS3, though they may have had different experiences at KS1 and KS2, and in any non-school history teaching. The main variable that had to be controlled in this study was that they were taught the same content in broadly the same way. A control variable needs to be consistent so that any differences between the independent (ethnicity) and dependent (changes in attitudes and perceptions) variables can be clearly monitored (Check and Schutt, 2012; Punch and Oancea, 2014).

An advantage this research had was that School X is all boys and is a highly selective grammar school so the attainment range is quite narrow. As such, these variables will have played a less significant role than they would have in a mainstream mixed setting. However, it should be noted that as there were four teachers delivering this content, including a trainee, the delivery may have varied. This was largely unavoidable. The lessons were designed with this in mind, and the teachers were given clear guidance at each stage of the unit of work. The trainee teacher was given a lot of guidance and I sat in on several of his lessons to ensure that they were taught in a similar way to the other classes.

Likert scale

This research used the Likert scale as it provided a simple way of gauging attitudes on a scale of 1-5, where 5 was “strongly disagree”, 4 was “disagree”, 3 was “neutral”, 2 was “agree”, 1 was “strongly agree”. This standard design was useful as the students had used these kinds of questions before and they are simple to understand. Oppenheim (1991) also points to the fact that having over 100 respondents helps to strengthen the reliability of the findings. There were 186 responses to the first questionnaire and 114 to the second questionnaire. Both questionnaires had 12 questions and each of the questions focused on one of the three research questions.

The only exception to the use of Likert-scale was Question 12, an open-ended question. This question allowed students to write in their own responses regarding any topics that they would like to study. The purpose of this question was to make the research more useful when designing new schemes of work (as the department currently are) and to provide another point of analysis of the types of topics that are proposed most frequently, both for the whole year group and also for individual ethnic minorities. Potentially, there may be students wanting to study content from their ethnic background – this question was useful in seeing how generalizable the findings of some of the literature were (Grever et al., 2008, Epstein, 2009).

Figure 2 shows the focus of the questionnaire questions (see Appendix 2 for the full questionnaire) and how they will be grouped in answering the research questions.

Figure 2:

Research question focus	Questionnaire questions	Explanation
1) Are students currently engaged with the history that they study?	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9	These questions focused on; the enjoyability (Q1), how interesting (Q2), how important (Q3), how broad (Q4), how significant the content choices were (Q8) and finally how engaged the students were outside of school (Q9).

2) Do the students feel they are taught and understand non-white history?	5, 6, 10, 11	These questions focused on; whether the students felt they studied and knew enough non-white history (Q5 and Q6), whether the students engaged with ethnic minority history outside of school (Q10) and whether they thought School X gave ethnic minority history as much emphasis as Anglo-centric history (Q11).
3) Do the students want to study more ethnic minority history?	7, 12	Question 7 focused on whether the students wanted to study more about the connections between Britain and ethnic minority communities historically. Question 12 was an open-ended question where the students could write in any ethnic minority history topics that they may want to study.

Reliability

The questionnaires went through a piloting phase where a draft copy was given to a sample of eight Year 9 students. This process helped ensure that the task and questions were accessible (Punch and Oancea, 2014). A few alterations were made following this pilot process where the students had been confused by some of the language. An example being Question 4 which was originally, "We study diverse history at School X". The students didn't understand what diverse history referred to, so I made my intended focus clearer, "We study a variety of topics and

areas of history at School X?”. The final draft was also discussed with the primary collaborator in the history department to ensure its suitability.

Where there were any individual questions which were not answered, pair-wise deletion was used to use as much of the data as possible. The one exception related to where the question on the student’s ethnicity was not answered and then likewise deletion was used as this data was needed to analyse the main variable (Oppenheimer, 1992).

Analysis

As the focus of this research was on changing perceptions, it was important to consider both the perceptions at the start before the intervention and to then look for similar or different patterns in the second set of data.

The first level of analysis of the quantitative data was a simple frequency analysis. Here I was looking for overall positive and negative perceptions within each ethnic group and whether these perceptions changed between the two questionnaires. Frequency analysis was useful in framing the rest of the analysis (Punch and Oancea, 2014). This stage of the analysis provided clarity and allowed for my hypothesis and inferential analysis to be tested against the data in a clear way. To do this, I first grouped the two positive and two negative responses together to see more overall perception changes. I then looked more closely to see whether the “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” responses presented any interesting findings. A problem with Likert-scale data is that it is hard to clarify the difference between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”, and the fact that this can differ so greatly between respondents (Cohen et al., 2011). However, we can assume that the difference between an overall positive and negative response is a measurable enough difference to give some degree of confidence in the findings.

The initial plan for this research project was to use the same categories of ethnicity as suggested by the ONS (2020). This is considered best practice in social science research and making new ethnicity measurements should be avoided wherever possible (Connelly et al., 2016). However, the data that was gathered varied quite dramatically between the two questionnaires in terms of the number of respondents overall and the number of respondents in individual ethnic groups. This variation on top of the already relatively small sample size for some of the ethnic groups made analysing these groups problematic. The issues with small sample sizes are that the data can exaggerate the findings either overly positively or negatively as well as exaggerating any changes in viewpoints between the data sets (Connelly et al., 2016).

As Question 12 is not a Likert-scale question, the analysis for this free-text and open-ended question was a simple frequency analysis for the answers to this question where they were grouped into similar historical topics.

3.3.4 Qualitative research design

Structure

The planned qualitative research involved two 15-minute semi-structured focus group interviews, one at the start and one at the end of the research. However, as previously explained, only the first interview was completed (See Appendix 3 for the interview plan). The aim of the initial interview was to gather information and perspectives from the students on both history at School X and ethnic minority history. The use of a group interview was chosen as it provided a wide range of data and had potentially more detail than multiple individual interviews due to the cumulative effect of multiple individuals (Fontana and Frey, 1994). This

cumulative effect comes from the students having the ability to develop their ideas and express them in more detail through conversations with each other in the focus group – something that doesn't occur as easily during individual interviews. The use of a focus-group structure here provided a means of discussing issues that also appeared in the questionnaires and as such helped in designing the questionnaire questions (Stewart et al., 2007). One example of how the focus group influenced the design of the questionnaires was the focus on studying history outside the classroom; one student spoke with a lot of enthusiasm about how much history they had learned outside the class in response to Question 5 (Do we study enough of this type of ethnic minority history – are our topics broad enough?). The purpose of this question was to explore the students' opinions on the current coverage of ethnic minority history and one of the students spoke at length about all the topics they chose to study outside of school that weren't covered in the curriculum. Another aspect of the questionnaire that the focus group influenced was having the open-ended question where the students could include suggestions for more ethnic minority history to study. This came about from Questions 4 (What do you think ethnic minority history is?) and 6 (Are there any areas of ethnic minority history that you would like to study?). The purpose of these two questions was to explore first what their understanding of ethnic minority history looked like, and whether they would like to study it more in class. The students expressed a wide range of topics that they would consider ethnic minority history and areas they wanted to explore further and subsequently I added the open-ended question to explore these views across the whole year group.

A focus-group works best when the individuals have enough to say about a topic (Morgan, 1997). This was the case here as the students were being asked questions about the topics they had studied and would like to study – and they had agreed to participate in the discussion. Whilst this was not a true focus group, as Fontana and Frey (1994) define it, as it was not a structured interview, and did not meet the criteria in terms of length and number of

participants proposed by Stewart et al. (2007) and Morgan (1997), it still fulfilled the main purpose of one. It had to be semi-structured here as a structured interview would not have elicited the range of data or information that was required as I wanted the students to develop their ideas. An unstructured interview would not have worked either as it would have lacked the focus on my research questions (Punch and Oancea, 2014). As the moderator I directed the questions beginning from a general starting point and became more specific (Stewart et al., 2007).

Interviewees

The six students chosen for these interviews were partially representative of the ethnic make-up of the student body in Year 9. This was done to best reflect the views of the whole cohort completing the larger questionnaire (Oppenheimer, 1992). Whilst Oppenheimer (1992) here was discussing depth interviews which these are not, the same principle can be applied.

