

## **EDI Project Knowledge Sharing and Learning: Q&A with BPS**

### **Introduction to EDI Small Grants Funding**

The [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Project](#) is a joint programme between The Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS), its member social science societies and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The purpose of the programme is to encourage and facilitate greater awareness of, and actions to support, EDI across member social science societies, by working together to share resources, learning and to maximise the potential to effect real and positive change.

As part of this partnership, AcSS and ESRC have given small scale grant funding to support EDI initiatives and interventions. Social science societies were encouraged to submit bids, either at an individual societal level or as a partnership/consortium of learned societies, to support work to pilot or scale up EDI initiatives or interventions.

### **About BPS' funded EDI Initiative**

The British Psychological Society (BPS) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) were awarded EDI grant money to create a pilot teaching resource with interactive sessions for KS3/KS4 secondary school students on the history of IQ testing in the UK education system and the wider social implications and legacy of this testing. The aim of the project was to encourage students to think critically about the tests (e.g. what groups of people would have been disadvantaged, how the tests were culturally biased), to explore this previously excluded part of UK history and acknowledge the impact the British education system has had on the Caribbean communities who settled here.

With more and more organisations starting to retrospectively evaluate their history, the BPS wanted to explore how to constructively reconcile with a harmful part of UK psychology's history in addressing how psychology and psychologists enabled a racist and discriminatory education system.

Here, BPS take part in a knowledge sharing Q&A, providing valuable insights and learning for other social science societies who may be interested in delivering similar EDI interventions in schools.

### **Q&A with BPS**

**BPS created a pilot teaching resource with interactive sessions for KS3/KS4 secondary school students on the history of IQ testing in the UK education system and the wider social implications and legacy of this testing. Can you tell us a bit about why this was important and how it relates to the EDI work/strategy of BPS?**

As an organisation, the BPS strives to be a national and global champion for equality, equity, diversity, inclusion and human rights. As many organisations are starting to realise, it's difficult to move on as an equal and just Society when past harms have not been addressed, and certain communities are still negatively affected by these harms. As part of this, we have begun to look back at UK psychology's history as an opportunity to address and positively reconcile some of its more challenging aspects.

As part of this, we have also received funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a Collaborative Doctoral Award in partnership with the University of Leicester titled 'Facing up to the Past: Challenging Histories & Changing Future Conversations at the UK British Psychology Society'. This is a research PhD analysing the overlooked history and experiences of minority groups in UK psychology, using the BPS archives as the primary source.

We hope that by looking back at our collective history with an unbiased and critical lens, we can promote UK psychology moving forward as a more diverse and inclusive profession.

**This project aimed to constructively reconcile a harmful part of UK psychology and BPS' history in addressing how psychology and psychologists enabled a racist and discriminatory education system, how and why did this matter for the wider EDI work of BPS?**

UK psychology and psychologists administered the intelligence tests which were used to disproportionately send Black Caribbean children in the UK to schools for the "educationally-subnormal". Early psychologists, such as Cyril Burt, also had a major influence on the development of the UK education system but some were strongly influenced by eugenics.

Due to psychology's role in perpetuating a historically racist education system, we wanted to take responsibility in recognising this whilst also attempting to reconcile this difficult part of our history.

**What advice and learning can you share with other social science societies who are wanting to address troubling aspects of their own history for the purposes of EDI?**

Our main piece of advice would be to think about how you can *constructively* address challenging parts of your history. The BPS is lucky in that we have a large, historically significant archive that we could draw from. We engaged with our membership to understand the parts of psychology's history they wanted addressed as a priority and then looked within our archive to see what collections reflected

these stories. We looked for opportunities to disseminate these stories to audiences who wouldn't otherwise be accessing or hearing about these stories.

**Members of the BPS expressed their wish for you to lead in addressing the challenging aspects of your history – can you expand a bit on how you worked with your membership to develop the proposal and project?**

We originally had a Challenging Histories in Psychology group which worked for two years to identify projects on psychology's history. The group produced various projects but also highlighted different parts of psychology's history which we wanted to pursue moving forward.

When developing the resource, we knew that we needed a panel of experts to feed into the resource to make it as rich as possible. We recruited psychologists, historians and educational experts who added valuable insights into the resource which we would not have had otherwise.

Our partnership with BERA was integral to the project as they reached out to their membership also. We got some great educational experts to feed into what would work in a classroom and what teachers would actually need from a teaching resource.

**Did you face any challenges from people who were not happy with BPS exploring and confronting its past in this way and, if so, how did you overcome these?**

To be honest, no! We communicated the project with our membership, but we did not have any negative feedback. We focussed our recruitment for the panel on areas of our membership who would be able to help and add insights, such as our History of Psychology Centre advisory committee and our EDI Board.

**Is there any advice or learning you can share with those who wish to work with their membership to develop meaningful EDI interventions and initiatives for schools?**

Having a specific topic on what you want the resource to be about makes the process a lot easier. We decided we wanted to concentrate on intelligence testing because of our existing historical test collection. That made it simpler to recruit for the panel regarding expertise and skills that were required. Once the panel were recruited, we created a project plan with the scope and aims to make it clear what we wanted to achieve. This open communication and clarity helped streamline the development of the resource.

**How did you go about developing this teaching resource and what were the main EDI considerations?**

We created a project summary document which we sent to our panel members. The panel then submitted content that they felt would add value to the resource. We collated the content (deciding what would and would not be included) and sent out a draft for the panel to comment on. We allowed for only two revisions as the funding

timeline was tight and we needed to make sure we could deliver the sessions by the deadline.

