

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh		
Unit of Assessment: UoA21 Sociology		
Title of case study: Culture and action in solidarity with the Bhopal Survivors' Movement		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005-2009		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Eurig Scandrett	Senior Lecturer in Sociology	August 2005-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased informed awareness of the Bhopal disaster in UK, especially Scotland; • Narratives of the Bhopal disaster have been better framed as a survivors' struggle for justice against corporate criminal negligence; • New action for solidarity has been stimulated <p>In addition, methodological innovations have contributed to education, professional practice, oral history and museum curation.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Between 2006 and 2009, Eurig Scandrett led the Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study (BSMS), an activist ethnography and participatory action research programme carried out with campaign groups of survivors of the 1984 Union Carbide factory Bhopal gas disaster, in collaboration with Suroopa Mukherjee of University of Delhi, and two research assistants, Dharmesh Shah and Tarunima Sen. The primary purpose of the research was to investigate learning and theory-generation in the Bhopal survivors' movement. Scandrett has a body of research and publication record concerning learning in environmental justice movements, and the BSMS raised important sociological questions which contributed to the study of social movement learning, especially because most of the activists are not literate. The research was initiated whilst Scandrett was Visiting Scholar at University of Delhi in 2006. It contributed to Scandrett's research portfolio in environmental justice movements, and has led to a range of academic invitations to speak and publish.</p> <p>The research involved video dialogue interviews, participant observation, survey, focus groups and research feedback sessions. In addition to an ongoing series of academic publications, a non-academic book was published on 25th anniversary of the gas disaster in December 2009 (<i>Bhopal Survivors Speak: Emergent Voices from a People's Movement</i>) comprising translations of excerpts from interviews with survivors engaged with various campaigning groups, focusing on their involvement with the struggles for justice. This book has been used in academic publications as well as to raise awareness of the ongoing Bhopal tragedy, the movement's struggles for justice, and to promote actions of solidarity in Britain.</p> <p>As a programme of public sociology research, the quality and validity of the BSMS is assessed by its integrity to both academic rigour and accountability to its 'public', the former through peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, the latter through engagement with the Bhopal survivors and the wider movement for environmental justice and occupational health. The initial research project was followed by ongoing contact with the survivors' movement.</p>		
3. References to the research		

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In keeping with the content and motivation of the research as public sociology, publication has prioritised those peer-reviewed journals and edited collections which combine academic rigour with social relevance and reach beyond an academic readership.

Publications in peer-reviewed journals

Scandrett, E., Mukherjee, S. and Bhopal Research Team (2011) "We are flames not flowers": a gendered reading of the social movement for justice in Bhopal. *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* Volume 3(2): pp. 100 - 122

Scandrett, E. and Mukherjee, S. (2011) Globalisation and abstraction in the Bhopal survivors' movement. *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* Volume 3 (1) pp. 195 – 209

Scandrett, E., Crowther, J., Hemmi, A., Mukherjee, S., Shah, D. and Sen, T. (2010) Theorising education and learning in social movements: environmental justice campaigns in Scotland and India. *Studies in the Education of Adults* Volume 42. No 2

Chapters for edited collections, by invitation of the editors.

Scandrett, E. (2019) 'Collective learning in and from Social Movements: the Bhopal Disaster Survivors' Movement' In Kleibl, T., Lutz, R., Noyoo, N., Bunk, B., Dittmann, A. and Khothatso Seepamore, B. (eds) *Routledge Handbook on Post-colonial Social Work and Indigenous Development Perspectives from the South*. London: Routledge

Scandrett, E. and Sharma, S. (2019) 'The Bhopal struggle and neoliberal restructuring: research, political engagement and the urban poor'. In Kapoor, D. and Jordan, S. (eds). *Research, Political Engagement and Dispossession: Indigenous, Peasant and Urban Poor Activisms in the Americas and Asia* London and N.Y. Zed

Mukherjee, S., Scandrett, E., Sen, T. and Shah, D. (2011) 'Generating Theory in the Bhopal Survivors' Movement' in Motta, S.C. and Nilsen, A.G. (eds). *Social Movements in the Global South: Dispossession, Development and Resistance* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

4. Details of the impact

Scholars of social movement learning emphasise the importance of learning *in* and *through* social movement praxis. The underpinning research was designed to understand the learning processes *in* the Bhopal survivors' movement; the impact is focused on the contribution of the BSMS to learning in the UK (primarily Scotland) *through* the Bhopal survivors' movement. The impact therefore, is primarily to key publics in Scotland (students, musicians, trade unions, professionals). Moreover, as social movement scholars have described, social change is achieved through the cognitive praxis of social movements shifting the knowledge practices of society. Impact on social change therefore occurs through changes to the practices, meanings and narratives affected by the cultural practices of social movements.