Initially the plan was to ask students from the entire year group to be involved and then select six students from a range of ethnic backgrounds to ensure a similar ethnic distribution to the whole year group. However, again due to Covid-19, only students from my Year 9 form group were asked to take part to prevent unnecessary cross-spreading. The sample did not have the same spread of ethnicity as it could have done if I had been able to select students from across the year group – there were four Indian students, one Sri Lankan student and one Iranian student.

Reliability

In terms of reliability there were a few key considerations; the interactions between interviewees, the interactions between interviewee and the moderator and the setting and running of the interview.

A key consideration was how the interviewees interacted with each other. This was important to consider as if the students could not freely and openly express their ideas then the interview data would not have been useful. A problem that can emerge in a group interview is that an individual may dominate proceedings (Fontana and Frey, 1994; Punch and Oancea, 2014). This dynamic does not allow for a free-flowing semi-structured interview and some students may not get the chance to express their views. Counteracting this required me, as the moderator, to lead the discussion and ensure that all students were given the chance to answer through directly asking questions to students who had not contributed so they could answer first (Morgan, 1997). As such, the moderator has a key role in driving the interviewees towards the issues that they want to discuss (Morgan, 1997). In order to achieve this, and keep the conversation focused, a list of topic questions and guides were used (Punch and Oancea, 2014). I also prepared explanations of key terms and examples to questions where I wanted the students to provide answers.

Finally, the setting of the interview was important to consider. This interview was held in a classroom, was audio-recorded and I also made short notes by hand during the interview. Audio-recording was necessary to ensure that the views of the students were accurately recorded (Seidman, 2006). I then transcribed the audio-recordings and used this information in the analysis. The use of written comments was to capture my own thoughts and any initial inferences that I had at the time. In terms of location, using a classroom was practical, free of interruptions and the children should have felt comfortable in a familiar environment (O'Reilly and Dogra, 2017).

Analysis

The purpose of the interviews was both to inform the questionnaires and provide some primary level data to analyse regarding student perceptions which could be compared to the questionnaire data. The benefit of mixed methodologies is that the data can be cross-referenced (Elliot, 1991). This ensured that there was greater validity in the findings. The analysis of qualitative data was intrinsically more difficult as it was less precise when compared to quantitative data (Punch and Oancea, 2014). The analysis of the data both at the time of the interview and later on involved looking for interesting patterns and inconsistencies in viewpoints amongst the interviewees especially when compared to the literature (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2013; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In looking for these patterns I considered both my field notes and the transcripts – recognising that my own interpretations of the language will have played a role in this analysis (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2013).

The coding of the data took place in two stages – the first being the sorting of the data into relevance for the different research questions, the second being the sorting of different perspectives regarding each of these research questions. This broadly follows the strategy of “basic” and “advanced” coding outlined by Punch and Oancea (2014) where the second stage involved making more inferences and looking at patterns. The choice of the research questions for categorising the data was a starting point for grouping the data into similar areas for later analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Finally, following suggestions from Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013), I used “jottings” to consistently reflect on the data during the coding stage of the analysis to provide a starting point for the more detailed analysis that followed.

3.4 Ethical considerations

When designing and undertaking this research project I considered three key ethical areas; the justification of the project and participation of the students, the methodology utilised and the analytical approach taken. In order to ensure that my research fulfilled ethical standards, the guidelines presented by Powell et al. (2013) in their report for UNICEF offered some key guiding principles; the research needed to respect children and cause them no harm, be beneficial to children and finally needed to be reevaluated throughout the research process to ensure that the ethical considerations were up to date and still applicable.

The first stage in ensuring that ethical issues had been sufficiently considered came in the form of obtaining CUREC approval from the University of Oxford. In order to obtain this approval, I provided drafts of the questionnaires and the interview schedules along with an outline of the research plan to the Headmaster at School X (See Appendix 4). Obtaining the consent of the Headmaster was preferable to contacting each parent of the 192 students in Year 9 and it was determined that the Headmaster was capable of giving informed consent for the students to participate. The key principles of informed consent are self-determination and information (Cohen, 2013). Cohen also points out that where minors are concerned both an adult responsible for the young person and the young person themselves should be consulted. The students were made aware of the purpose of the research and how their data would be used and were able to choose to not participate in any part or all the research. They were also told that I would be exploring differences between the different ethnic groups. The students were made aware that the purpose of this research was in part to improve the provision of history. The decision to analyse differences in different ethnic groups' perceptions of history was justified on the grounds of it currently being a significant issue in both public discourses and in

history education. It was also particularly relevant to School X given the large ethnic minority population.

In terms of the methodology, the starting point here was the British Educational Research Associations guidelines (2018). The first issue considered was that students felt comfortable being involved in the research process and understood that it was in no way mandatory to take part. Students in my Year 9 form group were asked to take part in the interview, and I explained the reason for the interview and how the data would be used. I chose to do this both because I wanted to limit excessive mixing of students given the Covid-19 regulations in place and felt that students whom I know well would feel most comfortable talking to me in an open way. The interview was held in a group of six students in my classroom to again make students more comfortable than if it had been a one-on-one interview.

I was also conscious that the students did not give up too much of their time for this research, a concern raised by Cohen (2013) and Stutchbury and Fox (2008). I ensured that the interview was only 15 minutes long so that the students would not have to give up an entire break time to participate. Similarly, I limited the number of questions in the questionnaire and all but one were Likert-scale questions, and so did not require much writing.

Lastly, when designing the questions for both the interview and questionnaire I consistently considered both the accessibility of the questions and the appropriate nature of them. Both through piloting with students and collaborating with another teacher I was able to ensure all questions were accessible. The main area of consideration regarding the nature of the questions was when they focused on issues of race and ethnicity. When asking the students to state their race on the questionnaire I used a similar list of ethnicities that were used in the 2021 UK census (Gov.uk, 2021). However, I added "Sri Lankan" to the list to reflect the fact that

in previous research I had found that this group were the second largest ethnic group within School X. Figure 3 shows the four ethnic categories that were used in the analysis.

Figure 3:

Ethnic category	Explanation
Indian	Students who identified as Indian
Sri Lankan	Students who identified as Sri Lankan
Asian Other	Students who identified as their ethnicity being from Asian countries (including the Middle East) except India and Sri Lanka. This also included all students who were mixed ethnicity where one of those ethnicities was Asian. It also included students who were mixed ethnicity and one of their ethnicities was Indian or Sri Lankan and the other was another Asian country.
Other	Students who identified as their ethnicity being from a country not in Asia (including the Middle East). This was predominately white European, white British and Black African.

All students were also given the opportunity to write extra information on their ethnicity, which some students chose to do, explaining either they were mixed-race or that they didn't identify with any from the list. When discussing issues around race and ethnicity in the interview I gave clear definitions of key terms such as "ethnic minority history" so that the students understood what I meant. These discussions were moderated by me and had any topics or ideas not been appropriate I would have used my professional judgement and acted accordingly to refocus the conversation.

Stutchbury and Fox (2008) present an extremely useful guide to ethical research in education.

They present a series of questions that researchers should ask themselves on all areas of

educational research – the ones on analysis focused on the quality of the data, the reliability of the results, the benefit of the research and the way language is used were particularly valuable. These clear and focused guiding questions made me conscious in my analysis not to over-claim in any of the conclusions. I also tried to keep language as clear as possible in my conclusions to avoid misrepresenting findings and to make them more useful to anyone reading the research.

4 Findings and analysis

4.1 Outline of findings and analysis

This analysis is focused around the three research questions proposed in the literature review:

1. Are students interested in and enjoying studying history?
2. Do the students feel they are taught and understand non-white history?
3. Do the students want to study more ethnic minority history?

For each of these research questions I will be comparing both the pre and post-intervention questionnaires and referencing the group interview responses. My goal is to see if perceptions of history, and ethnic minority history in particular, have shifted as a result of a targeted unit of work on the role of the British Empire in WWI. As a part of this analysis, I will also consider any differences between the perceptions of the different groups of students outlined earlier. The purpose here is to analyse how significant an impact student ethnicity may play in student perceptions of history and in particular ethnic minority history.

4.2 RQ1 – Are students interested in and enjoying studying history?

Overall, students appear to be interested in and enjoying studying history. The majority of responses to the questions focused on RQ1 were positive. Regarding the impact of the

intervention, it is slightly harder to draw definitive conclusions as there were conflicting results and changes in perceptions were slight.

