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## History and Super Diversity

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**Abstract:** The article looks at the perspectives on history amongst adolescent children of different backgrounds living in inner-cities in England and builds on previous research in this area. The current article presents exploratory research which focuses on the views of particular groups of adolescents, namely those from long established settled immigrant communities; those from more recently arrived migrant and immigrant communities; and those from white indigenous communities. An inclusive, perspectival and dynamic approach towards history education is outlined and the underlying view of knowledge and implications for pedagogy of this approach discussed alongside comparisons with other approaches towards the subject. The exploratory work and analysis is used to generate a research agenda through which history for a super diverse society can be developed. Although the research was conducted in the English context, the issues it raises are pertinent elsewhere.

**Keywords:** history education; super diversity; perspectives

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### 1. Introduction

The article starts from several premises; firstly, that “the future, immediate and long-term, will inherently be typified by diversity issues” [1]. While immigration into the UK has traditionally focused on South Asians and Afro-Caribbean people, the experience of immigration over the past decade or so has become much more varied to include newer, smaller, less organised “legally differentiated and non-citizen immigrant groups” [1]. This new state of affairs means that diversity in the UK has

changed considerably and can be characterized as “super diversity” [1]. The article looks at the role of history education in such a society.

Secondly, the article starts from the premise that adolescence or youth is a significant stage in the development of identity [2]. Furthermore history, whether in the form of family stories or in the process of doing history and learning about history as a discipline, can be a significant contributor to the formation of identity [3]. History can “play a role in the mental household” of a person [3], through the human aptitude of thinking back and forth in time, by making sense of the past and constructing expectations for the future. In this way, history becomes trans-generational, and the stories it encompasses can become assets in the orientation to life [4].

There has been little research conducted into adolescents’ historical perspectives in England in recent years. Grever, Haydn and Ribbens [5] have carried out comparative survey research in UK and the Netherlands and Hawkey and Prior [6] have conducted case study research in English inner cities. Both projects reveal a complex picture; while minority ethnic groups do position themselves differently in relation to national historical narratives, there is also evidence of differences within same minority ethnic group [5], examples of hyphenated identities [7], and identities being constructed and expressed in diverse ways [1]. Research conducted beyond Britain has focused on more settled groups including minority ethnic communities. Epstein [8,9] looked at adolescent perspectives on the national narrative and racial diversity in US history focusing on white indigenous and African American students. Barton and McCully [10] focused on Protestant and Catholic students’ perspectives in Northern Ireland. Both studies found strong impact of community influences, particularly family members, on students’ ideas about history.

These sites of research are different from the newer and emerging world of increasing migration, trans-migration, and super diversity which is more varied and fluid. An [11] has carried out work looking at Korean Americans’ perspectives on the national narrative in the USA and identified migration status as a key factor in understanding accounts presented by different groups. The research here, therefore, set out to see whether individuals’ perspectives towards history made a contribution to identity amongst the individuals from the different groups that made up the sample.

While the UK may be becoming more diverse, there remain areas characterized by lack of diversity along with a lack of mobility. In comparison to a focus on students affected by migration, therefore, the research also focused on teenagers in white indigenous communities where low levels of academic achievement, lack of social mobility and limited economic opportunity have been characteristic features. The socio-economic problems associated with these communities are increasingly acknowledged and targeted as areas of government concern [12,13]. This research, therefore, also wanted to see whether history made a contribution to identity amongst children in this community and the extent to which this was similar or different to immigrant communities.

At the heart of this article is a concern with what and how we should teach students in history classes in an age of increasing super diversity.

## 2. Context: Why Do Children's Perspectives Matter?

History is the major site for construction of collective memory in contemporary society [14]. As a subject, history is a curriculum site that can be claimed, reclaimed and fought over as society shifts and changes. The many changes in society in recent years, from increased globalisation, anxiety over identity politics before and after 9/11, and increased migration, have all put strain on notions of national citizenship and identity.

