Racial formation and education: A critical analysis of the Sewell report

Leon Tikly
University of Bristol, UK;
University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Abstract
The article provides an analysis and critique of the education component of the 2021 Sewell Report on Race and Ethnic Disparities. It commences by providing a critical summary of the report focusing on its spurious claims to objectivity, the erasure of racism and the inadequacy of its recommendations. The second part of the article focuses on developing a contextualised analysis of the report. Omi and Winant’s ideas about racial formation are used to provide a lens through which to interpret the Sewell report as part of a wider hegemonic project of the right to redefine what it means to be British in the context of a deepening organic crises of capitalism. The article outlines the nature of the crisis. It locates the report within a consideration of three ‘racial projects’ that have shaped education policy, namely, the nationalist, multicultural and antiracist projects. Through advocating a ‘colourblind’ approach to education policy and the selective appropriation of multicultural discourse, it will be argued that the report needs to be understood as part of a wider effort to reconfigure the nationalist project in response to crisis. It is suggested, however, that despite its many flaws, the Sewell report poses challenges for those who have traditionally been aligned to multiculturalism and anti-racism in education. The article concludes by setting out a vision for a new progressive project aimed at advancing racial and cultural justice that it is suggested, can begin to address these challenges.

Keywords
Commission on racial and ethnic disparities, Sewell report, education, racial formation

Corresponding author:
Leon Tikly, UNESCO Chair in Good Quality Education, School of Education, University of Bristol, 35 Berkeley Square, Bristol BS8 1JA, UK.
Email: Leon.Tikly@Bristol.ac.uk
Introduction

The Report of the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparities (HMG, 2021), popularly referred to as the Sewell Report, was instigated at the behest of the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, against the backdrop of a series of protests organised by the Black Lives Matter Movement in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by the police in the US and the toppling of the statue of the slaver, Edward Colston by protesters in Bristol. The report can be seen as part of a conscious attempt to ‘change the narrative’ on race and ethnicity in Britain in the light of these developments. The Commission was appointed by Munira Mirza, Head of the Downing Street Policy Unit, and consisted of a predominantly Black and Asian membership. Chaired by the educationalist, Tony Sewell, education featured prominently in the report. The key findings of the report, namely, that antiracists have got it wrong, that Britain is not an institutionally racist society, that our institutions, including educational institutions, have in fact become fairer in their treatment of minorities and that the UK should therefore be held up as a beacon in the arena of race equality for other majority White countries were met with delight and dismay in equal measure.

The report was greeted with barely suppressed euphoria from commentators on the right for striking a fatal blow against ‘wokedom’ (McKinstry, 2021) a victory in the ‘culture wars’ against the emotional rhetoric of the Black Lives Matter Movement and their attacks on British values (Halligan, 2021), for offering instead a reasoned, data-led appraisal of race relations in the UK today (Goodhart, 2021). In keeping with the key messages of the report, the commission members were presented as individuals who had rejected victimhood status and had ‘pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps’ to get where they are today. As the Chair of the Commission, Sewell was praised for being brave enough to challenge the orthodoxies of the left around the existence of institutional racism and defended against the ‘verbal pummelling’ he had received (Halligan, 2021).1

The report was met with despair and anger by antiracists. The Commission was accused of misunderstanding the nature of racism (Bhopal, 2021) and of whitewashing the experiences of people of colour through denying the existence of institutionalised racism (Runnymede, 2021). The liberal press pointed to the track record of the Chair and members of the Commission who had previously spoken out against the idea of institutional racism and several of whom were known for their right-of-centre views and history of links with the ‘Tory Party’ (Plummer, 2021). A controversial appointment, Sewell had previously expressed openly homophobic views, later retracted (Rawlinson and Dodd, 2020). Indeed, Sewell’s appointment had been questioned by the Chair of the Runnymede Trust and had been subject to a legal review.

The article does not aim to provide a detailed exposition and critique of the content of the educational component of the report. Such an analysis has been provided elsewhere (Tikly, n.d.). Rather, the aim here is to situate the report within a wider understanding of changing discourses on race, ethnicity and education policy in England. The article will, however, commence by providing a brief critical summary of the report as a basis for discussion. It will be argued that, far from being an objective effort to explain racial disparities, the report is highly ideological in nature. The article will contextualise the report against an analysis of the contemporary ‘organic crisis’ in British capitalism.
Drawing on Omi and Winant’s ideas about racial formation, the report will be considered in the context of three ‘racial projects’ that have shaped education policy, namely, the dominant nationalist as well as the multicultural and antiracist projects. It will be argued that, in advocating a ‘colourblind’ approach to education policy, and through selectively appropriating aspects of multicultural discourse, the report is best understood as an attempt to reconfigure the nationalist project as part of the wider effort to redefine the ‘national popular’ (i.e. popular understandings of what it means to be ‘British’). It is also suggested, however, that whilst the report has major weaknesses, it simultaneously represents challenges at a political and strategic level for those who have traditionally been aligned to multiculturalism and antiracism. The article concludes by setting out a vision for a new progressive project aimed at advancing racial and cultural justice in education that can begin to address these challenges.²

The Sewell report – a brief overview

The Sewell Report set out to investigate race and ethnic disparities in the UK. Besides education and training, the report also covers employment, fairness at work, and enterprise; crime and policing and health. The overall message of the section on education reflects the overall message of the report, that is, that if racism does exist, it plays a relatively small part in determining racial disparities.

Drawing on a secondary analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (Strand, 2021) the report’s authors argue that once socio-economic status is controlled for learners (particularly boys) from Indian, Chinese and Black African groups outperform learners of White British heritage and it is only learners of Black Caribbean and White/Black Caribbean heritage that underperform compared to their White British peers with children of Pakistani heritage performing at an equivalent level. Key explanatory themes running through the report are the impact of family structure and the higher likelihood that Black Caribbean and White/Black Caribbean learners come from ‘broken homes’ with absent fathers who fail to act as satisfactory role models and the negative impact of anti-academic street culture on the behaviour of Black boys in particular, themes Sewell has pursued for many years (e.g. Sewell, 2017; Sewell, 2010; Sewell, 2009).