The differences between the ethnic groupings were more pronounced in terms of their perceptions of history. These were potentially the most important findings for this research question as they point to large discrepancies between how the students from different ethnic groupings perceived history. However, it should again be noted that the imperfect nature of the groupings makes any findings inconclusive.

4.2.1 RQ1 Analysis.

The two overarching conclusions that can be drawn regarding overall perceptions of history are:

History is overall a popular subject – most responses in both questionnaires were positive regarding history as a subject, its importance and the choice of topics at School X.

Not all students benefited equally from the new unit of work – it is clear that ethnicity was a variable that affected this.

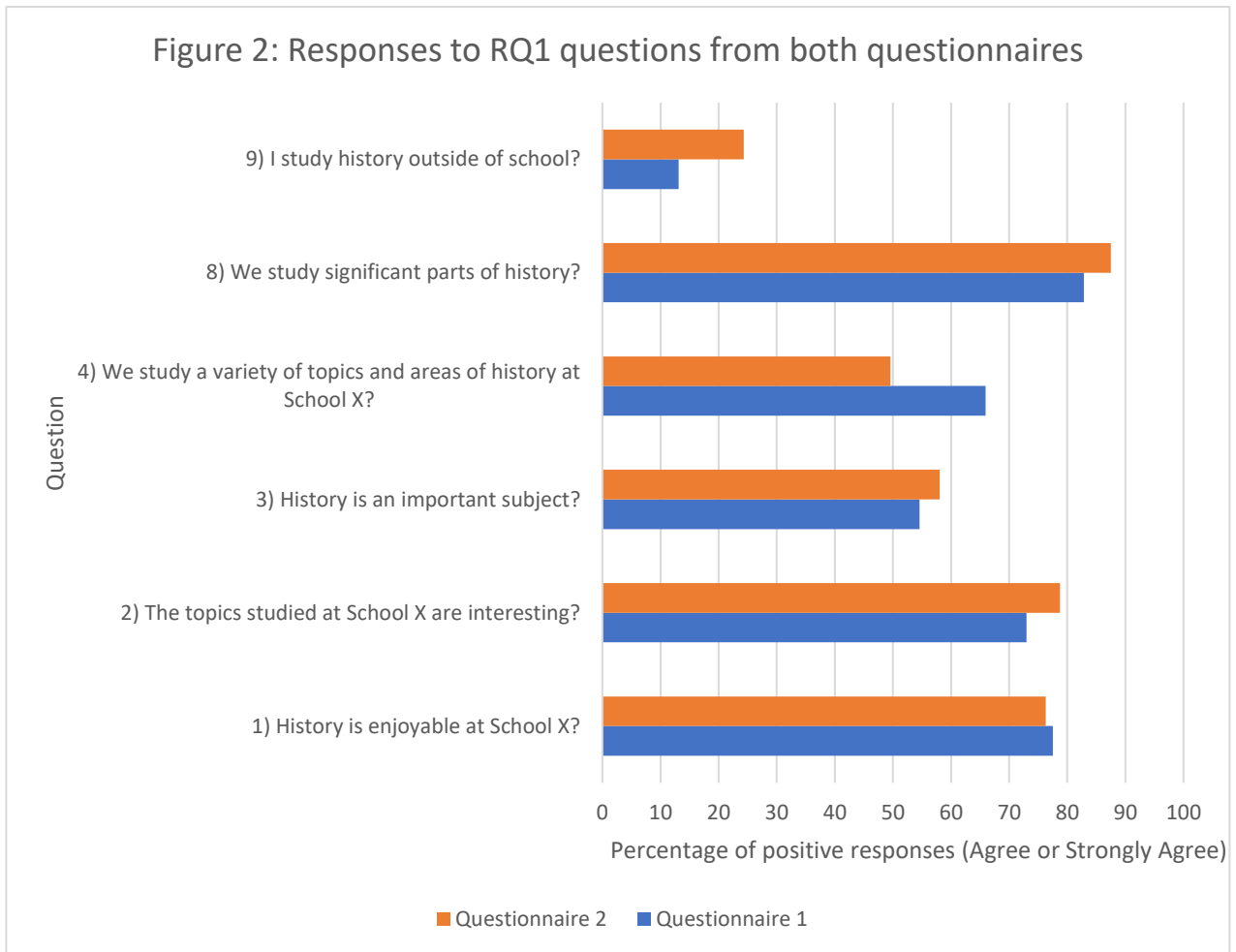


Figure 2 shows that the students' perceptions were mostly positive both prior to the intervention and after, with only slight variations. Prior to the intervention 83% of students considered the topics chosen to be significant parts of history (Question 8) and 78% suggested that history was enjoyable (Question 1). However, fewer students considered history to be important when compared with those that enjoyed it; only 55% of students suggested that it was important (Question 3). This presents an interesting dichotomy where despite enjoying history and thinking that the content chosen represents significant history, the students' perceptions of the value of studying history were still relatively low. This dichotomy remained in the second questionnaire.

In my Part Two research the students suggested that other subjects (in particular STEM) were more significant than history, and this perception is also something that the literature discusses with particular reference to South Asian students (Abbass, 2000). This could mean that whilst students enjoy history, there are social or parental pressures to focus on other subjects that then feed into the student perceptions of history's lack of importance. It is worth noting here that the four most popular subjects chosen at A-Level are all STEM subjects, and the majority of students from School X go on to study STEM related subjects at university (School X, 2020b; School X, 2020c). This culture of not valuing history as highly as other subjects may also be reflected in the low number of students who take an interest in studying history outside of school (Question 9). The most frequent response to this question in the first questionnaire was "Strongly disagree" (39%). The first group interview produced similar findings – only one student suggested that they engage with history outside of the classroom. This particular student suggested that documentaries and videos online were the easiest source of history available to him, whereas the other students suggested they spend their time doing other activities or clubs. Anecdotally, some of the most popular clubs and extra-curricular activities at School X are VEX robotics and Elite maths club, which may further indicate that students value these fields of study more.

However, it should also be noted that studying history outside of the classroom is one area where there was an appreciable increase in the percentage of positive responses following the intervention. An increase of 11% to 24% of students responding positively may suggest that some students had a newfound enthusiasm for the subject and that the unit of work inspired them to research historical topics further. This finding was reflected in a discussion with a collaborating teacher who mentioned that their students seemed to be enjoying doing their own research during the unit of work and that some had done extensive work. In one of my

classes of 32 students, 17 of them chose to research the country associated with their ethnic background.

Question 4 on the variety of topics being studied showed the biggest drop in positive perceptions from 66% to 50% positive responses between the two questionnaires. This is in sharp contrast to the overall trend, where the results showed that most perceptions of history remained positive. The reason for the decrease in positive responses regarding the diversity of topics studied could reflect the fact that we spent an extra three weeks studying WWI, having already done it for eight weeks prior. Whilst we focused on the ethnic minority history element of WWI, the students may have found the extended time spent on WWI slightly repetitive. As such, when teaching this unit again it could be better to shorten other areas of the WWI unit prior to teaching this specific unit or try to better integrate these lessons throughout the scheme of work. This greater embedding of the topic into the wider unit of work may also promote the fact that ethnic minority history is the same as, “normal”, history and avoid some of the problems of tokenistic history (Hawkey, 2012).

