

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Between the lines: Contours of nation, multiculture and  
race equality in policy discourse in the New Labour period

A thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology of the London School of Economics for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London, December 2013

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## Declaration

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## Abstract

This thesis examines how New Labour policymakers and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)-led race equality organisations articulated and connected themes of nation, multiculture and 'race' equality in policy discourse and discussions over the New Labour period. My study extends previous accounts of New Labour and multicultural discourses by incorporating the significant, but not always influential, role of BME civil society actors in such policy discussions.

My research draws on documents and archival material from and interviews with policymakers and race equality actors. I analyse this data using a qualitative thematic approach to discern changing policy discourses and claims about the state of the multicultural nation and the place of race equality within it.

In the study I suggest that, after a promising start, New Labour policymakers came to understand the relationship between nation, multiculture and race equality as a troubled and troubling one. At the same time, the three BME-led race equality organisations that I focus on in my research struggled to counter government discourses of parallel lives, community cohesion and Britishness that were detrimental to efforts to combat race inequality.

Policy and policy discursive interventions of BME-led race equality organisations were thrown off course not only by New Labour but also by 'new ethnicities', and the idea of complex and diverse 'BMEness'. BME-led organisations have struggled to engage with this latter destabilisation, let alone develop a politics capable of overcoming such issues. I therefore end my thesis by suggesting that, if BME-led race equality organisations are to shape policy debates on race equality, there is much hard labour and re-thinking about BMEness and re-organising for them still to do.

## Acknowledgements

This PhD is dedicated to the memory of Dr Bala Lingiah and Vishnoo Yellappa.

This PhD could not have been completed without the support of numerous people.

I want to first and foremost thank Claire Alexander, my lead supervisor, for her brilliant support, insights and for her patience. Also, I would like to thank Suki Ali, my co-supervisor, particularly for her help to clarify my conceptual and methodological thinking. Thanks also to Paul Gilroy for his generous guidance along the way and, similarly, Fran Tonkiss was also extremely helpful and encouraging.

I want to thank my various colleagues in academic life, including all those involved in the 'Race', Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Network. I owe much to friends and colleagues at LSE Sociology, especially roommates from S201. I am very grateful to Malcolm James and Naaz Rashid for their friendship and support. I would also like to thank Lena Karamanidou, Jesse Potter and Jill Timms.

I would like to express my appreciation to all my interviewees involved in my research and to the staff and volunteers of Black Training and Enterprise Group, Operation Black Vote, Race on the Agenda, and Runnymede Trust for providing access to their archives.

Special thanks go to Stephen Thake for so many things, including opening my mind to what it means to be an 'engaged' researcher. Thanks are also due to Vandna Gohil, former Chief Executive at Voice4Change England, for giving me an opportunity to explore issues of race equality in the first place.

I would like to thank my mum and dad for encouraging my studies and the pursuit of knowledge. Thanks too to Maman for her years of care and affection. I'd like to thank my brother-in-law Daram Sooriah and my sister Sangeeta Sooriah for their help; in Sangeeta's

case with the arduous task of proof-reading. I also need to express my deepest gratitude to Tugrul Marashli for proof-reading and providing the escape of Sunday football on Sky TV. I am also grateful to Robert Cord for his support and advice.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation; the London School of Economics; and Voice4Change England for their financial support without which I could not have undertaken this study. Special thanks also go to John Gordon.

Most of all I would like to thank Suyin Looui for her love, patience and help.

## Table of contents

Declaration .....	2
Abstract .....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Table of contents .....	6
Chapter 1 Introduction: Locating and undertaking the study .....	9
1    Introduction .....	9
1.1    Research questions .....	10
2    (New) Labour and the politics of multiculture and race equality.....	12
3    Three colours black .....	20
3.1    Black Training and Enterprise Group .....	21
3.2    Operation Black Vote .....	23
3.3    Race on the Agenda .....	25
4    Undertaking the research .....	27
4.1    Bounding themes and the body of data .....	27
4.2    Accessing and gathering data .....	29
4.3    Preparing, sorting and analysing data.....	34
4.4    Ethical issues, disclosures and positionnalities.....	37
5    Conclusions .....	41
5.1    Chapter summaries.....	41
Chapter 2 Landscaping the field: nation, multiculture and BME organising .....	44
1    Introduction .....	44
2    Nations: something old and something new.....	44
2.1    The state and the nation.....	48
3    Multiculture and the naming of difference .....	51
3.1    Multiculturalism.....	53
4    BME organising .....	58
4.1    Towards a black politics .....	58

4.2	Moving back from black.....	61
4.3	New ethnicities .....	62
4.4	Objections to black/BMEness .....	65
4.5	BME politics and the state .....	68
5	Conclusions: Drawing the line – nation, multiculture and BME organising .....	71
Chapter 3 Towards proportional multiculture.....		73
1	Introduction .....	73
2	Things can only get better .....	75
2.1	Better things for BME people .....	84
3	The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and Race Relations (Amendment) Act.....	88
4	The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain .....	97
5	Conclusion: Getting things in proportion .....	108
Chapter 4 Parallel multiculture and multicultural overlaps .....		110
1	Introduction .....	110
2	Making community count.....	111
3	The northern ‘disturbances’ and parallel living .....	120
3.1	Towards parallel lives.....	126
3.2	Cohesive communities .....	132
3.3	Cohesion and (race) equality .....	136
4	Unparalleled problems: The London Bombings .....	141
4.1	Security and community cohesion.....	145
4.2	BME-led organisations: restoring ‘race’ .....	154
5	Conclusions .....	163
Chapter 5 Pausing multiculture: re-asserting nation and citizen .....		166
1	Introduction .....	166
2	Britain calling .....	167
2.1	Towards a British patriotism .....	167
2.2	The push and pull of Britain.....	177
3	Citizens and citizenship: On best behaviour .....	185
3.1	New Labour, new citizens .....	185
3.2	BME people and dual citizenship .....	191

4	Re-framing equality .....	196
5	Conclusion.....	210
	Chapter 6 Politics behind the discursive lines .....	212
1	Introduction .....	212
2	Policy discourse and policymaking .....	214
2.1	Producing a parallel universe.....	214
2.2	Policy discourse and its connection to policymaking.....	219
3	Bringing BMEness to discourse.....	223
3.1	BME engagement in policy: gaining footholds and treading carefully .....	223
3.2	‘Representing’ BME voices.....	227
3.3	‘Unrepresentative’ BME voices: BME renegades.....	234
4	Conclusions .....	241
	Chapter 7 Conclusions: Rewriting the lines .....	243
1	Introduction .....	243
2	Three moments in time .....	244
3	Redrawing the discursive lines: After New Labour.....	247
4	To affinity and beyond? .....	253
4.1	A last throw of the dice? .....	255
5	A final word.....	257
	Appendix 1: List of interviewees .....	258
	References.....	260

# Chapter 1 Introduction: Locating and undertaking the study

The balancing act... is not just about commonality and diversity. It is also about the value placed on social justice and equality... [in] a context of significant disadvantage across all sectors for minority ethnic group members... (Wetherell, 2007: 6).

## 1 Introduction

New Labour's landslide general election victory in May 1997 was much anticipated amongst some Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) 'race'<sup>1</sup> equality activists. In opposition, New Labour committed themselves to creating 'a nation for all the people, built by all the people, old divisions cast out...' (Blair, 1995). In the run-up to the 1997 general election the party promised a changed society, a new economy and a new politics (Labour Party, 1997). New Labour's 1997 general election manifesto gestured towards greater equality in Britain in limited but significant ways, including the need to 'tackle the division and inequality in our society' and the importance of 'mutual respect and tolerance' (Labour Party, 1997: 3). The document also promised to create new offences of racial harassment and racially motivated violence to protect ethnic minorities (Labour Party, 1997: 23).

During the early New Labour years, I looked on with interest and hope. As a researcher for the New Economics Foundation, a 'progressive' think tank working on 'social justice' issues, I wanted to believe in the promise(s) of New Labour. In particular I wondered if, in the terms expressed by Margaret Wetherell in the opening epigram of this thesis, New

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<sup>1</sup> The term race is placed within inverted commas here in recognition of the non-objective character of race (Appiah, 1991; Omi and Winant, 1996) and its existence not as a meaningful scientific or biological category (Denton and Deane, 2010; Solomos, 2003) but as an important social and political one (Gilroy, 1987; Solomos, 2003). The term race is used in this contingent way throughout the thesis whether the term is or is not placed in inverted commas or is used to refer to concerns about in/equality, such as race in/equality.

Labour could build a sense of commonality that respected but did not reify (ethnic) diversity, as well as work to reduce race inequality.

A decade after New Labour came to power I was working as a researcher at London Metropolitan University and such hopes appeared dashed. I was advising the BME-led policy umbrella partnership Voice4Change England (V4CE) with my colleague Stephen Thake. V4CE was brought into being in order to make co-ordinated policy representations to government on behalf of BME voluntary and community sector groups and organisations, and Stephen and I were helping V4CE to strengthen their partnerships and to clarify priorities in their engagements with policymakers. One of the strategic areas that we identified as significant was building V4CE's capabilities in terms of what we called 'shaping the debate' (Voice4Change England, 2007b) on BME-relevant policy issues. This was based on the recognition that if an organisation such as V4CE could not influence such discussions then policymakers would dominate the discursive terms of the debate and issues such as race equality would continue to be side-lined in favour, for example, of notions of Britishness as the desired vehicle for commonality and container of diversity.

## 1.1 Research questions

My experiences with Voice4Change England and my interest in race equality intersect in this thesis. In particular, I take the connection articulated by Wetherell (2007) between commonality, diversity and (race) equality as the basis for my study and provide an account of changing discourses in the New Labour period (1995-2010) on issues of nation, multiculture and race equality through three overlapping research questions.

1. In what different ways have policymakers constructed and understood relationships between nation, multiculture and race equality over the New Labour period?

2. In what ways have these discourses been understood and responded to by Black and Minority Ethnic-led race equality organisations that engage in policy-influencing work?
  
3. What constraints affect the production and efficacy of policy discourses of New Labour and BME policy actors in policy debates of nation, multiculture and race equality?

As such I am interested in the discursive shape of the debate about the state of the multicultural nation and the place of race equality within it, as well as processes that influence such discourses in the New Labour period. I am specifically interested in discourse in the sphere of 'policy'. I use the term policy in a relatively broad sense as an area of activity and intentions around government but involving non-government actors (Bloch et al., 2013), such as BME civil society organisations.<sup>2</sup> My research explores how policy discourses and debates were 'framed' and how this in turn influences how events and behaviours are understood (Goffman, 1975). My research questions have been investigated using a qualitative thematic approach applied to 'pre-scripted' policy documents and interviews with some key policymakers, policy influencers and BME-led race equality actors. I return to a discussion of the research process in section three of this chapter.

Through my research I aim to make an original contribution to an academic body of knowledge in two main ways. First, I offer an account of a pivotal period for issues of race equality, namely the New Labour period, in which questions of multiculture and race inequality have been problematised discursively in the name of the nation. Second, I expand the discussion beyond the inputs of policymakers by considering how BME-led organisations attempted to engage in and influence policy discussions in order to further

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<sup>2</sup> I also recognise that 'policy' can be used in more specific ways, e.g. related to specific processes of decisions and implementation (Bloch et al., 2013: 22).

the cause of race equality. In this way I consider dialogical aspects of these discourses. Though this work is about a particular and important political moment, I hope that my work will be read as a contribution to an ongoing debate about the marginalisation of race equality in policy discourse and policy action that has continued into the current United Kingdom coalition government (see chapter seven).

I turn in the next section to the policy context for the research in terms of the Labour party and aspects of its relationship to questions of race equality.

## 2 (New) Labour and the politics of multiculture and race equality

In the early New Labour period<sup>3</sup>, initially in opposition and then in government, policymakers displayed an appetite to explore and address apparent tensions between the possibility of a shared common national life, multicultural diversity and race equality. By the time the party came to power with a landslide election victory in 1997 and a mandate for 'national renewal' it was emphasising Britain's ethnic diversity as part of its re-imagining and re-invigoration of the nation. For example, its 1997 general election manifesto exclaimed that 'Britain is a multiracial and multicultural society' (Labour Party, 1997: 23).

Historically, the Labour party had been the most prominent party political champion for equality or equality of opportunity (Reeves, 1983) and it appeared relatively sympathetic to the cause of race equality. A history of the Labour party and its policies on equality issues is beyond my scope here, however I want to mention the party's interest both in

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<sup>3</sup> The New Labour period can be said to have commenced in 1994 with the election of Tony Blair to the position of leader. The 'newness' was symbolically formalised in 1995 after the revision of Clause IV of the party's constitution. The Clause was originally drafted by Sydney Webb in 1917 and adopted in the in 1918 at a meeting at Methodist Central Hall with amendments in 1928 and 1960 (Rentoul, 1995: 458-459). The new Clause IV was adopted by Special Conference – also at Methodist Central Hall – on 19 April 1995 (Rentoul, 1995: 461-462). The latter version advocates living in 'a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect'.

equality of opportunities and outcomes. These two concepts were often intertwined (Miliband, 2005), for example outcomes in education, housing and health have to be at least somewhat equalised in order that (equal) opportunities might be taken (Reeves, 1983). The party has also made a distinction between unacceptable and acceptable inequalities of outcomes. The former was caused by favouritism and the latter through failure to achieve (Tawney, 1964 [1931]). However, the party has also had an ongoing debate recognising that (more) equal opportunity might merely enable a few gifted individuals to outcompete others and to be successful and attain high rewards rather than achieve 'collective equality that increases the social well-being of the whole community' (Reeves, 1983: 133). When New Labour was in power such debates continued, as I will discuss below.

Labour's interest in some notion of equality meant that it was the only British political party that has advanced legislation on race discrimination/equality (Solomos, 2003). It introduced the first piece of legislation against race discrimination in modern times, i.e. the Race Relations Act 1965 (The National Archives, undated) initiated by Harold Wilson's government. This Act outlawed discrimination on the grounds of colour, race or ethnic or national origins but was limited to specified 'places of public resort', such as hotels and restaurants. The Act also set up the Race Relations Board to adjudicate on claims of racial discrimination (National Archives, undated-c). The second Wilson government passed the Race Relations Act 1968 (National Archives, undated-c) which aimed to more effectively 'integrate' immigrant communities into wider society and extended anti-discrimination measures to housing, employment and education (National Archives, undated-c). This legislation set a pattern for what would follow in policy related to BME people – namely a policy drive for both integration and anti-discrimination.

The Labour government under Prime Minister Jim Callaghan enacted the Race Relations Act 1976 (National Archives, undated-c). The Act extended the definition of discrimination to include indirect discrimination and was aimed at preventing discrimination in employment, the provision of goods and services, education and public functions on the

grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic and national origin. This Act established the Commission for Racial Equality and gave it greater powers of enquiry and enforcement than had hitherto been available to the Race Relations Board that had been established in 1965.

The next major piece of legislation on race equality was undertaken by New Labour as it followed up the 1976 Act with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (National Archives, undated-c) in the wake of the Macpherson Inquiry (Macpherson, 1999) into the conduct of the police during the Stephen Lawrence murder investigation (see chapter three).

Despite its role in legislating against racial discrimination, the Labour party demonstrated ambivalence towards BME people. In 1967, Asians from Kenya and Uganda began to arrive in Britain in response to discrimination from their own national governments. These people had retained their British citizenship and passports following independence and were therefore not subject to restricted entry into Britain. In order to stem this flow the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1968 (National Archives, undated-c) took away the right of residence unless the passport-holders were 'patrials' – descendants of people (parents or grandparents) born, adopted or naturalised in the UK (Runnymede Trust, 2012). It would be over 30 years before the Labour party instigated further legislation on immigration and asylum – including the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002; the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc.) Act 2004; the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006; and the UK Borders Act 2007 (Bloch et al., 2013). Immigration and asylum is not central to my focus (see section three) and therefore I go into neither in detail. However, the legislative direction involved a general tightening on asylum claims and on non-European Union immigration and, although there was racism in Britain before there were comprehensive immigration controls (Fryer, 1984; Visram, 2001), immigration restrictions gave discrimination 'the sanction of the state' and in turn 'made racism respectable and clinical by institutionalising it' (Sivanandan, 1982: 109). Furthermore, immigration and equalities

legislation were tied. For example, the Labour party's legislative action for equality can also be seen as compensation for and complementary to its various anti-immigration measures. As Roy Hattersley famously argued in 1965, 'without integration, limitation is inexcusable; without limitation, integration is impossible' (cited in Jenkins and Solomos, 1987: 37).

Despite these restrictions, BME people, those defined as outside the white British population but including white people such as the white Irish, have become a larger proportion of the British population. Census data for 1991, 2001 and 2011 for the population of England and Wales make for interesting reading. The 1991 census data was categorised according to white and non-white groups and showed that 93 per cent of the population in England and Wales<sup>4</sup> were white, i.e. white British; white Irish; white Other; white Gypsy or Irish Traveller (cited in Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2012: 1). Subsequent figures distinguished white British from other categories of white people, and the latter could be included in the wider definition of BME people.

Based on these figures, it was clear that Britain under New Labour was becoming proportionately less white British (DCLG, 2007: 41). Between 2001 and 2011 the white British population in England and Wales declined from 87.3 per cent to 80.5 per cent. Put in other terms, the BME population of England and Wales by 2011 had reached nearly 20 per cent or almost 11 million people out of a total population of 56 million (Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2012). What was also noticeable alongside this relative decline in the white British population was the decrease in importance in percentage terms of those populations from what had been known as the 'coloured commonwealth' (Shukra, 1998), e.g. south Asians (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi), (certain) African and African-Caribbean populations. In 2001, this group collectively made up 5.9 per cent of the total population in England and Wales and 46 per cent of the BME population. In 2011, the respective figure for links to the 'coloured commonwealth' was 8.2 per cent of the population in

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<sup>4</sup> This stood at 47 million people at the time.

England and Wales but due to changing population patterns such as the ‘white other’ category through European migration and a rise in the ‘mixed’ population, this ‘coloured commonwealth’ group represented a smaller 42 per cent of the BME population (Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2012). This was still a significant bloc but it indicated changes in British society – a development encapsulated in, though perhaps overstated by, Steven Vertovec’s notion of super-diversity (2006, 2007).

In this context of increased diversity, and given the historic support of BME people for the Labour party (Anwar, 1991; Saggar, 2000), it appeared beneficial that the initial New Labour project for national renewal would have the BME population central to it. Indeed the ‘multi-cultural metropolises’ became the ‘cool’ in ‘Cool Britannia’ (Hall, 2000: 221) and, like a Benetton advert, New Labour insisted that every colour was ‘a good colour’ (Home Office, 2000).<sup>5</sup>

When it came to equality, New Labour continued Old Labour’s interest in opportunities and outcomes (Diamond and Giddens, 2005). There was, for example, recognition that one generation’s outcome (or income) determined another generation’s opportunities – as in the case of rich parents and their offspring – and, additionally, that equality of opportunity alone would preserve the equal opportunity to be unequal unless there were efforts to reduce other forms of inequality (Miliband, 2005: 47-48). However, although New Labour did have an interest in equality of outcomes, they were not attempting to bring about what can be called ‘simple’ equality where (say) income and wealth were evenly (re)distributed regardless of ability and endeavour (Phillips, 1999).<sup>6</sup> Instead, New

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<sup>5</sup> Such language contained echoes of 1966 when Roy Jenkins, the then Labour Home Secretary, called for integration characterised by ‘equal opportunities accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’ (cited in Sivanandan, 1990: 80).

<sup>6</sup> For example, in 2004 Tony Blair argued that the aim was: ‘Not a society where all succeed equally - that is utopia; but an opportunity society where all have an equal chance to succeed... Where nothing in your background, whether you’re black or white, a man or a woman, able-bodied or disabled stands in the way of what your merit and hard work can achieve’ (Blair, 2004).

Labour argued it was 'committed to tackling poverty and its causes' (1999: 3) and worked in part through what was called the 'opportunities agenda' (Hills et al., 2009) – an approach intended to ensure that people achieved based on their talents and their efforts so that (multicultural) society would reflect and reward merit.

In December 1997, the New Labour government set up the Social Exclusion Unit as a means to respond to some of these aspects of inequality. Social exclusion was related to inequality but was a specific formulation that Tony Blair described as 'a short-hand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdowns' (cited in Hills et al., 2009: 9). Social exclusion appeared to be a 'common sense' notion intended to 'capture the range of deprivations that prevent individuals from engaging fully in the wider society around them' (Diamond and Giddens, 2005: 110). Given the array of issues identified by social exclusion, it suffered from conceptual conflation and lacked a clear model of how deprivations were connected and what factors were causes and what were effects. Despite the muddle, social exclusion was a useful way for policymakers to label various attempts to give people skills, improve health, tackle crime and so on. Social exclusion was also consistent with New Labour's emphasis on employment as the best route out of poverty; redistributive transfers through benefits and tax credits; as well as investing in and expanding the size of public services (Lupton et al., 2013).

Though there were some successes in addressing social disadvantage, particularly in terms of educational attainment and reduced unemployment (Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2011), the New Labour period was one in which economic inequality and issues such as child poverty were high in comparison to the average in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Diamond and Giddens, 2005). In addition,

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patterned race inequality also appeared across this period (Wetherell, 2007).<sup>7</sup> The most recent comprehensive national study of race equality carried out for the Equality and Human Rights Commission Triennial Review (Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2011) makes for depressing reading with regards to race and other forms of equality.

Perceptions of racial prejudice increased over the New Labour period. In 2001, around 40 per cent of people in England and Wales believed there was more racial prejudice in Britain then, than there had been five years previously. However, this figure had increased to 56 per cent by 2008 (Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2011: 33). This was likely to have been related to issues of religious prejudice and especially negative Islamophobic attitudes towards Muslims in the wake of the London bombings (Allen, 2010; Kundnani, 2007; McGhee, 2008).

In more concrete terms, the disproportionate use of 'stop and search' by the police barely improved and was still an issue near the end of the New Labour period. In the case of London's Metropolitan Police, for every 1,000 people of different ethnic groups in 1997/8, 38 white people (one in 26) were stopped and searched compared to 181 (over one in six) black people; and 66 (one in 15) Asian people (Home Office, 1998). By 2007/2008, the equivalent figures were 41 (one in 25) for white people (a small increase); 168 (a one in six) for black people (a small decrease); and 63 (one in 15) for Asian people (small decrease) (cited in Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2010).

In terms of living standards, Department for Work and Pensions data over the period between 2006 and 2008 showed the percentage of individuals living in UK households below 60 per cent of median income, after housing costs, was 19 per cent where the

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<sup>7</sup> However the causal factors behind race inequalities are a complex issue and the role of ethnic origin in positive/negative outcomes is not clear and it is likely to be impossible to disentangle a single beneficial/detrimental factor when people occupy intersecting social positions (Phillips, 2009; Rattansi, 2005). In this study, underlying causal relationships are less important and certainly for the work of the BME-led race equality organisations it is the widespread disadvantage facing BME people.

'head' of the household was White British; 26 per cent for Indian households; and 37 per cent of Black/Black British households. This figure was considerably higher for Bangladeshi/Pakistani households at 56 per cent (cited in Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2010: 480-481). Such data were connected to experiences in the labour market and there appeared to be an 'ethnic penalty' in terms of higher unemployment rates for BME men and women (Cheung, 2007). From 1997 to 2005, there was an unemployment penalty for 'first' and 'second' generation Black African, Black Caribbean and Pakistani/Bangladeshi men (Heath and Li, 2008). In other words, 'life cycle, generational and period (over time) improvements' (Heath and Li, 2008: 280) did not appear to reduce this disadvantage for certain BME groups and the penalty was long-lasting and multi-generational. Therefore race inequalities were firmly entrenched at the beginning and throughout the New Labour period (Phillips, 2009).

A significant feature of the New Labour period was in the way that discussions of and responses to race inequality were shaped by considerations of cohesion, commonality and solidarity. In the opening epigram of this chapter, Margaret Wetherell (2007) highlighted not only the relationship between commonality, diversity and inequality but also suggested that attention on race equality risked being lost as policy discussions were focussed more towards goals of cohesion and commonality in the face of (ethnic) diversity.

These tensions between cohesion on the one hand and diversity on the other have long been part of policy discussions on race inequality. For example, as discussed in chapter three, an intervention such as the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry became a policy priority because of the way that the racism perpetrated against the Lawrence family was deemed as egregiously at odds with New Labour's idea of the new and cohesive nation. Elsewhere, it was also the case that the 'failure' of BME people to adapt to British life was also considered by some policymakers to be a barrier to collectivity – a theme that I discuss in detail in chapters four and five.

A famous skirmish in 2004 between the then Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, and David Goodhart, the editor of Prospect magazine, encapsulated the significance of and apparent tension between notions of cohesion and diversity. Goodhart (2004) wrote a provocative essay entitled 'too diverse?' In it Goodhart argued that 'sharing and solidarity can conflict with diversity' and that diversity supported through immigration, asylum and multiculturalism weakened society because it entrenched differences in lifestyle, culture, values and affiliations.

Trevor Phillips criticised Goodhart by stating that 'nice people do racism too' and described Goodhart and those that supported his position as 'liberal Powellites' (2004).<sup>8</sup> This Phillips-Goodhart clash and Margaret Wetherell's intervention (2007) both illustrate the tension, discursively if not in actuality, between ideas of cohesion and solidarity and diversity and multiculture. This apparent tension forms the analytical frame of my thesis which explores and analyses policy discourses about these tensions and the positioning of race equality in mediating them.

### 3 Three colours black

The existence and persistence of race equality and notions of the problem of the BME presence in Britain has spurred BME-led race equality organising to intervene in political and policy life. Towards the latter part of the New Labour period there were an estimated 17,000 BME-led<sup>9</sup> voluntary and community organisations in Britain (Voice4Change England, 2007a) – though the majority of these were small and unfunded. There was no

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<sup>8</sup> However, it should also be noted that Goodhart and Phillips also shared some ideas about the limits of multiculturalism and the need to emphasise the integration of BME people in society (Baldwin, 2004). I pick up this theme in chapter four.

<sup>9</sup> According to the Arts Council, Black or minority ethnic-led organisations (BME-led) organisations must meet both of the following criteria: a) self-definition – an organisation must define itself as Black or minority ethnic-led; b) representation – 51% or more of the organisation's board and senior management tier must self-define themselves as being from a Black or minority-ethnic group (Arts Council, undated).

singular BME voluntary and community sector with shared social analyses, identifications, priorities and co-ordinated interventions (Mayblin and Soteri-Proctor, 2011; National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 1996). Nonetheless, compared to voluntary and community groups and organisations in general, BME-led groups and organisations disproportionately provided advocacy and advice on immigration, equal opportunities, health, welfare, housing and education services (McLeod et al., 2001).

As a central part of this study, I explore the discursive interventions in policy discussions on nation, multiculture and race equality of three BME-led race equality organisations. These organisations attempted to encompass African, African Caribbean, Asian and (to some extent) other ethnic minority people based on common experiences of racism and exclusion in Britain. For the purposes of following changes in discourses over time, I have selected BME-led race equality organisations that were active throughout the time that New Labour was in government (1997-2010). Each of these organisations was still in existence towards the end of 2013.

### 3.1 Black Training and Enterprise Group

Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) is a charitable organisation and company limited by guarantee. It was started in 1991 as a project of the umbrella organisation body for the voluntary and community sector, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). In 1996 it became an independent organisation and a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. BTEG's Chief Executive Jeremy Crook OBE has been with the organisation since its inception – apart from an 18-month secondment to the Department for Education and Employment in 2000/2001. The 'B' in BTEG stands for 'black'. The organisation defined this grouping as 'African-Caribbean, Asian, African or Chinese origin or other groups who experience discrimination on the grounds of race or colour' (Crook and BTEG, 1992: unnumbered page). This attachment to 'political blackness' is significant in the way it focuses on racism and downplays issues of cultural difference and I shall develop this theme in an in-depth discussion in chapter two.

BTEG's mission is to '... ensure fair access and outcomes for black communities in employment, training and enterprise, and to act as a catalyst for enabling black groups and individuals to play an active role in the economic regeneration of local communities through partnership with others' (Crook and BTEG, 1995: unnumbered page). BTEG's response to racism and discrimination involves BME self-organising and influencing on policymaking, in part because 'mainstream third sector organisations [fail to] operate inclusively and meet the needs of BME communities' (BTEG, 2007a). The organisation's central concern is about BME inequality in terms of education, unemployment and lack of promotion for black people that are in employment (BTEG, 2003). Latterly, the organisation has been focussing on strengthening communities (BTEG, 2010a) as well as working to deliver the REACH role model programme to inspire black boys and young men to greater success (BTEG, 2010b; BTEG, 2011).

BTEG is highly engaged with government, for example as a member of various central government or national advisory groups (BTEG, 2009a). It often acts in the mode of 'critical friend to Government' (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012).

In financial terms, BTEG is the largest of the three organisations that I have examined closely in this study. At the beginning of the New Labour period in 1997/1998, its annual income was around £235,000 (BTEG, 1998), rising to as much as £1.6 million in 2006/2007 (BTEG, 2008). As large multi-year projects came to an end<sup>10</sup> BTEG's annual income by the end of the New Labour period was down to around £778,000 (BTEG, 2010a) and was set to fall further, although those figures are not yet published. As was the case with OBV and ROTA, the majority of the organisation's funding came directly or indirectly from the

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<sup>10</sup> For example, nearly a third (over £480,000) of the 2006/2007 figure was part of the National Employment Panel (NEP) programme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and aimed at addressing ethnic minority disadvantage in the labour market (BTEG, 2008).

state.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the organisation secured occasional resourcing from independent funders such as the Joseph Rowntree Trust.

### 3.2 Operation Black Vote

Operation Black Vote (OBV) is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. It began in July, 1996 (OBV, 2011) as a joint initiative between 'Charter88' – a campaign for democratic reform – and the 1990 Trust – a national policy research and networking organisation with a focus on race equality (OBV, 2010a). OBV's somewhat militaristic name ties with its mission to mobilise BME people politically in order to change the BME experience in Britain. OBV's work, similar to that of BTEG, is driven by BME experiences in contemporary Britain – including adverse outcomes in policing, education, employment, immigration and asylum and a sense of political powerlessness (OBV, 2011).

When OBV became an independent organisation in 1999, its programme was to '... promote, in a non partisan way, the political education, political participation and political representation of the African, Asian, Caribbean and other ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom' (OBV, 1999a: 9). The focus on politics has remained constant to the organisation although the specific articulation of their mission has changed. For example, by the end of the New Labour period, OBV stated that its aim in terms of reducing the 'Black democratic deficit in the UK' and support a 'strong political voice for African, Asian, Caribbean, Chinese and other ethnic minorities' (OBV, 2010b: 2).

OBV attempts to promote more equal outcomes and opportunities through the formal state-sponsored political system on the basis that without the full engagement of BME

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<sup>11</sup> Indirect monies included Big Lottery Fund; Commission for Racial Equality; and CapacityBuilders (the now closed voluntary sector support body and funder). In addition, the organisation was supported more directly from government sources such as Connecting Communities (provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government to promote cohesion in deprived communities); the Home Office; the Government Office for London; and London Councils.

people in political life inequality will continue. They therefore work to 'politicise' BME people and support BME education, activation and representation in public life.

OBV advances its mission through an evolving set of programmes which include shadowing schemes, where BME aspirants spend time with Members of Parliament, Councillors and Magistrates. They have also undertaken voter registration campaigns and conducted programmes to educate and motivate pupils in secondary schools about voting, parliament and the process of running for election in OBV's Understanding Power Citizenship (Mistry, 2005).

As well as the 'bread and butter' of these programmes of political engagement, OBV is engaged in a broader project to lift the BME community to new heights. For example, in the words of OBV co-founder, Derek Hinds, one of the purposes of OBV was to realise 'the potential of a community wide awake and united politically...' (Hinds, 1997: unnumbered page). This was in the spirit of a 'radical' black consciousness and politics that I shall discuss further in the next chapter.

The financial fortunes of OBV have waxed and waned. In 1999/2000 its annual income was over £100,000 (OBV, 2000b) and the trend in income was upwards over the New Labour period peaking in 2009/2010 at more than £500,000 (OBV, 2010b). Funders during this period included the Commission for Racial Equality; The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust; London Councils; Electoral Commission; Department for Constitutional Affairs (now reformed and subsumed into the Ministry of Justice); and the Department for Communities and Local Government. Once again the majority of this funding, as with BTEG, was directly or indirectly from the local and/or national state. Although OBV's 2012 accounts are not yet publically available, its income has fallen and it has had to reduce its staff, resulting in the redundancy of the organisation's longstanding Deputy Director (Pears, 2011).

### 3.3 Race on the Agenda

Race on the Agenda (ROTA) is a membership organisation with charitable status. It came into being in April 1997 succeeding a predecessor anti-racist organisation – Greater London Action on Race Equality (ROTA, 2007a). At its inception, ROTA's charitable objects were to '... work towards the elimination of racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups...' (ROTA, 1997: 1). Its aim therefore was to reduce racial discrimination; increase equal opportunity; and enhance multi-'racial' relationships. Though the first two elements could be measured in the type of race equality data cited above, promoting 'good relations' was more complex and subjective. For example, advances in race equality could lead to worse relations if some white people came to resent the loss of their relative privilege. Indeed, as I discuss in chapter five, policymakers positioned BME organising and advances for equality as problematic for the interests of (certain parts of) the white population.

While OBV and BTEG have been run since incorporation by Chief Executives involved in the founding of the organisation, ROTA had five Chief Executives over the New Labour period. In chronological order these were Marina Ahmad; Floyd Millen; Dinah Cox; Theo Gavrielides; and Elizabeth Henry. As a result, its philosophy and aims have been subject to considerably more movement than in the case of BTEG and OBV, although its function as 'a policy development, information and research service for the Black voluntary sector...' (ROTA, 2001: 2) has been a constant. The organisation's focus has extended across a range of changing themes over time, including crime and anti-social behaviour; equalities and human rights; community cohesion and homelessness; and health and social services (ROTA, 2005; ROTA, 2007a; ROTA, 2008a).

Significantly, ROTA amended its company objects in December 2008 to add the promotion of human rights and to replace a prior focus on the Greater London area with a national remit (ROTA, 2008b). Both of these can be seen as astute moves, with the former aligning the organisation with policymakers towards a more explicit equalities and human rights approach (see chapter five). However, ROTA already had an orientation towards human

rights and an interest in 'double and triple discrimination and disadvantage' according to ROTA's former Chair (Kamila Zahno, 2011, Interview). Moreover, ROTA could generally be characterised as moderate and non-controversial in policy terms. By 2007/2008, as part of its efforts to inform 'strategic decision-makers about issues affecting the Black voluntary sector and the communities it serves...' (ROTA, 2003: 3), ROTA was involved in 39 different policy forums, decision-making bodies, government and independent advisory boards (ROTA, 2008d).

ROTA's terminology on blackness shifted over the course of the New Labour period. At the beginning of 2002, ROTA was explicitly using the term black defined as 'those people of African, Asian, Caribbean and South East Asian descent and other groups who are discriminated against on the grounds of their race, culture, colour, nationality or religious practices' (ROTA, 2002: 1). Three months later, ROTA switched to 'Black and Minority Ethnic' (ROTA and Urban Forum, 2002: 1). This process of transition continued in 2006 when ROTA's annual report described it as working with 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities' (ROTA, 2006: 2). This was a symbolic departure from earlier attempts to develop political blackness and black consciousness (see chapter two).

As with BTEG and OBV, the majority of resources for the organisation were directly and indirectly derived from the state. ROTA's recent funders have included London Councils; City Bridge Trust; The Equality and Human Rights Commission; Big Lottery Fund; Communities and Local Government; and the Home Office (ROTA, 2008a, 2008d, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b). In the financial year 1999/2000, ROTA's total income was just under £170,000 (ROTA, 2001), a figure that broadly increased year on year and that stood at over £540,000 in 2009/2010 (ROTA, 2010b). Like other race equality organisations it has lost funding and staff in recent times and its audited accounts showed that, by 2011/2012, income had fallen to £350,000 (ROTA, 2012).

I shall return to focus on the work and emphasis of these three BME-led race equality organisations in chapter three onwards as I examine their interventions in policy

discussions and discourse. For the remainder of this chapter I outline the approach that I have taken in my research.

## 4 Undertaking the research

### 4.1 Bounding themes and the body of data

When embarking on my study exploring policy discourses connecting nation, multiculture and race equality, I was faced with an issue of defining the scope of my research given the number of avenues for investigation were open to me. For example, in the New Labour period, questions of nation, multiculture and race equality were tied to immigration, asylum, security and Islam/Islamic ‘terror’ (Kundnani, 2007; McGhee, 2005, 2008). I have chosen not to focus on these latter issues because they are less central – though still connected – to my core concerns. In particular, I do not want discussions of immigration and so on to obscure and overshadow the persistent problems of racism and race inequality for long-settled BME people. My decision to separate off issues of racism and migration is consistent with the broader intellectual split that exists in academic literature (Schuster, 2010). Just as academics have tended to work within borders of racism, the BME-led race equality organisations whose work I have followed have, in the main, been concerned with social justice and equality issues as they relate to settled BME populations, leaving immigration, refugee and security issues to other, more specialist, civil society organisations. However, although I follow their demarcation and restrict the scope of my work, in part to make my research feasible and practical, I do believe that it is valid to see migration and these other issues as part of a wider debate and set of anxieties about ‘difference’. These anxieties are to the fore in issues of racism and race equality that I engage with in my research.

With thematic boundaries in place I still faced the problem of identifying discourses and discursive materials that brought together issues of nation, multiculture and race equality in the sphere of policy.

Discourse is an elusive concept that can mean different things in different circumstances. Discourses can be defined broadly as 'all forms of talk and text' (Gill, 1996). For Stuart Hall, discourse is '... a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment' (Hall, 1997: 44). This notion of knowledge-production is in turn connected to the socially constructive effects of discourses (Fairclough, 2010; Wodak, 2009). These create a kind of 'macro-politics' (Solomos and Back, 1995) constraining what can be said and done in political spheres (Foucault and Sheridan, 1979). This notion of social constructionism (Bryman, 2008; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000) is central to my research interest. However, despite the constructionist possibilities of discourse, I am mindful of the need to avoid expanding the 'territorial claims' of the discursive (Hall, 1992c). That is, although discourses may have power, they do not have agency. They are products of social processes and any socially constructive effects are achieved through social action based on different social understandings of the world (Gergen, 2001; Gill, 1996; Jessop, 2002; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2006).

In practical terms, discourse refers to public language that provides accounts of the social world and advances responses to issues in that world (Reeves, 1983). Such materials relate to argumentation (Antaki, 1994) or 'rhetoric' where the latter is defined as 'the art of persuasion or effective communication, connected with speaking with propriety, elegance and force' (Back, 2004: 398). In other words, discourse and the discursive materials seek to convince and persuade (Fairclough, 2011; Gill, 1996; L'Hôte, 2010) and justify and legitimise certain positions (Capone, 2010; Ochs, 1979).

The corpus (Barthes and Sontag, 1993; Bauer, 2000) of primary materials was made up of documents and transcripts of interviews. I aimed to 'balance' the corpus and to avoid systematic bias rather than to satisfy the more problematic and elusive goal of 'representativeness' (Bauer and Aarts, 2000) or even of establishing the 'truth' (Haraway, 1988). Balance was sought in terms of sourcing written texts produced by different government departments, i.e. mainly located in three main institutional sites within

government: the Prime Minister's/Cabinet Office; the Home Office; and the Department for Communities and Local Government. In addition I drew on texts across the whole of the New Labour period in order to examine contexts, periodicity and patterns of discourse at particular moments and over time. The corpus also drew on documents from entities related to policymakers and policymaking such as Ted Cantle's Community Cohesion Review Team (2001) and Darra Singh's Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) as well as current and archival documents from three BME-led race equality organisations: BTEG, OBV and ROTA. The 18<sup>12</sup> interviews drawn on in the thesis come from three broadly analogous sources to the documentary data cited above. Seven of the interviews were with policymakers – national politicians, senior civil servants, and policy advisors such as Tony Blair's Chief Speechwriter Philip Collins. A further seven interviews were with leaders from BME-led or other equality organisations. Finally, another four interviews were conducted with other 'external experts' that have made interventions to influence policy discourses on race equality and the multicultural nation, such as Trevor Phillips and Bhikhu Parekh (who chaired the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain). The full list of interviewees is included as Appendix one.

## 4.2 Accessing and gathering data

I drew on a variety of New Labour policy materials over the period 1995 to 2010. As mentioned above, this material was largely drawn from three sections of government which mostly dealt with such issues, i.e. the Home Office; the Department for Communities and Local Government; and the Prime Minister's/Cabinet Office. These

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<sup>12</sup> I approached 25 potential interviewees. Seven requests were turned down or went unanswered despite repeated following up by phone, letter and/or email. In general it was far easier to arrange interviews with people working in civil society organisations rather than politicians and policymakers – partly because I have either previously met the people involved or was able to make my background and interests sound relevant to their own. I was not able to establish the same rapport with policymakers. The gatekeepers that declined an interview on behalf of politicians such as David Blunkett MP and Hazel Blears MP cited diary pressures and the need to prioritise constituency business as reasons for non-participation.

materials were largely in the public domain and retrievable (primarily) through web searches, but also through hard copies available in the official publications section of the library of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Another important source of policymaker discourse was the autumn party conference speeches of New Labour leaders between 1995 and 2010. Indeed these speeches were the first policymaker materials that I sourced and considered in order to better understand some of the broad rhetorical sweeps of New Labour discourses and policy priorities.

Following on from this, I wrote to the three BME-led race equality organisations by email to ask them for access to their paper and electronic document archives.

The paper and electronic libraries/archives of BTEG, OBV and ROTA were not assembled by professional archivists or librarians. Each of the three BME-led race equality organisations had their electronic and paper archives organised in slightly different ways and in different volumes. ROTA had a large volume of paper data stored in their London office. These were organised on an open shelving system in magazine files that took over a large wall about eight feet high by 15 foot wide. The archive included their own publications, in particular back issues of their magazine, *Agenda*; their peer-reviewed journal, *Policy & Race*; and regular policy briefings that offered a digest of key policy developments. In addition their archive also contained documents published by others in the field of race equality, for example government publications.

OBV had a similar amount of paper-based archival materials to ROTA. However, they produced less magazine and journal-type publications than ROTA with more of an emphasis on posters and A5 booklets, postcards and other campaigning materials. Much of the remaining material was in the form of project files, correspondence, reports and proposals for funders as well as media cuttings about OBV's work.

BTEG's paper archives were less extensive than OBV and ROTA though they did contain many back issues of their own magazine, *Race and Regeneration*, as well as published

project reports. The lower volume of data was due to the fact that though BTEG did conduct original research it operated in less of a ‘think tank’ mode than ROTA and in less of a public campaigning mode than OBV. Instead the organisation often worked through front-line organisations that intervened directly in the lives of BME people through educational and training projects.

Although I did inquire about the processes and systems for cataloguing/archiving at each organisation, I could not discern with any clarity what these were and it was also unclear when and how documents migrated from the domain of the ‘current’ library to becoming historical record and entered into an archive. It appeared that in each case the library/archive contained material deemed important and in need of ordering and storage – typically in magazine files or ring binders – as part of a process of creating an institutional timeline. Despite these uncertainties about provenance and assemblage, I was mostly just grateful that these organisations had materials that they were prepared to grant me access to.

In each of the three organisations I was given what appeared to be free access to paper-based materials available in ‘hard copy’ in the library/archive. In addition I was provided with restricted access to electronic resources on networked computer drives. I had access to similar volumes of ‘soft copy’ or electronic hard drive material for each of the three organisations. This included some publications produced as part of project work. In some cases, where this duplicated hard copy materials, I downloaded the electronic copy so as to reduce the amount of paper that I took away from the respective organisations. Sometimes the soft material included ‘process’ elements of projects such as funding bids, project correspondence and reports to funders as well as internal notes on the progress of different projects – but this material, though interesting, was not core to my research interests.

In each of the organisations, documents and parts of documents that ideologically and rhetorically addressed my central selected themes of race equality; nation; and multiculture were selected for on-site copying or scanning or transfer to a memory stick.

Interviewees were sampled purposefully (Patton, 1987) and in the majority of cases I knew of the person as an actor in my field of interest. Where this was not the case, people I interviewed were often suggested by other interviewees in response to my prompting. Interviewees were approached through a formal letter sent as an attachment via email in which I attempted to explain in everyday language the nature of my research; interview length; and how the data was to be used and disseminated (Harvey, 2011). The interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes and predominantly took place face-to-face at the interviewee's place of work. For logistical reasons, two of the interviews took place over Skype with and without video depending on the speed of the internet connection at particular moments during the interviews. This was a practical solution in these two situations but also a valid approach to research in its own right and not necessarily a 'second-best' option compared to the face-to-face interviews (Holt, 2010).

The interviews contained some common and some tailored areas of investigation for each interviewee based on their interest and expertise (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The interviews were semi-structured (Patton, 1987; Wengraf, 2001), combining some set pre-established questioning typical of structured interviews alongside some of the more open, interactive and 'non-neutral' aspects associated with unstructured interviews, where the emphasis is on understanding rather than the pursuit of 'objective answers' (Fontana and Frey, 1994). The types of questions posed and issues raised varied across and within categories of interviewees. The opening sections of interviews followed a largely standard format with me introducing my project and myself and confirming the time available for the interview. Depending on the time available, interviewees would typically be asked to discuss or respond to three main areas of investigation: broader questions on discourses of multicultural Britain – its existence, features and so on; questions of balancing and/or reconciling nation, multiculture and equality; and the place of group identity and BME

organising in this context. In each case, these questions were addressed through particular discursive interventions that the interviewee themselves had made or were knowledgeable about. As an example, I asked Philip Collins, Tony Blair's former Chief Speechwriter, in detail about a speech on integration (Blair, 2006) that he had co-written with Tony Blair in 2006.

I regard my interviews as co-constructed data where I influenced responses and meaning in the interviews (Antaki, 2002; Miller and Glassner, 1997). For example, there were possible 'race-of-interviewer-effects' (Gunaratnam, 2003: 53) on interviewees given my non-whiteness signalled in advance by my name, and confirmed by my appearance as I sat face-to-face with interviewees (Heyl, 2001; Song and Parker, 1995). Quite how this affected interview data is not likely to be constant or predictable. Yet there did seem to be effects. For example, one interviewee, who was not south Asian, spent a lot of time telling me about their south Asian spouse and in-laws – perhaps to establish rapport with me or to prove their inclusive credentials.

Another issue in relation to interviews was opposite to the concern above. Instead of 'race-of-interviewer-effects' it was possible that interviews had no effects whatsoever. That is, in the 'interview society', interviews may have become so normalised that instead of interviews as opportunities for exploration and investigation they descended into managed, rehearsed and repeated tellings of the self (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997). I cannot refute this concern; particularly as my interviewees were 'political' actors used to making and advocating on behalf of their particular position (see section on ethical issues below). However, I would suggest that even where my interviews were in part an opportunity for interviewees to repeat established positions, the interviews also enabled me at least to ask some less familiar questions that took interviewees on to new ground where their responses were perhaps less well-rehearsed. In particular, as is seen at various points of my study, I was able to obtain responses from interviewees as individuals rather than as representatives of organisations. For example, as outlined in chapter six, respondents have admitted that BME-led organisations were an 'elite'; had not engaged

effectively with BME groups such as Chinese and Turkish people; and had to compromise in order to keep the ear of policymakers. Each of these reflections was different to what these individuals' organisations had typically spoken about in the public domain. At these and other moments I felt that I was at least partially able to escape the shadow of the 'interview society'.