It has been argued (Tikly, n.d.) that the report can be criticised along the following lines. First, it claims to be objective when it is clearly not. To begin with, Sewell and, indeed, several of the other commissioners had previously gone on record as denying the existence of institutional racism. In a 2010 piece for Prospect magazine, for example, Sewell stated that evidence of the existence of institutional racism was ‘flimsy’, adding: ‘What we now see in schools is children undermined by poor parenting, peer-group pressure and an inability to be responsible for their own behaviour. They are not subjects of institutional racism. They have failed their GCSEs because they did not do their homework’ (Sewell, 2010). Secondly, it is highly selective in the evidence it presents, referring only to evidence that support its central narrative, that is, that institutional racism according to the definition included in the influential MacPherson Inquiry³ does not exist. Submissions that identified institutional racism as a causal factor in explaining racial
disparities (see for example, the evidence submitted by Gillborn et al., 2021) were ignored. Secondly, the report relies heavily on quantitative evidence and explicitly rejects the validity of ‘lived experience’ as a basis for understanding racial disparities. Through rejecting qualitative evidence of racism, however, the report is guilty of a testimonial injustice (Fricker, 2007). It is for these reasons that studies of racial disparities need to take account of both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Further, it is very difficult to ‘control’ for social class given the intersecting nature of race, class and gender and the extent to which racism is itself implicated in the reproduction of class inequalities and vice versa (see for example the statistical critique of the report provided by Portes, 2021).

Finally, the explanatory factors postulated by the report’s authors are, in fact, highly contested in the literature. For example, the links between broken homes, absent fathers and underachievement is not straightforward and often relies on deficit views of single parent Black and mixed-race families and in particular Black and (in the case of many mixed-race families) White, working-class mothers (Haynes et al., 2006; Reynolds, 2005, 2010; Tikly et al., 2004). Similarly, whilst there is evidence of the effects of negative peer pressure on attainment (Demie and McLean, 2017), there is also evidence that young Black men also support each other to succeed (Wright et al., 2020). Given the weight of evidence, it is argued that any theory of underachievement must inevitably embrace the idea of multicausality with racism as a major contributing factor. In apportioning blame exclusively to parents and communities, the report effectively frees schools of responsibility to act on racism.

The report also ignores the substantial evidence that institutional racism does indeed exist. This includes evidence relating to the over-representation of particularly Black Caribbean and mixed White/Black Caribbean learners in bottom sets and lower examination tiers (Demie and McLean, 2017; Strand, 2021; Tikly et al., 2006; Wright et al., 2020), in school exclusions and in statements of special educational needs (SEN) (Coard, 1971; Lindsay et al., 2006). Much of this evidence points towards the role of processes of racialisation leading to low teacher expectations and the uneven application of school policies. It also includes the substantial evidence of racialised bullying including Islamophobic bullying (Francis et al., 2017; Qureshi, 2013); the under-representation of Black and minority ethnic teachers and senior managers; a lack of language and other targeted support including for newly arrived and refugee learners (NASUWT, 2012); and a curriculum that fails to adequately reflect diversity and whitewashes Britain’s colonial past. The failure of schools, local authorities and academy trusts to address these issues is itself a prima facie example of institutionalised racism. The report also elides the role that racial and cultural bias plays in explaining the under-representation of Black and minority ethnic learners in apprenticeships (Little, 2021), and in ‘high tariff’ universities (HMG, 2021).

The recommendations put forward by the report are also problematic. In seeking to address racial disparities, the report argues for the need to focus on all learners from low SES backgrounds including an emphasis on White British learners though greater investment in early years education, better targeting of funding, extending the school day, emphasising good leadership and governance, a good curriculum, good teaching, good pastoral support and high aspiration.
These recommendations, whilst laudable, are not new. They echo decades of research in the area of school effectiveness and improvement. What they fail to address is the need to simultaneously tackle racism head-on in the education system. As others (e.g. Sveinsson, 2009) have convincingly argued, the issue of class inequality – as it affects White, Black and minority ethnic learners – is historically deeply embedded in the English education system. Discourses about the need to focus exclusively on the White working class in the context of a discussion of racism serve an ideological purpose as they feed into wider discourses about White victimhood exploited by right-wing politicians (Gillborn, 2010). This is especially pertinent in the context of the so-called ‘levelling up’ agenda (see further, later) but flies in the face of the reality of successive cuts by Tory governments to state education including, for example, cuts to the Sure Start scheme targeted at early years provision.

A key recommendation of the report is to do away with the unhelpful use of the term ‘BAME’ because it homogenises the experiences of different Black and minority ethnic groups. This again is not a new recommendation, although it is heralded in the report as such. This insight might also be usefully extended, however, to recognise the existence of multiple forms of racism that affect different Black and minority ethnic groups in different ways. This is to acknowledge, for example, the existence of Islamophobia as a distinctive form of cultural racism (Meer and Modood, 2009). Despite the prevalence of Islamophobia in society and in the education system (see later) it is not referenced once in the Sewell Report.

Further, seeking to include more references to Black and minority ethnic individuals in the Making of Modern Britain teaching resource glosses over the fundamentally Euro-centric nature of the curriculum and as an effort to appropriate multicultural discourse around diversity but to harness these ideas to a sanitised account of history that downplays and distorts the role of the British Empire in violent acts of dispossession, conquest and slavery (Heath, 2020; Tomlinson, 2019). In making their recommendations, the Commission have ignored the substantial evidence accumulated over many years of the benefits of whole school approaches to tackling institutionalised racism. These approaches typically involve a focus on issues such as school leadership, school policies that recognise and address racial and cultural inequality and injustice, careful monitoring and acting on data relating to ethnicity, an inclusive curriculum, engaging with parents and communities and investment in staff development around issues of racial and cultural justice. They have been shown to benefit not only Black and minority ethnic learners but all learners due to their focus on better understanding and responding to the needs to specific groups and individuals (Bent et al., 2012; Bhattacharyya et al., 2003; Blair, 2010; Blair et al., 1998; Demie, 2021; Demie and McLean, 2017; Maylor, 2014; Tikly et al., 2004, 2006).