Public knowledge of, and meaning ascribed to, a major tragedy such as the Bhopal gas disaster and its aftermath is contested by social actors with different interests: movements from above and below. Corporations and an Indian State increasingly committed to inward investment, present a Bhopal narrative of a past, tragic, industrial accident, the (passive) victims of which are to be remembered locally with pity, and forgotten by the rest of the world. By contrast, the movement is committed to a narrative of injustice, against which survivors actively continue to struggle, not only concerning their own grievances but also against the ongoing global causes of the tragedy: corporate negligence, a logic of economic development and state collusion with capital accumulation (campaign slogans include 'no more Bhopals' and 'we all live in Bhopal').

Ten years after the research, during a visit to Bhopal in January 2019, follow-up interviews were conducted with six key movement leaders, who continued to endorse the value of the research to international solidarity. Visits were conducted to institutions established with survivors located close to the Union Carbide factory site: the Sambhavna Trust (a clinic which provides Allopathic and Ayurvedic health care to Bhopal survivors, and conducts epidemiological research), Chingari Trust (a rehabilitation centre for children with physical and mental impairments born to Bhopal survivors and their descendants) and Remember Bhopal Museum (a museum of the disaster and the struggle for justice, co-curated with survivors). Discussions took place with activists, and contact was made with key individuals outwith Bhopal.

The impact of the research therefore concerns the meanings attached to the disaster in public spheres, and its significance in terms of current industrial practice, environmental justice and human rights.

In the context of international solidarity, pathways to impact therefore take the form of education, publications and presentations, in which awareness is raised, knowledge is gained, and understanding of the significance of the tragedy deepened. This impact is manifest in a range of cultural forms, including trade union policy, song, ritual, professional practice and artefacts. These cultural manifestations of the impact, can sometimes then become pathways to further impact, and this is reflected in the impact description below: Changes to cultural practice; Embedded in trade union practice; and Methodology and professional practice. In recognition of the cyclical relationship between research, pathways and impact, this section is extended beyond the 'indicative maximum' number of words to provide adequate explanation in three key areas of impacts in cultural practice. Corroborating Evidence, referred to in section 5, is cross referenced with the identification **E.1 – E.10**.

The integration of research and Impact generation has been noted above: impact that predates the census period is not included here, but of course impact since 2013 builds on what went before. It arose from earlier research and earlier pathway to impact (eg the trade union delegation which took place in December 2014 could not have occurred without the visit of Bhopal survivors to UK in 2012).

Research-Pathway-Impact 1: Changes to cultural practice -From education to song

Education with undergraduate students at QMU on the basis of the research led to increased awareness of a younger generation of students. One student, Ingrid Neil, selected the Bhopal movement for an assessment and, on graduation in 2010, helped establish Scottish Friends of Bhopal, an unincorporated association. In this role she negotiated the installation, in December 2011, of a permanent memorial plaque (**E.4**) in Edinburgh's Greyfriar's Kirkyard, a centrally located and publicly accessible cemetery containing many significant Scottish graves and memorials. During the census period, this plaque has been a focus for an annual commemoration on the anniversary of the Bhopal disaster, with wreath-laying, speeches, poems, readings from *Bhopal Survivors Speak*, and songs by Edinburgh-based political choir Protest in Harmony. A separate survey of the choir conducted in 2014 (Benjamin and Scandrett, unpublished) identified that 35% of respondents reported that Bhopal was an issue they had previously known nothing or little about but learned about through involvement with the choir, including at the anniversary commemoration (**E.5**). One of the choir leaders, a young musician and award-winning singer-songwriter (Penny Stone) subsequently composed a song about the Bhopal disaster and the survivors' movement, which has been sung at public events (**E.1**).

Pathway to Impact	Impact
Curriculum for QMU students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness • Framing of narrative • Action for solidarity The Scottish Friends of Bhopal (established by QMU graduate Ingrid Neil).

Scottish Friends of Bhopal	The memorial plaque in Greyfriar's Kirk yard, Edinburgh (E.4).
Bhopal memorial plaque	Anniversary commemorations on 3 rd December annually since 2019.
Anniversary commemoration	Community choir Protest in Harmony sing at commemorations 2011-2019. Survey conducted in 2014 found 35% of choir members report increased awareness about Bhopal (E.5)
Choir awareness of Bhopal	Choir leader Penny Stone writes song for Bhopal and performs at events

Research-Pathway-Impact 2: Embedded in trade union practice -From public lectures to trade union solidarity

Presentations about research to Scottish and UK Hazards Conferences by Scandrett and Dharmesh Shah raised awareness amongst trade union (TU) health and safety representatives and officials. At the instigation of survivors' groups in the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB), Scandrett, in collaboration with Kathy Jenkins of Scottish Hazards Campaign (E.2), organised a visit to the UK in 2012 of two Bhopal survivors, Balkrishna Namdev and Safreen Khan, who subsequently met with TU officials and officers. This meeting led to a motion to the 2012 Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) Disabled Workers' conference (E.6), to invitations to speak at other TU events and further expressions of solidarity. An invitation followed from the ICJB in Bhopal for a TU delegation to visit Bhopal for the 30th anniversary commemorations in 2014. The delegation of 11 TU activists (co-ordinated by Scandrett in conjunction with Kathy Jenkins and BSMS research participants) resulted in other motions and invitations to speak, and the establishment of Trade Union Friends of Bhopal (E.3).