#### 4.3 Preparing, sorting and analysing data

Having collected data from documents and interviews, the data was prepared and sorted in the following ways. In the first instance, the interviews which had been digitally recorded from start to finish were transcribed by me. I transcribed both my questions and interviewee responses. While recordings are necessary for the process of transcribing the act of recording may lead to 'a loss of some aspects of social interaction' (Peräkylä, 1997: 204) and perhaps diminish the quality of interview data by abnormalising the encounter. However, I think that was unlikely to be a major issue in my study as I was interviewing people that were 'public' figures used to being interviewed and asked for opinions. The recording and subsequent transcription also allowed me to ensure that the interview text was converted into the same written-down form as the documentary data. The nature of my interest in policy discourse and discussions (see below) meant that the transcription style I employed was not verbatim. In particular, 'ums' and 'ers' and delays were not included as I was interested in argumentation rather than more linguistic-orientated concerns.

As a consequence of my interest in argumentation and rhetoric, I collected materials centred on ideology, claims and justifications of certain policy and programmatic positions, rather than material about the detail of project and/or programmatic work undertaken by the BME-led organisations and policymakers.

This decision over selection most impacted my work in the archives of the BME-led race equality organisations, where I had between one and two days to spend sifting through

materials. As a result of the time constraint I required a means of quickly including/excluding materials from my corpus. This meant that I made a first pass of selecting materials emphasising rhetoric and claim-making. Sometimes documents contained both rhetorical and operational subject matter in which case I concentrated on the former. A similar exercise of selection and sorting of and within documents was also carried with respect to New Labour policy materials. In addition, the interviews provided me with an opportunity to focus attention on more specific issues related to my study and therefore less sorting and sifting was required, although inevitably not all of the material within the interviews was relevant to the way in which my study and interests evolved.

I adopted a qualitative thematic analysis approach (Howitt and Cramer, 2011; Seale, 2004a) for the study of the data rather than, for example, discourse analysis. The main reason for this choice is that discourse analysis has a tendency to focus on quite technical linguistic, lexical, grammatical and semiotic approaches that pay less attention to the political and sociological context and impact of the text and different discursive interventions. At times a focus on the linguistic can be unhelpful in interpreting political and social phenomenon, as Jones and Collins note:

... a political document, for example, is a matter of politics and a matter for political analysis and judgement. To get at its political or ideological significance, we must apply our politically attuned eyes and ears to a concrete analysis of the specific political conjuncture to which the document belongs and contributes in some way; "linguistic" analysis cannot help us with this (Jones and Collins, 2006: 30).

My priority has been to focus on discourse in terms of sociological and political interests 'to uncover the large patterning of thought that structures whole texts, rather than the finer patterning that structures sentences, and which concerns linguists' (Scott and Marshall, 2005: 159). Despite this, my approach to qualitative thematic analysis draws on discourse analysis – in that I am interested in text, context and content in terms of 'what

claims speakers are making about the world, and how they are grounding them' (Antaki, 1994: 7).

Having assembled the corpus from policy documents, archived material and transcribed interviews, I organised materials by year of publication to enable me to establish a sense of the pattern and rhythm of policy discourse. This material was read, re-read and re-read again alongside the interview material with a view to identifying tropes and themes. These themes were identified and organised with the aid of post-its and highlighter as I went through each document (including transcriptions of interviews) making a note of different claims and arguments in relation to nation, multiculture and race equality and connections between these ideas. Following repeated iterations of this exercise I identified a broad pattern and sweep of discourses that I eventually split into the three main chronological/thematic phases corresponding to the (sometimes overlapping) early (1995-2000), middle (2001-2007) and latter (2006-2010) parts of the New Labour period on proportional, parallel and paused multiculture, respectively.

Neither the themes nor the periodisation of them were neat. One theme was not simply replaced as a new phase took hold. By way of illustration, the theme of the injustice of BME people being under-represented in positive dimensions of national life (such as highly paid employment) continued through the New Labour period. However, it did drift away from the centre of discourse to the margins. The interview data was thematically analysed alongside the documents and helped me to strengthen my understanding of the periodised thematic nature New Labour's time. The interviews were also different to the documentary data, i.e. more reflective and backward-looking. The interview material led me to develop another strand of analysis that eventually became chapter six, on the process and the politics of policy discourse.

#### 4.4 Ethical issues, disclosures and positionalities

Finally, in this methods section I want to turn to issues that relate to my research conduct, access to and use of data in my study. Of paramount importance here was my access to and relationship with the three BME-led race equality organisations. When I asked for access to their office materials, I felt fairly confident that I would be helped because of my prior work with Voice4Change England (see introduction). I had also undertaken work with two of the three BME-led race equality organisations. In 2005/2006, I advised OBV on a pro bono basis on their work to support young people to engage with political issues, for example helping them to design a workshop for students at Islington's Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School. In addition, my involvement with Voice4Change England brought me into contact with BTEG's Chief Executive. I had only a tenuous link to ROTA, amounting to not much more than having been in a meeting in 2008 with their Chief Executive, and a conversation with a ROTA board member at a voluntary and community sector research event. Despite these rather weak links, I was generously granted similar access to library/archive at ROTA to that obtained at BTEG and OBV. All three organisations appeared to be willing participants in the research because I presented as a suitably sympathetic person to research these organisations and because they felt that theirs was somehow an untold story and that my work was somehow part of that storytelling.<sup>13</sup>

As a result, I was positioned as a relative 'insider' with respect to the BME-led race equality organisations that were central to my study. This access raises questions about my (over) familiarity with some of the actors in my research. It also has implications for my research 'findings' and the extent to which I could be critical both in the sense of questioning, but also in terms of passing negative judgement about these organisations.

One helpful way of thinking about these ideas of potential bias (Seale, 2004b:) is through ideas of 'situated knowledge' and 'partial' knowledge (Haraway, 1988). This is an

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<sup>13</sup> Indeed both Jeremy Crook and Simon Woolley, Chief Executives at BTEG and OBV, respectively, mentioned this to me informally (not during the formal transcribed interviews).

important area of thought in feminist and post-modern critiques of the social construction of knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1986; McDowell, 1992). It questions the notion of 'objectivity' in a point of view on an issue and emphasises that perspectives and knowledge is always situated and positioned and cannot be otherwise (Hall, 1991b). However, while this is an important ethical statement in itself (Ali and Kelly, 2004), it is not enough to simply refute the concept of 'objectivity' – though we should do that (Phillips, 2012). Neither is it sufficient to replace 'objectivity' with some idea of relativism as a view from 'everywhere equally' (Haraway, 1988: 584). Instead there is a requirement that, as researchers, 'we must recognize and take account of our own position, as well as that of our research participants, and write this into our research practice' (McDowell, 1992: 409).

Situated knowledge helps us to recognise that researcher's perspectives, like everyone else's, are incomplete, contextualised and not 'scientific' or 'objective' (McDowell, 1992; Phillips, 2012). Furthermore, this mindset also enables researchers and readers to engage with the particularity of research output and to explore the contextualised nature of research and the 'knowledge' it 'produces'.

In practical terms, my connection and access to the three BME-led race equality organisations perhaps requires most consideration in terms of how this affected my position as a researcher and situatedness of the knowledge produced in my study. As stated above, I had certain 'privileged' access to the documentary archives and interviews with senior figures in three BME-led race equality organisations (BTEG, OBV and ROTA). Despite this, my relationship with the BME-led race equality organisations has, in my mind, been somewhat ambivalent. I have viewed them as potentially important and useful actors in work to combat race inequality but at the same time I began work on this thesis partly out of frustration that BME-led race equality organisations were not making more effective discursive interventions in policy discussions. That is not to say that I am claiming 'neutrality' between the perspectives of race equality organisers and New Labour policymakers. My sympathies clearly lie with the former. However, my situatedness also

involves avoiding both a ‘told-you-so’ perspective about the awfulness of policymakers – even though their political positions may at times be appalling – or being a cheerleader for BME-led race equality organisations. Instead I have attempted to carve out a more interesting research path, i.e. to see how policymaker positions changed over time and how BME-led race equality organisations engaged with policymakers in the contestation and co-production of certain discourses of multiculture, nation and race equality. I therefore accept the situatedness, partiality and particularity of my research but also recognise that this is in itself a complex picture.

Furthermore, what was ethically more important to me was that none of the research participants could exert ‘undue’ pressure to sway my finally published research in a particular direction (Ali and Kelly, 2004). One way in which I attempted to represent the ‘distance’ between myself and the BME-led race equality organisations in order to protect myself from such pressure, was to draft and sign a non-disclosure agreement. This committed me to keep confidential commercially sensitive details about the three BME-led organisations involved in my study. As well as being a courteous thing to do, it was part of my attempt to reassert my role as a ‘professional stranger’ (Agar, 1996) and to avoid over-familiarity with the race equality organisations. The main substantive implication of this non-disclosure agreement was that I could not reveal commercial information that was not already public knowledge, such as financial arrangements associated with projects, e.g. day rates or salary levels of members of staff; or the particularities of projects for which the organisations were still seeking funding. It is my belief that this had relatively little impact in terms of my study of the discursive interventions of these three organisations and that rather it indicated that it was ‘safe’ to allow me relatively unfettered access to organisational documents that I discuss directly or indirectly in my thesis.

Moving on from ‘positionality’ and ‘particularities’, there are other practical and ‘ethical’ research considerations to address in my work. I secured what I considered to be ‘informed consent’ of research interviewees (Ali and Kelly, 2004; Patton, 2002) by writing

to interviewees to ask for explicit permission to interview and record them. Face-to-face interviewees also saw me using my digital recorder in front of them to emphasise that this was a set-piece encounter. My interviewees would not typically be considered 'vulnerable' (Ali and Kelly, 2004) as they were, in the main, people with some power and status who have been interviewed on many occasions.

However, though the individuals involved were not classically 'vulnerable', they may have been relatively vulnerable in their operating context. For example, one interviewee requested that they were not named in the research because they deemed that it could cause problems with their employers. I agreed to this request for anonymity to enable the participant to speak 'freely'. Furthermore, I felt that in this case what this senior civil servant had to say was potentially important, even if I could not name this person.<sup>14</sup> This explicit request for anonymity indicated that there were risks associated with departing from 'official' discursive positions, even for rather senior figures in organisations. As a result I recognise that I do, potentially, hold some power over interviewees and have endeavoured to use quotes from the interviews in a way that would not cause 'undue' embarrassment or vulnerability to individuals or organisations that they were attached to. At the same time, I have attempted not to circumscribe my research or its 'potential benefits to society' (Ali and Kelly, 2004: 126).<sup>15</sup> On this basis, I anonymised one quote from a person that did not ask for overall anonymity (see chapter six). I did this because they very honestly referred to race equality organisations as an 'elite', disconnected from BME populations. This admission might make life difficult for the particular organisation in question, e.g. in their attempts to secure funding, and therefore I have left this quote unattributed. I made no other explicit changes of this nature.

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<sup>15</sup> I see this as analogous to Suki Ali's 'promise' to one of the children that she interviewed for a piece of research. Ali explained to the child that what they said 'may be used in the research... in such a way that would be respectful... but would not get her [the interviewee] into trouble' (Ali and Kelly, 2004: 124).

## 5 Conclusions

In this introductory chapter, I have outlined my interest in the ways in which BME-led race equality organisations and national New Labour policymakers discursively attended to matters of nation (commonality), multiculture (diversity) and race equality. I have outlined my use of documents, archives and interviews and qualitative thematic analysis to explore, examine and evaluate the primary data in this study. I have argued that policy discourses of nation, multiculture and race equality matter and therefore warrant detailed investigation. I will develop the discussion of my thesis in the following way.

### 5.1 Chapter summaries

In chapter two, I connect my empirical concerns to broader sociological literature on nation, multiculture and 'new ethnicities' as well as discussions of BME organising as a form of political intervention inside the nation. These discussions help me to locate and ground my empirical work and in particular to show how policy discourses and discussions evident in my empirical chapters are tied to contemporary events and situations but also to deeper notions and practices of ethnicity and nation as decisive and divisive lines in society.

Chapters three, four and five each cover a particular chronological phase in the New Labour period organised according to different and major discursive themes that connect nation, multiculture and race equality. Chapter three relates to the first part of the New Labour period from 1995-2000, where policy discussion was organised around a notion of 'proportional multiculture', with an emphasis on a more proportional (and beneficial) allocation of BME people across national life. This included reducing over-representation of BME people in poverty, un(der)employment and low educational attainment and reducing under-representation in attainment such as high level employment and educational results. Even in this initial period there were indications about the limits to which New Labour was willing to go in policy terms, e.g. favouring anti-discrimination

compared to positive action to address inequality. Discursively, New Labour acknowledged race inequality in Britain but disavowed the existence of a deep connection between the nation and (minority) ethnic disadvantage.

The second overarching policy discourse of multiculture was prominent between 2001 and 2007 and is the subject of chapter four. In it multiculture was presented as a 'parallel' entity that marked society along distinct and antagonistic lines as evidenced by the 2001 northern disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. This idea of multiculture as a parallel force was perhaps the dominant policymaker-led discourse connecting nation, multiculture and race equality in the New Labour period. It was pivotal because it positioned multiculture and 'special' treatment of BME people for cultural or race equality reasons as incompatible with some unspecified notion of commonality. In the meanwhile, BME-led race equality organisations attempted to argue that parallelism was not the product of multiculture or policy accommodation but was due to race inequality. Furthermore, these organisations claimed that only an emphasis on race equality could lead to the kind of overlapping lives that policymakers appeared to desire.

Chapter five examines a third phase of policy discourse between 2006 and 2010. This attempted to 'pause' and downplay multiculture and to overwrite it with a re-emphasis on citizenship and nation. In another development, aspects of equality were discursively and legislatively re-arranged by policy reform with an emphasis on individualised human rights and also wider notion of group inequalities beyond race, including age and sexuality. This latter development diverted attention away from the earlier focus on minority ethnic dimensions of disadvantage.

Chapter six is on the politics of policy discourse and how such discourses were produced and constrained. In particular the chapter explores ways in which policymaker discourses had different policy and political functions, including attempting to dominate policy space by 'naming' a political moment. This chapter also discusses how discursive interventions of BME-led race equality organisations were 'crowded out' and negated by 'renegade'

BME policy actors who questioned the nature of BME inequalities and thus undermined the ability of BME-led race equality organisations to shape policy discussions and policy-making.

Chapter seven concludes this thesis. In it I reflect on the changing nature of my relationship to my research over its life cycle. I also consider the continuities of New Labour discourses of the troubled relationship between nation, multiculture and race equality in the time of coalition government. Most importantly, I examine what next for BME-led race equality organisations and organising and the prospects for a new phase of black/BME politics capable of engaging with complex, non-unitary and unguaranteed BMEness associated with 'new ethnicities' (Hall, 1991b, 1992a). In particular, I explore the possibilities and pitfalls of a new initiative called the Race Equality Coalition (REC) which is the result of a number of BME-led organisations coming together to advance race equality (Race Equality Coalition, 2013). I reflect on whether this might at last be an opportunity to engage with the 'hard ethical labour' (St Louis, 2009) that numerous authors (Gilroy, 1992; Hall, 1991b, 1992a; Shukra, 1998) have recognised as necessary for a new politics to engage with questions of nation and multiculture and to disrupt resilient racism and race inequality in Britain.

# Chapter 2 Landscaping the field: nation, multiculture and BME organising

## 1 Introduction

In this chapter, I step away from some of the contemporary subject matter of the previous chapter and instead attempt to connect the issue of race equality with broader debates on nation and multiculture. In particular, I want to suggest that conceptions of the nation and multiculture mark BME populations, and therefore the goal of race equality, as problematic. In order to advance this viewpoint, this chapter sets out the 'field' that my empirical work engages with and draws upon. This field is about conceptual understandings and discussions of the nation and multiculture but also includes evolving post-World War II BME organising which has worked with and against ideas of nation and multiculture. As a whole, this chapter will help to provide a backdrop of ideas and historical practice that inform the policy debates and discourses in my empirical work. I begin this chapter with a discussion about the nation and its deep ties to ethnicity.

## 2 Nations: something old and something new

Despite being a contested, complex and contradictory form (Anthias, 2010), nations are pervasive and in the modern period have become widely understood as 'real entities, as communities, as substantial, enduring collectivities' (Brubaker, 1996: 13). Ernest Gellner noted that while having a nation was not an inherent attribute of humanity; it had now come to appear to be so fundamental that '[a] man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears' (1983: 6).

The prospects for race equality in contemporary nations are shaped by understandings of how nations emerged and the part that ethnicity has to play in this. There are two main theoretical positions on the nature of the nation with differences and overlaps in how

they position ethnic minorities in the nation. The first set of theories is primordial and the second modernist. I take each of these in turn.

Primordial theories of the nation locate the roots of the nation in pre-modern histories and with pre-modern people emphasising the nation's fundamental, timeless, boundedness and internal sameness (Werbner, 1997). The roots of such theories can be traced back to Rousseau and his followers and arguments that nations were a return to a 'state of nature' (Smith, 2001) and claims that nations are 'in the very nature of things' (Gellner, 1983). Organic understandings of this type suggest that nations 'just are' – they are the building block for the world rather than a socially constructed category of collectivity.

The organic nation lends itself to the idea of organic and original. Socio-biological strands of primordialism connect biology, kinship and ethnicity (Van den Berghe, 1987) to the nation. This may involve the assertion that 'original' national people may come from some biological common origin or shared kinship (Anthias, 2010).<sup>16</sup> Origins and history are central to perennialism, another strand of thought under primordialism. Perennialism emphasises the continuity of ethnic groups through time – though not necessarily through biology (Conversi, 2002; Smith, 2001) – and points to the long history of some nations and/or the ubiquity of nationhood. In such cases, the accent may be placed on shared cultural features of peoples including 'language, religion, custom, traditions, feeling for "place"' (Hall, 1992b: 617) as well as regional proximity (Geertz, 1973). At its outer edges, perennialism overlaps with another school of thought classified under primordialism, i.e. ethnosymbolism. This foregrounds groups or peoples claiming a sense of their own unique history, culture and loyalties. Smith argues that these collectives are to be found in most

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<sup>16</sup> Such sentiments can be seen in Mrs Thatcher's appeals to 'kith and kin' during the Falklands War (cited in Curran et al., 2005: 25-26) and more recently, when Gordon Brown talked about a 'golden thread' of national values running through British history his was an appeal not to defining biology but to defining character (2004, 2007b).

ages and that some nation-states emerge out of such groupings and that sense of history helps to explain why some nations 'have not in practice really transcended ethnicity or ethnic sentiments' (Smith, 1986: 216).

Versions of primordialism signal continuities of the nation and mark some ethnic groupings as central to the nation and give other ethnic groups peripheral and outsider status. As a result of such formulations, BME people in Britain are construed as alien, incongruent and out of place (Gilroy, 1987; Solomos et al., 1982). However, primordialism does not necessarily leave these people placeless. Such groups may be aliens in one nation (Braziel and Mannur, 2003; Conner, 1986) but be considered to have primordial attachments to another 'homeland' or nation. Primordialism therefore fixes notions of nationals and non-nationals, and allocates people to territories and nations.

This understanding of the world of deep-rooted nations and nationality and corresponding ethno-nationals is partially disrupted by a second body of literature that provides a modernist account of the nation. This school of thought suggests that, rather than being original, continuous and timeless, nationalism, nations, nation-states and national identities are products of modernity and modernisation (Anderson, 2006 [1983]; Dittmer, 2010; Gellner, 1983).

In modernist explanations, nations are usually dated to the late 18th or early 19th century (Billig, 1995; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 2001). Nations and nationalism were brought on by an entirely novel set of conditions that disrupted the previous ordering of society. These conditions included the decline of religion and monarchy (Anderson, 2006 [1983]); and the breakdown of feudal control as dense populations associated with industrialisation replaced the scattered populations of the agricultural age (Gellner, 1983). In this context, nations and nationalism provided a new means of social control (Hobsbawm, 1990).

Modernists view the nation as constructed and, in the famous words of Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]), as an ‘imagined’<sup>17</sup> community. That was not to say that primordial thinking and understandings of the nation as natural and inevitable was not also the work of imagination. Rather, it was a kind of imagination that viewed a world without nations as unimaginable. From the perspective of modernists, imaginings of nation sometimes borrowed from primordial and perennial notions of origins and history. For example, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) pointed to the role of ‘invented tradition’ as significant in the making and reinforcing of nations in modernity. They defined invented tradition as ‘a set of practices... which automatically implies continuity with the past’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 1). These practices helped to put ideas of the nation in place and to keep them in place. Hobsbawm and Ranger’s work noted some rather visible and heavy-handed nationalising inventions, for example the development of ‘traditional’ Scottish dress to maintain distinctiveness from the English. However, the nation could also be marked in banal and unceremonious ways, such as through ‘the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building’ (Billig, 1995: 8).

The constructed modern interpretation of the nation, in contrast to primordial theories, at least offered the prospect that the nation might be imagined, invented or flagged in ways that side-lined ethnic preferment. If the nation was being ‘made up’ then it should be possible to do so in a way that was inclusive of those that were on the outside of primordial notions of the nation. Furthermore, if the nation was a product of modern imagination, this opened up the possibility of something post-national and beyond the nation that could be imagined in due course (Runnymede Trust, 2000). However, neither modernism nor imagination or invention guaranteed a break between nation and ethnicity. The national imagination could still construct the nation with ethnic preferences and position ‘minority’ people precariously within.

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<sup>17</sup> Enoch Powell had earlier stated that ‘the life of nations no less than that of men is lived largely in the imagination’ (Powell, 1969: 245) emphasising the fictive and imagined life of the nation.

## 2.1 The state and the nation

How the nation is imagined and the place of race and ethnicity within it depends on who does the imagining – as my empirical work will show. In Billig's definition of 'banal nationalism' (1995), cited above, the flag hangs from a public or state building and the state is engaged in a piece of quiet signalling. The (invisible) hand of the state is therefore critical in the making and re-making of the nation and in insisting that the nation exists and is pre-eminent.

The state may not always be so subtle or gentle as to use the limp flag, as made clear in Max Weber's definition of the state as the entity that has the monopoly of legitimate violence in defined territory (1948 [1918]). The state is a political entity that enables collective and concerted action (Brubaker, 1996) and control (Calhoun, 2006) in a territory and offers (people) comfort based on social control (Goldberg and Solomos, 2002). The state is neither monolithic nor unitary in form or actions (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992) – though it can be considered 'more or less coherent' (Goldberg and Solomos, 2002). It includes and acts through such institutions as the armed forces, civil service or state bureaucracy, courts, and schools; and these are significant sites of production for national values, culture and belonging (Goldberg and Solomos, 2002).<sup>18</sup>

The state and the nation are closely entwined and Hobsbawm argued that it was the state that was the active partner in the relationship: 'nations do not make states and nationalism, but the other way around' (1990: 10). Furthermore, Ernest Gellner defined nationalism as 'primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (Gellner, 1983: 1) – where the political unit is in effect the state. Nationalist sentiment is satisfied to the extent that the principle of political and

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<sup>18</sup> As an illustration of this process, British Education Secretary Michael Gove expressed his concern at what he considered insufficient attention on British history at GCSE level (Vasagar, 2011).

national congruency is upheld and discontent to the extent that it is violated.<sup>19</sup> Most significantly, nationalist sentiment may be frustrated if all the people of the 'nation' are not contained within the political boundary and/or if 'non-nationals' are contained inside it (Gellner, 1983). In this way the state and particular state actors may be deeply hostile to minority ethnic people inside the nation who are considered to be in the 'wrong place'.

The very notion of race equality can be further undermined by state action to satisfy nationalist sentiment. For example, state actors may intervene to ensure that ethnic and cultural characteristics become nationalised (Day and Thompson, 2004; Gilroy, 1987); and to mobilise state institutions in the pursuit of (racial and ethnic) homogeneity (Parekh, 2008). Indeed, Parekh (2000) argues that the modern state is less tolerant of diversity than pre-modern polities – which were composed of coalitions of ethnic, tribal, clannish and other communities. Therefore the (nation) state appears inclined towards a 'racially', ethnically and primordially-inflected version of the nation (Goldberg, 2001).

One of the most important ways that the state and ethnic minorities interact is through citizenship. The concept of citizenship stretches back to classical times and the Greek city-state. However, there is no real academic or policy consensus about its meaning (Martiniello, 2002). Citizenship can be conceived locally, transnationally (Yuval-Davis, 1997) and postnationally (Soysal, 1994). It is more typically thought of as official and acquirable membership of a nation-state (Marshall, 1964 [1950]). T.H. Marshall defined citizenship as 'a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community' (1964: 84 [1950]). Critically, for questions of multiculture and race equality, Marshall argued that '[a]ll who possess the status [of citizen] are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed' (Marshall, 1964 [1950]: 84). Indeed, race equality organisations use the idea of race equality as part of citizenship (OBV, 2000; Rose, 1969).

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<sup>19</sup> The political and national unit may lack congruity for numerous reasons. The state may not be the only legitimate power within a territory and in certain cases there are nations without a state, e.g. Palestine; or pseudo-national collectives whose people are spread across several nations, e.g. Kurds (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Marshall's dimensions of citizenship point to an idea of formal citizenship and nationality (Martiniello, 2002) and the passport as a symbol of membership of the nation. In turn, civic or 'territorial citizenship' differs from the ethnic variety (Hansen, 2000) in that it allows people to acquire national citizenship regardless of ethnicity. Citizenship of this type can be said to formally 'de-ethnicise' (Rattansi, 2007) and transcend other group traits such as race, gender and class (Goldberg and Solomos, 2002; Parekh, 2000) in favour of voluntary civic community and political community (Anderson, 2006 [1983]; May, 2002; Parekh, 2008; Shafir, 1998).

However, citizenship also has informal but substantive dimensions. This means that citizenship is not only formally tied to territory and passport, but is also informally connected to culture and, in particular, citizens 'are assumed to share the same culture since they belong to the nation and to the state' (Martiniello, 2002: 117). Therefore taking citizenship may also be seen as an ethnicising process, as citizens are required to sign up to and participate in the shared civic project (Brubaker, 1996; McGhee, 2009). In the British context it has been argued that this entails adopting a certain kind of normative civic whiteness (Burnett, 2004). As a result some parts of the population need to shed their 'excess' ethnicity whilst others do not. For example, in this context, ethnic minority identifications are considered problematic because notions of belonging 'stand between, and mediate, the state-citizen relationship' (Alexander, 2007: 123).

Yuval-Davis and Werbner (1999) extend this notion of the non-universality and asymmetry of citizenship when they argue that:

... the specific location of people in society – their group and categorical definition by gender, nationality, religion, ethnicity, race, ability, age or life cycle stage – mediates the construction of their citizenship as 'different' and thus determines their access to entitlements and their

capacity to exercise independent agency (Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999: 5).

Thus citizenship is graded (Martiniello, 2002), raced and ethnicised (Anthias, 2010; Kymlicka, 2005; Rattansi, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 1999). Citizenship and the state's relationship to the citizen are neither uniform nor universal even though citizenship formally downplays or sets ethnicity aside.

The discussion above illustrates the ambivalent and ambiguous contours of the nation. It is both modern in construction and stuck in the depths of time. Formal citizenship offers the promise of equality and citizenship rights to members of the nation, regardless of ethnicity. However, discussions of nation, civic life and citizenship are still informed by ethnicity and hostile to minority ethnicity, whilst simultaneously claiming to rise above it. This ambivalence towards and elision of 'difference' in the nation can disadvantage those considered 'different' and deny that discrimination occurs on this basis. By way of contrast, multiculture and multiculturalism insist on the centrality of difference in the nation and foregrounds how such difference might be responded and adjusted to. It is to this topic that I turn to in the next section.

### 3 Multiculture and the naming of difference

Difference within the nation can be signalled (and responded to) in different ways. There are three terms that begin with 'multicultur': multiculture; multicultural; and multiculturalism. Each of these articulates different aspects of difference.

The concept of multiculture, in its narrowest sense, can be defined as a demographic phenomenon, largely associated with ethnicity and the population phenomenon of permanent 'co-presences' of minority ethnic people within nations (Harris, 2001) – and others include a shared sense of origins; collective identity; community membership (Brubaker, 2004; Premdas, 2010; Shukra, 1998); as well as attitudes; beliefs; and values (Parekh, 2000; Runnymede Trust, 2000).

In policy usage, multiculture, ethnicity and 'diversity' have, in effect, come to be used interchangeably as encapsulating these various dimensions of 'deep-seated' difference (Runnymede Trust, 2000). Furthermore, phenotypical and racial dimensions have been inserted into cultural characteristics (Barker, 1981; Brah, 1996; Gilroy, 1987; Miles, 1989). One way in which these overlaps reveal themselves are through census-type classifications which invoke racial categories such as black and white as well as territorial ones, such as Asian and African, and nationality such as Chinese (Rattansi, 2007).

What is interesting is that multiculture could be defined in terms of any of society's various heterogeneities beyond ethnicity – including gender, class, sexuality, religion, race (Sharma, 2006). However, multiculture with ethnicity at its heart and race in the back of its mind has come to be the form of diversity that matters politically and in policy discussions. This is because multiculture has been associated with what Parekh (2000) calls 'communal diversity', i.e. a 'robust and tenacious' form of diversity that results in 'self-conscious and more or less well organised communities entertaining and living by their own different systems of beliefs and practices' (Parekh, 2000: 3). Communal diversity is also connected with different and rival lifestyles, perspectives, identities and loyalties that concern national policymakers and state actors (Sharma, 2006). These perceived characteristics make communal diversity a form of difference that policy actors find it hard to be indifferent to.

Multiculture may also have consequences beyond the demographic and draw attention to different aspects of difference including ensuing disparities, subordinations, instabilities, uncertainties, adversities and exclusions of BME people within the nation (Gilroy, 1987, 2004; McRobbie, 2009; Parekh, 2008; Premdas, 2010). However, multiculture is not only about (unfair) unequal handling of certain populations by state and other actors, but is also about differential treatment that people and groups might want to claim for themselves because of their 'distinctiveness' within a broader population.

In this way multiculture as a feature of population expands to become an issue for wider society, i.e. multiculture leads to the multicultural. This connection is made by Stuart Hall's exploration of the 'multicultural question', where Hall argued that the term 'multicultural... concerns the nature of society as a whole, and thus addresses the changed conditions of everyone' (Hall, 2001: 5). In my thesis I use both the terms multiculture and multicultural. I do so somewhat interchangeably because, for me and my interests, multiculture cannot simply be a narrow demographic characteristic; it always has meaning for the wider nation and society. I do, however, make a distinction between multiculture/multicultural questions and multiculturalism, as I discuss below.

### 3.1 Multiculturalism

With multiculture as an acknowledged feature of a nation, political actors are confronted with multicultural questions such as how '... can the particular and the universal, the claims of both difference and equality, be recognized?' (Hall, 2000: 235). Another way of asking this type of question is to consider how different groups are able to participate fully and equally in society and the economy (Parekh, 2000).

For my purposes, multiculturalism is most helpfully defined as a set of state strategies and policies that respond to and manage the problems that multicultural societies generate (Hall, 2000; Pitcher, 2009; Rattansi, 2011). There are many different versions of multiculturalism (Alibhai Brown, 2000; Hall, 2001; Rattansi, 2011) and these define (and respond to) 'problems' associated with multicultural societies in different ways. I discuss four forms of multiculturalism below: conservative; liberal; cultural pluralist; and critical. Each of these forms of multiculturalism prioritises different aspects of multiculture and multicultural life.

The starting point for conservative multiculturalism is that multiculture represents a threat to the cultural integrity of a nation (Hall, 2000). Conservative multiculturalism prioritises the nation and seeks to assimilate (ethnic) minorities and 'newer' nationals. Its

aim is to meld them into the national culture, whiteness and the traditions and customs of the majority (McLaren and Kanpol, 1995). Policies of assimilation can be seen as an advance on 'robust' primordialism where nationalist instincts are to expel or exclude non-nationals. Instead the point is to expunge certain minority characteristics as part of a de-ethnicising/re-ethnicising process.

Under conservative multiculturalism, equality is secured by national citizenship as long as citizens adopt and assimilate into the national culture. Failure to assimilate may, from this perspective, justify inequality (Parekh, 2008). Conservative multiculturalists are unwilling to negotiate over deep-lying disagreements between ethnicity and nationhood (Hall, 2000; Parekh, 2008). Such conservative sentiments also place ethnic minorities and immigrants in an invidious position in setting for them the task of proving themselves part of the nation with the ever-present possibility of moving the target out of reach in the future (Parekh, 2008).

Conservative multiculturalism acknowledges a relatively narrow conception of national culture and identifies those that are and are not carriers of it. Certain forms of liberal multiculturalism offer greater flexibility but also have to balance two cornerstones of orthodox western liberal thinking – universal citizenship and cultural neutrality of the state (Hall, 2000). Furthermore, differential treatment of groups may serve to undermine unity or collective solidarity in multicultural settings. Liberal culturalists such as Will Kymlicka (1995; 2000) have argued that cultural membership is consistent with liberal principles of freedom and equality and justify granting special rights to minorities. This position rejects the idea that cultural groups can restrict the political rights of their own members in the name of 'cultural authenticity'.

This form of multiculturalism provides individuals with access to 'group-differentiated rights' (Kymlicka, 1995). These rights can act to protect the members of certain groups from vulnerability to the political power of the majority (Kymlicka, 2000). Such

differentiation indicates that the state is willing to accommodate cultural aspects of minority groups rather than to eliminate them.

A related and third form of multiculturalism is a cultural pluralist approach to multiculturalism. This seeks to defend the diverse cultural dimensions of multiculture. For cultural pluralists the problem of multiculture is that cultural distinctiveness might be lost and injury could be caused by ignoring such differences (Taylor, 1992). Cultural pluralist multiculturalism is a form of 'strong multiculturalism' (Harris, 2001: 23) and places weight on what is intrinsic to the identity of individuals and groups. In terms of public policy and equality, Charles Taylor (1992) argues that recognition of distinctiveness is fundamental and that such uniqueness is of equal worth and should be acknowledged as such. This may be manifested through public funding for religious schools and other steps to allow ethnic minorities to pursue their own religion and languages (Parekh, 1991; Vasta, 2007) but also in the acceptance of visible symbols of difference such as the wearing of turbans by Sikh police in the UK and Canada, and the Jewish yarmulke in the US air force (Parekh, 2000). Such adjustments may also be found in liberal multiculturalism; however the emphasis from a culturalist perspective is somewhat different and argues that policy should be used to support and encourage the distinctiveness of particular groups of people rather than to merely accommodate them.

The question mark against liberal culturalist and culturalist forms of multiculturalism is whether adjustments for multiculture and an emphasis on the distinctiveness and equal worth of cultures leaves questions of race equality to one side. For example, what is of more interest, from a race equality perspective, is not whether male Sikh police officers might be allowed to wear turbans rather than police helmets, but that Sikh people could expect to be recruited to and advance through the police force in a similar way to their white counterparts.

Concerns about questions such as race equality provide the impetus behind a fourth type of multiculturalism – critical multiculturalism – which, in theory, attempts to foreground

issues of equality, anti-racism and the social and political relations of power as they relate to identity and cultural differences (May, 2002; McLaren and Kanpol, 1995; Sharma, 2006). It is these types of concerns that are core to my own interests as well as to those of the BME-led race equality organisations that I study in this thesis. This means that it is not 'culture' for its own sake that matters but racist subordination related to culture (Harris, 2001). At the same time critical multiculturalism attempts to avoid some of the pitfalls of anti-racism which may privilege racism at the expense of other modes of inequality (May, 2002) and may also be unable to engage with issues of 'new racism' which, in part, uses cultural characteristics as a resource (Barker, 1981). However, although critical multiculturalism foregrounds and attempts to balance such concerns, it has not proved easily transferable to a set of policy and programmatic interventions. Thus critical multiculturalism is perhaps more effective as a challenge to the complacency of multiculturalism than as a practicable way to address cultural difference and race equality.

Multiculturalism in action in Britain has struggled to balance (cf. Walzer, 1983) the elimination of certain differences related to race inequality as well as the preservation of other differences amongst BME people, e.g. cultural distinctiveness. The answer to Stuart's Hall's question of how to recognise '... the particular and the universal, the claims of both difference and equality' (Hall, 2000: 235) remains elusive.

While multiculturalism initiatives, where they have been enacted, have disrupted ideas of monocultural nation-thinking by insisting on explicit discussions of difference, they have had ambivalent effects on the struggle for race equality. For example, state recognition or funding for cultural groups (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992) has encouraged group boundary formation and boundary maintenance (Barth, 1969) making collective struggles for race equality more difficult (see the next section on BME organising for further discussion). As nationalism made nations (Hobsbawm, 1990), multiculturalism also contributed to the making of multiculture (Fortier, 2005) and risked partitioning society and sealing cultures (Anthias, 2010); containing difference (Bhabha, 1990); and maintaining 'purity' (May, 2002). This contrasts with the lived instability of cultures (Back,

1994) and the struggles that occur over culture (Parekh, 1991). Furthermore, multiculturalism witnessed in Britain can be seen to have retreated from thorough and critical re-examination of culture in favour of ‘separate but equal’ cultures (Gilroy, 1996). In turn, multiculturalism has not been able to address structural inequality and racism (Kundnani, 2002; May, 2002) that have produced a nation that, ultimately, has been both ‘separate and unequal’ (Johnson, 2010).

In addition, while multiculturalism might disrupt implicitly ethnic-laden nation-thinking by insisting on explicit discussions of difference, it is not disruptive enough. For example, multiculturalism is bound to and confined by the unitary nation (May, 1999; Sharma, 2006) and multiculturalism enacted through state intervention is not an escape from the nation (and its associated problems for the place of ethnic minorities), but an accommodation with it. It is a form of official licensing of ‘difference’ in a way that policymakers can locate in their own ‘grid’ (Bhabha, 1990). Specifically, multiculturalism has not dislodged the idea of Britishness as a white phenomenon (Hall, 2000).

However, multiculturalism cannot be entirely or only to blame for such problems and continued race inequality, in part because the notion of ‘state multiculturalism’ (Cameron, 2011; Gilroy, 2012), as a co-ordinated and comprehensive policy in Britain, has been greatly exaggerated (Younge, 2011).

I suggest that both nation and multiculturalism contain ambivalences towards minority people as a presence/problem in society. In different ways these notions can emphasise the separateness of BME people and ethnicity as society’s main dividing line in ways that support race inequality. Certainly neither nation-thinking – even of the version where citizenship is acquirable and ‘equal’ – nor multiculture/multiculturalism appears to offer any guarantees of progress on race equality. It is with this backdrop of ingrained disadvantage against BME people in Britain in mind that I turn to next to ways in which BME political organising has understood and attempted to respond to difference in the multicultural nation and to take action for race equality.

## 4 BME organising

In this section I outline different historical and conceptual dimensions of BME organising that have a bearing on the contemporary realities of BME-led race equality activity. I suggest that BME-led race equality organisations in the New Labour period were constrained by a number of different factors limiting their effectiveness as discursive policy actors. In particular, there were the complexities of organising BMEness encapsulated by Stuart Hall's conception of new ethnicities. In addition, there were numerous concerns about BME organising as a particularist and therefore suspect basis for political collectivity and intervention.

### 4.1 Towards a black politics

There is a long history of BME/black organising for race equality in Britain (Ramdin, 1999; Solomos, 2003). 'Ethnic' associations were established before World War I in maritime industries and port cities and spread in the 1950s after immigration from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent (McLeod et al., 2001). In the aftermath of World War II, BME organising in Britain was based on geographical links such as to the 'colonies' and struggles for independence 'back home' (Brubaker, 2005). In addition, there were cultural/welfare groups which included faith organisations and activities such as education about heritage as well as providing advice to deal with the day to day realities of education, housing, working with young people, elders and so on (Goulbourne, 1990).

The need for mutual aid amongst BME populations could not be separated from the racist context within which BME people existed in Britain. Some BME organising was explicitly political and aimed directly against racism (Gilroy, 1987; Ramdin, 1987, 1999; Sivanandan, 1982; Shukra, 1998). Important early organising against racism typically followed lines of national 'origins' and specific anti-colonial struggles. For example, Indian Workers Associations (IWAs) were initially formed in various locations such as London and Coventry in the 1930s (Josephides, 1991). Though IWAs had different emphases, their major

concern appeared to be the independence of India. When this was achieved in 1947, IWAs still retained interest in Indian affairs but in a postcolonial context increasingly turned their attention to the conditions of people with Indian backgrounds living in Britain (Hiro, 1971). With this 'new' focus in mind a number of IWAs were formed in Bradford, Birmingham, Nottingham and Southall and in 1958 the local IWAs were centralised to form the Indian Workers Associations (Great Britain) (IWA (GB)) in order to provide greater co-ordination of action (Josephides, 1991).

In 1958 anti-black riots took place in Notting Hill as white people attacked the houses of West Indian residents (Brah, 1996; Solomos, 2003). This event prompted the founding of the West Indian Standing Conference in 1958 (Goulbourne, 1991). The impetus for the Standing Conference came from the High Commission of what was then the federated government of the West Indies, rather than from African-Caribbean immigrants to Britain. With high unemployment in the West Indies, the High Commission needed smooth settlement of West Indians into Britain to ensure that this channel of migration remained open (Heineman, 1972). However, when the West Indian Federation broke up in 1961, the Standing Conference became less focused on the West Indies and more attentive to the experience of West Indians in Britain and the discrimination that they faced (Shukra, 1998).

The building blocks of some kind of collective political 'blackness' were set in place in the early post-war period of the 1950s and 1960s as the British state homogenised people of African, Caribbean and South Asian heritage into the category of 'coloured Commonwealth immigrants' (Shukra, 1998) and/or simply saw a 'black mass' (Ramdin, 1999). By the end of the 1960s, the orientation of black politics in Britain was based on 'black power' and 'black consciousness', spurred on by envious glances across the Atlantic, where US civil rights organisations appeared to be at the heart of a vibrant mass movement in the late 1960s (Shukra, 1998).

Through the 1970s and the early 1980s black was a political colour (Sivanandan, 1990) that represented African-Caribbean and Asian ‘exclusion from Britain and Britishness’ (Gilroy, 2002: 323). Specifically, ‘the formation of an inclusive notion of blackness [was] configured as the political colour of opposition to racism’ (Back, 1994: 3). Furthermore, blackness was ‘based on people’s direct, first hand, experience of racism; it has to do with how they are treated by ‘white’ society, rather than what culturally distinct groups they belong to’ (Jeffers, 1991: 63). Therefore (multi)culture in these arrangements was largely set to one side in favour of shared inequality experienced by black people. This construction of black politics both generalised and standardised the black experience across all BME people and emphasised the need for collective organising for race equality and other goals. Furthermore, there was something almost utopian about the idea of black:

... despite their differences, the ‘black professional’ in a local authority social services department, the Afro-Caribbean ancillary in a hospital and the hip-hopping Asian youth of West London may all discover within that colour [of black] a medium through which to articulate their own experiences and make sense of their common exclusion from Britain and Britishness (Gilroy, 1987: 236).

In this version of black, Paul Gilroy outlined the possibility of something demotic, solidaristic and perhaps even redemptive. Gilroy also signalled that these higher goals had to function in the context of ‘difference’ amongst black people. Working across such differences was never without its problems, even in the heyday of political blackness. The increased emphasis on ethnicity, in particular, challenged the notion of political blackness, as I discuss below.

## 4.2 Moving back from black

By the 1980s, there were various developments that emphasised the difficulties facing black politics. For example, some social scientists had protested that the term 'black' was developed as a form of political coercion and argued that black specifically referred to the historical experience of people of sub-Saharan African descent and therefore was not meaningful when applied to Asians (Banton, 1977; Hazareesingh, 1986; Modood, 1988, 1994). At the same time, the state increasingly began to view and treat 'coloured Commonwealth immigrants' differently (Sivanandan, 1990), for example along cultural lines. Asians, Africans and Caribbeans also experienced different kinds of structural positioning, disadvantage and socio-economic trajectories (Ramdin, 1999), implying the need for specific kinds of organising and intervention.

In practical terms these complexities meant that an initiative such as the Organization of Women of African and Asian Descent, that was set up in the 1970s as a national body, declined in the 1980s, in part, because of culturally 'specific' issues facing particular BME 'communities' (Brah, 1996: Griffin, 2003). In addition, there was a fragmenting of 'blackness' such that the term 'Asian' was split off from 'black' (Brah, 1996; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies., 1982; Solomos and Back, 1995). Furthermore, 'Afro-Caribbean' became 'African' and 'Caribbean' and 'Asian' became 'Indian', 'Pakistani' and 'Bengali' (Shukra, 1998: 59), as identities and identification became decentred, regionalised and nationalised (Hall, 1992b; St Louis, 2009).

In addition, the process of splitting also contained a faith dimension and the difficulties of maintaining a coalition of political blackness were most famously exposed by the controversy over Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses* (1988). The novel was condemned by some Muslims as blasphemous and led to some demonstrations such as a staged book-burning in Bradford in January 1989, as well as protests in Pakistan and other Muslim countries. In February 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwā against Rushdie (Solomos, 2003). The affair further encouraged debates about the multiple nature of the category black/BME (Hall, 1991b, 1992a; Modood, 1988, 1992) and also led to tensions on

the political left about appropriate responses. One instinct was to protect Muslims as a minority. In this spirit Labour MPs Bernie Grant and Keith Vaz argued for an extension of the blasphemy laws to cover Islam. Others on the left supported the right to criticise religion and were anxious about the political goals of religious groupings (Solomos, 2003).

The Rushdie affair illustrated the potential tension between shared efforts against racism and specific 'cultural' priorities. It also encouraged what Arun Kundnani (2002) termed ethnic 'fiefdoms' – run by community 'leaders'; notions of fixed cultural identity; and ethnic competition at the expense of collective black resistance. The Rushdie affair was also a reminder of Asian experiences and agendas that had been suppressed and silenced in certain articulations of blackness (Hall, 1991b, 1992a; Modood, 1988, 1992). As a result, by the New Labour period there were significant questions about the validity of an 'overarching' BME-led approach to race equality given the multiple and multiplying nature of BMEness.

### 4.3 New ethnicities

Stuart Hall conceptualised this fragmentary and fraught drift away from political blackness in the idea of 'new ethnicities' (1991b, 1992a). He argued that new ethnicities represented a transition away from a simplified and unified idea of blackness:

... the end of the essential black subject is something which people are increasingly debating, but they may not have fully reckoned with its political consequences... What this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects (Hall, 1992a: 254).

For Hall, there were two phases in black cultural politics, each of which were, in different ways, 'rooted in the politics of anti-racism and the post-war black experiences in Britain' (Hall, 1992a: 252).

The first phase of this politics saw racism fought and resisted ‘behind the slogan of a Black politics and the Black experience’ (Hall, 1991b: 55). As Les Back stated, at this stage ‘black... referred to a common response of racism and discrimination and that the use of positive black imagery was used to respond to reified notions of black culture’ (1994: 4). Therefore, BME organising against racism and race inequality ignored ethnicity and used blackness as a means of boosting the esteem of those counted as black. The second phase of this politics required engagement with ‘the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ‘black’... [and] the recognition that ‘black’ is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature’ (Hall, 1992a: 252).

Hall’s articulation of new ethnicities was informed by the idea of the local and the global and the shifts in cultural politics implied by globalisation (1991a). This affected the old unitary form of Englishness, but also meant that the ‘Black experience [w]as a diaspora experience’ (Hall, 1990, 1991b), associated with the ‘deterritorialisation of identities in the contemporary world’ (Wahlbeck, 2002: 229); and unsettled notions of ‘home’ (Braziel and Mannur, 2003; Safran, 1991). For Hall, ‘[t]he diaspora experience... is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity’ (Hall, 1990: 235). In other words, black/BME diasporic population was on the move culturally and Hall recognised the political implications of this. As a result, Hall argued that this second phase of black politics needed to work ‘with and through difference’ (Hall, 1992a: 254), such that it might be able to organise coherently against racism whilst acknowledging heterogeneities and diverse BME positionalities (Hall, 1992a).

