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An overview of British attempts to ‘manage diversity’ since the 1950s

Farzana Shain*

Abstract

This paper reviews the recent history of English education in connection with British state attempts to ‘manage diversity’. It offers a new analysis on points of coherence and tension between the role of education and state policies in relation to race and ethnicity. Drawing on the *Prevent* strategy as an example, the paper highlights the role that education has played in the construction of ethnic minorities as ‘problems’ to be managed or contained. It is argued that assimilation into a (superior) British culture has remained a constant theme (Grosvenor 1997), but has been more pronounced in periods of economic uncertainty and geopolitical dislocations (Gilroy 2004). The targets of containment policies have also changed, from African Caribbeans, predominantly, in the 1970s and 1980s to Muslims, in general, since then, but race (albeit re-coded through ethnicity, community and/or faith) has been a central reference point in state discourses on minorities.

Keywords: race, nation, prevent strategy, managing diversity, empire, post-colonial melancholia

Introduction

Since the 1950s, British state policies for the management of ethnic diversity have been based on a range of ideologies including ‘assimilation’ (the expectation that immigrants will abandon their language and cultural norms and practices in favour of those of the host society), ‘integration’ (acceptance of the majority culture’s laws, customs and values through partial assimilation) and ‘multiculturalism’ (the recognition of a plurality of cultures) (Cheong et al. 2007). In much of the established literature (Mullard 1982; Troyna 1985; Tomlinson 2008) a linear progression has been identified, from assimilation in the 1950s to integration in the mid-1960s and multiculturalism since the 1970s. There has also been academic debate about the extent to which state policy responses since 2001 signal the end or the death of multiculturalism (Kundnani 2001) and a return to ‘assimilation’ (Back et al. 2002). This debate followed the launch of a new official state strategy of ‘community cohesion’ (Cantle 2001) in the immediate aftermath of the disturbances that took place in towns and cities in the summer of 2001. More recently, the Coalition government, elected

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in 2010, has unveiled 'integration' (DCLG 2012) as its official approach to managing ethnic diversity.

This paper draws on Ian Grosvenor's (1997) contention which identified that linear shifts in policy "are more apparent than real" (1997, 49). Grosvenor argues that "they exist in the sphere of articulation rather than in practice" and that assimilation has in fact been a coherent, consistent and uniform policy goal running through government circulars, advisory notes, select committee documents and political speeches since the 1960s (1997, 49-50).

While agreeing with Grosvenor, and drawing on this framework for analysing the role of education in the management of ethnic diversity in the latter part of the 20th century, I also argue that since 2001 national policy responses have been much more strongly focused on the concrete detail of unacceptable 'Otherness' and have been translated via an expanded state apparatus into policies for managing and containing 'problem' populations. Ministerial speeches and policy pronouncements on, for example, veiling, 'not being able to speak English', forced marriages and 'extremism', and the solutions proposed – citizenship classes and ceremonies, detention without trial, visa restrictions and the targeted policing and surveillance of 'suspect communities' – have been aimed primarily at Muslims, asylum-seekers and foreign students. I argue that education has played a key role in the intensified state control of disadvantaged populations through the racialised construction of ethnic minorities as 'problems' to be managed and contained. Ethnic minority students have, since the 1950s, been constructed in policy discourses through discourses of 'deficit' as culturally deprived (Archer and Francis 2007). However, in recent years, educational professionals have additionally been asked to engage in direct surveillance of ethnic minority students, and this paper sets out to locate these current developments historically in the context of broader economic, political and social change since the 1950s. The paper builds on arguments developed in a recent book which reported an empirical study of Muslim boys and education in England (Shain 2011). The book offers an assessment of how and why working class boys who identify as Muslim in England have come to be seen as modern day folk devils or as symbol of crisis and change. In the book, I trace and locate the emergence of current discourses of Muslim students as 'problems' in the context of a wider set of economic political and cultural forces including the end of the Cold War and the geopolitical change that has followed. The present paper offers a deeper analysis of the interconnections between the development of education policy and British state attempts at managing diversity since the 1950s. In doing so, my overall goal is to offer a historically informed analysis of the impact of the war on terror on education – an issue that has to date received relatively little attention.

My analysis is framed by the following theoretical assumptions: first, that education policy does not exist in a vacuum. It is shaped by and contributes to wider processes of economic, political and social change. The 1944 Education Act, based on the mantra 'education for all', emerged in a period of relative optimism underpinned by economic

policies which were committed to full employment and a political and social commitment to the redistribution of equality. However, despite the stated aim of increasing opportunities for all children, the middle classes were the main beneficiaries of the Act. The role played by educational processes in sorting and sifting children through processes of labelling and setting, as well as the embedded middle-classness of the education system, contributed to the reproduction of existing inequalities. The 1988 Education Reform Act arrived at a time of significant economic decline, following the recessions of the 1970s. Resorting to a market model and open competition set in motion policies and processes that would contribute to an exacerbation of inequalities experienced by disadvantaged communities. In relation to both Acts, the designs of education systems reflected the processes of wider social change, but education policies and processes were also significant in producing new forms of classed, racialised and gendered inequality. The aim here is not to suggest linear or straightforward connections between the development of race and education policies and this wider contextual background, but to understand how broader patterns of economic, political and social change have underpinned the role of education in state attempts to manage ethnic diversity.