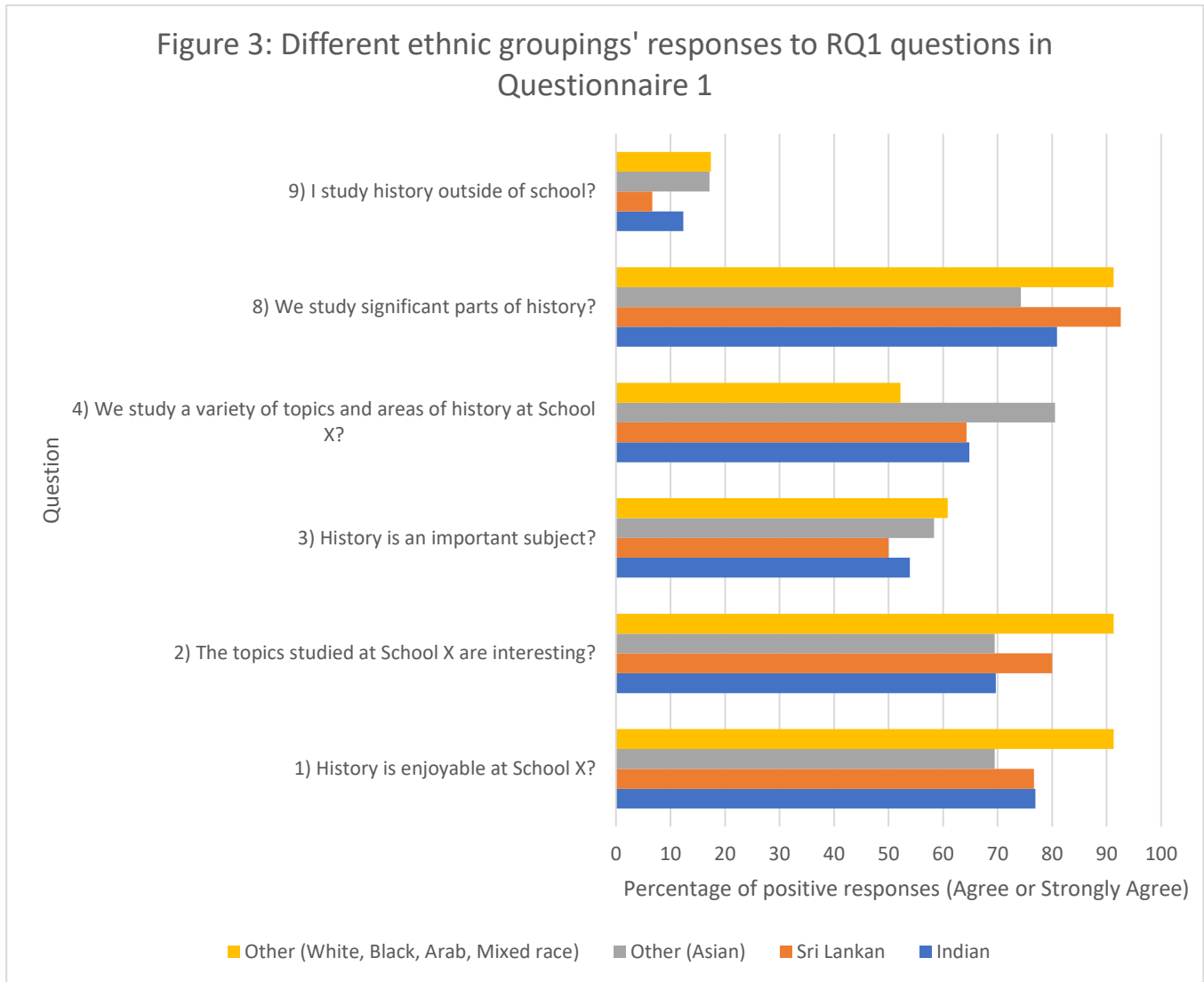
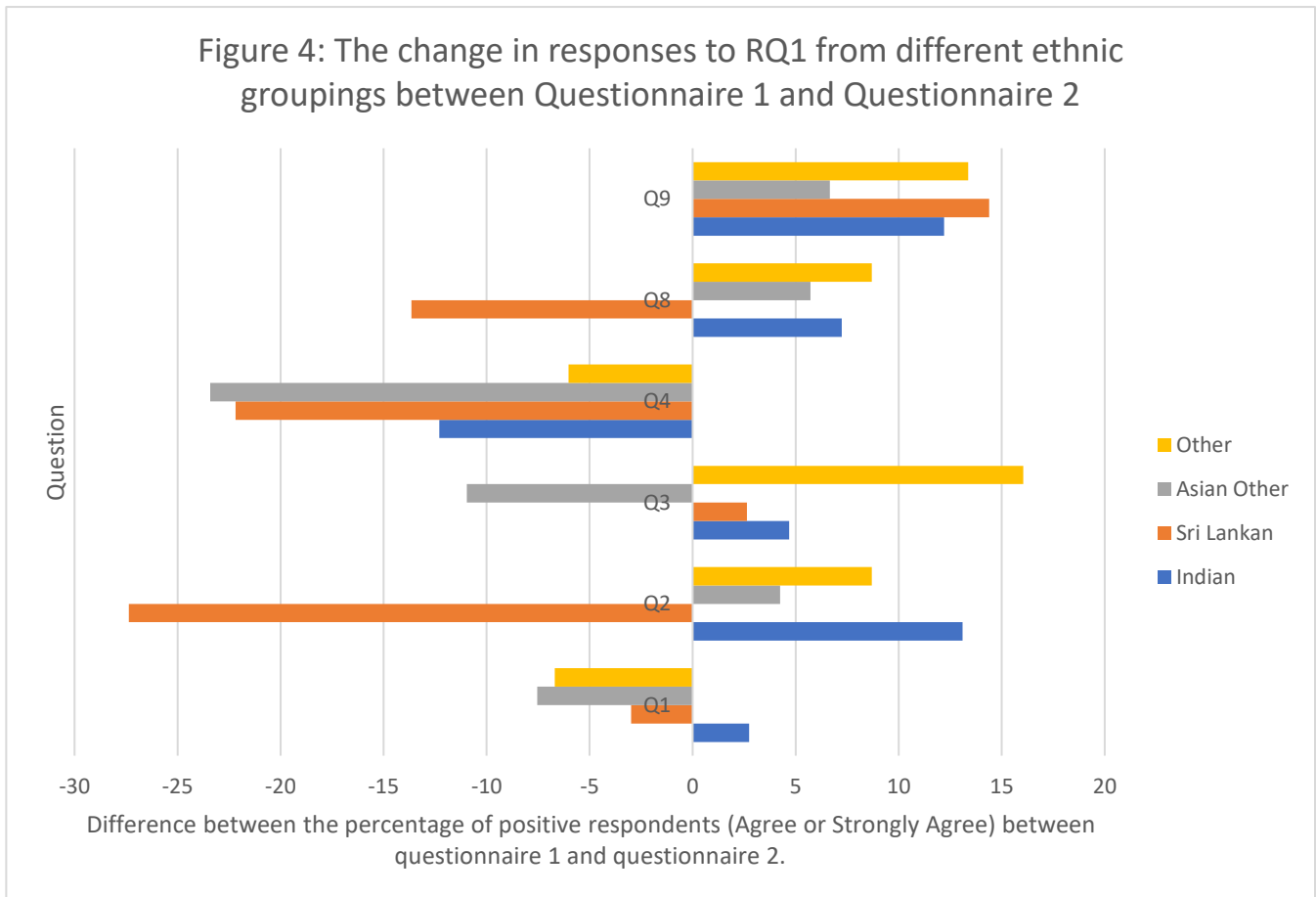


Figure 3 shows there was some deviation between the ethnic groupings on individual questions in the first questionnaire. This is seen most clearly in responses to Questions 1, 2 and 4. In Questions 1 and 2, the “Other” group were by far the most likely to suggest that history was both enjoyable and the topics interesting, with 91% positive responses for both questions. In response to both questions, this group was markedly more positive than the other ethnic groupings – there was a 23% difference between them and the “Other Asian” group for both questions. Whilst definitive conclusions are hard to draw from this due to the diversity within these groups, it does suggest that the group of students at School X who enjoy history the most are non-Asian students. Parts of the literature have suggested that current curriculum choices

do not engage ethnic minority students as they are too focused on Europe and Britain in particular (Alexander et al., 2015; Arday, 2020a). As such, these findings could be because of the focus on white history at KS3 and as the largest demographics in the “Other” ethnic grouping are white British and European students, this may have played a part in this. However, the responses from Question 4 suggest that the “Other Asian” group had the most positive perceptions of the range of topics taught, and that the “Other” group had the least positive perceptions. This contradicts the notion that any perceived narrowness of the curriculum is affecting the perceptions of the subject in a negative way.

In the first group interview, the students did mention that they thought we studied a lot of British history, and that they would like to learn about different parts of the world.

Nevertheless, the students still spoke positively of the topics that were studied at KS3 and that they had enjoyed most of them. As is often the problem with writing a curriculum, deciding what not to include is often harder than what to include. However, as I was conducting the interview there is a good chance the students would have refrained from giving responses that were overly critical of the history curriculum choices even if they had complaints to raise.