Therefore, new ethnicities posed a specific conundrum for the idea of blackness and black politics:

... you are plunged headlong into the maelstrom of a continuously contingent, unguaranteed, political argument and debate: a critical politics, a politics of criticism. You can no longer conduct black politics through the strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject (Hall, 1992a: 254).

Blackness had become destabilised and black people could not be assumed to be one (good) thing and white people the (bad) other. Brett St Louis argued that this development 'set black cultural activists adrift – 'without guarantees' – and left them to face the hard ethical labour of working out what their ideals, commitments and aspirations are and might be' (St Louis, 2009: 571). The empirical chapters that follow illustrate some aspects of this 'adriftness', and the ways that BME-led race equality organisations have attempted to politically organise and intervene to cope with it.

However, as Hall was careful to point out, one phase of black politics did not substitute and replace the other. Instead there was displacement, repositioning and reorganisation (Hall, 1991b), and the two phases in black cultural politics 'constantly overlap and interweave' (Hall, 1992a: 252). I would also argue that BME post-war politics in Britain was always subject to such repositioning and realignment. For example, though Hall and others described a first phase of black politics as a relatively inclusive political colour against racism, it was preceded, as described above, by 'phase zero' in which BME organising was conducted along national, regional and 'cultural' lines, as with the Indian Workers Associations and the West Indian Standing Conference. In practice, even at its height, the first phase of blackness could not exist without drawing on some (prior) idea of ethnic allegiance (Shukra, 1998). In effect, blackness was a 'rounding up' of different groups based on a range of factors associated with ethnicity including culture, skin 'colour', 'race' and national 'origins'; and new ethnicities could be seen as another part of the same process.

In addition to these difficult ongoing questions of how to configure black/BME politics, there were other criticisms about the legitimacy of black/BME organising in the first place – an issue which I address below.

#### 4.4 Objections to black/BMEness

Patterns of inequality for black/BME people have resulted in collective black/BME-led responses against such disadvantage (Brah and Coombes, 2000; 1990 Trust, 2005; Voice4Change England, 2007a). There are clear benefits to collective resistance to subordination (McRobbie, 2009) by those disproportionately affected by racism. Shared difference can ‘manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action’ (Brubaker, 2004: 34). The practice of that collective action can also itself be politicising (Sivanandan, 1982) and lay foundations for further action and identification (Calhoun, 1994).

However, black/BME-led organising has faced criticism from various perspectives for being ‘differentialist’ (Wiewiorka, 1997). One set of concerns about differentialism were related to earlier criticisms about multiculture and multiculturalism and the effects that it might have on national or collective life. For example differentialism concerned liberals because it brought into doubt the neutrality of the state (Barry, 2000). In addition it threatened the nation so prized by the political right (Hall, 2000). Black/BMEness also created concerns for the political left too as they worried about issues such as race and class solidarity (Sivanandan, 1990).

A second set of concerns about differentialism focussed particularly on the human and cultural consequences of constructing group identity for political purposes. These included anxieties that black/BME lines reified groupness (Bhatt, 2004; Brah, 1992; Brubaker, 2004) and essentialised and foreclosed notions of black/BMEness (Alleyne, 2002b; Brah, 1992; Mercer, 1994; St Louis, 2009; West, 1990). Pnina Werbner usefully summed up the multiple dangers of essentialising in the following way:

To essentialise is to impute a fundamental, basic, absolutely necessary constitutive quality to a person, social category, ethnic group, religious community, or nation. It is to posit falsely a timeless continuity, a discreteness or boundedness in space, and an organic unity. It is to imply an internal sameness and external difference or otherness (1997: 228).

Essentialisation homogenised categories of people as permanently and irrevocably different in order to provide political coherence. This, however, could paradoxically replicate racism's exclusionary and partitioning modes (Bhatt, 2004; Goldberg and Solomos, 2002). For example, one dimension of partitioning revolved around 'the idea of there being a corporate black history and identity which is accessible only to individuals by virtue of their experience of being black... [making] racism... specifically a black experience' (Shukra, 1998: 41).

Rogers Brubaker (2004) coined the term 'ethnopolitical entrepreneurs' to describe a category of corporatising political actor that reified group identity for political (as well as perhaps personal) ends. These entrepreneurs viewed and presented social, economic, political and other phenomenon as group phenomenon. Such actors – who might include government politicians and activists in BME-led organisations – attempted to ensure that 'communities' could be imagined as coherent and totalised entities in order that political work might be carried out in their name.

In some cases, black/BME political 'representatives' and community advocates have been criticised for 'unethical' practices. For example, they have been labelled 'compradors' (Sivanandan, 1990) – a type of political operator or trader functioning between powerful elites and wider constituencies. Elsewhere, the term 'tenderpreneurs' has been employed as a pejorative in post-Apartheid South Africa to describe those masquerading as servants of the people and using positions of influence to secure government tenders and contracts (Feinstein, 2010; Gilroy, 2012).

Therefore, from a number of different perspectives – national, cultural, political and conceptual – BME political organising and representing has been deemed problematic. The BME-led race equality organisations that I examine in my fieldwork operated against this backdrop of, at best, scepticism and at worst, cynicism for their groupist inclinations and manipulations. However, while it is correct to scrutinise such forms of organising, BME political activity has been too easily dismissed as sectarian – representing nothing more than black interests – while white-led or non-black political activity has not generally been viewed in the same way (Brah, 1992). As Donna Haraway has perceptively noted, the term 'special interest groups' was applied to those disagreeing with policy/political orthodoxy (1988: 575) so that their interests could be more easily dismissed. Conversely, the default 'white-led' political position adopted in 'mainstream' policymaking and civil society was considered unremarkable and came without the health warnings associated with BME organising. Sayyid recognised this in the passage below.

What I want to suggest is that any critique of essentialism which is not also a critique of universalism is problematic, and should perhaps be understood as likely to serve as another strategic ploy within the armoury of western supremacist discourse. If a critique of essentialism is to be mounted, in good faith, it can be done only by extending the critique to universalism itself. No doubt Islamists make use of essentialism, but to point this out, without pointing out that the western project itself is also equally essentialist, seems to be at best eccentric and at worst mendacious. The conflict between Islamism and western supremacist discourses can be seen as a conflict between particularity and universalism only if one makes the particularity of the West unmarked and natural (Sayyid, 2000: 267-268).

Sayyid's original point was specific to the West and Islam but can equally be applied to white and black/BME dividing lines. Sayyid suggested that the West/White was a

'supremacist' form of universalism that (along with Islam) was also essentialised and imposed on events. However, it was rarely named as such as it was normalised and made invisible. Furthermore, it has also been argued that 'strategic' essentialism may be justified as part of collective minority political struggles (Alleyne, 2002a; Brah, 1992; Fuss, 1990; Spivak, 1987). In this way political actors could 'knowingly' undifferentiate people (Spivak, 1985), providing that this was carried out in a 'laudable oppositional political spirit' (Ang and St Louis, 2005: 297).

#### 4.5 BME politics and the state

After all was said and done about the basis of black/BME organising and the difficulties of collectivising, there was still a question of how black/BME political entities could best promote the interests of BME people in Britain. Here I want to delve further into the practice of black/BME politics as a prelude to the empirical material to come. In particular, given that the BME-led race equality organisations that I focus on in my thesis have chosen to promote race equality by engaging with state policy actors, I consider some of the ways in the post war period that black/BME political actors have worked with (and against) the state in the cause of race equality. This topic is important because it raises questions about incorporation of civil society by the state (Passey and Tonkiss, 2000). At the same time, it is difficult to ignore the state, because of the way that state actors can enforce ethnic preferences in the nation, as described in section two of this chapter.

A useful starting point for thinking about black/BME organising is the example cited above of Paul Gilroy's notion of black alliances between 'the 'black professional' in a local authority social services department, the Afro-Caribbean ancillary in a hospital and the hip-hopping Asian youth of West London' (1987: 236).

Such informal, non-hierarchical alliances were very different to the formal BME-led race equality organisations that I study. The alliance of people from different walks of life that Gilroy imagined was potentially political, but not in the sense of 'organised' civil society. Instead this version of black appeared to be the unorganised (and perhaps unorganisable)

black politics of the ‘street’ – with a pre-disposition to work against and in resistance to the state (Kundnani, 2002).

The BME-led race equality organisations that I study are different: more institutionalised, less ‘grassroots’ and, significantly, working with state actors. These organisations have taken their lead from initiatives such as the Campaign Against Racist Discrimination (CARD), which emerged after a December 1964 meeting in London between Martin Luther King and British BME activists (Anwar, 1991; Heineman, 1972). CARD was a coalition of black and white antiracism (Shukra, 1998) aimed at influencing ‘central government, Parliament, and the media and to building a mass united front for coloured immigrants and their children’ (Anwar, 1991: 42). CARD was a blueprint for subsequent ‘engaged’ policy-orientated work of BME-led race equality organisations that followed. CARD also became embroiled in controversy about involvement with state actors (Josephides, 1991 – particularly over how close it should be to the Labour party (Shukra, 1998). This, alongside the problems of internal power politics (Heineman, 1972; Solomos, 2003), led to CARD’s decline as a political force in the late 1960s (Shukra, 1998).

The model of (relatively) institutionalised and state-connected organising has been one of the prominent features of what has been dubbed the ‘race relations industry’ (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Kalka, 1991; Lawrence, 1982; Tompson, 1988). This, often disparaging, term has been coined to describe a formalised, state-sponsored approach to promoting ‘harmonious’ relationships in society (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). The industry was flexible to the extent that it could accommodate different approaches to this problem. For example, at times multiculturalism dominated, with the understanding that society was made up of essentially different communities and cultures (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). The industry could also incorporate anti-racist elements into its operation with the emphasis on political blackness and the discrimination and disadvantages of black people (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). Both of these positions had their weaknesses. In the case of multiculturalism, these limits have been somewhat discussed above and included other problematic assumptions, such as a lack of culture amongst

African-Caribbean people and ‘strong’ culture of Asian people (Lawrence, 1982). The limits to anti-racism of this form could be described in terms of failure to engage with BME differences and over-simplistic ideas of the ‘black experience’ (Ballard, 1992; Cross, 1991; Gilroy, 1992).

The industry was comprised at various points in time of institutions such as the Race Relations Board and Community Relations Councils, introduced in the 1965 Race Relations Act, and the Commission for Racial Equality that superseded them in the 1975 Race Relations Act (Tompson, 1988). In addition, there were various posts such as equal opportunities advisors in state and state-supported institutions (Ballard, 1992); as well as measures in some local authorities, ‘such as ethnic monitoring, positive action, contract compliance and outreach community work’ (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 161). There were also, famously, (multicultural) grants for ethnic minority groups and organisations, for example the Greater London Council (Gilroy, 1987; Tompson, 1988). Even where these grants were administered by the local state, they were often backed by national government. By way of illustration, local authorities were able to access the Conservative government’s Urban Programme and this funding went disproportionately to black groups (Tompson, 1988).

Perhaps most importantly, critics argued that, through involvement in this ‘official’, state-sponsored race relations industry, black political leadership became ‘quangoized’ and on the ‘payroll of a local council’ (Tompson, 1988: 108) and that activists for race equality were being incorporated into career streams and into ‘the state’s design’ (Ramdin, 1987: 496). This, in turn, meant that these theatres of action were divorced from BME people and their everyday experiences (Tompson, 1988). Through such processes, state-funded, BME-led race equality organisations had become enmeshed in, if ultimately not influential on, policymaking. The BME-led race equality organisations studied in my thesis were, during the New Labour period, embroiled in such relationships with the state and questions about influence.

## 5 Conclusions: Drawing the line – nation, multiculture and BME organising

In this chapter, I have outlined three parts of the field of study that my empirical work on race equality engages with: i.e., nation; multiculture and BME organising. The construction of the nation as simultaneously primordial and stable and also modern and evolving has left and continues to leave BME people in an ambiguous national position. They are at odds with the nation as well as emblematic of its modern face (Hall, 2000). Multiculture names and notices the position of BME people and difference in the nation. However, naming this difference presents its own difficulties in that it may re-invigorate race thinking (Bhatt, 2004) and essentialise and reify culture (Brah, 1992; Brubaker, 2004). Both nation and multiculture may serve to de-couple questions of equality and difference (Yuval-Davis, 1999) and set aside concerns about structural and historical disadvantage (Goldberg and Solomos, 2002). Furthermore, they may organise collective life in ways that are undesirable. As Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis observe:

Wherever a delineation of boundaries takes place, as is the case with every ethnic and national collectivity, processes of exclusion and inclusion are in operation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 39).

The new ethnicities debate (Hall, 1991b, 1992a) helps us to think about the way that that lines and boundaries of black/BME politics have developed in the post-war period in response to racism in the nation. In particular, the earlier comforts of political blackness that downplayed (multi)culture in favour of a singular contestation (and experience) of racism was confronted with complex, contingent and unfixed black diversity, alongside the continued existence of and need to resist racism.

It is from this unstable platform, destabilised by new ethnicities and problematic notions of nation and ethnicity, that BME race equality actors engaged in questions of collective national life, multiculture and race equality in the New Labour period.

In the next chapter, my first empirical one, I explore the discursive theme of 'proportional multiculture' that was significant in the early New Labour period. This initial period emphasised greater race equality and the legitimate place of BME organising in advancing this cause. For a while, at least, it appeared to set aside tensions in black/BME organising and between multiculture and nation. Even in this early 'honeymoon' period, it appeared that such tensions were never too far away.

# Chapter 3 Towards proportional multiculture

## 1 Introduction

As described in chapter one, New Labour came into power promising to find Britain a favourable place in a globalised and changing world and to become more at ease with itself on the domestic front. Renewal, change and progress were central New Labour themes (L'Hôte and Lemmens, 2009) as the party argued that Britain had to remember its national past as well as to engage with a multicultural and an international future.

This study centres on the examination of how nation and national collective life was connected to multiculture and race equality in different discourses over the New Labour period. I argue that, broadly speaking, policy discourses on nation, multiculture and race equality were organised in different themes across three phases of the New Labour period. The first discursive theme was 'proportional multiculture' where the emphasis was on a fairer and more proportional share of the spoils of national life through (limited) efforts on race equality. This was the dominant policy discourse of multiculture in the period from 1995-2000 when New Labour was in opposition and in its first term in office. The second overarching theme of policy discourse of multiculture came to the fore between 2001 and 2007 and was centred on policymaker concerns about 'parallel' multiculture along distinct and antagonistic multicultural lines. The third policy discourse theme that I have identified, which was active between 2006 and 2010, downplayed multicultural difference or sought to 'pause' multiculture and to sideline it by placing greater emphasis on conceptions of life in Britain outside its scope, specifically through a re-emphasis on citizenship, nation and de-racialised aspects of equality. Parallel and paused multiculture will be the subjects of chapters four and five, respectively, whilst in this chapter, I focus on the construct of proportional multiculture and the early part of the New Labour period.

Proportional multiculture was connected to an idea of 'multicultural democracy' with its 'gestures towards cultural diversity and inclusion' (Back, 2002). Multicultural democracy

aimed to make room for BME people and one could optimistically view it as an escape from the notion of dominant and non-dominant groups (Van den Berghe, 2003) and consistent with the idea that cultural diversity might even become part of the self-understanding of the nation (Parekh, 2000).

However, one of the dangers of the focus on multiculture and the multicultural was its disconnection from questions of race equality – placing the emphasis on diversity, but not attending to the material disadvantages and everyday realities of being ‘different’. This problem stemmed from tensions between difference and equality.

Equality can be viewed as opposite to diversity, as equality refers to equivalence and diversity to difference (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). Yet, there would be no need to call for equality without difference (Scott, 1994). The crux of the issue is that some (cultural) ‘differences’ were seen as desirable and chosen by certain people whilst others, such as race inequality, were undesirable consequences of difference. As a result, the response to inequality is not to erase all variations between people but rather to intervene for equality in limited ways ‘eliminating not all differences, but a particular set of differences, and a different set at different times and places’ (Walzer, 1983: xii). Therefore, a (degree) of justice and equality is necessary to enable commonality in a context of multicultural diversity (Phillips, 1999) and, furthermore, race equality may require differential and additional rights granted to certain groups in order to allow them to participate on a full and equal basis in society (Parekh, 2000).

New Labour’s project for equality in this early part of its existence appeared to ensure that existing formal and universal rights were enforced so that BME people might, in time, be represented somewhat proportionately to their size in the overall population across different spheres of national life. This meant to be less well represented as perpetrators of crime in the criminal justice system and to be better represented amongst the ranks of holders of top public and private jobs. BME-led race equality organisations for their part

aspired to the goal of BME people 'participating equally in British life' (Khan, 2007: 55) and emphasised that BME people were being disproportionately denied such opportunity.

## 2 Things can only get better

The New Labour period can be said to have officially commenced in 1995 after the revision of Clause IV of the party's constitution. The Clause was originally drafted by Sydney Webb in 1917 and adopted in 1918 at a meeting at Methodist Central Hall with amendments in 1928 and 1960 (cited in Rentoul, 1995: 458-459). The new Clause IV was adopted by a special conference – also at Methodist Central Hall – on 19 April 1995 (Rentoul, 1995) and contained five parts and notably replaced 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange' (cited in Rentoul, 1995: 458) in the 1917 version with 'power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few' (cited in Rentoul, 1995: 461) – thus shifting the party away from public ownership of key industries. Other features of the revised Clause of particular importance to the interests outlined in this study included its emphasis on community, rights and duties and tolerance (cited in Rentoul, 1995). Together these themes highlighted New Labour's commitment to: the notion of national collective (community); 'diversity' and multiculturalism (tolerance); the idea that what citizens could expect from the nation was positively correlated with what they contributed to it (rights and duties); and some idea of racial justice.

In 1995, in his second year as Labour leader, Tony Blair called for a national project capable of healing rifts in the diverse and divided nation:

... for far too long it [the Conservative party] has left us defining ourselves as a nation, not by what unites us, but by what divides us: a class system, unequal and antiquated; a social fabric, tattered and torn; a politics where dogma so often drives out common sense; even an education system where one part of the nation is taught apart from the other; and where, if we do not change course now, we will have two classes of

health service, two classes of state school, two Britains, one on welfare, the other paying for it...

Let us rouse ourselves to a new moral purpose for our nation to build a new and young country that can lay aside all the prejudices that have dominated our land for generations, a nation for all the people, built by all the people, old divisions cast out, a new spirit in the nation, working together in unity, solidarity, partnership – one Britain (Blair, 1995).

Blair identified New Labour as the party of one nation and attempted to take this mantle from the divisive Conservatives that had abandoned Disraeli's vision of national unity.<sup>20</sup> The vocabulary used was elemental – it was about land, people and spirit and it was also national with the emphasis on the 'country', 'Britain' and 'the nation'. In some ways, the line on 'two Britains' was standard fare in criticising an incumbent government, but what was more interesting was New Labour's decision to pair something old – the idea of one nation – with the need for a 'new and young country'. The speech contained a moral, even biblical dimension – even though at this time Blair was not 'out' about his own religious convictions – that Britain should be resurrected, redeemed and the mistakes of the past could be washed away.

Around this time, BME-led race equality organisations were involved and invited to assist New Labour in devising the blueprint for the reconstructed nation whilst New Labour was still in opposition. This was in line with one aspect of the new Clause IV of the party which emphasised that Labour would collaborate with 'trade unions and co-operative societies and also with voluntary organisations, consumer groups and other representative bodies' (cited in Rentoul, 1995: 462) in order to advance its political aims. BME-led race equality organisations and activists fitted the bill, as both 'voluntary organisations' and

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<sup>20</sup> This attempt to claim Conservative ground was repeated by the current leader of the Labour party, Ed Miliband (2012).

'representative bodies', in that they claimed to speak for a section of society typically unrepresented or underrepresented in policy development.

This BME input into New Labour's policy process was formalised when an advisor with knowledge of the BME voluntary and community sector was seconded to work with Labour's opposition spokesperson on Home Affairs, Alun Michael (2011, Interview). The advisor, David Weaver, was a Trustee of the 1990 Trust, a leading race equality organisation, and was employed as a consultant to work with Michael to specifically act as a bridge between New Labour and the BME voluntary and community sector:

... what David [Weaver] managed to do was to get people who are quite angry to trust him and me sufficiently to sit down and talk sensibly about the challenges they were going through. And that allowed you to get past the anger to why is this happening (Alun Michael, 2011, Interview).

The fact that New Labour were prepared to engage with David Weaver illustrated that they believed that a BME perspective existed; that it could be represented; and that it had been missing from government. Alun Michael valued the role of David Weaver as an interlocutor and in particular his ability to act as a firewall and to protect Michael from direct BME anger, converting those raw emotions into political dialogue and policy ideas. Michael was clear that the best mode of dialogue between New Labour and BME activists was 'to sit down and talk sensibly' in something akin to the protocols of formal politics. For Kundnani, this process of institutionalisation sacrificed the essence of black political struggle:

[It] 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, 2002).

Kundnani, contrary to David Weaver and Alun Michael, understood the street as the natural or appropriate site of and for ‘black culture’ as that was the place where black politics had been formed as an unruly and rebellious struggle against the state. However that was in itself a (competing) form of reification of black politics and another vision of how social change could be achieved. Rather than revisit the earlier discussion outlined in chapter two about the trade-offs associated with BME policy work, the point to be made here is that New Labour policymakers, including Alun Michael, attempted to introduce a familiar structure and pattern of politics to the question of BME challenges and that, despite the potential corseting effects of this mode of operating, numerous BME-led race equality organisations and BME political activists were willing to engage on these terms.

We definitely invested a lot of time thinking around the Labour party [and] people like Alun Michael who led on the voluntary sector... In terms of coming to 97 and a New Labour government then, without being political, there was a sense there'd be a step change in the way that BME communities were perceived and supported and especially the voluntary sector and that we would have more of a footing and an influence in decision-making and also delivery of services... [O]n the positive side, doors were opened for the BME sector to have a formal footing in government structures... (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

Jeremy Crook from BTEG did not share Kundnani’s concerns about formal politics. The precariousness of BME communities and BME-led voluntary sector organisations necessitated and warranted the investment that BTEG and other BME-led organisations made into New Labour during the party’s time in opposition. Crook justified the engagement as a way to combat precariousness and it offered the prospect of ‘more of a footing’ and ‘a formal footing’ that marked out a transition from BME people and organisations from the margins into a rightful, central and secure position in the nation. For Jeremy Crook, BME voluntary sector organisations were most effective if they had a place connected to government structures.

Though Crook justified BTEG's engagement with New Labour in the early days of the latter, he also contrasted that early period to the time when the interview took place (in 2011), when it was clear that BME-led race equality organisations were much further from the centre of government. In that early moment, New Labour was providing discursive signals that they were committed to race equality – and not just in the comfort of opposition when policymakers could be fast and loose with pledges in order to win support.

Once in government, New Labour continued to present the case for race equality – or at least against discrimination. For example, in his 1997 Leader's speech at the party conference Tony Blair noted the discrepancy between the high-minded idea of Britain and the real-life experiences of BME people.

We cannot be a beacon to the world unless the talents of all the people shine through. Not one black High Court Judge; not one black Chief Constable or Permanent Secretary. Not one black Army officer above the rank of Colonel. Not one Asian either. Not a record of pride for the British establishment. And not a record of pride for the British Parliament that there are so few black and Asian MPs. I am against positive discrimination. But there is no harm in reminding ourselves just how much negative discrimination there is (Blair, 1997).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This was a theme that Blair returned to in the wake of the 9/11 bombings and when Blair was supporting the good in American life: 'I think of a black man, born in poverty, who became chief of their armed forces and is now secretary of state Colin Powell and I wonder frankly whether such a thing could have happened here' (Blair, 2001).

The excerpt encapsulated Blair's grand project for the nation and his wish for Britain to take its place (again) as a leading light ('beacon') on the world stage. He connected this desire for world greatness, to which conservative forces in Britain would surely agree, with a more difficult observation about racial discrimination. He did not criticise the private sector or use them to illustrate his point, but focused closer to home and talked about the visible absence of BME people from senior ranks of public service. There may have been an ulterior motive at work in that New Labour sought public service reform and modernisation (Brooks, 2007; Needham, 2007) and pointing to the failings of the public sector served that agenda. More specifically, Blair realised that his reforms required an 'enemy' such as the British establishment. However, in this passage and argument BME people were painted as equally deserving of high office as their white counterparts and that their absence from top jobs was ascribed only to failings of a system rather than shortcomings of BME people themselves. Even though BME people were the innocents and exempt from criticism in the excerpt, Blair made it clear that discrimination was the problem and that he would not replace negative discrimination with its positive counterpart. So, although New Labour was sensitive to unequal outcomes in senior posts in the public service, its interest was not to achieve equality of outcomes (Blair, 2004; Phillips, 1999). Instead it favoured equality of opportunities (Hills et al., 2009) that over time might not equalise outcomes but that could erase some of the starker disproportionate features of British life by rewarding 'talent'.

One of the ways that exemplified the change that was in the air in this early period of New Labour was the advent of 'Cool Britannia'. This term was used in 1996 by Ben & Jerry's ice cream as a name of one of its products. This was ironic because, ultimately, the concept turned out to be a piece of confectionary (Bayley, 1998). Stryker McGuire's article for Newsweek magazine (McGuire and Elliott, 1996) was heralded as the naming of this moment even though the article did not use the actual term 'Cool Britannia'. McGuire argued that London, rather than Britain, was the 'coolest city on the planet'; citing the fashion, club scene and new money in the city as its pulsating heartbeat. This image could not really have taken hold nationally under the distinctly 'uncool' Prime Minister John

Major – even though Major did try to exploit the idea<sup>22</sup> – but it was something that New Labour and the not altogether untrendy Tony Blair could appeal to and encourage, not just as the spirit of London, but as the epitome of a nation renewed.

There were, as with all attempts to name a moment, questions about what and who that naming was for. A leader article in *The Economist* argued that this construct was not only or even mainly for a domestic audience but was part of an attempt to rebuild Britain's standing in the world:

Worried by opinion polls suggesting that foreigners regard Britain as backward-looking, and keen to burnish its image for dynamism, the Blair government is intent on presenting Britain as a modern, thrusting type of nation (*The Economist*, 1998: 20).

Brit art, pop and lit were all hip and its shining stars were invited into Downing Street in the early days for champagne receptions (Hodgson, 2003). There were also attempts to co-opt some of these cultural producers into the New Labour project, e.g. through Panel 2000 which brought together government ministers and cultural luminaries 'to replace a myth of an old Britain with the reality of the modern Britain' (Cook, 1998, cited in De Michelis, 2008: 410).

As 'Cool Britannia' was essentially an idea of swinging London stretched, somewhat unconvincingly, across the nation as a whole, London's multiculture was fundamental to its ideas. Stuart Hall argued that the 'multi-cultural metropolises' were the 'cool' in 'Cool Britannia' (Hall, 2000).<sup>23</sup> Though, certainly the idea required multicultural diversity – in

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<sup>22</sup> As Stryker McGuire noted: 'It was odd to hear John Major cite from it [the "London Rules" article] during a Mansion House address. When you heard Mr Major talk about the youthfulness and vibrancy of London, it had a hollow ring' (McGuire, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Hall also called the idea Cool Britannia a 'new Labour fantasy' (Hall, 2000b: 2).

part because it was a message to the wider world from which those cultures came – ‘Cool Britannia’ was fundamentally white or a white interpretation of the delights of multiculture. Its embodiments were rarely from BME backgrounds or even necessarily from London but ‘Cool Britannia’ required proximity to newness and BME people and communities were one way in which the old and fusty Britain could be left behind. It was a frame inside which Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary could claim Chicken Tikka Massala<sup>24</sup> as an exemplary British multicultural dish (Cook, 2001) and New Labour could insist, in 2000, that every colour was ‘a good colour’ (cited in Runnymede Trust, 2000: 40).

As well as (sometimes vacuous or frothy) talk there was policy action from New Labour to make the lives of some BME people in Britain easier and more commensurate with those of their non-BME fellows. One early change was the abolition of the ‘primary purpose rule’ (Home Office, 1997) – enabling non UK national spouses, fiancés and children that were outside of the country to follow their spouse into Britain without needing to prove that the marriage was not entered into primarily to obtain admission to the UK. The change occurred soon after Labour came into power in 1997, fulfilling a Manifesto promise (Labour Party, 1997: 35). According to Home Secretary Jack Straw this meant that ‘Entry Clearance Officers are being instructed not to refuse entry clearance applications where the refusal depends solely on the primary purpose rule’ (BBC, 1997). This particularly benefited people with backgrounds in the Indian subcontinent that wished to participate in ‘arranged’ marriages (Barot et al., 1999).

Interestingly, the change in the primary purpose rule meant that those applying for residency did not have to show that the primary purpose of marriage was *not* to obtain British residency it was now up to immigration officials to prove that this was the principal

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<sup>24</sup> In a speech to the Social Market Foundation Cook claimed:

Chicken Tikka Massala is now a true British national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences. Chicken Tikka is an Indian dish. The Massala sauce was added to satisfy the desire of British people to have their meat served in gravy (Cook, 2001).

motive (BBC, 1997). The change in policy therefore was reflected in a symbolic shift that meant that some BME people no longer had to prove themselves to Britain or the British state and rather the default position that they and their families were part of Britain. As former Home Office Minister, Fiona Mactaggart noted.

I think that [amending the primary purpose rule] was a very significant change that we introduced to say that we rejected the Tory position of treating south Asian migrant marriage traditions as somehow suspicious (Fiona Mactaggart, 2011, Interview).

For Mactaggart, this change was a significant switch of emphasis and a break from the Conservatives. Elsewhere, Home Secretary Jack Straw argued that the rule was being ended because:

... it is arbitrary, unfair and ineffective and has penalised genuine cases, divided families and unnecessarily increased the administrative burden on the immigration system (Straw, cited in BBC, 1997).

In doing so Straw justified and grounded the change in ideas of natural and social justice in that the rule was 'unfair' to 'genuine cases' whilst not denying that some cases were fraudulent. Perhaps most skilfully Straw argued that the existing measures 'divided families' – a device that made the measures more difficult to criticise for the apparently 'family-friendly' Conservatives. As well as putting himself on the side of families Straw was against waste and placing unnecessary 'administrative burden' on the immigration system. The implication was that this distracted the immigration service from its 'real' job of being firm on more dubious immigrants. Therefore the discursive case assembled around the removal of the rule was both socially just as well as defensible against criticism from the right.

While the change was symbolically powerful and of practical importance to families that were affected the increase in immigrants appeared to be relatively small. The figure for spouses given limited leave to enter (excluding European Economic Area and Swiss Nationals) was just under 21,000 in 1996 (Home Office, 2005: 40) to just over 42,000 in 2007 (Home Office, 2008: 54). It was not clear how much of the additional figure was related to the abolition of the primary purpose rule or that those gaining limited leave to enter would seek to settle in the United Kingdom. However, it appeared that the abolition of the primary purpose rule made relatively little contribution to increased immigration.

## 2.1 Better things for BME people

There was optimism about New Labour amongst some BME race equality campaigners after a particularly bleak period prior to New Labour:

... basically through the 80s it was all the issues of stop and search policing; and that was really a, you know, a pretty bad time for black communities, especially young black people. And then in the early 90s there was a lot of organisation by the British National Party and that's when Stephen Lawrence was killed in 93 (Karen Chouhan, 2011, Interview).

Karen Chouhan, the one-time Chief Executive of the 1990 Trust, painted the time before New Labour as a desolate one in which black people were harassed both by the state – in the form of the police – and by organised civil society racists in the form of the British National Party. It was against this backdrop that New Labour's positive words were interpreted by race equality campaigners as a constructive force and efforts to make room for multicultural diversity in the initial phase of the New Labour period saw it labelled a 'radical hour' (Pilkington, 2008). However, perhaps instead of a 'radical hour', this was a pragmatic hour, where the Labour party returned the favour of being the beneficiaries of BME votes (Anwar and Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, 1998; Saggar, 2000).

Another practical benefit was that action for race equality helped to dampen down Labour's longstanding problem over accusations of racism in the party and the attempts of the 'Black Section' movement to advance black representation and status within the Labour party (Jeffers, 1991; Ramesh, 1997; Saggar, 2000).

Despite these practical drivers, Karen Chouhan (2011, Interview) stated that there was a sense of progress amongst black/BME anti-racist activists: 'I mean we felt pretty hopeful... that things could happen as a result of community organising. So yeah we did feel that there was change in the air'.

It appeared, in terms of race equality, that progress was being made, as New Labour's election song, *Things can only get better*, had promised. Just as there were some new concessions, such as the abolition of the primary purpose rule, there was new money too as government supported multicultural democracy with new multi-million pound Home Office funding for BME voluntary and community organisations to provide more inputs into policy and community development (Home Office, 1999a).

Labour started in earnest to think about policy and innovative ways of bridging the gap [with BME voters]. Two things happened – even before they were elected – Jack Straw said to Black Britain..., and specifically to Doreen Lawrence, that if you vote Labour you would be afforded the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry; which changed the way every institution had to deal with race in 1997. And secondly, in Tony Blair's first speech after he got elected, I remember speaking with Faz Hakim on, you know, on this input – she was a special adviser at Downing Street – she inserted into Tony Blair's speech that we cannot be a beacon of society whilst we have so few MPs; whilst we have so few black officers. He gave a list of things. This discourse had never been... [said]... by a Prime Minister. And so you can see that there was a recognition that something dramatic

needed to change and 1997 was the start of that. So it started off well (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

For Simon Woolley, from OBV, New Labour had 'started off well' both rhetorically and in policy terms. In particular New Labour appeared to be willing to strike a political deal with 'Black Britain', for example the promise of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in exchange for political votes. This move both recognised the travails of being black in Britain and acknowledged the idea of blackness as an agentic political force. Woolley also used Blair's 1997 Autumn Labour party conference (as cited earlier in this section), where the Prime Minister highlighted the absence of black people from various parts of public life, as evidence of a new politics where black insiders and advisors (in this case, Faz Hakim) were close to and influential in government.

The disproportionate absence of BME people in successful positions in British society that had been noted by Blair was the *raison d'être* of the three BME-led race equality organisations that I have studied. As outlined in chapter one, these organisations made sense of the world in terms of relatively poor results for BME people across education, employment, criminal justice and so on. For example, in 1999 OBV detailed the extent of the disproportionality that they were working against.

There are:

only nine Black MPs out of 651 (only two women);

only five Black circuit judges, (none women);

two Blacks in senior Civil Service positions, out of 805 (grade 4 and above);

There are also severe shortfalls in other key public services. (OBV, 1999b: unnumbered).

OBV painted a picture of a BME gap. Life in Britain was disproportionately difficult for BME people as evidenced by under-representation in these good jobs and because white

people were over-represented in them. Reapportionment was required. Nine BME MPs out of 651 in total amounted to 1.4 per cent compared to the 2001 Census data that showed that 7.6 per cent of the United Kingdom's population was BME – which would have translated proportionately into 49 MPs. In 2000, OBV committed itself explicitly to proportional outcomes by stating that '[t]he challenge of achieving proportionate levels of representation in the political and civic arenas is our core business' (OBV, 2000a: unnumbered).

Jeremy Crook from BTEG highlighted that it wasn't just the disproportionality that mattered but the location of the discrepancies was also important. In particular he viewed the disproportionate number of white policymakers as damaging to the interests of BME people.

So, until I feel that, you know, these think tanks and the civil servants are informed from the experience of living with, working with diverse communities then we're not going to get a diverse kind of inclusive policy outcome at the end of it. (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

The problem was not just that the policymakers were white and middle-class; they were not from another colour or class but from another world. They did not live, grow up or work with BME people and therefore could not understand or help to tackle the problems that faced BME people. The assumption made by Crook and OBV was that white over-representation in positions of power was the result of BME disadvantage and resulted in further discrimination in other spheres of life. I develop this idea on the 'representation' of BME policy interests in chapter six.

In this early New Labour period there were two policy episodes that deconstructed and spotlighted the relationship between multiculture and the collective life of the nation. One of these 'moments' was the launch of, and then the government's response to, the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry which was published in 1999. The other was the publication in

the autumn of 2000 to the report of the independent Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CFMEB). Though both the Inquiry report and the CFMEB report pointed to deep-lying problems of racism in national life there was a contrast in official response to the two interventions. The CFMEB, which set out the limits of Britain, Britishness and Britannia for many BME people, came to be criticised by New Labour. In the case of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, though the party resisted certain aspects of its findings and attempted to limit what it said about the nation, New Labour engaged relatively constructively with the idea of the police as deeply antagonistic to BME people.

### 3 The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and Race Relations (Amendment) Act

In opposition New Labour promised a Public Inquiry into the racist murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence in April 1993 and the subsequent bungled investigation into his death. The Inquiry was announced by shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw at an event hosted by Operation Black Vote (OBV, 2011). This decision to launch the Inquiry and to announce it in a BME-led forum was designed to indicate New Labour's commitment to race equality and BME Britain. Like its 1997 manifesto promise to abolish the primary purpose rule, the Inquiry was also a practical and relatively simple policy step to cement Labour's position as the party of the BME population as well as (once again being) the party of the family. Indeed it was the family dimensions of the Lawrence case, given that Stephen's parents, Doreen and Neville, were an exemplary black British married couple and that Stephen Lawrence was (characterised as) an ideal, hardworking and ambitious son. These circumstances marked out Stephen as different to Ricky Reel (The Guardian, 1999b) or Michael Menson (The Guardian, 1999a). Both were murdered in racist attacks in 1997 but were difficult to cast in the role of ideal BME victims because Reel had been drinking on the night of his death and Menson had suffered from psychiatric problems.

In his 1998 speech to the Labour party conference, Tony Blair cited the Stephen Lawrence case as symbolic of the deleterious position of BME people in Britain.

Deny opportunity, leave injustice or discrimination unchecked and we lay waste the genius of the nation. When a young black student, filled with talent, is murdered by racist thugs and Stephen Lawrence becomes a household name, not because of the trial into his murder, but because of an inquiry into why his murderers are walking free, it isn't just wrong, it weakens the very bonds of decency and respect we need to make our country strong (Blair, 1998).

In the excerpt Blair used the Lawrence case as a morality tale as he set out the characteristics of the nation and the conditions for membership of it. Lawrence was offered as the poster child for New Labour's Britain – young, studious and striving – and was in stark contrast to the 'racist thugs' that murdered him. The case was not just a personal, family and legal calamity, but a national one.

As with all political speeches and statements Blair was operating in, as well as shaping, a political and public context. In particular, unlike with cases such as Reel and Menson the shining example set by the Lawrences of black functionality meant that mainstream media was on the family's side in their pursuit of justice. By a bizarre twist of fate it turned out that Stephen's father, Neville Lawrence, had decorated the house of the Daily Mail's editor Paul Dacre and that Dacre had met Stephen Lawrence during that time (BBC, 2012). This personal connection appeared to be decisive when, in February 1997, the Daily Mail famously published a front page that named and pictured his five murderers (Dacre, 2012) and invited the accused to take legal action against the paper if they wished to challenge the claim. It was unlikely that the Mail would have been so supportive were it not for the connection between the Lawrence family and Dacre or if the Lawrences were not such a model family.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry was led by High Court Judge Sir William Macpherson of Cluny. There is the extremely detailed report of the Inquiry (Macpherson, 1999); the

response of the Home Office (1999b); as well as reflections about the Inquiry (Cathcart, 1999; Cottle, 2004; Marlow and Loveday, 2000) that do a better job of analysis of on various different aspects of the Inquiry and its report than I am able to do in limited space. For the purposes of my work the central and crucial finding of the Inquiry was that, on the basis of its original investigation of the murder, the Metropolitan Police Service was guilty of 'institutional racism', where this concept was defined in the following way:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people (Macpherson, 1999: 6.34).

The use of the term institutional racism in the Inquiry report represented a remarkable journey for the concept which began in black radical thought in the book *Black Power* written by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton (1967). Macpherson used institutional racism to explain what Coretta Phillips termed 'the mechanisms and interacting processes through which ethnic inequalities are reproduced and sustained in a cumulative fashion' (Phillips, 2011: 175). Macpherson's definition above explained that racism was a function of 'colour, culture, or ethnic origin', i.e. it was not only against African-Caribbean people but it was enacted against people somehow deemed to be distinctively not white British. Yet, there were some ways in which Macpherson's deployment of institutional racism was actually rather conventional.

The Macpherson report was both consistent with and departed from the findings in the Scarman report into the Brixton riots of 1981.<sup>25</sup> Scarman accepted that public bodies may

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<sup>25</sup> The Scarman Inquiry was commissioned by the Conservative government in the immediate aftermath of the April 1981 Brixton riots to inquire into the disorder and to make recommendations for the future.

adopt practices that were 'unwittingly discriminatory against black people' (Scarman, 1981: 11), a theme echoed in Macpherson's idea of 'unwitting prejudice'. Scarman had rejected the idea that Britain was an 'institutionally racist society' where there was knowing discrimination against black people as a matter of policy. Macpherson agreed with this rejection and instead made the rather narrower argument that the failings of the Metropolitan Police in the Lawrence case was based on (unwitting) institutional racism based on ignorance and thoughtlessness, rather than malice.

By advancing an argument about the 'collective failure' of institutional racism Macpherson largely exempted individuals from being racist or perpetrating racism. Instead it was the system 'wot dunnit'. In some ways Macpherson may have been acting in a lawyerly manner and avoiding naming names and making charges against individuals that could not stick. Instead it was easier to point to a systemic problem. However, this led to exoneration for particular Metropolitan Police officers who had behaved in a discriminatory and racist manner towards the Lawrence family. In other words, their racist behaviour was classed entirely separately from the race-based motives that drove Stephen Lawrence's murderers in the first place. The police were accidental racists and the killers were 'racist thugs'.

The reality of the racism that bedevilled the Lawrence case was rather more multi-layered and complex than problems in the machinery of the police or even personal acts of racism by police. There were both institutional factors involving the routine operations of institutions which may or may not be driven by intentionally racist actors. There were also 'micro-racialisations' where individual prejudice and racism affected interactions of everyday life (Phillips, 2011) and individuals were personally culpable for their racism.

Perhaps because of its limits, institutional racism became a powerful emblem within this early New Labour period of the tension between multiculture and national life. Leading Labour politicians, such as Prime Minister Tony Blair (Hansard, 1999b) and the Home Secretary Jack Straw (Hansard, 1999a), accepted the Inquiry's findings of institutional

racism levelled at the Metropolitan Police Service and the Inquiry report informed the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act (National Archives, undated-b) which required public authorities to take a more proactive anti-racist and pro-race equality stance (Phillips, 2009). However, New Labour, like Macpherson, attempted to play down ideas of institutional racism as intentional or malicious.

In my view, any long-established, white-dominated organisation is liable to have procedures, practices and a culture that tend to exclude or to disadvantage non-white people. The police service, in that respect, is little different from other parts of the criminal justice system – or from Government Departments, including the Home Office – and many other institutions (Straw, 1999).

In this passage the Home Secretary Jack Straw stuck to the idea that the discrimination facing BME people was unwitting and not deliberate. Instead, institutional procedures, practices and culture inevitably reflected the ethnic makeup of the organisations concerned. This logic meant that the police were not alone in their institutional failings and Straw even cited his own organisation – the Home Office – as suffering from the same problem. Straw was therefore playing down the idea of culpability for discrimination but extending its reach into other spheres of public life. It appeared that Straw as Home Secretary wanted to provide the police service with some cover from the criticism that it had faced by moving the spotlight to other public bodies. One more thing to note was how the notion of racism continued to be edged out in discussion about the Inquiry. Although New Labour had no problems in labelling Stephen Lawrence's killers 'racist thugs', state institutions were guilty only of the less heinous crime of tending to 'exclude or disadvantage' certain groups. However, the naming of institutions as white meant that in a multicultural context they had to become less white to work for modern times. Whatever lines of discussion were closed down by policymakers after the Inquiry one line that could not be closed down was on the need for institutional reform for race equality.

BME-led and other race equality organisations had campaigned for and closely monitored developments in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Though the appointment of the Inquiry and the subsequent policy response was important to those working for race equality there were concerns about a 'whitewash'. For example, Marina Ahmad who was the Chief Executive of ROTA emphasised the deliberate racism of the police:

... there is a so-called canteen culture of overt racism that pervades the Police Force. This in turn sets the tempo, the institutional body language, which shapes the way that Black communities are policed (ROTA, 1999: 1).

Ahmad refuted the idea of accidental racist practice suggested by Macpherson and also by Jack Straw and instead of subscribing to the idea that it was the institution that infected the practice of individuals she argued that it was the personal racism of police officers that shaped the workings of the institution. Ahmad went on to express scepticism about just why mainstream Britain appeared so concerned with the plight of the Lawrence family:

Many Black people regard public sympathy for the Lawrences as little more than a cry of angst from the people of "*Middle England*". They are crying because five working class thugs from south-east London have made a mockery of their trusted English system (Ahmad, 1998).

In this analysis 'Middle England' – populated by white middle class people and the antithesis of Stuart Hall's multicultural metropolises – was less concerned about the fate of a young black man and a black family than with what it meant for their own inflated sense of English justice, fair play and civilised society. Middle England's sympathies did not lie with the Lawrences and instead they were outraged that contemptible 'working class thugs' could shatter their imagined England. Ahmad's message was telling and at least partially correct and, as it was said during New Labour's honeymoon period, was a difficult, brave and provocative idea to articulate. To make it more easily sayable Ahmad

distanced herself somewhat from the words by attributing these sentiments not to herself or ROTA but instead argued that these were the opinions of 'many Black people'. This protected both Ahmad herself and ROTA from some criticism and portrayed ROTA as bold and connected to underrepresented voices.

However, this downbeat assessment was not the majority response to the Macpherson Inquiry. Many BME race equality activists were enthusiastic about the findings and implications of the Inquiry.

... never in British history have the establishment said 'you know what, our institutions are rotten' in regards to race. Our institutions, for no other reason than the colour of their skin... hold black people back. Now that's pretty bold. And you know what it's like that it was the single greatest sigh of relief for millions of black people in this country. Because we knew it, we felt it, we saw it. It took a white judge to say it before it was recognised. And it was a fantastic moment actually... we don't have a chip on our shoulder; we've not been making this [racism] up. Now it's been acknowledged that it's real (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

Woolley's response to Macpherson was more optimistic than Marina Ahmad's but also shared a similar sense of a society that was divided. The dividing line this time was not 'Middle England' and black people but 'the establishment' and black people. The extent of division was such that the establishment did not accept black claims of racism – which was a form of racism in itself – but that they would take the word of one of their own, i.e. 'a white judge'. Macpherson ended the culture of denial from the white establishment and confirmed what black people had known all along.

Woolley was less interested in Macpherson's claim that racism was 'unwitting' and placed more stress on the fact that racism was acknowledged at all. One reason for Woolley's effusive response was that the Inquiry offered, at least momentarily, the possibility that

racism could be transformed from being a problem for black people into a problem for society as a whole (Shukra, 1998).

New Labour's response to the institutional racism identified by the Macpherson Inquiry came in the form of the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RR(A)A). The RR(A)A 2000 was intended to prevent the kind of uneven treatment of BME people by public authorities by requiring the latter to take a more proactive stance against discrimination. The Act outlawed direct and indirect race discrimination as well as racist victimisation across functions not covered by the 1976 Race Relations Act (National Archives, undated-d).