The second assumption is that the economic, political and social forces that underpin state policies are first and foremost global and systemic. Two major and interlinked developments have impacted on the course of education policy in England in the last 50 years and are pertinent to making sense of state attempts at managing ethnic diversity; the first is the significant economic decline that has followed on from the end of the initial boom of the post-World War II period. This decline is associated with the economic restructuring that involved a shift in the economic base from a manufacturing to a service sector, which started in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of increased competition from other national economies such as Germany in the 1970s and China in the 1980s, and entailed significant costs in terms of unemployment and job insecurity. The second development is the loss of Britain's colonies at the end of World War II, which was largely followed by the active recruitment of workers from the former colonies to fill labour shortages created in the immediate aftermath of the war. However, the loss of its colonies did not necessarily lead to a post-colonial state identity and culture for the British state in the initial decades. As Gilroy (2004) has argued, a post-colonial melancholia – the repeated failure to let go of its imperial past – has shaped British state relations and policy in relation to ethnic minorities. Imperial and colonial notions of a 'superior British way of life' and the racialised inferiority or difference of minority groups have been re-worked through modern day constructions of the minorities as 'backward' and 'refusing to integrate', 'untrustworthy' with criminal tendencies, hyper-sexualised and prone to over-breeding (CCCS 1982; Layton Henry 1992; Gilroy 2004). As in colonial times, some categories, primarily middle-class Indians, have been accepted as 'model minorities' (Gillborn 2008; Mirza 2009) and education has been a major vehicle for the further success of these groups.

The third assumption is that education is generally shaped, but not exclusively determined, by economic changes. As Jones (2009) argues, “schools are places where attempts occur to realise the designs of policy – to produce responsible citizens and capable workers. But they are also places where these policies and processes have been resisted”. Multiculturalism, for example, was born out of the resistance of parents and teachers to the racist assumptions embedded in education systems in the 1950s and 1960s and the unequal educational outcomes that followed. Education has recently been the site for organised student resistance to imperialism and war (Cunningham and Lavellete 2004) as well as the neoliberal reform of higher education (Gokay and Shain 2011).

The core argument of the paper is that education and race policies have sometimes developed coherently and sometimes in tension with each other and also with the underlying economic, political and social change that has given rise to them. While assimilation into a (superior) British culture has remained a constant theme (Grosvenor 1997), it has been more pronounced in periods of economic uncertainty and geopolitical dislocations (Gilroy 2004). The targets of containment policies have also changed from African Caribbeans, predominantly, in the 1970s and 1980s to Muslim students, in general, since then, but race (albeit re-coded through ethnicity, community or faith) has remained a central reference point in state discourses on minorities.

The paper is organised into three sections: the first briefly reviews the major economic, policy and social developments that form the backdrop for race and education policies; the second highlights key policy developments in the field of education in relation to state attempts to manage diversity; and the final section focuses in more detail on recent policy developments, specifically the British government’s *Preventing Violent Extremism* strategy, known as *Prevent* which currently implicates educational professionals in the surveillance of particular groups of ethnic minority students.

The economic, political and social context for ethnic minority settlement in the UK

In 2001, ethnic minorities made up 8% of the population, but this figure has been predicted to rise to 20% by 2051 (Tran 2010). Britain has a long history of black immigration going back 500 years (Fryer 1984). However, it was specifically in the post-Second World War period that large numbers of black workers were actively recruited by the British state to fill labour shortages following the economic boom of this period (Anwar 1986; Layton-Henry 1992). In the 1950s and 1960s, African Caribbeans, Indians and Pakistanis (and later Bangladeshis) arrived to take up jobs – a small minority in professions as doctors and teachers but the majority in unskilled labouring work such as manufacturing and textiles. These were often the jobs the indigenous workers were not prepared to do, and involved immigrants working un-social hours often for less pay than white workers (Solomos 1992).

The conditions that gave rise to this active recruitment of black labour are set out below. Immediately after the Second World War, Britain, like other similar industrialised economies in the West, witnessed a period of economic expansion accompanied by social welfare policies of both the Labour and Conservative governments (1945–60). Internationally, this was the most sustained period of economic growth, and it was in this context that black labour was actively recruited to address labour shortages (Anwar 1986; Layton-Henry 1992). In Britain, the Labour government of 1945 to 1951 laid the foundations for the ‘post-war consensus’ by establishing the welfare state and adapting the labour movement to policies of full employment. The Conservative government in 1951 continued this trend, becoming slightly more interventionist in order to achieve economic expansion. By distributing shares and bringing (coal, steel, automobile) industries under state control, they claimed to have a national property-owning democracy. Whether identified as Keynesian (following the principles of economist John Maynard Keynes) or ‘embedded liberalism’ (e.g. Harvey 2009), this set of policies was the result of high rates of economic growth which, accompanied by a period of political and ideological consensus, lasted until the end of the 1960s when the growth slowed down and more and more crises affected the economy.

Britain lost competitive advantage in the global market place from the 1960s onwards as unemployment and inflation rose at home, as a result of which the previous political consensus appeared to be unsustainable. Politically and ideologically, the shaky consensus was also threatened in this decade by the arrival of new social movements, including feminism, black power and the student movement, and by the resistance to racism of immigrant workers and students. It was in this context that the state played an active role in racialising immigration, that is, immigration was constructed as a ‘black’ problem, and this in turn was linked to social problems such as overcrowding and crime (Solomos 1992).