Note: Q1: History is enjoyable at (School X)?; Q2: The topics studied at (School X) are interesting?;

Q3: History is an important subject?; Q4: We study a variety of topics and areas of history at (School X)?;

Q8: We study significant parts of history?; Q9: I study history outside of school?

The most significant findings in terms of RQ1 came from the final analysis into the change in perceptions of the different ethnic groupings. Figure 4 shows quite a clear divide emerge – the “Sri Lankan” and “Asian Other” groupings saw substantial decreases in terms of positive perceptions of history and the “Other” and “Indian” students had overall increases in the percentage of positive perceptions. Sri Lankan students most clearly demonstrated this trend – in four of the six questions there was a decrease in positive perceptions, and in two of those (Questions 2 and 8) they were the only ones with a decrease. In Question 2 on the topics being interesting, they were not only alone in having a decrease in positive perceptions, but it was also the single largest change (27%). Sri Lankan students were most negative in questions

regarding the topics chosen (Questions 2, 4 and 8) which suggests that the content covered in the intervention had a negative impact on their perceptions of history at School X.

Contrastingly, Indian students had a greater percentage of positive responses in five of the six questions. A possible reason for this contrast is the choice of content taught during the intervention unit. As the unit was only a short one, I could not design lessons on all of the countries that I wanted to and was forced to settle on choosing two countries to teach specific lessons on. I chose India and the West Indies to do in class as these were the units I knew the most about and I was able to better resource them. However, the explicit focus on these countries, to the relative exclusion of others, may have contributed to the mixed responses. It is telling that the Sri Lankan students had a markedly worse reaction to the new unit of work and this could potentially be because they still did not feel represented in this new unit of study, and that the emphasis was instead just being shifted to other groups. With the majority of students being Indian and the emphasis in class being shifted to them, the Sri Lankan students may have continued to feel underrepresented. This could also explain why the “Asian Other” students were also overall more negative. I did add a homework activity where the students could consider other countries, enabling them to research any country that interested them. The intention here was that students had the opportunity to research the country linked to their own ethnicity.

A further interesting point worth noting here is that in terms of engagement outside the classroom, Sri Lankan students showed the greatest increase in positive perceptions. This could indicate that whilst in the classroom the lessons were not as engaging as they could have been, the unit was still partially successful as the students were engaged in a different way. A longer unit of work on this topic would also give me the chance to introduce a greater variety of content from more countries and regions that may further increase engagement.

4.3 RQ2 - Do the students feel they are taught and understand ethnic minority history?

This second research question was more specific than the first and puts an emphasis on ethnic minority history. The purpose of asking this question was to gauge whether the students' perceptions and understanding of what ethnic minority history means and how good a job they thought School X was doing at delivering such content. The main findings to this research question were:

The students did not initially think they were taught or understood much ethnic minority history at School X, but the intervention had a positive impact in both areas – though from low starting points.

Not all ethnic minority students were as satisfied by the content delivered in the lessons on ethnic minority history, and in particular Sri Lankan students showed the least engagement with content in class.

Asian students, and in particular Sri Lankan students, were likely to engage in more ethnic minority history learning outside of the classroom after the intervention.

4.3.1 Analysis

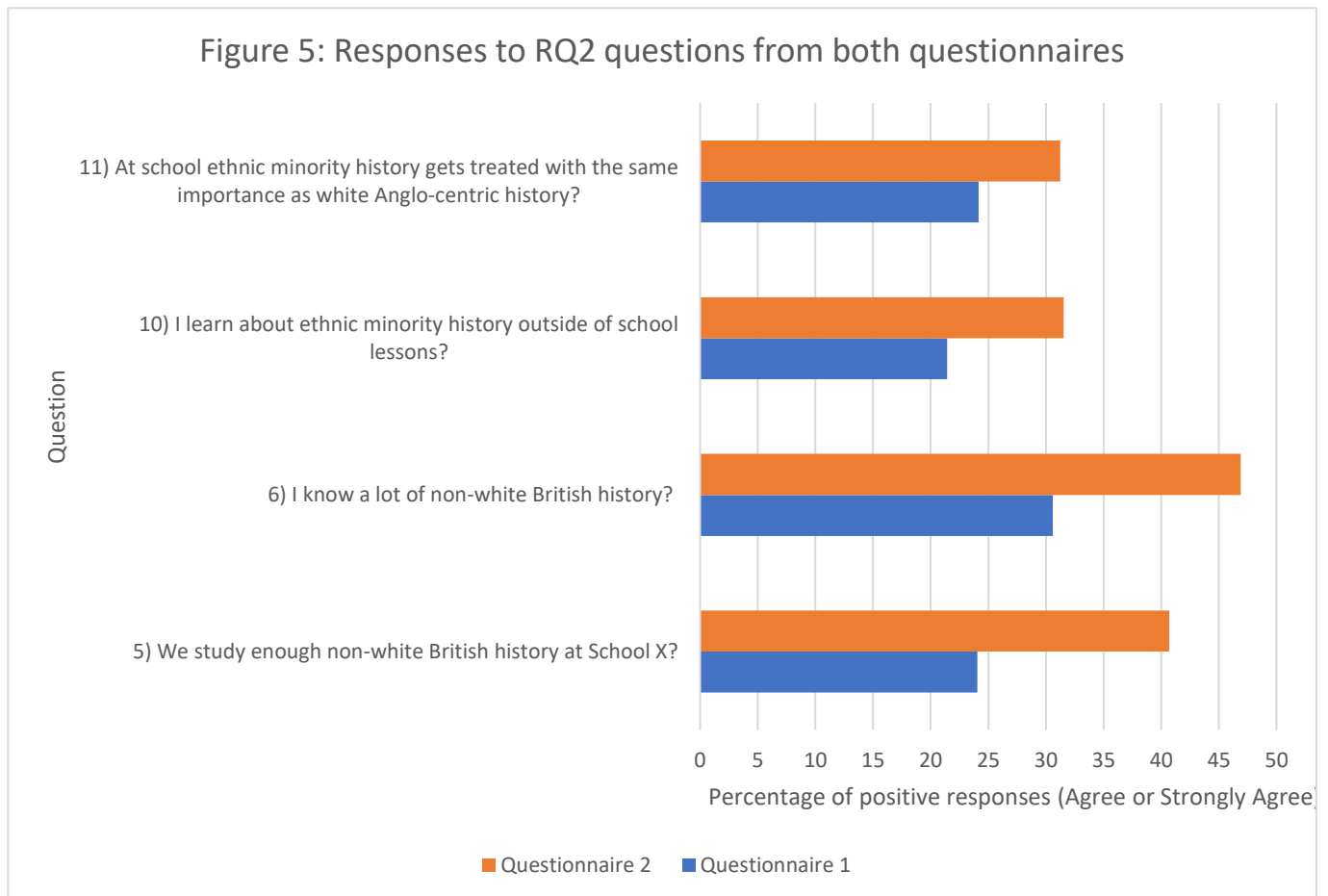


Figure 5 illustrates that overall the students at School X prior to doing the intervention unit of work had a relatively poor perception of the treatment of ethnic minority history. Questions 5 and 11 illustrated that the students didn't feel enough ethnic minority history was covered and Question 11 suggested that students felt there was a hierarchy in the treatment of history, with ethnic minority history not given the same status as other parts of history studied. Both had only 24% positive responses whilst they also had 42% and 49% negative responses respectively. This suggests that prior to the intervention students did not feel that the history being studied was very diverse and this is something that was reflected in the first group interview. Four of the six students mentioned this and pointed to the lack of history about Asia studied in KS3. The students suggested that they would have liked to learn more about this region and in particular how the British Empire declined in the region.

The three questions that saw the biggest increase in the percentage of positive responses between the two questionnaires were Questions 5 (17%), 6 (16%) and 10 (10%). The increases in positive responses to Questions 5 and 6 to 41% and 47% respectively shows that the new unit of work improved perceptions of the amount of non-white British history and the degree to which it was understood. To further support these findings, the number of positive responses became greater than negative responses for both questions which were 31% and 29% respectively. The improvements seen in these two questions demonstrates that the unit of work had a positive impact on the students and that they made progress with regards to RQ2 as a result. This is good evidence for supporting future changes to the curriculum to try to go further in engaging the students through teaching more ethnic minority history.