In addition, the Act required public authorities to positively promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. Public authorities and public service providers (including private sector organisations that delivered public services) were also required by statute to audit, monitor and consult on policies and services in order to assess whether there were adverse impacts on different ethnic groups. The Act also gave the Home Secretary new powers to extend the list of public bodies subject to the general duty to promote race equality and to impose specific duties on public bodies subject to the general duty to ensure better performance of the duty. In addition, the Act also extended the powers of the Commission for Racial Equality to enforce specific duties imposed on public authorities and to issue codes of practice to provide guidance to public bodies on how to fulfil their duties to promote race equality. A final, very interesting aspect of the Act, given the recent revelations of police action to smear the Lawrence family shortly after the murder of Stephen (Evans and Lewis, 2013), made chief police officers liable for acts of discrimination carried out by officers under their leadership and provided for awards from discrimination claims against the police to be paid out of police funds (Home Office, 1999b).

As illustrated by data on race equality provided in chapter one, the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act did not eliminate discrepancies and disproportionalities in outcomes for

BME people in Britain nor did it overcome the troubled relationship between BME people and the police. However, the Act was an advance over what had gone before in terms of offering a framework to hold the public sector to account. Joy Warmington from the equalities and human rights organisation brap<sup>26</sup> (formerly known as Birmingham Race Action Partnership) called it 'a complicated but beautiful piece of legislation' (2011, Interview) but went on to claim that it was also an opportunity missed:

It [the Race Relations (Amendment) Act]... was hardly ever used effectively... I think Lawrence was a huge opportunity that unfortunately we weren't able to capitalise on because its implementation didn't capture the imagination. I think it wasn't used in a way that could really galvanise people. It was used as a beating stick in most organisations and, you know, sometimes things that are seen as more punitive don't help to take the agenda forward. That was not necessarily the intention of the legislation but it definitely felt as if that's how it was used, you know. People were forever confessing how institutionally racist they were and that seemed to be the thing to do rather than, you know, looking at how they could critically take forward the agenda (Joy Warmington, 2011, Interview).

Warmington's argument was that the new legislative regime needed to (but did not) capture the imagination of white people and organisations and instead created a punitive atmosphere that encouraged and normalised a culture of confession rather than an anti-racist one. Instead, Warmington saw another path to social change where the emphasis was on co-operative work that meaningfully addressed institutional racism. This ruefulness at the unfulfilled potential of the Act was shared by Simon Woolley.

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<sup>26</sup> brap really does call itself this name and uses lower case letters.

You had a piece of legislation that had the ability to change the world. But it was barely used. Precisely because we were not politically ready to fully utilise what it could do. So we never had the tools, you know. We had the mechanism to hold every public body to account. What are you doing about race? How are you promoting race? What is the standard? We didn't. So what would happen is it almost became a tick-box exercise... But the gains that we could have had were not really fully realised (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

Woolley's approach of even more scrutiny on public bodies was the opposite to that of Warmington. What Warmington viewed as punishment for institutions was, for Woolley, a matter of accountability. For him the problem was that black organisations lacked the resources or wherewithal to ensure such accountability. Where Woolley and Warmington ultimately agreed was that the passing of the legislation did not ensure its meaningful implementation. Therefore the moment of apparent discursive breakthrough and the naming of institutional racism as a problem in Britain was not the transformative moment that might have been hoped for. However, at the time, there was a palpable sense that New Labour's talk in opposition had at least resulted in a legislative environment whereby multiculture and collective national life might be made more compatible.

However, I next turn to an episode that showed that even in the early optimistic part of their time in government there were limits to the extent that New Labour was willing to accommodate multiculture as a feature of the nation.

#### 4 The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain

A year after the Macpherson report another report on life in multicultural Britain was published, this time to a hesitating then openly hostile response from government. The independent Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CFMEB) had been set up by the race equality organisation Runnymede Trust as a three year study to:

analyse the current state of multi-ethnic Britain and to propose ways of countering racial discrimination and disadvantage and making Britain a confident and vibrant multicultural society at ease with its rich diversity (Runnymede Trust, 2000: iix).

The CFMEB began its work in January 1998, but the idea for the report came prior to the New Labour period. Bhikhu Parekh, who became the eventual Chair of the Commission, approached the Runnymede Trust with an idea akin to the Commission around 1994 as a way to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Colour and Citizenship* (Institute of Race Relations, 1969) – the first survey of ‘race relations’ in Britain. The study was directed by Jim Rose, co-founder of the Runnymede Trust. However, for a number of reasons, including the need to secure a considerable amount of funding, the project did not come into fruition at that time (Bhikhu Parekh, 2011, Interview).

When the Commission began its work it had support from policymakers and the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was present at the launch of the Commission in January 1998 (McLaughlin and Neal, 2004: 155). The original Chair of the Commission was Sir John Burgh, former Director-General of the British Council. However, Burgh decided to leave his position in 1998 and Parekh agreed to succeed him on the condition that he could restructure the Commission. This included bringing in Stuart Hall on to the Commission along with four or five others, including Tariq Modood as a consultant (Bhikhu Parekh, 2011, Interview). Therefore, the final Commission was composed of 23 people and included commissioners such as the former Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, Herman Ouseley, and Andrew Marr of the BBC. The latter was responsible for the final write up as Parekh explained:

Different chapters [were] written by different people and we wanted it to flow. So we invited Andrew Marr... He looked at all of the chapters and made them read like a story (Bhikhu Parekh, 2011, Interview).

Adopting the approach of a public inquiry the Commission took evidence from sessions around the country and also commissioned research inputs. The Commission attended to three central themes of multicultural Britain: acceptance of diversity; action on equality (non-discrimination); and enabling national commonality (Runnymede Trust, 2000). The majority of the report was dedicated to an analysis of policy and policy reforms including policing and criminal justice; education; health and welfare; political representation; and employment – all areas in which race inequality were manifest.

Proposals in these areas were underpinned by a series of principles. The first was that all people had both equal worth regardless of colour, gender, ethnicity, religion, age or sexual orientation, and equal claim to opportunities needed to develop and contribute to the collective. A second principle was that citizens were both individuals and members of geographical and other communities. The third principle was that, as people were different, that uniform treatment would result in inequality. Specifically that equality ‘must be defined in a culturally sensitive way and applied in a discriminating but not discriminatory manner’. The fourth principle counterbalanced the idea of difference with the need for society to be cohesive, and to ‘find ways of nurturing diversity while fostering a common sense of belonging and a shared identity among its constituent members’. The fifth principle argued that while respect for moral differences was important, every society needed a broadly shared set of values, including human rights, the equal worth of all, equal opportunity for self-development, and equal life chances, in addition to procedural values such as dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict. Finally, the sixth principle asserted that racism could ‘be based on colour and physical features, or on culture, nationality and way of life’ and that it was contrary to the aim of common belonging (Runnymede Trust, 2000: viii-ix).

The principles taken as individual items and as a whole were, for the most-part, uncontroversial. The one exception was, perhaps, the third principle and the idea of differential treatment of multicultural groupings. This could be seen as a challenge for two cornerstones of western liberal thinking – universal citizenship and cultural neutrality of

the state (Hall, 2000). This principle was also practically difficult to navigate in policy terms. For example, as was seen in the later parts of the New Labour period, policymakers were concerned about being seen to be in favour of 'special treatment' for BME people (Denham et al., 2010). However, in this early time it was not these principles laid out by the Commission per se or even its detailed policy proposals that caused controversy, but the way that the report framed the discussion about multi-ethnic Britain.

Bhikhu Parekh identified two parts of the report that created resistance amongst policymakers. The first of these was the use of the term 'post-nation':

Unless these deep-rooted antagonisms to racial and cultural difference can be defeated in practice as well as symbolically written out of the national story, the idea of a multicultural post-nation remains an empty promise (Runnymede Trust, 2000: 38-39).

The passage contained a number of different elements that individually and collectively served to puncture the fantasy of Cool Britannia and a Britain that had moved on from the past. The central claim was that the nation contained deep antipathy towards BME people. This animosity was both organic ('deep-rooted') and symbolic in the way that it was incorporated into the nation's idea of itself (the national story). The second element of the passage implied that the national story be re-written which echoed Paul Gilroy's call for the 're-writing [of] British history to the point at which it ceases to be recognizably British at all' (2000: 119). Gilroy's call was provocative, but it also had the consolation for policymakers that the re-written (hi)story, however unfamiliar, might still be nationally situated. It was Britain, but not as we know it. However, the CFMEB passage above identified the national story as problematic before implying that what was required was a 'post-national' turn, and this was a provocation too far for nationalist politicians. Though Parekh recognised the trouble that the idea of the post-nation state caused to policymakers, he argued that the Commission had been misread.

Occasionally we used phrases which I think allowed us to be misunderstood. And there are two or three of them – although they are now fully accepted but at the time they brought anxiety. One was post-national state. When we said Britain can't be a nation state it has to be a post-national state. Now it seems to me so obvious if we have three nations: Scotland, England and Wales, it can't be a nation state it has to be post-national. And post-national was not intended to denigrate Britain; on the contrary, it highlighted the great opportunity that the country has to devise something new for the 21st century (Bhikhu Parekh, 2011, Interview).

Parekh acknowledged that the Commission's use of language had perhaps 'allowed' them to be misunderstood. In other words the Commission had failed to foreclose the possibility of mis-interpretation. As well as acknowledging mistakes Parekh defended the approach taken. The problem, according to Parekh, was more that the Commission was ahead of its time in naming ideas in 2000 that were, by the time of our interview in 2011, 'now fully accepted'. However, Parekh's insistence that the 'post-national state' was a natural descriptor of the situation of Britain was not an idea around which there was political consensus. None of the main Westminster parties appeared, even post-New Labour, to be willing to accept the idea of the post-nation. For example, recently, Ed Miliband turned to the idea of 'One Nation' to describe his inclusive vision of collective life (Miliband, 2012). While the post-national state may indeed be the best foundation for multicultural Britain it was hard to believe that the Commissioners could not see in advance that policymakers and certain parts of the media would take 'multicultural post-nation' as a nightmarish provocation. However, perhaps the context of the moment, post-Macpherson, and in the midst of Cool Britannia, had convinced the Commissioners that the mood was sympathetic to new ideas and language.

Elsewhere, the report rightfully expressed reservations about the conception of Britain and pointed to its racial and racist baggage. The report questioned the relevance of

Britishness in relation to Britain's ethnic minorities, in the context of devolution, the Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement; and the fact that Scotland, Wales and England belong to a nation-state named the United Kingdom not Britain. For my purposes, the first of these points was critical and it led to a passage such as the following in the Commission's report:

Where does this leave Asians, African-Caribbeans and Africans? For them Britishness is a reminder of colonisation and empire, and to that extent is not attractive... For the British-born generations, seeking to assert their claim to belong, the concept of Englishness often seems inappropriate, since to be English, as the term is in practice used, is to be white. Britishness is not ideal, but at least it appears acceptable, particularly when suitably qualified – Black British, Indian British... (Runnymede Trust, 2000: 38).

The Commission strategically totalised BME people such that regardless of place of birth BMEness was at odds with unreconstructed Britishness and Englishness.

Another piece of text that Parekh identified as difficult for policymakers to accept was the concept of 'community of communities'.

... citizens are not only individuals but also members of particular religious, ethnic, cultural and regional communities, which are comparatively stable as well as open and fluid. Britain is both a community of citizens and a community of communities, both a liberal and a multicultural society, and needs to reconcile their sometimes conflicting requirements (Runnymede Trust, 2000: ix).

The CFMEB offered an optimistic vision of multiculture in Britain (Alexander, 2007), in which the nation, the citizen and multicultural groupings co-existed side by side. The

CFMEB defended the meaningfulness of multicultural minority communities by claiming that they were both lasting as well as fluid and open and that they did not isolate or prevent people from being part of the nation. The idea of 'community of communities' had been borrowed from the Indian constitution. As with the idea of the 'post-national state', it appeared to Parekh to be a self-evident feature of life in contemporary multicultural Britain.

... we talked about community of communities. But here again it puzzles me. It's a standard phrase in India. When the Indian constitution was drafted people said that India is a community of citizens as well as community of communities... When we first got that phrase going we thought it's so obvious that look if you think of Britain you think of individual Brits – fine. But you also think of the fact that there are Afro-Caribbeans with a history of their own. There are Jews with a history of their own. There are communities – Catholics. Scotland is a regional community or a national community. There are ethnic communities. So Britain is a community of communities. Every country is a community of communities. But somehow people immediately associated this with the kind of de-constructionist ethic; that we were trying to dismantle this country and reduce it to a fragmented entity. That was a complete misunderstanding. So, I think a few things here and there about which we should have been careful but it would have never have occurred to us that the phrase communities of community – it's in retrospect when these guys objected. Although even now and even then, I don't think the objection was valid (Bhikhu Parekh, 2011, Interview).

The communities that Parekh cited that made up the British community were only partly BME and in many cases were (predominantly) white, e.g. there were Scots and Catholics. However, though the emphasis on white communities may have been an attempt to reassure policymakers it failed to do so. Whereas, in India, the compromise of 'community

of communities' was required in order to allow the country to come into being, in Britain it was seen as undermining and fragmenting. As with the post-nation, Parekh claimed that this was another misunderstanding.

When the report first emerged New Labour appeared, if not to welcome the report's findings, to accept it as a serious and constructive piece of work. A news piece in the Daily Telegraph on 10 October 2000 entitled *Straw wants to rewrite our history* carried the following response to the report from the Home Office minister, Mike O'Brien:

This is a timely report which adds much to the current debate on multi-ethnic Britain. The Government is profoundly committed to racial equality and the celebration of diversity. We are a multi-cultural society (cited in Johnston, 2000).

This was a relatively standard (non-) response to a report that was not particularly effusive but it was broadly supportive and, by restating the government's celebration of multiculture and pursuit of race equality, aligned the government and the CFMEB in a common cause. Bhikhu Parekh explained how and why New Labour's response changed:

In Jack Straw's case, his office had read the [draft] report [ahead of publication], approved the report, or at least agreed with it [or did not object]. When the Daily Telegraph spread the red herring about the word British being racial or racist and the media began to blow certain things out of proportion... Number 10 panicked. And remember, elections were only a year away (Bhikhu Parekh, 2011, Interview).

New Labour's shifting response was, according to Parekh, driven by the clamour from the Daily Telegraph newspaper. The CFMEB found itself caught up in a media storm. A Leader piece in the Daily Telegraph said that it was 'astonishing that ministers should have welcomed the sub-Marxist gibberish' (Daily Telegraph, 2000a). Two days later, a comment

piece in the same newspaper, titled *Don't diss Britannia*, criticised Labour's indecisiveness in response to the report:

When the Home Office first learnt of the report's contents, it welcomed the findings as "timely". But after this newspaper reported the anti-British agenda that the commission peddles, Mr Straw read the report in full. Suddenly, it was no longer quite so welcome. Instead of regarding Britishness and Englishness as "racist" terms, as the report appeared to suggest, Mr Straw now says that he is proud of both. Yesterday, Number 10, alarmed that a new avenue of attack had been opened up to the Conservatives, backed him up (The Telegraph, 2000).

The title of the piece in the Telegraph cleverly both flaunted the paper's ease with the vernacular of the multicultural metropolises by using the term 'diss' whilst, at the same time, reclaiming Britannia for the newspaper's monocultural middle England suburban heartland. The paper also trumpeted its ability to make Jack Straw read the report more fully and to change his mind about its worth, illustrating the influence of the paper and drawing attention to New Labour's weakness and fallibility. The erstwhile tailwind behind the Commission's work had turned into a political and media storm (Fortier, 2007; McLaughlin and Neal, 2004; Pilkington, 2008).

At the launch event for the report (after the Daily Telegraph articles), Jack Straw took Bhikhu Parekh and Stuart Hall aside and told them that he was going to criticise the report. Parekh asked Straw what his concern about the report was to which he replied that it said that 'the word British is racist'. Parekh responded as follows:

I said this [British is racist] is not what it meant. We spent about seven minutes in a quiet corner trying to take him through the argument but it looked at the time that he was pretty convinced that this was the line that he wanted to take (Bhikhu Parekh, 2011, Interview).

Parekh attributed Straw's response to the media furore but was also critical of New Labour's response, labelling it one of 'panic', brought on by the impending general election. Another aspect of the political context was that CFMEB followed on from the Macpherson report (Parekh, 2001). As Pilkington argued, the response of the right-wing press to the Commission 'indicated the existence of considerable anger towards the idea that Britain needed to change in fundamental ways. In some respects then the [CFMEB] report served as a 'proxy target' for the resentment felt towards the earlier Macpherson report' (2003: 273). In some cases that resentment was naked and party political:

The Conservatives now have an excellent chance to make good their past silence on Macpherson. They must expose the Government's collusion in this attempt to destroy a thousand years of British history (The Telegraph, 2000).

The Daily Telegraph considered and represented the CFMEB and Macpherson as a threat to British history and in the face of such attack Jack Straw and New Labour secured their position by launching a robust defence of Britain:

... I do not accept the argument that Britain or Britishness is dead. On the contrary, both are now receiving a new lease of life. Enduring British values of fairness, tolerance and decency are at the heart of the Government's reforms to build a more inclusive, stronger society (Straw, 2000).

Straw countered the argument of the lessening of Britain but did not accept the Telegraph's focus on history instead making a typically New Labour argument about renewal and newness. The Home Secretary ignored the critique from the CFMEB about the racially problematic idea and practice of Britishness and the recent findings of Macpherson. He instead sought to erase Britain's history of race-thinking (Goldberg, 1994;

Goldberg, 2001), overwriting this with innate decency and the British sense of fair play. Straw did not deny problems entirely as he cited the need for more inclusivity (rather than less racism), but claimed that the required improvements were being delivered by New Labour's reforms.

Straw also argued that Britain was inoculated against racism by 'enduring British values'. A second refutation of Britain as a racial or racist state pointed to its diverse population – as in the following speech from Tony Blair:

This nation has been formed by a particularly rich complex of experiences: successive waves of invasion and immigration and trading partnerships, a potent mix of cultures and traditions which have flowed together to make us what we are today.

Blood alone does not define our national identity. How can we separate out the Celtic, the Roman, the Saxon, the Norman, the Huguenot, the Jewish, the Asian and the Caribbean and all the other nations that have come and settled here? Why should we want to? It is precisely this rich mix that has made all of us what we are today<sup>27</sup> (Blair, 2000b).

This account argued that the problem of racism could not exist in Britain in any meaningful sense because of its long history and recent past of multicultural mixedness and flows, courtesy of invaders and immigrants. Blair named different origins of modern Britons and claimed them all as equally British even though Macpherson showed another picture. Instead, Blair appealed to the diverse spirit of Britain and the British. This

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<sup>27</sup> Somewhat of a consensus had formed around this narrative as in the same year (2000) the Conservative leader William Hague acknowledged that 'Our nation is a nation of immigrants, Celts, Picts, Saxons, Angles, Normans, Jews, Huguenots, Indians, Pakistanis, Afro-Caribbeans, Bengalis, Chinese and countless others. These are British people. It is what makes our country such an exciting and varied place to live' (Hague, cited in The Guardian, 2000).

emphasis on hybridity (and tolerance) of Britain could be used to close down discussions of racism because how could the inherently ‘mixed’ (and decent) nation be racist? As this was the case and as the British were so decent and fair then the remedy to rogue elements of racism was more Britishness (see chapter five for more developments in this regard). Therefore the language of multiculture and the nation had turned or perhaps returned to complacency in short order and the moment of heightened awareness of race equality and the role of BME perspectives and organising against it had seemingly passed.

## 5 Conclusion: Getting things in proportion

This first period was not, in hindsight, quite the ‘radical hour’ (Pilkington, 2008) that it once seemed. However, there was a policy discussion on the importance of multiculture being represented proportionally in national life and democracy. There was a questioning, even amongst policymakers, of the over and under representation of BME people in different spheres of national life, and the role of discrimination and racism in this distribution. Policy discourse and practice engaged with the possibility that the benefits and burdens of nation and nationhood could be more equally reapportioned between BME and white people.

The abolition of the ‘primary purpose rule’ extended to some BME people the same freedom to choose and live with a partner as enjoyed by their white British counterparts. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 similarly attempted to reduce the discrepant and disadvantageous treatment of BME people by institutionally racist public bodies and it was seen as an advance by BME-led race equality organisations.

However, as witnessed by the eventual response of policymakers to the CFMEB report, this discursive and policy shift from policymakers towards the redistribution of outcomes in the multicultural nation was tied to contradictory New Labour urges that disciplined multiculture and advanced racially exclusive nationalism (Back et al., 2002). Such instincts revealed themselves in response to the CFMEB’s calls to re-examine and re-write Britishness beyond the vacuity of ‘Cool Britannia’. However, there was at least a debate

over the relationship between the nation, multiculture and race equality. As Dinah Cox, former Chief Executive of ROTA, reflected the time covered in this chapter was in hindsight 'fucking springtime' (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview) compared to subsequent developments.

By contrast, the next chapter addresses what might be described as autumn or perhaps winter for the way that issues of nation, multiculture and race inequality were interconnected in policy discourse. This chapter covers the period 2001 to 2007 and charts a series of episodes in which policymakers became increasingly concerned that multiculture came at the expense of the nation. In turn this problematised BME organising and government action for race equality.

## Chapter 4 Parallel multiculture and multicultural overlaps

... we'd lost that initial agenda – the multiculturalism agenda – which essentially said people integrate better [and] quicker when they're afforded equality. Simple. Simple. We started to lose that agenda. The whole agenda then became about we're not British enough. And... it got steadily, steadily worse... (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

### 1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored accounts offered by policymakers and BME-led race equality organisations of the need to more evenly distribute opportunities and outcomes in the nation amongst BME and white people. Even in the first part of the New Labour period, this mood and the discourse surrounding it was not solely one way. Though New Labour recognised race inequality, their emphasis was largely focused on efforts to act against race discrimination rather than special positive measures for race equality. Furthermore, in their response to the CFMEB, New Labour demonstrated their resistance to discussions of race equality and multiculture which compromised or questioned the nation.

In this chapter I explore a second period under New Labour from 2001-2007 and three main moments within that time that set back the policy work for race equality and BME organising for it. The first of these moments was the so-called 'northern disturbances' – particularly those that took place in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham over the spring and summer in 2001. The disturbances were officially interpreted as signs of ethnic divisions caused by over-indulging multiculturalism. The second moment, which was taken by policymakers as confirmation of an organised ethnic minority 'problem' was the 'London bombings' on 7 July 2005. In this incident, over 50 people were killed on London transport at the hands of four bombers claiming Islam as their inspiration. The third moment covered in this chapter is the work undertaken by the government-appointed Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC) and its response to the concerns of policymakers about

the dangerous side of diversity and the growth of multiculture at the expense of common bonds.

This shifting discursive environment meant that BME-led race equality organisations and their leaders were concerned that the early promise of New Labour was at risk and that new understandings of the relationship between multiculture, collective life and equality were taking hold. The opening epigram in this chapter by Simon Woolley from OBV offered a formula whereby multiculturalism safeguarded action on race equality and in turn led to a more integrated society. However, Woolley argued that the virtuous circle had been broken and that policymakers had an alternative formula for integration which required BME people to conform to being 'more British' and less multicultural. In this reformulation, action on race inequality was increasingly precarious.

Shifts in government thinking about integration were informed by concerns about how BME and non-BME people lived with each other and, accordingly, I organise my analysis in this chapter around the themes of parallels and overlaps. The concept of 'parallel lives' stemmed from 'official' readings of the 'disturbances' in three northern towns in 2001 as triggered by and evidence of ethnically divided local communities. The policy prescription to avoid any repeat of the disorder was to ensure that communities were productively overlapping and cohesive. Before further exploring the related themes of parallels and overlaps, I begin this chapter with an examination of the importance of community as a concept that underpinned New Labour's ideas of living together and commitment to the collective.

## 2 Making community count

Community is a notoriously elusive concept that seems to defy precise definition or analysis (Alleyne, 2002a; Frazer, 1999). Community operates in different spaces – territorial, mental and social (Castells, 2004; Cohen, 1995; Keith and Pile, 1993) and is used to describe the clustering of people around specific identities and forms of collectivity (Alleyne, 2002a) – and even 'deep horizontal comradeship' (Anderson, 2006

[1983]). At the heart of community is some sort of relationship between individuals and a collective. Rousseau famously stated that optimal community was:

a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and the goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone and remain as free as before (1968: 60).

Rousseau's expression of ideal community valorises personal freedom and seeks to tie it to the 'common force'. However, this relationship is in tension and the interests of individuals or sub-groups may not be aligned with the 'whole common'. Indeed, community may contain the potential to create oppressive enclosure and the loss of freedom (Bauman, 2001; Frazer, 1999) and conversely may be collective in appearance only. A number of authors have argued that community, characterised by people seeking collectively to make good what they lack individually, based on inalienable rights, obligations and fraternal commitments, has largely disappeared (Bauman, 2001; Giddens, 2000), replaced instead by something that sets aside ethics, questions of redistribution and collectivity in favour of individualism. This opens the possibility that living amongst each other equates to contiguity and isolation rather than solidarity, mutuality and co-operation (Nisbet, 1993).

This idea of the death of community is not a new one. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ferdinand Tönnies (2001 [1887]) argued in the context of a modernising Germany that that the *Gemeinschaft* (community) of small town and village pre-industrial Europe was being supplanted by *Gesellschaft* (association or society) that came with industrialisation and was characterised by impersonal relations, contracts, bureaucracy and replaced the organic bonds of attachment of community. Marx, Durkheim and Weber also wrote about the advance of modernisation, capitalism, increased functional differentiation and alienation that transformed pre-industrial community into modern society (Giddens, 1971).

The contemporary re-emergence of community under New Labour (Frazer, 1999; Goes, 2004; Hale, 2004, 2006; Pearce and Margo, 2007; Pitcher, 2009) went against these ideas about de-collectivised modern societies. Instead, the party was drawn to aspects of community, including its fundamental ambiguities. As one author observed, 'the very attractiveness of community to policymakers lies in its ambiguous potential' (Schofield, 2002: 679-680).

While community was certainly elastic, its re-emergence was not purely pragmatic. It was, in part, a response and alternative to prevailing political conditions and concerns that the Thatcher and Reagan period had decisively and worryingly swung society towards individual and against collective interests. For example, the language of community was a rejoinder to Thatcher's more atomistic utterances such as when she argued that:

... there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour (Thatcher, 1987).

The passage above was part of a broader attack against reliance on government. Thatcher's emphasis was on individuals and narrow groupings of family and neighbours as self-help units. Despite the tightness of the togetherness advocated, Thatcher's vision of self-help was morally grounded and duty-bound. However, according to Powell (2000) the moralistic individualism of Thatcher and Reagan gave way to hedonistic individualism – where notions of self-reliance and self-sacrifice were displaced by amoral market-informed behaviour of self-gratification and wealth accumulation. In response to this, political philosophers including Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), Michael Sandel (1982, 1996) and Charles Taylor (1985) expressed concerns about the atomistic and hyper-individualistic nature of modern liberal societies and the resulting social consequences.

This group came to be labelled communitarians, though they did not necessarily think of themselves in these terms (Hale, 2004, 2006). At the centre of their thinking was a quarrel with a Rawlsian notion that government's main role was to provide individuals with the liberties and resources they needed to live freely (Frazer, 1999; Goes, 2004). For example, in his essay titled *Atomism*, Charles Taylor objected to a liberal view that people were 'self-sufficient outside of society' and instead argued for the locatedness of individuals (Taylor, 1985: 190).

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1993a, 1993b) helped to connect discussions of community and policy. Etzioni was a critic of unregulated free-market capitalism and government welfare provision, arguing that both undermined sites of community, such as family; localities; and polities.<sup>28</sup> Etzioni privileged the ties of community and called for 'moral and social order... carried by the community rather than the state' (1993: 160). In other words, collectivism was not bound up in statism and welfarism, but was instead carried through social bonds (Etzioni, 1993a).

New Labour may have drawn on Etzioni, who had become a figure of interest in British political circles (Hale, 2006), in locating themselves between individualism, the market and the state. In 1994 Blair argued that community was a response to a changing and precarious world:

Market forces cannot educate us or equip us for this world of rapid technological and economic change. We must do it together. We cannot buy your way to a safe society. We must work for it together. And we cannot purchase an option on whether we grow old. We must plan for it

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<sup>28</sup> By way of illustration, capitalism is associated with demands on employees that hamper parenting and the economic interest groups that influence and remove trust in politics. At the same time welfare rights require power to be relocated away from local communities in favour of centralised bureaucracy and provide a narrative of rights and entitlements that undermine individual, family and community obligations (Etzioni, 1993a).

together. We cannot protect the ordinary against the abuse of power by leaving them to it; we must protect each other. That is our insight, a belief in society, working together, solidarity, cooperation, partnership. These are our words. This is my socialism, and we should stop apologising for using the word. It is not the socialism of Marx or state control. It is rooted in a straightforward view of society, in the understanding that the individual does best in a strong and decent community of people with principles and standards and common aims and values. We are the party of the individual because we are the party of community. It is social-ism, and our task is to apply those values to the modern world (Blair, 1994).

Blair refuted Thatcher's denial of the existence of society by explicitly stating his belief in it. However, while he used un-Thatcherite terms, such as 'solidarity', he was as keen as Conservatives to distance himself from state control as a site of the collective. Blair argued that he was on the side of freedom, but that individuals could only thrive in the context of community. These ideas of community were developed in a wide-ranging speech entitled *Values and the Power of Community*:

What are the values [to resolve conflicts between old and new, modernisers and traditionalists]? For me, they are best expressed in a modern idea of community. At the heart of it is the belief in the equal worth of all – the central belief that drives my politics – and in our mutual responsibility in creating a society that advances such equal worth... The idea of community resolves the paradox of the modern world: it acknowledges our interdependence; it recognises our individual worth (Blair, 2000c).

Blair claimed that community resolved the contemporary dilemma of the conflicts between independence and interdependence. Blair stated that he was speaking about the 'modern' idea of community and its newness gave him permission to endow it with

qualities that he valorised. Blair's politics of community was therefore a classic piece of 'third way' logic (Giddens, 2000; Hale et al., 2004) that rejected 'false choices' (Dionne, 1992) between left and right – in this case collectivism and individualism, respectively. However, drawing on the previous passage from his 1994 speech, it was evident that the reconciling of the individual and the collective relied on common principles, standards, aims and 'good citizens'. In the absence of 'good' citizenship, the house of cards that was community could come toppling down.

This requirement that individuals behave in ways that supported collective life was a driver behind New Labour's interest in citizenship. I do not intend to dwell on the topic here because I return to the theme of New Labour and citizenship in more detail in the next chapter. However, it is important to note that, in this second part of the New Labour period, David Blunkett, especially during his time as Home Secretary between 2001 and 2004, was developing a programme of work that encouraged citizens to connect with each other and to the state as part of endeavours to promote 'active communities'.<sup>29</sup>

Blunkett's philosophy behind this work was captured in his book called *Renewing Democracy and Civil Society* (Blunkett, 2001). His vision was for a brand of community not where 'anything goes' but where the emphasis was on 'the difference between right and wrong' (Blunkett, 2001: 112). Blunkett called for a 'revitalised' public political culture; and outlined a number of key elements to achieve this including the need to 'improve political literacy, social and moral responsibility and community involvement amongst the adult population through citizenship education...' (2001: 137-138). Blunkett was therefore

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<sup>29</sup> According to the now archived government glossary of terms used on Department for Communities and Local Government websites, active communities were defined as: 'communities in which citizens are empowered to lead self determined fulfilled lives, and in which everyone regardless of age, race or social background has a sense of belonging and a stake in society' (National Archives, undated).

interested in a version of political Communitarianism. As Nick Pearce, former advisor to Blunkett, explained:

... I think his [Blunkett's] view on the community was that, you know, whatever your background it was important to be an active citizen. And that strong communities had people in them that engaged in the self-government of that community... it's a Communitarianism that privileges political engagement (Nick Pearce, 2011, Interview).

The version of community that Blunkett had in mind was the local community, rather than Blair's meta-term to cover all collective life. Blunkett's localities were to be governed, within the confines of a moral framework, by active citizens pursuing 'common interests'. While strong communities and active citizens appeared to be incontrovertible goods, the expectation of community involvement could be a burden.

[The] New Deal for Communities [regeneration scheme], like the Conservative government's Single Regeneration Budget, required poor communities to compete for limited resources, while the 'rights and responsibilities' theme deliberately made new funding for neighbourhoods conditional on community involvement (Levitas, 2005: 199).

Levitas identified a tyrannical strand in community involvement and the way that it could be imposed on the most stressed and poorest communities. This meant that David Blunkett's call for an expansion of mutual and community associations based on 'overlapping networks of participation and common interest' (2001: 139) had different implications around Britain and could particularly exert further pressure on 'problem' communities.

The government's concern about the decline of associational life and an interest in its revival was closely connected with the work of Harvard Professor Robert Putnam. Social capital, like the term community, was slippery and had heuristic properties that helped to name and account for a certain sense of disconnectedness in modern society. Putnam defined social capital as 'features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (1995: 67). Social capital could be put to 'work' and it had the qualities of a resource (Tonkiss, 2000: 84) that individuals and groups could use (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119) to achieve certain goals (Coleman, 1988: 598).

Putnam claimed that social capital made everyday life better and easier: allowing citizens to resolve collective problems; reducing the costs of everyday business and social transactions; encouraging a sense of interdependence and shared fate amongst people; as well as being psychologically and biologically good for people (Putnam, 2000: 288-290). Most importantly, 'high' levels of social capital, signalled by 'civic engagement and social connectedness' contributed to 'better schools, faster economic development, lower crime, and more effective government'<sup>30</sup> (Putnam, 1995: 66-67). Putnam (1995, 2000) also argued that social capital in the United States was in decline, exemplified by the reduction in the number of people involved in team bowling leagues in the United States and the rise in numbers of people 'bowling alone'.

Putnam was the highest profile social scientist in the world at the turn of the millennium and he was sought out by policymakers including New Labour (Hunt, 2001) for whom Putnam's ideas usefully tied citizenship, civic renewal and welfare reform together with 'softer packaging' (Arneil, 2007: 42). New Labour and Putnam were a good fit in other

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<sup>30</sup> Similarly, according to David Halpern 'communities with a good 'stock' of such 'social capital' are more likely to benefit from lower crime figures, better health, higher educational achievement, and better economic growth' (Halpern, 2009).

ways. Although the party was fascinated with what was modern much of their newness was based on contemporary reboots of old notions, such as rights and duties, the family and community (Brown, 2000 cited in Wilson, 2001). Putnam's work on social capital was similarly orientated on revival and restoration of civic life in ways that were consistent with New Labour's ideas on renewal.

Despite the policy appetite for Putnam's work, his understanding of social capital has been subject to numerous criticisms. Putnam's view of valid 'civic engagement and social connectedness' was nostalgic (Fine and International Initiative for Promoting Political Economy, 2010; Talbot, 2000), for example pointing as it did to television as one of main causes of the decline in associational life. Similarly, for Theda Skocpol, Putnam's work failed to take note of the changing shape of associational life. She also argued that Putnam's view of civic life was too narrow and that it over-emphasised local groups and associations as its centrepiece. Skocpol suggested that 'American civic voluntarism was never predominantly local and never flourished apart from national government and politics' (Skocpol, 2003: 12).

Nevertheless Putnam's brand of social capital, with its focus on local associational life, civic responsibility and good citizenship could be seen to be influential in New Labour circles. For example, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown wrote that

Voluntary action is a form of active citizenship, of active engagement in the society in which we live. By participating in our community, we learn about the world beyond our front doors and garden gates, and our citizenship is stronger as a result. It is our own constructive contribution to the forging of good social relations and the rich civic society on which we all depend. And it is a contribution that the state cannot make in our place (Brown, 2000, cited in Wilson, 2001: 25).

A variety of associational concepts – voluntary action; citizenship; engagement; and civic society – were co-located by Brown and credited with making life liveable. The community was painted in idyllic everyday terms – a place of ‘front doors’ and ‘garden gates’ and ‘good social relations’. Drawing on the ‘folksy’ side of social capital, Brown lauded the benefits of voluntary action as a gateway to engaging with and understanding the outside world and an input into making that world better. Community engagement was not just educational or practical, as was revealed in a speech to a leading voluntary sector organisation:<sup>31</sup>

Your efforts represent society at work, compassion in action, community at its best – as someone once said, making the word neighbour not just a geographical term but an ethical term as well (Brown, 2000).

Here Brown used community in a different, more grounded way to Blair, more in line with Blunkett, tying it to local geography. However, like the Prime Minister he positioned it as an (old-fashioned) virtue that encapsulated and required what one author has described as ‘public-spiritedness sacrifice for the community...’ (Powell, 2000: 95). Community and associational life was therefore central to New Labour’s understanding and explanation of the modern world and to the new settlement that the party sought between the individual, the market and the state. For the New Labour formula to work community had to work. It is in this context that apparent breakdowns in community life witnessed in the ‘northern disturbances’ need to be assessed.

### 3 The northern ‘disturbances’ and parallel living

The so-called ‘northern disturbances’ occurred over the spring and summer of 2001 mainly centred in Bradford (15 April 2001 and 7-10 July 2001); Oldham (26-29 May 2001);

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<sup>31</sup> The speech was given to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) a leading umbrella organisation with thousands of members in the voluntary and community sector.

and Burnley (24-26 June 2001) alongside some lesser disturbances in Leeds and Stoke-on-Trent (Home Office, 2001).

The Bradford disturbances attracted significant attention for a number of reasons.

Bradford had been one place where public burning of Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* had taken place in 1989 (Finney and Simpson, 2009; Solomos, 2003) and it had also been the location of unrest in 1995. In 2001, there was disorder in April (commencing the series of events known as the 'northern disturbances'). There were further problems in Bradford in July. The July disturbances were particularly serious and led to injuries sustained by over 300 people – around three times the level in any of the other areas involved (Home Office, 2001: 7) and also included the burning down of the Oak Lane BMW garage (Wainwright, 2001). Christopher Allen described the events in July in the following terms:

As with other areas where disturbances occurred, far-right and neo-Nazi organisations were active. Despite having a march by the National Front (NF) banned on the day of the disturbances, many witnesses identified large groups in Bradford city centre. Tensions between police, Asian-Muslim groups and neo-Nazi groups led to confrontation between them. The violence escalated: the cumulative effect being the evening's disturbances. 400-500 Asian-Muslim youths fought pitched battles with police in the suburb of Manningham (Allen, 2003: 7).

A critical factor in the Bradford disturbances was outside agitation from racists from the National Front and neo-Nazis and such activity was also evident in the disturbances in Oldham (Solomos, 2003).

The events in Oldham resulted in less violence and damage than those in Bradford. Yet the disturbances and the explanations of them also illuminated the micro-politics of local space. As with the other sites of the 2001 disturbances there were claims and counter

claims about the sources of local tensions. The (slow-acting) catalyst appeared to be the violent attack by a group of young Asian males on 75 year old white pensioner Walter Chamberlain on 21 April 2001 – more than a month before the disorder. Chamberlain was attacked on an access road through an industrial estate towards the mainly white part of town where he lived (Vasagar and Ward, 2001). Perhaps as a ‘two-fingered’ response to the Macpherson report the police treated the attack as racially motivated and the National Front and British National Party<sup>32</sup> sought to racialise the attack (Alexander, 2004), even though Chamberlain's son expressed the view of the family that it was an assault rather than a race issue (Vasagar and Ward, 2001). Months later, in September 2001, when a 14 year old boy was convicted of the assault, the presiding judge stated that ‘I am quite satisfied there is no evidence here by which a jury could come to the conclusion that the crimes were motivated by race’ (cited in Carter, 2001).

The reality was that the role of race in this crime was not altogether clear. It may have been possible that if Chamberlain was elderly Asian man that he would not have been attacked by these young Asian men. However, if the crime was not racially motivated, then it took place in a highly racialised context in which the assault on Chamberlain could have just as easily have been an attack elsewhere in Oldham on a 75 year old Asian by young white males.

What was certain was that, as was the case in Bradford, the National Front (NF) and British National Party (BNP) had been fomenting problems in Oldham as Chief Superintendent Eric Hewitt, Head of the Oldham division of Greater Manchester Police, acknowledged when he said:

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<sup>32</sup> The British National Party had been active in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham ahead of the various disturbances. Nick Griffin the leader of the British National Party had been speaking in Bradford to supporters the night before the summer disturbances in Bradford (Allen, 2010).

There is no doubt the presence of the NF and BNP in recent weeks would seem to be a deliberate ploy to exploit our racial situation and it has since struck a chord of fear among our communities, not just Asian (cited in Stokes, 2001).

Hewitt labelled the NF and BNP as outsiders instilling fear into the lives of insiders in 'our communities'. Despite the activities of external agitators the prevailing idea was of Oldham as a place with what the Superintendent called a 'racial situation' that was exploited by outside racists but not caused by them. Instead the attack on Walter Chamberlain and the disorder that followed was taken to be a consequence of community 'no-go zones' (Vasagar and Ward, 2001).

A series of local and national reviews into the disturbances were established, including an interdepartmental ministerial group announced by Home Secretary David Blunkett in July 2001. The group was to be chaired by John Denham, the Minister of State with responsibility for crime reduction, policing and community safety. The selection of Denham, given his portfolio, reflected one strand of New Labour's thinking that the disturbances were a breakdown of law and order. For example, Tony Blair described the actions as 'thuggery' and that those involved had ended up 'destroying their own community' (cited in Wainwright, 2001).<sup>33</sup> David Blunkett also spoke in July 2001 about the law and order aspect to what went on in Bradford:

... what took place in the Manningham district [of Bradford] was sheer mindless violence and therefore people acting in a totally anti-social and thuggish fashion, rather than some inherent cause through disadvantage that we need to address (cited in Bagguley and Hussain, 2008: 61).

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<sup>33</sup> The latter comment perhaps betrayed Blair's middle class bafflement of how anyone would do such a thing to the place that they lived, ignoring the fact that not everyone liked the area in which they lived.

In expressing such sentiments, Blunkett imposed a conservative interpretation of civil disorder as needless and without purpose, similar to the way that Conservative Home Secretary Douglas Hurd had interpreted the civil disorder in 1985 in Brixton and Tottenham<sup>34</sup> (Benyon, 1987).

In foregrounding law and order, Blunkett turned attention away from questions of race inequality and injustice. However, race was an important factor when it came to blaming and punishing those involved in disturbances. This can be seen in the harsh sentencing that was doled out to Asian-Muslims involved in the disturbances in Manningham, Bradford as compared to those found guilty of similar offences on Bradford's mainly white Ravenscliffe Estate.

Whilst those involved in the Manningham disturbances of Asian-Muslim descent have received average sentences of four and a half years, at Ravenscliffe, those [mostly white people] convicted of their involvement in the disturbances have been sentenced to an average sentence of not more than two years (Allen, 2003: 41).

The discrepancy in sentencing was intriguing. Participants in the disorder in Manningham were charged with riot and those in Ravenscliffe were charged with violent disorder (Allen, 2003), which accounted for the sentencing discrepancy. The decision to differentiate between the two areas was a 'political' one that could be seen as a signal that Asians were seen as the central problem in the community and that those convicted

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Hurd spoke the mindless excitement of breaking the law and causing disorder when he said that

The excitement of forming and belonging to a mob, the evident excitement of violence leading to fears on crimes that we have seen reported and the greed that leads to looting... to explain all those things in terms of deprivation and suffering is to ignore some basic and ugly facts about human nature (Hurd, 1985 cited in Benyon, 1987: 30).

needed to be given tough sentences – both in order to punish them and to deter others from similar action.

Whereas the government's first response (as illustrated by Blunkett above) dismissed any legitimate structural or racist causes of the disturbances, it also eschewed culturalist explanations of the disturbances and even downplayed the idea of communities divided along cultural lines. The emphasis was placed on thuggery plain and simple. However, in parliament David Blunkett framed the investigation into the disorder in broader terms than criminality alone.

As we share a common citizenship, we have to find ways of working and living together in harmony. Our aim is to create an inclusive society, local communities which meet the needs of all groups, and a dialogue which transcends differences (Hansard, 2001).

This was, on the one hand, a more considered and even emollient liberal response (Benyon, 1987) to disorder, compared to the original conservative dismissal of events as 'thuggery'. The passage above stepped out of a law and order framework and into a social one, emphasising the need to live with and overcome differences and to include marginalised people. It even offered the possibility that the issue of race inequality might be attended to. The analysis recognised the existence of exclusions and group tensions and hinted at the connection between the two. This new framework made a break from concerns about policy-community relations that had been central to policymaker interpretations of unrest in the 1980s and 1990s (Solomos, 2003). In doing so, it also opened up and encouraged the notion that localities were divided on ethnic and cultural lines and set up BME populations and organisations for scrutiny and suspicion for their roles in damaging community.

### 3.1 Towards parallel lives

The discursive notion of separate ethnic lives was given initial shape by the first of three independent local reviews on the main areas affected by the disturbances. A Bradford review (Ouseley, 2001) was led by Herman Ouseley, the former Executive Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, and was commissioned before the 2001 disturbances began. The review was entitled *Community Pride not Prejudice* and it highlighted some local tensions between ethnic groups that came to define the disorder. Ouseley laid the ground for the discourse of parallel lives (see below) when he stated that:

... different ethnic groups are increasingly segregating themselves from each other and retreating into "comfort zones" made up of people like themselves. They only connect with each other on those occasions when they cannot avoid each other... (Ouseley, 2001: 16)

Ouseley presented ethnic differences as significant and as the basis of segregation and conflict. Furthermore the cause of the segregation was not outside the control of local people, unlike racist housing policies. This was their choice. This discourse of self-segregation argued that both whites and non-whites preferred the company of their 'own' rather than to stretch themselves and to make the effort to extend their social networks. In the context of government's interest in active communities and citizenship, the population of Bradford were inactive citizens whose anti-engagement instincts resulted in fragmented communities. As the first of the various reports on the northern towns to be published, *Community Pride not Prejudice* established discursive ideas of communities separated along ethnic lines in the policy sphere.

The group producing a report into the events in Burnley (Burnley Task Force, 2001) was chaired by Tony Clarke and the corresponding team for Oldham was chaired by David Ritchie (Oldham Independent Review, 2001). Once again, the main discursive theme that emerged from these reports was the idea of people living in contiguity but without (cross-ethnic) solidarity. Specifically, it was argued that people lived in separate areas in

neighbourhoods according to ethnicity and that other potentially cross-ethnic experiences, such as work, school and places of worship, were also monocultural rather than multicultural. The Clarke report on Burnley used the phrase 'parallel lives' (Burnley Task Force, 2001: 7) to describe what the Task Force saw as the separate and segregated lives of Asian and White communities.

These three local reports were supplemented by a Community Cohesion Review Team appointed by David Blunkett to take a multi-local view and to develop some national policy implications to prevent a repeat of the northern disturbances. The team was tasked to seek out the views of local residents and community leaders in the towns affected by the disturbances, as well as other parts of England that had not been affected, such as Southall, Birmingham and Sheffield. The remit of the review team was to 'identify good practice, key policy issues and new and innovative thinking in the field of community cohesion' (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001: 5). This review provided local colour and was in line with the government's expressed interest in evidence-based policymaking (Cabinet Office, 1999; Wells, 2007). Ted Cantle, formerly the Chief Executive of Nottingham City Council, was appointed by the Home Secretary to Chair the review team (Ted Cantle's Website, 2012).

The review team concurred with the Bradford, Burnley and Oldham reports and in particular it memorably used, or re-used, the phrase found in the Burnley report about 'parallel lives'.

Whilst the physical segregation of housing estates and inner city areas came as no surprise, the team was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation of our towns and cities. The extent to which these physical divisions were compounded by so many other aspects of our daily lives, was very evident. Separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, means that many communities operate on the basis of

a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001: 9).