**The Sewell report as a response to organic crisis**

In this, and subsequent sections, an effort will be made to contextualise the Sewell Report against an analysis of the wider politics of race and ethnicity in the UK. The Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, coined the term ‘organic crisis’ as a way of describing a crisis encompassing the totality of a system or order. Organic crises are at once economic, political, social, and ideological. That is to say, they are fundamentally crises of hegemony (i.e. of intellectual and moral leadership) and they often lead to a rejection of established
political parties, economic policies, and value systems (Gramsci, 1992). In their influential analysis of racism in 1970s Britain, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham located the emergence of an authoritarian state under Thatcher and a resurgence in state and civil society sponsored racism as an aspect of the organic crisis of the time (Hall et al., 1978). It was exemplified in economic terms by the winter of discontent and in political terms by critiques of the welfare state and the rise of the National Front in response to fears amongst the White population over immigration. The current organic crisis of British capitalism is demonstrated in economic terms by continued attempts to deal with the aftermath of the 2008 economic crash through policies of austerity exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and overlain by the existential threat posed by climate change. It is also characterised in ideological terms by an attempt to redefine the ‘national popular’ (i.e. how the British nation is constituted in discursive terms). This has been through a reassertion of a populist nationalist discourse as a response to globalisation and the perceived threat posed by immigration, all of which contributed to the Brexit vote.

In political terms, the way that the crisis has played out has exposed historical contradictions within the governing ‘Tory Party’. In his analysis of the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher, Hall (1979) coined the term the ‘New Right’ to describe the coupling of libertarian, free-market thinking linked to globalisation and traditional Tory values around what it means to be British. What we are currently witnessing, however, is a resurgence of the ‘Old Right’ in which the liberal free market wing of the party has had to increasingly take a back seat in the face of Johnson’s populist agenda. The realisation of Brexit and the fall of the so-called ‘Red Wall’ to the Tories in the 2019 election has, however, presented, new dilemmas for the government. Against its basic instincts and historical opposition to state interventionism, the party must be seen to be pursuing a state-sponsored, redistributive agenda to appease its new predominantly White working-class base, particularly in the North through a process of ‘levelling up’. This is at a time when class based, and regional inequalities have been laid bare by the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic (Blundell et al., 2021). As suggested below, the emphasis on the need to focus on the White working class in the Sewell Report can be interpreted as a way of demonstrating this so-called ‘levelling up agenda’.

As was the case in the 1970s, race is once again centrally implicated in these contradictions and in Tory strategies for dealing with them. In ideological terms, the report directly feeds into the wider ‘culture wars’ that the Tory Party has been waging against perceived attacks on British values including the toppling of statues the rise of so-called ‘woke’ culture, the attention given by antiracist activists and others to the dangers posed by ‘micro aggressions’ of various kinds and demands to ‘decolonise the curriculum’. As with the levelling up agenda, efforts to stir up patriotic sentiment can be seen as a hegemonic strategy that is intended to appeal both to the traditional, as well as new, Tory support base. In Laclau’s (1990) terms, appeals to patriotism in defence of British values can help to suture together what are otherwise quite disparate class interests. Similarly, denying the salience of racism and the existence of structural racism feeds into populist narratives about putting ‘our’ (read White) working class first. Education is centrally implicated in these Tory culture Wars.
The Sewell Report can also be seen as part of an ongoing effort to seize control of the diversity agenda from the Labour Party. Labour has consistently attracted the vast majority of Black and minority ethnic votes in the UK and has historically been perceived to take the lead on issues of race equality. This despite its own historical contradictions around issues of race and immigration (Back et al., 2002). For example, during Cameron and May’s leadership there was a concerted effort to increase the number of Black and Asian MPs and members of cabinet with some success. Significantly, several of these Black and Asian Tory politicians have been at the forefront of the so-called ‘Tory culture wars’. For example, during a speech at the end of parliamentary debate to mark Black History month in October 2020, it was Kemi Badenoch, the Equalities Minister and who is of Nigerian heritage who announced that the government was ‘unequivocally against’ the concept of critical race theory (Economist, 2020). Appointing a predominantly Black and Asian membership can itself be seen as an effort to secure legitimacy for the panel.

Racial formation, racial projects, racism and antiracism

The aim of this section is to set out a theoretical framework that can help explain how key terms such as race, racism and institutionalised racism can be understood and that can serve as a basis for considering the Sewell Report in relation to the broader policy context of race and education in the UK.

Here Omi and Winant’s (2015) ideas about racial formation and racial projects have been found particularly helpful. A key starting point for Omi and Winant is in recognising the nature of race as a socially constructed ‘master category’ in sociological analysis. The socially constructed nature of race has, however, shifted over time from pseudo-scientific accounts to more culturally oriented ones. Omi and Winant see race as co-existing with other master narratives of class, gender and sexuality. Although they perceive these master categories as being relational and intertwined, they argue the importance of considering race as a distinctive analytical category. Here work on intersectionality is relevant because it allows for a consideration of how racism intersects with other regimes of inequality including those based on class, gender and sexuality to produce complex dynamics of inequality at the level of policy, at an institutional level and at the level of individual and group identities and agency (for a fuller discussion see for example, Tikly, 2020; Walby, 2009).

The authors define racial formation as ‘the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed’ (Omi and Winant, 2015: 624). That is to say, that changing discourses on race need to be understood historically and in relation to how they have served to legitimise (or indeed to challenge) racially defined hierarchies within the state and civil society. Racial formation involves processes of racialisation, a term that the authors use to emphasise how ‘the phonemic, the corporeal dimension of human bodies, acquires meaning in social life’ (Omi and Winant, 2015: 624).

Racial formation theory has been criticised by some exponents of the theory of structural racism and critical race theory (CRT) for failing to adequately take account of the concepts of Whiteness and of White supremacy that they argue must be understood as foundational for an understanding of structural racism (Feagin and Elias, 2013). As others
have argued, however, racial formation theory can be considered complementary to CRT and to ideas of systemic and institutionalised racism in that it allows for a more nuanced understanding of how intersecting and competing racial projects have, at an aggregate level, worked to sustain White supremacy (Golash-Boza, 2013, 2016).

Omi and Winant coined the term ‘racial projects’ to capture the ‘simultaneous and co-constitutive ways that racial meanings are translated into social structures and become racially signified’ (ibid; see also Hall, 1996). A ‘racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organise and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines’ (Omi and Winant, 2015: 713). Racial projects can operate at a number of scales from the societal to the individual. Discussion will focus below on three racial projects that have operated at the level of society and its institutions and have been particularly influential in shaping education policy.

Significantly, in relation to the discussion of the Sewell Report, a ‘racial project can be defined as racist if it creates or reproduces structures of domination based on racial significations and identities’ (Omi and Winant, 2015: 713). However, rather than envisioning a single, monolithic and dominant racist project, the authors suggest that ‘racist projects exist in a dense matrix, operating at varying scales, networked with each other in formally and informally organised ways, enveloping and penetrating contemporary social relations, institutions, identities, and experiences. Like other racial projects, racist projects too converge and conflict, accumulate and interact with one another’ (Omi and Winant, 2015: 732). In the discussion to come, for example, the nationalist project will be presented as an example of a racist project but one that mobilises (in sometimes contradictory ways) other racist projects, including Islamophobia and anti-Blackness.