In response to these shifts in society, politicians have tended to revert to a curriculum rooted in nation building, with a narrative of a common past and a shared national values and citizenship. In the UK, for example, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove [15] has called for a return to "traditional" teaching of British history "with children sitting in rows, learning the kings and queens of England", and lessons that "celebrate rather than denigrate Britain's role through the ages, including the Empire." [15]. Elsewhere the situation is similar [16,17].

Not everyone is so optimistic that such a curriculum would result in this presumed patriotism and social cohesion (see, for example, [5]). In the light of increased migration, some call for a more multicultural curriculum, with greater visibility being given to the achievements and contributions of minority ethnic groups and for "a more diffuse historical culture that reflects the changed, more complex society" [18].

A further position questions the value of history as a subject for some students. White [19] has suggested that history as a subject originated in the middle class values of the 19th century. He argues that its introduction as a subject in the national curriculum has "alienated many youngsters, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds" [19]. In its place, he calls for a curriculum based on aims rather than subjects in which students would learn through projects and themes and which would equip pupils to lead a flourishing personal and civic life in a modern liberal democracy. This position has gained ground in recent years in the UK where the place of history has been eroded in some schools [20]. While 48% of students educated in independent schools take the subject at GCSE exam level, only 30% of students in state schools do. In the more vocationally oriented Academies [21] the figures are even more dismal (in one academy just 5% were entered for GCSE history or geography for example) [22]. Disadvantaged students have been steered away from academic subjects towards semi-vocational qualifications which are of doubtful value to employers and, in times of high unemployment, of even less value. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate has had some impact on the number of students taking a humanities GCSE, although the imbalance between the state and independent sectors remains.

In light of these differing positions playing out at a policy level, this research aimed to elicit the views of students currently studying history against the backdrop of these culture wars.

## 3. The Research

The research was conducted in two schools in one city in the UK. School one is an inner city multi-ethnic school comprising of white indigenous, black Afro-Caribbean heritage BME (black and minority ethnic), and Asian heritage BME students. The school is in an area of increasing migration, so that the school population also includes a significant number of more recent immigrants mainly from Somalia but also from Eastern Europe. School two is an Academy (since September 2008) in an

area of some deprivation, unemployment, and social housing on the outskirts of the city. It comprises mainly white indigenous students but also a few recent immigrants mainly from Eastern Europe.

The sample of students were identified through discussion with the heads of history. They were all students who had a positive disposition towards history, enjoyed the subject, and who had opted to continue studying history beyond the age of 14 when it becomes an optional subject in schools. The students were all studying history at GCSE (exam qualification at age 16) level and were aged 14–15. Interviews were conducted with individual students on both sites. The semi-structured interviews focused on the students' experiences of history at school as well as what history they had learnt outside of school about and from family and community. In school 1, 10 students were interviewed; in school 2, 7 students were interviewed (see Appendix).

Both heads of history were new in post with plans to change the curriculum. The comments from the students are unlikely to reflect the perspectives of their teacher to any great extent since they had only recently been taught by them, although it is possible that they may reflect the views of their previous teachers [23].

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. History's Contribution to Identity

The white indigenous students from both sites gave responses which suggested that history played little part in contributing to their sense of identity. Most of the white indigenous students (particularly at school 2) lived close to other members of their extended families and saw them regularly. Some family stories had been passed down, but their contribution to any sense of identity was absent. Molly described a family story my great granddad in the war was on a lifeboat and he rescued loads of people. There were about 40 left who died but he couldn't save everyone. I can't remember. (Perhaps Dunkirk, but Molly didn't know). Similarly, Tom knew that both his grannies had been involved in the Blitz and that his uncle fought in the Falklands War but went on to say that we very rarely talk about history at home.