According to the Community Cohesion Review Team, separate living arrangements characterised lives that did not touch at any point. Because the basis of separation was ethnicity and culture and issues of community (Bauman, 1996) the divide was deemed to be deeper than issues of physical separation. The report contrasted the desired state of overlapping and interchanging lives with the situation of parallel ones, so fixing in place the central discourse of multiculture and collective life of this second part of the New Labour period. Cantle's team emphasised and reified the existence of two sides: south Asians and white people. Although blame was not attached explicitly to one side or the other for the lack of interchange the narrative of separate education, language and networks invited criticism of the 'newcomer' Asians who had failed to integrate into the mainstream local white communities (Alexander, 2004). Furthermore, the 'common sense' operating logic was that 'cultural networks' only really applied to BME people who were defined by culture and not white people (Sveinsson, 2009); and it was therefore these closed cultural communities that were the parallel in parallel lives.

The idea, problem and power of a discourse of 'parallel lives' was tied to the work undertaken by Robert Putnam on community and social capital (cited above). Putnam's discussion of social capital distinguished between bonding and bridging types, where the former was more inward-looking, tending towards reinforcing homogeneous groups whereas the latter could be more outward-looking and inclusive of greater diversity.

Bonding capital is good for under-girding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity... Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion.... Moreover, bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves.... Bonding

social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40 (Putnam, 2000: 22-23).

Though Putnam did not explicitly label bonding social capital 'bad' and bridging social capital 'good', extending his superglue-WD-40 analogy, the former could result in society getting stuck whereas bridging social capital acted as a social lubricant. Putnam's later work (2007) also argued that in more ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, people trusted each other less, were less altruistic, and had fewer friends. In other words, they tended to 'hunker down' (Putnam, 2007: 137). Although this latter piece of work came after the Cantle report, Putnam's earlier ideas of bridging versus bonding should be seen as informing the Cantle report (McGhee, 2003) and the broader idea of ethnic groups living in parallel. The interdepartmental ministerial group led by John Denham accepted the parallel lives hypothesis and viewed it as associated with, if not a cause of, the disturbances. The Denham report argued that 'in many areas affected by disorder or community tensions, there is little interchange between members of different racial, cultural and religious communities' (Home Office, 2001: introduction).

Publication of this report could be said to be the moment that Simon Woolley referred to in this chapter's opening epigram, marking the loss of the 'multiculturalism agenda'. While, for Woolley, this was a source of regret, this was not the case for others. For Kundnani (2002), the policy imperative behind parallel lives and community cohesion was to find an alternative framework to contain and cage Asian people as effectively as multiculturalism once had.

Before turning in more detail to community cohesion as a policy response to parallel lives it is worth pausing to reflect on the way that and extent to which, post-northern disturbances and post-9/11, this agenda was about Muslims as well as Asians and the wider BME population.

Much of the official and race equality commentary on the northern disturbances used the both the terms Asians and Muslims to refer to people in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham with Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds. However, the issue of Muslims was to the fore after the northern disturbances as the executive summary of the Cantle report made clear:

A Muslim of Pakistani origin summed this up:

'When I leave this meeting with you I will go home and not see another white face until I come back here next week'

Similarly, a young man from a white council estate said:

'I never met anyone on this estate who wasn't like us from around here'.

(Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001: 9)

The Asian man was defined both by religion (Muslim) and national origin (Pakistani) – even though he was likely to be a British citizen. By contrast, the white man did not need to be assigned a religion because that was deemed not to be an active variable in explaining him. His national origin also needed no mention because unlike his Asian counterpart he was self-evidently British. What was important was his class, signalled by the fact that he lived on a council housing estate and was therefore both white and disadvantaged (Denham, 2010; Kelly and Byrne, 2007; Sveinsson, 2009).

Muslims had already been established as specific figures of concern in British life long before the northern disturbances. This phenomenon can be traced back to the controversy over Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) in which Rushdie was accused of blasphemy. In January 1989 a staged book-burning took place in Bradford and there were demonstrations against the book in Pakistan and other Muslim countries. In February 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwā against Rushdie (Solomos, 2003). The affair further encouraged debates about the multiple nature of the category BME (Hall, 1991b, 1992a; Modood, 1988, 1992) and also led to tensions on the left about appropriate

responses. One approach was to protect Muslims as a minority, and in this spirit Labour MPs Bernie Grant and Keith Vaz argued for an extension of the blasphemy laws to cover Islam. Others on the left supported the right to criticise religion and were anxious about the political goals of religious groupings (Solomos, 2003).

This 'Muslim question' was given national shape through military interventions in the Gulf War in 1990-1991 and continued into the New Labour period with the war in Afghanistan in 2001; as well as the war in Iraq in 2003. According to John Solomos these types of events

... provided a stark reminder, if any were needed, of how the question of national identity had become inextricably linked to the politics of race. Perhaps the main social impact of the Gulf War, especially when taken together with the Rushdie affair, was to enhance the idea that there was some kind of unitary Muslim community in Britain that could pose a threat to national identity (Solomos, 2003: 215).

The critical point being made here by Solomos was that the Muslim community was seen as some kind of unified threat to Britishness and the British way of life. This idea of an imagined unified Muslim threat was particularly embodied in young men, as identified and criticised in Claire Alexander's work on 'Asian gangs' (Alexander, 1998, 2000, 2004). This concern about young Asian men informed subsequent interpretations of the northern disturbances and sentencing policy for participants in the disorder (Allen, 2003). In addition, the Cantle and Denham reports were finalised after the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington DC, and as such the category of Muslim was gaining policy currency over the more traditional classification of (south) Asian and policymakers such as David Blunkett connected Islam to different and dangerous 'norms' in conflict with and outside 'British norms of acceptability' (cited in Brown, 2001).

In this way, the ‘Muslim problem’ was, in the mind of policymakers, different and more unified than the more generalised anxiety about BME people as a whole (Allen, 2010). However, I would also argue that alongside the specificities of this anti-Islamic turn, it is also important to understand the link between this and broader policymaker anxieties about multiculturalism. I see the discourses about a Muslim threat as a distinct thread within a wider process of what the CFMEB identified as ‘deep-rooted antagonisms to racial and cultural difference’ (Runnymede Trust, 2000: 38). Furthermore, the response to this idea of Muslim separateness influenced and had important implications for the broader work of BME-led race equality organisations and organising (Alexander et al., 2013).

### 3.2 Cohesive communities

The policy response to parallel lives (Cantle, 2001; Home Office, 2001) was cohesive communities. ‘Community cohesion’ contained four main elements, each of which responded in some way to the problem of parallel lives. The four elements were: a common vision and a sense of belonging to the local area; appreciation and valuing the diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances; similar life opportunities for people of different backgrounds; and people from different backgrounds and circumstances developing strong and positive relationships (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001: 13; Local Government Association, 2002: 6; Local Government Association, 2004: 7).

Community cohesion expressed in these terms referred to a set of outcomes where multiculturalism and wider collective life was aligned and where lives were lived not in parallel but in productive overlap. However, community cohesion was full of contradiction as Claire Alexander noted.

One of the biggest ironies of the ‘community cohesion’ agenda is that it creates the idea of minority ethnic communities at the same time as it demands their disappearance, and that it fixes ethnic identity within

these community boundaries while demanding it move outside of them (Alexander, 2007: 124-5).

The tension in the community cohesion debate meant that it was a simultaneously 'retreat to multiculturalism' (Brighton, 2007: 3) as well as it was an attempt to escape it. A step in the latter direction was taken in 2004 when Tom Baldwin (TB) from The Times interviewed Trevor Phillips (TP), then Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality. Phillips said the following about multiculturalism:

TP: "The word [multiculturalism] is not useful, it means the wrong things."

TB: [Journalist asks] Shall we kill it off?

TP: "Yes, let's do that," he replies. "Multiculturalism suggests separateness. We are in a different world from the Seventies.

"What we should be talking about is how we reach an integrated society... But I also think people should be allowed to be a bit different. It's a good thing that people are different in Yorkshire than they are in Cornwall" (Baldwin, 2004).

In response to a question on whether multiculturalism should be killed off, Phillips answered in the affirmative. In the context of the northern disturbances and community cohesion, the aim was integration; and multiculturalism was about disintegration. Difference would have to be curtailed to the non-threatening regional variety as, in theory, such affinities were non-racial and transferable. That is one could acquire Cornishness or Yorkshiresness, but one could not attain another ethnicity. However, it was interesting that Phillips chose two very white identities (Cornishness and Yorkshiresness) that were difficult, if not impossible, for BME people or even non-BME 'outsiders' to fully attain. This point revealed how community cohesion was not about the openness or

closed nature of identities but specifically about the problem of ethnicity as a site of affinity and allegiance.

Community cohesion, by questioning the place of minority ethnicity in society, also heralded a move away from concerns of race equality and from BME-led organising for it. This shift was not explicit in the definition of community cohesion as it emphasised valuing diversity and similar life opportunities for people of different backgrounds as well as strong and positive relationships across backgrounds (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001; Local Government Association, 2002; Local Government Association, 2004). Conceptually, it was not clear how each of the elements of community cohesion related to one another in policy terms; what, if any, were the causal links between the dimensions; and where equality stood in the list of priorities. According to Ted Cantle, the elements of community cohesion were interdependent and that it was a case of all or nothing:

SL: Maybe, given that... community cohesion is a multi-stranded concept and has different ideas of common vision, belonging, opportunities and so on; I just wonder if you could say something about how those different strands interact. For example, are they independent variables, are they dependent, are they sequential?

Ted Cantle: No, I think it's very important that they are all done together. I mean, that's the whole point of it really... In my view you can't have a cohesive society unless you're also addressing grievances and inequality... You can't have cohesion without some form of interaction and connection between people... And, similarly, a sense of belonging is only going to be achieved if people feel that a part of the community, a stake in the community... It's always been clear to me and to all the definitions that all the different aspects of cohesion have to be done as part of the same process. They're absolutely inextricably linked (Ted Cantle, 2011, Interview).

Therefore, for Cantle, each of the elements of community cohesion was directly or indirectly a response to the problem of parallel lives and contributed to the promotion of overlapping lives. The emphasis was on more belonging, more equality and more interaction in the community all happening at once and with each element contingent on the others. This was also a rejection of a 'race equality first' approach that had been advanced by some BME-led race equality actors that 'people integrate better [and] quicker when they're afforded equality' (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview). Now there was a simultaneous exchange that was required where BME people could expect advances in race equality but only if they were also themselves taking steps to integrate with and belong to the community. Race equality was now officially a contingent good.

However, whilst discussions of community cohesion and parallel lives were widespread, it was poorly suited to practical policy implementation, as Nick Pearce, former Special Advisor to David Blunkett and former Head of the Number 10 Policy Unit, argued:

I mean my own view about the community cohesion side of things is that I don't believe that really had depth and kind of traction in government. You know, I think John Denham's group around government tried to do its best to pull together a response but it struggled to get traction with number 10 and the different departments (Nick Pearce, 2011, Interview).

According to Pearce community cohesion was a policy idea without policy 'traction'. Its conceptual circularity made it unclear what was to be done about it. However, though the link between community cohesion and practical policy was weak, that did not mean that the community cohesion debate did not have an effect. In particular, discussions of community cohesion mediated and problematised those of race inequality, multiculturalism and multiculturalism and as such had a profound impact on the work and the workings of BME-led race equality organisations (see chapter six for further discussion).

### 3.3 Cohesion and (race) equality

Parallel lives and community cohesion were built on a notion of population segregation that was highly questionable. For example, using 2001 Census data, Finney and Simpson acknowledged that the BME population of Bradford clustered in particular parts of the district but argued that there were other developments across the area as a whole including more 'mixed' wards and 'White arrival' into predominantly BME areas of Bradford (Finney and Simpson, 2009: 123). The implication was that multiculture was not associated with physical separation of people along ethnic lines. Rather, in the main, it was associated with greater mixing. Elsewhere, Danny Dorling (2005) argued that Britain was not segregated along ethnic or faith lines but was at risk of segregation by wealth and poverty. Despite these arguments, the proximity of white people and Asian people was not in itself proof of harmonious mixing. As such it was hard to refute ideas of ethnic segregation at the heart of the parallel lives hypothesis and parallel lives appeared to have discursive 'traction'.

It was significant that in many cases race equality actors did not contest arguments about segregation and parallel lives. In part this was because their work was predicated on the distinctiveness of the BME experience of race inequality and arguments that BME people were being forced through racism to live peripheral lives. Both ideas were consistent with notions of parallels. Instead of arguing against segregation race equality actors attempted to make sense of why physical separateness occurred and to ensure that BME people were not blamed for it.

In the first instance, the usual suspect of racism was held responsible for the lack of overlap between BME and white people. Some authors argued that various reports of segregation over-emphasised the 'choice' of Asians to self-segregate and at the same time to correspondingly de-emphasise the importance of 'white flight' from areas and to ignore the role of local government racist housing policy in balkanising northern mill towns (Amin, 2002; Kundnani, 2001). For example, a typical rejoinder took the form: '[i]t is not

Black communities that do not want to be part of cohesive communities or to be integrated; rather they have been segregated by racism' (1990 Trust, 2005: 31).

A 2001 BTEG press release attacked David Blunkett for seeking to shift blame for the disturbances onto BME communities.

... the Home Secretary has deflected attention away from racism and the real causes behind the civil uprisings. In doing so, he is blaming the victims of racism and discrimination for a wide range of socio-economic problems that successive governments have failed to address (BTEG, 2001: 1).

BTEG argued that racism and discrimination were the guilty parties and the root cause of the disturbances aided and abetted by the complacency of governments. BME people were innocent victims – playing to an idea of this grouping as blameless and deserving justice. Elsewhere in the same press release Jeremy Crook, in order to counter attempts to blame BME people for the northern disturbances, attempted to re-invoke the earlier idea of institutional racism by saying: '... let's start by talking about the failure of government policy to tackle institutional racism in housing, education, jobs and politics' (BTEG, 2001).

Given the injustice facing BME people, BTEG adopted a radical view of the collective violence (Benyon, 1987) and portrayed the actions of people in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham as 'civil uprisings' (BTEG, 2001) rather than disorder, disturbances or riots. OBV's Simon Woolley made a comparable point about the emancipatory impulses behind the disturbances.

You know, it's the ten year anniversary just recently of the Bradford riots and anybody that... would want to dig around in it would clearly recognise that it was the BNP that started all that you know coming into the areas and causing trouble. And all you had was second-generation Muslims

saying 'hang on a second, we're gonna fight back'. You know. That happened in Leicester in the 70s. You know it's happened when communities start defending themselves. It was articulated as anti-British antidemocratic and black people that were failing to integrate. That's how it was presented and everything else there then followed that... (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

These disturbances were framed as justified acts of resistance rather than the interpretation of mindless or separatist violence that the government insisted upon. Bradford was a legitimate 'fight back' from the local community and an act of self-defence – led by British-born Muslims responding to provocations from British National Party activists. In addition, Woolley suggested that these acts should not be viewed as signs of anti-Britishness. Rather, the implication was that BME people were fighting from within for a safe space inside and as part of the nation. This had echoes of the claim from Ash Amin that those young Asians involved in the disturbances were 'a counterpublic with distinctive citizenship claims' (2002: 964). In other words, they were actively claiming citizenship rather than renouncing it.

Elsewhere, ROTA criticised the way that community cohesion identified BME people and citizens as a problem in society. The passage below came from ROTA's response to Guidance on community cohesion produced by the Local Government Association:

Unfortunately the Guidance focuses on mainly Black and Minority Ethnic and Youth interests. Older people, disabled people, gay and lesbian people, single parents and many others barely feature, if at all. This Guidance is evidence of a missed opportunity to deliver a tool to help bring about cohesion within communities, with and for everybody (ROTA and Urban Forum, 2002: 2-3).

ROTA had essentially found out policymakers. Though community cohesion was supposed to be about whole communities the fixation with BME people clearly indicated otherwise. It was BME people that were deemed barriers to cohesion. By extension this pattern of blame and pathologising was consistent with the idea that, after the northern disturbances, policy and policymakers appeared to be moving (back) to ideas of normatively desirable whiteness (Burnett, 2004; Hall, 2000) which placed the responsibility of the challenges of multicultural living with ethnic minorities and presumed that the white British population was unproblematic (Robinson, 2005).

However, though these counter-narratives of racism and action against racism as the causes of segregation and the disturbances offered by BME-led race equality organisations had a ring of truth they were also politically self-serving. For these organisations such arguments were a means of avoiding a new and uncomfortable landscape of resistance to racism that the northern disturbances represented. After years focussed on secular, metropolitan, 'black'-led anti-racist work, the events of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham represented something new and specifically a young, male, Asian, Muslim and small town response to race inequality. This was a form of anti-racist parallel politics and one that was de-stabilising for 'conventional' BME-led race equality organisations.

One response from BME-led race equality organisations as illustrated by BTEG and OBV above was to insist that though the modalities of the 'uprisings' may have been different they were familiar black-led political responses to racism. In other words the Asian Muslim 'counterpublic' were a continuation of a familiar pattern, rather than one that broke the mould. However, that was an over-simplistic response and another option was to simultaneously say that there were familiar elements of oppression and resistance as well as new dimensions. Leroy Richards, former Head of policy at ROTA, tried to explain the drivers behind BME population clustering:

[i]ndividuals from the same ethnic group often choose to live together for support and cultural reasons.<sup>35</sup> This does help these groups to become more effective at creating environments that maximise their potential success within the society they live. Therefore it is important that the Government understands why segregation persists in some geographical areas' (Richards, 2004: 10).

Richards offered a structural reason for BME population clustering as a coping response against racism and disadvantage. He also provided another reason under the catch-all category of 'cultural reasons'. In doing so he was attempting to engage with something that appeared to be different and new about the northern disturbances. The problem was that ROTA, OBV and BTEG, like the government themselves did not really understand what was going on in those northern towns at the time of the disorder or the implication for conventional BME-led race equality work. In the passage above ROTA engaged with the idea of 'culture', whereas other BME-led race equality organisations chose to ignore it. However, in doing so they fell into another trap of suggesting that Asian people were somehow culturally programmed, borrowing Putnam's phrase, to focus on their 'narrower selves' (2000: 23) and therefore to segregate themselves from others in their locality. This conundrum about how to consider and promote race equality and collective life against a shifting backdrop became still further complicated when the peculiarities of faith and ethnicity in the north of England burst onto the streets of London in 2005.

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<sup>35</sup> Finney and Simpson also argued that one often-ignored factor behind population distribution was that '[s]mall preferences for sharing a neighbourhood with at least some of one's own ethnicity could account for significant degrees of ethnic clustering' (2009: 118). In other words BME people may have had relatively weak and benign BME preferences for living together with other similar people, e.g. for shared worship, and this may have led to population clustering that was inherently problematic or evidence of parallel living.

## 4 Unparalleled problems: The London Bombings

In Singapore on Wednesday 6 July 2005, Jacques Rogge President of the International Olympic Committee announced that the Games of the 30<sup>th</sup> Olympiad in 2012 were awarded to London. London's bid was built, in exemplary New Labour style, on something old – its history – and something new – its place as a multicultural world city. Tony Blair's letter of support in the bid document sold the application as host city on the twin promises of sport as the lifeblood of the nation and on 'the amazing diversity of London' (London 2012, 2005: 5). However, before the celebrations at the awarding of the Games could get into full swing they were cut short by the events of Thursday 7 July 2005.

Four bombers, Hasib Hussain, Mohammad Sidique Khan, Germaine Lindsay and Shehzad Tanweer launched a series of co-ordinated attacks on London Transport. Three bombs exploded at around 0850 in the morning. These were on a Circle line train travelling between Liverpool Street and Aldgate; on a westbound Circle line train that had just left Edgware Road Station; and on a southbound Piccadilly line underground train travelling between King's Cross and Russell Square. The fourth and final explosion took place around one hour later on the top deck of a number 30 double-decker bus in Tavistock Square, not far from King's Cross as it travelled between its route from Marble Arch to Hackney Wick (BBC, 2005). This was London's version of 11 September 2001 except that the threat came not from international airspace but from within as three of the four bombers were British born and all were British citizens living in West Yorkshire.

By the time of the bombings in London in July 2005 the idea of a unified Muslim threat, as discussed in the previous section, had been firmly established in the public and political imagination (Solomos, 2003). Nine days after the London bombings Tony Blair made a speech in which he portrayed the actions of the bombers as driven by an 'evil ideology' connected to Al-Qaeda (Blair, 2005) and far removed from multicultural life and mainstream Islam.

They [Al-Qaeda and its supporters] demand the elimination of Israel; the withdrawal of all Westerners from Muslim countries, irrespective of the wishes of people and government; the establishment of effectively Taliban states and Sharia law in the Arab world en route to one caliphate of all Muslim nations (Blair, 2005).

Blair sought to abnormalise the bombers and the political alliance to which they belonged by outlining their preposterous political demands and alien goal of unifying Muslim nations. Elsewhere in the same speech Blair contrasted British and Western values: 'freedom, tolerance and respect for others' against those of the Islamic extremists: 'suppression of women and the disdain for democracy' (Blair, 2005). In doing so Blair attempted to cast Al-Qaeda as the ultimate parallel and alien entity. He also sought to magnify and maximise Al-Qaeda as a global force and ideology affecting the West; Westerners; Israel and all Muslim nations, as a justification strategy to give himself political scope for future action against Al-Qaeda and its sympathisers.

By December 2006, when Tony Blair was making a series of valedictory speeches before he left office in the following May, the Prime Minister made it clear that (a minority of) Muslims were Britain's most pressing multicultural problem:

It [extremism] is not a problem with Britons of Hindu, Afro-Caribbean, Chinese or Polish origin. Nor is it a problem with the majority of the Muslim community. Most Muslims are proud to be British and Muslim and are thoroughly decent law-abiding citizens. But it is a problem with a minority of that community, particularly originating from certain countries' (Blair, 2006).

Blair was deliberately balanced and even handed so that he could carry out his desired political work and set an agenda for the next Prime Minister once he had stepped down. Therefore, of course, the London bombings and the bombers were categorised as

anomalous, unrepresentative of multicultural life in the nation and the wider BME and Muslim communities. So reasonable was New Labour that it recognised most Muslims were decent and law-abiding and many of them shared Blair's pride in being British. Most Muslims, like British Hindus, Afro-Caribbeans, Chinese and Poles were proud Britons, just like Blair and the wider British public.

However, because Blair had identified the threat as a particular one it did not mean that he and New Labour did not draw wider implications from the situation. As he stated elsewhere in the same valedictory speech cited above.

The 7/7 bombers were integrated at one level in terms of lifestyle and work. Others in many communities live lives very much separate and set in their own community and own culture, but are no threat to anyone.

But this is, in truth, not what I mean when I talk of integration. Integration, in this context, is not about culture or lifestyle. It is about values. It is about integrating at the point of shared, common unifying British values. It isn't about what defines us as people, but as citizens, the rights and duties that go with being a member of our society (Blair, 2006).

Whereas the post-northern disturbances discourse had largely centred on visible signs of separation between white and South Asian communities, the London bombers represented a different kind of threat. The bombers were apparently 'integrated' into society, for example, the suspected ringleader of the London bombers, Mohammad Sidique Khan was a teaching assistant in a primary school in Beeston, Leeds (BBC, 2007) and he was therefore involved in the kind of community 'interchange' that John Denham's report on community cohesion had deemed desirable (Home Office, 2001). However, in a video about the bombings, Khan justified his actions not in local but in global terms of British foreign policy:

Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people and your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters (cited in Dodd and Taylor, 2005).

For Khan, the level of community that mattered was not the local dimension of community cohesion but the global Muslim community. By way of response, the issue that mattered was not that Muslims lived amongst and interacted with white people but whether these Muslims shared British values. In the case of the bombers, it was their values rather than their lives that were un-British. Such people were therefore fundamentally and elementally different. Muslims in particular, and BME people more generally, were identified as a potential 'fifth column' and a specific problem of four murderous Britons became a wider question of multiculture and an even more problematic version of parallel living.

The London bombings also saw a revival of discourse on the theme of physical segregation. For example, after the bombings of July 2005, Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, famously warned about the US-style ghetto-isation of Britain and that:

... we are sleepwalking our way to segregation. We are becoming strangers to each other, and we are leaving communities to be marooned outside the mainstream (Phillips, 2005).

Apart from being catchy and alliterative, sleepwalking to segregation conjured up a nightmarish scenario as well as inevitability about the doomed destination towards which the population was travelling. The theme of half-awake zombie-like behaviour was extended in the idea of people not recognising one another as their fellows but seeing each other as strangers. The metaphorical setting then switched from land to water but was no less dismal. The result was that whole groups of people were stranded from

society's centre – its main 'stream'. The imagined outsider communities that Phillips conjured up as the problem were BME ones (though not necessarily Muslim). This was because his apocalyptic vision explicitly drew on the example of what happened in post hurricane New Orleans when the normal rules of civility no longer applied as the US government abandoned the city's largely African-American population.

Letting his imagination run away with him, Phillips (2005) even stated that, left unchecked, the process of segregation would lead to 'chronic cultural conflict.' This doom-laden scenario contained echoes of Enoch Powell's famous 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech which warned that 'the immigrant communities can organise to consolidate their members, to agitate and campaign against their fellow citizens' (The Telegraph, 2007 [1968]). Though Phillips' address will unlikely live as long in the memory as Powell's, it did call on policymakers to make a powerful response to avoid the prospect of a riven nation.

#### 4.1 Security and community cohesion

The policy response to the London bombings, like the reaction to the northern disturbances, was framed by a sense of jeopardy and crisis. Well before the events of 7 July 2005, the 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act was passed in the wake of 9/11, giving the state a raft of enhanced powers related to terrorism and security, such as the freezing of assets and the power to detain indefinitely and deport non-British citizens suspected by the Home Secretary to be a terrorist (National Archives, undated-a). The Act and the latter provision in particular have caused concerns about the compatibility of some of the measures with international human rights principles (Husband and Alam, 2011: 65).

Since 2003, the United Kingdom government has used a strategy known as CONTEST to counter international terrorism. CONTEST was divided into four principle strands: PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT, and PREPARE which together were aimed at 'preventing terrorism by tackling the radicalisation of individuals; pursuing terrorists and those that

sponsor them; protecting the public, key national services, and UK interests overseas; and preparing for the consequences' (HM Government, 2006: 9).

The PREVENT strand is of most relevance to my interests, as its focus was on domestic 'terrorists inspired by Islamist extremism' (HM Government, 2006: 8) and mitigating the risks of British people carrying out acts of violence, as was the case with the London bombings. This work to counter terrorism combined with the discourse of parallel lives to form part of a 'securitisation' agenda (Husband and Alam, 2011; Kundnani, 2007; McGhee 2008, 2010) in which BME people, and Muslims in particular, were presented as a security threat as well as a broader problem in integrating in the nation. My interests are not explicitly on securitisation but rather on the extent to which such concerns affected discussions of national life, multiculture and race equality. In this respect, the government made the following link between security and cohesion:

... the drive for equality, social inclusion, community cohesion and active citizenship in Britain strengthens society and its resistance to terrorism here in the UK (HM Government, 2006: 9).

The government appeared to recognise that the 'home-grown terrorists' were more likely to be 'produced' in environments characterised by social exclusion and inequality. The implicit rationale was that their status as outsiders in Britain led to disenchantment and to seek solace in other groupings and entities that made them feel wanted and valued.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, there was the counterbalancing call for community cohesion and active citizenship with the requirement for BME people to assimilate and to conform (Kundnani, 2005).

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<sup>36</sup> However, even in government there was also acknowledgement, as stated by Tony Blair above about the London bombers, that 'terrorists' might not fit this profile.

Ideas of and the connections between equality, social inclusion, community cohesion and active citizenship contained in PREVENT were initially developed in the aftermath of the northern disturbances and the various reports that followed. In the light of the London bombings and what Nick Pearce labelled a lack of policy ‘traction’ (2011, Interview) associated with community cohesion, New Labour decided to revisit the topic.

In August 2006, the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Ruth Kelly (2006), launched the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC) to look at how to counter tensions between people of different ethnic groups and religions. Kelly was interested in common bonds and the tensions between these and diversity. As a result, the Commission was asked to consider the following:

In our attempt to avoid imposing a single British identity and culture, have we ended up with some communities living in isolation of each other, with no common bonds between them? (Kelly, 2006)

The question was set up to be answered in the affirmative and implied a series of substitutes, complements and choices. A single British identity and culture was distinct from the multicultural; the multicultural meant that some communities lived apart from each other; isolation was a choice made by different cultural communities in relation to each other. Most importantly, a single British identity and culture was necessary (but not necessarily sufficient) for common bonds and the end of parallelism. Elsewhere, in the speech at the launch of the CIC, Ruth Kelly was careful to avoid direct criticism of BME people and instead pondered the complexity of rebalancing multicultural life.

Second and third generation immigrants can face a struggle. Not to adapt to life in the UK – but to reconcile their own values and beliefs with those of their parents and grandparents. Young people may be seen as Pakistani on the streets of Burnley, but many feel out of place and “British” when they visit Pakistan (Kelly, 2006).

Multiculture, according to Kelly, was a perplexing place – not for her – but for young British Pakistanis like the London bombers. They had to navigate feeling in between Pakistan and Britain and there were inter-generational issues to be negotiated too. In making these points Kelly was drawing on ideas of migrants and minorities being ‘between two cultures’ (Watson, 1977) and processes not necessarily of cultural fusion but of ‘confusion’ (Ali et al., 2008). Yet Kelly exhibited her own confusion when she argued, in contradictory terms, that second and third generations of Pakistanis were adapted to life in the UK but at the same time they were deemed to be dislocated both in Britain and Pakistan. Kelly also labelled them ‘immigrants’ – even though they were British born – as if to emphasise their permanent status as outsiders.

Multiculture was not just a dislocating process for (British) Pakistanis but also for white Britons, albeit in a different way.

... there are white Britons who do not feel comfortable with change. They see the shops and restaurants in their town centres changing. They see their neighbourhoods becoming more diverse. Detached from the benefits of those changes, they begin to believe the stories about ethnic minorities getting special treatment, and to develop a resentment, a sense of grievance (Kelly, 2006).

In this passage Kelly added to the sense of a nation marked by parallel or uncomfortably overlapping lives. In the case of white people the particular concern was, apparently, the BME-isation of their neighbourhoods and the sense that BME people were getting ‘special treatment’ and getting ahead. By naming perceptions of favourable treatment for BME people as a problem for white Britons, Kelly was signalling that New Labour would go out of its way to allay such fears. By voicing (apparent) concerns of white Britons uncomfortable with change Kelly was both distancing herself from those concerns (after all New Labour was all for change) and at the same time legitimating and encouraging

those sentiments. Perhaps more importantly, Kelly was projecting the uncertainty and bewilderment of politicians themselves at complexities beyond their policy imagining and containment capabilities.

As in other times when policymakers had been uncertain and bewildered, Kelly turned to people outside government for help in the form of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC). The CIC was chaired by Darra Singh, the Chief Executive of Ealing Council and former Chief Executive of Luton Council (Benjamin, 2006). In addition to Singh there were 13 commissioners brought in to act in a personal capacity rather than in the interests of a particular institution or group in society. They included a trade union activist; a senior police officer; a local councillor; academics; and numerous leaders of voluntary and community sector organisations. Amongst the commissioners was Michael Keith, then a professor at Goldsmiths College. Keith had a longstanding interest in urban issues and multiculturalism and was the former leader of Tower Hamlets Council. Other commissioners included Ramesh Kallidai, the Secretary General of the Hindu Forum of Britain and Nargis Khan, a Councillor in the London Borough of Hackney who had contributed to the Cantle review and had advised the Home Office-led task force 'Preventing Extremism Together' (Information Daily, 2006).

Although the CIC was brought into existence in the wake of the London bombings, the Commission did not particularly engage in security debates covered by PREVENT and was much more of a follow up to the reports carried out in the aftermath of the 2001 northern disturbances with its focus on the day-to-day, often local experiences of living together in multicultural settings. The Commission's remit extended to England only and it had a specific focus to develop a set of 'practical proposals for building integration and cohesion at a local level' (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 7). Its work was advanced through commissioned research and a consultation process that spanned all the English regions. The report developed the work of the Community Cohesion Review Team (2001) but branched out from a focus on community cohesion to focus on integration and cohesion. These, the CIC argued, were related but distinct processes.

We do not believe integration and cohesion are the same thing as some argue. Cohesion is principally the process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together; while integration is principally the process that ensures new residents and existing residents adapt to one another (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 9).

The separation of cohesion from integration in this way meant that the former was primarily concerned with Britain's settled BME population (Bloch et al., 2013) such as those people involved in the northern disturbances. Integration was more a means of dealing with new population flows given the rising levels of immigration such as that from the expanded European Union (Bloch et al., 2013). While this distinction was not necessarily a problem in itself, the question of what to do about largely white central and eastern European newcomers was an important but distinct and perhaps distracting one to the question of race equality for settled BME populations.

The CIC also advanced a new definition of an integrated and cohesive community which was identified as one where:

- There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country
- There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment

- There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny
- There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common
- There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 42).

Differences from earlier definitions of community cohesion included that people were not required to have a sense of shared belonging or vision of the local area but instead they had a shared contribution towards a collective vision. This allowed for disagreement and dissent within a framework of encouraged overlap and commonality. A second difference was an emphasis on recognising the contribution of newcomers and long-settled people in a particular area – although this encouraged competing claim-making and inevitably favoured incumbents that could argue that they were more deeply part of the local fabric and had done more to make the local area. This framing gave permission to assert local contribution hierarchies and privilege not just between settled populations and new arrivals from Europe but licensed white Britons to assert themselves over settled BME people and to argue that their families had been contributing to Britain and the local area for more generations – thus putting BME belonging in its (inferior) place. A third departure from earlier definitions of community cohesion was the focus of individual rights and responsibilities that went with local and national citizenship. This was an attempt to categorise people outside of ‘cultural’ group membership that had been deemed to cause such division.

The Commission developed 57 proposals on both integration and cohesion. Many of these were specific and subject to local conditions, such as encouraging local areas to develop their own local indicators of integration and cohesion (Commission on Integration and

Cohesion, 2007); a new programme of voluntary service for young people to boost local citizenship; and, most significantly, a recommendation that 'single' ethnicity community organisations 'as part of their application for funding should demonstrate an understanding of their role in building integration and cohesion in their local community' (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 163). In justifying this funding proposal the Commission argued that:

... it is clear that single identity work can entrench attitudes and stereotypes and can only ever be partial in a community where others share the public space... We are also clear that the presumption should be against Single Group Funding [awarded on the basis of a particular identity, such as ethnic, religious or cultural] unless there is a clear reason for capacity building within a group or community. (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 162-163).

The CIC asserted as self-evident that single identity work was incompatible with overlapping lives. It essentially adopted the position laid out in the Cantle report that:

Funding bodies should presume against separate funding for distinct communities, and require collaborative working, save for those circumstances where the need for funding is genuinely only evident in one section of the community and can only be provided separately (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001: 38).

The CIC and the Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT) questioned the public benefit of organising on the basis of 'single identity'. Such suspicions were nothing new. For example, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Enoch Powell had expressed his concern that organising amongst immigrant communities could damage 'their fellow citizens' (The Telegraph, 2007 [1968]). Despite the use of neutral language such as 'distinct communities' by the CCRT and 'single community organisation' and 'single group funding'

by the CIC to avoid naming BME communities as the problem, BME civil society groups and organisations were the main beneficiaries of such ‘distinct’ funding and therefore stood to be the main losers in the event of changes (Rattansi, 2010). The proposal against single and separate funding therefore showed how what had begun with a particular policy concern with Asian-Muslim communities was extended through a ‘chain of equivalence’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) to a problem with all forms of BME-led organising as potentially separatist.

The report of the CIC threatened the role of BME political organising in addressing in/equalities. It argued that the assertion of group identities ‘can still be damaging to integration and cohesion if it means privileging one identity over others to access shared resource, and relying on the difference between them as a bargaining chip’ (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 98). At the same time, however, the Commission also showed itself to be far from immune from asserting the needs of specific groups when it suited its own purpose. For example it named ‘white working class boys’ (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 4) as a distinct population that needed to be protected and assisted.

Cantle's single identity funding proposals were not followed up in the recommendations of the interdepartmental ministerial group led by John Denham (2001), in part, perhaps, because it was deemed politically difficult to implement at a time when BME organisations were relatively strong. Another reason for this non-implementation may have been because ethnically-based ‘representative’ organisations were seen by policymakers as vehicles through which to manage multicultural and race equality problems.<sup>37</sup> By the time of the CIC these factors had changed and the single funding

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<sup>37</sup> For example, ‘the DfES [Department for Education and Skills] and LSC [Learning and Skills Council] will commission work involving local voluntary organisations and statutory bodies to devise local strategies for helping more people from ethnic minority groups back into learning’ (Home Office, 2001: 25).

proposals were offered up for consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2008). In the event they were successfully rebuffed by a campaign against by a range of BME and non-BME voluntary sector organisations and funders (BTEG, 2007; Voice4Change England, 2008). In addition a High Court judicial review case was won by Southall Black Sisters in July 2008, as they challenged Ealing Council's decision to cut funding to the organisation on the grounds that the council wanted to provide a generalist ('multiple identity') rather than specialist ('single identity') service. The judge ruled that there was no inconsistency between specialist service provision and community cohesion.<sup>38</sup> However, although the single identity funding proposals were not formally enacted, they helped to create a policy and funding environment whereby all BME organising was newly scrutinised by funders and policymakers (Perry, 2008).

#### 4.2 BME-led organisations: restoring 'race'

Developments against identity-based funding, combined with the rise of Muslim identity and faith as a more prominent feature of multicultural life, left BME-led race equality organisations in a precarious position. In addition, such difficulties for these organisations were exacerbated as there were attempts to re-assert whiteness – this time not white privilege, but white disadvantage in the form of the 'white working class' (Back, 2010; Dench et al., 2006; Sveinsson, 2009) – onto the equalities agenda.

The targeting of 'single identity' left BME-led organisations precariously placed especially due to the lack of clarity over the definition of this term.

The problem with single identity organisations was that they could be specifically a Muslim organisation, a Sikh organisation, a Hindu

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<sup>38</sup> The judge ruled that the council should have had due regard to its duties under the Race Relations Act and carried out an Equality Impact Assessment before policy was changed. The judge also importantly ruled that there was no dichotomy between cohesion and specialist services (Gupta, 2008).

organisation or an African-Caribbean organisation and actually if they represented several different minorities then, in my view, they're not single identity (Ted Cantle, 2011, Interview).

This nuanced point was a reminder that many BME-led organisations were actually based on multiple identities. However, they might present themselves as 'single identity' and unified groupings, such as African-Caribbean or Muslim, as part of their attempts to be seen by funders, policymakers and others as co-ordinated and solidaristic. In addition, funders and policymakers might see single identities where multiple ones existed. Ultimately, whether BME-led organisations encompassed multiple identities or not perhaps did not matter because they were, by definition, not working for the whole community but a particular segment of it. In the parlance of social capital they bridged – but only so far.

The problem facing BME-led race equality organisations such as BTEG, OBV and ROTA was also that multiply-constituted coherent BMEness was unravelling, as discussed by a surprisingly rueful Ted Cantle:

... what's rather disappointing is that, you know, where I grew up in an era when the term black was a sort of political term, is that encompassed anybody from a minority community. And at the time I did my report in 2001 that concept of black had been sort of disintegrating as organisations said 'oh well we're not black, we're Asian or we're not Asian, we're Sikh or we're Muslim' or whatever. So some of the sort of camaraderie, I guess, between minority organisations had actually disappeared and splintered and I think there was an opportunity where minority organisations could be much more outwardly-focused but had actually grown increasingly inward-focused (Ted Cantle, 2011, Interview).

Cantle defended the findings of his review against problem 'single identity' organising by arguing that black identity had splintered (Alexander, 2002; Hall, 1991b; Solomos and Back, 1995). More specifically, he suggested that the umbrella term black was outwardly-focused and the fragments of sub-black organising were problematic and inward-focused. Cantle was particularly scathing of and pointed the finger of blame at Asians for both the parallel lives that his review team identified, but also the death of political blackness. Perhaps unexpectedly, with the latter argument, Cantle came close to Sivanandan's idea of 'cultural enclaves and feuding nationalisms' (Sivanandan, 2000: 423).

As pressure was exerted on BME-led race equality organisations to become more recognisably and conspicuously multiply-orientated, ROTA was interested in further extending their work to encompass certain white people:

... we were gonna look at... white boys in the east end of London and achievement at school because there were some issues there going on and we were a race organisation so they [a funder] thought that – yeah white people have an ethnicity too... (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview).

This overlap was sometimes encouraged, as in ROTA's case with ROTA above, by funders that had responded to the recommendations on single identity funding even though they were not eventually passed (see Perry, 2008). Even where pressure from funders was not brought to bear, BME leaders did recognise the sometimes thin separation of black and white lives. As Jeremy Crook noted, '[there] are... white people in those [black] communities – white people in our families – because obviously there is more mixture now and all the rest of it so... those [black and white] mindsets... are a bit dated anyway...' (2011, Interview). However, while this raised questions about neat and complete separations of black and white there were distinctions that required that BTEG maintained its BME-centred work as illustrated in this response to the CIC's report.

The report suggests that the reasons why single group funding has been awarded in the past are now largely historical – e.g. that groups may ‘in the past have suffered direct or indirect discrimination’. The report implies that these reasons are no longer valid, so there is no longer a good case for single group funding. But there is plenty of evidence to show that ethnicity is related to unequal outcomes in various service areas. The inequalities which prompted BME groups to start up in the first place are still there, even if the Committee’s report completely overlooks them (BTEG, 2007: 2).

BTEG responded to the CIC’s assertion that the context and the needs of the moment had changed by insisting that the opposite was true. The parallel structures of BME groups were created as a means to combat race inequalities and that struggle was still required and drove the work of BTEG, OBV and ROTA and many local organisations.

Like BTEG, ROTA attempted to turn the debate away from integration and cohesion and back onto staple race equality issues.

The COIC [Commission on Integration and Cohesion] report seems to assume that inequalities are not as prominent as they used to be... [W]e have concrete evidence that shows that London’s BAME [Black Asian Minority Ethnic] communities experience a number of disadvantages from unemployment, access to health, criminal justice, education and regeneration... [I]t is presumptuous to assume that the indirect or direct discrimination that originally brought these groups together has now ended (ROTA, 2007: 1)

ROTA’s point of intervention was similar to that of BTEG and like that organisation they invoked ‘evidence’ of race inequality to discredit the Commission and its readiness to turn attention onto cohesion. BTEG also continued earlier arguments (1990 Trust, 2005; Amin,

2002; Kundnani, 2001) that discrepant outcomes for BME people were due to structural disadvantage:

We would argue that the main barrier to the integration of visible minorities is 'skin colour' and this is why so many black people were channelled into poor housing, low paid jobs and poor schools in the first place (BTEG, 2006: 13).

BTEG's use of integration related to settled BME communities rather than new immigrants, as used by the CIC. Integration was a desirable outcome that black people were in favour of but that they were denied. They did not choose parallel lives; rather these were forced on them. As well as exonerating BME people from blame for an apparent lack of integration the passage from BTEG also revealed how they and other BME-led race equality organisations responded to the increased profile and policy-relevance of Muslimness after the northern disturbances. The reaction was to claim questions of integration as entirely a black phenomenon – indicated by non-white skin colour. Muslim specificities were denied and instead integration (and exclusion) was a black thing.

BME-led race equality organisations attempted to subordinate religion to ethnicity. This was an ongoing tension in BME organising, reflected in part by questions and difficulties of containing south Asians under the black umbrella (see chapter two). Where policymakers had overstated the Muslim dimension and 'problem' as it affected questions of multiculturalism, race equality and collective life, BME-led race equality organisations were guilty of the opposite, insisting on 'old ethnicities' rather than new ones (Hall, 1991b, 1992a), based on a (self-serving) idea that there was no change in the way that racism worked and who was affected by it.

As an illustration of this 'flattening' process, BTEG stated that '[t]he Government believes that the veil is a barrier to integration' (BTEG, 2006: 13), referring to the government's

concern about 'the face veil as a symbol of separation or a curtain' (Straw, 2006). BTEG mocked the idea that such a small piece of cloth could be so powerful and called instead for the government to focus on discrimination against BME people as a far more significant barrier to integration. Whilst this was supportive of Muslims in one sense, the downplaying of (symbols of) Muslimness was also a way for BTEG to claim Muslim people as BME first and foremost, thus ensuring the relevance of BME-led race equality organisations.

OBV connected the situation of Muslims to a more general struggle faced by BME people. The organisation condemned the speech by Ruth Kelly, Communities Secretary, at the launch of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion.

In her statement this morning, the Secretary of State while attacking multiculturalism and segregation as enemies of integration and cohesion, failed once to mention the underlying roots of inequality, discrimination and racism that many Muslim and BME communities face (OBV, 2006).

OBV attempted to unify the BME experience by noting that both Muslims *and* BME people faced the same kinds of 'underlying' disadvantages. Elsewhere, even before the London bombings, they had attempted to draw the similarities between contemporary suspicions of Muslims with a broader attack on BME communities:

The predominant issues over the last year for BME communities have become very clear. The 'war on Iraq' and on 'terror', has caused an unprecedented level of Islamophobia. The demonisation by certain sections of the media towards Muslims has meant that they and their religion have sadly become by-words for terrorism... As a result the debate about the Governments [sic] social cohesion and Trevor Phillips views on multiculturalism radically move away from anti-racism and celebrating diversity to demanding that BME communities, particularly

Muslims, 'become more British', whatever that means. This shift along with the policies of 'stop and search' and ID cards all form part of the political array that will invariably and negatively focus more on our communities (OBV, 2005: 1).

The specific issue of Islamophobia was duly noted as a particular mode of racism, but was also connected to a generalised political backlash against multiculturalism, anti-racism and the celebration of diversity – issues that affected all BME people and organisations alike. The theme of the passage was the changing same, where the increased attention on Muslim people as a problem was tied to tactics, such as 'stop and search', traditionally used against other parts of the BME community such as African-Caribbean people. To ensure survival, BME-led organisations needed to avoid parallel political lives and to ensure that Muslim political struggles remained in broad overlap with BMEness and its associated political work. This was partly for practical reasons to ensure that BME-focused organisations were relevant to funders and policymakers – an issue made all the more pressing after the single funding recommendations (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001; Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007).

Alongside the undoubted pragmatism was another principled side to the defence of BMEness that emerged in discussion with BME leaders. For example, Dinah Cox, former Chief Executive of ROTA, argued that '... we should all come together and stand by each other in order to prevent this chipping away and this divide and rule' (2011, Interview). For Cox maintaining the overlap with Muslimness was a riposte to colonial techniques of separating peoples subject to the same discrimination. This form of resistance was aimed at ensuring that BMEness was more than a response to adverse circumstances – a 'community of suffering' (Werbner, 1997) – and was something more like a community of action 'invested with black political agency' (Back, 1994: 13) and, even, a certain degree of romance.

Simon Woolley from OBV explained political ‘blackness’ as the basis for common political action in the following way:

I think that activists had got to the stage through hard work and endeavour to bring peoples together: African, Asians and Caribbeans – bearing in mind now at some point that all had been separated by old colonial attitudes. Africans against Caribbeans; Caribbeans against Asians. But a lot of good people from all sides of... the ethnic divide came together and said that united we're stronger (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

Woolley praised the achievement of blackness and elevated the status of the ‘good people from all sides’ that made it happen. It represented a moment of consciousness and clarity in which former colonised subjects resisted colonial ‘divide and rule’ (a term also mentioned by Dinah Cox above) enabling solidarity that transcended nations and continents. Blackness in Britain was part of a colonial struggle of two hundred years. However, this version of blackness was as idealised as policymaker talk of British decency. For example, it covered over the cracks in ‘blackness’ and tensions between African and African Caribbean communities and south Asians (Modood, 1988). Instead Woolley argued that the notion of the ‘black’ community was a ‘good enough’ compromise name for collective identification, organising and action (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

Jeremy Crook from BTEG also saw the blackness as a force for inclusion, emancipation and political agency.