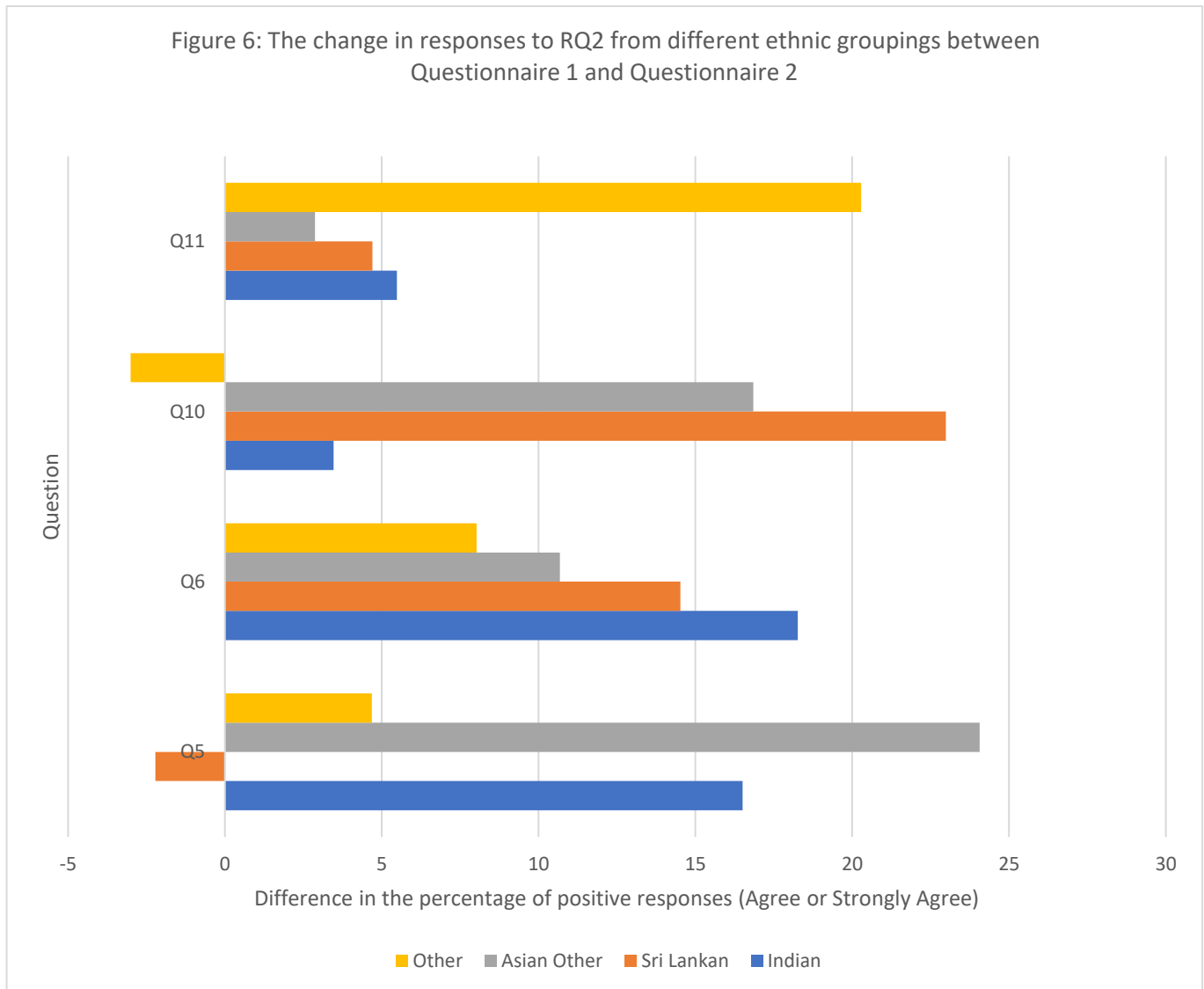
Question 10 saw a significant increase in the percentage of positive responses from 21% to 31%. This would indicate that a growing number of students were engaged enough with non-white history to study it further outside the classroom. This is particularly promising given the previously acknowledged fact that at School X the humanities have to fight hard to get the same recognition and engagement from the students that STEM subjects have. If this unit of work has increased the desire to learn history outside the classroom as seen for RQ1 in Question 9 and has increased the desire to study ethnic minority history, then this unit of work has been somewhat successful in its objectives. Talking to the other teachers as part of our daily informal collaboration it was clear that they all enjoyed straying away from the normal British/Eurocentric history that we have traditionally taught, and they were all enthusiastic in doing more non-White history. They spoke of the interest the boys showed in doing extra research and the insightful discussions that took place. Partly as a response to this research and intervention, in Year 8 next year the students will be studying the First War of

Independence¹ instead of the Peasants' Revolt as part of the broader theme of revolutions.

This is a further success for this unit of work as the literature suggests that teachers are vital for implementing positive changes in their history curriculums (Hawkey, 2012), but also that many teachers lack the time or experience of diverse history to do so (Harris and Clarke, 2011).

However, as it was still less than half of the students who gave positive responses, there is clearly still more work to be done here, but it is promising progress.

¹ This is sometimes known as the Indian Mutiny.



Note: Q5: We study enough non-white British history at (School X)?; Q6: I know a lot of non-white British history?; Q10: I learn about ethnic minority history outside of school lessons?; Q11: At school ethnic minority history gets treated with the same importance as white Anglo-centric history?

Figure 6 shows the different change in attitudes from the different ethnic groupings. It is important to consider these changes in positive perceptions as one of the goals of the intervention was to improve the perceptions of ethnic minority of history and its significance. Whilst we have already seen that overall, there have been positive changes in relation to RQ2,

these changes are not uniform across the ethnic groupings. Also, positive perceptions were only once over 50% for a single ethnic grouping for any of the questions. This suggests, that whilst there was improvement, it is from very low starting points which may impact the comparability of this data to any subsequent research where the starting point is somewhat different. Though, given the literature (Epstein, 2009; Grever et al., 2011) points to many students having a low opinion of the teaching of ethnic minority history, this data could indeed be worryingly reflective of the norm.

A first interesting finding was that Sri Lankan students were exceptional as they had a decrease in the percentage of positive responses (-2%) to Question 5 on studying enough non-white history at school but had the largest growth (23%) in Question 10 regarding studying non-white history outside of school. Then, with regards to Question 6, they had the second largest increase (15%) regarding improved knowledge of non-white history overall. This would indicate that they did not feel engaged in the lessons on ethnic minority history in the classroom but were engaged by the idea of studying this content and took it upon themselves to research these topics further in their free time. As previously noted, this could reflect the content choices of the lessons and that the Sri Lankan students may not have been engaged by the focus on Indian and West Indian content. This may reflect the findings of Epstein (2009) who found that black students were not engaged by lessons in US schools. Instead, she points to examples where black students were given agency in the curriculum and how engaged they became researching historical topics that were focused on ethnic minority history. This research supports these findings from Epstein in that the research component may have been the most successful element of the intervention as it gave students that agency.

