

An evaluation of the available resources for ethnic minorities to research their  
histories

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# Abstract

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**Background:** A comprehensive review of literature reveals that ethnic minorities are poorly represented in both archival audiences and collections. Many official reports have been produced on the subject of making cultural organisations more inclusive; however ethnic minorities are very poorly represented in the workforce.

Despite the long and fascinating history of ethnic minority settlement in Britain, little attention has been shown to these hidden histories in educational curricula and archives, local studies and museum collections.

**Aims:** This study aims to evaluate the available resources of for the research of ethnic minority histories in UK local studies libraries and archives. The four main objectives of the study are: to find out what resources are available, who uses them, for what purpose to they use them and to identify barriers to the research of ethnic minority history.

**Methods:** Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals working in archives, local studies libraries and one museum. The transcripts of these interviews then underwent thematic analysis.

**Results:** The results show that few ethnic minorities visit local studies libraries and archives. In the instances when ethnic minorities did visit these institutions it appeared that their primary interest was not the research of their ethnic group. Most archival material relating to ethnic minorities consisted of brief references or single documents rather than discrete collections. The fact that few books had been written on the history of ethnic minorities was also highlighted by interviewees.

Many barriers were identified to the research of ethnic minority histories. Information professionals were sceptical about how much impact their outreach work could have.

**Conclusions:** Comparatively few resources exist for the research of ethnic minority history, although efforts are being made to change this. A very small proportion of ethnic minorities

visit archives and local studies libraries. Many possible barriers to the research of ethnic minority history have been identified.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## 1.1 Value and rationale of research topic

The research topic was selected because of a strong personal interest in local history. I live in an area of Leeds with a large Jewish population and have become interested in their history of settlement in the city. The rising popularity of genealogical research thanks in great part to television programmes such as 'Who do you think you are?' has also influenced my choice of topic and led me to question what resources are available for to research their histories people whose families may have arrived in the country relatively recently .

I also completed an assignment in the autumn semester on social exclusion and public libraries which showed that libraries are still regarded by some as the haven of the white middle classes. This led me to question whether similar attitudes prevail towards cultural heritage organisations. Research on the subject of power in the archives for another assignment also contributed to an increase in curiosity about the topic.



This research is of value because it is now a decade since the Caribbean Studies and the history of Black and Asian peoples (CASBAH) project took place. No final report was produced as a result of the CASBAH project and only five regions of the United Kingdom were surveyed. Of the eight repositories that involved in this project, only Leicestershire and Rutland was involved in the CASBAH pilot study. During the past decade no further projects to survey archival collections across the country for records relating to ethnic minorities have been completed. .

Although this research involved the participation of one local studies library in Leeds, along with two combined archive and local studies services in Tameside and Coventry, as well as the Jewish Museum, its main focus is archives. Little has been written on diversity in archives collections in comparison to the museum and public sector which was also a motivating factor for this research project.

Although this research does not claim to be a comprehensive survey of the holdings of the repositories involved, it does hope to offer a snapshot of the current situation.

## **1.2 Aims**

This project aims to evaluate the available resources for ethnic minorities to research their histories in archives, local studies libraries and museums.

## **1.3 Objectives**

Three main objectives of the research are to;

- Identify available resources repositories in the United Kingdom for the research of ethnic minority history
- Find out whether Black and Minority Ethnic groups are making use of these resources
- Investigate what these resources are being used for
- Identify any potential barriers to ethnic minorities researching their histories

## **1.4 Structure of dissertation**

The dissertation starts by presenting a comprehensive review of literature on the topic. The third chapter presents the chosen methods used to collect and analyse the research data and the rationale behind these choices.

The key findings of the interviews are then presented in chapter 4 and subsequently discussed in chapter 5.

Following on from chapter 5 conclusions are drawn from a synthesis of the existing literature on the topic and the findings of this project. Finally, suggestions are made about how the situation could be improved and what further research could be carried out into the topic.



# Chapter 2: Literature Review

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## 2.1 Background and context

The Office for National Statistics recently estimated that the non-white population of England and Wales has reached 9.1 million people, making up almost one sixth of the total population (Rogers, 2011). Research conducted by King's college London has also revealed that 67% of secondary school pupils in inner London now come from ethnic minority backgrounds (BBC News, 2011), whilst it has been widely reported that Leicester will soon become the first city in Britain with a majority non-white population (Brown, 2010; Herbert,2007)

However, many believe that experiences and history of this sizeable minority of the British population are not being adequately represented in our archives, museums and libraries (Flinn,2007). Some have linked the low numbers of ethnic minority visitors to our cultural institutions to the fact that their experiences are not reflected in collections.

### **2.1.1 Social inclusion and archives**

As in many other areas of public life and the cultural sector, social inclusion has been touted as a major priority for the archives of the twenty first century (Craven, 2008). Andrew Flinn (2007) asserts that by failing to represent minority groups in the archives, feelings of alienation and disengagement are reinforced. According to Flinn (2007) the Journal of the Society of Archivists has paid very little attention through the years to the emergence of the new social and identity histories. In this respect British archives' professionals could learn a lot from their colleagues in Canada and the United States and from the museum sector (Flinn, 2007).

In the light of the apparent lack of attention paid to the issue of social inclusion in the past, several official reports have been produced in the last decade or so on the subject of making archives and record offices more inclusive. Following the publication of these reports a number of projects have also been initiated with the aim of making archives a more inclusive environment.

In 2004 the Archives Task Force produced the 'Listening to the past, speaking to the future' report (MLA, 2004) which gave a series of recommendations on how archival collections

could be made more accessible. The report also aimed to show how archives can demonstrate their value and contribute to the wider social inclusion agenda by meeting public sector social, economic and educational targets (MLA, 2004).

Amongst the report's recommendations were to: 'Increase community participation in UK archive activities with particular focus on engaging hard-to-reach communities' (MLA, 2004, p.44). It is proposed that this could be achieved by the recruitment of a team Community Archive Liaison Officer whose role would be to 'support the development of community archives and foster links between existing archives and record offices and the wider community'. (MLA, 2004, p.44).

The report supports the idea that archives can make a valuable contribution to making Britain a more inclusive society by reaching out to socially excluded groups and 'offering unusual but imaginative routes to engagement with their lives and the wider community' (MLA, 2004,p.41). The 'Black History Project' initiated by Lambeth Archives is cited as an example of how archival collections can be used to engage marginalised groups with their history and increase their self-esteem (MLA, 2004, p.41). Similarly the Community Access to

Archive's Project's Final Report (2004) argues that the creation of community archives can strengthen a community's identity and pride in itself (CAAP, 2004, p .21).

A National Standard for Access to archives was first produced in draft form in 1999 (ARA, 2012). The latest version which was published in 2008 is "intended to guide archive services in the management of access" (NCA, 2008, p.5) rather than a compulsory standard for all repositories. The standard states that those adhering to it should work to meet the needs of "all community members" (NCA, 2008, p.14) in the area which it serves. In addition, the Public Services Quality Group standard states that a policy should also be formulated outlining how the repository aims to cater for a diverse audience with regard to its collections, the services it provides and means through which they are delivered (NCA, 2008, p.14).

It is also suggested by the NCA standard that steps should be taken to "promote use by, and demonstrate interest in and respect for, groups previously under-represented in its user base" (NCA, 2008, p.15), including " the use of publicity materials and internal displays with images of members of the group, ensuring that outreach and events are relevant to the group, preparing relevant interpretative and guidance materials, staff training in appropriate



service delivery and developing contextual knowledge of the history of minority ethnic communities” (NCA,2008, p.15).

In 2005 the Mayor’s Commission on African and Asian Heritage published ‘Delivering Shared Heritage.’ The report examines how mainstream heritage organisations, including museums and archives can cater for London’s ethnically diverse population (Greater London Authority, 2005; Craven; 2008). In addition, the report also looked into the work of the city’s community heritage organisations (GLA, 2005).

As a result of the publication of the ‘Delivering Shared Heritage’ report, the Heritage Diversity Task Force was established in order to make sure that the report’s recommendations for making London’s cultural institutions more ethnically diverse were followed (GLA, 2009). The HDTF’s work also produced a follow-up report entitled ‘Embedding Shared Heritage’ which despite being London focused, nonetheless makes interesting reading. A series of recommendations are listed in the report, some of which it is claimed have already been implemented (GLA, 2009). These recommendations included the

broad categories of diversifying museum collections, diversifying archive collections, diversifying heritage audiences and diversifying the audience (GLA, 2009, p.46-47).

However, despite the work of the HDTF and other public bodies the results of the Archive and Record Association's Visitor Survey of 2011 would seem to suggest that such initiatives have had little immediate impact on the demographic profile of visitors to archives and record offices. The stereotype of the typical archive user are strongly supported by the survey's findings, which reported that 44% of archive users were aged between forty five and sixty five years old, whilst just five per cent of respondents came from the 20-24 age bracket (ARA, 2011). Of even greater concern for archive professionals should be the fact that 97 % of those surveyed identified their ethnicity as 'white', whilst just 2% identified themselves as 'Asian' and a further one per cent as of 'mixed' heritage (ARA, 2011). In addition, not a single participant described themselves as 'black' or 'Chinese' (ARA, 2011).

### **2.1.2 History of immigration**

Contrary to most people's perceptions, the presence of Black people in Britain dates back to the Roman occupation (Ramdin, 1999; Fryer, 1984). Fryer writes in his history of Black people

in Britain (1984) that soldiers from the African continent were charged with defending Hadrian's Wall. In addition, people of African descent were also kept as slaves in Roman households (Fryer, 1984).

According to Fryer (1984) and Ramdin (1999) Black people are not recorded again in Britain until many centuries later when Henry VII is said to have employed a Black trumpeter (Ramdin, 1999). By the end of that century it had become almost de rigeur for English aristocratic families to have at least one Black servant working in their household (Fryer, 1984).

However, it is not until Britain became involved in the transatlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century that the Black people in Britain really became noticeable and the continuous presence of Black people in Britain began (Ramdin, 1999; Bresssey, 2006). By the eighteenth century small communities of emancipated slaves had become established in port cities such as Liverpool and Bristol (International Slavery Museum, 2012). Despite the long history of people of African descent living in this country, the arrival of the SS Windrush in 1948 remains the point at which the popular consciousness dates the arrival of Black people in Britain (Moving Here, date unknown).

Although it is now acknowledged that Black people have been in Britain in small numbers for many hundreds of years, the Jewish and the Irish communities are still often regarded as the 'oldest' and most established immigrant communities in the United Kingdom (Kushner, 2006). Both groups arrived in large numbers in the nineteenth century and quickly set about writing their own histories (Burrell and Panayi, 2006). In contrast, until relatively recently the majority of histories of the Black population of Britain were written by people from outside the community (Burrell and Panayi, 2006).

The presence of Jewish people in Britain has been dated to as far back as 1066 when prosperous communities were established in cities across England (Jewish Museum London, 2012; Moving Here, date unknown). Unfortunately over time the Jewish community became increasingly persecuted before their eventual expulsion from England in 1290 (Moving Here, date unknown). Jews did not start settling again in England until 1656 when Oliver Cromwell decided to tolerate the practising of Judaism (Moving Here, date unknown). The first settlers came from the Sephardic communities of Spain and Portugal (Moving Here, date unknown; Jewish Museum Manchester, date unknown; Cesarani, 2012), whilst the majority of Jewish people in Britain today are descended from Ashkenazi influx of the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Moving Here, date unknown; Jewish Museum Manchester, date unknown)

There are some references to people from the Indian subcontinent in Britain before the twentieth century, for example Indian seamen or 'lascars' sometimes worked on British ships and Indian nannies or 'ayahs' worked for British families (Moving Here, date unknown; Ramdin, 1999). However, like the Afro-Caribbean population, the majority of people of South Asian origin arrived in Britain after 1950.

## **2.2 Researching the history of ethnic minority and migrant groups**

According to Andrew Flinn (2007), local studies librarians started to diversify their collections to include primary and secondary resources of relevance to the study of community histories in the 1980s. Burrell and Panayi (2006) also acknowledge the fact that local studies libraries and archives have made a significant contribution to the formation of community histories.

However, Johnston (2001) and Bressey (2006) highlight the results of a 1999 study that examined archival provision by the Black and Asian Studies Association and concluded that

“almost no public archives have been able, or have tried, to make a meaningful effort to collect material from local Black organisations or people.”(BASA cited in Johnston 2001).

The Caribbean Studies and Black and Asian History project ran from 2001 until 2002 and was collaboration between the National Archives and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICS, 2002). The project was initiated because it was felt that resources in libraries and archives, such as finding aids intended to help Black and Asian people to research their histories were thought to be inadequate (ICS, 2002).

The project's main objective was to find out what archival, printed and audiovisual resources were available nationally for the study of Black and Asian history in archives and other information repositories (ICS). According to Louise Craven (2008), the CASBAH project revealed that there is a wealth of relevant sources in archive and library collections for the study of Black and Asian history. However, the project also produced a 'Survey Tool' for information professionals to help them carry out an inventory of their own collections to find what sources they held on Black and Asian history (Craven, 2008; Robertson, 2002).

### **2.2.1 Family history**

Interest in family history research in Britain has grown in recent years both in the general population and amongst ethnic minorities (Burrell and Panayi, 2006, p.9; MLA, 2004). Burrell and Panayi describe interest in genealogy as “one key development in (this) public memorialisation of the experiences of immigrants”(2006, p.9). The boom in family history research is in large part thanks to improvements in working conditions and an increase in leisure time (Loughran, 2008; Kramer, 2011), along with the availability of archival records on the Internet and television programmes such as ‘Who do you think you are?’(Arnot, 2010; Kramer, 2011). In the United Kingdom, the membership of Federation of Family History Societies included two hundred and nineteen history societies with a total of three hundred thousand members (Loughran, 2008). The information needs of family history researchers are also catered for by a large number of online resources such as Genes Reunited, Ancestry.co.uk and Find My Past.