Hall et al. (1978) argue that the end of the post-war liberal consensus created space for a new form of political leadership but one that required a more coercive form of state to manage the crisis caused by the decline of Britain’s manufacturing base in the global economy. The conservative ‘New Right’ government led by Margaret Thatcher took up that space in 1979, with the explicit intention of finding a radical solution to the economic decline and accompanying social and political problems. The policies of the Thatcher administration created consent for what later came to be known as a ‘neoliberal’ and ‘post-welfarist’ agenda which set out to free capital from the constraints of state ownership and investment. What followed was a radical restructuring of workers’ rights and real wages in order to keep investments profitable for the capitalist economy. These policies were underpinned by a global monetarism which was promoted by neoliberal economists such as Friedman, whereas the Keynesian phase had emphasised state planning and in some instances state ownership of key sectors. The neoliberal project set out to disembed capital from these constraints (Harvey 2009).

Race was a central political symbol in the rise of the New Right. It was “mobilised to explain the demise of the post-war liberal consensus, economic decline, welfare dependency and a general lapse in social order and traditional moral value” (Ansell 1997, 26). The classic study by Hall et al. (1978) develops in detail an argument about how, through the use of moral panics around race, youth and crime, the New Right manufactured consent for its economic and political project of ‘rolling back the state’. Racialised stereotypes about black ‘criminals and muggers’ helped to legitimate coercive state measures aimed at the population in general, but particularly targeted disadvantaged groups that were also the most severely affected by the rising unemployment. The increased surveillance of the population in general was achieved through measures such as ‘stop and search’, but this disproportionately targeted African Caribbean men, and as a consequence led to further unrest in towns and cities in the 1980s. By the mid-1980s, African Caribbean youth were being characterised in policy and media discourse as a ticking time bomb (Solomos and Back 1996) and a threat to the ‘British way of life’.

Race and nation were also central themes for the New Labour government elected in 1997. Thatcherite constructions of ‘two nations’ had divided Britain into a privileged nation of ‘good citizens’ who were ‘hard working’ and a contained and subordinated nation which included ethnic minorities and much of the unskilled white working class outside the South East (Jessop 2003). The Blairite ‘Third Way’ between neoliberalism and social democracy promoted the idea of Britain as a ‘single’ nation in which opportunity could be shared by all. Yet New Labour governments also, especially from 2001, posed multiculturalism and ethnic identification as a threat to ‘the nation’, and introduced some of the most draconian anti-immigration and anti-terror legislation that the country has ever seen. New Labour’s ambitious project of redefining Britishness around notions of ‘active citizenship’, ‘rights and responsibilities’ and paid work (Worley 2005) positioned some groups, notably Muslims, asylum-seekers and generally those not in paid employment, as outside the nation and its interests.

By the time the New Labour government was elected in 1997, concerns were being expressed about the growing inequalities resulting from the neoliberal reforms pursued by three successive Conservative governments. There have been various debates about New Labour’s legacy and the extent to which New Labour’s policies marked a continuation of Thatcherite neoliberalism. Giddens (2010) disagrees that they mark any such continuation arguing that New Labour demonstrated a genuine commitment to social justice which was missing from Conservative agendas. It is certainly the case that New Labour’s policies and measures such as the *New Deal for Lone Parents*, *Working Tax Credits*, *Child Tax Credits* and *Surestart* aimed for redistribution, albeit by ‘stealth’. Policies such as *Aim Higher*, *Widening Participation* and the *Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant* also targeted disadvantaged white and ethnic minority youth, aiming to ‘raise aspirations’ and educational achievement and thereby help people to get jobs. New Labour did manage a significant rise in higher

education participation (15% between 1997 and 2012), but research evidence also shows that ethnic minority students end up in 'new' post-1992 universities and on vocational courses. As with the 1944 Education Act, the middle classes made the most of the opportunities offered by the expansion of higher education (Raey et al. 2001; Archer et al. 2003; Modood 2006). There were also increases in the levels of educational achievements of all groups, but the gaps between groups increased and class and ethnicity have consistently been found by researchers to be the biggest predictors of educational and economic success (Gillborn 2008; Mirza 2009). The UK's social mobility rates have also declined over recent decades (Blanden et al. 2004), so that New Labour's policies did much to slow down the onset of the 2008 crisis but did not alter the broad patterns of structural inequality, let alone prevent the crisis altogether.

The 2008 economic and financial crisis was the platform for the election of the new Coalition government in May 2010. With the mantra of 'clearing up the mess inherited from the previous government', the Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition has pursued austerity measures with the assumption that the private sector will step in to provide jobs for the large numbers of unemployed as a result. But the real priority has been to satisfy the financial elite, bond markets and financial assessors. The government's 2010 Green Paper, *21st Century Welfare*, and the White Paper, *Universal Credit: Welfare that Works*, reflect a renewal and deepening of neoliberalisation in the context of the current financial crisis and persistent economic recession. Indeed, Hall (2011) argues that the Coalition government has taken the neoliberal agenda further than any of the three regimes since the 1970s. This intensification of neoliberal policy measures, based on punitive conditionality and economic rationality, is portrayed by the government as 'new and innovative' to restore Britain's economic competitiveness. Education was first in line for cuts in spending: the *Future Jobs Fund*, the cancellation of school building and refurbishment, the abolition of the *Education Maintenance Allowance* and funding cuts in university teaching budgets, fewer university places and a massive increase in university tuition fees. These draconian measures have disproportionately affected poorer communities the most.