As mentioned before, it was key to the success of the project that we had educational experts from BERA. This made sure the resource was fit for purpose. We also spoke directly to teachers who volunteered to deliver the resource for their initial feedback before they took it into the classroom.

We spoke to a reproduction company (that we used already) and relied on them to reproduce the paper aspects of the tests. To recreate the objects, we sourced these off online retailers. We put all the different aspects in briefcases, as the originals were.

The EDI considerations were that the resource should be accessible to all abilities at KS4 and that the session should be a safe space for all students, no matter their background.

**What advice and learning can you give to other social science societies who are considering developing similar teaching resources?**

Working with individuals who had first-hand experience of teaching/running lessons in schools was integral to making sure the resource was fit for purpose and would work in a classroom. You can write the best, most interesting content in the world but if it doesn't give teachers a clear lesson plan and engaging activities then they won't want to deliver it.

**Why did you decide to work with schools and young people for this work and what was important about this age group?**

We wanted to engage with audiences who were not already accessing heritage and would be unlikely to. We are also aware that psychology is not a very diverse profession, and we wanted to engage with schools with a diverse population to give students a taste of psychology and its history.

The BPS have links with psychology teacher networks so we had an existing network that we could draw upon for the pilot.

**The sessions were piloted in schools in culturally diverse areas of the East and West Midlands to reach the communities these tests had negatively impacted in the past – how easy was it to identify and narrow down which schools to approach?**

We specified that we wanted to target diverse schools in the midlands from the start. We had an existing relationship with the Association for the Teaching of Psychology (ATP), and they were great - enthusiastic about the project and sending out calls to their membership for volunteer schools.

**Were there any lessons learnt in how to build relationships with schools where existing relationships were not in place?**

We mainly drew on our existing networks of psychology teachers. We were lucky in that we had a few volunteer teachers come forward who were very passionate about the topic and understood what we wanted to achieve.

**What has the feedback been from students who have taken part in one of your sessions?**

Overwhelmingly positive! We sent out a survey after each session to the teachers to get their thoughts and feedback on the resource, including what the students thought and how engaged they were.

All the teachers felt that the students were engaged and that the resource provoked thoughtful questions and discussion. They loved the tactile aspect of handling the tests and the videos that were included, it really brought the history to life for them. Students felt they should have heard about this aspect of history before the session, and some said it was the best lesson of the year!

**How have you balanced the need to address this topic with the need to ensure you are providing a safe space for students for who this might trigger some strong emotional reactions?**

We wanted to be as transparent as possible with the content of the resource. We included a lot of information to give teachers as much support as possible, but we also included a note at the start stating that the teacher knows their class and what is appropriate for them / what they are mature enough to discuss. We felt that instead of us trying to second guess how different students might react to certain things, we would trust teachers to tailor the session to their class.

The activities with the tests were the part of the resource we discussed the most. At first, we thought a role play scenario would work with students acting as administrators and those being tested. However, a member of our panel rightfully pointed out that that could prove traumatic for some students. We then decided that looking through the tests with prompting questions was enough of a task for the session.

**What has been the feedback from teachers?**

Teachers really appreciated having a resource to support them teaching a challenging topic. Through discussions we realised that teachers often want to teach these kinds of topics, however, they don't necessarily know how or are afraid to do/say the wrong thing. They all expressed that they would want us to create more resources on a variety of topics. They also said they would recommend the resource to colleagues.

Teachers appreciated that we explicitly indicated within the resource in what parts of the current curriculum the resource could fit into. It obviously fitted as part of the psychology and history modules, but it could have also been included as part of PSHE or sociology modules.

**How did you ensure that teachers were equipped to answer delicate questions in this area?**

We included a lot of content around the topic to give teachers a good understanding of the topic and the different elements involved. We also included reflective questions for each activity to help steer students into constructive discussions that would prompt them to think critically about the tests and how the Black Caribbean community were treated at the time.

**What were the overall highlights of working with schools and what would you do differently in the future?**

The highlights were working with the teachers who led the sessions and developing the lesson plan. The teachers were so enthusiastic about the project, and it's been great to hear that students have been really engaged. Working with our panel taught us so much about what would work in a classroom and that was integral to the project's success.

**What lessons or advice can you share with those who are also considering partnering with a school to run an EDI intervention or initiative?**

Work closely with teachers and/or educational experts to develop a resource that is fit for the classroom. Also include options within the resource for teachers to tailor the content to their class.

**How do you propose to build on the EDI work carried out as part of this EDI initiative or intervention?**

We want to develop the resource so it's available online for anyone to download and use. We are considering how to do this without losing the interactive element which students liked so much.

We want to develop more school resources and will be assessing what other aspects of psychology's history would be the most beneficial to focus on.

**Do you have any resources or documents you would be willing to share that could help other social science societies who are looking to carry out similar EDI work?**

The digital version of the resource will be published in 2025. We will share the link with the AcSS once it's live.

**If social science societies want to know more about the EDI work carried out by BPS as part of this project and if they have specific questions, how can they find out more?**

Feel free to get in touch with us at [hopc@bps.org.uk](mailto:hopc@bps.org.uk)

**Overall, what is the most important lesson you can share with other social science societies?**

Collaboration! We learnt so much from our panel and the teachers involved. The resource would not have worked or been as engaging without their help.

**Are there any final thoughts, reflections, or learnings you would like to share?**

This project has emphasised to us how powerful it can be when you look back at challenging parts of history and try to address them in a constructive way with a positive outcome. It can seem daunting at first or not a priority, but it has been a great way for us to engage with new audiences and harness the power of our collective history with our archive collection.