For people with ancestors who moved to Britain from abroad relatively recently, researching their family history can be somewhat complicated (Fowler, date unknown) However, The

'Tracing Your Roots' gallery on the Moving Here offers guidance on conducting family history research for people of Irish, Jewish, Caribbean and South Asian origin (Moving Here, date unknown). The Society of Genealogists has also hosted a number of events throughout this year focusing on immigrant communities including: 'Finding Your Ancestors in Eastern Europe', 'Researching Spanish genealogy for Non-Spanish Speakers' and 'Irish History Resources in England and Ireland' (Society of Genealogists, 2012).

Those with Jewish or Irish ancestry are fortunate enough to have access to online resources such as JewishGen, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, Irish Genealogy and Roots Ireland- the website of the Irish Family History Foundation. Roots Ireland and JewishGen claim to provide access to a staggering 19 and 20 million records respectively (Irish Family History Foundation, 2010; JewishGen, 2012). Burrell and Panayi (2006) were not aware of any genealogical societies for immigrant groups from Commonwealth countries, however internet research located the Caribbean Family History Group which holds event in Solihull and Lambeth (Caribbean Family History Group, 2012).



Tony Kushner (2006) asserts that the Black and Asian population of the United Kingdom did not really become interested in studying their history until the 1970s, whilst the Jewish and Irish communities developed their historical consciences in the nineteenth century (Kushner 2006; Burrell and Panayi, 2006). The Jewish Historical Society of England's was established in 1893 (Burrell and Panayi, 2006; Jewish Historical Society of England, 2010; Flinn, 2007), whilst the first history of the Irish presence in Britain was written in 1892 by John Denvir (Burrell and Panayi, 2006).

### **2.2.2 Oral History**

The Oral history movement started in earnest in the 1970s with the formation of the Oral History Society in 1973 (Smith, 2008; Oral History Society, 2012) . Much of the motivation for the development of the discipline was the desire to give a voice to people who had previously been 'hidden from history' (Rowbotham cited in Smith, 2008) including women, the working classes and ethnic minorities a voice (Buchanan, 2011; Panayi and Burrell, 2006; Smith, 2008; Flinn, 2011). Historians and archivists with a particular interest in local history can probably lay claim to establishing the first oral history projects (Smith, 2008).

Since its development some historians have shown scepticism about the validity of oral history accounts as a form of historical evidence (Lane and Hill, 20011; Burrell and Panayi, 2006). Critics claim that oral histories' reliance on personal memories mean that they are often historically inaccurate and tend to romanticise events (Burrell and Panayi, 2006). The eminent historian A.J.P Taylor was once went as far as describing oral history as nothing more than "old men dribbling at the mouth" (Taylor cited in Smith 2012).Nevertheless, increasing numbers of academics have become interested in using oral history and interviews as a method of research, especially in the field of migration studies (Burrell and Panayi, 2006; Ryan, 2006).

As early as 1980 the oral history movement demonstrated its interest in recording the experiences of migrant and ethnic minority groups with the publication of a special edition of the Oral History Society's journal dedicated to the subject of Black History (Smith, 2008). Oral history has become recognised as a particularly effective way of chronicling the experiences of ethnic minority groups because it "allows a different history of migration to be recorded-one where the main protagonists are migrants themselves" (Burrell and Panayi,

2006, p.13). Hearing the personal testimonies of migrants means that they are “no longer nameless masses” (Burrell and Panayi, 2006, p.13)

The collection of oral histories has played a particularly important role in the development of community archives (Flinn, 2011). Despite the criticism that oral history has faced in some quarters, community archives from all over the country adopted the practice because of its unique ability to preserve traditions and memories in the form of songs and stories (Flinn, 2011). Although many of the topics that people talk about might at first seem mundane, their recollections can often give deeper insights into gender, class and how people reconstruct the past (Burrell and Panayi, 2006; Herbert 2006). Examples of oral history projects relating to ethnic minority groups include community projects such as Birmingham Black Oral History Project which started in 1990 (Birmingham Black Oral History Project, date unknown) and the Italian Connection project in Nottingham (Nottingham City Council,2012), the Chinese Oral History project in London (Smith,2008) and large scale collections such as the Leicester Oral History Archive which includes interviews with people from Uganda, Kenya, Pakistan and Jamaica (CASBAH,2002; Smith,2008)

### **2.2.3 Community archives**

One way in which people are seeking to reveal histories including those of migrant groups which are often absent from mainstream archival collections, such as the histories of migrant groups is the establishment of 'community archives' (Flinn, 2007; Flinn, 2011a; Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd, 2009, Flinn and Stevens,2009; Cox,2011). Fuelled by the technological revolution, Andrew Flinn estimated that there were some three thousand community archives across the UK in 2007 (Flinn, 2007). The Community Archives and Heritage Group lists twenty four community archive projects relating to the Black and Minority Ethnic communities (Community Archives and Heritage Group date unknown). Examples of community archive projects relating to ethnic minorities include the Black Cultural Archives in London, Birmingham Black Oral History Project, the George Padmore Institute and Preserving Asian Heritage in the East Midlands (Community Archives and Heritage Group, date unknown).

The term 'community archive' is hard to define (Flinn, 2007; MLA, 2004, Latimer, 2006; Flinn,Stevens and Shephard, 2009; Flinn,2011a, Flinn,2011b). Defining the term is made even more difficult by the fact that the word 'community' itself does not have a fixed meaning

(Flinn, 2007). A 'community' can be formed around a geographical area, religious belief, a shared interest of ethnic group (Flinn and Stevens, 2009; Flinn, 2011b; Flinn, 2010; Mander, 2009). The Archives Task Force agreed that geographical location, culture and common interests are often the basis for the formation of community archive collections (MLA,2004).Furthermore, the Community Access to Archives report states "community archives might be defined as collections of material that encapsulate a particular community's understanding of its history and identity" (Community Access to Archives Project, 2004, p.9).

Some archive professionals have criticised community archives as they believe the way in which they sometimes artificially create collections by copying or creating material goes against archival principles (Flinn,2011a). Community archive collections can include objects, audio-visual, digital materials, ephemera ,clothes, newspapers, works of art, posters, leaflets, grey literature, books along with the more conventional records (Flinn,2007; Flinn,2011a; Flinn,2011b; Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd, 2010; Flinn and Stevens, 2009;Mandera,2009). However, supporters of community archives would argue that collecting such material is the only way that marginalised voices can be heard, given the fact

that the only references to them in mainstream archives are written from the point of view of the state or the elite (Flinn, 2007). Whatever the nature of the material collected, for Dr Andrew Flinn it is essential for the community to maintain some sort of control over it (Flinn, 2007; 2011a; Flinn, Stevens and Shephard, 2009).

Another criticism that has been levelled at community archives is that rather than promoting a more inclusive version of history, by only collecting material on one particular group they are excluding people from outside of their community (Flinn, 2007). It is also argued that community archives are founded on a reductive and homogenous view of identity and fail to reflect the fact that identity and the way in which people view themselves is often multifaceted (Flinn, 2007).

These collections might be maintained with the help of professionals who offer expertise on cataloguing or preservation or with no outside assistance whatsoever (Flinn, 2011a; Flinn, 2007). In addition, the community collections can be stored in the premises of the local authority archive or they may remain in the possession of the community itself (Flinn, 2011a). Some groups are unwilling to allow the custody of their collections to be taken away

from them because of their lack of faith in 'official' bodies and the desire to hold onto their heritage (Flinn, 2007).

In 2006 the Community Archives Development group commissioned an independent report examining the impact of community archives (CADG,2007). The research found that community archives bring people of all ages and educational attainment levels together based on a shared interest (CADG, 2007). A number of other positive outcomes were identified including helping to re-balance history by telling the story of people who were previously absent from the archives ,increasing the cultural capital of those involved and creating a sense of empowerment and belonging (CADG,2007,p.7-8).

## **2.3 Barriers to ethnic minority history research**

### **2.3.1 Education**

In her speech to the History in British Education conference, Rachel Hasted, the former Social Inclusion Manager at The National Archives highlighted the findings of survey carried out on London teenagers' cultural identity and knowledge of Black history (Hasted, 2005). According to Hasted, the report revealed that teenagers were much likely to be familiar with the key events and figures of African-American history rather than Black British history (Museum of London cited in Hasted, 2005).

Furthermore, participants did not feel that much information about Black British history was likely to be available to them in the classroom or school library and as a result would need to resort to using the internet to find out more about the subject (Museum of London cited in Hasted, 2005). It was also the belief of the teenagers involved that the periods of history which the national curriculum focuses on such as the Second World War, were of not direct relevance to Black or Asian people (Museum of London, cited in Hasted, 2005). This would suggest that the contribution of troops from the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent to the



war effort is ignored by the National Curriculum (Hasted, 2005). Flinn and Stevens (2009) concur with the theory that not enough recognition is given to the contribution of Black and Asian troops to the allied victories. Hasted (2005) went on to express her concern that by not making the “right resources” available to schools, The National Archives were at least partly responsible for the failings of the history curriculum.

### **2.3.3 Myth of archival neutrality**

Appraisal is one of the principle functions of an archivist or records manager (Williams,2006). The American Society of Archivists defines appraisal as : “ the process of identifying materials offered to an archives that have sufficient value to be accessioned” (Pearce-Moses,2005). In the past it archivists have been steadfast in their claims that this is a completely objective process (Cox, 2011; Ketelaar, 2001; Schwartz & Cook, 2002). Leading to the identification of archives as “neutral repositories of facts” (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, p.1; Flinn, 2007) or to the description of the archival record as “the direct, uninterpreted and authentic voice of the past: the primary evidence of what people did and what they thought” (MLA, 2004, p.12).

Rosenberg (2001) writes that we naively entrust our most important records to archivists without considering the possibility that their personal beliefs and prejudices about a particular ethnic group for example, could influence how they catalogue or describe certain records. Ketelaar (2001) asserts that whatever the claims of the archive profession, the appraisal process cannot be entirely impartial. Thus invents the term 'archivalization' (2001,p.133) to describe how an archivist is either consciously or unconsciously influenced by social or cultural ideas when deciding whether or not to keep something.

Even for those who have never set foot inside an archive or record office, the work of archivists has a powerful role to play because it is through the archives that our histories are constructed (Rosenberg, 2001). The *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future* report states that: "An interest in the past transcends social boundaries: in this respect archives are socially inclusive institutions" (MLA, 2004, p.38) and that the "exploration of personal history and identity should be the right of every citizen." (MLA, 2004, p.6). However, this is difficult to achieve given the fact that for many years historians and archivists ignored the experiences of ordinary people, regardless of their ethnicity (Schwartz and Cook, 2002).

### **2.3.4- Recording ethnicity**

Caroline Bressey's article *Invisible Presence: The Whitening of the Black Community in the Historical Imagination* (2006) seeks to show how many of our assumptions about the Black presence in Britain are incorrect. It is often assumed that the reason that archive collections do not include the voices of Black people is because they simply were not here to be recorded (Bressey, 2006). Records relating to Black people may also have remained hidden because it has been assumed that they only lived certain geographical areas, when according to Bressey (2006) there is evidence of them having lived in villages up and down the country.

Black people in the archives can sometimes be identified by their place of birth, or by records for certain periods of history or by a Portuguese sounding name (Bressey, 2006). However, the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade meant that increasing numbers of Black people were being born outside of the African continent, making them much more difficult to identify (Bressey, 2006). Britain's entry into the slave trade also meant that Black people often have British sounding names which cannot be distinguished from the names of the general White population (Bressey,2006).

Finding records relating to Black and Asian people is made all the more difficult because in the past someone's ethnicity was not routinely recorded (Bressey,2006). It was not until 1991 that the British census began to record a person's ethnicity (Bressey,2006)

Bressey's (2006) examination of photographs from Pentonville Prison during the nineteenth century reveal that at least sixteen Black men were inmates there, but none of the written records about them make reference to their ethnicity. It is not clear what this says about the Victorian attitude to race (Bressey,2006), however it does suggest that there could be many more written references to Black people in our archives that have not been identified.

Unfortunately, examining Victorian photographs for traces of the Asian community may not be as effective because the sepia tint might make it difficult to tell whether or not somebody was of Asian extraction (Bressey, 2010). However, it would be unusual for someone from an Indian background to have a British sounding name, unless they came from an Anglo-Indian family.

### **2.3.5 Archives role in shaping memories and identities**

Wurl (2005) calls for a new understanding of the archival principal of provenance. Rather than just associating records with the person or organisation which created them, Wurl (2005) suggests that the concept of provenance should also include the subjects of records. Ethnic and religious minority groups have often been the subjects of record keeping in this country due to Britain's long history of colonialism. The insistence on linking a document's provenance exclusively to its creator may go some way to explaining why so little information is available for ethnic minorities to research their histories.

Elizabeth Kaplan (2000) identifies archivists as "major players in the business of identity politics" (p.126). Both Kaplan (2000) and Wurl (2005) are very clear about the vital role that archives play in shaping our memories. However, they warn against putting people into ethnic pigeonholes because our identities as human beings are can be multifaceted (Kaplan, 2000; Wurl, 2005).

## **Conclusion**

This literature review has shown that social inclusion and diversity have been touted as major priorities for the cultural sector, with a long list of official reports being produced in the last decade. Many of these reports have emphasised the importance of learning about one's history to a sense of pride and belonging, yet since the CASBAH project of 2002 no serious attempt has been made a surveying the archival landscape for traces of the Black and Asian experience.

Despite the long history of migration to Britain, the experiences of ethnic minorities have been systematically excluded from our archive and museum collections. History teachers have also failed to acknowledge the positive contribution of Black and Asian people to British history.