This nuanced understanding of racist projects is important for our purposes. Firstly, it points to the changing nature of racism over time and need to specify different racisms (see, for example Barker, 1981) in education and wider society including for example, different forms of anti-Black racism and Islamophobia. Whilst each involves a complex juxtaposition of corporeal/phenotypical and cultural elements, they are nonetheless distinctive in the way in which they are articulated and the relative prominence given to each. Importantly for our purposes, Omi and Winant also acknowledge that racial projects can be antiracist. The authors define antiracist projects as ‘those that undo or resist structures of domination based on racial significations and identities’ (Omi and Winant, 2015: 735). As with other racial projects, this understanding also allows for a plurality of antiracist projects.

The idea that racist and antiracist racial projects can co-exist and compete for hegemony is consistent with the Gramscian idea of organic crisis outlined earlier and allows for the possibility that dominant racial projects are contested. In the US, this has been through the discourses of civil rights and, more recently, of Black Lives Matter. In the UK, as suggested later, the current racial formation can be understood as arising from competing racial projects of nationalism, multiculturalism and antiracism. (Note that ‘antiracism’ here refers to a distinctive racial project advanced by actors who self-identify as antiracist. It will be argued that both antiracism and multiculturalism can be considered
more or less antiracist in their effects, that is, in the extent to which either have the effect of undoing or resisting structures of racial domination *in practice.*

**Racial formation in the UK and in education policy**

Omi and Winant describe distinct periods of US history understood through the lens of changing racial formation. They describe the shift from overt racial domination exemplified by Jim Crow laws, segregation, the widespread practice of lynching and the McCarran-Walter immigration restrictions, to the evolution of a new racial formation in the wake of what they describe as the *great transformation* brought about by the civil rights movement. The new period of racial formation quickly became dominated, however, with a conservative reaction (since the 1970s) that has sought to effectively reverse the gains made by the civil rights movement. They identify Obama’s election victory in 2009 as signifying a new period of hegemony characterised by ‘colourblindness’ that has sought to underwrite the neoliberal project in America. More recently, however, under the Trump administration claims towards ‘colourblindness’ have increasingly been in tension with the reassertion of overt racism. This is reflected in key areas of policy from policing to immigration. It is also reflected in political rhetoric including the condoning of White supremacist acts and attacks on the Black Lives Matter movement as part of an effort to mobilise Trump’s base through an appeal to white victimhood (Bobo, 2017; Kelly, 2020; Schrock et al., 2021).

Applying the ideas of racial formation and racial projects to the UK context, it is possible to identify similar shifts in racial formation at a general level, although with significant differences in how they have played out between the two national contexts. The UK has also seen a shift from the overt racial domination involved in the colonial project and the slave trade to overt segregationist policies pursued against newly arrived immigrants in the post-war period to the development of a new period of racial formation. In the UK, however, this has taken a different form.

Racial formation in post-war England has been characterised by the co-existence of competing racial projects within the state and in civil society, namely, those of nationalism, multiculturalism and antiracism. These racial projects should not be seen as fixed but rather as having fluid boundaries between each other that change over time. As we will see later, the Sewell Report, as a contemporary manifestation of the nationalist project, borrows heavily from the multicultural racial project in key areas. Furthermore, many antiracists may also ascribe to ideas more closely associated with the multicultural racial project and vice versa. It is important to acknowledge how these projects often co-exist in contradictory ways within an overall racial formation, in policy, within institutional practices as well as at the level of individual belief and action. The author’s own position, for example, can be described as straddling the antiracist and multicultural projects. Adherence to one racial project or another also cuts across party lines depending on the historical context. Whereas the nationalist project provided the major impetus for the hegemony of assimilationist approaches to policy in the immediate post-war period, it now provides the major impetus for a colourblind approach to policy.
Despite the fluid, intersecting and changing nature of racial projects, they are considered useful as a heuristic device.

**The nationalist project in education**

The nationalist project can be seen as the dominant racial project in the post-war era and is once again in the ascendancy. It is reflected strongly in the Sewell Report. It is organised around an essentialised view of British values and institutions such as the family and the monarchy, a belief in law and order and a glorified view of British history that extols Britain’s role in the world, its right to sovereignty and elides the more barbaric aspects of empire including the expropriation of land, genocide, massacres, indentured labour and slavery.

It has also been associated in the past with essentialised views of race including ideas about the links between race and intelligence such as those popularised by some psychologists in the 1970s (e.g. Eysenck, 1971). With their origins in the eugenics movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries, these ideas continued to cast a long shadow on education policy in the post-war period (Tomlinson, 2019). Although nowadays direct references to scientific racism are rarely used in public discourse (having been largely discredited in the aftermath of the holocaust), the basic ideas of a linkage between genetics and ability have recently resurfaced (Gillborn, 2016).

To the extent to which racism is considered to exist within the nationalist project, it is largely perceived as the accumulation of acts of individual prejudice rather than being systemic and institutionalised. In this vein and as shown above, whilst acknowledging the existence of instances of individual teacher bias, the Sewell Report argues that, ‘if there is racial bias within schools or the teaching profession, it has limited effect and other factors such as family structure, cultural aspirations and geography may offset this disadvantage (HMG, 2021: 69).

The above quote illustrates another key aspect of this project, namely, a tendency to subsume issues of race under the wider umbrella of socio-economic disadvantage. This aspect was exemplified for example in early post-war education policy which rarely mentioned race (Tomlinson, 2019). The implication then, as now, is that resources ought to be targeted at disadvantaged communities which are predominantly White rather than at tackling racism. Then, as now, the education system is seen as a largely meritocratic institution enabling social mobility provided the disadvantaged have the necessary aspirations and are prepared to work hard.