By contrast, the responses from the British born students from long established BME communities did indicate that history contributed to their sense of identity. Reba was able to talk at length about the experiences of grandparents on both sides of her family as well as recent discoveries family members had made ranging from family connections in Romania to Jamaica. Family history was clearly a live subject in her home. On studying the Holocaust at school she commented, I know quite a bit about it—my family is actually Jewish and it is quite a common conversation so I knew quite a lot about it already and I found it really interesting. Of course I knew a lot about it cos my family's Jewish. Similarly, Ahmed is familiar with his own family history,

I like to know about general knowledge of the world, especially stuff that's happened in the past, it intrigues me. Interviewer asks why that is? Maybe because of where I'm from—family names in Somalia—you tend to be born knowing about the history of your father's father and so on. I know a bit about my dad's dad gave him land from Ethiopia and parts of Somalia and Djibouti and stuff. I used to go sometimes to Djibouti—to see my Grandmother—not really any more. My dad used to talk a lot about how he used to travel a lot, he used to travel to Arabian countries, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya—to buy sheep—because my family used to own a lot of land. Great-Grandma used to have guards to keep

wild animals away, baboons and lions, which don't live there anymore. She used to have one gun—I don't know how they used to fight off the lions. When you go down like 18 names down the line there used to be a guy called Isaac, apparently he used to be a merchant and one time he came across oil—there are still stories about oil in Somalia today.

Despite having lived in UK all his life, he knows many family stories and retains a strong connection with his Somalian heritage and its cultural traditions.

Afzia, likewise, knows about her Pakistani heritage but also finds clear connections between this and her own life today,

My Grandad was in the partition split. Mum told me how his sister or someone they were related to picked up a baby that had been left—they couldn't take it over the border. She picked it up and looked after it. She lives in London now so I can see the connection. They moved from India to Pakistan. It's an interesting story but I'd like to know more about it. It's so close to me I think we should be able to learn more about it but we don't. Dad also tells me about when he was in Paksitan. All the traditions they have there like kite flying. I did it once. They tell me more about family stories.

Amongst those who moved to UK more recently, the picture was similar. Abdulahi, Ayaan, and Farah are all able to recount the details of how and why their parents moved from Somalia to England. Bahar knew about her family history in Pakistan where a relative had been a politician in Benazir Bhutto's party and was able to explain how the family moved to England via Germany and Holland. Jacob, despite limited English, was able to explain how his (great?) grandmother in Poland tells him about her experiences in the Second World War as well as stories of Poland's great past right through to stories of Solidarity and Lech Walensa. He concludes, "I think of myself as English, Poland is my history." Whilst all students, long established BME or more recently arrived, expressed a connection with their history, there were varying levels of interest. Omar, for example, says that he wants to hear about "my background and where I came from" and that he hears stories when he goes on holiday from family members. However, he goes on to say that he doesn't remember the stories!

In summary, from the small sample in this research, there appears to be little difference between old established BME and more recent arrivals in terms of history's contribution to identity. The greatest difference is between the white indigenous students, where links between history and identity are not much in evidence, and the BME students, where they are. This is, perhaps, not surprising since the BME students all share a migration experience (either personally or in recent generations) and such a major change is a key factor in explaining their current location.

#### *4.2. What Do You Think You Should Study in History?*

In answer to this question, the greatest differences in response were between the two schools and it is possible that this may in part be an effect of the previous teachers. In school 2, responses were rather non-committal other than to reiterate what they had been studying at school and particularly what they had been studying recently. In school 1, while two students gave similar non-committal responses, most students were able to express an opinion in response to the question. The white indigenous students in school 1 gave responses which suggested students should study their local area (Sarah); also "definitely stuff about Britain and how it wasn't all great because we live in such a multicultural society now—I guess we could be proud of it—of the fact that now we are a lot more understanding and how we're not like we were. But you go to some countries and or places and they're

not so....” (Tom). Tom’s response is interesting. He takes a critical stance towards Britain’s history as well as showing a clear commitment to multicultural society, which may well be in part due to his experience of growing up in a multicultural school.