Race has not been mentioned overtly by the Coalition government, but the continuation of debates about forced marriages, 'extremism' and immigration have targeted racialised groups, namely Muslims and asylum-seekers, while the targeted cutting of public services has and will disproportionately affect all disadvantaged groups but especially poorer ethnic minorities because of their reliance on public services.

Education policy and state attempts to 'manage diversity'

Against the background of economic boom and political and ideological consensus in the 1950s and 1960s, education was viewed as a key means of integrating the children of immigrant workers, but this integration was to be achieved by assimilationist goals. Over 50 years later, the Coalition government's official strategy for managing diversity still promotes the same goal of assimilation, albeit labelled as 'integration' (DCLG 2012).

As is well documented in the literature (Troyna 1992; Grosvenor 1997; Tomlinson 2008), two key policies confirmed the assimilationist project of British governments in the 1960s. The first was ‘English as a Second Language’ (ESL); the second, which followed on from the first, was the policy of ‘dispersal’.

ESL was ostensibly introduced to help ethnic minorities ‘integrate’ into British society. Language was seen as essential to this integration; however, ESL was seen not just as linguistic assimilation but also as cultural and social assimilation (CIAC 1964). The Department for Education and Science in 1967 referred to “immigrant groups” as “formed by different breeding and ordered by different manners” (cited in Grosvenor 1997, 52). Further, this ‘difference’ was also constructed as threatening to the educational prospects of indigenous children. Linguistic diversity apparently disrupted the learning experiences of indigenous children, but also caused a decline in educational standards. The localised concentration of immigrants in some areas was constructed as inherently threatening to educational standards, as the 1964 report of the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council (CIAC) stated:

The presence of a high proportion of immigrant children in one class slows down the general routine of working and hampers the progress of the whole class, especially where the immigrants do not speak or write English fluently. This is clearly in itself undesirable and unfair to all the children in the class ... if a school has more than a certain percentage of immigrant children among its pupils the whole character and ethos of the school is altered. Moreover, the evidence from one or two areas showed ... a tendency towards the creation of predominantly immigrant schools, partly because of the increase in the number of immigrant children in certain neighbourhoods, but also partly because some parents tend to take native-born children away from schools when the proportion of immigrant pupils exceeds a level which suggests to them that the school is becoming an immigrant school. If this trend continues, both the social and the educational consequences might be very grave (CIAC 1964, para. 25).

The above paragraph reveals early concerns about the effects of concentrations (segregation) of minorities in some localities and about the resultant ‘white flight’ from these neighbourhoods. The concerns led to the introduction of the policy of ‘dispersal’ through the 1965 government White Paper (Home Office 1965). This recommended that immigrant children should make up no more than one-third of a school and that dispersal between schools should be adopted by local authorities. Few local education authorities actually took up the suggestion of dispersal by ‘bussing’ children out of the locality, mostly because of costs rather than because they disagreed with the policy of ‘bussing’ and only 11 authorities had ‘bussed’ children by 1970 (Tomlinson 2008).

By the mid-1960s, teachers and parents were challenging the racist assumptions underpinning education policies such as dispersal and in 1966 the British state moved towards an official strategy of ‘integration’ which was defined as “not a flattening process of assimilation” but one of “mutual tolerance” of cultural difference (Jenkins 1966). In reality, assimilation remained a key policy goal. Integration was the aim,

but it had to be accompanied by the acceptance of assumed superior shared British values. The language of the decade in both official documents and academic work referred to ‘immigrants’, ‘coloured populations’, ‘second language speakers’, and as ‘problems’. Ethnic minority children were constructed as culturally deprived, and as having ‘special needs’, and too many of them were defined as educationally subnormal (Coard 1971). This cultural pathologising, or the construction of the familial and/or cultural background of minorities as inferior or inadequate (Shain 2003), continued in the 1970s through notions of ‘culture clash’ and ‘intergenerational conflict’, and helped to shift the blame for material (racialised and classed) inequalities that were emerging as a result of New Right reforms onto the cultural background of the child.

Multiculturalism and its critique

Multiculturalism initially emerged, in the 1970s, as a form of resistance on the part of parents and teachers to previous assimilationist policies. However, multiculturalism was not officially adopted by the state until after the publication of the *Scarman Report* into the inner-city disturbances of 1981. The state institutionalised funding of separate ethnic groups and emphasis on culture difference that followed produced not only a backlash from the right-wing press but also from the left and the anti-racists (neo-Marxists), who saw it as a deliberate state attempt to weaken the solidarity that had been built across the left and the black community. From an anti-racist perspective, multiculturalism was always a double-edged sword (Kundnani 2001). It had started out as a defensive survival strategy against New Right popular racism but was now institutionalised as a mode of social control of ethnic minorities:

Multiculturalism now meant taking black culture off the streets – where it had been politicised and turned into a rebellion against the state – and putting it in the council chamber, in the classroom and on the television, where it could be institutionalised, managed and reified (Kundnani 2001).

Despite the state institutionalisation of multiculturalism during the Thatcher and Major years, multiculturalism and its counterpart, anti-racism, were subjected to a “discourse of derision” (Ball 1990). The explicitly ‘colour-blind’ approach to policy pursued by Conservative governments in the 1990s (Tomlinson 2008; Gillborn 2008) fed New Right critiques of multiculturalism as a “looney left” obsession (Grosvenor 1997).

The Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988, enacted in the context of this multicultural backlash, provoked further tension between official state policy (multiculturalist) and education policy, which was profoundly assimilationist. The 1988 ERA “re-made” education (Jones 2003) through its introduction of the market and ‘choice’ into education. However, this ‘modern’ agenda was accompanied by, and indeed a product of, a regressive conservative nationalism with decidedly melancholic imperial undertones. The Act was based on a conception of the ‘nation’ as politically and culturally indivisible. Kenneth Baker, its architect, when introducing the Conservatives’

educational reform programme in September 1987, stated: “children are in danger of losing any sense at all of a common culture and a common heritage. The cohesive role of the national curriculum will provide our society with a greater sense of identity” (Kenneth Baker, cited in Grosvenor 1997, 86).

The 1992 White Paper and the 1993 Education Act, *Choice and Diversity, a New Framework for Schools* took conservative nationalism a step further, stating that “proper regard should continue to be paid to the nation’s Christian heritage and traditions”. And, in the context of wider policies of opting out, parental choice and competition between schools, racism in education became accepted under the New Right as a market force (Gewirtz 2001). As Apple (1999) has argued, race became an “absent presence” in education.

New Labour: Tackling institutionalised racism?

Against the background of the backlash against multiculturalism, the incoming New Labour government’s decision to commission a public enquiry into the racist murder in 1994 of black teenager Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson 1999) seemed to mark a significant break with the previous Conservative approach to race. The Macpherson enquiry’s finding that “institutional racism” was rife in public services marked a watershed for British politics. It led to the strengthening of existing policy through the Race Relations (Amendment) (RRA) Act 2000 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Under the RRA Act, which came into force in September 2002, educational institutions were legally required to prepare written policies on race equality; to assess the impact of their policies on ethnic minority pupils, staff and parents, with the emphasis on the attainment of ethnic minority pupils; and to monitor levels of attainment in relation to the school population.

Only a handful of authorities actually complied with the new RRA Act’s requirements (CRE 2003), and the Ajegbo review of *Diversity in the Curriculum* (DfES 2007) noted that “issues of ‘race’ and diversity are not always high on schools’ agendas” (2007, 34). Even before the end of New Labour’s first term in office, institutional racism and equal opportunities had been compromised into concepts such as “valuing diversity”, which in practical terms overemphasised the “celebration of differences” at the expense of tackling inequalities and material disadvantage (Mahony and Hextall 2000). By 2003, Home Secretary David Blunkett was arguing that the concept of institutional racism had “missed the point”, and while education policy was out of sync with the legislative context in relation to equality, the neoliberal restructuring of education confirmed the absent presence of race in government policy.

Back to integration or more assimilation?

New Labour’s approach to dealing with racism from 2001 to 2005 has been described by Back et al. as “the new assimilationism” (Back et al. 2002, 452) but also as “naïve multiculturalism” (Gillborn 2001, 19). As both authors note, New Labour’s

early flirtations with multicultural democracy were combined with melancholic appeals to imperial grandness with these paradoxical impulses, according to Back et al., producing a contradictory vision oscillating to the past and future by turns. Institutionalised racism virtually disappeared from the agenda in this period as the Community Cohesion agenda emerged – as a direct response to the civil disturbances that had occurred in some northern towns in June 2001. This new assimilationist cohesion agenda was given further fuel after the 9/11 terrorist attacks were officially connected to Muslim ‘extremists’ and the USA and Britain officially declared a ‘war on terror’.

Education was seen having a central role to play in “mythbusting” (DCLG 2006) or challenging mutual misunderstandings between “communities”. The official reports (Cantle 2001; Denham 2002) into the causes of the 2001 riots identified the “self-segregation” of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities as a major cause of the riots. The argument put forward in the Cantle Report was that the geographical separation of white and minority communities was nothing new but the fact that white and Asian people’s lives barely touched was a major factor in causing the ‘misunderstandings’ that had led to the outbreaks of violent protest. This segregation did not just threaten academic standards, as in the 1960s, but potentially presented a threat to the security of the nation. Segregation, it was argued, prevented young people from actively participating in processes of local democracy, leaving them open to misinformation at best and potential radicalisation and ‘extremism’ at worst. In addition to the citation of the lack of language proficiency as a major factor in the cultural segregation of communities, Cheong et al. (2007) note a shift in terms of the policy reading of Muslim communities. What was once seen as ‘good’ social capital – the tightness of Asian family ties – is now being recast as ‘bad’. In Robert Putnam’s terms, Asian communities possessed too much “bonding capital” and not enough “bridging capital” (ibid.), that is, they were constructed as too tightly knit and not outward facing enough; they needed to build both on their social networks if they were to work their way out of marginalisation.

Calls for a more open and honest debate about Britishness (Home Office 2002) led to the engagement of the British government in a project of redefining British citizenship around notions of cohesion and integration and ‘British values’. For New Labour, this was largely conceptualised and pursued through its policies on immigration, namely the White Paper *Secure Borders Safe Haven* (Home Office 2002). In the foreword to this White Paper, Home Secretary David Blunkett justified a new robust system for managing migration, with reference to the need for “us” “to be secure within our sense of belonging and identity” (Home Office 2002). However, as Back et al. argue (2002), the core of this Britishness, or what is really Englishness, was never clearly defined. At times, Britishness was cast as the Other of genital mutilation or forced marriages.¹ At other times, it referred to “fair play and tolerance”.² In Gordon Brown’s speeches (2006), ‘hard work, effort and enterprise’ were reframed as core

British values, again betraying New Labour's realignment of British citizenship with a neoliberal state.