However, the evidence presented by Bressey (2006) also shows that there could be many references to ethnic minorities in the archives that are yet to be identified.

It is only recently that efforts have been made to redress the balance in history. Attempts have been made to fill the gaps left in the archives by undertaking oral history projects and

creating community archive collections. However, some in the archive profession have been hostile towards such initiatives considering them to be contrary to the archival principles.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

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## **3.1 Introduction**

First of all this chapter will present which research methods were chosen and why they were chosen. Then it will go on to describe the process of data collection and analysis.

Subsequently potential weaknesses and limitations of the chosen methodology are discussed. Finally, the practical and ethical issues that were considered before embarking on the data collection stage of the project are presented.

## **3.2 Research strategy**

After a detailed review of literature published on the topic, it was decided that an inductive approach was the most appropriate way of researching the topic given the exploratory



nature of the research and the complexity of some of the ideas involved. Bryman (2008, p.11) describes induction as “drawing generalizable inferences out of observation.”

Semi-structured interviews were preferred to structured or unstructured interviews. This type of interview encouraged the information professionals to give “rich, detailed answers” (Bryman,2008, p.437), of the sort which are essential to the exploration of complex concepts such as ethnicity, whilst making it easier for the researcher to ensure that the data collected would meet the project’s aims and objectives (Bryman,2008). Bryman (2008) also states that semi-structured interviews make it easier to compare and contrast data.

The researcher agreed with Bryman’s (2008) theory that semi-structured interviews would make conversation flow more naturally. Therefore it was decided that the interviews should not follow a script, in order to allow flexibility in questioning and make it easier for the interviewer to delve more deeply into certain topics (Bryman, 2008).However, information sheets including a list of possible questions were sent out to participants in advance of the interviews (see appendix 1a and 1b for examples). As shown in appendices 1a and 1b, some questions such as ‘Please give me a brief overview of the kind of collections and resources held at the Jewish Museum’.

A triangulation approach was considered with the aim of making the results more reliable but it was decided that this would be difficult to achieve given the limited amount of time available to complete the project. It was felt that questionnaires using closed questions drawn up using key themes and findings from the semi-structured interviews would be most appropriate and that using open questions would not add anything significant to the project. Using a triangulation approach would require two stages of piloting, data collection and analysis which was simply not achievable within the timescale allocated.

Interview questions were designed with reference to the literature and information either communicated by the repositories themselves about the composition of their collections or through consultation of their websites. A pilot interview was carried out with the help of the dissertation supervisor who played the role of the information professional and suggested some possible changes to the questions.

### **3.2 Data collection and preparation**

Eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with professionals who worked in archives, local studies libraries and a museum. These interviews varied from twenty five to forty five minutes in length and were recorded in their entirety using a Dictaphone. Seven of the interviews were transcribed word-for-word as advised by Bryman (2008).

Recording the interviews means that the researcher is able to fully engage with the interviewees and that the data can be analysed in detail once it has been collected (Bryman, 2008).

Initial research on the internet identified a sample of twenty two archives and libraries that potentially held items of relevance to the research of ethnic minority history. These organisations were selected either because they are dedicated to the study of a ethnic group, for example the Black Cultural Archives or because they were located in areas which the researcher knew to have significant ethnic minority populations.

Thirteen of the twenty two repositories contacted via email agreed to be interviewed for the project. Unfortunately as this project was entirely self-financed it was not feasible for the researcher to interview all thirteen volunteers. Given the cost and practicalities of travelling

to all thirteen locations on public transport, a 'convenience sampling' approach was taken (Robson, 2002; Bryman, 2008).

It was intended that all eight interviews would be carried out face-to-face, however due to unforeseen circumstances the interview with the Social History Curator was conducted over the telephone. As the interviewee was taken unwell on the morning of the interview and it was not practical for the researcher to make a further visit to London, it was felt that conducting the interview over the telephone could be justified in this case. The researcher, like Sturges and Hanrahan (Sturges and Hanrahan cited in Bryman, 2008) did not feel that the length and detail of the answers given in the telephone interview differed much from those given in the face-to-face interviews. However, as Bryman (2008) observed telephone interviews do not offer the researcher the opportunity to pick up on the interviewee's body language.

Unfortunately as specialist equipment was not used to record the telephone interview, the sound quality of the recording was quite poor. As a result it was decided that an exception should be made and the interview should not be transcribed word for word given the extra time that this would have taken.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The interview transcripts were analysed using the thematic analysis method. Bryman (2008,p.13) describes thematic analysis as an examination of data “to extract core themes that could be distinguished both between and within transcripts.”

Thematic analysis involves assigning labels to parts of the text (Bryman, 2008). The researcher chose to assign labels to the interview data according to interesting themes and patterns were identified in the transcripts. The researcher also considered it helpful to use the project’s aims and objectives as a starting point for creating codes.

A copy of each interview transcript was made and then analysed using thematic analysis. The four main research objectives were labelled A,B, C and D (see appendix 2). For example, anything that was thought to be a potential barrier to ethnic minorities researching their histories was labelled C, then subcategories were created to describe the specific barriers that had been identified. For example ‘C1’ was used to label instances in which a lack of records had been identified as a barrier to ethnic minorities researching their histories.

Given the limited word count and the fact that some of the categories were not easily relatable to the research objectives, it was decided that not all of these codes could be included in the findings section of this dissertation.

### **3.4 Potential limitations of the methodology**

Eight interviews presents a very small sample of archives, library and museum professionals from across the country. Therefore it is acknowledged that no definitive conclusions can be drawn from the research data.

Bryman (2008) observes that the production of an interview guide could limit the extent to which an interview is a genuine reflection of the interviewee's opinions and knowledge. The researcher did consider the possibility of not providing a list of questions in advance but it was felt that as the attendance rate of archives and local studies libraries by ethnic minorities

was so low, there was a danger that the information professionals would have little to say if they were not given the opportunity to consult their catalogues and refresh their memories in advance of the interview.

The reliability of this research is also limited by the fact that only one data collection method was chosen.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

The research did not involve contact with vulnerable groups; however it was recommended that the project be classified as 'high risk' because of the sensitivities surrounding the discussion of ethnicity. The risk of psychological harm being caused to either the researcher or interviewees was thought to be negligible. The potential for risk to the personal safety of the researcher and interviewees was also judged to be very low as all interviews were conducted in public places.

Participants were only interviewed in relation to their professional role and their names are not included anywhere in this dissertation. All data collected will be destroyed following the

completion of the project. However, in theory some of the interviewees could be identified in theory by their job title or place of work. In one case an interviewee volunteered information about their ethnicity to give context to one of their interview responses.

The information sheets sent to participants in advance of the interview outlined the ethical considerations of the project and the efforts that would be made to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees. Participants were also asked to sign two written consent form before the start of the interview. One copy was kept by the researcher and the other one by the interviewee. Before the interview recording started, the researcher also reminded the interviewees verbally that their participation was entirely voluntary and they could ask for the recording to be stopped at any time.





## Chapter 4: Interview Findings

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### **4. Introduction**

In this chapter the most significant findings of the eight interviews will be presented. First of all, the different types of sources and projects of relevance to the research of ethnic minority history from Leicestershire and Rutland Archives, Nottinghamshire Archives, Tameside

Local Studies and Archive Centre, Sheffield Archives, Leeds Local Studies Library and Coventry History Centre will be described. The available sources of information at the Jewish Museum in London and the Black Cultural Archives will be described separately because their entire collections are dedicated to two particular ethnic groups.

In the second section of this chapter, the reasons why ethnic minorities visit archives, local studies libraries and museums will be discussed.

Finally, the information professionals' views on what barriers there are preventing ethnic minorities from accessing their services are discussed.

## **4.1 Available resources for the research of ethnic minority history**

### **4.1.1 Family history**

Providing access through subscriptions to online family history resources was identified as a way in which information repositories could help people from ethnic minority backgrounds to research their histories:

*Well we have, we've got a subscription to ancestry.co.uk and that's the worldwide version of Ancestry so includes records from all over the world, so there are for example there are lots records on there about um, about um Jewish communities in Eastern Europe so you could start off with that kind of thing on there.*

The interviewees in Sheffield and Leeds said that they had been involved with organising family history sessions with community organisations for people from an ethnic minority background in the past. For example in Sheffield:

*So we did a project with them where they came in with a group and they were looking at tracing their Caribbean roots. There was a, a someone came up from London who was an expert in that area and we provided space here for people to do their research*

Main collections such as births, marriages and deaths records were also identified as a possible source of information during the interviews, depending on when people settled in the country and where they got married ecetera.

#### **4.1.2 Exhibitions**

A number of the interviewees said that they had created exhibitions that were specifically related to the history of migrant groups. In Leicestershire the archive service were involved in *Stopping Places*, an exhibition on the history of the Gypsy and Roma community. An exhibition was also produced for the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery:

*Yeah, that was a project, an exhibition largely to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery. So we did that in 2007 and we were all involved, all the professionals from this office*

Nottinghamshire Archives had also created an exhibition called *Forbidden Love* which included information on the history of interracial marriage.

### **4.1.3 Oral histories**

All eight repositories had some form of oral history collection relating to the experiences of ethnic minorities. In Coventry oral histories were used to tell the story of migration:

*'Coming to Coventry' was done as a sort of celebration of immigration again done by (name omitted) as the Equality and Diversity Officer. And she was very much involved in that with the South Asian community*

Tameside Archives and Local Studies Library also collected oral histories:

*The most substantial collection we've got is the Tameside Oral History project, a series of interviews that was done with the South East Asian community on Tameside and as well that in there we've got an interview that I did there that was with my uncle's mum who was Ukrainian, she came after the Second World War.*

#### **4.1.4 Books and printed material**

Books and printed materials on ethnic minority history were also available. For example the Ukrainian community in Ashton-Under-Lyne had donated some books about their history to the Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre. In both Coventry and Tameside, booklets had been produced on the oral history projects that had been carried out there.

Sheffield Archives and Local Studies Library created a series study guides highlighting key sources in the local studies and archive collections to help people who wanted to research the history of a community.

Leeds the Local Studies library considered it part of their remit to collect printed material on minority groups in the city, including the Afro-Caribbean and Jewish communities. This

material was not limited to straightforward histories of these communities but could also include creative works or biographies. Relationships had been forged with a publisher and a community centre in the hope that library could keep up-to-date with any recent publications on those communities:

*We've got, I mean we've got cause in Leeds you've got sort of Chapel Town which the main sort of African, African-Caribbean area, there have been books and pamphlets written about that area and the African-Caribbean community. Also there's the Jamaican Society in Chapel Town that published recently in the last few years a history of the community in Chapel Town. So we do if booklets are being published, we do collect them and also we've made contact with a publisher, well he's a local publisher in Chapel Town who publishes sort of histories and sort of art books relating to the Chapel Town community of and poetry.*

#### **4.1.5 Outreach and education**

Outreach work, such as work with schools was frequently mentioned during the interviews. In Leicester, the *Stopping Places* project and exhibition was completed with the assistance

of the Roma, Gypsy and traveller community itself which the interviewee identified as the key to its success:

*Perhaps the unique aspect of the project was that representatives of the local Gypsy and Roma and travelling community were actually involved, they contributed every step of the way that again was quite unusual because I've heard that in other places that projects are undertaken but it was an interpretation that the person that did that project did some research got books and things like that did research and put their own spin on it, their own interpretation. Our project was active involvement from the community itself; they were the ones that fed us the information so it's almost like recording word of mouth as it were.*

As a follow-up to the exhibition to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery, an online educational resource was produced and interviewee, who is responsible for education went out into local schools to talk about slavery. Unfortunately none of schools involved had a high proportion of pupils from an ethnic minority background.

They also worked on a project which involved working with members of the South Asian community who had experienced the upheaval of the partition of India.



The Principal Archivist at Nottinghamshire Archives talked at length about a project at a local school that involved children producing a play on the experiences of an emancipated slave who lived in Nottingham:

*So the children researched elements of slavery, so George Africanus, who was a slave from Sierra Leone he moved to Nottingham and started his own very successful business so they researched it and then with the help of the creative writer produced a play performed at the school festival.*

In Tameside talks on the Victorian Muslim Mayor in Stalybridge and a famous Black boxer, who later became a politician, from the area were successful in attracting more diverse audiences.

#### **4.1.6 Discrete collections**

Apart from oral history projects, not many discrete collections specifically concerned with ethnic minority groups were mentioned. In Leicester the most significant discrete collection was the Marrett collection, a particularly valuable source for researchers interested in the migration of East African Asians to Leicester in the 1970s.

In Coventry, Nottingham and Tameside the collections of the local racial equality councils were identified as sources that might be of interest to people researching the history of the anti-racist movement:

*One of the major ones would be the records of the racial equality council, that's that was Nottingham and District Racial Equality Council and that has its roots in the 1950s, as the Commonwealth Consultative Citizens' Committee and the idea of that committee was to welcome arrivals from abroad, particularly those coming from the Caribbean to have dances, start clubs, cricket teams- a whole range of cultural activities to help settle in find appropriate housing and to find work .*

In Tameside a collection on the campaign against the deportation of an Indian man called Vinod Chauhan was said to be of interest, along with a collection in Coventry relating to the Indian Workers' Association.

The only instance of a community archive collection being deposited at a local authority repository was in Nottingham. This particular project was initiated by an individual who was concerned that experiences of people in the ethnically diverse St Anne's area of the city might be found in the archives.