A motion from Midlothian Trade Union Council in 2019 to the STUC (whose 39 affiliates represent 540,000 workers in Scotland) "welcomes the development of Trade Union Friends of Bhopal in Scotland and urges affiliation and support for this essential campaign. Congress calls on the STUC to liaise with relevant survivors' groups and trade unions in Bhopal, and write to appropriate Indian decision makers in support of their demands for justice" (E.6). The latter call to action is a direct result of the 2019 research follow-up interviews conducted by Scandrett. In September 2019, in liaison with Scandrett and his Bhopal contacts, a letter in support of the Bhopal survivors' demands was sent by the STUC General Secretary (GS) Grahame Smith to the Indian High Commissioner Mrs Ruchi Ghanashyam (E.7). Following a presentation at the 2020 (online, due to COVID-19) commemoration and conference by survivor Sanjay Verma, TU Friends of Bhopal resolved to follow up this correspondence. Scottish Hazards Campaign issued an invitation for Scandrett to speak at STUC Health and Safety Representatives Development course in January 2021.

Pathway to Impact	Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness Framing of narrative Action for solidarity
Public presentations collaborators at TU events	Tour of UK by Bhopal survivors Safreen Khan and Balkrishna Namdeo.
Bhopal survivors tours of UK	Presentations at TU conferences and meeting with officials and officers, including CWU; NASUWT and STUC Black Workers conference.
TU engagement with Bhopal	Resolutions and policy adoption by STUC and its committees. (E.6).
Ongoing contact between Bhopal survivors and TU officials	TU delegation to Bhopal for 30 th anniversary 2014.
Delegates' commitment to ongoing solidarity	Further resolutions and policy adoption by STUC and individual unions (Unison, CWU, UCU, Community) (E.6)

Motion to STUC 2019	STUC recognition of TU Friends of Bhopal. STUC GS correspondence with Indian Consulate 25/9/19 (E.7). Followed up by TU Friends of Bhopal (ongoing).
Ongoing recognition of research value to TUs	Invitation (in November 2020) to speak at STUC Health and Safety Reps Development course 2020.

The value of solidarity activity is attested to in interviews with Bhopal movement leaders and trade union activists (E.8).

Research-Pathway-Impact 3: Methodology and professional practice

In the BSMS, research objectives, methodology and methods were determined in collaboration with Indian co-researchers and key activists in Bhopal. Methodology was designed, based on Freirean dialogue, to optimise the input of survivor-activists in deliberation and analysis of data. As activist ethnography and participatory action research, solidarity action continues to be part of the research's action outcome. Researchers participated in campaign activities of survivors and solidarity activists, and Scandrett has maintained dialogue with survivors in Bhopal for solidarity activities in Britain. The methodology, moreover, has impacted the work of other professional practices (museum curation, political research, social work, community education etc), as evidenced through testimonials and publications.

Shalini Sharma, a former organiser with Students for Bhopal in India and activist in the Remember Bhopal Trust, and who subsequently completed a PhD and commenced an academic career, noted the influence of BSMS on her own work on the media (E.9), including the survivor co-curated Remember Bhopal Museum, which opened on 30th anniversary in 2014 (and covered in the Scottish press by embedded journalist and NUJ participant in delegation to Bhopal, Rob Edwards).

These methodological innovations led to an invitation from Dip Kapoor, Professor, Social Justice & International Studies in Education at University of Alberta, to write a chapter for a book on *Research, Political Engagement and Dispossession* (2019, co-authored with Sharma). The methodology of activist ethnography has also been recognised in social work professional practice, leading to an invitation to contribute a chapter to the *Routledge Handbook on Post-colonial Social Work and Indigenous Development Perspectives from the South* (2019). This in turn has been cited as relevant to the professional practice of community education by Marjorie Mayo in her 2020 publication *Community-based learning and social movements: Popular Education in a Populist Age* (E.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Testimonials

- E.1 Testimonial (musician)
- E.2 Testimonial (Scottish Hazards Campaign)
- E.3 Testimonial (Edinburgh TUC)

Corroborating evidence 1. Changes to cultural practice

- E.4 Photographs of memorial plaque, Edinburgh
- E.5 Data from survey of choir

Corroborating evidence 2. Embedded in trade union practice

- E.6 STUC policy motions
- E.7 Letter from STUC GS to Indian Consulate
- E.8 Excerpts from interviews with activists

Corroborating evidence 3: Methodology and professional practice

- E.9 Email (Remember Bhopal Museum)
- E.10 Excerpt from popular education book