Gillborn (2008, 81) describes new Labour's final term (2005–2010) as an era of “aggressive majoritarianism”, when “the rights and perspectives of a white majority were asserted” and, in the context of the ‘war on terror’ and its securitisation of everyday life, they now felt able to freely voice these prejudices in the name of ‘integration’ or ‘security’. The *hijab*, *niqab*, forced marriage and genital mutilation became the subject of intense and detailed debate, not only in Britain but across Europe. However, Britain has not quite taken the steps that France has in banning the *niqab*. Parallels can be drawn here with colonial strategies and the emphasis on ‘winning hearts and minds’ over brutal suppression. However, this ‘winning hearts and minds’ approach also needs to be read alongside reports about the evidence of horrific mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners in what has been called Britain’s “Abu Ghraib” (Cobain 2010). This judicial abuse, torture and war crime, alongside ‘home’ measures, including forced repatriation and detention without trial, keep the threat of state violence ever present alongside a series of ‘soft’ or consensual measures to manage and contain ‘problem’ populations. In the next section, I explore some of the implications of the war on terror for education through the example of one of the most contentious national policies that has implicated educational professionals in the state surveillance of ethnic minorities.

The ‘war on terror’, ‘suspect communities’ and education

In Britain, Muslims have been subject to intense scrutiny since the Rushdie affair in 1989 but concerns about the supposed radicalisation of Muslims, and young men in particular, escalated following the July 2005 London bombings, when Muslims came to be identified as a new “enemy within” (Kundnani 2007, Shain 2009). Whereas the early Ministerial response to the 2005 bombings characterised ‘extremists’ as a tiny fraction of the larger Muslim community, direct links were nonetheless made between ‘terror’ and Islam:

The principal current terrorist threat is from radicalised individuals who are using a distorted and unrepresentative version of Islam to justify violence. Such people are ... a tiny minority within the Muslim communities here and abroad. Muslim communities themselves do not threaten our security; indeed they make a great contribution to our country (Home Office 2006).

As I have argued (Shain 2011), the view that Muslims communities do not themselves threaten our security has largely been swamped by the more provocative notion, of a ‘supportive community’ for terrorism. For example, Home Office Minister John Denham suggested that “few terrorist movements have lasted long enough without a supportive community”. A supportive community does not necessarily condone violence but sees “terrorists as sharing their world view part of the struggle to which

they belong” (Denham 2009). Communities Minister Hazel Blears spelled out in more detail who the individuals might be in a supportive community:

It’s the stay-at-home mum, the taxi driver, the neighbour, the dinner lady ... the student – all of those whose decisions and actions contribute towards making an environment in which extremism can flourish or falter (Blears 2009).

In other words, any ordinary Muslim, even when not directly involved, could potentially provide support for terrorism. This construction of a ‘supportive community’ not only positions *all* Muslims as complicit in terrorism, but articulates in detail who is Other to Britishness and a threat to the British nation. The notion of a supportive community is premised on the assumption of a unified Muslim community based on faith and working directly but covertly against the interests of the British community and has been central to the new racist discourse that constructs Muslims as a “suspect community” – “a sub-group of the population that is singled out for state attention as being ‘problematic’” (Pantazis and Pemberton 2009, 649). The construction of Muslims as suspect has not only been applied to adults but, as I argue below, through the *Prevent* strategy, a pre-emptive and increasingly coercive and punitive state approach towards young people is currently in operation. Justified through a ‘security’ discourse, this strategy implicates education professionals in the surveillance and containment of ‘problem’ ethnic minority students.

The Prevent strategy and education

Established in 2006 as one of four elements of the government’s counter-terrorism strategy, *Prevent* was officially defined as a strategy that aims to stop “people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism”, and part of an approach to build “strong and positive relationships between people of different backgrounds and a sense of belonging to a shared vision of the future” (DCLG, 2006).

Prevent was launched by means of a series of documents and toolkits aimed at supporting schools, colleges, universities and other public bodies in the task of challenging ‘extremist’ behaviour. Extremist behaviour in this context is a term which is simultaneously too vaguely and too specifically defined as a problem of Islam (Shain 2011). This strategy was revised in 2011 following criticism that it alienated rather than co-opted Muslims. The revised *Prevent* strategy, however, has failed to address the criticism that it criminalises and stigmatises Muslims. Rather, it has further extended the definition of ‘extremism’ to any ideology that opposes ‘Britishness’ (Cameron 2011). The focus of the strategy remains on Muslims despite escalations of right wing ‘extremism’ across Europe. *Prevent* funding (£140 million in 2009) has been targeted to areas with high Muslim populations and has included partnerships between the police and community and faith groups, mentoring for vulnerable, ‘at risk’ students, faith awareness weeks in colleges, English-language courses to teach Imams about the importance of issues such as child protection (Shain 2011).

Prevent has also been supported by contentious militaristic language. “Winning hearts and minds”, the subtitle of the *Prevent Action Plan* (DCLG 2007), was a key slogan of the British Army, coined to distance the British response from the heavy-handed tactics employed by US soldiers in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. However, as stated earlier, slogans such as ‘winning hearts and minds’ sit uneasily with evidence of the brutal repression of prisoners of war. The *Prevent* strategy has been a central tool in the construction of a ‘war at home’ with a ‘new enemy within’ through its underlying assumption that all Muslims may be susceptible to condoning terrorism. John Denham (cited earlier) went on to suggest that “silence can be interpreted as acquiescence or tacit acceptance”. In other words, as Spalek et al. (2008) point out, the ‘responsible’ and ‘active’ (and gendered, since the onus has been on women to carry this out) Muslim citizen is required to engage in internal community surveillance. If they fail to challenge words and deeds that may be considered to offer support for terrorism, they may themselves be seen as complicit in extremism.