Responses from long established or more recent immigrants indicate clear views about what history should focus on. For Afzia, her response shows a critical awareness and a view about what a multicultural school should offer, as well as indicating how history connects to her identity, “We learn about US, UK, Russia. We don’t study much on other countries. For me studying Pakistan would be a good place to do. We don’t have a wide enough range of things, we keep going back to the UK. Obviously I like to study about where I am but it would be a good thing to learn about other things. Dad’s family are still there and I go there. I’ve never learnt anything about Pakistan’s history except from my parents. We’re a really multicultural school so we should.”

Abdulahi’s response is similar, and he suggests a history curriculum in a globalising world needs to become broader, most of what we study is to do with Europe and America. We should learn more about Africa and Asia. We should learn more knowledge of a wider space than just a couple of continents.

The views of these students don’t sit comfortably with the views of politicians who recommend a traditional national history for the school curriculum. They also seem to confirm Stuurman and Grever’s position that, in a globalising world an inward-looking canon will become less and less convincing. In the end, it might make history simply irrelevant [24].

Not all responses related to issues of identity or diversity. In response to the question, “What do you learn from history”, the responses from both sites were more similar. Many students suggested they learnt useful skills which would help them with their exams (“how to structure your writing” Ayaan; “how to pick up information from sources” Abdulahi). Such instrumental answers were also mirrored in students’ responses to the question “Why did you decide to study history”? Responses included, “It looks good on your CV” (Tom) “I want to be a lawyer and it’s the first step” (Bahar; Georgia); “the skills I learn in history would help me in a wide range of careers” (Afzia); “I got a better grade in history and found it more fun” (Alex). It is quite clear that history is recognised as being a high status qualification and this is a motivation for many students opting to take it as a GCSE exam qualification.

Some students, all from school 1, gave responses which indicated a fairly high level of critical skills, thinking about the nature of the subject, and the contribution it can make to the way one lives.

Reba responds, “from history I have learnt to question what I see—“don’t trust sources”—I question everything. That’s why I like studying history—I like question everything so in the classroom if the teacher doesn’t explain everything I’m like what about this bit—I find it really interesting—it’s one of the few lessons I’m actually interested in.” It’s clear from her response that the critical skills that history develops are central to what she enjoys and values in the subject.

Sarah’s response is slightly different, “How to go about being with people. Partly from RE too. The ways to do things and the ways that really don’t work. Unconsciously you learn social skills better from learning about the past. Our school is such a different range of people and history helps us to all get on.” While history is not a mainspring in Sarah’s sense of identity, her response here suggests an understanding of how diversity (both in history and in her own school) offers her useful practical skills for life. Her response is an example of what Rusen describes as history beginning to “play a role in the

mental household of a subject”, developing the aptitude of thinking back and forth in time so that history can begin to offer a practical function in a person’s life [3].

Ahmed’s response similarly highlights practical skills for life, “When you don’t learn about stuff like history you tend to be narrow-minded—and only have one point of view—history teaches you to have many points of views. It should be compulsory—we would all have a broader view of the world.”

In answer to the question, “how have any groups been treated unfairly in the past?” many students on both sites identify the Jews and slaves involved in the slave trade. There is also some evidence that students identify issues which touch on their personal experiences.

In school 2, Georgia, not only recognises the contributions of the “small person” in history, but also, the experience of poverty, “Poor people are always looked down on in history but they make a big difference. For rich people, their lives were considered not worth living but when you look back on it what some of them have done is amazing. Like the pyramids, the poor made the pyramids.”

Molly, similarly identifies the experience of poverty “With MLK, how we thought differently with the colour of our skin, that was unfair. We’re all like the same. Also poor people weren’t treated the same. They weren’t important just because they didn’t have the money. It’s not always their fault and still today people are nasty to them.”