A second interesting finding from this data is the fact that the "Other" ethnic grouping, which as mentioned previously has a large number of white students in it, showed less interest in

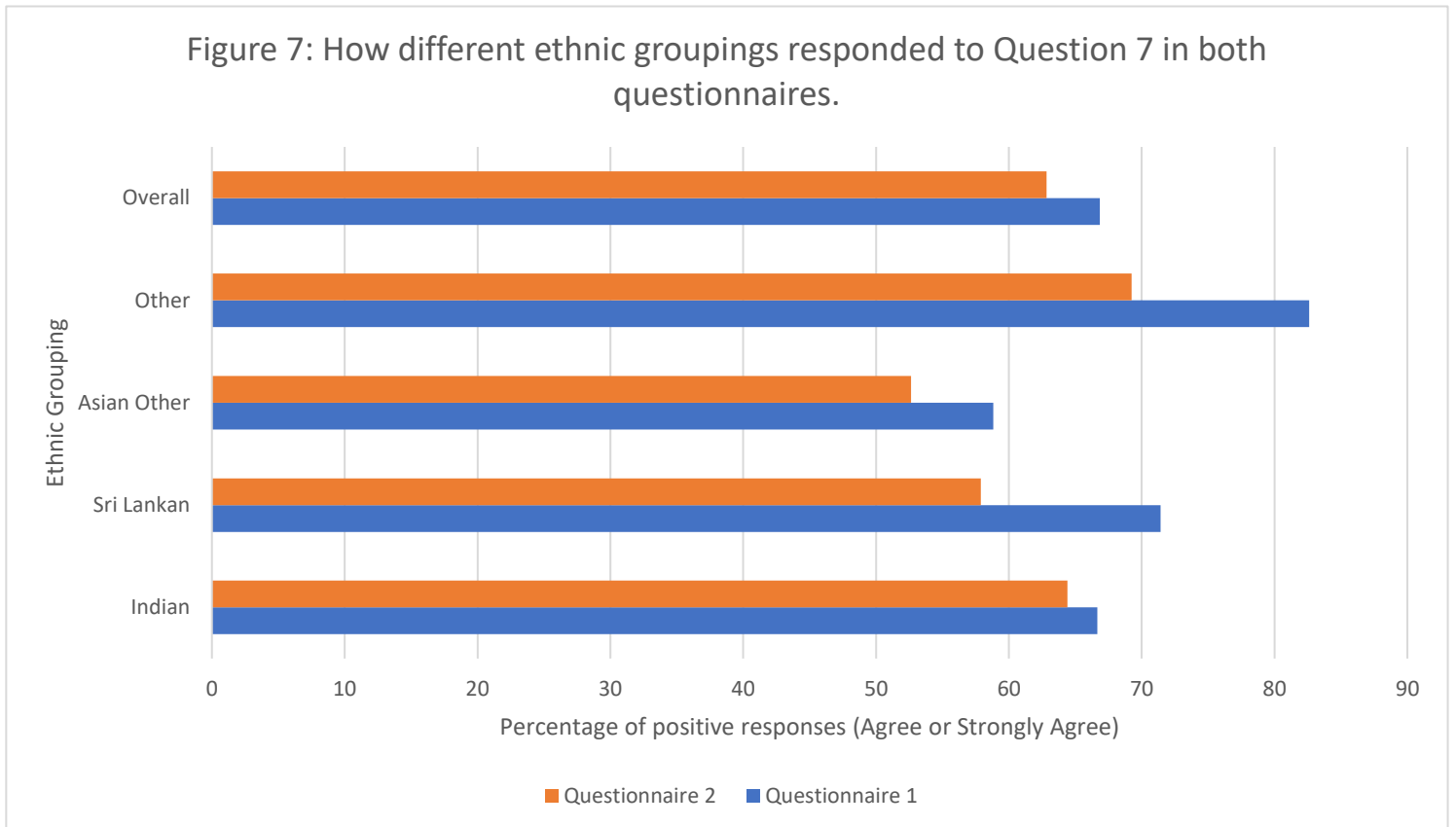
studying ethnic minority history outside of school after the intervention (-3%) and had a 21% increase in positive responses to Question 11 on whether School X covers enough non-white history – by far the largest increase. These two pieces of data may partially reflect the critique that comes from Critical Race Theory (Gillborn, 2006; Gillborn, 2011). The argument here is that the white students in the “Other” ethnic grouping have grown up in an education system that has systematically put white history at the front of the historical narrative to the exclusion of ethnic minorities. As a result, through no fault of their own, they may have become part of the system which thinks that a solitary month studying ethnic minority history is enough to do it justice. However, this finding is far from substantiated due to the mixed nature of the “Other” ethnic grouping, in which black students are the second largest ethnic group and also the fact that in questionnaire 2 only 38% had positive responses to Question 11 – still a relatively low percentage. Nonetheless, it is an interesting consideration, and going forward as a department we are conscious of the need for a more substantial and continuous integration of ethnic minority history within the curriculum. Our end goal is that ethnic minority history is not separated out at all, and instead is seen by students as “normal” history and it is given the same engagement and interest as any other historical topic.

4.4 RQ3 - Do the students want to study more ethnic minority history?

The purpose of this final research question was to explore what topics students may want to study in the future and, in particular, if they wanted more ethnic minority history in the curriculum. Following on from the analysis of the two previous research questions, it is already clear that the different ethnic groupings have different perceptions of the unit that they studied. One finding has been that the non-Indian Asian students have been less enthusiastic about the unit of work than the Indian students. This may well reflect that the unit of work did

not cover other parts of Asia in the classroom, and as Indian students are the majority of students at School X, the non-Indian Asian students may have felt marginalised as a result.

4.4.1 Analysis



Note: Q7: I would like to study more about the connections between ethnic minorities and Britain?

Figure Seven shows that every ethnic grouping expressed less interest in studying the connections between ethnic minority history and Britain in the future. However, it should be noted that this question had a comparatively positive response in the questionnaires when considered in relation to other questions – in particular those associated with RQ2. The ethnic groupings with the largest decrease in the percentage of positive responses were Sri Lankan students (-14%). Yet again, the Sri Lankan students are the group that responded least well to the unit of work, and again this echoes the points already made regarding RQ1 and RQ2 - the

unit of work may in fact have alienated them further, due to its focus at times on Indian history. This could easily be seen through the lens of Critical Race Theory. I as the teacher, and leader of this unit of work, did not fully understand the implications of the unit of work and how it would be seen by certain ethnic groups, such as Sri Lankan students. This blindness to the diversity of the students, despite my attempts to make the unit inclusive through the research component, may have had an adverse impact on some groups.

The fact that every ethnic grouping responded with less enthusiasm to this area of study suggests that unit of work may not have been as engaging as I wanted it to be. Perhaps, the focus on Britain's connection to ethnic minorities was the issue and that trying to fit this unit of work into the existing broader scheme of work on Britain and warfare was the problem. By only teaching ethnic minority history alongside its link to Britain I may have done ethnic minority history a disservice. Whilst I avoided the obvious issue that Haydn (2014) suggests regarding teaching the British Empire in a purely positive light, my unit of work was arguably still too narrow. Whilst the lessons also focused on the history of other countries in order to ground the students' understanding, I had still remained connected to the original scheme of work's objectives and the emphasis on Britain in WWI. I think the key finding here for my future practice is that to teach ethnic minority history effectively will involve a much greater overhaul of the current schemes of work than previously anticipated. The volume of work required here would be an obvious barrier for most teachers – though the most recent *Teaching History* issue's focus upon, "race", may suggest otherwise. Furthermore, it would also require people above me in the school hierarchy to be onboard, which has in many schools been a barrier to change (Harris and Burn, 2014).

Question 12 was an open-ended question, in response to which students could write in any ethnic minority history topics that they wanted to explore further in class. This question was

not responded to by the majority of students, with only 62 responding in the first questionnaire and 32 in the second. As such, any conclusions are hard to draw. However, there were a few interesting inferences that could be made that support some of the conclusions already drawn. The most frequent responses from Indian and Sri Lankan students, were a request to study more Indian and Sri Lankan history respectively. This was the case in both the first and second questionnaires. This supports previous findings regarding students wanting to study what they saw as 'their' history (Epstein, 2009). However, due to the very small sample sizes, this finding is very tentative.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of findings

Overall, this research has demonstrated that at School X students do enjoy studying history. However, the students also seem genuinely interested in the opportunity to study a more ethnically diverse history in the future. The data suggests that overall the intervention brought about improved perceptions of ethnic minority history and a greater understanding. However, when accounting for ethnic groupings, the conclusions are a little different. The intervention was received in a mixed way – possibly the most interesting insight being the differences in the reception of the new unit of work between the Indian students and other non-white students. The intervention in class was received far better by Indian students than their peers. However, non-Indian students still showed an increased desire to study more ethnic minority history, even if the new scheme of work they studied in class was not as well received. This was most prominently seen in Sri Lankan students who engaged least positively with the scheme of work but demonstrated an increased enthusiasm for studying outside the classroom.

5.2 Limitations of research

The two key limitations of this study were:

- The ethnic groupings that were used.
- The lack of second interview data that was available.