... [The] black self-help movement, which I think was an inclusive movement as well in terms of, you know, Asian and black communities, was certainly a good thing at the time and vocalised lots of people... (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

Blackness was an explicitly political formation organised around shared concerns and goals. Crook, like Woolley, invested blackness with redemptive and inclusive qualities as he argued that the black community enabled BME people to collectively find their voice in a silencing environment and to engage in self-help where the state was a hindrance. Finally, some of the romance and inclusivity of BME/black community was also revealed by Dinah Cox when she detailed, somewhat ruefully, how ROTA, when she began her work there in the late 1990s, was super-inclusive and 'black did include the Irish; the Jewish; Asian; African; African-Caribbean communities' because they were all subject to racism and discrimination (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview). This inclusivity was the basis for solidarity and a feeling of BME fellowship. So while Les Back was correct when he stated that 'Black community discourse is utilized... as a way to particularize black experiences' (Back, 1994: 13) it was also the case that BME leaders, in a context of fragmentary blackness, also used the notion of black community and collectivity to generalise black experiences sufficiently widely to advance a political and principled emancipatory project.

At the same time, secular race equality and faith organisations were not predisposed or even well-placed to stand by each other, as Karen Chouhan, the former Chief Executive of the antiracist organisation 1990 Trust, explained.

... we can see that Islamophobia is the new racism; we can see what was happening; that... there was a divide and rule going on. So it was an antiracist agenda and so to that extent we were happy to support; be involved; do as much campaigning as we could to support people...

I think that the difficulty [is that]... we're not religious people so... that was the tension for us. We could see how it [faith] related to racism, but we didn't particularly want to be supporting single faith schools or things like that (Karen Chouhan, 2011, Interview).

Karen Chouhan encapsulated the conundrum facing secular organisations working for race equality. Islamophobia was the most virulent strain of racism of the moment. Black solidarity necessitated an anti-racist response whilst resisting some of the implications of a Muslim-centred politics, such as separate education that in turn undermined solidaristic BME politics. Simon Woolley similarly was concerned about fragments of blackness.

[In the past] we didn't have competing forces such as a redefined Muslim community in particular; but also Sikh and Hindu that after 9/11 and 7/7 redefined themselves as not being the other. We're not Muslim. We're not black, we're Muslim. So we've had to go the extra 10 miles in saying that we still include you (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

The splintering of south Asian collectivity<sup>39</sup> played out enmities imported from the Indian subcontinent on British shores and also created distance between Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus and some 'overarching' black identity. Like Cantle, Woolley blamed south Asians for a break up of black politics but also argued that it was still possible to keep such groups in the black fold. However, the elasticity of blackness was tested not only by the contours of faith but also those of new European migration and the rise in asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka and Somalia (Bloch, et al., 2013) that meant that those BME populations that formed the first iteration of the black political community were becoming a smaller proportion of the British BME population (see chapter one).

## 5 Conclusions

This middle part of the New Labour period was framed by policy discourses and policymaker concerns about parallel lives prompted initially by the northern disturbances

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<sup>39</sup> For example see Runnymede Trust (2007); a study into British Hindu identity commissioned by the Hindu Forum of Britain which distances British Hindus from their Muslim counterparts in a context of community cohesion.

of 2001 and then the London bombings in 2005. The discourse of parallel lives pointed to and constructed a problem of modern Britain where ethnic communities lived next to one another but not with one another. This notion was particularly troubling for New Labour because of the importance it attached to community as a means to reconcile individuality and collectivity in the absence of state control. This importance attached to community from New Labour meant that 'alternative' BME communities were unwelcome 'rivals'.

The government's proposed response and alternative to parallel lives was community cohesion which set back the idea of race equality by foregrounding and prioritising local belonging and strong and positive relationships across ethnicities (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001; Local Government Association, 2002; Local Government Association, 2004). Though community cohesion also spoke of the importance of similar life opportunities being available to people regardless of background this was itself contingent on BME people demonstrating that they belonged in and were loyal to the wider community.

Though parallel lives was in many ways about a spotlight on BME and especially south Asian people this debate was also about white people, including sentimental ideas of lost whiteness (Dench et al., 2006). Policymaker conceptions of community cohesion made it clear that it was important to avoid what Ruth Kelly described as 'ethnic minorities getting special treatment' (Kelly, 2006) because it harmed cohesion by creating resentments and grievances amongst white people. Opening up debates about whiteness and white working class people might have been a valuable exercise if it brought class and equality back onto the political agenda (Sveinsson, 2009). However, as mobilised by New Labour, discussions of whiteness in the context of parallel lives and community cohesion were expressed in terms of ethnic competition and the problematic overlap between BME and white people. Therefore, by 2007, the work of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion advanced proposals to restrict funding for 'single identity', specifically BME, organisations.

As a result, discourses of parallel lives had set back both the pursuit of race equality and BME-led organising for it, as BME organising was implicated in the violence of the northern disturbances and the London bombings. As the then Chair of BTEG observed there was the 'real danger that black-led organisations are seen as part of the problem [of the lack of community cohesion and shared values] and not the solution' (BTEG, 2008: 4). However, BME organising for race equality was not just set back by hostile policymaker discourses and their consequences, but also due to the rise of Islam as a specific and important political identity.

The response from BME-led race equality organisations was to note but also to play down the significance of Muslimness. BME-led race equality organisations tried to return discussions of ethnic minorities and Muslims in Britain to the ongoing problem of race inequality and to subsume Islamophobia and 'Muslim issues' into broader concerns and narratives about the perils of being BME in Britain. This was partly the result of a desire of these organisations to resist policies of 'divide and rule'; a principled commitment to BME/black as a hard-won political identity. It was also a coping mechanism and pragmatic response to ensure policy-relevance of BMEness over and above Muslimness.

In the next chapter I move on from this second period of multicultural parallel and overlaps to examine the third and final part of the New Labour period. Here policymakers (re)turned to discourses and conceptions of individual citizens and the nation as a whole as a means to settle fraught discussions of collective living at sites other than (increasingly problematic) multiculture.

# Chapter 5 Pausing multiculture: re-asserting nation and citizen

## 1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the third and final part of the New Labour period, from 2006 up to the general election defeat in 2010. The discursive thread of the previous chapter of parallels and overlaps was the result of policymaker disquiet about multiculture and the multicultural, triggered particularly by the events of the northern disturbances and London bombings. In the absence of such calamitous occurrences, the period of time covered in this chapter was more centred on ongoing attempts by policymakers to respond to multicultural troubles. I argue that the developments in this period combined to form a discourse of multiculture ‘paused’. This attempted to escape the paradoxical position which policymakers sought the disappearance of multiculture whilst at the same time fixing it in place (Alexander, 2007). I am not suggesting that this period was somehow post-multicultural or that there was a cultural ‘U-turn’, but rather that policymakers attempted to work discursively around multiculture as a means to manage it.

There was not a single unified discourse or discursive theme that policymakers offered to counter the centrality of parallel and overlapping multiculture as a way of understanding and managing society. Instead I suggest that the discourse to look past multiculture was made up of three related strands. The first of these was an increased focus on the nation and Britishness. A second strand was the importance of citizenship as a common feature of life in Britain that could govern how people might behave individually and live together collectively. The third strand of discourse was based on reconfigured discussions of equality and inequality. This centred on the enactment of the 2006 Equality Act which de-privileged the place of race in equalities by both focusing on (in)equality both as a more individuated experience and simultaneously turning attention to categories of people other than BME that might be susceptible to discrimination, such as young and old, as well as lesbian and gay people.

Despite the way that each of the three dimensions of discourse was a departure away from multiculturalism, they also contained elements of the previous discourse of parallel lives such as ideas of belonging and definitions of good conduct (Ali, 2003). The result was that this reconstituted discourse of the third and final part of the New Labour period did not escape the limits, problems and entanglements of multiculturalism but it continued the earlier work on parallel lives to make the source of multiculturalism, namely BME people and BME organisations, a problem for British society.

## 2 Britain calling

### 2.1 Towards a British patriotism

In this section I explore the way in which policymakers turned to the nation as a higher calling for citizens of any ethnicity. This focus on Britain and Britishness was not new for New Labour though its function was different in this latter period. 'New Labour, new Britain' was one of the party's early slogans (Blair, 1994, 1995) and, as cited in chapter three, Tony Blair spoke of the need to renew a weary and divided nation after a long period of Conservative rule. Elsewhere, Britain's 'rich mix' (Blair, 2000b) was given a central place in the idea of a renewed Britain. In those early interventions, Blair deliberately aligned himself with an outward-focused Britain akin to the Foreign Policy Centre's idea of Britain as a 'global island' (Leonard, 1997: 12).

Whereas Blair was interested early on in 'new Britain' and 'Cool Britannia' as a means to rebrand the nation, Gordon Brown seemed to have deeper and more thoughtful engagement with ideas of Britain, British history and Britishness. Brown's interest in Britishness preceded his brief period as Prime Minister (from June 2007 to May 2010) and included early pamphlets engaging with constitutional and devolutionary aspects of Britain (Brown, 1992, 1999).

Gordon Brown's British Council annual lecture in July 2004 (Brown, 2004) focused on '[c]reating a shared national purpose' and rediscovering 'a clear and confident sense of

who we are as a country'. This interest, as beffitted a speech to the British Council, was about Britain's place in the world; about the world's place in Britain, e.g. in the form of Britain's BME population; and also about the shape of Britain itself given devolution in Wales, Scotland and London.

Brown was eager to emphasise the nation not just as the site of renewal but as a means to guide politics itself. In January 2006 he made a speech to the Fabian Society entitled *The Future of Britishness*. In it he argued that Britishness was at the centre of multiple policy and everyday questions.

When we take time to stand back and reflect, it becomes clear that to address almost every one of the major challenges facing our country: our relationships with Europe, America and the rest of the world; how we equip ourselves for globalisation; the future direction of constitutional change; a modern view of citizenship; the future of local government, ideas of localism; and, of course, our community relations and multiculturalism and, since July 7th, the balance between diversity and integration; even the shape of our public services; you must have a clear view of what being British means, what you value about being British and what gives us purpose as a nation (Brown, 2006).

The aim was to elevate Britishness to a guiding light for policy. The answer to national policy challenges was to be found in the meaning of the nation – even though it could easily be argued that it was policy that gave meaning to the nation. Brown's fascination for Britishness had been inspired by what he had seen in the United States.

I think the first time I went to America, and looked at what people thought of themselves as Americans, and went in to bookshops in America and found there were so many books about the idea of America, the values of America, the identity of America, what America is and who

Americans are, and then looked at the debate in Britain, and found that we so were wedded to the idea of evolution and to almost empiricism that we had not considered that actually our national identity, more so than America, and earlier than America, was founded on values, that we in Britain invented the modern idea of tolerance... (Brown, 2009).

This passage was taken from an interview conducted by the journalist Matthew d'Ancona for a BBC Radio 4 series on Britishness and it revealed both Brown's fascination and admiration for the United States and its interest in and sense of itself. For Brown, Britain as a nation was even more steeped in (decent) values – but Britain lacked the strength of national identity of America or the desire to create one. Brown's response was to reject the idea of a continually evolving and organic British identity and to lay down what he imagined to be some enduring features of Britain and British life. To give national identity greater meaning Brown turned, in a number of speeches, to the naming and claiming of so-called British principles, characteristics and values including tolerance, liberty; fairness and fair play; responsibility and duty; and internationalism (Brown, 2004, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2008)

This was a highly selective set of features of Britain that were all desirable and compatible with multiculture and race equality. However, they lacked resonance as being particularly British or particularly meaningful as Nick Pearce, former Head of the Number 10 Policy Unit during Gordon Brown's premiership, explained.

That speech he [Brown] gave on liberty shortly after he went to number 10 was very much in that mould of saying here are the golden threads of [Britishness], you know. The people he talked to were people like Linda Colley and people who tried to understand the invention of Britishness and what it meant and what values it carried. But it was non-exclusivist; it was non-ethnically reductivist, but as a consequence it was quite thin. It felt quite academic and cold... He genuinely did want to make Britishness

more than it was but I just think it didn't work... It wasn't thick enough  
(Nick Pearce, 2011, Interview).

Through his conversations with Colley, whose work was on how British identity had been forged historically (Colley, 1992), Brown recognised that golden-age Britain was an invention and that the task at hand was one of re-invention. Brown did not and could not define Britain in explicitly closed ethnic or religious terms but the version of Britain conjured up was difficult to grasp and anaemic. In the context of contemporary times Britain was not particularly distinct and its 'golden threads' could not be woven together.

A major imperative behind attempts by Blair and Brown in this period to define Britishness with greater clarity were the troubling events of the northern disturbances and the London bombings. While these were viewed by policymakers as evidence of a lack of community cohesion, they were also seen as signs that some BME Britons did not feel British. Brown, like Blair,<sup>40</sup> had from the early days of New Labour spoken up for the mixed-up multicultural essence of Britain.

... a belief in fair play, a tolerance that has enabled us to welcome successive waves of immigrants – from Saxons and Normans to Huguenots and Jews and Asians and Afro-Caribbeans – into what today is a thriving multicultural nation (1997, cited in Brown: 2006: 345).

Even in these heady early New Labour days Brown argued that it was not the endeavour of immigrants that had earned their place in Britain but rather that Britain had been a

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<sup>40</sup> For example, in 2000 Blair said that Britain had been made by:

successive waves of invasion and immigration and trading partnerships, a potent mix of cultures and traditions which have flowed together to make us what we are today (Blair, 2000).

welcoming place to migrants because of its inherent values of fair play and tolerance.<sup>41</sup> A decade later, Gordon Brown extended the narrative when he stated that Britain had not just welcomed immigrants but that it was the product of interchange with the outside world through '2,000 years of successive waves of invasion, immigration, assimilation and trading partnerships' (Brown, 2006). The centring of Britain's historic openness to the outside world in Brown's later intervention enabled him to criticise 'outsiders' within Britain.

... we are waking from a once-fashionable view of multiculturalism, which, by emphasising the separate and the exclusive, simply pushed communities apart.

What was wrong about multiculturalism was not the recognition of diversity but that it over-emphasised separateness at the cost of unity. Continually failing to emphasise what bound us together as a country, multiculturalism became an excuse for justifying separateness, and then separateness became a tolerance of – and all too often a defence of – even greater exclusivity (Brown, 2007b).

The line adopted by Brown was of multiculturalism warping the true essence of British togetherness. Under its aegis, diversity became separateness and exclusivity. Where it was supposed to safeguard diversity it instead promoted disunity. Where warped

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<sup>41</sup> Brown's was an idealised and even old-fashioned version of Britain. In some ways it was consistent with rather Conservative notions of the nation. For example, in 1993, speaking about the resilience of Britain's essence in the context of its role in Europe, John Major painted the following idyllic (for some) picture:

Fifty years from now Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers and – as George Orwell said – "old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist" and if we get our way – Shakespeare still read even in school. Britain will survive unamendable in all essentials (Major, 1993).

multiculturalism had once overshadowed the nation Brown sought to reverse the process and to pursue a 'strong modern sense of patriotism and patriotic purpose' (Brown, 2006); replacing the passive tolerance of old (Gilroy, 2012) with something more strident.

Paradoxically though patriotism was supposed to be under threat from multiculture, it appeared also to be on the rise as Gordon Brown proudly proclaimed in a February 2007 speech to the Commonwealth Club.

A few years ago less than half – 46% – identified closely with being British. But today national identity has become far more important: it is not 46% but 65% – two thirds – who now identify Britishness as important, and recent surveys show that British people feel more patriotic about their country than almost other European country (Brown, 2007a).

Therefore the positioning of multiculturalism as a threat to commonality and nation was greatly exaggerated and indeed BME people identified with Britishness more than white counterparts.<sup>42</sup> BME identification with the nation was not enough, however, as Jack Straw explained.

We have to be clearer about what it means to be British, and to be resolute that what comes with this is a set of values that have not just to be shared but accepted. Yes, there is room for multiple and different identities, but there has to be a contract that they will not take precedence over the core democratic values of freedom, fairness,

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<sup>42</sup> In 2012 a survey commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (University of Essex, 2012) showed that people from ethnic minority backgrounds identify more closely with Britishness than their white counterparts. The survey asked "how important is being British to you?" the average scores by ethnicity on a 0-10 scale were as follows:

Pakistani (7.76); Bangladeshi (7.75); Indian (7.68); Black African (7.64); Middle Eastern (7.48); Other (7.03); Chinese (6.90); Caribbean (6.89); Mixed race (6.78); White (6.58) (British Future, 2012).

tolerance and plurality that define what it means to be British. It is the bargain and it is nonnegotiable (Straw, 2007).

Building on Blair's argument (2006) about the need for integration and consensus around British values, Straw also emphasised the need to behave like a 'Brit'. This appeared to be an attempt to bring unruly BME people into line and perhaps a sign of 'island race' (Gilroy, 2002: xxxvi) indignation at the behaviour of 'outsiders'. Where Blair (2006) spoke of 'duty' Straw talked of a contract and nonnegotiable values as BME people were obliged to pledge allegiance to and live by and under British values. In insisting on the subservience of multiculture, New Labour displayed little of two heralded British values, namely tolerance and plurality.

For policymakers, viewing policy questions through the lens of the nation also added to a sense of the nation being under threat.

... when terrorists struck London on 7 July 2005, it was not seen or felt as an attack simply on London, or even England, but on Britain itself. Why? Because for generations Britain had been a country in which many different nationalities and cultures live together, confident that in times of trouble we share risks, rewards and resources (Brown, 2009: 26).

By 2009 the London bombings were positioned not as an attack against London, multiculture or innocent civilians but as an attack on the nation itself. The nation was portrayed as under siege and in crisis and legitimate grievances about race inequality in Britain were shifted from prominent view on the political stage. Instead a romantic version of Britain was presented; and in the passage above Brown insisted that 'risks, rewards and resources' were shared in multi-national multicultural Britain. This idealised version of Britain further undermined attempts to locate the attacks in a context of race inequality.

### *From rhetoric to policy*

Values of the British nation and of British nationals were the cornerstone of attempts in this period to bolster Britishness. The importance of values to policymakers was illustrated by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion who claimed that values 'speak of what is most truly important to us and inform and motivate the actions we take... [and]... are touchstones of moral action and motivators for change' (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 65-66).

In Gordon Brown's tenure there was an attempt to codify British values in a Green paper on constitutional renewal as stated in the following terms.

Through an inclusive process of national debate it [the government] will work with the public to develop a British statement of values that will set out the ideals and principles that bind us together as a nation (Ministry of Justice, 2007: 57).

Though the statement of values never came into being it indicated that values were not simply to be named and claimed rhetorically by policymakers as British but were seen as an important part of a process of creating Britishness and Britons and identifying those people that did not belong.

As Nick Pearce suggested above, despite the attempts of Gordon Brown, the Britishness agenda did not go very far because of the weakness of the concept. Its thinness was revealed by policy proposals made in its name. These included a Museum for Britishness in the form of a permanent building to act as a centre of national identity (Hope, 2007); and a 'national day' (Goldsmith, 2008; Kelly and Byrne, 2007). Both proposals indicated a very literal approach to the idea of nation and belonging as if the answer to deeply complex issues of belonging was a day at the Museum or a good old-fashioned 'knees-up'.

There were mixed views about policy discussions about Britishness inside policy circles. On the positive side the idea of ‘civic patriotism’, as opposed to the ‘ethnic’ version discussed in chapter two, was appealing and inevitable according to Sunder Katwala, former general Secretary of the Fabian Society. Katwala in his time at the Fabian Society had considerable dealings with Brown<sup>43</sup> and the former’s interest in the Britishness agenda saw him go on to found and direct the identity and integration think-tank, British Future. He argued that

... in the end I think all of the national identities will have to find a contentful civic patriotisms that work in diverse societies, for diverse citizenships. And the thing you can say in Britain is, well it was multi-ethnic, it was multinational and it was civic from the start and it was always plural... So the inherently plural nature of Britishness is why it feels comfortable...

... the reason for confidence about Britishness is because if you want to say look diversity is just part of who we are; it’s ineradicably, inevitably part of our future. But the reason it’s inevitably part of our future is because it’s part of our past; it always has been (Sunder Katwala, 2011, Interview).

Katwala’s analysis was in tune with Brown’s optimistic comment, cited above, about Britain as a place where ‘different nationalities and cultures live together’ (Brown, 2009: 26). This accepted the idea of Britain as deeply and irretrievably multicultural. Yet Katwala also differed from policymakers in that he did not share their anxieties about British multiculturalism. Conversely, he did not share the concerns expressed in the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CFMEB) that Britishness held fears for BME people. Instead, Katwala argued that Britishness was on an inevitable path to reconciling multiculturalism and the nation based on civicness and plurality. However, Katwala’s optimism

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<sup>43</sup> For example, Brown’s 2006 speech on Britishness was delivered to the Fabian Society.

did not provide an answer to why multiculture was such a source of policymaker anxiety and why race inequality was such a feature of British life. His 'contentful patriotism' might not contain sufficient content or contentment.

Katwala carefully avoided placing shared values at the centre of such patriotism. Specifically he stated, 'doesn't everyone want fair play and whatever?' (Sunder Katwala, 2011, Interview). Similarly, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion report noted that 'while "high level" values can be held in common, there can still be substantial disagreement about how to apply them to particular circumstances' (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007: 65). The devil was in the detail.

Former Blair Chief Speechwriter, Philip Collins, was particularly sceptical about common values and argued that

... the search for a common set of values which goes beyond the banal is doomed to failure; there is no such set of values; it doesn't matter that there isn't because what there has to be is commitment to a procedure and a process of a liberal democracy. And that that is the overlap in which we all live... (Collins, 2011, Interview)

Collins took a governance approach to the situation. Agreement on common values was not essential in the management of collective life. Credible institutions and processes of liberal democracy (that maintained the rule of law, human rights and civil liberties) could ultimately govern and arbitrate between differing practices in the multicultural nation. However, the institutionally racist leanings of national institutions offered little guarantee of equal treatment and equal opportunity. Furthermore, it was clear that discussions of Britishness coupled with ideas of problem multiculture meant that policymakers did not want to be seen to on the side of BME people:

We have worked hard to ensure that people know that Government is committed to making sure, in every community, in every corner of this country, that we are on their side and that this is reflected in everything we do. This means no favours or privileges for special interest groups. Just fairness (Denham, 2010: 5).

Ultimately the centrality of the nation meant that government wanted to govern and wanted to be seen to govern in the 'national interest'. Responding to race inequality and BME organising qualified as special favours and was deemed to antagonise people in white corners of the country. Race equality was therefore to be moderated by public perceptions of fairness and appropriateness – even where that was likely to leave race inequality intact.

## 2.2 The push and pull of Britain

As policymakers attempted to re-assert the nation as a means to frame and contain the multicultural society, BME-led race equality organisations were deeply ambivalent to this agenda. These organisations contested the idea that Britain and Britishness was the open and inclusive entity that policymakers claimed and wanted to maintain the right for BME people to identify and pledge their allegiance to other nations or entities than Britain. However, at the same time, BME-led race equality organisations did not want to overthrow the nation but wanted to enhance it and the place for BME people within it.

The blueprint for BME and race equality campaigner uncertainty about Britain and Britishness was most (in)famously laid out by the CFMEB. As mentioned in chapter three, the CFMEB was reluctant to accept British as a descriptor for the country's BME population:

Britishness is not ideal, but at least it appears acceptable, particularly when suitably qualified – Black British, Indian British...' (Runnymede Trust, 2000: 38).

The CFMEB argued that there were 'deep-rooted [British] antagonisms to racial and cultural difference' (Runnymede Trust, 2000: 38) and yet despite this tenuous footing that BME people had as Britons Britishness had a claim on them and BME people were expected to declare their allegiance to Britain.

Of course this phenomenon was not exclusive to the New Labour period. In 1983, a well-known election poster appeared in ethnic minority press showing a young black man in a suit and tie with the caption 'Labour says he's black. Tories say he's British' (cited in Gilroy, 1987: 58). On the one hand the young black man was claimed as 'one of us' and given British status that trumped colour, and yet this status was insecure and came at a price. As Paul Gilroy noted the young man had to rid himself of black garb and signifiers – hence the suit – and conform as his price of admission into the nation (Gilroy, 1987). Policymakers from both main political parties were obsessed by BME allegiances. In April 1990, the former Conservative Cabinet Minister Norman (now Lord) Tebbit set out his infamous 'cricket' test which judged the loyalty of Asians by whether or not they supported the England cricket team.<sup>44</sup> It was much less clear that Tebbit cared whether people with Australian or New Zealand heritage cheered for England or not, presumably because their 'cultural proximity' to Britain nullified their threat.

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<sup>44</sup> Tebbit stated the following in a US newspaper interview

A large proportion of Britain's Asian population fail to pass the cricket test. Which side do they cheer for? It's an interesting test. Are you still harking back to where you came from or where you are? (Tebbit, 1990, cited in Manning and Roy, 2007: 3-4).

Tebbit went on to argue that if his comments on the cricket test were taken more seriously 'those [7 July 2005 London] attacks would have been less likely...' (Davie, 2005).

The New Labour period saw an extension of such approaches – albeit slightly more subtle. Simon Woolley from OBV was correct in the aftermath of the 2001 northern disturbances that the policy ‘agenda then became about we’re [BME people] not British enough’ (Woolley, 2011, Interview). Arun Kundnani expanded on this unease in the following way:

One of my main concerns with the current policy framework is the assimilationist tone of much of the rhetoric; alongside a discourse of blame directed towards new migrants and especially British Muslim communities, who are expected to show ‘which side they are on’, through an allegiance to a ‘phoney’ Britishness rather than a genuine universalism (Kundnani, 2005).

Kundnani and Woolley resisted the idea both that the loyalties of BME people were misplaced and that BME people should have to declare and demonstrate loyalty to Britain. BME loyalty and the act of choosing to be British was, however, powerfully symbolic for policymakers. This revealed both British anxieties about BME people but also, less obviously, British insecurities and self-doubt that it was worthy of being chosen. One can see ‘Cool Britannia’ as an attempt to convince Britain and the wider world of its worthiness and its nefarious twin ‘Cruel Britannia’ (Cohen, 1999) as a countervailing effort to keep the world away. In the context of the northern disturbances, London bombings and invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, British BME people and especially Muslims were required to choose Britain and to be seen to choose Britain, but at the same time they could never be ‘British enough’.

BME-led race equality organisations challenged the official portrait of virtuous multicultural Britain.

When one considers the institutional racism within employment and housing and the fact that legislation was needed to curb overt forms of

discrimination, it is hard to agree with this notion of Britain as a ‘tolerant society’ in the second half of the twentieth century. The experience of many black and Asian immigrants during this period is often at odds with the notion of a ‘tolerant’ and welcoming Britain (BTEG, 2007b: 3).

In understated and reasonable language emphasising the power of their point, BTEG highlighted the fallacy of Britain as a tolerant and welcoming place. Racism was institutional, i.e. organised and embedded, and policymakers that emphasised British decency were detached from real BME life that BTEG was deeply connected to. Not only was Britain not a tolerant nation it was complacent as Jeremy Crook from BTEG stated when he claimed that ‘[a]s a country we are still not bold enough and determined enough to deal with racial inequalities at the highest levels in the public, private and third sector’ (BTEG, 2008: 7).

Despite this concern about being cast in the role of perpetual outsiders, the BME-led race equality organisations that I studied were not against the nation. Rather, they each sought to transform it. In the case of OBV its efforts went to the heart of the formal politics of Britain; namely to increase BME involvement and interaction in British public life. This focus on national life was evident in the ways in which some events were viewed as nationally important. For example, Simon Woolley argued that the Macpherson Inquiry verdict made ‘British history’ and also stated that the build-up to the 1997 General Election was ‘the first time in British politics that the black community had been put on the radar as a political force...’ (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview). In these ways Woolley connected BME race equality and the story of the nation as a whole. Furthermore, after the election of Barack Obama as the President of the United States, OBV introduced the idea of the ‘Obama generation’ of BME political leaders and fantasised about the prospects of a BME politician one day leading Britain (OBV, 2009).

Elsewhere, a consultation document from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion which asked for feedback on whether it was appropriate to claim values shared by other

nations as 'British values' in order to help the nation to cohere around them. Whereas even political actors close to the government such as Philip Collins pointed out the conceptual and practical limits to the idea, BTEG did 'not see any harm in calling the shared values we hold British' (BTEG, 2007b: 3). This was hardly a ringing endorsement of Britishness by BTEG but it did demonstrate that it and other BME-led race equality organisation were located in the nation and in the project of national improvement rather than in any desire to see its downfall. This was different to the priorities cited above, where Kundnani (2005) contrasted Britishness and universalism.

One of the most striking features about the written texts of the three BME-led race equality organisations was that of the three central issues in this thesis – multiculture, race equality and nation – these organisations had considerable amounts to say about multiculture and, of course, the need for and approaches to race equality. However, they were relatively silent on connecting the work for race equality to the project of developing the nation. That mission had been tackled by the CFMEB early on in the New Labour period with mixed results. The antagonistic response to the CFMEB may have served to discourage endeavours to link efforts on race inequality and the life and progress of the nation. A more important reason may have been the specialist nature of many civil society organisations. These organisations were focussed on the narrower 'day job' which was the issue of race equality and the material realities associated with that rather than the macro-politics of nation-making.

The three BME-led race equality organisations were specialist in two main senses. First, they had a particular set of sectional beneficiaries in mind for their work, namely BME people and communities; and second, each of the organisations had particular sectoral interests. For example, in this latter part of the New Labour period ROTA was focussed on specific areas that included crime and anti-social behaviour; homelessness; health and social services (ROTA, 2008). BTEG in the meanwhile was focused on BME employment rates, educational attainment and entrepreneurship (BTEG, 2008). OBV at this time worked to increase the political education, participation and representation of BME

people (OBV, 2008). The mix of the sectional and sectoral specialisms of these BME-led race equality organisations appeared to overshadow the national context in which those sectional and sectoral disadvantages were situated.

This failure to locate their work in a national context may have been a tactical mistake given the aim of BME-led race equality organisations to secure a full and equal place inside the nation for BME people and the increased turn of policymakers towards ideas of the nation. However brap, the explicitly non BME-led equality and human rights organisation, argued that the failure of BME-led race equality organisations to address and locate their work explicitly in the (national) collective was not a tactical failure of BME-led political interventions but inherent to these forms of organising.

We don't understand at the moment what the bigger gain is because we don't necessarily believe we're in this society together. So I think that there's something about reframing that agenda so we begin to believe that we are a society together and that, you know, that is something that I think traditional race politics dismantles very quickly (Joy Warmington, 2011, Interview).

For Warmington, as with John Denham's point about 'special interest' (2010: 5), there was a tension between the collective and the sectional interest. Instead of being all in this together it was a case of all being against each other. BME identity politics was a culprit in that its focus on specific interests meant that it detracted from the whole. Though Warmington undoubtedly had a point about the risk of narrow BME thinking, her words were also themselves advancing brap's own sectional interests as a new and transformative civil society actor in equality.

Unsurprisingly, Jeremy Crook from BTEG disagreed with this assertion of being disinterested in and detrimental to the collective. He argued that BTEG had made the effort to position race equality as a collective project.

... we have certainly from our communities tried to make sure that we have got a voice whether locally or nationally to advance our interests and make this place a fairer society for everyone... and we've never kind of said that it's just about us having more opportunities for ourselves. I think we've wanted to make the system fairer for everyone so that you are judged on your merit and your qualifications and your experience and not the colour of your skin. So I'd like to think that there's been a benefit to all communities in this country from the efforts you know of race equality organisations... (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

Crook argued that the ultimate goal was to have a 'fairer society for everyone'. However, a merit-based system, with the implication that this would lead to a more proportional distribution of BME people in good jobs, other things being equal, would adversely affect white people that benefitted from the status quo. As it transpired, the argument about the principle of merit was rarely if ever advanced in written-down texts from BME-led race equality organisations. Instead the emphasis appeared to be about the progress of BME people that left BME-led organisations open to accusations of 'special pleading' (Gilroy, 1992: 49).

However, it was also the case that BME-led organisations were expected by policymakers to only engage in special pleading and sectional thoughts.

... the unfortunate fact is that if you just get bracketed as race equality organisations or... black organisations [then] very often you're perceived as having a very narrow of the world... that's only about black people or about black and Asian people (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

The process of policy development, discourse and discussion meant that policymakers, funders and others did not want to hear from BME-led organisations on questions of

nation even where these organisations had expertise to lend, for example on questions of fairness and equality, let alone on wider issues such as environment or foreign policy. BME perspectives were instead considered narrowly sectional and sectoral – a stereotype that BME-led organisations did little to counter.

There was one notable and belated attempt from a BME-led initiative to fully engage with the idea of race equality and the life of the nation. This was the 2010 'Black Manifesto'<sup>45</sup>. It argued the following:

Britain is a country rightly proud of its historic contributions to setting the global standard for democracy and the rule of law. Trial by jury, the National Health Service, access to state education, universal suffrage and the more recent adoption of human rights legislation are examples of a nation that has sought to ensure that most vulnerable in society are guaranteed basic access to important services and protected from unlawful discrimination (Equanomics UK, 2010: 2).

This was an attempt to co-locate race equality to other great British achievements around which one could build a political and public consensus. More specifically, the manifesto argued that race inequality was incompatible with Britain's journey as a 'modern, progressive, inclusive society' (Equanomics, 2010: 2). Unfortunately this argument did not fit well with the policy mood of the time (see chapter seven for further discussion on the coalition government).

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<sup>45</sup> The manifestos had been produced to coincide with every general election in the United Kingdom since 1997, by a coalition of BME-led and non BME-led organisations concerned about race equality. The 2010 Manifesto involved over 40 organisations: Operation Black Vote, Runnymede Trust, Oxfam and Black Mental Health UK.

### 3 Citizens and citizenship: On best behaviour

#### 3.1 New Labour, new citizens

The (re)construction of Britain and Britishness attempted to pause multiculture by appealing above and beyond it. In contrast, the debate on citizens and citizenship ducked under the issue of multiculture and ethnic groupings and towards the population as individuals. At the same time, citizenship emphasised individual rights and responsibilities (Goldberg, 2008) thus attaching and obligating the individual to the collective.

Citizenship had been associated with voluntary civic community over tribal loyalty (Shafir, 1998) as well as an attachment to political community (Anderson, 2006 [1983]; May, 2002; Parekh, 2008). Most importantly, even though it was possible for citizenship to be conceived locally, transnationally (Yuval-Davis, 1997) and postnationally (Soysal, 1994), it is more typically thought of as official membership of a nation-state (Marshall, 1964 [1950]; Touraine, 1994). Indeed Bhikhu Parekh (2000) has argued that the (nation) state and citizenship have operated as two parts of a whole.

In this latter part of the New Labour period nation and citizenship were explicitly tied to Britishness (Ministry of Justice, 2007). Yet citizenship could also be de-coupled from ideas of Britishness and British identity as historian Linda Colley explained in a Downing Street Millennium Lecture on *Britishness in the Twenty-first Century*.

Instead of being mesmerised by debates over British identity, it would be far more productive to concentrate on renovating British citizenship, and on convincing all of the inhabitants of these islands that they are equal and valued citizens irrespective of whatever identity they may individually select to prioritise... (Colley, 1999, cited in Weight, 2002: 732).

Although this formulation kept the link between citizenship and Britain, Colley advocated a shift away from often angst-ridden ideas of Britishness and the need for (BME) people to

identify as British, in favour of more concrete and equal benefits of British citizenship. Instead she favoured filling British citizenship with meaning – making it full and equal regardless of how British citizens chose to identify. Colley also de-emphasised Britain and Britishness by using the less familiar term ‘these islands’. This reduced emphasis on Britain was taken up by the CFMEB which argued that the aim should be to develop ‘a sense of affiliation to the supranational entity known as ‘these islands’’ (Runnymede Trust, 2000: 38) and that perhaps one day a unifying term equivalent to ‘Nordic’ might be developed to reflect them.

Despite the invitation from Colley and the CFMEB to broaden connectivity beyond notions of Britain and Britishness New Labour chose to ignore this appeal and instead they appeared ‘mesmerised’ *both* by Britishness and British citizenship.

The citizen was important to New Labour because s/he was required to play their part in a renewed Britain and in a new post-Thatcherite settlement, which, according to Stuart Hall, included ‘a new relationship between markets and the public good, the individual and the community’ (Hall, 1998: 9). The citizen was understood as a social concept in that it signified that the individual was part of the wider collective web and was an active participant in networks of social capital and community life discussed in chapter four. According to Gordon Brown, there existed a long chain by which different elements of society were connected ‘stretching from the individual and family to the community and state’ (Brown, 2000, cited in Wilson, 2001: 6).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> These linkages were reminiscent of the famous connections made by Edmund Burke in 1790 (2003: 40) in which he stated:

To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind.

The individual was attached to the ‘little platoon’ – small groupings to which the individual person might feel considerable affinity and sense of belonging, for example to family, and various forms of community, such as

In order to strengthen these connections the earlier part of New Labour's time in office had seen attempts to promote the role of active citizens as part of a broader rebalancing between individuals, communities and the state. David Blunkett was the main champion of this agenda during his time as Home Secretary between 2001 and 2004 in his work on 'active communities' (see chapter three on community) aimed at linking citizens with each other and to the state for the 'advancement' of the local community (Blunkett, 2001). Blunkett favoured citizens that were active, moral, political and working in overlapping and constructive ways with fellow citizens. Henry Tam, a senior civil servant who worked with David Blunkett, described the aim of civil renewal as tackling the 'lack of [a] relationship between the state and citizens' (Henry Tam, 2011, Interview). Tam described three strands to this work to strengthen the connection of individuals to the state:

One is individuals who just don't have the know-how or confidence to engage with the state so we promoted work to actually help develop people skills and confidence... The second strand was developing communities and community organisations... The third was developing relationships between state and citizens. So, that's recognising that even if you have individuals that are more confident, you have very vibrant community organisations, you still need state organisations; central government; local government to be open and responsive to actually create the opportunities for people to engage (Henry Tam, 2011, Interview).

Tam's description interpreted active citizenship as essentially a good governance initiative in accordance with David Blunkett's interest in promoting community 'self-government' (Nick Pearce, 2011, Interview). However, to focus on this element alone would be to

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people sharing identity, experiences or locality – and then from there to wider groupings such as society, country and, in modern parlance, humanity.

ignore the moral dimension of the work and Blunkett's own emphasis on encouraging a combination of 'political literacy, social and moral responsibility' (Blunkett, 2001: 137-138). Moral and social responsibility meant that all organised citizen activity was not good activity – this was only the case if active citizens were delivering collective 'goods' such as community cohesion.

In the third part of the New Labour period in the wake of the northern disturbances and the London bombings policymakers placed a greater emphasis on citizenship as the relationship *between* citizens, in addition to the relationship between the citizen and the state that was prominent in Tam's definition. For example, Sadiq Khan, former Minister of State for Communities described citizenship as a 'horizontal contract between citizens' (Khan, 2007: 24). This reflected a desire in New Labour to extend and to make more explicit the demands placed upon citizens.

What we hold in common and the sense that it is good to contribute to wider society has tended to be implicit in Britain – not stated and debated clearly as in some countries like France. Our approach to citizenship has been *laissez faire* (Kelly and Byrne, 2007: 3).

The call from Kelly and Byrne was for a 'more overt but inclusive sense of citizenship' (2007: 4); as well as 'a clear statement of British citizenship, its rights and responsibilities' (2007: 5). This work, along with that cited above from Sadiq Khan, illustrated how New Labour wished to use citizenship to control interactions between citizens and indeed require citizens to productively overlap with the state and with each other as part of the requirements of citizenship.

#### *From rhetoric to policy*

Soon after Gordon Brown took up the post of Prime Minister New Labour published a Green Paper entitled *The Governance of Britain* (Ministry of Justice, 2007) to make aspects of British citizenship more explicit. The document outlined the 'Government's vision and

proposals for constitutional renewal' and covered a wide variety of issues including measures to: hold the executive to account; to reform democracy, e.g. through an elected second chamber; and – of most interest here – to develop citizenship, specifically to reassess

... the rights and responsibilities that shape the relationships which the people of this country have with each other [and]... the relationship people have with the institutions of the state, at a local, regional and national level (Ministry of Justice, 2007: 6).

Proposals included a review of British citizenship (Ministry of Justice, 2007) to be conducted by Lord Goldsmith. Ahead of the review the government was clear about the importance of citizenship:

Each of us possesses multiple identities because we define ourselves in different ways depending on the factors that matter most to us. Factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, class and faith are shared with some and different from others. But in addition to these there is a national identity that we can all hold in common: the overarching factor – British citizenship – that brings the nation together (Ministry of Justice, 2007: 53).

According to the Green Paper, citizenship was tied to the nation and made it cohere. It sat alongside, but was superior to, other aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity and faith because citizenship and national identity – the two were offered as synonymous – was one characteristic that most of the population could share. In adopting this approach the government rejected Linda Colley's earlier advice to focus on full and equal citizenship and to forgo questions of British identity (1999, cited in Weight, 2002) and argued that 'a clearer definition of citizenship would give people a better sense of their British identity...' (Ministry of Justice, 2007: 54). Citizenship was to be used as a mechanism to nationalise

people as it was suggested that a 'clearer understanding of the common core of rights and responsibilities that go with British citizenship will help build our sense of shared identity and social cohesion' (Ministry of Justice, 2007: 57). Just how clarifying rights and responsibilities of British citizenship would enhance social cohesion was unclear. The citizens of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham all theoretically 'enjoyed' full and equal British citizenship and evident tensions were the results of unequal and/or diminished chances in life (Amin, 2002).

While New Labour attempted to make citizenship a more explicit set of rights and duties, government only had limited scope to influence the behaviours of existing citizens. Things were different in the sphere of immigration where policymakers could make much more explicit demands of migrants whilst dangling the carrot of citizenship. Picking up from the 2002 White Paper on nationality, immigration and asylum policy (Home Office, 2002), New Labour introduced the conception of 'earned citizenship' (Brown, 2008; Home Office and UK Border Agency, 2009). In a speech on the subject in February 2008 Gordon Brown argued that:

Citizenship is not an abstract concept, or just access to a passport. I believe it is – and must be seen as – founded on shared values that define the character of our country (Brown, 2008).

According to Brown, the nation mirrored the values of citizenship. Under the proposed 'earned citizenship' regime prospective new citizens were expected to demonstrate that they were worthy of and shared the so-called national values. The requirement was, like the besuited black man in the Tory election poster cited earlier, that these newcomers had to demonstrate that they were on Britain's side; meeting English language requirements; and that they were 'joining in with the British way of life', including showing 'commitment to the UK by playing an active part in their community' (Home Office, 2009: 7) and 'engaging with UK society' (2009: 9). This work on the moral and behavioural components of citizenship sat alongside earlier work to establish a points-

based approach to manage the flow of migrants which included suitability criteria such as qualifications, earnings, English language skills and the funds available for individuals to support themselves (Home Office, 2006). Together, the points-based system and 'earned citizenship' would produce the ideal citizen projected onto the figure of the immigrant. They were: educated and employable; capable of paying and making their way in the world; a net contributor to the state; active citizens engaged in public life; and they would interact and overlap constructively with their fellow citizens.

Ultimately, as with the British statement of values, the proposals on earned citizenship were not enacted.<sup>47</sup> However, the figure of the good citizen was a powerful construct and a standard by which citizens could be judged. Discussions of citizenship explicitly placed a question mark against BME people aspiring to citizenship through the immigration system and emphasised the need to consider their suitability as Britons. By extension, this also revived broader concern contained in community cohesion that British BME people were problematic compared to desirable whiteness (Burnett, 2004; Robinson, 2005).

### 3.2 BME people and dual citizenship

While policymakers were pointing to the ambiguous position of BME people as citizens, BME-led race equality organisations argued that BME people had 'earned' their citizenship but were denied it in as full and equal terms as white British people. In effect there was dual citizenship in Britain. BME-led race equality organisations were drawn to the possibility of 'renovating British citizenship' and giving BME people the status the status of 'equal and valued citizens' (Colley, 1999, cited in Weight, 2002: 732). Though these race equality organisations had been ambivalent about Britishness and Britain they were drawn to British citizenship. Floyd Millen, former Chief Executive of ROTA, stated that:

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<sup>47</sup> They were due to come into force in 2011 but Teresa May, the Home Secretary of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government announced in November 2010 that earned citizenship would not be implemented – not because there was an objection in principle to such measures but because it was deemed that the policy would be 'too complicated, bureaucratic and, in the end, ineffective' (May, 2010).

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities have for many years called for increased openness, inclusion and an adherence to a collective consciousness that is more than lip service and sees them as fully accepted citizens contributing to the success of Britain (Millen, 2002: 2).

This passage was part of a report on a citizenship conference and Millen argued that BME people wanted to be included in the wider body of citizens but that wider society did not share this desire. BME people aspired to be full, equal and contributing citizens.

Full and equal citizenship for BME people implied (but did not guarantee) certain rights with it, such as the entitlement to live without discrimination. In addition, the three organisations that I studied also wanted BME people to actively perform the role of the good citizen. This theme emerged in the programmatic work of the three BME-led race equality organisations that attempted to support BME people in various aspects of contributing citizenship. For example, when Jeremy Crook spoke about BTEG's work on behalf of BME people it was:

... to ensure that we can realise our full potential in this society... primarily means, you know, succeeding in education; having a robust voluntary sector; ... and [being] involved in the wider community (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

BTEG's goals here were entirely consistent with good citizenship, both in terms of personal development and improvement, for example to do well in education; to get jobs; to start businesses; but also to play a role in public life and to be active in BME and non-BME civil society. This view, consistent with policymaker ideas of good citizenship, was about making the most of life and the passage above showed BTEG in a parenting role wanting the most for its metaphorical BME offspring.

... our core message has been that there's a responsibility on two sides: both within our communities, i.e. within black, Asian communities, to make sure we do everything we can for ourselves to give to ensure that we can realise our full potential in this society... and on the other hand government and employers taking responsibility for combating unfair and discriminatory barriers and practices (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

Crook accepted that BME people needed to work hard. The work of the good BME citizen was to control what they could control and corporate citizens such as government and employers were charged with ending discrimination. In this passage, like the one immediately above, Crook talked about BMEness in terms of 'self-help', self-reliance and the attainment of 'full potential'.

OBV's work was aimed at BME people taking up positions in public life so that other BME people could fare better. By way of illustration OBV's advert in the black newspaper *The Voice* (1997) asked for BME people to step forward as candidates for the May 1998 local elections to ensure that people were 'fighting our corner at the policy table'. The advert ran under the heading 'your community needs you', adapting the tagline from the famous 1914 British wartime recruitment poster featuring Lord Kitchener that declared that 'your country needs you'. While the situation was not war, the OBV advert painted a picture of a crisis and the need for BME people to be public-minded and to heed the call to action.

The advert was part of a larger conscription drive by BME-led organisations to promote not just active citizens but BME-centred citizens that saw the advancement of the life of the BME 'community' as part of their public contribution. BTEG, OBV and ROTA were themselves formed and run by BME citizens committed to an ethos of BME self-help and advancement and they wanted other BME people to follow suit. As Simon Woolley stated:

For many individuals the work of OBV literally changes their lives. They become magistrates, school governors, sit on health boards and become

role models... Above all we seek to promote the idea that to play a full and positive role in the political and decision-making arena benefits all of society (OBV, 2010: 3).