In school 1, there are a range of responses. Tom recognises that the victor writes the history, while Farah identifies “black people—like people who are not white basically—they are judged by the colour of their skin”. Such responses indicate that personal experience is a lens which influences how they view the world.

Students were asked whether there was anyone from history who they admire. Two students (both white indigenous) identified Winston Churchill as someone to admire in history for “the way he managed to keep his cool—the speeches he made were very inspiring” (Tom) and “he got people through the second world war” (Alex). Only two other students in school 2 identified anyone from history who they admired—again perhaps their limited exposure to any history might help to account for this. In both cases in school 2, the students identified Martin Luther King as someone to admire in history. In school 1, four students also identified Martin Luther King while other people worthy of admiration identified by one or two students in school 1 were Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Bob Marley, Suffragettes, Mother Theresa, Malcolm X and Alexander the Great.

## 5. Discussion

The number of students in the sample was small and caution is needed in drawing any firm conclusions. The discussion should be read as more tentative conclusions from which further research could proceed. Responses from students in the two schools varied hugely. Students in school 1, by and large, had a great deal to say about history, why they study it, what its value is, how it contributes to the way they live, how the subject in schools might be changed. In school 2, by contrast, the students, by and large, had very little to say about these questions. One explanation lies in the amount of time dedicated to the subject in the two schools. In school 1, history is a compulsory subject in years 7–9 before students choose their GCSE which starts in year 10. In school 2, by contrast, there is no humanities curriculum in year 7 (when children are taught topics in a primary style curriculum). In year 8 students then get just one year of history before making option choices for GCSEs which start in year 9. In school one, therefore, students receive 3 years of history before making their option

choices, while in school two they receive just one year. It is hardly surprising then that the students in school two have little to say about the subject. That schools are able to marginalize a subject to this degree is largely a result of a market-driven system which has come to dominate schools in UK and elsewhere in recent years. When schools are judged by high-stakes testing regimes which prioritize literacy and numeracy results, a subject like history can easily be dismissed as irrelevant or too difficult for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to engage with [25].

So the amount of time dedicated to studying history is one factor which helps to explain the limited responses that students in school two made to the questions asked in interview. Students in school 2 not only knew less history than their peers in school 1, but were also less well versed or practiced in the skills, processes and concepts that the subject aims to develop.

A second possible explanation for the differences between the two schools can be found when looking at what students on both sites had to say about the curriculum. There is evidence of students identifying the same people worthy of admiration in history across both sites. Confirming the findings of previous research [6], students in both schools identified Martin Luther King as someone who was worthy of admiration for his contribution to the development of civil rights. The identification of Martin Luther King may also suggest an implicit understanding of history as the study of injustice and the development of and struggle for civil rights (and both schools teach this in the pre GCSE history curriculum). Similarly, the local bus boycott was identified in both schools as an episode when black civil rights were struggled for and extended, a local example of the wider struggle for civil rights elsewhere. Interestingly, however, there was no mention in either school of the struggles of white working class in furthering the cause of civil rights. It is possible that this reflects an established visibility having been achieved for the contributions made by black pioneers in the cause of extending civil rights and greater democracy. This has become part of the established curriculum in all schools. Quite why there is no such equivalence coverage for pioneers in the white working class community, even in the school where this community was best represented, is an interesting question to explore. Ahonen [4] addresses a similar issue when she examines how the new reform curricula in Estonia and Germany responded to the collapse of communism around 1990. She describes how the revised curricula resulted in “new exclusions” in the curriculum [4], and goes on to ask whether a national curriculum can ever be truly socially inclusive. It appears that a similar process may be happening here with the traditional white working class losing some of its visibility in the history curriculum in England.