The ethnic groupings that were used did not adequately show the range of students in the cohort. One of my key findings focuses on the need for greater focus on the range of ethnic minority history topics, and this research was unable to fully analyse the viewpoints from different ethnic groups. This was as a result of the small number of students in some of these groups. This is often a problem in research into ethnic minorities, as the smaller groups are too small to analyse on their own so are amalgamated into other groups.

If I had been able to explore the students' responses to the unit of work through a second interview, I would have been able to gather further qualitative data on their views of ethnic minority history and whether they had enjoyed the unit of work. Getting their insights into these findings, and the triangulation that would have come from having another data point, would have been valuable for verifying my overall findings.

5.3 Implications for future teaching practice

Going forward at School X there is a growing impetus to keep diversifying the curriculum across KS3. As such, the findings here are extremely useful in that process. When looking at how to include greater ethnic minority history in the future, the choice of topic will be considered in greater detail.

There are two key considerations here for my own practice and for School X. The first is that I will try to avoid choosing ethnic minority history topics that may marginalise certain groups. This study has indicated that ethnic minority groups are diverse, and they want to study a diverse range of topics. As a department when we are designing new schemes of work for next year, we will focus on delivering a far greater range of ethnic minority history from many different countries and ethnicities.

The second key consideration is the inclusion of more independent study. The students showed great enthusiasm in their research, and it allowed for a lot of personal history to be studied and shared in a multicultural classroom setting. This was an area of great success for this unit of work, and I would like to continue to use it across KS3.

A key finding that could be applied to all history departments is that in order to pursue my ethnic minority history, it will require teachers to be given the time and resources to create these new schemes of work. There is no quick fix. Teachers will need time both to challenge their own teaching on these topics, as well as to learn new content in order to teach ethnic minority history effectively.

The final point I would make regarding the implications of this research pertains to the need for nationwide data on students' attainment and subject uptake compared to ethnicity to be made available. This data would allow for more large-scale studies to be undertaken and for greater critical analysis of the history education landscape. The lack of this data seriously hinders any definitive conclusions regarding the analysis of ethnicity and history education.

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Excerpt of Year 9 Scheme of Work.

Lesson	Key question/focus	Lesson objectives	Key concepts/skills	Resources/activities	Homework
19	The Empire and WWI (Double)	To understand the role of the British Empire. To understand the scale of the British Empire To understand the problems with and the legacy of the Empire	Explanation Knowledge	PowerPoint and sources	
20	The Empire and WWI – the role of India (Single)	To understand the impact of WWI on the Empire. To understand the diversity of the troops that fought for the Empire.	Analysis Case study	PowerPoint and sources	Research task
21	The impact of Empire troops on WWI (Double)	To understand some of the key contributions of Empire troops in WWI. To understand some of the key battles in WWI	Explanation Knowledge	PowerPoint and information	Source research
22	Analysing sources (Single)	To analyse sources that students have found. To use knowledge of Empire to analyse sources.	Analysis Sources	PowerPoint	Utility question
23	Analysing the empire's role in WWI (Double)	To create a source To analyse the impact of the Empire on the War.	Analysis Significance	PowerPoint	
24/25	Test and feedback	To complete assessment. To complete feedback and improvements to their work.	Utility exam technique		Utility - Empire

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Brief: This questionnaire focuses on your views on the current curriculum in history. The purpose is to take your views into account when redesigning the curriculum. Your views will also be used as a part of a wider research project into the curriculum and how well we teach ethnic minority history. For clarification, ethnic minority history in this instance refers to the study of minority groups in the UK, such as Indian, black or East Asian, and their historical connections with Britain.

You do not need to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with or do not want to answer. All of your answers will remain anonymous.

Section 1

Question	1 – Strongly agree	2 – Somewhat agree	3 - Neutral	4 – Somewhat disagree	5 – Strongly agree
1) History is enjoyable at (School X)?					
2) The topics studied at (School X) are interesting?					
3) History is an important subject?					
4) We study a variety of topics and areas of history at (School X)?					
5) We study enough non-white British history at (School X)?					
6) I know a lot of non-white British history?					
7) I would like to study more about the connections between ethnic minorities and Britain?					
8) We study significant parts of history?					
9) I study history outside of school?					
10) I learn about ethnic minority history outside					

of school lessons?					
11) At school ethnic minority history gets treated with the same importance as white Anglo-centric history?					

Question 12) Is there any topic that you would like to study in particular regarding ethnic minority history? (Please write in your answer)

Section 2

Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background

White

1. English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
2. Irish
3. Gypsy or Irish Traveller
4. Any other White background, please describe

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups

5. White and Black Caribbean
6. White and Black African
7. White and Asian
8. Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe

Asian/Asian British

9. Indian
10. Pakistani
11. Bangladeshi
12. Sri Lankan
13. Chinese
14. Any other Asian background, please describe

Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British

15. African
16. Caribbean
17. Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe

Other ethnic group

18. Arab
19. Any other ethnic group, please describe
20. Prefer not to say

Appendix 3: Interview questions and outline.

Interview One Questions and Guidance.

1. So far, what areas of history do you remember studying here at (School X)?
 - a. *Students given a copy of the topics they have studied to look at after they have answered this question.*
2. What areas have you enjoyed the most?
3. What do you think makes a topic worth studying in history? What makes it important or not?
4. What do you think ethnic minority history is?
 - a. *Depending on the nature of answer here from the students and the level of understanding shown I may offer a brief explanation: that ethnic minority history, in this instance, refers to the study of minority groups in the UK, such as Indian, black or East Asian, and their historical connections of those people with Britain.*
5. Do we study enough of this type of ethnic minority history – are our topics broad enough?
6. Are there any areas of ethnic minority history that you would like to study?
 - a. *Specific probes (after students have identified any topics of their own) to offer suggestions such as Britain’s involvements in China, and Hong Kong, and the opium wars, India and the revolutions and rebellions against colonial rule in the late 1800s or Chilembwe’s 1915 rebellion against British rule in modern day Malawi? These probes are topics we do not cover at all and cover a wide range of regions. They also show how the history of ethnic minority peoples can be taught alongside the topic of “conflict and tension” that is studied in Year 9.*
7. Why do you want to study these topic areas?

Interview two questions.

1. What did you think about studying ethnic minority history?
2. What, in particular, if anything, have you learned from studying this?
3. What parts did you enjoy the most and the least?
4. Do you think we should try to add more ethnic minority history throughout Year 7, 8 and 9?
5. Are there any more topics that you would like to study?

Appendix 4: Letter to the Headteacher

(Removed names of Headteacher, school and supervisor)

Dear (Removed),

I am writing to enquire about conducting research in school this academic year. As you know, I am studying for the Master's in Learning and Teaching at Oxford University, supervised by (Removed). Through my final research project "Year 9 students' perceptions of the history of minority ethnic groups in the UK in the history curriculum and how they can be improved" I intend to develop and improve our current provision of minority history education.

This research follows from research conducted last year into South Asian students' perceptions of history and its value/utility as a subject. This research demonstrated tentatively that our students have no real affinity for minority history. As such, I intend to delve into this further and explore why the boys are less engaged in this area of history. The end goal being to rewrite parts of the Year 9 history curriculum to engage with minority history in a more substantive way and help the boys to appreciate the significance and importance of this history. Given the current political context and national attention being paid to areas of the history curriculum it seems the perfect time for "School X" to take a strong lead on the delivery of a more substantive and diverse history curriculum.

I hope to conduct this research between August 2020 and February 2021. It would involve initial group interviews of six students and then questionnaires to the whole of Year 9. Following changes to the Year 9 history provision at the end of Term 1 there would then be further interviews with the same six students and another questionnaire to measure any perceived changes in their outlook on history.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures on conducting ethical research, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. The University also recognises, however, that my study is a piece of practitioner research, and that schools already operate with the highest ethical standards. Therefore only your formal consent as headteacher is necessary, and not that of individual parents or staff. However, throughout the research, students and other teachers will be able to refuse to participate in any research activities at any time.

All participants, including students, teacher and the school, would be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor (Removed) and me, and only used for academic purposes. It will be kept for as long as it has academic value.

If you are happy for me to proceed with this study, please confirm that using the attached reply form. If you have any concerns or need more information about what is involved, please contact me or my supervisor. Further, if you have any questions about this ethics process at any time, please contact the chair of the department's research ethics committee, though: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

(Removed)