OBV viewed engagement in public life as both personally transformative and publically valuable. They argued that BME involvement in public institutions benefitted the whole of the public rather than special BME interests. They also actively embraced the idea of BME active citizens as role models and these super-citizens were designed to inspire the next generation of active BME citizens.

The embrace of role models illustrated that BME-led organisations, such as OBV, believed in the spirit of self-help and what BME people could do, even in adversity. It also hinted that BME-led race equality organisations accepted, to a degree, the idea of BME dysfunction, for example captured in the phrase 'poverty of aspirations' in which disadvantaged people were blamed for not doing enough to escape their own diminished circumstances (Bennett, 2012).<sup>48</sup>

Walking this difficult line of self-help agentic possibility on the one hand and structural disadvantage on the other was difficult and involved different types of interventions. While OBV worked to enable BME citizens to rise to public office, BTEG and ROTA, in some of their work, attempted to provide support for BME citizens that had 'fallen' or those at risk of 'falling'.

BTEG was involved in delivering the REACH programme – a national role model programme with BME male mentors working with 'Black boys and young Black men, supporting and inspiring them to raise their aspirations, attainment and achievement' (BTEG, 2010b: 1). The programme began in 2008 and followed in the footsteps of other

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<sup>48</sup> Even though there was little evidence to support the causal connection between aspiration and attainment (Cummings et al., 2012).

mentoring programmes used in Britain {Majors et al., 2000). REACH mentors provided guidance, support and inspiration for young people and the programme was aimed at reaching over 10,000 young black males with outreach through local engagement activities undertaken by approximately 50 local groups (BTEG, 2010b). The programme was particularly aimed at addressing disproportionately high black youth unemployment and disproportionately low educational attainment (BTEG, 2010b).

As stated above the idea of role models did not deny the structural causes of race inequality but suggested that these structural factors needn't determine the destiny of black people. The focus on the situation of black boys and young black men was driven by statistics on their relative lack of successful outcomes, but was also about an ongoing sense of alarm around the young black male (Hall, 1978). Middle-aged BME and black leaders saw black boys and young men as troubling and perhaps dysfunctional and underperforming citizens in need of redemption.

ROTA's *Building Bridges Project* was another example of engagement with young people to enhance their lives and prospects as citizens. This project involved youth-led research and a policy project into gangs, weapon use and serious youth violence. The project ran from 2006-2008 and involved a policy recommendations report which included a call to decouple gangs from 'black culture' in the policy and policing imagination (ROTA, 2008: 9).

Apart from the findings and the commendable attempt to involve young people in research, the Building Bridges Project was similar to the REACH project in that it involved a group of engaged citizen-volunteers (such as young researchers or mentors) leading a process intended to safeguard or redeem BME people that were less active and/or potential 'counter-citizens'.

BTEG, OBV and ROTA's interventions were consistent with the public-minded involvement and engagement that the government encouraged from its active citizens. As OBV noted: '[o]ur ethos of engagement sat well with the previous Government strategy particularly

around community cohesion' (OBV, 2010: 3). However, where BME citizenship and policy agendas parted ways in this third part of the New Labour period was in the way that organised BME citizenship was perceived to advance the interests of minority ethnic communities. By way of contrast, the government wanted active citizens but BME-centric citizenship was problematic. However, for an organisation such as OBV it was not enough that BME people were active in public life; they needed to be active with a BME perspective.

Black politicians would say 'I'm a politician that just happens to be black'. We want the opposite. We want our communities to say that I am just a black man or woman that happens to be a politician' (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

Simon Woolley wanted active citizens to put their blackness first, particularly in the case of politicians that had the opportunity to influence policy and ultimately the prospects for equality for BME people. OBV's aim was not simply to raise the numbers of BME people in public office but to ensure that policymaking was more in tune with the needs of BME citizens.

This meant that while policymakers saw citizenship as a means to nullify multiculture by making citizenship more explicitly about rights and duties and commitment to the larger populous, BME-led race equality organisations could view BME people as BME citizens first and national citizens second. Therefore citizenship was not necessarily a means to sidestep questions of multiculture.

#### 4 Re-framing equality

A third attempt in this final part of the New Labour period through which policymakers tried to set questions of multiculture to one side came in the shape of a new framework for thinking about equalities that incorporated the potentially universalising force of human rights.

Towards the end of the New Labour period there was a major re-framing of the way that inequalities were understood and responded to by policymakers. While discussions of Britishness and citizenship attempted to escape from problematic notions of ethnic groupings the issue of persistent (race-based) inequality was still important. As Trevor Phillips argued:

Well, it seems to me that the first pre-requisite for a society to live at ease with itself... is that there has to be at least the promise of equality. I don't think you have to have it [equality] actually. That's a much more complicated question, but at least people have to believe that they have the opportunity to exercise their talent and potential and all the rest of it in the same way as their neighbours. If they don't then you don't get past first base (Trevor Phillips, 2011, Interview).

Phillips distinguished between the equality of outcomes – a ‘complicated question’ – and equality of opportunity, which he labelled the ‘promise of equality’. This latter variant of equality was a necessary but not sufficient condition for peaceful multicultural coexistence.

The development of a new (race) equality framework in this latter part of the New Labour period had its roots in the early New Labour period and the 1998 Human Rights Act. The Act sought to further align British law with the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 14 of Part 1 of the Convention included the ‘prohibition of discrimination’ which meant that:

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social

origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status (Home Office, 1998: 25).

The 1998 Human Rights Act offered a strong statement on anti-discrimination. The Human Rights Act was passed before the events of the northern disturbances and the London bombings at a time when New Labour was rather more sympathetic to the BME-led pursuit of race equality. In time, as I will show, the notion of human rights provided a way to organise questions of discrimination and equality when multiculture was deemed more problematic.

After the enactment of this legislation the government had hopes that human rights could help to bring the nation together. In the words of Jack Straw, the then Home Secretary:

The HRA [Human Rights Act] will help us rediscover and renew the basic common values that hold us all together. And those are also the values, which inform the duties of the good citizen. I believe that, in time, the HRA will help bring about a culture of rights and responsibilities across the UK (Straw, 1999: 3).

Human rights and freedoms were more than guarantees for individuals; they were collectivising because they were expressions of common values of citizenship and nation. For example, the right to education and the right to participate in free elections were public goods that should be of shared importance to the population and indicate what good citizens should do, i.e. become educated and participate in the electoral process. This framework of human rights therefore conferred privileges on and demanded duties from citizens.

The anti-discriminatory leanings in the Human Rights Act did not resolve questions of how to promote greater equality or race equality. However, a process of changing the equalities regime was set underway with the publication in October 2002 of the

consultation document, *Equality and diversity: Making it happen* (Department of Trade and Industry, 2002). It highlighted the possibility of, but did not explicitly advocate for, the creation of a Single Equalities Body (SEB) bringing together the three previous equalities Commissions: the Commission for Race Equality; the Equal Opportunities Commission (which dealt with gender equality issues); and the Disability Rights Commission. At this stage the consultation document did relatively little to bring together the agendas of human rights and equality and the document made limited reference to human rights beyond saying that one of the strands of the work of an SEB would be the 'promotion and protection of human rights' (Department for Work and Pensions, 2002).

In October 2003, Lord Falconer, the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs, announced to Parliament that the government intended to set up an SEB providing support for human rights as well as equality (Klug and O'Brien, 2004). In 2004, a White Paper (Department of Trade and Industry, 2004) entitled *Fairness for All* outlined the government's vision for the implementation of a new SEB that would initially be called the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). The White Paper included details about the powers, duties and role of the new Commission and integrated human rights more fully into the framework of the SEB. The 2004 White Paper also argued that the new arrangements were necessary because of the 'changing nature of our society poses significant, complex and new challenges to social, economic and political life' (Department of Trade and Industry, 2004: 13). These changes included greater diversity from increased migration that was the result of the forces of globalisation.

Greater diversity in our society poses a significant challenge to how we shape and promote the shared values that underpin citizenship. While respecting and celebrating our differences, citizenship will need to promote wider ownership of these common values and a shared sense of belonging. Human rights, establishing basic values for all of us, will play an increasingly important role in this, providing a language we can all share. This language is one that means something to, and is useful for, all people

no matter what social group they belong to (Department of Trade and Industry, 2004: 15).

According to this document, ethnic diversity was a problem. Human rights, 'based on an idea of fairness for all' (Department of Trade and Industry, 2004: 15) were offered as a set of shared guarantees and shared values so that individuals and members of social groups could feel that they were part of the same body of citizens. However, the government's ambition that human rights would contribute to a shared sense of belonging, because they were in theory available to all, did not make sense in the presence of inequality across society. This was simply a reminder that inequalities did not seem to violate human rights (Parekh, 2006).

Human rights were on occasion called to arbitrate some of the tensions in a multicultural society. For example, when a British National Party (BNP) candidate for the Welsh assembly burnt a copy of the Koran, the right to freedom of expression (Article 10, European Convention on Human Rights) was put into conflict with the freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9, European Convention on Human Rights). The balancing of these rights led to the arrest and charge of the BNP candidate in April 2011 under Section 29 of the Public Order Act (Daily Mail, 2011) on the grounds that the act of burning the Koran could have incited hatred and violence against Muslims. This case showed how human rights legislation could be mobilised to protect ethnic minorities from particular episodes of racist behaviour whilst doing nothing to advance the daily lives of, and combat inequalities faced by, BME people in education, employment, public life and so on.

The Equality Act 2006 brought the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) into being. The Commission was officially launched on 1 October 2007 and renamed the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) when it took on its role as the new institutional hub for equality and human rights. The general duties of the Commission were expressed as follows:

The Commission shall exercise its functions under this Part with a view to encouraging and supporting the development of a society in which –

(a) people's ability to achieve their potential is not limited by prejudice or discrimination, (b) there is respect for and protection of each individual's human rights, (c) there is respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, (d) each individual has an equal opportunity to participate in society... (HM Government, 2006: 2)

The first four elements (items a-d above) of the desirable society were individually-orientated and emphasised the sanctity of the individual and their right to achieve their potential on the basis of respect for their human rights, individual worth and equal opportunities. The section of the 2006 Act that defined equality and diversity further emphasised the individuated nature of this equality and human rights regime by stating that:

“diversity” means the fact that individuals are different, “equality” means equality between individuals... (Equality Act, 2006: 4).

In this way, the collective aspects of inequality such as being BME that had been so prevalent in talk of parallel lives and the troubles of multicultural Britain were downplayed and, similarly, equality was adjudged on the basis of the performance of one person – not one group – against another. Therefore, a high-flying BME person could then be seen as evidence both that the regime to promote individual endeavour was working and that membership of a group was not a constraint on progress. Despite this individualist leaning the idea of collectivity was introduced as part of the EHRC's work to ensure that 'there is mutual respect between groups based on understanding and valuing of diversity and on shared respect for equality and human rights' (Equality Act, 2006: 2). The Act defined a 'group' as:

a class of persons who share a common attribute in respect of any of the following matters – (a) age, (b) disability, (c) gender, (d) proposed, commenced or completed reassignment of gender (within the meaning given by section 82(1) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (c. 65)), (e) race, (f) religion or belief, and (g) sexual orientation (Equality Act, 2006: 5).<sup>49</sup>

The 2006 Act diversified group diversity by constructing and naming additional ‘protected’ group characteristics that it deemed bases for discrimination. The emphasis on ‘mutual respect between groups’ was an echo of the parallel lives discourses that viewed (minority) ethnic groups as a basis for conflict. The task to ensure ‘good relations’ between groups (Equality Act, 2006: 5) had been passed down from the responsibilities of the Commission for Racial Equality, though it was notably not part of the duties of the Disability Rights Commission or the Equal Opportunities Commission (Klug and O'Brien, 2004). Good relations were mainly an issue with the problem categories of race and faith and concerns about conflicts across the key fault lines in multiculture between BME/white people and Muslims/non-Muslims. The Act also confirmed that the EHRC would ‘work towards the elimination of prejudice against, hatred of and hostility towards members of groups’ (Equality Act, 2006: 5). In doing so policymakers acknowledged but did not prioritise the idea that an individual’s group membership could result in prejudice and discrimination.

However, as if to reinforce the contradictory attitude of policymakers towards groups, it was also stated that the EHRC would ‘work towards enabling members of groups to participate in society’ (Equality Act, 2006: 5). This was part of a well-established trope located in the discussions of community cohesion, i.e. that BME ‘tribal loyalty’ acted as a

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<sup>49</sup> The Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1 October 2010 bringing together over 100 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act, including part of the 2006 Equality Act.

brake on membership and active engagement in wider society and belonging to the nation. However, policymakers appeared unconcerned that older people campaigning with Age UK would have their ability to participate in society curtailed or that the mums in Mumsnet would get cut off from the rest of us. Therefore membership of some groups and organisations were problems and others were not.

The new framework of equalities and human rights was ambivalent in regards to race equality as a priority because of the problematic way that it constructed multicultural groups and focused on numerous different 'protected' categories. However, human rights and race equality were not necessarily incompatible. For example the CFMEB had argued that '[h]uman rights principles provide a valuable framework for handling differences, but they are never by themselves enough' (Runnymede Trust, 2000: ix). As the Chair of the CFMEB Bhikhu Parekh later explained:

Although they are closely related, the ideas of human rights and equality belong to different historical traditions, rest on different presuppositions, and have different moral implications. To be sure, human rights include the right to equality, including equality of consideration, respect, treatment, rights and opportunities. However equality encompasses much more than this... Inequalities damage human lives but do not seem to violate human rights (Parekh, 2006: 36).

At the centre of the criticism was that a framework for human rights was insufficiently attentive to the ways in which inequalities diminished human life. Like citizenship and Britishness, it was not clear what human rights had to offer to settle the 'quarrel' between multiculture and collective living where, as with the northern disturbances, the underlying problem was one of inequality, discrimination and a lack of opportunities (Amin, 2002; Kundnani, 2001). Parekh also argued that human rights were of limited assistance in addressing equality because they were predicated on the idea of the homogenous

individual and that rights were the same for each individual, whereas equality was also about collective differences:

... human rights concentrate on individuals; equality does that too but also has a collective dimension. When individuals are discriminated against or subjected to demeaning stereotypes on grounds of colour, ethnicity, race, or gender, they are treated unequally by virtue of their membership of the relevant group. Their discrimination and the disadvantages cannot be tackled at the individual level alone and require actions directed at them collectively (Parekh, 2006: 37).

Parekh argued that human rights downplayed the patterned and collective nature of discrimination and the role of discrimination as a group phenomenon. However, there were also attempts to better connect patterns of race inequality and human rights. For example, in 1997 the anti-racism organisation 1990 Trust set up a human rights programme to tie together questions of race and human rights (cited in Runnymede Trust, 2000: 100) as part of a desire to establish the principle that racism was a violation of human rights (1990 Trust, 2010). This was still a race equality-centred approach whereas brap, the (explicitly not BME-led) equalities and human rights organisation, took a different view of overlapping issues of inequalities. Their Chief Executive Joy Warmington stated that brap was interested in:

... issues of intersectionality. So the idea that you weren't just a BME person, you were also a woman, you were also other things as well. It already had that broad message which did take it a little bit out of outside the kind of core messages of race equality organisations at the time... (Joy Warmington, 2011, Interview).

Warmington was interested in intersectional individuals – those that were members of multiple groups and subject to discrimination on the grounds of those multiple

memberships. This approach was in line with the idea of the need for multiple protected group characteristics as identified in the 2006 Equality Act.

Other race equality actors were critical of the proposed institutional reforms that New Labour proposed to undertake leading up to what eventually was the EHRC. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), which was established by the Race Relations Act 1976 to prevent indirect and direct racial discrimination; to promote racial equality; and to review the working of the Act and make proposals for its amendment (Solomos, 1989: 8), suggested that the 'protected' characteristics under the proposed EHRC's remit were simply too different to each other.

... although all types of inequality share similar features, they also exhibit marked differences... we know that in the area of race, there are institutional and cultural forces at work that resist every effort by decent people at encouragement, promoting good practice and raising awareness (Commission for Racial Equality, 2004: 4).

The CRE acknowledged similarities between different forms of group inequality and in doing so did it attempted to locate itself as a reasoned critic rather than a bitter one attempting to stave off its own demise. However, it argued that racism was more and differently entrenched as a phenomenon than was the case with other forms of group-based discrimination. The CRE spoke of 'forces at work' pointing to the conspiratorial nature of racism and its hold on society. The depth and the breadth of the problem meant that it required a bespoke and specialist solution rather than a generic one.

Some BME-led race equality organisations agreed with this criticism of the difficulty of a single body responding to different inequalities. OBV stated the problem in more forceful and dramatic terms than the CRE (which was constrained by its status as a non-departmental public body).

Frustration has reached boiling point with Black community leaders now the new body has no specific focus on race and no guaranteed Black representation.

Simon Woolley, Director of Operation Black Vote stated

The fundamental failure of this body is its inability to accommodate the needs of various sectors that have different histories, challenges and require different approaches. This one size fits all seems to be a blatant attempt to ignore race equality (OBV, 2006: 1).

The text above from an OBV press release attempted to do a number of things at once. It asserted the specialist nature of race equality through the assertion that the new body needed (but did not guarantee) specialist Black representation. This was consistent with the black political narrative that a black person with a black perspective was best placed to deal with inequality against black people. By extension the argument was that racism was ultimately unknowable to white people. Without black representation the single equalities body would offer a generic approach to a specialist problem, and the history of generic interventions were that they were white-led and overlooked race equality.

Another element of the text was to express anger through claiming that Black community leaders were reaching 'boiling point' and the accusation that the design of the single equalities body was a 'blatant attempt to ignore race equality'. While these latter comments could be said to fall into the caricature of 'angry and black', at the same time, reflecting on the earlier discussion about the narrow spectrum of issues on which race equality organisations were allowed by policymakers to speak, perhaps the tone and content was right for the intended audience. And it may have given the impression of OBV being in touch with and a legitimate carrier of the voice of the 'community' that OBV was expected to 'represent' (see chapter six for more on 'representing').

By including age, gender reassignment, and sexual orientation (Equality Act, 2006: 5) as 'vulnerable' groups and splitting (minority) faith and religion away from its previous place

embedded within minority race, one concern for BME-led race equality organisations was that this diluted the primary and privileged position of race as a locus for discrimination and inequality.

BTEG Trustees and staff remain concerned about the impact of the single equalities agenda. Naturally we welcome the widening of the equality strands but a real consequence of this change is a shift away from race equality (BTEG, 2010: 5).

BTEG adopted a three-tiered approach in this excerpt. The first tier was BTEG's alarm about single equalities. However, they did not simply say that the concern was BTEG's as an institution but that it belonged to BTEG's trustees and staff amplifying and unifying the anxiety felt. Second, BTEG observed the niceties of policy discussion in accepting the already-implemented and irreversible policy development and stating that they 'naturally' welcomed the expansion of equality to other strands and groups. In doing so they attempted to demonstrate their balance and reasonableness in an attempt to make their criticism more credible. Third, and this was where the discursive centre of gravity lay in this text, was that the consequence of the increased number of 'protected' groups was that the protection against BME inequalities became diluted. For BTEG there was a 'zero-sum' equation in operation with respect to 'protected' groups, i.e. if some groups were extended protection against inequality then others by definition, were less protected.

Of the organisations at the centre of my study ROTA, though concerned that the new equalities and human rights apparatus was overly-focussed on individual rather than group race inequality (Gavrielides, 2009), was most interested in intersectional elements of inequality. They hoped that the new EHRC arrangements might create the possibility for joint and collective responses to discrimination and as a result the organisation 'championed the Commission amongst BAME [Black Asian Minority Ethnic] groups' (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview). In doing so ROTA was an outlier amongst BME-led race equality

organisations, as Dinah Cox highlighted with a story of a meeting with other BME representatives on the proposed single equalities body:

... I was the only person in the room that thought that there might be some positive elements of working together with people with other equalities groups but I am a woman as well as black so for me there's always been an issue of one's oppression isn't always necessarily based on a single issue ... So yeah, in that way we weren't in tune with the rest of the black voluntary sector in London at that time. But I still think I was right (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview).

Cox asserted her position as a black woman – and claimed double oppression as a result – to justify why she saw the potential in working with other equalities groups. Cox used her situation as an intersectional individual and tied this to a collective and overlapping response to discrimination for example by emphasising 'working together with people with other equalities groups'. Furthermore Cox appeared proud to say that ROTA was out of line with the wider black voluntary sector and asserted the importance of not going with the crowd.

Kamila Zahno, former Chair of ROTA, also supported the multiple dimensions of the single equalities body and explained how the organisation reconciled this with its BME-led and race equality dimensions:

... we said we still are a race equality organisation and race equality is still our top priority, but we need to be considering, you know, disabled black people, you know, gay and lesbian, LGBT and black people... So in terms of policy and direction we wanted to be more inclusive (Kamila Zahno, 2011, Interview).

Zahno re-emphasised race and race inequality at the heart of ROTA's work. In doing so she attempted to avoid any suggestion that ROTA's work was being diluted but rather that it was being augmented. Their work was therefore both grounded in BMEness but expanded on the principle of inclusion. The position was one where ROTA could justify itself on principled grounds. However, even though this may have been the driver behind ROTA's position, it was also the pragmatic thing to do given the direction of policy and funding.

Though ROTA's intersectional rhetoric was distinct from BTEG and OBV's more BME-centred approach, at the level of specific programmatic intervention the focus of most BME-led organisations was already intersectional and sub-sectional. For example, BTEG's REACH programme targeted young African-Caribbean males recognising that their aggregate experiences were different to young African-Caribbean females. Correspondingly, OBV's work in secondary schools with BME and non-BME young people as part of their *Understanding Power* citizenship project targeted the next generation of voters and parliamentary candidates (OBV, 2006). Therefore the issue of singular or intersectional equality thinking and who was for or against either was not as clear cut as at first glance.

The EHRC and its surrounding discursive and policy framework attempted to 'pause' multiculture or perhaps to dilute and disturb it by insisting both on more individuated approaches to equality and identifying an increased number of groups at risk of discrimination. The new framework for equalities brought the BME-centred way that BME-led race equality organisations had previously organised their work into question, if not into outright disrepute. BMEness was no longer a privileged or prioritised site of discrimination.

Sir Bert Massie, Chair of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and an initial critic of the single equalities body, conceded the EHRC was 'the only game in town' (Disability Now, 2007). Some race equality campaigners came to the same conclusion. Trevor Phillips, who had been Chair of the CRE, was appointed the first Chair of the EHRC. However, this was

only a partial concession to BME-led organisations given his controversial comments (outlined in chapter four) about multiculturalism being ‘killed off’ (cited in Baldwin, 2004) and ‘segregation’ (Phillips, 2005). In addition, OBV Chief Executive Simon Woolley was appointed a Commissioner in the EHRC two years after it was set up (OBV, 2009: 1). These appointments at least gave the Commission two race equality specialists. However, the broader pattern of the shift away from race equality was confirmed in changes in 2012 to the EHRC Chair and Commissioners which saw both Phillips and Woolley leave the Commission and stripped the organisation of race equality champions (Berkeley, 2012).

## 5 Conclusion

This third and final part of the New Labour period witnessed a three-pronged attempt to pause the troublesome idea of multiculture and to (re)establish other ways of thinking about difference and sameness as well as equality and inequality. However, just as was the case with previous discourses of parallel lives and community cohesion, discourses in this third part of the New Labour period had multicultural matters at their heart and turned away from questions of race inequality and impeded equality-orientated BME-led organising.

The idea of the nation was explored by policymakers, particularly Gordon Brown, as a means to provide a transcendent sense of belonging and values that trumped cultural groupings. However, such notions were thin and struggled to locate the essence of Britishness or ‘the British thing’. At the same time Britishness was associated with whiteness (Ali, 2003; Back, 1994) and situated BME people and BMEness always on the edge of or precariously placed inside the nation.

The discursive theme on citizenship crystallised the idea that citizens ought to be individually well educated, employed and employable and emphasised the requirement that their attitudes and actions were public-spirited. However, citizenship was positioned by policymakers as above ‘tribal’ or multicultural loyalties, but at the same time, as evidenced by race inequality statistics, was not fully and equally available to BME people.

Policymakers underpinned citizenship with explicitly British values and identification and, in doing so, once again located BME people on the margins.

Finally, the reconfiguration of equalities and human rights developed more individuated notions of equality and weakened and diversified ideas of groups at risk of inequality. Both developments took focus away from race equality and diminished the relevance and influence of BME-led organising against race inequality.

As a result, in the final part of the New Labour period the discourse of multiculture 'paused' was a continuation of earlier ideas of problematic multiculture, BME people and BME-led organising. The centrality of the nation, the citizen and equalities and human rights may have attempted to step around the multicultural but at the same time they were focussed on amplifying its troublesome aspects.

In the next chapter, I switch attention from the particular themes of discourse across the New Labour period onto how discursive themes were produced by policy actors. I also examine factors that affected the content of policy and political impact of discursive interventions from both BME-led race equality organisations and New Labour policymakers.

# Chapter 6 Politics behind the discursive lines

## 1 Introduction

This chapter takes a sideways step from the previous three chapters and ventures behind the discursive lines related to nation, multiculture and race equality. It is about the politics of policy discourse – where I understand politics to be about the constrained use of power (Goodin and Klingemann, 1996; Goodin, 2009). Therefore my focus is about the constraints that affect the production of policy discourses as well as the efficacy of discourses in the policy process. The first part of this chapter considers the production and deployment of certain ‘official’ policymaker discourses. In this first section, I also explore the complicated relationship between what was said by policymakers and the connection between this and policy initiatives. In the second part of this chapter, I switch attention to interventions in policy discourses from BME-led race equality organisations. In particular, I examine the notion of BME political actors as ‘representative’ of ‘the BME community’ in policy discussions. I then go on to discuss how, in an increasingly hostile policy environment, ‘renegade’ BME perspectives sceptical about race inequality emerged as an alternative theme of BME-led policy discourse.

Before moving on to discuss these matters in further detail, I want to reiterate the importance of policy discourses and the themes contained therein. In chapter one, I cited the ‘socially constructive’ effects of discourses (Fairclough, 2010; Wodak, 2009) as the reason for my interest in them. For policy actors and policymakers discourse was a means to ‘dominate or organise a field of meaning... in a particular way’ (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 3). This kind of manoeuvre relies on rhetoric, i.e. ‘the art of persuasion or effective communication...’ in favour of a particular point of view (Back, 2004: 398).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> An example of persuasive impact came from Margaret Thatcher. She appeared on the current affairs television programme *World in Action* in 1979 and expressed ‘public’ concern about ‘swamping’ by immigrants. Prior to the interview just nine per cent of British citizens felt that there were too many immigrants whereas after the appearance 21 per cent said that they were worried (Winder, 2004: 401).

New Labour, with its close association with 'spin', language and communications management, was all too aware of the potentially constructive effects of discourse. This was perhaps most explicitly articulated by Sadiq Khan in 2008 – before he went on to become Minister of State for Communities. Speaking about the positive, outward-looking London portrayed in the bid for the 2012 Olympic Games, he stated:

This was, in truth, a rather idealised version of London (and Britain), but the story we told was one of a Britain of different races, cultures and religions united in wholeness. We may not be quite there yet, but I think that we saw too how telling that story, to ourselves as much as to the wider world, can help to make it a reality, become a shared understanding of a mission that we want to live up to (Khan, 2008: 8-9).

According to Khan, certain idealised discourses about multicultural Britain helped to make that ideal state more likely. By implication, more dismal discourses about 'parallel lives' helped to position BME people as problems.<sup>51</sup> With this notion of the socially constructive

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Therefore, in claiming that the public was concerned about immigration, Thatcher made parts of the public concerned about immigration – creating a self-fulfilling discursive loop.

<sup>51</sup> Sarah Teather, former Liberal Democrat Minister of State for Children and Families, powerfully made a similar point in July 2013 when she argued (specifically in relation to immigration) that:

Public opinion does not exist in a vacuum, and I wonder whether colleagues have any understanding about language and the implications of language. Language is one of the powerful things you have as a politician, and we need to consider that. We forget that language actually forms society – we're integral to it – so people's attitude to their neighbours is formed partly by the things we say on television, and the way in which they are reported. Silence in the face of language that others are using is not enough (cited in Aitkenhead, 2013).

effects of policy discourses in mind, I now turn to processes of producing themed discourses of community cohesion and parallel lives.

## 2 Policy discourse and policymaking

In this section I consider some process and political dimensions of New Labour policymaker discourses about nation, multiculture and race equality. In the first sub-section below, I examine the production of discourses of community cohesion and parallel lives. In the following sub-section, I then explore the complex relationship between policy discourse and policymaking as part of a discussion about the efficacy of policy discourse.

### 2.1 Producing a parallel universe

As part of my research interviews, I discussed the production process of policy discourses with a number of people close to policymaking. For Nick Pearce, former Head of the Number 10 Policy Unit, the production of policy discourses was often driven by a feeling amongst politicians ‘that they have to name a moment and place themselves’ (Nick Pearce, 2011, Interview). Pearce pointed to the urge that policymakers had to both organise a set of events and to position themselves in relation to those developments. In naming a moment, policy actors were naming themselves and what they, as political actors, stood for.

One such example of ‘naming’ was found in the discourse that centred on ‘parallel lives’ (Burnley Task Force, 2001; Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001). This was perhaps the defining discourse of the ‘problem’ of multicultural Britain in the New Labour period, driving not only the community cohesion agenda (see chapter four) but also the subsequent turn to Britishness and citizenship (see chapter five). This parallel lives

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Teather justified the idea of the power of language in social construction by suggesting a variety of pathways through various discursive pathways that carried pronouncements from on high by policymakers, down to the populous.

discourse was constructed as part of an unusually concerted effort. As described in chapter four, there were five main policy reports that shared a broad analysis on the existence of local ethnic-based segregation as well as the need for more 'positive' connection across ethnic groupings (Ouseley, 2001; Burnley Task Force, 2001; Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001; Home Office, 2001; Oldham Independent Review, 2001). The complementary nature of the five reports can be seen as an example of 'intertextuality' (Atkinson and Coffey, 2011; Gidley, 2004), in which texts (for example those contained across different documents) intersect with other texts (Talbot, 2005). In particular, these five documents were complementary and could be read in conjunction with each other.

Philip Collins, former Chief Speechwriter to Tony Blair, suggested that community cohesion had changed the landscape for policy discourse.

I think looking back on it, obviously you're writing in a context defined by things you don't necessarily have in the forefront of your mind. You know, you know of them, but clearly writing after the Cantle report and other things is different from writing before it... (Philip Collins, 2011, Interview)

However, Collins also argued that such prior discursive inputs were not front of mind for people such as him and rather that '[one is] rarely conscious of them at the time' (Philip Collins, 2011, Interview). Yet, even subliminally, the discourse of community cohesion and parallel lives cast an intertextual shadow and changed the terms and shape of policy debate. As Collins acknowledged, they became 'part of the [speechwriting] mix' (Philip Collins, 2011, Interview) and were inevitably something that policymakers writing on multicultural living had to take account of following the Cantle report.

I have discussed the content of the reports that followed the northern disturbances in some detail in chapter four and do not intend to repeat this material here. Instead, I want to note the concerted process that went into the 'naming' and production of a social

phenomenon of parallelism as a policy concern and theme of policy discourse. Ideas such as ethnic groups living in 'comfort zones' (Ouseley, 2001: 16); '... the segregated nature of society...' (Oldham Independent Review, 2001: 23); and 'parallel lives' (Burnley Task Force, 2001: 7), ensured that a 'field of meaning' (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 3) was being clearly set out and reinforced. This reinforcement included the commissioning of two reports in the aftermath of the 2001 disturbances by Home Secretary David Blunkett. One was the Community Cohesion Review Team, whose terms of reference required it to explore 'the issues that need to be addressed in developing confident, active communities and social cohesion' (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001: 5). The other was John Denham's inter-departmental ministerial group which was tasked to advise the government on what it 'could do to minimise the risk of further disorder, and to help build stronger, more cohesive communities' (Home Office, 2001: introduction).

Professor Michael Keith raised the issue of government-commissioned reports in sealing and reinforcing certain 'understandings' and discursive themes. Reflecting on his own involvement as a Commissioner in the central government-appointed Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007), he stated that:

... you have the terms of reference; you have the bureaucracy [civil service and political advisors]; you have certain kinds of normative frames – and that, if you like, acts as the discursive boundaries (Michael Keith, 2011, Interview).

As Keith noted above, different state, policymaking and political forces were at work constructing tight discursive boundaries around ideas of parallels and cohesion. In effect, policymakers ensured that Ouseley's early ideas (Ouseley, 2001) were followed through by the Cantle (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001), Denham (Home Office, 2001) and, after a gap, Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) reports. Together these reports, and the political actors behind them, entrenched and ring-fenced the emerging discursive 'field' of parallelism and (in)cohesion.

The example of parallel lives and community cohesion, above, illustrates how certain themes can and did take hold in policy debates. Discourses on community cohesion and parallel lives were constructed in a concerted and concentrated way as policymakers threw their discursive weight behind these notions. However, it was not simply the support of policymakers that enabled these discourses to gain purchase. In my interview with Ted Cantle he suggested that part of the power of 'parallel lives' was its poetic and evocative nature.

... I remember actually thinking of and writing the section on parallel lives and I thought... this does conjure up what we've been trying to express and what was being told to us... to express this idea of different communities going along parallel tracks. So, we tried to conceptualise that in a way that would capture people's imagination... (Ted Cantle, 2011, Interview).

In discussing his use of parallel lives, Cantle stated that he wanted to develop a phrase or idea that could capture people's imaginations and crystallise what he believed the Review Team were being told. It was not clear whose imaginations Cantle wanted to capture, although likely suspects were the media; people working in 'diversity' and 'multiculturalism'; and/or the wider general public, including those living in the areas where the 2001 disturbances occurred. The point of such capturing of imagination appeared to be to have discursive and policy (making) effects. By way of contrast, 'conventional' BME-led race equality themes appeared to lack the ability to organise and dominate policy discourses, for reasons that I explore later in this chapter.

Even though policymakers had access to heavy discursive machinery, such as official commissions and reports, to enable discourses to gain a foothold, discursive interventions still needed to tread with care. In particular policymakers did not have carte blanche to

simply say anything they wished in regards to nation, multiculture and race equality. Philip Collins explained:

... it's interesting how there's, in every speech, a sort of tyranny of things you can't not say. And it's actually a mark of progress that you can't not say some of that stuff. Because there was a day when you couldn't say it. And to be forced to have to say it is no bad thing. So to be compelled to do a eulogy to diversity in this speech [on integration delivered by Tony Blair in December 2006] is a much better world than one in which nobody ever says that. In a way I wish I didn't have to do it because I wanted to make a slightly different argument, but nonetheless you do have to do that thing. And there's a little bit that's partly good politics but it's also partly that's what you think. You do want – it's not cynical – you do mean that stuff, but even if you decided to leave it out because you were doing a different speech you'd then get three days of complaints from not having said it (Philip Collins, 2011, Interview).

The first point to note was that speeches from the Prime Minister still mattered. Even in the modern communication age, the old-fashioned medium of the speech still drew attention and criticism if the Prime Minister did not say certain things to satisfy certain constituencies. The problem for Collins was that from the perspective of discursively intervening in policy matters, one could not simply get straight to the point. However, though Collins may have been frustrated by the 'tyranny' of what had to be said, it was not the case that the 'eulogy to diversity' obscured the central message in the 'duty to integrate' speech that he co-wrote with Blair. This was unambiguously captured in the following passage:

The right to be in a multicultural society was always, always implicitly balanced by a duty to integrate, to be part of Britain, to be British and Asian, British and black, British and white (Blair, 2006).

Therefore, although Collins and Blair had to go through certain discursive hoops and observe particular niceties to get there, it was possible to send a loud and clear signal through the speech about their defining idea. In the case of the passage above, this was to serve a warning to BME people and put them on notice about the need to 'integrate' and to stop causing parallel lives.

## 2.2 Policy discourse and its connection to policymaking

Having made a discursive intervention and named political ideas and moments, it was uncertain about how such inputs might influence policymaking. The reality was that policy discourses did not necessarily translate (at least in the short term) into policymaking. For example, Nick Pearce argued the following about community cohesion – the proposed policy solution to parallel lives:

... personally, I don't think that [community cohesion] had a secure place in the policy discourse of the government as much, you know, as people on the outside thought it did. Blunkett was very preoccupied with sorting out asylum and immigration. That was his big major concern when he was Home Secretary – less about established communities, although as I say, there were elements of that – particularly marriage. Blair, I think was absolutely preoccupied with asylum and terrorism – those were the things that most preoccupied him. I don't think he had a community cohesion agenda, really. And I think, you know, we have these periodic eruptions in British public in our history, you know, Notting Hill, Toxteth, Brixton, you know and I think probably those riots in Bradford and Oldham and so on, Burnley, probably had less impact on public policy-making than perhaps Brixton through Scarman or Notting Hill did – to my mind anyway (Nick Pearce, 2011, Interview).

Pearce's account suggested a disconnect between policy discourses, policy-thinking and policymaking. This meant that parallel lives and the community cohesion agenda was less influential, in policy terms than, for example, BME-led race equality organisations deemed (see chapter five). Although there was lots of discursive energy spent on these subjects, policymakers did not really understand how to respond in policy terms to the northern disturbances and other more pressing and practical aspects of 'difference', such as immigration and terrorism, were prioritised. In addition, the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001 appeared to offer less clear policy solutions than earlier eruptions such as Brixton in 1981 (where the policy issues of policing and deprivation were more apparent). According to former Home Office Minister Fiona Mactaggart MP, community cohesion did not lend itself to national policy action.

It [the community cohesion agenda] wasn't just grassroots and practical enough... I think that was a mistake and I think I was to some extent responsible for that. But it [the community cohesion agenda] began to recognise that what one needed to do was to kind of create community initiatives where people could make a difference (Fiona Mactaggart, 2011, Interview).

In different ways, Mactaggart and Pearce agreed that community cohesion, and the parallel lives it was predicated on, held an ambiguous place in the policymaking imagination. For example, neither questioned the validity of the concepts, but both doubted their policy practicalities.

Yet, this difficulty of converting community cohesion into policy terms did not mean that this discourse was not performing political or policy-orientated work. Indeed, discourse could be used to manage and maintain support amongst different constituencies, e.g. electors, the media, politicians, civil society actors and so on. For example, Nick Pearce talked about the function of specific discursive interventions to reassure constituencies.

I think they [some discursive interventions] are much more rhetorical. They function as a rhetorical device; as reassurance devices... So that, for me, is a very interesting question. Whether you get some of these political interventions which are designed to sort of function politically for the politicians, but remain largely rhetorical when it comes to the business of Government (Nick Pearce, 2011, Interview).

For Pearce, the community cohesion agenda was largely rhetorical and lacked a hard policy edge. Instead, Pearce talked about the function of discourse as 'reassurance devices' – and as such, discursive inputs were still a useful tool of politics, policy, influence and persuasion.

Another slightly different aspect of the connection of policy discourse, policymaking and reassurance was that, in some cases, policymaking connected to race equality came without a race equality discourse. As Sunder Katwala, former General Secretary of the Fabian Society, explained.

[Sometimes]... people are hoping not to, I think, generate enormous amounts of discourse and discussion of it [policymaking] because there's a bit of a risk... You've got people like Robin Cook and Peter Hain essentially soft left sympathisers of New Labour saying we shouldn't do good works by stealth and not tell people about it. Where I think the sort of Blairite view is 'what's the point of creating a public argument about stuff that we're getting on with and that hasn't been spotted'... I think, if you're doing things like spending a lot of money on schools and the health service and trying to redirect resources to the poorest areas on a kind of evidence base, minorities will be disproportionate winners because they are the most disadvantaged; but you think you will be less successful at doing it if you were to articulate that. And I think, you know, there are kind of pros and cons about that... I think that... the Labour party will be

perceived by white voters as primarily interested in advancing the interests of non-white voters over white voters... (Sunder Katwala, 2011, Interview).

Katwala argued that the discursive silence on the race equality dimensions of New Labour's investment in public services, regeneration and renewal enabled New Labour to advance the position of BME people in society. According to Katwala, New Labour understood its policies as being redistributionary and reducing race inequality but that the absence of multiculture or race equality discourses accompanying these policies helped to ensure that this work could be undertaken reassuringly and without alarming white people. In other words, just as there were political moments that needed to be named there were other occasions when the politic thing to do was to leave things unnamed or to name them something uncontentious.

In this section I have considered the complicated politics behind the discursive lines of policymakers. At times, as with community cohesion and parallel lives, policy discourse could be developed as part of a concerted and muscular effort. However, policymakers could not simply impose their discourses. For discursive interventions to gain ground they needed to observe certain rules and organise around memorable ideas and phrases as well as pay due regard to 'sensitivities' on 'diversity' in order for their central argument and rhetoric to be heard. The nature of policy efficacy of discourses was also complex. For example, community cohesion and parallel lives were discursively important but may not have had much direct policymaking follow-through. However, even where policy discourses could not directly be converted into policymaking they could organise understandings of a political field and thereby make a political and policy mark. It was in pursuit of this kind of influence that BME-led race equality organisations were active discursively. It is to this topic that I turn next.

### 3 Bringing BMEness to discourse

#### 3.1 BME engagement in policy: gaining footholds and treading carefully

Whereas policymakers could not always convert policy discourses into policy action they could often shape policy debate with discursive resources and power at its disposal. By comparison, BME-led race equality organisations faced a number of difficulties in making effective discursive interventions on policy issues. For these organisations, the politics of policy discourse and policy-influencing involved countering what at times was 'hostility' from policymakers about the place of BME communities and BME organising in British society as well as difficult issues of new ethnicities (see chapter two). Both of these factors curtailed the ability of BME-led race equality organisations to turn policy discussions back to questions of race equality, discrimination and disadvantage – or to present such questions in a way to capture imagination and dominate a discursive field.

Engaging in policy discussions with policymakers was difficult and often unrewarding for race equality initiatives in the New Labour period, as the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CFMEB) found to its cost (see chapter three). Reflecting on the response to the CFMEB report, Bhikhu Parekh echoed the point made by Nick Pearce and Philip Collins cited above about discursive interventions as reassurance.

If you are trying to persuade people you must begin by praising them – say nice things about them... I think in our report we were carping from time to time; critical; and it might have been helpful if we had begun the report with a fulsome praise of Britain, saying it's a great society; proud to belong here; but it has some few blemishes and we need to correct them (Bhikhu Parekh, 2011, Interview).

Parekh acknowledged that the CFMEB may not have observed certain reassuring niceties and instead the tone and content of its report could be perceived by policymakers as

overly critical. Parekh also suggested that the CFMEB's intervention was mired in the politics of the time.

Remember that there is also the politics to this report... We were associated – I was associated – with Tony Blair. Because I had just been appointed peer by Tony Blair. I was also connected with IPPR [the Institute for Public Policy Research] which is a Labour party think tank. So was Trevor Phillips. So, if you wanted to attack the Labour government in 2001, one easy way to attack it was to attack the report and take the report as representing the hidden agenda of Labour government – breaking up Britain.

According to Parekh, parts of the media that were hostile to New Labour coerced New Labour into a robust counter-response to the CFMEB report. In particular, Parekh suggested that the fact that the report was associated with him, as well as a critical thinker such as Stuart Hall, was a provocation to a right wing media already angered by what they saw as a meek and accepting policy response to the Macpherson report (Pilkington, 2003). Therefore the context in which a discursive intervention was made was crucial to its ability to influence policy debates and policymaking.

Whereas policymakers rapidly shut out an intervention such as the CFMEB, in other cases, the policy process almost required that highly critical race equality actors were seen to be part of policy deliberations. Karen Chouhan, former Chief Executive of 1990 Trust, reflected on that organisation's inclusion in policy discussions in the following way.

I think what was good for the 1990 Trust was that it was never backward in coming forward [in its interventions in policy discourse]. It never was shy about saying things weren't actually with the grain they were against the grain and for a strange reason that actually... meant that we were included on a lot of things that we didn't think that we would naturally

be, partly because it's like they [policymakers] wanted their enemies in the tent. So, in a funny way, saying what you want to say and saying it loudly can actually make you more included (Karen Chouhan, 2011, Interview).

Counter-intuitively, it was the robust and oppositional nature of 1990 Trust's policy discourses that resulted in them being invited into the policy tent, as policymakers attempted to keep their 'enemies' close. The inclusion, by policymakers, of race equality campaigners in policy processes appeared, at least somewhat, to be aimed at demonstrating that the policy process embraced 'diverse' opinions. However, it was not clear that 'inclusion' in policy processes resulted in impact and influence in policy debate and policymaking.

As discussed in chapter two, whether and how BME organisations and/or individuals should be involved with policymakers has been a contentious issue. Some critics saw such engagement as 'selling out' (Feinstein, 2010; Sivanandan, 1990) serving self-interests and failing the broader BME population. I suggest that these were relatively easy charges to make against policy-engaged BME-led race equality organisations and the reality was more complex, as the BME-led race equality organisations that I studied appeared to demonstrate.

Some BME leaders understood that there were compromises in their policy discourses as part of the process of engaging with policymakers. As Dinah Cox explained: 'We would tone down the use of our language in order to keep the door open...' (2011, Interview). Cox went on to describe how, over the New Labour period, continued articulation of the need for action on race inequality led to resistance from policymakers:

With policymakers I did put forward issues about – and I think you'll find in our writings at the time – you do need to address the balance by doing positive action... Yes I think there was some interest to start with. I do

think by the end eyes were glazing over and as policymakers moved away from the discourse of equality into the discourse of diversity placing the emphasis, I felt, on individuals... (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview).

Cox described both an attempt to keep the policy door open through tailored language but also an understanding that the door was not fully open, e.g. it was closing in relation to 'positive action' to counteract the effects of past discrimination (Equality and Human Rights Commission, undated). Also a policy door might ostensibly be open but access to and inclusion of BME-led race equality organisations in policy processes was not the same as impact. This ambiguous position was reflected as Cox stated the following:

You do have to be co-opted to a certain degree to operate with policymakers but even if you feel that those policymakers even understand some of what you say and you're nuancing it or you're trying to help them to develop something going forward then the compromise is worth making because everything in life is a compromise for most people...

If we don't tell them [government] when we think they're wrong or what we think should be in its place or how to do it better there is a problem and then you get [to] the point where you are in government's pockets or you're in funders' pockets and you are no longer speaking truth to power. [Instead] you are sitting round nice dinners (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview).

Cox did not fit the caricature of a 'sell-out', but was a sophisticated political actor acutely aware of the trade-offs involved in engagement with power. Cox was conscious of and torn by the struggle between contrasting notions of 'compromise' and 'truth' as well as the aim of making an impact. Cox, on the one hand, expressed a strong and pragmatic preference for compromise as long as policymakers 'even understand some of what you say' and justified the approach with the idea that 'everything in life is a compromise'. On

the other hand, Cox also revealed an equally strong attachment to speaking ‘truth to power’; to remain outside ‘government’s pockets’; and to avoid the glitz of being close to power whilst actually having no influence on it.

Jeremy Crook from BTEG talked in similarly ambivalent terms in relation to what could be said in policy work.

... I still feel able to talk about racism, institutional racism in government circles and civil servant circles and to ministers... Yeah, I am still happy and confident to talk about the issues directly. I think it's a bit more difficult talking about a white bias in thinking and policy in this country because you've got to kind of – you are trying to work closely with senior civil servants and ministers and you've got to keep that door open.  
(Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

Like Cox, Crook prized the ‘open door’ to policymakers and the threat that it would be shut appeared to limit what BTEG could and could not say. In engagements with senior civil servants and ministers speaking about racism was not off limits but the concept of ‘white bias’ was. This was analogous to the earlier discussion and what Philip Collins called the ‘tyranny of things you can't not say’ (Philip Collins, 2011, Interview). Instead, this time, the tyranny was in terms of what could not be said rather than what had to be said. White bias was a provocation to policymakers in a way that the more abstract notion of institutional racism was not, as the former called individual policymakers to account and named them as perpetrators and beneficiaries of white privilege. In this way, for BME-led race equality organisations, honesty in their discourse was not necessarily best for policy.