This philosophy of ‘getting on your bike’ (as Conservative MP Norman Tebbit once famously put it) or ‘pulling yourself up by the bootstraps’ pits itself against the politics of ‘victimhood’. It is shared by a wide range of constituencies. Under Thatcher it was used to appeal, with some success, to the aspirational working class who could now buy their own council homes. It also increasingly appeals, along with socially conservative views about the family, to some sections of the immigrant community. The philosophy is clearly reflected in the Sewell Report which explicitly argues that a focus on racism in education reinforces a sense of victimhood and dampens aspirations.
There are two main policy orientations within a nationalist approach. The first, noted earlier, is a colourblindness that refuses to acknowledge the existence of systemic and institutionalised racism and subsumes racism as an issue to socio-economic class. The second is towards assimilation in which racial and cultural minorities are expected to adopt British values and traditions. It has been reflected in wider policies on immigration instituted by both Tory and Labour governments over many decades dating back to Powell’s 1968 ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech with fears over immigration often centring on the ability of British society to ‘absorb’ immigrants.12

Education has been a key battleground for assimilationist ideas. Policies such as the bussing of immigrant children in the 1960s and early 1970s were aimed at ensuring assimilation. As mentioned, section 11 funding from the 1970s was targeted at immersing newly arrived immigrants into speaking English with little regard for the evidence of the pedagogical and psychological benefits accrued to the learner from a bilingual approach. Conservative criticism of multicultural policies in the 1970s and 1980s, influenced by the Black Paperites including thinkers such as Cox and Scruton railed against the cultural relativism implicit in multiculturalism which was seen as a threat to the teaching of British values.13

The debates over the curriculum and, in particular, the history curriculum, at the time of the introduction of the national curriculum in 1988 can be seen as a triumph for the nationalist, assimilationist project in education. Against the progressivist ideals of education during the 1970s and the perceived evils of multiculturalism as it was beginning to manifest itself, it proposed a highly content-driven approach with a history curriculum firmly focused on British history. Contemporary debates about the supposed dangers of decolonising the curriculum find echoes in this and in previous eras. Subsequent reforms to the curriculum have reinforced this tendency (Tomlinson, 2019).

As Tomlinson (2019) goes on to argue, by the 1980s, religion had been added to race as a source of White hostility as Muslim communities began to request that predominantly Muslim schools be funded on a par with other grant-maintained faith schools. The burning of Rushdie’s book, The Satanic Verses, in Bradford in response to the issuing of a fatwa by Iran’s Supreme Leader against Rushdie added fuel to the fire of anti-Islamic sentiment. The aftermath of 9/11, the fallout from the Iraq war in 2003 and from the 7 July bombings in London in 2005 as well as disturbances between Muslims and White youth in Northern towns (see later) and more recently, the rise and then defeat of ISIS have deepened fear and hostility. This has been demonstrated by a rise in violent hate crimes against Muslims (Awan and Zempi, 2017).

The prevent agenda introduced under Labour as part of its anti-terrorism strategy and continued under the Tory/Liberal Democratic coalition government has placed a statutory responsibility on schools to report signs of non-violent extremism. It has, however, been strongly criticised by the Muslim community both with respect to the extent to which it homogenises Muslims but also because it has been disproportionately applied to Muslims with children as young as three being reported as a potential terrorist threat. As such, it has been counter-productive in terms of winning hearts and minds amongst Muslims and has served to undermine trust in the British values it was supposed to protect (Cohen and Tufail, 2017; O’Toole et al., 2012). An assimilationist ideology also lay behind the
introduction of British citizenship tests under the Nationality, Citizenship and Asylum Act implemented by the Labour government in 2002.\textsuperscript{14}

To what extent can the nationalist project be considered racist in Omi and Winant’s terms? It will be recalled that racial projects intersect in complex ways at the level of policy, the institution and the individual and assessments of whether individuals and groups have been disadvantaged by a particular project require careful analysis within specific contexts. Nonetheless, the immediate implication of a colourblind approach which has been integral to the nationalist project has been to redirect resources aimed at tackling racial disparities and racism to predominantly White constituencies.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, it can be seen to have had the overall effect of preserving White privilege.

\textbf{The multicultural project in education}

Multiculturalism, as a distinctive racial project, can be seen to have emerged in the 1970s in, first the US, and then in the UK, as a response to the civil rights movement and the articulation of a new radical politics centred around racialised and gendered identities (Modood, 2013). In this project, race is seen primarily as a social construct rather than as an essentialised characteristic and racism is seen largely in terms of social arrangements that unfairly discriminate against racially and culturally defined groups. Multiculturalism in the UK context has drawn on two main philosophical traditions (Uberoi and Modood, 2019). The first is that of classic liberalism which is premised on a framework of individual rights and freedoms that are considered universal including the idea of universal human rights. The second is pluralism, which is based on a recognition of culturally relative world views and on the need to develop inter-cultural understanding and dialogue. Both of these feed into a broadly integrationist approach for managing diversity, that is, an inclusive view of British citizenship and identity that embraces diversity, encourages inter-cultural dialogue and is underpinned by anti-discriminatory as well as religious and cultural rights and freedoms (Uberoi and Modood, 2013).

Multiculturalism has driven the development of much government policy, including a series of acts introduced by Labour governments. These include the \textit{Race Relations Act} (1965) which banned overt discrimination in public places; the \textit{Race Relations Amendment Act} (2000), which placed a duty on organisations to actively promote race equality (which, in education, meant measures that aimed at closing the attainment gap); and, the \textit{Equalities Act} (2010) which consolidated legislation relating to race, gender and disability under one legislative umbrella and defined race and ethnicity as two of several protected characteristics and also put an onus on schools to actively promote equality.

Integrationism has also underpinned key reports and initiatives.\textsuperscript{16} The 1985 Swann Report (HMG, 1985) advocated a multicultural curriculum and the provision of bilingual EAL support for immigrants. During the 1980s, several Local Education Authorities (LEAs) including the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) began to adopt multicultural policies and to set up specialist units to support multicultural education and EAL provision. The idea for a Black History month originated in the US and was introduced by ILEA in 1987 much to the dismay of Margaret Thatcher.
The 2001 *Report into the Future of Multiethnic Britain* chaired by Parekh (2001) was a landmark report for the multicultural project in that it set out the intellectual case for multiculturalism. It argued that Britain should develop both as a community of citizens (the liberal view) and as a community of communities (the pluralist view). It was the first report to acknowledge the existence of different racisms including biological and cultural racisms (e.g. Islamophobia). The report was significant in setting the future multicultural agenda in education, arguing for the monitoring of attainment by ethnicity, a curriculum based both on a notion of common citizenship and respect for plural values and improvements to teacher training.