Educational institutions are seen as having a vital role to play in rooting out this terrorism, and a significant part of the *Prevent* programme has involved the embedding of counter-terrorism police within the delivery of local services, including schools, for the purpose of gathering intelligence on Muslim communities (Kundnani 2009). Workshops have been delivered to local schools and colleges by police to assist teachers to ‘spot’ pupils ‘at risk’ of ‘extremism’. In one report, children as young as four were identified as “at risk” (ibid.). Educators and youth workers have expressed concerns that they were expected to be the “eyes and ears” of security policing (ibid.).

In the higher education sector, a number of high profile cases have confirmed suspicions that universities have been required to “spy on students” (Dodd 2006). University campuses have been identified as breeding grounds for terrorism, and vice chancellors asked to monitor the activities of their Muslim students in the interest of ‘security’. *Promoting Good Campus Relations* (DIUS 2007), for example, warns against the dangers of permitting external speakers invited by Islamic societies onto campuses. It is suggested within this paper that such invitees “are able to fill a vacuum created by young Muslims’ feelings of alienation from their parents’ generation by providing greater ‘clarity’ from an Islamic point of view on a range of issues, and potentially a greater sense of purpose about how Muslim students can respond” (DIUS 2007, 21).

This repeats familiar themes of a culture clash that have dominated policy frameworks in relation to Asian and Muslim communities since the 1970s at the same time as it introduces the discourse of ‘grooming’ for extremism. In stark echoes of ‘bussing’, the authors of an ‘independent’ report recommended to the Blair government that universities curtail their Muslim populations in an effort to combat extremism (Glees and Pope 2005). As the *Times Higher Education Supplement* noted at the time, the *Prevent* initiative smacked of “the Cold War use of academics in counter-insurgency activities – essentially using academics as spies” (Baty 2007). Fekete (2008,

102) has described this surveillance as a “revamped version of McCarthyism, with its highly public loyalty reviews and congressional hearings... being injected into the body politic, with particular mutations being developed in particular contexts”. The dominant discourses of global security have affected the broader priorities of educational institutions, especially the research culture and practice of universities, not just through this surveillance but also through the targeted funding of terrorism studies (Jackson et al. 2007). Giroux (2012) refers to this as the militarisation of higher education.

Nation-building and education

Pre-emptive modes of control have been justified through the discourses of the ‘war on terror’, which in turn have supported a renewed project of nation-building. With the appointment of the new Obama–Brown coalition in 2008, the language of the ‘war on terror’ dissipated,³ but it continues to impact on the schooling of all young people, especially Muslim children. At the same time, there has been little provision for the safeguarding of Muslim pupils, who have been subjected to increased surveillance and harassment. In 2002, Citizenship Education was made a compulsory part of the curriculum for all 11–16-year-olds in state-maintained schools. The Ajebo review of *Diversity in the Curriculum* (DfES 2007) was commissioned in 2005 in the aftermath of the London bombings and fears about “‘home grown’ terrorism” (Osler 2009). The review added a fourth pillar, “Identity and Diversity: Living Together”, to the existing three strands of the citizenship curriculum. However, as Osler (2009) argues, contemporary racism is barely mentioned in its suggested schemes of work. Citizenship education, from its inception, was seen as a possible arena for promoting anti-racist education. But it has maintained the social control functions associated with the New Right’s initial attempt to introduce it, in the 1990s, as a “cross curricular theme” (Cunningham and Lavellete 2004). Children are encouraged to be “good” citizens and to engage with a narrow domestic notion of politics, but not to become “too political” (ibid.). Cunningham and Lavellete argue that the contradictions at the heart of the citizenship education curriculum were revealed when school students took to the streets to protest at the prospect of war in Iraq in March 2003. Rather than being seen as ‘active citizens’ exercising their rights to legitimate protest, they were branded by the chief inspector of schools as “irresponsible truants” (ibid.). Some of those engaged in these and other anti-war protests were boys who I interviewed as part of my research that examined educational experiences in the context of the ‘war on terror’ (Shain 2011). At the time of the research, in 2003, citizenship education had just been introduced as a compulsory subject. The boys reported a spontaneous attempt to deal with the ‘war on terror’ through a history lesson when two of them reported, “for a joke”, that they would join the Taliban. The history teacher’s preparedness in this case to discuss the issue was greatly appreciated by the boys. Outside of the assemblies there had been little coverage of 9/11 and wars in Afghanistan and

Iraq. The absence of curricular discussion around the wars further contributed to the stigma that the boys were already feeling within their schools for being associated with Islam (ibid.).

In 2006, just before the current financial and economic crisis reared its head, there was a creeping defence of empire in Ministerial speeches. In 2006, Tony Blair argued that “this country is a blessed nation. The British are special. The world knows it; in our innermost thoughts, we know it. This is the greatest nation on earth” (cited in Gillborn 2008, 722). Gordon Brown reportedly said, “we should be proud ... of the Empire”, that “the days of Britain having to apologise for our history are over”, and that “we should celebrate much of our past rather than apologise for it, and we should talk, rightly so, about British values” (Kearney 2005a; 2005b). Claiming that the empire had given Britain a greater global reach than any other country, Brown specifically linked imperialism with enduring British values of enterprise and internationalism (Lee 2006).