In the UK, the limiting of the powers of trade unions in the 1980s by the Thatcher government, and the declining interest in political parties and voting in elections, have resulted in one time standard topics such as the extension of the franchise and working class protest, not disappearing but, in some schools, slipping from the foreground of the curriculum [22,26,27]. Similarly, changes in the economic base of the country have given rise to changes in the class structure of the country with the result that the concept of class becomes a much more complex and difficult concept to tackle than previously. The fall of the USSR, the collapse of socialism, and the seeming triumph of western capitalism have all further eroded the place of working class history in the curriculum. Class has slipped from the focus in history classrooms and may even, perhaps, be regarded as a controversial subject to raise. By contrast, the increasing focus on ethnic and identity politics and discourses in society at large, has

had its impacts on the curriculum and may have contributed to the inclusion of Black Civil Rights as a more prominent element in the national canon of history teaching.

Some students, therefore, may be experiencing a double disadvantage in their experience of learning history. Not only do they have very little time, but also the visible presence of the white working class contribution to history has been eroded in the current curriculum. Hobsbawm's [28] lament at the end of the 20th century that we have lost our sense of history connecting us to place, time and community remains as pertinent as ever, "The destruction of the past or, rather, of the social mechanisms that link one's contemporary experience to that of earlier generations, is one of the most characteristic and eerie phenomena of the late 20th century. Most young men and women at the century's end grow up in a sort of permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in" [28].

The students in school 2 may face a third disadvantage, namely in relation to social capital. A much contested concept, Weller defines social capital as "the resources individuals and collectives derive from their social networks. Social capital is not an "object" but rather a set of interactions and relationships based on trust and reciprocity that have the potential to be transformative" [2]. It may be that the largely homogeneous nature of school 2 gives rise to strong networks within and between members of that community but with less contact beyond that homogeneous community. School 1, by contrast, is a much more heterogeneous community of interaction. Georgia in school 2, in identifying MLK as someone worthy of admiration, demonstrates her lack of ease and familiarity with knowing quite how to talk about the subject, "I don't want to sound rude like, but that black man who made it like so black people had the same rights as everyone else." This is in contrast to the way Sarah talks about how her understanding of diversity (both in history and in her own school) offers her useful practical skills for life (previously quoted). Since these are only two examples considerable caution is needed. Using Putnam's two-fold typology comprising bonding and bridging elements, students in school 2 may develop stronger bonding capital while those in school 1 may develop stronger bridging capital [12,29]. In terms of managing the complexities of living in a super diverse society or achieving social mobility, the bonding social capital of students in school 2 may serve the students less well than the bridging capital that students in school 1 may be well placed to develop.

There are issues around the visibility of some communities in the curriculum in both schools and the history that is taught in both schools includes a particular bundle of silences [30]. Much of the contribution made by the indigenous white working class in history is overlooked in the curriculum; and similarly little space is afforded in the curriculum for the histories of some immigrant communities. None of these exclusions sit comfortably with an increasingly super diverse and plural society.

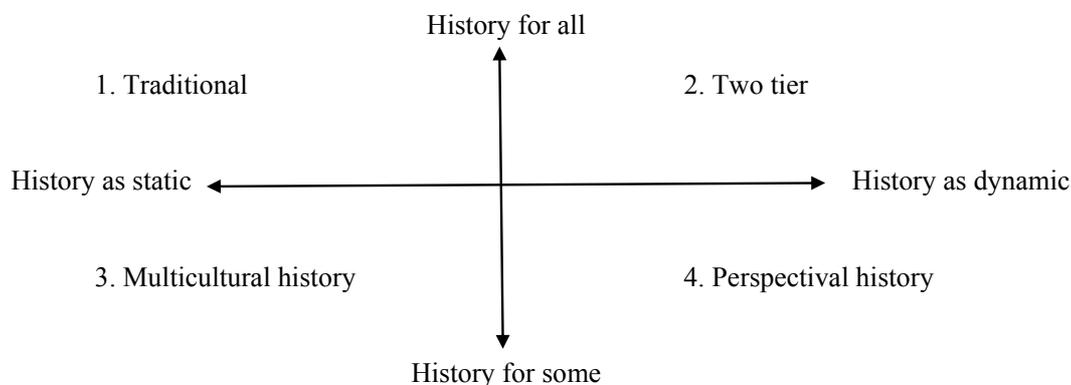
In moving forward to address these tensions, I will first raise cautions to be alert to before moving on to identify the research agenda which needs to be tackled. Firstly, a curriculum which recognises such exclusions and attempts to remedy them by making the excluded community more visible in the curriculum runs the danger of being tokenistic, a celebratory multiculturalism of "samosas, saris and steel bands" [31]. There is a danger that learning about such excluded experiences can become a substitute for learning challenging academic knowledge and skills. Certainly students on both school sites visited recognize that history is a high status subject and any dilution of its rigor in a gesture towards soft cultural celebration needs to be avoided.