A key theme of the Parekh Report, namely, the importance of social cohesion spoke to growing concerns about a lack of community cohesion and integration on the part of some Muslim communities. These concerns had been precipitated by growing tensions between Muslim and White youth in Northern towns which led to outbreaks of violence in 1995 in Bradford and again in Oldham, Bolton, Bradford, Burnley in 2001. The Cantle Report in 2001 placed an onus on schools to foster greater social cohesion through teaching citizenship education focused on a common set of British values. The social cohesion agenda has subsequently been pursued by the coalition government. However, whereas the vision of cohesion set out in the Parekh and Cantle reports was based on a pluralist understanding of recognition and representation of the agency and voice of minority communities, the vision set out in more recent Tory government statements such as the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* (HMG, 2018) is altogether more assimilationist in tone, despite its assertions to the contrary.17

To what extent can the multicultural project be considered antiracist in Omi and Winant’s terms? To the extent that multicultural policy has allowed resources to be targeted at Black and minority groups, and where initiatives such as the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant were implemented successfully, they have contributed to closing the attainment gap. However, these initiatives have tended to be short-lived and have quickly become subsumed within wider strategies to target resources at disadvantage in general. Multiculturalism has also only been partially successful in guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of Black and minority groups in education. Thus, whilst the race relations and equalities legislation has sought to limit overt discrimination and racial violence, it has often failed to be properly implemented. This is evidenced by the continuing prevalence of racial bullying in schools and the failure to close the attainment gap in the case of Black and minority ethnic groups most at risk of underachieving.

Despite early efforts to diversify the curriculum, multiculturalism has also been limited in its scope by the imposition of a dominant nationalist agenda. A criticism of multiculturalism on the part of advocates of the antiracist project is that it has rarely attempted to implement a curriculum that would allow spaces for learners to explore the possibilities for reparative justice as a basis for more racially and culturally just futures in education (Sriprakash et al., 2020). Finally, and despite the commitment to pluralism in important texts such as the Parekh Report, multiculturalism has had limited success in engaging the voices of Black and minority ethnic learners, parents and communities. For many supporters of the antiracist project, these limitations arise because of the failure of the
multicultural project to adequately acknowledge and take account of the structural nature of racism and of White supremacy.

The antiracist project in education

The third racial project that has been evident in education, that of antiracism, has operated for the most part as a counter-hegemonic project in relation to the more dominant nationalist and multicultural projects. It can be seen to have diverse roots in the struggles against colonialism and imperialism and in the development of pan-Africanism and neo-Marxism in the 1970s and 1980s. Antiracism, as a contemporary racial project, was given an enormous impetus during the civil rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s in the US and UK exemplified by the grassroots campaigns, such as the Bristol bus boycott, and against racist immigration, employment and housing policies. It was given a further impetus by the grassroots struggles against the National Front in the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of the anti-apartheid movement in the wake of the 1976 Soweto uprisings and campaigns to free Nelson Mandela from prison in the late 1980s.

At a general level, race in this project is perceived as an ideological category and racism as a structural feature of White majority, capitalist societies. The ideas of structural and institutional racism have a long history in this tradition and can be traced back to the 1967 book authored by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton entitled *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. These ideas have been developed by advocates of critical race theory who have argued that racism is a normal (rather than an aberrant) feature of White majority societies. As noted, antiracists have often been critical of multiculturalists for focusing too much on issues of cultural recognition rather than challenging the structural nature of racial inequality.

Within education, antiracism is reflected in the early grassroots campaigns by the West Indian community in the UK during the 1960s and 1970s in response to the growing perception that their offspring were being discriminated against by teachers, were over-represented in SEN classes and generally failed by the education system. During the 1970s and in the context of the rise of the far right, the education system was a key battleground between the Anti-Nazi league and supporters of the National Front. Antiracism, as a racial project, continues to be reflected in grassroots movements against school exclusions as well as in efforts to develop antiracist materials for use in the curriculum. Contemporary examples include the Black Lives Matters protests and efforts within higher education to decolonise the curriculum. Another example of such initiatives is the work of the Bristol-based artistic co-operative that produces history materials for key stage three. The materials highlight the achievements of people of African and African diaspora heritage including in the fight against racism and colonialism. These movements develop earlier antiracist initiatives in the curriculum undertaken in some Local Education Authorities and schools that sought to challenge the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum, the marginalisation of non-Western knowledge systems and to encourage a critical engagement with Britain’s colonial past through the curriculum.
Antiracism has, however, had relatively little purchase in government policy at a national level. Indeed, it has often been vilified by nationalist politicians and the right-wing press. There have, however, been rare moments where it has gained some foothold at a national level. For example, the 1999 MacPherson Report into the death of the teenager Stephen Lawrence (HMG, 1999), although integrationist rather than explicitly antiracist in tone, was the first official acknowledgement of the existence of institutional racism and had implications, not just for the criminal justice system, but for other institutions including education. It became an important point of reference for antiracists who had historically identified institutional racism as the major barrier in the way of achieving racial justice in education and society. The Sewell Report can be seen as an effort to push back on this achievement through its efforts to dismiss the concept of institutional racism. During the 1980s, antiracism did gain some foothold, however, in the work of a small number of local authorities despite these efforts often being pilloried in the press. Antiracism also gained some traction within teaching unions such as the NUT which first published antiracist guidelines for schools in 1992 (Tomlinson, 2019).

So, to what extent can antiracism understood as a racial project be considered to be antiracist in Omi and Winant’s terms, that is, to what extent has it actually impacted on policy and practice? Perhaps the biggest success of the project is the extent to which the idea of institutional racism has become accepted within mainstream policy discourse. This has provided a basis and a rationale for government-led initiatives that have sought to tackle institutional racism as part of efforts to close the attainment gap. However, as we have seen, these efforts have generally tended to be short-lived. The definition of institutional racism that did become established in policy has also been contested. What is emerging in the Sewell Report, for example, is a watered-down version that is reduced to individual acts of prejudice rather than a focus on the processes that lead to systematic discrimination that antiracist project has often sought to highlight. This points to the need for antiracists to clearly articulate a fuller understanding of the term (see later).

Antiracism has also had some success in seeking recognition for different forms of racism including a recent focus on anti-Black racism. There is, however, scope for deepening these understandings including how anti-Black racism may differentially affect different groups of Black learners, including those from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds. Further, as noted, antiracists have also been criticised by some multiculturalists for focusing largely on colour racism and failing to recognise the specificities of cultural racism, including Islamophobia.