#### 4.1.7 Other records

Rather than discrete collections, much of the material of relevance to ethnic minorities and migrant groups seemed to appear incidentally in other collections which were not concerned with ethnic minorities per se. For example, in Nottinghamshire:

*The material would occur incidentally within larger collections for example the hospital records where you had a considerable presence of African-Caribbean nurses in the 1960s and there are photographs relating to them in the hospitals for example.*

In Leicester, there were also some references and records relating to the Gypsy and Roma communities buried within the main collections:

*Some of them were brief, um I think one is two were brief references to them but overall they just are records, individual records sometimes they do appear in parish registers if you're lucky and I think Constable's accounts*

Leicestershire and Rutland estate records also helped to reveal the region's role in the slave trade and the appalling way in which slaves were treated.

Religious records relating to the Sikh, Muslim and Hindu communities could also be found in Coventry and Leicester.

It was often mentioned by interviewees that information about ethnic minority or migrant groups appeared in sources such as newspapers. For example in Tameside:

*There are odd mentions and references to some of the Italian communities settled in Hyde but that tends to be in other sources like in newspapers or things like that as opposed to a discrete collection*

#### **4.1.8 Black Cultural Archives**

The Black Cultural Archives collects a wide range of material including books and objects. As items of ephemera are not normally collected by archives, the BCA's large ephemera collection is of particular interest:

*We're constantly collecting ephemera items and we've a really large theatre poster collection which has come in handy cause we're doing a project with the National Theatre on Black British theatre in the 80s and 90s. So, ephemera it's not really what archives would collect but taken as a whole it's quite an interesting kind of look at kind of culture and how that's changed*

The largest collection at the BCA relates to the Runnymede Trust, the race relations think-tank which includes their library, periodicals and research papers

Although the majority of collections date from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some earlier historical records can be found including a collection of plantation records called Gayle Papers and material relating to a prominent Black Edwardian family called the Barbour-James's. There is also an oral history collection about the Black Women's Movement.

#### **4.1.9 Jewish Museum**

The Jewish museum also collects a very wide range of material:

*We've also got oral histories; we've got a range of different materials. So we've got documents, archives mainly families who've donated but not many institutional archives. We've got a very large photograph archive, we've got lots of objects as well, objects that people brought over with them when they migrated. We've also got an art collection but it's not particularly huge, we've got quite an important print collection as well, which consists of five hundred prints and it was collected by one person. He basically collected any prints or engravings that had any kind of Jewish subject.*

The museum also has a small library of books that have been donated to them or that relate to exhibitions have taken place at the museum which is accessible to the public. However, the museum does not actively collect stock for the library.

The interviewee states that between 350 and 400 oral history interviews had been collected mainly relating to the Jewish East End but also to subjects as diverse as Yiddish theatre, Jews of the West End and sexual health.

Oral history interviews were identified as a particularly good way of recording memories and important historical events for future generations:

*I think people who survived the holocaust and refugees from Nazism, those people are kind of dying out. It's going to get to the point where that's all we have really in terms of people's memories. So it probably will become quite an important archive I think.*

The Jewish Museum also makes some of its oral histories and photographs available through the Judaica Europeana digital library

## **4.2 Why do ethnic minorities visit archives, museums and local studies libraries?**

As seems to be the case that very few people from ethnic minority backgrounds visit local authority archives and local studies collections, it would be hard to say what their interests are.

For the Leeds Local Studies Librarian, the absence of ethnic minorities from the local studies libraries cannot be explained by a simple lack of interest in history:

*It's not that the interest isn't there it's just I think people don't realise and I think also because a lot of this material is now on the Internet so people just access it at home, family history for example*

It would seem that their research interests may not necessarily be focused on their ethnicity or identity. For example the Archivist in Coventry observed:

*See for instance today we had a woman in, Coventry born from the accent. She would be what? 35, and she was interested in the history of a farm behind the house where she lived. She was interested there because it was Chapelfields and not anything else, that self-consciousness of either ethnicity or trying to integrate one's ethnicity to the whole city*

Similarly members of ethnic minority groups were said to visit archives to look for marriage certificates, wills and building plans.

When efforts were made to engage people with their histories, it does seem that there was some interest with nine or ten people turning up for the Afro-Caribbean genealogy session



run by Leeds Local Studies Library. Some of the attendees' at the Afro-Caribbean family history workshop in Sheffield were even inspired to visit the archives again on an individual basis.

Schoolchildren also showed an interest in history especially if they could make a personal connection with a place, event or individual. This was not necessarily connected to their ethnicity. For example the interviewee in Leeds commented:

*They are interested in looking at old maps and seeing you know when their house was built and that sort of thing. So school kids are quite interested in history and how you can link it to them and to their house and their granny's house and that sort of thing*

Furthermore, it was asserted by the interviewees in Sheffield and Leeds that because information professionals do not always ask visitors what their interests are, they could be researching their Afro-Caribbean or Jewish ancestry for example without them knowing.

Most enquiries at the Jewish Museum were concerned with family history but there was also quite a lot of interest in the oral history collections, particularly amongst academic

researchers. The majority of Jewish people visiting the museum wanted to learn more about their culture:

Most visitors to the Black Cultural Archives were said to be academic researchers who were interested in for example looking at the Runnymede collection to investigate the context of the inner city riots of the 1980s:

*We've had a lot of people recently doing research into the uprisings in 1981 and 1985 which is sparked off quite a lot by what happened last year and we've got collections on that and we've also the Runnymede brings in quite a lot research on community, policing and uprisings*

4.3 Who uses archives, local studies libraries and museums?

## **4.3 Who uses archives, local studies libraries and museums?**

### **4.3.1 Demographic user profile**

All of the interviewees from local authority archives and local studies libraries believed that their visitors tended to be middle aged or retired. A typical answer when asked about who uses local authority archives or local studies libraries was:

*I would say they are very largely white and I would say perhaps 95% are white. Over the age of forty would be a majority*

However, the consensus on the socio-economic status of visitors was less clear. Two of the interviewees felt that the majority of their readership came from a middle class background with the archivists in Sheffield and Leicester agreeing that most visitors are probably middle class. On the other hand several of the respondents were not sure that their readership would bear out the stereotype of library and archive users coming from middle class backgrounds. One interviewee stated when asked about the socio-economic status their service's readership:

*We have a higher density of working class people here in Tameside although there is probably a fair number of middle class people as well but probably a lot of working class people as well.*

The profile of a typical researcher at the BCA was somewhat different:

*In terms of research, reader profiles are generally female, 19 to 35 with a degree or postgraduate and 50/50 almost Black and ethnic minority and White.*

Interestingly, only one interviewee mentioned the Public Service Quality Group Survey:

*Yes, we are part of a survey which I'm sure that you'll have information on, PSQG- Public Service Quality Group and that enables us to monitor the people that visit us in the search room. We do this every year and a half and it's part of a national survey and that identifies our core readership and that core readership is largely as you said Lucy, white and would be predominantly over the age of fifty.*

#### **4.3.2 Ethnic minority users and difficulty in building up a profile of users' ethnicity**

When asked about how much interest there was from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community in a project which focused on their history, the difficulty in monitoring web traffic was mentioned by the interviewee in Leicestershire:

*Well, I think the way we could measure it is website hits but we wouldn't be able to tell the ethnic origin and the council website isn't set up - it's not sophisticated enough to be able to analyse the number, the people who are looking, what their economic status is, what their standing in society is you know all of that, we, the County Council don't have (unclear) to answer that. I think it's fair to say it's hard to measure.*

*What it doesn't do is identify what sort of organisations or people approach us about learning and outreach events or the people who you might contact us by email and we, we get many, many emails now it far exceeds any other form*

Similarly, it was pointed out by the archivist in Nottinghamshire that most enquiries were now made by email but unfortunately the profile of people and organisations making contact via email and telephone could be not monitored:

*We can't monitor in any detail the approaches we get by email or indeed telephone and that's a shame because increasingly I think as with any organisation you're approached by electronic and remote systems.*

The interview data seems to suggest that the numbers of people from ethnic minority backgrounds visiting local authority archives and local studies libraries is comparatively low.

For example, the Librarian at Leeds Local Studies Library said the following when asked whether they receive many visitors from an ethnic minority background:

*Unfortunately, we don't. It's not that the interest isn't there it's just I think people don't realise and I think also because a lot of this material is now on the Internet so people just access it at home, family history for example.*

However, this comment does highlight the fact that rather than visiting in person, there could be many more people from ethnic minority backgrounds accessing information via the library's website or through other web sources.

Interestingly, despite the fact their collections are focused on the history of specific ethnic and religious groups, the interviewees from the Black Cultural Archives and the Jewish Museum in London did not seem to think that the majority of their visitors came from inside those communities

In the case of the Jewish Museum it was thought that more Non-Jewish than Jewish visitors were welcomed:

*The last time we did it was in 2010 but I think the research we did it was around 40% Jewish and 60% Non-Jewish. Many of our visitors are school groups and most of those aren't Jewish, they account for quite a huge number of our figures.*

In Tameside there was an example of a member of an ethnic minority showing an interest in researching their family history:

*Yeah, definitely we have the odd enquiry from people, a chap who's quite a regular and pops through on the way to the main library asked us the other day if we, we had anything on the ancestry website related to India because he was quite interested because he'd done some of his own work on his own family tree. So people, there is, there is a little bit of interest and the odd person comes in but it's not huge.*

History talks on Stalybridge's Victorian Muslim mayor and a Black boxer from the area attracted quite a large number of Black and minority ethnic people. Some of Ashton-under-Lyne's Indian community were also interested in researching the history of the particular area of the town that they had settled in:

*Yeah, we get quite a few to come as a quiet study place and few to come through to do a little bit of research around their local area. So we have some, a lot of Ashton's, a lot of Ashton's Indian community lives in the west end of Ashton and that's quite an interesting area because it was, it was a planned town back in sort of the late 1700s and late 1800s. So some of the people, some of the people that live in that area of come in to trace their house history for example with their kids and we've had a couple of BME families come along to the junior history club*

However, one comment from the Tameside interviewee was rather tellingly:

*As a general rule we don't have a huge take up of people from those backgrounds. We don't have as many BME people do the work I can generally remember the ones that there are.*

## **4.4 Barriers to use of archives, local studies libraries and museums**

### **4.4.1 Lack of records or relevant resources**



It is quite rare for local authority archives to possess records relating to religious groups such as Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Sikhs. Only two of the repositories visited had any records from these communities.

If a family migrated to Britain in the fairly recent past, then the interviewees also pointed out that their collections were unlikely to hold primary material of direct relevance. This means that if a member of one these groups wanted to find out more about their family history for example, they would be unlikely to find it in their local record office.

#### **4.4.2 Perception of irrelevance**

Several of the interviewees, including those in Leeds and Coventry asserted that ethnic minorities did not come into the archives or local studies library because they simply thought that there would not be able to find anything of relevance to them

Although half of the Black Cultural Archives' visitors are Black, the reasons why few people visit archives and museums were discussed in some detail during the interview there. Again,

it was agreed that Black people might stay away from archives, because of a perception that collections would not be relevant to themselves:

*I don't think Black people are less interested in history, a lot, we get a lot of interest from people but I think it's just there might be the perception that there isn't anything in archives for them but that might not necessarily be the case.*

#### **4.4.3 Poor promotion**

A number of the interviewees expressed concern that people did not even know that their organisation existed or did not really understand what they did.

In Leeds, a previous attempt at organising an Afro-Caribbean family history workshop failed to attract any participants. According to the Local Studies Librarian, this was because of the poorly targeted promotion of the event:

*I mean it does just come down to just publicity as well. So you might publicise the event in local libraries but if people don't go into them then how will they know about it? Because you know to do a press release for a session seems a bit excessive for just one thing, so we have an events guide which goes up on the council website and goes into various different publications and that sort of thing but it all depends on whether people see that sort of stuff really. So that's why I guess yeah working with partners is one way of getting people into the library.*

The archivist in Leicestershire also thought taking leaflets and posters to places that people visit on a day-to-day basis might bring in more ethnic minorities to the record office. More radically, documents and displays could be taken out to the people, rather than waiting for them to come in:

*What we could do, I mean something we've thought about is try and install our exhibitions doctors surgeries, businesses, youth centres, different places that 'normal' people or the majority of people go to*

#### **4.4.4 Lack of resources**

A lack of funding and staff was regarded as an obstacle to attracting more ethnic minorities to local studies libraries and archives.

In Nottinghamshire, partnership work was identified as the only way of getting such projects of the ground:

*Because without resources we are only going to have a very limited impact. You know we need to get staff, voluntary workers or people on board to help us do it because we haven't got enough. We only have a small staff, we'll never have enough people or resources to have a significant effect in the long run.*

#### **4.4.5 Difficulty maintaining momentum of a project**

Once a project had been completed, it was said to be difficult to maintain the interest of the communities involved and get them to come back into the archives. For example the archivist in Leicestershire said the following:

*I think without sounding too negative it is often the case that you conduct a project, you put an enormous amount of effort, resources go into it to get it up and running and to the end but without any sort of follow up in terms of resources etcetera that often is the case. Unless there's a mechanism to sustain it in terms of time and resources it tends to just end.*

#### **4.4.6 Highly academic or specialist material**

Some of the collections relating to ethnic minority groups such as the Racial Equality Council collections and the Virk collection are of a highly specialist nature and would be unlikely to be of interest to anyone but academic researchers:

*Say taking Virk, it's very much of the Indian Worker's Association which was connected with say the local far left and consequently the Communist Party of course has associations with it as well. It tends to be a very small number of people motivated initially to use it. So the community itself is not going to be particularly interested in that I suspect.*

#### **4.4.7 Cultural sensitivities**

It was the opinion of the interviewee at the Black Cultural Archives that some mainstream repositories might not feel comfortable with collecting information on a culture that is not their own:

*I don't know if that's because of sensitivities aspect where people, I mean the heritage profession is notoriously White, middle class and maybe that people don't feel that they can tell that history whereas as we as a Black organisation, not that we can tell everybody's history because but we can tell it confidently maybe.*

In Coventry some collections were kept closed because of the fear of offending people:

*We have kept that one as closed material until we know what people are looking and why they're looking at it so that anything that might be a bit incendiary on there is going to be kept away until people know what it is there for or can be trusted in that sort of way. What I mean is the usual sort of abusive words and this sort of thing.*

#### **4.4.8 Restrictions on access**

The rules and regulations imposed on visitors, especially in archives were also seen as intimidating visitors. The archivist in Coventry felt that the understandable rules needed to protect unique materials could act as yet another barrier to ethnic minorities researching their histories.