### 3.2 ‘Representing’ BME voices

The previous section was about what race equality actors could and could not say to policymakers in policy discourse and discussions. The idea of ‘white bias’ in policymaking,

though undoubtedly correct, was something that could/was not to be spoken in polite policy circles and yet it was also the *raison d'être* for involvement of BME-led organisations in policy processes. BME-led organisations argued that an absence of BME perspectives in policymaking and policy discourse led to policies that (further) disadvantaged BME people. For example, the BME umbrella organisation Voice4Change England, argued in a response to government proposals on 'single (BME) identity' funding (see chapter four) that such ideas were based on a '... flawed policy framework which is insensitive to the positive contribution made by the 'single groups' in mainstreaming equality and meeting the unmet needs of diverse communities' (Voice4Change England, 2008: 2).

The argument was that the insensitive policy framework was the product of an unduly white policymaking process that did not and could not understand the contribution of the BME third sector in advancing equality. Similarly, Joy Warmington of brap also recognised that there was a problem of uniformity in policymaking.

I think that we often don't have the right people doing the right thing. I think policymakers that tend to do this stuff; they're usually very bright 25 year olds from Cambridge or Oxford. I think that what... [is needed]... in order to create good equalities policies is an understanding of people who have been trying to implement it and... understanding the culture of changing race relations. You need to bring a number of different people together and think okay what do we need now in terms of policy? (Joy Warmington, 2011, Interview).

The problem to which Warmington and Voice4Change England were pointing was similar to that identified by Trevor Phillips, namely that policymaking and '... discourse... is conducted largely by people who don't inhabit a space that any of the minority populations do' (Trevor Phillips, 2011, Interview). It wasn't just that the policymakers and policy discourse-makers were white but that they were people who had parallel lives,

experiences and interests to BME people. Unsurprisingly, BME-led race equality organisations, such as BTEG, claimed that BME perspectives in the policy realm were required to reduce this distance and deficit:

... [unless] these think tanks and the civil servants are informed from the experience of living with, working with diverse communities then we're not going to get a diverse kind of inclusive policy outcome at the end of it, you know. We're still going to get a very white middle-class view of the world; or of this country; or of communities and that's why I think, you know, our perspective has to be in the mix there to make sure that there's a balance and that kind of weighting in the thinking... (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

The central argument here was not about the tone and content of what was being said in policy discourse, but on whose behalf it was/was not being said. Crook claimed that inclusive policy outcomes could not be delivered through exclusive participation in policymaking. Only (using the language of chapter three) more 'proportional' presence of BME people and perspectives could deliver more 'BME-friendly' policy thinking, discourse and initiatives.

According to both BME-led (race equality) organisations this could help to fill the policy void of absent perspectives.<sup>52</sup> New Labour accepted the idea that BME-led organisations could bring a new dimension to policymaking and they formalised a role for third sector organisations (voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises, co-operatives and mutual) in the policy sphere in the 2007 Third Sector Review (HM Treasury, 2007). This set out a new framework for co-operation between the third sector and government

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<sup>52</sup> However, against this was the idea that white masculine spaces such as Westminster and Whitehall had so far proved capable of resisting female and BME 'perspectives' even when more women and BME people infiltrated their workforces (Puwar, 2004).

in recognition of the role of organisations in the third sector as 'legitimate' representatives of groups in society.

The Government recognises the value of the diversity of organisations in the sector in providing voice for underrepresented groups, in campaigning for change, in creating strong, active and connected communities, in promoting enterprising solutions to social and environmental challenges and in transforming the delivery and design of public services (HM Treasury, 2007: 4).

The government viewed third sector organisations as a means to develop better-informed policy by 'providing voice for underrepresented groups' and 'vulnerable members of society' (HM Treasury, 2007: 3). This meant that New Labour shared, in principle, the view of Voice4Change England, Warmington and Crook (cited above) about the over/under-representation of certain perspectives in the policy process and on the need to access 'perspectival diversity' (Parekh, 2000: 3) to supplement existing policy inputs.

The three BME-led race equality organisations examined in my study claimed that they could 'represent' the 'underrepresented' BME population(s) and perspective(s). The organisations justified their 'representativeness' in similar ways.

It [ROTA] was set up to support voluntary and community sector organisations so during our time as well, we tried to ground the policy in what was important to small black organisations in London doing things on the ground and their voice in terms of policy... (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview).

Dinah Cox, formerly of ROTA, explained the organisation's connectedness to BME interests and perspectives through BME voluntary and community sector organisations. The smallness and groundedness of the organisations that they represented was

foregrounded as a way of emphasising the ‘authenticity’ of the representative function undertaken by ROTA. ROTA was offered as the ‘missing’ link between real life in BME communities and the distant world of policy. BTEG was also a membership organisation that worked on a similar connective basis to ROTA and though OBV did not have a membership, it sold itself as the self-styled ‘home of black politics’ (OBV, 2005).

However, as discussed previously (see especially chapter two), the very notion of ‘representing’ BMEness in discursive and other political interventions was itself problematic. Numerous authors (Brah, 1996; Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 1991a, 1991b; Mercer, 1994) have called for new patterns of black (cultural) politics that engage with black complexity and diversity and complicate attempts to speak on behalf of the ‘black community’. Joy Warmington from brap picked up on this idea, even though, as cited above, she had also recognised the need ‘to bring a number of different people together’ for policymaking (Joy Warmington, 2011, Interview). Warmington questioned whether the idea of representation of blackness as the means to this end:

You know, equality policy... still had fundamental views of what blackness was and what BME was, you know, and that was based on tokenistic or representative views which we're not. You know you don't get one British person who's white on telly saying 'I'm the representative of all Yorkshire people' (Joy Warmington, 2011, Interview).

Warmington’s facetious end to this passage pointed to the impossibility and undesirability of attempts to reduce and represent all BME people for the sake of what Warmington calls ‘equality policy’. Warmington rejected this form of representational politics and her organisation claimed to represent the issue of equality rather than a particular community. In addition, even BME leaders whose legitimacy was based on some notion of ‘representativeness’, recognised the limits of their claims to reflect BMEness.

We are, I think if we're honest, a bit of an elite in the sense that we are... organisations that focus on race equality issues that don't have a mass membership; have small networks of organisations... We probably didn't do enough and haven't done enough to kind of engage with the ordinary [BME] person on the street... whether they're working in a council, office cleaner or they're a teacher or lecturer in a university (Anonymous<sup>53</sup>, 2011, Interview).

The passage did not dispute the possibility or desirability of being representative of BME people and communities. Instead the interviewee recognised the limited extent to which BME organisations positioned as speaking on behalf of BME communities were connected to BME civil society and 'ordinary' members of the BME population.

Added to this problem with outreach, were other structural shifts in the pattern of BMEness and new ethnicities that further complicated the job of being 'representative'.

I mean, to be honest with you, in those early days, we never easily incorporated the Chinese community or the Turkish community – we didn't. But... we didn't have competing forces such as a redefined Muslim community in particular, but also Sikh and Hindu that after 9-11 and 7-7, redefined themselves as not being the other. We're not Muslim; we're not black; we're Muslim (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

Simon Woolley acknowledged that BME-led race equality organisations had not always engaged effectively with BME populations outside of their African, African-Caribbean and (South) Asian core constituency, such as Turkish and Chinese populations. However,

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<sup>53</sup> I have anonymised this quote because although this statement would not come as a surprise to those working on equality or to funders and policymakers, such an explicit admission could be damaging to the organisation in question.

Woolley blamed the fragmentation of black communities on elements of the South Asian population community that were trying to disentangle themselves from one another and from blackness as a unifying political identity. In some ways Woolley's criticism was similar to ideas of 'feuding nationalisms' (Sivanandan, 2000: 423) and ethnic 'fiefdoms' (Kundnani, 2002). However, all of these arguments downplayed risks of homogenising and silencing in 'blackness', e.g. in terms of differences between south Asians and African-Caribbeans (Modood, 1988, 1994). Furthermore, it was not only south Asians that questioned collective blackness/BMEness. For example, Caribbean activists (BTEG, 2009) were also sceptical about the value of 'generic all-inclusive approaches' (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview) because they felt their particular needs were not being met through this form of organising.

Moreover, following Simon Woolley's concern about religious identification (above), secular BME-led race equality organisations were disrupted by what Karen Chouhan (cited in chapter four) called 'the tension' presented by BME identification with faith and religion (Karen Chouhan, 2011, Interview). Similarly, Dinah Cox reflected that she '...didn't feel that ROTA was an organisation to deal with religion' (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview). The result was that the ability of secular BME-led race equality organisations to 'represent' BMEness in its various forms was further diminished.

Even where BME organisations did feel that they were well-placed to deal with certain issues they were not necessarily allowed to do so as Jeremy Crook from BTEG explained:

... the unfortunate fact is that if you just get bracketed as race equality organisations or... black organisations [then], very often, you're perceived as having a very narrow view of the world... that's only about black people or about black and Asian people (Jeremy Crook, 2011, Interview).

Organisations such as BTEG were not seen within the policy process to be able to provide discursive or other inputs beyond rather narrow sectional BME interests. These

organisations were restricted by other political actors, such as policymakers, to engaging on ‘traditional’ BME issues and could not have something of value to add beyond this scope. In chapter two I discussed criticisms of BME differentialism, but the political reality was that BME voices only counted when talking about specific distinct ‘BME issues’. As Nirmal Puwar rightly argued ‘... because black people are racially marked, it is not easy for them to be the representatives of humanity’ (2004: 149).

As a result of these difficulties about the tone, content, scope, representativeness and impact of discursive interventions of BME-led race equality organisations, the politics of policy discourse and policy input for these organisations was fraught and uncertain. In that uncertainty ‘other’ BME voices and discourses were taking the centre stage.

### 3.3 ‘Unrepresentative’ BME voices: BME renegades

In a policy environment where BME voices in policy discussions of nation, multiculture and race equality could result in the ‘eyes [of policymakers]... glazing over’ (Dinah Cox, 2011, Interview) there was rather more interest in policymaking and other circles for discursive interventions from BME political actors that had ‘alternative’ things to say about the problems of multicultural Britain.

I call this class of BME political actor ‘renegades’. They were people in or given privileged discursive status to pronounce on race equality in ways that could be seen as ‘representing’ a new set of BME perspectives and experiences. They could claim space in policy discussions about race equality because they were BME people *and* because they departed from ‘usual’ BME repertoires about the existence of racism and the need for positive action to support BME people in Britain. By contrast, this group in some way or another argued that a minority ethnic penalty in Britain was exaggerated and/or that multiculturalist policies had failed.

People of note in this category included educationalist Dr Tony Sewell who founded Generating Genius (Generating Genius, 2012) – an organisation working with high-achieving secondary students from disadvantaged communities to win places at ‘top’ universities. Sewell has challenged the idea that institutional racism was holding back the progress of black Caribbean children and instead pointed to the negative and disruptive peer group culture associated with ‘black boys’ (Sewell, 2008) and the absence of black fathers (Sewell, 2010). Another educationalist, schoolteacher Katherine Birbalsingh, won acclaim at the Conservative Party Conference in 2010 for her ‘back to basics’, no excuses approach to education (Wilby, 2012). She has authored a book about the failings of the local authority school system (Birbalsingh, 2011) and now has a blog space on the Telegraph website (The Telegraph, 2013). Birbalsingh is also due to open an ‘academically rigorous’ free school in London’s Wembley Park, in September 2014 (Stevenson, 2013).

In the cultural realm, Munira Mirza could also be described as having some renegade views. Mirza was a former staffer at Policy Exchange – a right-leaning free market and localist think tank favoured by Boris Johnson (Policy Exchange, 2013). Mirza is Deputy London Mayor for Education and Culture and as a cultural policymaker has argued that cultural policy is dominated by the politics of diversity and should be reoriented to universalism (Mirza, 2012). She was also involved in the steering group of the review of the Equality Duty (see the next chapter) undertaken by the coalition government (Home Office, 2012b). Perhaps most significantly in terms of policy discourse, Mirza edited a special edition of Prospect Magazine containing a series of articles critical of official anti-racism and diversity policies (Mirza, 2010).

These protagonists have faced criticisms from organisations working against racism and for greater race equality. For example, Operation Black Vote labelled such people ‘inequality deniers’ (Woolley, 2010). There have also been accusations that these renegades were seeking to promote their own careers and interests (Wilby, 2012). In other words, in the discursive theatre, ‘renegadism’ got one noticed.

The highest profile BME renegade over the New Labour period was Trevor Phillips. He was Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (between 2003 and 2006) and the first Chair, from 2007 to 2012, of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. One of his most prominent renegade moments was in 2004 in an interview with a Times journalist where he agreed that multiculturalism could be 'killed off', arguing that '[m]ulticulturalism suggests separateness' (cited in Baldwin, 2004).

In the same interview, Phillips argued that a major goal was an 'integrated society' and that multiculturalism was unhelpful to that cause. A year later, Phillips, after and in response to the London bombings of July 2005, reprised his role as outspoken BME renegade, this time in a set piece speech. In it he warned that Britain was in danger of 'sleepwalking our way to segregation' and 'becoming strangers to each other' (Phillips, 2005).

In a chapter on the politics of policy discourse it is important to note the difference between these two discursive interventions. The first of these was in a newspaper interview where Phillips appeared to agree to 'killing off' the word multiculturalism and this was perhaps an off-the-cuff response to a very loaded question. By way of contrast 'sleepwalking our way to segregation' came in a prepared speech and was therefore a much more deliberate discursive intervention. Phillips was able to reflect on the difference in the discourses in the following way.

I did have an intention, when Tom Baldwin asked me that question, of saying I think that the language that we're using is not helpful in explanatory terms. My main point, really, is the same now as it was then. The term multiculturalism has lost explanatory power because... there are so many different meanings and people use it entirely to suit their purpose... What I didn't anticipate, was that people would essentially use an argument I was basically making about language and discourse, in order to have, to be honest, a much more substantive argument about

how you manage difference... So, I think the honest truth is that I didn't quite expect that people would react in the way they did. And I was a bit disappointed by it, but, in the end, actually, I think the statement did more than I expected it to. And, on balance, though it didn't particularly help me personally – you know. It turned me into a figure of controversy, which I've never particularly wanted to be; expected to be – but what it did do was it opened up the possibility of people having a more honest discussion about how we manage difference.

... The speech I made in Manchester, which was what, 18 months later, the context was quite different. And that was deliberate. I mean everything I did, we did, with that was deliberate. It followed 7-7 and we made a decision, really the day after, that we would not say anything. Partly because, you know, who needed to hear, you know, our theoretical views when there were people who were, you know they'd lost their loved ones... My colleague who sits just the other side of that wall was on one of the tubes. She lost her leg, you know. She didn't need to hear me pontificating – number one. Number two, in my view, was pretty much as it is about what's happened recently [in the 2011 English riots]; that a lot of these things, on these kinds of issues, a little thought is a good idea. You know, stand back. Think about it (Trevor Phillips, 2011, Interview).

There are a number of points of discursive interest in Phillips' reflection. His explanation about his core point that the term multiculturalism had 'lost explanatory power' looks uncontroversial when explained as such. Certainly the term was flabby and had multiple meanings (see chapter two). The narrow point was about the failure and emptiness of language and was, according to Phillips, a bit of discursive ground-clearing so that one could have a better conversation about managing diversity. However, Phillips' acquiescence to the violent language of 'killing off' multiculturalism meant that his point

about discourse was overtaken by controversy, stoked by a journalist but certainly fed by Phillips himself.

If the first intervention on killing off multiculturalism was, a partially mis-interpreted point then there was no such cover for his second intervention. This was a controversial discursive theme in the speech, suggesting that the 'parallel lives' of the northern disturbances would mutate into an apocalyptic vision of US-style ghettos similar to the scenes in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. While Phillips positioned himself not as a controversialist but as an agent of 'more honest discussion about how we manage difference' (Trevor Phillips, 2011, Interview), he seemingly could not 'do' honesty without overstating the problems of multiculturalism and understating the problem of race inequality.

In the end, Phillips' aim to change discourse on nation, multiculture and race equality appeared to be successful as Simon Woolley commented in an OBV editorial:

I believe that 99.9% of the population prior to Phillips' comments would have concluded that 'multiculturalism' is a good thing and makes the UK special. Post Phillips that figure, although still the majority, has fallen to 67% in a recent poll. Worse still, important figures in the Government... have bought into this cul-de-sac debate blaming multiculturalism for the radicalisation of some Muslims, and other social ills (OBV, 2007).

Whereas, for Phillips '[m]ulticulturalism suggests separateness' (cited in Baldwin, 2004) for Woolley multiculturalism was a necessary (though not sufficient) symbol of the togetherness of the diverse society. Indeed Woolley argued that 'the multiculturalism agenda... said people integrate better [and] quicker when they're afforded equality' (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview). However, for Woolley the issue was not just that there was a clash of ideas over the meaning and consequences of multiculturalism. The problem

was that this was not a fair discursive contest and that BME renegades had a disproportionate impact on policy discourse:

... there's a negation of tackling race inequality from a black perspective... and the talking heads that are articulating it are black. And they just happen to be actually seeking to find favour with those that are able to give them top jobs. So you find them in relative positions of power... pushing a particular agenda... I argue they do our community a grave disservice and at times it's a little shameful because of the disproportionate impact they can have (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

Woolley lamented the denial of structural disadvantages for black people in society. For Woolley, as a committed believer in and builder of a politics of blackness, the discursive marginalisation of a black race equality perspective was made worse because the charge was being led by privileged black people. For Woolley there were two types of black people: those like him that strongly identified with other black people and thought of them as 'our community'. In the opposite corner were those dis-identifying black people out for themselves.

For Woolley, Trevor Phillips and other BME renegades changed the politics and parameters of policy discourse on nation, multiculture and race equality. They provided a surprising and newsworthy line to that offered in 'traditional' BME-led analysis<sup>54</sup> and the voice of the renegades 'crowded out' BME race equality arguments. The renegades gave white policymakers an excuse to step back from action on race equality:

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<sup>54</sup> In his work on media representations of 'race' and crime, Sveinsson quoted the then head of BBC TV news, Peter Horrocks, who argued that "news is largely based on rare and surprising events" and that audiences "are interested in, and we as a society want to understand things, that are new, that are different, and are surprising" (2008: 5).

So the whole policy agenda now instead of looking at the Lawrence Inquiry; about equality – race equality – delivering for people to come together, the policy's now changing... (Simon Woolley, 2011, Interview).

Despite his prominence and status as the most high profile BME renegade, Trevor Phillips had the self-awareness to note that what was really going on in the construction of the discourse on multiculturalism and race equality was another form of racist exclusion.

You know, the fact that I'm important is almost entirely and wholly one of the outcomes of institutional and cultural racism. It's ridiculous that – [and] this is not me being, you know, kind of coy and modest – but I am far more important than I ought to be. You know, the fact that there ought to be a dozen people like me who are from ethnic minorities whose voices count and who people listen to. And who can have an argument between themselves about what is going on to which other people will listen... If I am thinking, you know, you just look at the response, the media response to all of the [2011] riotage. Okay, David Lammy and Diane Abbott had a presence. That's because they were MPs for their constituencies. And they exist – their media presence was principally to explain and to react to the local events. Nobody really asked them for a broader, more global account. I mean I expect if, even when, I choose to give one it will be noticed. But that's just because I've been created as the guy who does that. But there ought to be 20 guys like me.

There are no [BME] voices. There's no platform and I think that is; that's the real and biggest problem with the discourse; that [it] is conducted largely by people who don't inhabit a space that any of the minority populations do (Trevor Phillips, 2011, Interview).

Phillips' point was a powerful one. It was not about BME spokespersons acting as 'representatives' of BME people or perspectives but that simply there were too few black policy voices. As a result, a renegade voice like his was amplified in a context where other BME opinions were often silenced. Ironically, in a policy discourse environment where BME voices tended not to count, the voices of renegades counted too much.

## 4 Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown that the politics of policy discourses on nation, multiculturalism and race equality was a varied and messy process. Policymakers sometimes appeared to build a discourse in a concerted manner as with discussions of parallel lives and community cohesion. Even so, and with all of the discursive resources invested in them, such discourses did not necessarily have a direct impact on policymaking. Even if this was the case discursive interventions could still have a policy and political impact, shaping future policy debate and setting discursive boundaries.

For their part, BME political actors led a precarious existence as actors in policy discourse. Even though the BME-led race equality organisations that I have examined did have some semi-official and sanctioned 'voice' function in policy discussions, they had unenviable calculations to make about judging the tone, content and scope of their discursive interventions. Unlike government and government-appointed commissions, race-equality orientated endeavours such as the CFMEB could easily and firmly be 'shut down' by policymakers and media and their emergent discourses be stifled. BME-led race equality organisations were, therefore, working with the ever-present threat that an open policy door was going to slam shut or, perhaps worse, would stay open but with no prospect of influence. It was also unclear how BME-led race equality organisations could 'represent' BMEness as it unravelled and refused to be contained.

In addition, BME-led race equality organisations and their (familiar) narrative of racism and race inequality risked being 'crowded out' and displaced by BME 'renegades' offering an alternate and 'fresh' line. The existence of renegades was entirely consistent with new

ethnicities and the differences that existed amongst BME people in terms of experiences and perspectives. However, they were also products of a distorted discursive system that rewarded 'unfamiliar' and policymaker-friendly discursive interventions on nation, multiculture and race equality. More specifically, as noted by Trevor Phillips (2011, Interview) above, the discrimination, disadvantage and racism that BME-led race equality organisations were attempting to combat in wider society was limiting the ability of these organisations to speak about the continued presence of these same phenomena. That is, the politics of policy discourse was as subject to race inequality as other spheres of national life.

## Chapter 7 Conclusions: Rewriting the lines

### 1 Introduction

To begin this ending, I want to return to some of the issues of positionality outlined in the opening chapter and to reflect on my own shifting relationship to my research. As part of the rites of this final phase of my PhD, I decided to look back at the application that I submitted to the London School of Economics in January 2009. At that time New Labour was still in government and Gordon Brown was wrestling with the concept of Britishness as a way to reconcile the nation with and to itself. Looking back, my research proposal was somewhat oversized and unresearchable, but at heart it concerned the policy problematisation of multiculture and race equality in Britain – an aspect of policy that, if anything, is more relevant now than it was nearly five years ago. My original proposal was orientated towards an idea that a rhetorical device such as South Africa's 'Rainbow Nation' could help to reconcile race equality with the commonality, solidarity and diversity – the balancing act cited in the opening epigram of this thesis (Wetherell, 2007). I also hoped that I might devise a 'killer' discourse of the multicultural nation that would somehow resolve the difficult entanglements of nation, multiculture and race equality. I now see this very notion of discourse as antidote as fanciful and the 'reality' of the situation as much messier and deeply ingrained. There are deep antagonisms that lie behind discursive lines about tensions between nation and multiculture.

At the time of my PhD application, I was clear that BME-led race equality organisations were part of the solution to such bleak policy discussions of nation, multiculture and race equality and, in particular, that their BMEness counted for something in terms of insight and as a basis for social action. I wanted my thesis to help BME-led race equality organisations to increase their discursive efficacy and to be able to intervene more effectively at that level rather than waiting for policy proposals to come threateningly towards them. To use a meteorological analogy, I wanted these organisations to stop providing an umbrella in response to political downpours and to change the weather

instead. My position is more equivocal now and depends not on what these organisations 'are' or claim to be but on what they do.

## 2 Three moments in time

I have organised New Labour's time into three main overlapping discursive waves that connect multiculture, the nation and the place of race equality within it. My research has shown how policy(maker) discourse across this period can be thought of in terms of three Ps: proportional multiculture; parallel multiculture; and paused multiculture. Another way to think of this is in terms of the metaphor of the 'line'.

In the first period from 1995 to 2000, policymakers and BME-led race equality organisations emphasised that the nation was out of line with itself in terms of the disparities and discrimination in life in Britain for ethnic minority people. In particular the discursive emphasis was on making both positive and negative outcomes in British life more proportional to the ratio of BME to non-BME population. This, for example, might mean less of the BME population in the criminal justice system and more of the BME population in good jobs. In other words, the focus was on re-shaping Britain so that BME people were distributed more evenly socially, economically and politically. This policy debate and position was invested in and co-constructed by BME-led race equality organisations as well as by New Labour policymakers. In the latter case this agenda was viewed as part of a wider realignment and renewal of the nation after 18 years of Conservative government.

The second phase outlined in this study ran from 2001 to 2007. The centre of gravity in policy discussion was on the parallel nature of (parts of) multicultural life in Britain. In this case the idea of the line was not about discrepancies in race equality but instead, in the eyes of New Labour policymakers, the line represented the way that the nation was divided by ethnicity. From this perspective, multicultural policies enabled and indeed encouraged BME people, and Muslims in particular, to cluster in their own 'communities' and to self-segregate away from the rest of society. This idea of (BME) preferences for

‘parallel’ lives informed an ill-defined notion of ‘community cohesion’ as a means to ensure overlapping lives, but it also heightened policy ambivalence towards race equality as the goal of race equality. ‘Special measures’ to address race inequality were viewed by policymakers as another concession to BME people in a context where separate arrangements led to separate communities. BME-led organisations – including coalitional race equality organisations that explicitly and deliberately crossed ethnic groupings (although not always completely or effectively) – such as BTEG, OBV and ROTA were implicated in this process of creating dividing lines and increasingly became considered dubious political actors. Though BME-led race equality organisations accepted, and indeed existed because of, the idea of the parallel, for them it represented the gap between white and BME lives due to racism and race inequality rather than BME separatism.

The third part of the New Labour period ran from 2006 until general election defeat in 2010. During this time the emphasis from policymakers was to ‘pause’ multicultural questions and move beyond the nation defined in terms of multiculture. Instead the stress was placed on redrawing and rezoning the nation along new lines.

One element of redrawing the nation was to look to Britishness as a ‘big idea’ containing a common set of values that were larger, more important and more unifying than multiculture. The second element in the redrawn nation was an appeal to something smaller than multiculture, namely citizenship. Like Britishness, citizenship had been a leitmotif from New Labour’s early days. In this late period it was used as a proxy for the responsibilities of citizens and non-citizens towards society and nation and exemplary citizen-like behaviour of individuals was asserted as a priority over ‘loyalties’ to ethnic groupings. The third element of the redrawn nation in this period was embedded in a new Equality Act (HM Government, 2006) and an Equalities and Human Rights Commission. This legislation promoted an individuated idea of equality and also identified a number of additional ‘protected’ groups beyond race and ethnicity that were deemed subject to discrimination. These included age, religion or belief and gender reassignment (HM

Government, 2006). The naming of these groups, perhaps inevitably and deliberately, diverted attention away from groups subject to race inequality.

The combined discursive direction of the second and third parts of the New Labour period foregrounded the problem of the de-lined nation and BME organising as part of that problem of delineation. This left organisations such as BTEG, OBV and ROTA standing on the side-lines and being seen by some policymakers as a problematic form of civil society organising. This situation was most vividly illustrated when the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government stated that the 'growing selfconfidence of minority communities can actually be seen as a threat to communities under pressure' (Denham, 2010: 6). In other words, BME organising was no longer primarily seen as a response to race inequality but was seen to result in perceptions of unfairness within and towards white communities.

This perception amongst policymakers, so clearly stated by John Denham, was reflected in the politics of policy discourse. In the first part of the New Labour period when there was some overlap and consensus between New Labour and BTEG, OBV and ROTA on the connections between nation, multiculture and race equality, these race equality organisations appeared to be somewhat influential on policymaker-thinking. The paradox of discursive influence was that organisations appeared to make an impact when in tune with prevailing policy-thinking and vice versa. This paradox raised questions about what happened when BME-led race equality organisations were 'out of tune' with policymakers. In particular, these organisations could be forced to compromise in order to maintain their position as policy 'insiders' or face being ignored altogether.

The rise of BME 'renegades', such as Trevor Phillips, formerly of the Commission for Racial Equality and Chair of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission further complicated the politics of policy discourse for BME-led race equality organisations. The renegades, to continue the image of the line, were prepared to break rank with 'conventional' BME race equality arguments. The BMEness of these renegades meant that they could open up new

discursive ground in ways that might be difficult for white policymakers more susceptible to charges of racism. The rise to policy prominence of the renegades also confirmed that the presence of racism in wider society, against which organisations such as BTEG, OBV and ROTA were fighting, was also prevalent in policy discourse itself. Specifically, it appeared that only a certain number of BME policy actors could be given discursive space at one time. If a set of renegades took up much of the available room, then there was less space for BME race inequality 'traditionalists' to have their say and for their voice to make an impact on policy.

Just as the ground of policy discourse was being cut from under BME-led race equality organisations by policymakers, at the same time BME race equality organisers were contending with what had been a long-standing disruption of 'black' politics and the rise of complex 'new ethnicities' (Ali, 2003; Back 1994; Hall, 1991b, 1992a) that brought into question the idea of a coherent 'black' or BME perspective, experience and politics. In the New Labour period, firmly drawn lines of BME sameness no longer appeared a credible 'meta' container for the lived realities of Muslims and a range of other 'sub-BME' communities. This disruption, combined with the turn in thinking amongst policymakers, meant that BME-led race equality organisations such as BTEG, OBV and ROTA could be said to be caught in a difficult space between New Labour and new ethnicities.

### 3 Redrawing the discursive lines: After New Labour

The shifts in discursive and political landscape associated with nation and multiculture outlined over the course of the New Labour period suggest that the future prospects for policy and policymaking on race inequality are somewhat bleak. The period since New Labour has been out of office has seen policymakers continue to downgrade concerns for race equality.

The new coalition government has been dominated by the theme of austerity.

Nonetheless, there have been some discursive interventions in my area of study by both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. Back in 2007, when David Cameron was still

trying to convince everyone that the Conservatives were compassionate, he authored an article in the Observer entitled ‘No one will be left behind in a Tory Britain’. The by-line of the piece asserted that by ‘vigorously promoting equal opportunity and fairness, we will make this a better country for all’ (Cameron, 2007). Whilst adopting a fairly typical and critical Conservative line against multiculturalism as a doctrine of division, the piece also recognised that government could not ‘bully people into feeling British...’ (Cameron, 2007). Cameron also correctly stated that the community cohesion agenda entailed ‘... a dangerous muddling of concerns: community cohesion, the threat of terrorism and the integration of British Muslims’ (Cameron, 2007). The article was written a long time ago and was specifically designed to appeal to and reassure Guardian and Observer readers. In government, Cameron and his colleagues appear to have returned to a discursive line more in keeping with mid-to-late New Labour and a more traditional brand of Conservatism.

In February 2011, David Cameron delivered a speech in Munich (Cameron, 2011) and echoed the scepticism of his host, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, about multiculture and multiculturalism.<sup>55</sup> He argued against the idea of ‘state multiculturalism’ – even though no such comprehensive strategy has been implemented in Britain (Younge, 2011) – and in favour of ‘muscular liberalism’. It has been suggested that Cameron’s pronouncements were similar to those of Emma West who was filmed in 2011 shouting racist abuse on a tram in Croydon, south London (BBC, 2013). Both Cameron and West shared a sense of Britain’s loss of national identity due to the problem and prevalence of cultural difference (Gilroy, 2012). Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg followed Cameron’s ‘multiculturalism’ speech with his own in March 2011. Clegg’s speech was more optimistically framed and entitled ‘An Open, Confident Society’ (Clegg, 2011). However, Clegg agreed with the central argument of Cameron’s Munich speech, fixing in place a link

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<sup>55</sup> In a speech in Potsdam in October 2010, Merkel argued that ‘the approach [to build] a multicultural [society] and to live side-by-side and to enjoy each other... has failed, utterly failed’ and that immigrants needed to do more to integrate, such as learning German (cited in BBC, 2010).

between multiculture and the problem of (Islamic) extremism and the need for robust responses to such threats. Moreover, neither of these speeches by Cameron or Clegg, discussed race equality or equal opportunities as a means to advance integration in the multicultural nation.

In May 2012, Teresa May, the Home Secretary, announced a review of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as part of the government's 'Red Tape Challenge' (Home Office, 2012b).<sup>56</sup> The Equality Duty requires public bodies to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between groups in society (Home Office, 2010: 96). The review of the Equality Duty has been overseen by a Government-appointed 'independent' steering group which included former Conservative MP Rob Hayward as its Chair and Onora O'Neill, the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Home Office, 2012a). Another member of the group was Munira Mirza – mentioned in the previous chapter as critical of ideas advanced by BME-led race equality organisations about the existence of racism and race inequality. Given Michael Keith's comments, also cited in the previous chapter, about his experience in the Commission on Integration Cohesion and the 'boundaries' within which such groups operate, the independence of the steering group was certainly questionable. Notably, the committee was entirely composed of politicians and public officials and included no one from a frontline equalities organisation (Curley, 2013). The findings of the review have, unsurprisingly, been critical about the implementation of the Duty. Yet, due to the lack of evidence and the relatively short time since the Duty had been implemented (since 2011), the steering group acknowledged that 'it is too early to make a final judgement about the impact of the PSED' (Government Equalities Office, 2013: 11). However, the broader discursive point, related to discussions in the previous chapter on dominating and organising a field (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000), is that the very co-articulation of equalities and 'red tape' means that the damage to the Duty may already be done.

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<sup>56</sup> The review of the Equality Duty is part of an overall review of the 2010 Equality Act (Home Office, 2010) – which replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act.

Certainly, equalities organisations have expressed understandable concern that the government intends to curtail or end the Equality Duty (The Fawcett Society, 2012).

The government will also halved the EHRC's budget to £26m by 2015, by which time staff numbers will be 180 (compared to 455 in 2010). In addition, its new Chair is paid £56,000 a year for two days of work a week compared to Trevor Phillips who earned £112,000 a year for a three-and-a-half day working week (Ramesh, 2012). These reductions symbolise a downgrading of the Equality and Human Rights Commission under the coalition government.

In 2012, the coalition government launched an Integration Strategy (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012) which outlined a notion of Britishness in rather New Labour terms:

We should be robustly promoting British values such as democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity and treatment, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind. It is these values which make it possible for people to live and work together, to bridge boundaries between communities and to play a full role in society (DCLG, 2012: 4).

The passage combined ideas of Britishness with community cohesion and the spectre of multiculture-gone-wrong. The Integration Strategy was based on five principles (DCLG, 2012: 5): common ground (shared aspirations and values); responsibility (commitments and obligations); social mobility (people can get on in life); participation and empowerment (participation in local and national life); and tackling intolerance and extremism (responding to threats such as discrimination and extremism). Apart from a telling refusal to use the language of equality, the conditions for integration appeared every bit as 'muddled' and 'catch-all' as the version of community cohesion that Cameron (2007) had previously criticised. The meaning of integration had expanded to encompass

everything from immigration to the disturbances that occurred in a number of English towns and cities in August 2011.

In all of these ways, the coalition government has reduced action and emphasis on (race) inequality as a means to allow multiculture and the nation to co-exist. These discursive and policy developments can be seen as a continuation and acceleration of trajectories from the latter part of the New Labour period. Furthermore, in opposition, Labour under Ed Miliband has appeared similarly ambivalent about issues of equality.<sup>57</sup> In an important speech in December 2012, Miliband outlined his vision of One Nation Labourism.

A Britain where people of all backgrounds, all races, all ethnicities, all cultures, can practise their own religion, continue their own customs, but also come together to forge a new and better identity (Miliband, 2012).

The speech celebrated 'diversity' and acknowledged the right to be multicultural in private but it also argued for a form of Britishness in the public realm. The same speech emphasised: the primacy of the English language; the problem of immigration as a source of excessive diversity; and the need for integration to counter the threat of disintegration. The speech included just one fleeting reference to a 'fair nation' and no uses of the word 'equality' (Miliband, 2012) – as if, counter to the evidence on display in this thesis, BME people ought to be reassured that the idea of One Nation in itself would guarantee them a full and equal place in Britain.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> An interesting development is that Tom Baldwin, the man who asked Trevor Phillips if multiculturalism should be 'killed off' (Baldwin, 2004), is now Ed Miliband's Director of Strategy. This post involves shaping the narrative surrounding Miliband (Hodges, 2012; The Telegraph, 2012). It is conjecture, but Baldwin may be strategically steering Miliband clear of associations with 'toxic' multiculturalism.

<sup>58</sup> However, as part of its policy review process in the run up to the 2015 general election, Labour has developed a consultation document about a new race equality strategy and connected this to the goal of 'realising one nation' Labour Party (Labour party, 2013). The document recognises the continued existence of 'race' discrimination and accuses David Cameron's Government of 'turning the clock back on racial

The post-New Labour period suggests that there are some important shared understandings and articulations amongst the major political parties on questions and problems of nation, multiculture and race equality and limited sign that race equality might re-emerge as a discursive theme or policy priority for mainstream policymakers. This is not to dismiss some of the legislative progress on equality and anti-discrimination that took place under New Labour (Hills et al., 2009), such as provision for positive action in employment (Jarrett, 2011). Nor does it rule out the possibility of policy attention on particular extremes of race inequality such as 'stop and search'.<sup>59</sup> Rather, I suggest that such situations are likely to be considered as anomalous by policymakers and in need of specific reform rather than as evidence of the limited effects of race equality policies to date (Phillips, 2009) or the need for a renewed and concerted policy effort to advance race equality. If anything, the discourse since the end of the New Labour period, particularly about action on equality as bureaucracy and the emphasis on the integrity, fairness and supremacy of the national collective, suggests that measures against race inequality may be repealed rather than enhanced.

This lack of impetus amongst policymakers places even greater onus on BME-led and other race equality actors to organise effectively. It is to this group; their discursive interventions and policy-influencing endeavours that I turn to next.

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equality' (Labour party, 2013: 3). As such this appears to be a piece of political differentiation that might appeal to the party's 'core' BME vote. Yet, the fact that Miliband chose not to make race equality a feature of his keynote One Nation speech in December 2012, suggests that the party is not going to make combatting race inequality a prominent or meaningful part of its general election 2015 manifesto or policy platform.

<sup>59</sup> For example, the Home Secretary Theresa May has plans to curtail improper use of stop and search powers on the grounds of potential illegality and public resentment (Travis, 2013).

## 4 To affinity and beyond?

The section above suggests that if policy discourse and policy action are to be turned towards the problem of race inequality then, at least in the first instance, it will fall to race equality actors in civil society to instigate such a shift.

As discussed in chapter two, BME organising has had a complex history in Britain informed by problematic conceptions of nation and shifting notions of ethnicity and black/BME identity. In this context, and that of continued racism and race inequality, various authors have contemplated the difficulties of both BME and anti-racist political organising. For example, Paul Gilroy has criticised the inertia in the anti-racist movement; its failures of organisational form; and identified within anti-racism a crisis of 'political language, images, and cultural symbols...' (Gilroy, 1992: 50). For her part, Kalbir Shukra (1998) laid out a programme for BME organising and organisations for the 21st century focusing of making the consequences of racism relevant to all social groups and creating room for a new generation of leaders in BME organising (1998). Both Shukra and Gilroy's contributions were aimed at stimulating more meaningful and effective organising for race equality. Sadly, their reflections from so many years ago, remain just as relevant today.

In this thesis I argue that the ability of BME-led race equality organisations to contribute to contemporary efforts on race equality depends in part on whether and how they can respond to the 'maelstrom' that unsettled notions of blackness as part of the thesis of new ethnicities (Hall, 1991b, 1992a). As discussed in chapter two, Stuart Hall argued that new ethnicities demanded a 'second phase' of black cultural politics that recognised that 'black' was 'politically and culturally *constructed*' (Hall, 1992a: 252) and that there was no unitary notion of the 'the Black experience' (Hall, 1991b: 55).

My analysis shows that BME-led race equality organisations have found this transition to a second phase of black cultural politics extremely difficult. Such organisations have

struggled to imagine, articulate and organise around more fluid notions of BMEness and multiple experiences of BME people (Gilroy, 1992; Shukra, 1998; Tompson, 1988).

Furthermore, shifts in the New Labour period such as the rise of Muslimness; the emergence of 'newer' ethnic minority groups, including people with Turkish, Chinese and central and eastern European connections; and the identification of new groups by policymakers vulnerable to structural inequality, such as lesbian and gay people, mean that a second phase of black politics may no longer be sufficient for meaningful contemporary organising against race inequality. Building on Shukra's idea of making connection with other social groups (1998), BME-led race equality organisations are faced with the challenge of crossing existing (ethnic) divides and to join the campaign for race equality to other struggles against discrimination and disadvantage. Perhaps what is required, therefore, is a 'third phase' of black politics that responds to new ethnicities; keeps in sight the ongoing problem of racism; and that is also part of a wider politics for equality.

BME-led race equality organisations have been battered by the twin storms of New Labour and new ethnicities. Some of these types of organisations are no longer in existence<sup>60</sup>; others have much-reduced funding; and all have fallen out of policy favour. Such developments may mean that BME-led race equality organisations may not be in a fit state to respond to the need for radical and imaginative change that a third phase of black politics would entail. However, there are tentative signs of a response, including talks between BME-led race equality organisations about increased co-operation, possible mergers and new approaches to race equality work.

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<sup>60</sup> BME-led organisations with a race equality remit that have ceased operating in 2013 include BME regional umbrella organisations in the East of England (MENTER, 2013) and in the North West of England (One North West, 2013) as well as the BME multi-purpose organisation Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO) (Mair, 2013).

#### 4.1 A last throw of the dice?

BTEG, OBV and ROTA have all put their name to an initiative provisionally called the Race Equality Coalition (REC).<sup>61</sup> The REC is intended to become ‘a unified, high profile national voice that is able to lay bare the realities of racism and discrimination and speak up for race equality’ (Race Equality Coalition, 2013a: 2). Eighteen (predominantly) BME-led organisations are in the coalition including a mix of local, regional and national organisations (Race Equality Coalition, 2013a: 1). Prominent Coalition members, apart from BTEG, OBV and ROTA, include the race equality think tank, Runnymede Trust, and the BME-led policy umbrella organisation, Voice4Change England. The latter is acting as the accountable body for the initiative. The REC offers some potential as an incubator of a third phase of black/BME politics. It has received development funding from three funders: Barrow Cadbury Trust, The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, and those co-ordinating the REC are developing a work and business plan to try and secure its future. The fact that start-up funding has been provided from three leading independent, i.e. non-state funders, is an important development in light of the discussion in chapter two about race equality actors being co-opted by the state. Another interesting and welcome development is that BME-led organisations have come together despite the fact that some that have traditionally been rivals for impact, attention and funding.

Outreach work has been undertaken by the REC in order to strengthen its development phase. This has included engagement exercises such as a July 2013 meeting with academics including Claire Alexander, Suki Ali and Floya Anthias (Race Equality Coalition, 2013b: 4) in an attempt to cross an often uncrossed line between BME voluntary sector organisations and academia (Bhattacharyya and Murji, 2013).

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<sup>61</sup> The Coalition is now known as CORE.

I was invited to another REC outreach meeting held in July 2013 – this time for those labelled ‘critical friends’. Participants were defined as people that organisers of the REC could ‘feel comfortable to be uncomfortable with’ (Race Equality Coalition, 2013b: 8). The meeting offered me an opportunity to advocate for some of the lessons in this thesis to be taken up by the REC. In particular, I argued that being ‘correct’ on the prevalent and pernicious nature of racism and race inequality was evidently not enough to combat either. I worried out loud that the document that we were sent prior to the meeting looked discursively ‘familiar’, re-iterating longstanding campaigning messages and evidence of injustice. At the same time the political and policy landscape was much changed and hostile to BME-led race equality work. Given this, I suggested that the REC rethink both the tone and content of race equality political interventions and that it had to not only point out and challenge race inequality but also intervene in the discursive environment that repeatedly situated BME people as a problem in the nation. This might involve performing some kind of ‘discourse-watch’ function to identify and challenge discriminatory discursive practice as and when it happened in high profile policy and media circles.

My comments received a fair hearing at the REC meeting and other ‘critical friends’ made complementary points to my own. We now have to wait and see how the REC develops. The risk is that the REC becomes little more than an attempt to put the Humpty Dumpty of ‘old’ black politics back together again. However, a ‘familiar’ BME-led approach has, in recent times, been unable to ensure race equality gains. Instead, I believe that a more productive stance would be to locate a third phase of BME organising in ‘race critical’ thinking (Bhattacharyya and Murji, 2013) that would involve both a desire to use BMEness as a constructed political resource alongside an intention to dismantle the category of BMEness (Ali et al., 2004). Adopting a ‘race critical’ stance would appear to allow (BME) people to be human in the manifold ways that this might entail. At the same time it would perhaps also provide a basis to destabilise policy discourses that focus on and blame BME people for ethnic divisions in the nation whilst also downplaying racism and its ongoing consequences. It is not clear if this stance will shift the orbit of policy discourse and lead to

policy gains. However, I would argue that this approach is fundamental to new forms of black/BME politics and allows for a better quality of discourse – something that is an important goal in its own right.

## 5 A final word

A new politics amongst BME race equality actors is unlikely to take hold quickly or easily. Just as the second phase of black/BME politics was never fully realised the same may be true of a third phase that engages with the complexities of BMEness and connects with the struggles of other groups – in Britain and internationally.

Certainly, if BME-led race equality organisations and organisers wish to transform themselves and the politics and policy of race equality then there is much to be done.

Brett St Louis' comment about the 'hard ethical labour' (St Louis, 2009: 571) facing black activists seems salient here. The need for that work is even more urgent given the legacy of New Labour on ideas of and connections between nation, multiculture and race equality. Furthermore, I suggest that, in this particular moment and despite the decades of struggle that BME-led race equality organisations have been engaged in, it appears as if the hard labour for social justice-orientated BME organising has only just begun.

## Appendix 1: List of interviewees

	Organisation and role <sup>62</sup>	Date of interview
<b>Policymakers</b>		
Anonymous	Senior Civil Servant in the Department of Communities and Local Government	15 September 2011
Philip Collins	Former Chief Speechwriter to Tony Blair	11 May 2011
Sunder Katwala	Former General Secretary of the Fabian Society	18 August 2011
Fiona Mactaggart MP	Former Home Office Minister (Parliamentary Under Secretary for Race Equality, Community Policy, and Civil Renewal)	01 November 2011
Alun Michael MP	Former Home Office Minister	15 September 2011
Nick Pearce	Former Head of the Policy Unit at Number 10 Current Chief Executive of the Institute for Public Policy Research	25 July 2011
Henry Tam	Former senior civil servant in the Home Office	18 May 2011

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<sup>62</sup> The organisation/role identified is the one that led me to approach the person for an interview and to view the person as relevant to my study.

	Organisation and role	Date of interview
<b>Race equality actors</b>		
Karen Chouhan	Former Chief Executive of 1990 Trust	28 June 2011
Dinah Cox	Former Chief Executive of Race on the Agenda	21 June 2011
Jeremy Crook	Chief Executive of Black Training and Enterprise Group	21 June 2011
Seán Hutton	Policy Officer of Federation of Irish Societies	02 August 2011
Joy Warmington	Chief Executive of BRAP	18 July 2011
Simon Woolley	Chief Executive of Operation Black Vote	22 June 2011
Kamila Zahno	Former Board Member and Chair of Race on the Agenda	27 June 2011
	Organisation and role	Date of interview
<b>External 'experts'</b>		
Ted Cantle	Former Chair of the Community Cohesion Review Team	08 September 2011
Michael Keith	Former Member of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion	01 July 2011
Bhikhu Parekh	Former Chair of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain	15 June 2011
Trevor Phillips	Chair of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission	23 August 2011

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