Through focusing on decolonising the curriculum, the antiracist project has provided a critique of the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum, the Whitewashing of Britain’s colonial past and the absence of the histories, experiences and voices of people of colour. It is further argued, however, that there is important work to be done in better understanding how these initiatives can be put into practice. This draws attention to a tension within the antiracist project. For some exponents of antiracism, there has been a reluctance or an unwillingness to engage in seeking to realise change within the mainstream education system. This is partly based on the pessimistic view that genuine change cannot be realised unless the whole edifice of capitalism and White supremacy is completely dismantled, a scenario that, in the current context, seems extremely unlikely.
Finally, antiracism has, largely through the actions of grassroots organisations, drawn attention to specific issues in education including campaigns against the over-representation of Black learners in SEN classes and against school exclusions. Furthermore, the establishment of supplementary schools as a response to the racist nature of the mainstream education system has drawn positively on a long tradition of Black self-reliance (often with Black women at the forefront) with its roots in Pan-Africanist thinking (Andrews, 2016; Reay and Mirza, 2001). There is much to be learned from these movements about successful practice for teaching Black learners. It should also be pointed out that this version of collective self-reliance stands in contrast to the individualism implicit in the nationalist project. It provides useful lessons from which a reconfigured antiracist project can build upon.

Beyond Sewell: The struggle for racial and cultural justice in education

It has been argued that the Sewell Report is flawed in its analysis and limited in its recommendations. It has also been argued that the report is best understood as part of a wider ideological effort to advance a reconfigured nationalist project as a response to the wider organic crisis in British capitalism. A central feature of this emerging nationalist discourse has been the further deepening of a colourblind approach to issues of racism in education. It has also involved appropriating some of the language from the multicultural project including, for example, language around cohesion, integration and even the idea of multiculturalism itself. These have been harnessed to what remains in essence an assimilationist approach in education. It has also been argued that, through failing to identify and tackle racism as a serious issue in the education system, the Sewell Report can be seen to perpetuate, rather than to challenge, White supremacy in education (whatever the stated intentions of the authors of the report may have been).

Despite its many shortcomings, the Sewell Report, as an example of a redefined nationalist project, does however, pose new challenges for multiculturalists and antiracists. One challenge is that antiracists specify more clearly what is meant by institutional racism. As discussed in previous sections, there is a wealth of existing evidence of the effects of unconscious processes and colourblind policies that have the net effect of discriminating against some Black and minority groups because of their race and/or ethnicity. There is also a need, however, to deepen research and understanding on the nature of institutional racism. This is to acknowledge that racial projects are not static over time but also that processes of racialisation give rise to distinctive forms of racism including Islamophobia and anti-Black racism that need to be better understood and challenged.

A criticism of efforts to decolonise the curriculum in the Sewell Report is that they are essentially negative. It has been argued that the supposedly more positive vision of diversity contained in the report perpetuates an ideological view of Britishness in which British colonial history is elided. Nonetheless, it does pose a challenge to antiracists about how the struggle against racism can be cast in positive terms. At a philosophical level, this implies seeking to articulate a new ‘planetary humanism’, that is, a view of human nature
and of social reality that is based on a positive recognition of diverse racial and cultural identities but also how these intersect with class- and gender-based identities (Gilroy, 2006; Mbembe and Posel, 2005). There is also a need, however, to move beyond purely philosophical concerns and begin to articulate what a vision of racial and cultural justice in education might look like in practice. Here, there is room for a greater rapprochement between the antiracist and multicultural projects (see also Modood and May, 2001). One area of policy and practice where such a joining of forces could take place is in terms of developing an expanded view of racial disparities in education that seeks to close the attainment gap whilst simultaneously addressing institutional racism. It has been suggested that the whole school approach that emerged through some of these initiatives provides one valuable starting point for such an endeavour.

It is also crucial as a counter-hegemonic strategy to articulate how efforts to create more racially and culturally just institutions complement rather than contradict efforts to address class, gender and other sorts of disparities and injustice. Demands to tackle racism as well as to tackle other forms of inequality are not mutually exclusive as the Sewell Report implies. For example, it has been found in the past that where schools have applied a whole school approach to tackling racial disparities, this has benefited all learners because it helps institutions to base interventions on a more nuanced understanding of the needs of all learners (Bent et al., 2012; Bhattacharyya et al., 2003; Blair, 2010; Blair et al., 1998; Demie, 2021; Demie and McLean, 2017; Maylor, 2014; Tikly et al., 2004, 2006).

A key area of focus for realising positive change is in the curriculum. Antiracists have often challenged the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum and have sought both to highlight the positive role of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in the making of modern Britain whilst also highlighting their efforts in struggling against slavery and colonialism (see for example, Mohamud and Whitburn, 2016). For multiculturalists, this equates to developing an inclusive British identity through fostering inter-cultural dialogue and understanding (Uberoi and Modood, 2013). This understanding transcends the narrow view of citizenship based on a nationalistic conception of ‘British values’ set out in the Sewell Report. However, demands to enrich the curriculum through embracing diversity need to go hand in hand with efforts to increase access to and attainment in the existing curriculum. Indeed, it has been the desire to increase access to the mainstream curriculum that has partly driven the supplementary school movement amongst the Black Caribbean (Reay and Mirza, 2001) communities and support for extra tuition amongst Muslim communities (Khattab and Modood, 2018).

Underpinning a new counter-hegemonic project for racial and cultural justice in education must be a new radical politics in education that can galvanise the agency and voices of racialised and minoritised communities. There is a long tradition of grassroots activism and intellectual endeavour on which to build (see Warmington, 2014: for example; Tomlinson, 2019; Reay and Mirza, 2001). There is much to learn from antiracism about the power of grassroots activism and struggle in realising change. There is also much to learn from multiculturalism about how a new radical, pluralist politics might be conceived and realised in policy terms.
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ORCID iD

Leon Tikly  https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0697-524X

Notes

1. Ironically, Sewell had participated in the education committee of the Parekh Report written some 20 years earlier that had met with hostility from the press for identifying institutional racism as an issue.

2. It is important to be clear about the author’s own positionality in relation to the arguments put forward in the article given the highly politicised, and often emotive, nature of many of the issues involved. As will become clearer, the author’s own background is as an antiracist activist but also as a practitioner teaching in racially and culturally diverse settings and as a researcher in the area of race, ethnicity and education policy both in the UK and in South Africa who has contributed to national policy debates. These experiences have inevitably influenced my own reading of the Sewell Report.