The difficulty of taking unique material out into the community was also underlined:

*I think that to get it of interest to them we would expect them to come in here to look because if the things go out from the office and are not brought back and then are covered by insurance then*

On the other hand it was felt the BCA offered a more welcoming environment:

*I think when people come in they feel a bit more part of it and it's kind of not as strict but it's a different atmosphere*

#### **4.4.9 Not feeling part of the history of Britain**

It was believed that some ethnic minorities might not feel part of British history or the history of the city that they lived in. They may also feel that the white, indigenous community and their institutions is not interested in and does not respect their heritage:

*Because I mean one of our kind of points is that Black history, is British history. It's not I mean, we do focus on the Black aspect because that kind of been maligned but in terms of history, it's still the history of Britain- race relations is the history of Britain the seventies and eighties. You know, you know a lot about Black people fighting in the First and Second World War and you don't really, I think it's coming more to the fore now*

#### **4.4.10 Lack of trust**

Lack of trust in information professionals and cultural institutions in general was identified as a contributing factor to ethnic minorities' reluctance to deposit their records at local authority archives. This had even been experienced by the archivist in Tameside who was of Ukrainian heritage and had tried to encourage that community to deposit their records at the archives:



*I think a lot communities think, there's still a belief that because they're an ethnic minority in their own right, that the British don't really care enough about it and would not particularly look after it and I thought that I'd be able to bridge that gap in a way with being an information professional and being part of that community. I thought that they would then trust me and it was interesting that there was still quite a lot of apprehension.*

In Nottinghamshire, it was also felt that trust was key to encouraging the deposit of records. If trust could not be built up enough for records to be deposited at Nottinghamshire Archives, then at least a relationship could be formed that allowed the archive service to offer advice on matters such as conservation:

*They don't want to lose that heritage that they've fought hard for but what we have got is certain skills for example in conservation and we can help them find suppliers for archival material to preserve their photographs to advise them on bookbinding folders and temperatures or other places that they could deposit that they may feel is more relevant than us because to us the most important thing is that the material survives, it's available to as wide a community as is possible. We're not here to take*

*anything away from them, we're here to support if necessary what they want to do but there may be a perception that we want their material and that's not what we're about and we never have been*

#### **4.4.11 Lack of diversity in the workforce**

The fact that the diversity of the British population is not reflected in the archives and library workforce was also seen as deterring ethnic minority visitors. Leading the archivist at the BCA to comment she did not feel that the 'notoriously white, middle class' heritage profession felt comfortable with teaching people about Black history

However, the seeming lack of interest in joining the information professions amongst ethnic minorities was highlighted in Nottingham:

*We're not often approached as an organisation in terms of job applications by those communities.*

#### **4.4.12 Prejudice in records**

Several of the interviewees felt that the fact that many records were created when racism was inherent amongst the general British population but also throughout the country's institutions has continued to deter visitors from ethnic minority population right up until the present day:

*The institutional racism in the fifties, sixties, seventies I mean even the eighties just denied people their history, I mean if you've had thirty, forty years of that it's hard to just suddenly you know switch between extremes. Does that make sense?...if that's your parents experience it might, your parents are the ones who you know are going to when you're young, take you to museums. If you know when they were young it was quite highbrow, quite white then they might not have wanted to go and they might not take their children*

Furthermore records were rarely created from the point of view of the ethnic minority community itself, as was observed by the archivist in Nottinghamshire:

*A lot of the material will be reflected in ways that may not genuinely reflect the feelings or attitudes of the communities. That's a worry because if this goes down in*

*history with an angle of prejudice, then what will students and others make of that when they come to discover it for themselves?*

In Leeds, the Local Studies Librarian pointed out that the prejudices in history writing itself meant that there simply were not many books written about ethnic minority communities:

*We probably don't have an awful lot in stock because you know the politics of writing histories have always excluded people so you wonder whether in the past books just wouldn't have included histories of minority groups so therefore the nature of the stock reflects that history.*

#### **4.4.13 Information is hidden**

Some information relating to ethnic minorities is 'buried' in the archives. At the BCA it was proposed that collections sometimes needed to be looked at "with a different eye" to uncover references to ethnic minorities.

The way that things are catalogued by archivist can also make information difficult to find:

*That can make a big difference as well as to what what prominence you put things and how you just catalogue it because a lot of people come to archives now from Google or from they expect it to be online and if it's catalogued in a slightly odd way or just in and just in a maybe the key words aren't there then that might make it difficult to find. That goes back to what I was saying about local author, local government archives and local studies libraries, if they were to recatalogue things, they might find a lot more interesting, but again that's a lot of time and kind of knowledge to go back and do it.*

Tameside Archives encourages people who come across references to ethnic minorities during the course of their research to put a reference to it in the 'discovering history' file:

*We've got like a 'Discovering History' file so as soon as someone sees something we make note of it and we put a reference to it in there. It can be interesting what's in records, you know quite buried.*

#### **4.4.14 Use internet and other sources instead**

Both the archivist in Nottingham and the librarian in Leeds commented that a lot of people now research their history on the internet instead of visiting a library or archive. In Nottingham it was also observed that people might turn to their own community to find out about their history:

*I mean people get information often through the internet these days or from friends and their own communities. They feel that's enough, they don't need to make a special journey into Nottingham*

#### **4.4.15 School or university curricula**

At the BCA the neglect of ethnic minority history by the school curriculum was identified as discouraging an interest in history:

*I mean quite a lot of the information that I've been looking at does really heavily say that when you're at school you might be, if you're ethnic minority, you might be turned off history because even if you're white, as a girl you might just imagine history that was just always loads of men doing stuff.*

This ignorance could even extend into higher education:

*It's just whether universities offer the course for you to do the research as well because I mean when I was at university I don't think I would have had much of an option to come and research here. Unless when writing your dissertation and you can choose what to write about and have a tutor who will support you*

#### **4.4.16 Few barriers for the Jewish Community**

In contrast to many other communities, the Social History Curator at the Jewish Museum felt that Jewish people faced few barriers to accessing cultural institutions. The British- Jewish experience was also thought to be particularly well-represented in mainstream museums given how small the community is. It was thought that Jewish people did not face some of the socio-economic and economic barriers that other migrant groups may face:

*Yeah, generally speaking the Jewish community has become part of the professional middle classes. Obviously there's always gonna be exceptions but you could generalise and say they're very culturally literate.*

Barriers to accessing cultural institutions were also reduced for Jewish people because they are on the whole a well assimilated community with a long history of settlement in this country. The only possible barriers that could appear would be for particularly observant members of the Orthodox Jewish community:

*Like I said the Jewish community is assimilated, they don't have any language problems. East European migration happened over a hundred years ago and then there was a migration after the War but I think in general most of the community's been quite assimilated. I mean the Ultra-Orthodox community may have issues accessing an institution like ours but definitely we do have people from the Orthodox community coming in so I don't think it's a huge issue.*

#### **4.4.16 Socio-economic barriers**

In contrast to the Jewish community, at the BCA the socio-economic deprivation of a large proportion of the Black population, rather than a lack of interest in history was seen a significant contributing factor to their absence from cultural institutions:



*Yeah, because unfortunately in terms of economic ability. I think the same number of maybe white working class people visit archives but because Black people tend to be in the lower, I mean that's a massive generalisation but possibly in the lower kind of class for want of a better word then maybe it's a social thing*

## Chapter 5: Discussion

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The interview findings reveal that material relating to the study of ethnic minority history can be found in archives and local studies libraries, however anecdotally such material would still seem to make up a very small percentage of available collections. For example, the archivist in Leicestershire and Rutland estimated information relating to ethnic minorities to make up just two or three per cent of their total collections. It was not within the scope of this project to find out what proportion of archival collections are of relevance to the research of ethnic minority history; however the project to identify find examples of what is available.

An extensive search and consultation of the literature on this topic has revealed that the only attempt so far to survey British archival collections for material relating to ethnic minority

groups was the Caribbean Studies and the history of Black and Asian people pilot project of 2002. The CASBAH project aimed to show that records relating to Black and Asian people were available in repositories across the country and not just limited to port cities such as Bristol, Liverpool and Cardiff (Saltus, 2002). Bressey has (2006) also argued that the idea that Black people were only found in large port cities before the twentieth century is untrue as references to Black people can be found even in rural areas.

However, the survey was limited in scope to five regions of the United Kingdom and the holdings of sixteen partner institutions (ICS, 2002). Leicestershire and Rutland Record office was the only repository to participate in both Institute Of Commonwealth Studies survey and this research. In contrast to this research project, CASBAH was exclusively concerned with archival material.

CASBAH identified collections of interest in five areas: estate papers, local government, organisations and societies and the State (Saltus, 2002). None of the collections identified in CASBAH survey were mentioned by name in the interview conducted at Leicestershire and Rutland Record office as part of this research project. In fact, the only collection mentioned by name during the interview was the Marrett collection which seems to have been held at the University of Leicester at the time of the CASBAH project(Saltus, 2002). However,

estate records were identified by both the survey and by the interview as collections of interest to the study of Black History (Saltus, 2002).

The majority of the records in the collections highlighted by the CASBAH survey are likely to have been created from the perspective of the ruling white elite. Wurl (2005) and Flinn (2007) observe that ethnic minorities have frequently been the subjects rather than the creators of records. However, some exceptions were found by the survey they included: the letters, petitions and statements from bondspeople requesting freedom at the British Court in Lagos, the records and the Leicester Oral History Archive. The Racial Awareness Consortium collection is also likely to have at least in part been created from the point of view of ethnic minorities. However, none of these four collections were mentioned during the Leicestershire interview. Although the Racial Awareness Consortium records were not mentioned in the Leicestershire interview, collections relating to similar organisations were referred to in Coventry, Nottingham and Tameside.

Johnston (2001), writing a year before the completion of the CASBAH project asserted that few local record offices had tried to collect material reflecting the experiences of Black people. He also claimed that archive profession did not understand why this was a concern (Johnston, 2001). However, all of the interviewees involved in this project seemed aware of

the problem of underrepresentation in their collections and audiences even if they were unable to offer any practical solutions to these problems. Perhaps this shows that even though the archives workforce is probably no more diverse than it was eleven years ago, at least archivists are aware that their collections and audiences do not truly represent the community.

The findings of *Barriers to entering careers in Museums, archives and libraries* (2005), indicated that parents from a Black and minority ethnic backgrounds did not visit museums because they thought they were irrelevant to them and would reflect the experiences of people from their culture (Zebra Square Ltd., 2005, p.54). This was supported by several of the participants in this research who expressed the view that people from ethnic minority backgrounds did not visit their archives because they did not think that they would find anything of relevance to the,.

The observations by the archivists in Nottinghamshire and at the Black Cultural Archives that the archives profession is overwhelmingly white is supported by the 2008 *Profile of the archives workforce in England* (MLA and Lifelong Learning UK, 2008). The survey revealed that 93 % of the archives professionals working outside of London were white (MLA and Lifelong Learning UK, 2008, p.17), this statistic is particularly interesting as this research

project was mainly concerned with repositories outside of London This is compared against the results of the 2001 Census which found that 86.99% of the population would describe themselves as 'White British' (MLA and Lifelong Learning UK, 2008, p.15). However, it is likely that the British population has become more diverse since the 2001 Census. It should also be noted that survey of the archives workforce in England recorded a response rate of just 25% to 27% (MLA and Lifelong Learning UK, 2008,p.2).

Similarly, in 2008 93% of the cultural heritage workforce were said to be white (Cultural & Creative Skills cited in Cultural & Creative Skills, 2008). The *Cultural Heritage Blueprint* makes the link between diverse workforces and diverse audiences:

“Recruiting a diverse workforce – paid and voluntary – has direct business benefits; it ensures that organisations have a workforce that reflects the communities they serve, helping them to understand their customers better so they can ensure their services meet the needs of the whole community. A failure to develop a workforce that reflects society may well in time lead to organisations limiting the number of potential users. Organisations with diverse workforces are able to draw on a wider range of skills and resources and bring in new ideas and perspectives.” (Cultural & Creative Skills,2008, p.26)

Comments made by the archivist in Nottinghamshire about adopting a more 'hands-off' advisory role when working with ethnic minorities are echoed by Flinn (2007), who advocates a post custodial approach be adopted in relation to community collections.

The wide range of outreach projects described during the interviews, illustrate that many archivists do wish to get out into the community rather than stay in the search room. Flinn (2007) acknowledges that individual archivists do work with community groups, but describes this work as "patchy & not over a long period" (p.161). Unfortunately, some of the comments made by the archivist in Leicestershire about the difficulty in maintaining the momentum once a project had ended and keeping people interested would support Flinn's claims.

The "discovering history" file bears some similarities to the "sightings" initiative mentioned by Bressey (2006,p.49). "Sightings" was one of outcomes of the Black and Asian Studies Association conference of 1999, it called on local historians, genealogists and family historians to record any references they came across to Black and Asian people and send them to the BASA. Two thousand "sightings" have been recorded since 1999 and the Equino Centre at University College London is in the process of applying for funding to complete the cataloguing of these sightings and put them into a database (UCL Equino Centre,2012). This

project has the potential to be the next CASBAH, although considering how small-scale CASBAH was hopefully it will be considerably bigger.