Secondly, there is a need for caution around the categories used when we focus on diversity and exclusions from the curriculum. While current discourses, educational, media and political, include a focus on “cultural and ethnic diversity” [32], such catch-all categorizations, unless carefully handled, can be crude divisions to work with. There is a danger that such specification might conjure a perhaps fixed, monolithic or stereotyped image of what this diversity amounts to. In practice, this means that looking at the histories of such excluded communities will not necessarily speak to those students whose heritage is from such communities. The picture is more fluid, changing and ever evolving and such categorizations may be helpful only as “pragmatic starting points” [2]. Class is a “shifting signifier” [33], “stereotypes cut deep, and people are complex” [34]. The challenge, therefore, is to “take advantage of the pragmatic opportunities that categories such as race offer us in term of understanding society and its problems, but not be bound by those categories” [35].

## 6. Conclusion: Developing the Research Agenda

Children have different experiences of history in school; these experiences are influenced by policy and the different ways in which schools respond to policy. I set out the following framework as a summary of such experiences and as an analytical tool. This is not to preclude other possibilities; multicultural history, for example, could be a static history or a history for all. Rather, the framework reflects the more typical range that many children experience of history in school (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Children’s experience of history in school.



Quadrant 1 refers to an essentialist national history, often advocated by politicians, with the associated rhetoric that this brings with it social cohesion. While such presumed social cohesion is questionable [5], it also sits uneasily within an increasingly super diverse society.

Quadrant 2 refers to the view that history is only suitable for some students and too hard or irrelevant for others. Not only is this position associated with the “soft bigotry of low expectations” [22] but also with a high stakes standards driven testocracy [36]. In this position, any commitment to history offering “a necessary asset in the orientation to life” [4] has been abandoned for some students. In schools where students are underachieving or struggle to get good results, teachers come under particular pressure to meet standards over and above anything else [37]. The study of history for some students has become the casualty.

Quadrant 3 reflects the position of those who argue for greater visibility for the achievements of those traditionally excluded from the curriculum. It runs the danger of being regarded as soft,

tokenistic, and low status, not least because it may only be introduced in those schools where such excluded minorities are in evidence.

Quadrant 4 retains a commitment to high status, serious disciplinary history which is available to all. What is selected for study in history needs to satisfy criteria of significance in order for it to be worthwhile knowledge that is valued by society at large. Following Bernstein [38] and Young [39], a social realist framework argues that democratic access to theoretical and abstract knowledge is a precondition for effective democracy because this is the medium through which society conducts its debates and conversations. The purpose of formal education must include enabling students to acquire knowledge that is not accessible in everyday life and to enable them to move beyond their experience to gain more understanding of the wider world of which they are a part [39]. Such a curriculum remains dynamic and open to change since, even within a social realist framework, dominant discourses and priorities shift over time.