Empire has been a significant theme of the current Conservative Education Secretary Michael Gove’s agenda for the review of the history curriculum. In his speech to the Conservative party conference in 2010, Gove attacked the current approach to history teaching, claiming that it denied children the opportunity to learn about “our island story”:

Children are growing up ignorant of one of the most inspiring stories I know – the history of our United Kingdom. ... Our history has moments of pride and shame, but unless we fully understand the struggles of the past we will not properly value the liberties of the present.

Gove sought the advice of empire-apologist Niall Ferguson in 2010 to help rewrite the history curriculum for English schools. Ferguson is known for politically championing British colonialism, stating that “Empire is more necessary in the 21st century than ever before”. Andrew Roberts, also approached by the Conservatives, spoke of the British Empire as an “exemplary force for good” (Milne 2010).

Patriotic appeals to Britishness and empire at this moment, alongside a detailed caricature of the Other, need to be analysed in an economic and political context. Back et al. (2002, 450), writing about the contradictions inherent in the New Labour project on ‘race’, suggest that its cohesion policies attempted to reconcile an “aspiration for a model of neoliberal economic growth, based on a rhetoric of globalised economic forces, with an attempt to protect the social integrity of the nation-state”. Britishness tests, citizenship ceremonies and Britishness taught in the school curriculum read from this perspective offer a way of hanging on to a sense of national identity in the face of global economic competition. However, the ‘inclusive’ politics of community cohesion also represents the ‘softer’ consensual face of coercive state attempts to contain and manage problem populations (Burnett 2009). From the latter perspective, educational policies such as Lifelong Learning and Widening Participation which

have targeted poor ethnic minority students, ostensibly offer extended transitions for young people as they face increasingly 'risky and complex' futures as a result of the decline in heavy industry and the growing casualisation of work since the 1960s – as outlined in theories of 'risk' and 'reflexive modernity' (Beck 1991; Giddens 1991). However, critics argue that these policies are also 'soft' tools of containment of the very people who are most disadvantaged by changes in the labour market and growing job insecurity (Brine 2006).

Against the background of rising unemployment and growing economic uncertainty, current appeals to Britishness and the history of empire can be read as desperate attempts to instil national pride in the British public. This comes at a time when Britain's imperial power and status as a leading Western economy is being challenged by strong competition from countries such as China and India and other emerging economies (Gowan 2009, Gokay 2009). The forging of a renewed British identity can be read in this context not just as melancholic (Gilroy 2004) but as an ideological mechanism to deflect attention from a British economy in decline. Patriotic appeals to a mythic Britishness help to create the illusion of a cohesive society at a time when disadvantage and class inequalities threaten to become stark as a result of savage cuts to public funding in the context of significant economic decline.

Conclusion

I have argued that since the 1950s successive British governments have characterised minorities as 'problems' to be managed and contained. In the 1950s and 1960s, ethnic minorities in general were blamed for declining educational standards. In the 1970s and 1980s, cultural deprivation and intergenerational conflict positioned African Caribbean young men as largely responsible for the inequalities that had emerged as a consequence of the onset of neoliberalisation of education. Since the 1990s, Muslims, foreign students and asylum-seekers have been the targets of racism and intense disciplinary measures, and have been posed as a threat to the security of the nation. From the 1950s to the present, themes of race and nation and appeals to ethnic minorities to conform, respect or integrate, or rather assimilate, to a 'British way of life' have been a constant thread.

Despite the promise of 'equality' and 'fairness', successive governments since the late 1970s have mobilised 'race', albeit coded through notions of 'ethnicity' and 'community' (Worley 2005) to justify increasingly coercive state approaches to the management of problem populations. At the same time as calling for 'equality', 'fairness' and integration, recent governments have also ideologically segregated the communities they seek ostensibly to unite. Themes of race and nation remain as significant today as they were in the 1950s and 1960s, if not more so. The unacceptable Otherness of particular minorities is being spelled out in detail like never before via the operation in education of strategies such as *Prevent*. Education has become suffused with counter-terrorism and surveillance at the same time as the government's appeal

to 'fairness' in a 'big society'. I have argued that such appeals provide a convenient distraction from the current realities of economic downturn and the further decline in Britain's global power.

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Notes

- 1 David Blunkett's speeches in the aftermath of the inner-city disturbances in 2001 called on Muslims to abandon such practices. In June 2010, the prime minister announced the criminalisation of forced marriage and a £500,000 fund to be made available to help teachers in schools and colleges to 'spot' victims of forced marriage. Although the legislation has been welcomed by women's and children's rights campaigners, there have also been concerns that the legalisation itself could send the issue underground and risk stigmatising communities (Gill 2009).
- 2 Blair's 'Duty to Integrate' speech (2006); also see Blears (2009)
- 3 After the failed bomb attacks in 2007, Gordon Brown is said to have developed new guidelines for ministers directing them to 'drop' the 'war on terror' language and 'banning' them from connecting Muslims with terrorist attacks due to concerns of undermining cohesion (*Daily Express* 2007); there was also a shift in language adopted by the then Home Secretary Jacqui Smith in 2008 when she referred to alleged terrorist activities as anti-Islamic activity (*Daily Mail* 2008, January 17); in 2007 (*Guardian*, January 17), David Miliband described the government's use of the 'war on terror' terminology as 'a mistake'.

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