“Because I mean one of our kind of points is that Black history, is British history.”  
Fundamentally, it should be remembered that the history of ethnic minorities is part of the history of Britain. As the the Director of Policy and Communications at English Heritage put it:

“Personally, I see no reason why as a white woman, the history of Black people in this country is any less part of my history then castles and medieval churches, it is something we all share, just being here.” ( Lamb ,cited in Flinn, 2007, p.151)

It should be of concern to everyone that these histories are not being adequately represented in our archives, museums, local studies libraries or schools.





## Conclusion

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Although this research project has been quite limited in size and scope, a comprehensive review of the literature on the subject and an analysis of the data gathered has provided an interesting snapshot of the current situation in local studies libraries, archives and museums regarding provision for the research of ethnic minority history.

The results of both the literature review and interviews would suggest that the number of people from ethnic minorities visiting local studies libraries and archives to research their

history is very low. However, the information professionals were aware of this and many had been involved in outreach work which targeted ethnic minority communities.

According to both the interviewees the reasons for this are many and complex. However, some barriers, including socio-economic barriers and general ignorance are not exclusive to ethnic minority communities. However, some of these barriers do seem to be specific to ethnic minorities and are rooted in a deep mistrust in cultural and state institutions. Although archives and libraries cannot singlehandedly remove all barriers to access; they can address the issues of recruitment and make more of an effort to make connections with the community through their collections.

There certainly is interesting material available for the study of the history of ethnic minorities in British archives, museums and local studies libraries. However, this material still makes up a very small proportion of collections. The situation can only be improved by encouraging ethnic minorities to write their own histories and to trust archivists to become the custodians of their records.

As the number of ethnic minority individuals visiting local authority repositories is so small, no real conclusions can be drawn on what their research interests are. However, the majority

of the information professionals interviewed did seem to feel that past outreach work carried out in these communities had had some positive effects.

## Recommendations

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- A more inclusive history curriculum which does not just focus on the oppression and persecution of ethnic minorities. It is important that Black boys in particular are provided with positive role models and a pride in their history and culture.

- A comprehensive, nationwide survey of archive collections to identify records relating to ethnic minorities.
- The adoption of a national policy to prioritise the cataloguing of material relating to ethnic minorities over other records.
- Few discrete collections so material might need to be created, archivists need to be more flexible in their ideas about archival principals and work with community organisations.
- All archives should create a 'discovering history' file. This would require any extra funding or staff but could uncover for very interesting and important information.
- Nationwide initiatives to recruit ethnic minorities in local studies libraries and archives.

- Further research into the information needs and behaviours of ethnic minorities in a local studies and archives context.
- Further research into perceptions of archives, museums and local studies libraries amongst ethnic minorities.

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## **Appendix 1A: Example information sheet 1**

### **Information Sheet: Jewish Museum, London**

## **About the researcher**

I am a student on the MA Librarianship programme at The University of Sheffield. I have recently completed an elective module on archives' and records' management which included a lecture on the subject of local history and local studies' libraries. This lecture made me consider whether local studies' libraries include provision for ethnic minorities to research their histories. I have decided to investigate this further and complete a dissertation project on the subject.

## **Research Background**

The research project is entitled "An evaluation of the available resources for ethnic and religious minority groups to research their histories".

The research aims to identify and evaluate the resources that are currently available for the research of ethnic and religious minority history. In addition, the researcher hopes to establish who uses these resources and for what purpose. If it is discovered that these resources are rarely used, then the research will also seek to find out what the possible barriers to access are.

## **Methodology**

Semi-structured interviews with professionals working in archives, libraries and other information repositories will be conducted. All of the interviews will be recorded and later transcribed to facilitate detailed content analysis of what has been said. Some brief handwritten notes may also be taken during the interview. The interview should last approximately fifteen minutes.

### **Ethical aspects**

Participants will only be interviewed in connection with their professional role and no personal information about the interviewee will be recorded. However, I will be describing the location of the archive and the nature of the material held there which could theoretically be used to identify the interviewees.

Interviewees will also be asked to sign a written consent form before the interview takes place. The consent form will also be signed by the researcher in the presence of the interviewee.

All data will be destroyed immediately after the project's completion in order to ensure its continued confidentiality. It is acknowledged by the researcher that participation in the project is completely voluntary. This means that participants will have the right to ask for the interview to be terminated at any time and also for audio recording to be stopped.

### **Interview Questions**

1. Please give me a brief overview of the kind of collections and resources held at the Jewish Museum.
2. What role do you think that museums, libraries and archives can play in shaping identities?
3. What contribution do you think the Jewish museum can make to the shaping of British Jewish identity and indeed Jewish identity in general?
4. Why was the Jewish Museum established?
5. How did Jewish people living in the UK find out about their history before the establishment of the museum?
6. Do you think that Jewish people are adequately represented in mainstream museums, archives and libraries in the UK?
7. Do you think that there are any barriers which prevent Jewish people from accessing cultural institutions?
8. Why do people come to the Jewish Museum?
9. Could you tell me a bit about your oral history collections?
10. Could you tell me a bit about your photographic archive?
11. Could you tell me a bit about the museum's involvement with Judaica Europeana?
12. Do you have a library?
13. Do most visitors to the Jewish Museum tend to be middle aged or elderly as is often the case in other institutions that I have visited?

14. Do you think that Jewish people are particularly interested in finding out about their history?
15. Are there any collections or subjects that are particularly popular?
16. Why is this/are these collections particularly important?
17. Are there any collections that are underused?
18. Why do you think that they are not used?
19. Do you have many non-Jewish visitors?
20. Do you think the museum has helped to teach non-Jewish people about Jewish history and culture?
21. Do you think that the museum might have helped to reduce prejudice against Jewish people?

**N.B. Questions will not necessarily appear in this order and maybe phrased slightly differently. The interview will be semi-structured and therefore the interviewer will not be following a script.**

## **Appendix 1B: Example information sheet 2**

### **Information Sheet: Nottinghamshire Archives**

#### **About the researcher**

I am a student on the MA Librarianship programme at The University of Sheffield. I have recently completed an elective module on archives' and records' management which included a lecture on the subject of local history and local studies' libraries. This lecture made me consider whether local



studies' libraries include provision for ethnic minorities to research their histories. I have decided to investigate this further and complete a dissertation project on the subject.

### **Research Background**

The research project is entitled "An evaluation of the available resources for ethnic and religious minority groups to research their histories".

The research aims to identify and evaluate the resources that are currently available for the research of ethnic and religious minority history. In addition, the researcher hopes to establish who uses these resources and for what purpose. If it is discovered that these resources are rarely used, then the research will also seek to find out what the possible barriers to access are.

### **Methodology**

Semi-structured interviews with professionals working in archives, libraries and other information repositories will be conducted. All of the interviews will be recorded and later transcribed to facilitate detailed content analysis of what has been said. Some brief handwritten notes may also be taken during the interview. The interview should last approximately fifteen minutes.

### **Ethical aspects**

Participants will only be interviewed in connection with their professional role and no personal information about the interviewee will be recorded. However, I will be describing the location of the archive and the nature of the material held there which could theoretically be used to identify the interviewees.

Interviewees will also be asked to sign a written consent form before the interview takes place. The consent form will also be signed by the researcher in the presence of the interviewee.

All data will be destroyed immediately after the project's completion in order to ensure its continued confidentiality. It is acknowledged by the researcher that participation in the project is completely voluntary. This means that participants will have the right to ask for the interview to be terminated at any time and also for audio recording to be stopped.

### **Interview Questions**

1. Please give me a brief overview of the kind of collections held at the Nottinghamshire Archives.
2. Would it be fair to say that the majority of visitors to the archives are white, middle class and over the age of forty?
3. What role do you think archives can play in shaping identity?

4. Do the archives hold any items or collections related to ethnic or religious or ethnic minorities?
5. How often do these items or collections get used?
6. Who uses them?
7. Do you know why they want to access these collections?
8. Do you think that anything could be done to raise awareness of these items?
9. Can you think of any reason why these collections might not be used?
10. Could you tell me a bit about the Nottingham and District Community Relations Council collection?
11. Could you tell me about the 'Forbidden Love' project and exhibition and how it relates to the history of ethnic minority groups in Nottinghamshire?
12. Have you done any outreach work with the African Caribbean communities and other minority groups in Nottinghamshire?
13. Have done any work with younger people from ethnic minority backgrounds to try get them interested in using the archives?

**N.B. Questions will not necessarily appear in this order and maybe phrased slightly differently. The interview will be semi-structured and therefore the interviewer will not be following a script.**

## **Appendix 2: Original list of Codes**

**Who?**

A1. General Demographics

A2. Difficulty in measuring demographics

A3. Ethnic Minorities

A4. Academic

**What are they used for?**

B1. General Interest

B2. Education

B3. Exhibitions

B4. Academic research

B5. Housing/ Community History

B6. Family History

B7. Voluntary Organisations

**Barriers**

- C1. Lack of interest
- C2. Lack of records
- C3. Not recorded in main sources e.g Church of England Parish registers
- C4. Perception of irrelevance
- C5. Fear of trying something new
- C6. Lack of resources
- C7. Difficulty maintaining momentum/interest
- C8. Don't know they exist
- C9. Highly specialist material e.g Virk Coll/Not relevant to general ethnic pop.
- C10. Cultural sensitivities
- C11. Language (archivist not knowing language)
- C12. Preservation/ restrictions on access
- C13 Not feeling part of history city or country

C14-Language of Archivists

C15- Recruitment of ethnic minorities

C16- Lack of long term history

C17- Info cannot be trusted as recorded during time of prejudice

C18- Not feeling comfortable in social institutions

**What resources are available?**

D1- Religious

D2- Oral history

D3- Racial Equality

D4- Racist Lit

D5- Housing

D6-Community History

D7- Hospital Records

D8- Community Archives

**Identity**

E1- Archives role in shaping identity

E2-Making a connection with 'real' history/social history

**F-Outreach Work**

F1. Deposit of records

F2- Examples of Outreach Work

F3.Partnership (e.g. with libs)

**G-Publications**

**H-Community Archives**

**I-Collection Policies**

**J- The Future**



### **Appendix 3: Black Cultural Archives transcript**

Me: First of all could you give me an overview of the kind of collections that you have here?

Archivist: Ok. Um we have mainly archives; I can't tell you the square metreage um but a few. I think we've got about 300 objects and some library material but the majority of it is archives. Um our biggest collection is the Runnymede which are, they're a race relations think-tank we've got quite a lot of their research papers and some of their periodicals and their library. We should be getting in their governance records when we move to Raleigh Hall. We've got our own collections, quite a lot of periodicals and a very large ephemera collection as well.

Me: Right. What kind of things do you have in the ephemera collection?

Archivist: We've got posters, leaflets, kind of book, um God all sorts of things, er basically a lot of ephemera items from about the, about 80s til present. So we collect, we're constantly collecting ephemera items and we've a really large theatre poster collection which has come in handy cause we're doing a project with the National Theatre and on Black British theatre in the 80s and 90s. So, Ephemera it's not really what archives would collect but taken as a whole it's quite an interesting kind of look at kind of culture and how that's and what is interesting so you can kind of see development which at least at the time isn't very interesting.

Me: Do you think that ephemera collection is probably more important to this archive than other ones or is it hard to say?

Archivist: Um it's really hard to say because we do kind of collect ephemera from other institutions as well so we've got kind of leaflets and posters for maybe the V& A or the British Library on stuff they're doing kind of chose it as whole rather than just what one institution's doing.

Me: Right.

Archivist: So it's hard to say.

Me: Right, so progression through time, changes through time.

Archivist: Yeah.

Me: Changes through time.

Archivist: It's what people... I think with our collection because it started as a community organisation, it's what the community found important at the time which is quite interesting. Um If you're looking back at what was key then it's really helpful rather than it's not artificially created.

Me: Have you tried to carry on down those kind of roots?

Archivist: Yeah, I do, we still do collect ephemera um I think in about March the National Theatre did 'Room on a rainbow Shore' which is based in Jamaica, so we've got the um poster and I think a leaflet for that so we've still collected that. Um but you can, I think we've got the original ones, so you can kind of see how that's changed it's, that's quite interesting.

Me: Do you have any more like historical records dating back further?

Archivist: Oh! Um, the oldest one we've got I think will date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and we've got the plantation records um for a plantation in Jamaica, it's called the Gayle Papers and that's quite interesting because it's indentures and it's kind of got slaves and their occupations for the sale of that plantation and that's probably one of the oldest document we've got and we've also got material relating to the, a family called the Barber-James family and they were around in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. So we've kind of got um an Edwardian Black family and it kind of just traces the history back, but as I said, our collection policy does focus on the 19, the post 1940s most of our collection relates sort of mainly to the 70s and 80s than before.

Me: Right. Why did you decide to focus on that period of time?

Archivist: I mean, I can't, I wasn't here so I'm really not sure but I guess the decision was taken like 1947/1948 was when the Windrush, um sort of first wave, big wave of immigration happened so I guess it was kind of important to focus on the kind of modern story because archives also collect, like the London Metropolitan Archives, their kind of remit is to collect on that and sort of that local studies library and archives collect on that. So I think it's kind of a, where we can excel is on that kind of..

Me: They collect on earlier?

Archivist: Yeah, probably. Not, I don't think they do it kind of knowingly maybe but they probably will have collected and also in terms of although there've been Black people in Britain since sort of the

Roman times, the mass immigration happened in the 40s,50s,60s so that's kind of a good place to start. As I said we're kind of looking at whether that is still appropriate but it probably...

Me: Ok. What role do you think archives can play in shaping people's identities?