Any significant history, however, is also open to a perspectival approach. In the two schools visited, such a perspectival approach might result in students studying the Second World War from a Polish perspective, or Empire from a Somalian or Pakistani or indigenous white working class perspective. Although these might have particular resonances in the particular schools depending on their populations, this wouldn't necessarily have to be a guiding principle. Preparation for living in a super diverse society involves a familiarity or ease with engaging with new and unexpected perspectives.

The concepts which underpin disciplinary history go some way to supporting this endeavour. Foregrounding empathy and diversity, in the hands of well trained history teachers, certainly helps to ensure historical understanding that is nuanced and complex rather than simplified and stereotyped. The concepts of interpretation and significance further develop understanding of the situated and constructed nature of the subject. At the highest level, these concepts enable a critiquing of the curriculum and support a deeper understanding of its historiography. In this way it is possible for history students to understand why, for example, they study Martin Luther King rather than the trades union movement, and to begin to understand why they have the history curriculum they do have. In developing a perspectival history, therefore, the importance of the concepts underpinning the discipline are reinforced.

The pedagogical challenges for teachers to develop confidence working within such a paradigm shift are considerable. A commitment to retaining academic disciplinary rigour and avoiding soft additions of excluded cultures approach is no easy task to implement in practice; nor is a commitment to ensuring a coherent overview without lots of fragmentation within the curriculum. Pragmatically, busy teachers also need support in searching out new perspectives along with readily available curricular materials. These are big curriculum research and development challenges.

The political involvement in determining the history curriculum presents further challenges. Whatever the official curriculum, however, teachers, certainly in the UK context can have some impact by the way in which they mediate the curriculum. It remains possible to include "outside perspectives on the national past of the country of residence" [40] and to introduce other narratives in order that they "collide" with and thereby "disrupt" the traditional history [41]. In this way, while excessive relativism should be avoided, history can move from being solely a search for truth towards also including "a search for perspective" [42].

Of course, not all locations in a super diverse society are characterised by diversity. None the less, the education of all children needs to equip and prepare them for a super diverse society. This, rather than a narrowly conceived national history, may offer the best prospect for social cohesion. In this way, history classrooms can aim to become, “the places where the contending voices in the debate over what history means, or should mean, in a democracy come together” [14].

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## Appendix

**Table A1.** Sample.

School	Student	Background	Detail
School 1	Tom (m)	White	Indigenous
	Sarah (f)	White	Indigenous
	Reba (f)	Jewish-Jamaican heritage	Long established, British born
	Ahmed (m)	Somalian	Long established, British born
	Afzia (f)	Pakistani	Long established, British born
	Bahar (f)	Pakistani	Moved from Germany, then Holland, 2 years ago
	Farah (m)	Somalian	Moved from Holland 7 years ago
	Ayaan (f)	Somalian	Moved from Holland 8 years ago
	Abdulahi (m)	Somalian	Moved from Somalia 7 years ago
	Omar (m)	Somalian	Moved from Holland 6 years ago
School 2	Jordan (m)	White	Indigenous
	Ellie (f)	White	Indigenous
	Jess (f)	White	Indigenous
	Georgia (f)	White	Indigenous
	Molly (f)	White	Indigenous
	Alex (m)	White	Indigenous
	Jacob (m)	White	Moved from Poland 18 months ago.

## **Interview Questions**

### School History

1. Why did you decide to choose history for GCSE?
2. What have you studied in history before GCSE? What can you remember?
3. What do you enjoy doing most in history? What topics? What sort of activities?
4. Do you think students should study history at school? Why? Why not?
5. What do you think you should study in history?
6. What do you learn from history?

### Family History

1. What have family members told you about their lives when they were young?
2. What family stories have been handed down in your family?
3. What have family members told you about people in the past or events in history?
4. What people or events have you learned about from your family that you have not learned about at school?
5. How is history you learned about at home different from the history you learned about at school?
6. Who in history do you /members of your family admire? Why?
7. How have any groups been treated unfairly in the past?
8. Do you believe any groups are treated unfairly today? Why or why not?

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