3. The MacPherson Inquiry into the death of the teenager Stephen Lawrence defined institutional racism as ‘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’ (HMG, 1999)

4. The report attributes this to poor career guidance. However, there is significant evidence of discriminatory practices in admissions processes to universities (Boliver, 2013, 2015) Black and minority ethnic learners are also more likely to drop out of university, have more negative experiences than their White counterparts and leave with lower academic qualifications partly on account of bias and discriminatory practices within universities (UUK/NUS, 2019; Walker, 2019).
5. The Runnymede Trust defines Islamophobia as ‘any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life’. (Elahi and Khan, 2017: 1)

6. The Commission also exposed tensions in the Tory party itself leading one commentator to question whether the report had in fact been deliberately provocative and should be seen as part of an ongoing internecine struggle within Downing Street over race, resulting in the resignation of the government’s race advisor, Samuel Ksumo. (Watson and Scott, 2021).

7. This is evidenced, for example, by statements by Ben Bradley, Tory MP for Mansfield, who recently claimed that equality legislation discriminates against White working-class men and that the notion of ‘White privilege’ is ridiculous when White working-class boys struggle academically, (Economist, 2020).

8. Several senior members of the cabinet including the Chancellor, Richi Sunak, the Home Secretary Priti Patel, the equalities minister, Kemi Badenoch, the Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi and the Chair of the Tory Party, James Cleverly, are now of African, African diaspora or South Asian decent as are several senior advisors and government aides such as Samuel Ksumo, Special Advisor for Civil Society and Communities and Munira Mirza, Head of the Downing Street Policy Unit.

9. To date, their ideas have had limited uptake in the UK, see (e.g. Caballero and Aspinall, 2018) perhaps reflecting the US centric nature of Omi and Winant’s work.

10. My own background as an activist has been in grassroots antiracist struggles, whereas much of my research has been broadly on work aimed at closing the attainment gap within a broadly integrationist frame of reference. Below I argue for a greater rapprochement between multiculturalism and antiracism.

11. A key finding of the Scarman Report in 1981 into the Brixton riots (Scarman, 1981), for example, found evidence of individual acts of prejudice by police including the disproportionate use of stop and search on young black man but no evidence of institutional racism.

12. These sentiments were echoed in later years by Margaret Thatcher’s famous 1978 speech about the fears of Britain being ‘swamped’ by people of a different culture and in Norman Tebbit’s 1990 famous ‘cricket test’ by which he suggested that loyalty to the country equates to support for the English national sports team. Teresa May’s 2012 efforts whilst Home Secretary to create a ‘really hostile environment’ is a more contemporary example of the rhetoric that is used to legitimise assimilationist policies. It led directly to the Windrush scandal.

13. Incidents such as the Honeyford Affair in which a local headteacher in Bradford, Honeyford, wrote to the Times Education Supplement campaigning about the introduction of a multicultural and antiracist curriculum by Bradford LEA added fuel to the fire and reinforced a sense of White victimhood that was exploited by the right as did the incident in Dewsbury in 1987 when a group of White parents insisted that their children should not be taught in a school with Asian children. Another example of a growing sense of White victimhood were the attacks in the press in 1991 against Culloden Primary school in Tower Hamlets for giving too much emphasis to speakers of a second language.
14. The preceding White paper introduced by Home Secretary Blunkett had also proposed that children of asylum seekers should have separate schooling echoing Thatcher’s earlier concerns that these children were ‘swamping’ British schools. Although this part of the Act was dropped the policy of dispersing asylum seeking and refugee families meant that they were often relocated to areas hostile to their presence and experienced increasing racist abuse and hostility by young White people (Tomlinson, 2019).

V15. Indeed, it was a colourblind approach to school funding that led Cameron’s coalition government to redirect funding specifically targeted at providing language support and closing the attainment gap through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant to the Direct Schools Grant that schools had discretion to use as they wished. This despite evidence that the strategies funded through the grant were having an impact (Tikly et al., 2007). The result was a loss of expertise at a local authority and school level, particularly in language support (NASUWT, 2012).

16. The 1977 Report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration on the West Indian Community (CRE, 1978) was the first report to identify Britain as a multiracial, multicultural country.

17. For example, whilst the report couches itself in the language of integration and multiculturalism and the recognition of religious freedom for different faith groups, it remains premised on the idea of immutable British values but does not specify what these are, or indeed, the process by which they might be determined. Neither does it allow for a questioning of some British values that remain altogether too common including racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, classism, disablism, etc. At no point in the report is racism mentioned as an obstacle to integration and cohesion. Furthermore, whereas the Green Paper acknowledges the need for migrants to learn English, it says nothing about the right to develop community languages alongside English.

18. Structural racism is often used by exponents of the antiracist project to refer to the extent to which racism is a structural feature of the capitalist system itself, a view that informs for instance the concept of racial capitalism: (Robinson, 1984).

19. Carmichael and Hamilton wrote that, while individual racism is often identifiable because of its overt nature, institutional racism is less perceptible because of its ‘less overt, far more subtle’ nature. Institutional racism ‘originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than (individual racism)’: (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1968: 4).

20. See, for example, No More Exclusions, which is a grassroots movement aimed at abolishing exclusions (https://nomoreexclusions.com/) (accessed 21 May 2021).

21. The decolonising the curriculum movement draws on a long tradition of anticolonial critique of the Western-centric nature of the curriculum. It was given an impetus by the #RhodesMustFall Movement started by students at the University of Cape Town in 2015 and subsequent movement in US and UK universities such as the #WhyismyCurriculumWhite movement.

22. See https://cargomovement.org/classroom/ (accessed 21 May 2021).

23. For example, the Rampton committee set up in 1979 by the Conservative government in the wake of the inner-city disturbances of 1980 into the educational needs and attainment of West Indian pupils identified low teacher expectations and racial prejudice among White teachers.
and society as a whole as the main obstacle to raising the attainment of this group. This report was rubbished by the press and rejected by the government and the Swann Committee was established in its place.

24. Writing in the 1980s, the Black educationalist Maureen Stone, see (1981), drawing on Gramsci, argued that, if the next generation of Black learners are to be empowered to use education to realise meaningful change at an individual and societal level, then this requires first getting to grips with the content of the formal curriculum if they are to be empowered to transform and harness this knowledge in their own interests.

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