Archivist: Um well the Black Cultural Archives were started in 1981 as a direct kind of antithesis to the White society cause it started after the Brixton uprisings of the 1980s and our, one of the co-founders Len Garrison, he worked um, in the kind of community and he could see that in terms of education, the education system looked at kind of White middle class men and if you're a young black child, you can, in terms of your identity you've got nothing to look at and so where our strengths lay is in telling a history, what is possibly an untold history, so and taking that into schools. So our learning team put together packs we can go in schools and we can say, you know history's made up of lots of different people and it's kind of different narrative, people can look at and that's definitely one of our strengths...

Me: So how have the, the local school children reacted?

Archivist: I think people find it really positive. As I say, um I haven't been here very long but our event a couple of months ago with South London schools and their teachers and we took some of our information, kind of copies of our archives out there and they found it really, really good to kind of tell a different story but that's the kind of thing that's really hard to quantify.

Me: Yeah.

Archivist: But I mean we've had a few school groups in her and I think they've kind of found it amazing to think that I just didn't know that and think it does kind of make people feel ...

Me: And erm do you think that the work you do would contribute to like improving educational outcomes for particularly for Black children?

Archivist: I hope so. Actually I've been doing work a kind of education subject guide, I think that at the moment only 33% of Black boys leave school with five or more GCSEs at grade A to C and I think that's definitely a way of engaging people with history but I mean it's, it's quite hard but I mean kind of showing what you can achieve and people have achieved it so try and get over, that you know kind feel 'ah that's not for me' but I mean I'm not really in the outreach teams kind of...

Me: Right. Ok.

Archivist: But it's what I hope will happen.

Me: I think it might take a bit longer for it to for the effects to be seen

Archivist: Yeah, I think hopefully once we've moved to Raleigh Hall we can engage on a much wider I scale. It can be a bit kind of obvious then, we can think about bringing people in and go out into schools but yeah I think it, I think in time it will filter through.

Me: Um does your work with schools focus on London or further afield?

Archivist: We're hoping it'll be further afield but I mean because at the moment we are kind of limited to London but we've opened and we have um space to ...We've had a group from Norwich in and I think they'll be a group from Birmingham coming in. So I think it is getting out there.

Me: Right ok. How do think um in your opinion Black people are represented in more mainstream museums and archives and libraries?

Archivist: Um, especially since I've started working here I've started noticing it. I think before I started working here it didn't really occur to me, I don't know if that means that it's kind of not there um but I have noticed it more and it is quite specialist and I think that one of our strengths is that people are looking forward to us opening and there is a sense that the Black experience isn't really catered for in a museum but I don't know if that's because of sensitivities aspect where people, I mean the heritage profession is notoriously White, middle class and maybe that people don't feel that they can ...history whereas as we as a Black organisation, not that we can tell everybody's history because ...but we can tell it confidently maybe. The British Museum and the British Library are kind of trying to do it ...to look at your collections and maybe see what you've got.

Me: Yeah.

Archivist: I think we're definitely in a niche. I think there's a lot to done in getting out there.

Me: So you think that perhaps a lot of places might have things but they don't have the time to...?

Archivist: Yeah, exactly ...have the knowledge because if the kind of names that are around but unless you research into who they are you might not necessarily realise that they were Black maybe.

Me: Like you might see something but not realise..

Archivist: But I think in terms of social ... it's a Black problem, I think it's just collecting policies ...you collect what you feel comfortable with and collect what you..and it's only kind of now there's a lot more social, interest in social history that it's not I mean a lot of archivists might be looking back at their collections with a particular ...One of my friends works in Preston and she does a lot with the LGBT community and kind of looking at collections with a different eye ..kind of doing that I don't think ...look for it specifically.

Me: Yeah, so people ...what they can.

Archivist: Yeah what they can but it's just kind of ..really a lot of places are ..time and funding.

Me: Erm what barriers do you think there are for Black people accessing cultural institutions in general?

Archivist: I think to be honest ..um not being for them. I mean I was, I heard some weird statistic which was like by the time someone's 16 ...been to a museum or ..institution with their school ...quite a dry experience and think people are put off by it and see it as being White history. I think it's just kind of getting over that barrier ...quite scary, especially archives where there's a lot of ...and you kind of



have to know a bit about it. I think it's trying to get over that but because we're you know a community organisation, we are a bit different, yeah in the way we approach things especially here because we're very open plan ..Researchers and we can only take a small amount of people anyway once a week. I think when people come in they feel a bit more part of it and it's kind of not as strict but it's a different atmosphere ...people.

Me: Not a stuffy atmosphere.

Archivist: But again that's not particularly Black.

Me: So you don't think there are specific barriers for Black people?

Archivist: Um I think there are a lot of possibly social barriers.

Me: So it's more a social than a ...

Archivist: Yeah, because unfortunately in terms of economic ability. I think the same number of maybe White working class people visit archives but because Black people tend to be in the lower, I mean that's a massive generalisation but possibly in the lower kind of class for want of a better word then maybe it's ...it's a social thing but unfortunately because of ...

Me: It's not because they think they won't be represented maybe?

Archivist: Yeah, I think that's what it is.

Me: It's that plus...

Archivist: I don't think Black people are less interested in history, a lot, we get a lot of interest from people but I think it's just there might be the perception that there isn't anything ...archives for them but that might not necessarily ..but it's just kind of, I think if you're introduced to it at a younger age then maybe you'll be more comfortable with that sort of thing.

Me: Um so it's not that they, it is possibly that they think that they're not part of the history of this country or something like that?

Archivist: Yeah, not that they feel that their not part of the history because they know they are but how that's represented in ...but until you start researching you ...I think it's maybe up to archives to start pitching it to people and presenting it for people rather than waiting for people to come to them.

Me: Yeah. Do you feel like you're well-known in the Black community?

Archivist: I think we've still got a lot to do to raise our profile nationally. I think Brixton, Lambeth, South London Black community we're quite well-known because we do, do outreach events and go to quite a lot of ...and I think we're going to the Lambeth Country show in August.

Me: Laughs

Archivist: The Lambeth 'Country Show', yeah.

Me: What's that?

Archivist: Um events in a local park, various kinds of organisations go there possibly anyway, I'm not sure I've never been but anyway that kind of thing and I think we are obviously ...When we're in this big building in Brixton gets people interested but nationally I think not so much.

Me: Right, yeah.

Archivist: Our capacity as I say is quite small, we actually ...but we're kind of getting out there.

Me: Do you think if people come here or see your website and things it might make them more comfortable with going to other archives and libraries?

Archivist: Um.

Me: Or do they think of you as totally separate?

Archivist: I think that's what we're kind of hoping. It's a struggle but a kind of personal goal is to get people comfortable with archives and then going to more mainstream places and if you want, archives. I mean, I can't, it's what I can hope for but whether it actually what happens

Me: Ok. Do you work with any other Black organisations?

Archivist: Um we, not, not at the moment, we do have a few partnerships but we don't ...with Lambeth Archives and Lambeth Council but no other organisations but in terms of partnership work, not at the moment.

Me: Do you think when you move you might start doing...?

Archivist: I think definitely, when we get into our project plan and start doing exhibitions we'll, we will have to start working with other organisations just to kind of build our experience cause once we're kind of ...I think we kind of need to borrow items for the new building.

Me: Why do people come to the archives? What kind of reasons do they come here for?

Archivist: Um ...quite academic reader, research kind of profile. We've had a lot of people recently doing research the uprisings in 1981 and 1985 which is sparked off quite a lot by what happened last year and we've got collections on that and we've ...that kind of social and also the Runnymede brings in quite a lot research on community, policing, um uprisings so that's kind of mainly and we get a lot of school ....especially with the Citizenship GCSE and..

Me: So they've tried to work that in ...?

Archivist: I think there is one on identity and diversity so it's kind of working that in as well which is quite helpful for them. We don't get many people coming in for kind of personal research but we're not really geared up for that because ...

Me: So you don't have the sort of...

Archivist: No.

Me: So you wouldn't have someone coming in to research their family or anything like that.

Archivist: No.

Me: No, you don't have that?

Archivist: We don't collect like Parish registers, baptismal information or census we just don't have that.

Me: So they'd have to go to Lambeth?

Archivist: Yeah. I think we will possibly run sessions on telling people to go you know...but you know we don't have that information unless it's just kind of, you know, incidental.

Me: What kind of age demographic is it? Is it mainly academics, like school children and then?

Archivist: I can't really speak for the learning tea, because they go out to schools and do ...but in terms of research, um reader profiles, generally female, 19 to 35s with a degree um or postgraduate and 50/50 almost Black and ethnic minority and White.

Me: Right ok.

Archivist: That's quite mixed so it's ...

Me: Even though it's the Black Cultural Archives it's still 50/50; why do you think that it?

Archivist: Again I think it's just shows definite socio-economic in terms of...Um we get quite a lot, we get quite a lot of international people coming in kind of looking at the ...

Me: Comparison?

Archivist: Yes, comparison between the American Civil Rights movement and the Black Civil Rights movement particularly. So that's something that comes up ...but I think it's just kind of at universities have, get a lot more kind of M.A. students it's just whether universities offer the course for you to do the research as well because I, I mean when I was at university I don't think I would have had much of an option to come and research here unless your dissertation and can choose having a tutor who will be able to support you in your...

Me: So is it the kind of the types of, the like periods of history that universities focus on?

Archivist: Yeah, that would, that would kind of be able to ...

Me: They're not often interested in Black history?

Archivist : I'm not, I mean it's hard to kind of talk about the university sector without kind of not being in it and not you know but I think from my own experience I would have really, found it really interesting doing a dissertation on something similar to what we have here but just kind of didn't know about it. Kind of getting BCA's name into the university sector so people can start researching and generating that kind of interest. Um but then again we've only been going since the 1980s, so it's only thirty years of history and think you know we need a bit of you know distance to be able to start looking back and really being able to judge I guess so maybe in like 10, 20 years' time what we've collected in the 80s and 90s will start to come to the fore if that makes sense.

Me: People will want to look back?

Archivist: Yeah, as I say quite a lot of people are interested in our Black women's movement oral histories um because that was kind of the fifties and sixties. Maybe it was a bit too close and now you're kind of further away really to start to... Does that make sense?

Me: Yeah, that's what I was trying to say about maybe Black people think the, most of them, their families have only been here since the late forties maybe they think interesting because it's not...

Archivist: Because it's just history.

Me: Yeah, because it's just too recent, kind of within living memory

Archivist: Yeah.

Me: I dunno if you think that.

Archivist: Maybe, but yeah I think there is still that, also sort of maybe because it is too recent kind of if you're interested in a certain period. I think what we're always trying to get at is that although we only collect from the forties, there has been a near constant Black presence in Britain and we haven't just haven't collected on it ourselves.

Me: Yeah.

Archivist: It's kind of out there cause, I dunno if you saw the BBC programme on mixed race Britain.

Me: I think I did actually.

Archivist: It was quite interesting but in places Bristol and Wales and Liverpool because...

Me: I don't know if I saw all of it actually.

Archivist: Well they're just saying that since you know since forever in especially port cities there's always been Black communities so it's just trying to get over that idea that in the forties people just didn't spring up from nowhere, there were reasons why people came.

Me: And do you think some younger Black people might not be aware of the longer...?

Archivist: Possibly and that is again just kind of a fault with the education system and again hoping we'll be able to go in to schools and say to people you know, 'this is actually', you know.

Me: Yeah. Um.

Archivist: I mean quite a lot of the information that I've been looking at does really heavily say that when you're at school you might be, if you're ethnic minority, you might be turned off history because even if you're, as as a girl you might just imagine history that was just always loads of men doing stuff.

Me: Yeah, White men.



Archivist: Yeah, history was totally made up of those people you don't really get to hear about instead of people like, you know, you. Parliament now is just made up of maybe fifty per cent of people who went to public school and that's not my history, it's not most people's history and just maybe schools are now starting to kind of look, we've had really positive teachers coming to us saying you know they are more interested in teaching a more kind of social history but that's kind of government policy to drive. But I mean as hard as it is to say but the institutional racism in the fifties, sixties, seventies I mean even the eighties just denied people their history, I mean if you've had thirty, forty years of that it's hard to just suddenly you know switch between extremes. Does that make sense? Kind of if your parents

Me: If your parents don't.

Archivist: Yeah, if that's your parents experience it might, your parents are the ones who you know are going to when you're young, take you to museums. If you know when they were young it was quite highbrow, quite white then they might not have wanted to go and they might not take their children and then you're waiting for the school to take you and the school doesn't really have time or kind of health and safety, it's quite difficult to take that out children. You know I think it's just kind of getting out the message, you know, we are here.

Me: Is there anything you think's particularly underused in your collections?

Archivist: Um...quite (long pause). Our own records aren't really used, like our own organisational records and we've also got the papers of the Black and Asian Studies , BASA and they do a lot of work in lobbying the government um to change the curriculum and they've got a lot of research essays in there and they're not used very often either. And I don't know if it's something to do with the way we've catalogued it cause that can make a big difference as well as to what um what prominence you put things and how you just catalogue it because a lot of people come to archives now from Google or from they expect it to be online and if it's catalogued in a slightly odd way or just in and just in a maybe the key words aren't there then that might make it difficult to find. That goes back to what I was saying about local author, local government archives and local studies libraries- if they were to recatalogue things, they might find a lot more interesting, but again that's a lot of time and kind of knowledge to go back and do it.

Me: Do you think that um you've been able to teach people outside of the Black community more about Black history and perhaps change their views?

Archivist: Um, again it's hard to say, I mean that's kind of not really, I can't really, I can't really quantify how many people. I mean because I can't..

Me: Yeah. Do you think you could, that could be a role that...?

Archivist: I think in definitely in terms of going into schools um and teaching kind of mixed er mixed schools basically or that kind of teaching. Because I mean one of our kind of points is that Black

history, is British history. It's not I mean, we do focus on the Black aspect because that kind of been maligned but in terms of history, it's still the history of Britain- race relations is the history of Britain the seventies and eighties. You know, you know a lot about Black people fighting in the First and Second World War and you don't really, I think it's coming more to the fore now..

Me: Do you have anything on that, much on that?

Archivist: We don't have much on that, I think it falls slightly outside of our, I think the Imperial War Museum kind of looks at those aspects I mean you know it's trying to kind of enforce that it wasn't you know Britain had a large, something like ninety per cent of the world at one point, maybe not though but a large proportion of the world. The majority of those people were Black and when you know you're learning about it at school, there's just the Nazis but there isn't much emphasis played on that, so I think it's just trying to reposition in history slightly.

Me: Um why have you not included Asian people do you think? Is that just the roots of the..?

Archivist: That's an interesting question and that's something we, we do grapple with. Um I think that's kind of a board level discussion, it's quite difficult because also as you may know the kind of notion of 'Black' has changed but I think it's within, I was, you know I think I've read things where people where like you know when I came come to Britain I didn't realise I was Black until I came to England. It's kind of like when you're in the Caribbean because ninety per cent of people are Black, it's not something, you don't really, you only identify with things against other things um and at the moment I think Black

is quite narrowly defined as being people of African or Caribbean origin but in the sort of sixties or seventies it was Asians as well.

Me: Right.

Archivist: But I know that doesn't really answer your question. It's really hard, I think that it's just within the Black community people are African or their African-Caribbean and their Black British and possibly it's only White people that see everyone as Black. But there are very keen divisions even really within the African continent, you know Africa's made up of lots of different countries, in the Caribbean, somebody who's from Jamaica's very different from somebody from Grenada. I mean 'I'm not Black, I'm Jamaican', you know that kind of thing and it's the White society who are 'oh you're either White or not' who lumps everyone together. But in terms of why we only collect African...

Me: But you represent all of those groups?

Archivist: Yeah, I mean there's no kind of

Me: And do you represent mixed race people as well?

Archivist: Um yeah, we do. Um but I think it's how people identify themselves. Whereas um I think, I mean I don't really have that much knowledge of theory but I think there's an idea that maybe the Asian community don't want to be seen as part of the Black Community.

Me: Yeah.

Archivist: I'm not, I mean I can't that's just my ...but we don't collect on Asians. That might change.

Me: OK. Um I think I've asked all my questions now. Thank you, thanks very much.

Archivist: That's ok.

Recording starts again...

Archivist: In terms of the community aspect, most of our collections have come from the community which started, happened at the time in Brixton and Brixton didn't have a very high Asian population and so I think that's just kind of continuing on um what the collections that were started and I think it's just kind of the makeup of the original community that kind of..

Me: Carried on?

Archivist: Yeah, sets the tone and had we started in Southall which is a bit more mixed er it might have been a different story. But yeah, so that's what I wanted to say really, it's an accident of history as well.

Me: Have the media been interested in your work at all? Have you had television companies or anyone else?

Archivist: Um we do get quite a few people not interested in our work as an organisation, interested in what we have. Unfortunately there is occasionally the people come to, 'oh you're a Black organisation, you'll be able to tell us how it is' and it's just kind of it's all very vague. It's kind of 'ah I'm

looking for information about Black people, can you help?' and you're just kind of um 'specifically what do you want to know?'. It's kind of again you know Black is such a vague term, so it's kind of almost laziness when people come to us and are like 'oh yeah you can speak for the Black community' and you're like 'well, if there is such a thing as a Black community we would only be able to speak from our perspective. It's not like you would go to the Queen and be like, 'oh you're White, you can speak for the entire White community'. You know it's that kind of that there are a lot less, there are a lot fewer Black people than there are White people but you wouldn't expect there to be, there isn't such a thing as a White community.

Me: Yeah.

Archivist: And it's that kind of weird...

Me: But have you had any examples of people who are like genuinely interested from the media?

Archivist: Um, I mean I dunno. We haven't had, I mean I've not dealt with. Well, saying that actually our contractors went into administration a couple of months ago and there was quite a bit of media interest about that. So there was interest but I mean I think the contractors were quite a big company and I think it was kind of linked to the recession and there was coverage in the Guardian about it as well which was quite interesting. But we don't get people coming in daily asking us about our, what we do. We do get people to help them with programmes but I think maybe in the build up to us moving there might be a bit more interest.

Me: Right. So there are not any like specific tv programmes you've worked on or anything?

Archivist: Not me personally but I think there have been some. I think, 'Heir Hunters'? I think we might have done a bit of work with them. Um and (pause), we do kind of get a few kind of but not constantly and as I say it was before my time. I think there was quite a bit of interest when the riots, riots last year were happening. Again, it's kind of for us to get ourselves out there as well cause even on Google, when you google us, I don't know if you've found this but we're quite low down.

Me: Ooh I can't remember actually.

Archivist: But we don't come up as BCA which is what people know us as.

Me: Oh right.

Archivist: You have to type 'Black Cultural Archives'.

Me: Right. Thank you.

Tape on again....

Me: Um do you think you've had, have you been influenced by America and some of the work...?

Archivist: Not me personally but I think, not even..ah yes because the original plans for the Black Cultural Archives were based on the Schomburg and I can't remember where it is but I think it's in

America um but that's the national Black organisation there and so I think they were looking to America um quite a lot of, quite a lot of um a lot leadership and it comes through in quite a lot the collections we have as well um the collections of the Black Women's movement and a lot of them, they're oral histories and a lot of the women talk about going over to America and meeting the um Black women in America, feeding that into um their work. But maybe not so much now but I think the sixties America were leading the way in race relations.

Me: Yeah, ok. Um do you think perhaps, I've read somewhere that perhaps Black British people sometimes identify with African American culture rather than Black British culture? Perhaps because they don't, I dunno it's not exposed as much?

Archivist: I think that was probably true I think in the 80s and 90s but I think if you think about a long history of racism um and the kind of almost rejection of Black culture in England for a long, long time. I mean kind of if you look at programmes of the 50s and 60s and 70s, there's no Black presence and there's just kind it was just this is the way it is. I dunno if it was of the politics, kind of conservative you know, if you want, if you want to come to Britain, there's was quite a big kind of integrationist, kind of assimilationist, you're either British and you have to comply with our mode of Britishness you know stiff upper lip and if you didn't fit in with that you were kind of rejected. Whereas in America and as multiculturalism kind of comes in in the nineties there was more of an acceptance of difference and in America there was a Civil Rights movement that had more kind of key Black figures which you could look to.



Me: Yeah.

Archivist: Now, I don't possibly not as much because of the kind of growing even people you know like Dizzee Rascal is kind of a more homegrown, more British culture that you can look to now.

Me: They don't rap in an American accent.

Archivist: No, no and they're proud to be British. I think it's just kind of the space to have that culture whereas in the past maybe there was a rejection of British culture in search of other things but now there's kind of less so kind of a more of kind own British scene and people like you know Noel Clarke the director?

Me: Yeah.

Archivist: Very British, kind of 'Attack the Block' that's very British. (unclear)

Me: Ok. Thank you.

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## **University Research Ethics Application Form**

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## for Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

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This form has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

**Complete this form if** you are an **undergraduate or a postgraduate-taught student** who plans to undertake a research project which requires ethics approval via the University Ethics Review Procedure.

Your Supervisor decides if ethics approval is required and, if required, which ethics review procedure (e.g. University, NHS, Alternative) applies.

If the University's procedure applies, your Supervisor decides if your proposed project should be classed as 'low risk' or potentially 'high risk'.

**\*PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DEPARTMENT MAY USE A VARIATION OF THIS FORM:  
PLEASE CHECK WITH THE ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR IN YOUR DEPARTMENT\***

This form should be accompanied, where appropriate, by all Information Sheets / Covering Letters / Written Scripts which you propose to use to inform the prospective participants about the proposed research, and/or by a Consent Form where you need to use one.

Further guidance on how to apply is at:

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure)

Guidance on the possible routes for obtaining ethics approval (i.e. on the University Ethics Review Procedure, the NHS procedure and the Social Care Research Ethics Committee, and the Alternative procedure) is at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval)

**Once you have completed this research ethics application form in full, and other documents where appropriate, check that your name, the title of your research project and the date is contained in the footer of each page.**

**If your Supervisor has classed the project as 'low risk':**

- Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your Supervisor; and

- Sign and date **Annex 1** of this form and provide a paper copy to your Supervisor.

**Important Note for Supervisors:**

Following the ethics review the Supervisor must provide the academic department's Ethics Administrator with a copy of the 'low risk' research ethics application that s/he reviewed and a completed Ethics Reviewer's Comments Form indicating the ethics decision that s/he took in relation to it. The Ethics Reviewer's Comments Form can be downloaded here: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/universityprocedure2/reviewersc](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/universityprocedure2/reviewersc) The Ethics Administrator reserves the right to consult the Chair of the academic department's Ethics Review Panel (or equivalent) if s/he has concerns that projects classed as low risk should in fact have been classed as potentially high risk.

**If your Supervisor has classed the project as potentially 'high risk':**

- Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your department's Ethics Administrator; and

- Ask your Supervisor to sign and date **Annex 2** of this form and provide a paper copy of it to your department's Ethics Administrator.

Ethics Administrators are listed at:

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.99105!/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.99105!/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf)

## **University Research Ethics Application Form for Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students**

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**I confirm that I have read the current version of the University of Sheffield 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue', as shown on the University's research ethics website at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy)**



**A1. Title of research project:** An evaluation of the available resources through which people from minority backgrounds can research the history of their communities'.

**A2. Name of Student:**

Department: Information Studies

Email: lhealy1@sheffield.ac.uk

Tel.: 07771736611

**Name of Supervisor:** Andrew Madden

**A3. Proposed Project Duration:**

Start date: As soon as ethics approval is given.      End date: 03/09/2012

**A4. Mark 'X' in one or more of the following boxes if your research:**

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- involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
- involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
- involves children or young people aged under 18 years
- involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose
- involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) \*
- involves testing a medicinal product \*
- involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) \*



involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care \*

involves investigating a medical device \*

\* If you have marked boxes marked \* then you also need to obtain confirmation that appropriate University insurance is in place. To do this email [insurance@shef.ac.uk](mailto:insurance@shef.ac.uk) and request a copy of the 'Clinical Trial Insurance Application Form'.

It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University's Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue before completing the following questions. Please note that if you provide sufficient information about the research (what you intend to do, how it will be carried out and how you intend to minimise any risks), this will help the ethics reviewers to make an informed judgement quickly without having to ask for further details.



**A5. Briefly summarise:**

- i. The project's aims and objectives:**  
(this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

To find out what resources related to minority groups are available, who uses them and for what purpose.

- ii. The project's methodology:**  
(this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

I plan to conduct semi-structured interviews with archivists and people working in information resource centres.

**A6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?**

The risk of any physical or psychological harm to participants is negligible.

**A7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)**

The risk to my personal safety is very low, as the interviews will be conducted in a public place. I will be travelling outside the university and the local area for my

interviews but this poses no risk over and above what would be expected when travelling on public transport.

**If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.**

I will leave the contact details for where I am going with my family and plan my journey in advance.

**A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:**

i. **Identified?** I used the internet to find out where significant collections of material relating to minority communities were likely to be held.

ii. **Approached?** I have contacted a number of organisations via email.



iii. **Recruited?** Participation will be confirmed via email.

A9. **Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?**

YES  NO

**If informed consent or consent is NOT to be obtained please explain why.**

Further guidance is at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent)

**A9.1.** This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed consent:

**How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):**

I will ask participants to sign a written consent form prior to interview and will send them background information in advance via email.

**A10. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?**

I will only be interviewing people in connection with their professional role and will not be recording any personal information about them. However, I will be describing the location of the archive and the material held there but will inform the interviewees of this in advance.

**A11. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)**

No compensation will be offered.

**A12. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?**

YES  NO

**A12.1.** This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:

**How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?**

I will provide the interviewees with an information sheet and ask them to sign a written consent form prior to interview.

Guidance on a range of ethical issues, including safety and well-being, consent and anonymity, confidentiality and data protection' are available at:

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes)

## **For Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students**

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### Student Declaration

(The student completes Annex 1 if the Supervisor has classed the student's proposed research project as 'low risk')

The Supervisor needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated paper copy of this Annex 1 'the Student Declaration'.

→ Full Research Project Title: **An evaluation of the available resources through which people from minority backgrounds can research the history of their communities.**

**In signing this Student Declaration I am confirming that:**

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University's 'Good Research Practice Standards': [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good)
- The above-named project will abide by the University's 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue': [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy)
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I undertake to adhere to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- I will inform my Supervisor of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- I will inform my Supervisor if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.

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- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. my Supervisor and the Ethics Administrator) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- **I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.**

→ Name of Supervisor: **Andrew Madden**

→ Name of student: **Lucy Healy**

→ **Signature of student: Lucy Healy**

→ Date: **02/05/2012**

## For Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

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### Supervisor Declaration

(The Supervisor completes Annex 2 if s/he has classed the student's proposed research project as potentially 'high risk')

The Ethics Administrator needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated paper copy of this Annex 2 'the Supervisor Declaration'.

→ Full Research Project Title: **An evaluation of the available resources through which people from minority backgrounds can research the history of their communities.**

**In signing this Supervisor Declaration I am confirming that:**

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University's 'Good Research Practice Standards': [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good)
- The above-named project will abide by the University's 'Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue': [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy)
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I will undertake to ensure that the student adheres to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.



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- I understand that personal data about the student and/or myself on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- **I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I and/or the student wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.**

→ Name of Supervisor: **Andrew Madden**

→ Name of student: **Lucy Healy**

→ Signature of Supervisor:

→ Date: **02/05/2012**