From stronger to weaker multi-culturalism?

How the UK policy community sees the future of ethnic diversity policies

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Abstract

Multiculturalism as the dominant approach to managing diversity in the UK has been called into question by politicians, community leaders and academics in recent years. This paper reports interviews about multiculturalism, social cohesion and future policy directions with leading figures in the debate, including Home Affairs Select Committee members, authors of major reports, experts, researchers and academics. The attitudes expressed when discussing overall policy directions do not fit the traditional left-centre-right dimension of British politics but, in most cases, indicate unease at assumed segregative effects of current policy. However, when specific issues (sharia law, faith schooling, dress/diet codes, political representation) are considered the viewpoints of most interviewees are more pragmatic. Relatively few advocate strong policies to impose British values or move decisively away from a general multiculturalist stance. The transition most widely supported would be from stronger to weaker multiculturalism rather than from multiculturalism to a different approach to diversity.

I. Multi-culturalism: elite perspectives

Multiculturalism is commonly seen as the dominant strand in official approaches to diversity and difference in the UK. It may be understood as 'the recognition of group differences within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of a shared citizenship and national identity' (Modood 2007, 2; see Phillips 2009, 10, Parekh 2000a, 6, Parekh 2000b). The emphasis on recognition draws on Charles Taylor's seminal analysis of the 'politics of recognition' and of the fundamental shift in the 'presumptions' surrounding political discourse towards the view that equal recognition should be afforded to all established cultures (Taylor 1994, 67-8). Parekh points out that, in multi-culturalism, demands for recognition go beyond the plea for tolerance and include 'acceptance, respect and even public affirmation of their differences' (2000a, 1). Probably the single most influential document, the report of the *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, which he chaired, opens with a clear statement of the 'equal worth' of all individuals, 'irrespective of their colour, gender, ethnicity, religion, age or sexual orientation', a

recognition that 'citizens are both individuals and members of particular religious, ethnic, cultural and regional communities', and the point that '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' (Parekh 2000b, 10). The politics of recognition requires the negotiation and accommodation of difference.

Multi-culturalism has emerged during the past three decades as the dominant theme in the UK, replacing assimilationist and then integrationist policies. The primary objective of assimilation is to promote a unified culture by encouraging minorities to adopt mainstream cultural practices. Integration pays little attention to cultural differences, but focuses on the removal of the obstacles to social cohesion caused by disadvantage and discrimination. Multiculturalism adds explicit and codified respect for cultural differences (for reviews see Rattansi, 2011 ch1, Modood, 2012, 26-29).

Some commentators distinguish 'soft' as opposed to 'hard' or 'strong' as against 'weak' multiculturalism (Hirst 1994, 1-6, Goodhart 2012, West 2005). Hard or strong versions focus on sustaining separate ethnic identity. Weaker or softer forms put equal citizenship first. Banting and colleagues describe the UK as a 'modest' multicultural nation alongside Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the US. They use an index based on scores across multiple dimensions of social, educational and citizenship policy (Banting et al. 2006). Most commentators would see UK multiculturalism as stronger rather than weaker, with an increasing emphasis on support for the traditions and practices of minority communities as well as on equality and disadvantage. Policies include legislation against direct and indirect discrimination and harassment, recently codified and strengthened in the 2010 Equalities Act with a duty for public bodies to promote equality and the inclusion of 'promoting, supporting and enforcing equality' across race and religion among the statutory duties of a unified Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC 2012); support for different cultural, ethnic and religious groups mainly from local government through the communities and neighbourhood programmes, recognition of diverse traditions and practices in education and acknowledgement of difference in such areas as Sharia and Jewish courts, acceptance of dress and dietary codes, the expansion of faith schools beyond the established Christian and Jewish schools, and rights to observe religious holidays.

Many observers see the British commitment to multiculturalism as distinctive: 'of all European societies, Britain has perhaps gone the furthest in accommodating her ethnic minorities by means of explicit state policy, Muslims included…This .. paradigm-setting anti-discrimination policy in Europe was framed within a consensual view of Britain as a multicultural society, where 'diversity' was extolled as a virtue long before this happened elsewhere' (Joppke 2009, 455). Recently the approach has been called into question for varying reasons by political leaders (Cameron 2011; Brown 2007), those at the heart of policy (Trevor Phillips 2005), academics (Joppke 2009) and other commentators (Anne Phillips 2009, Goodhart 2004, Sen 2006, 114-7).

A review of literature and debate indicates that the themes in discussion are complex and are not structured simply in relation to the established left-right or liberal-collectivist dimensions of British politics, which underpin positions in relation to mainstream economic or social policies. These traditions have been associated with the emergence of class cleavages in modern society and turn on the relationship between state and market and the role of collectivism in enhancing or constraining individual freedom. The debate about multi-culturalism also involves cross-cutting issues which centre on understanding of the relationship between individual identity and group culture and between group rights and individual rights. It is noteworthy that Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative 2010 Manifestoes do not mention multiculturalism, although Labour presents a strong anti-discrimination programme, based on a new Equality Act and the EHRC (Labour 2010, 21-2) and the Liberal Democrats also promise action against discrimination (2010, 30, 95). Conservative references to discrimination simply concern gender and disability (2010, 16, 35). One factor constraining mainstream parties may be concerns that minority parties, committed to 'end the policy of multiculturalism' (UKIP, 2010, 4) and 'repeal the race relations act and … the EHRC' (BNP 2010, 4) may encroach on traditional support.

This gives rise to a complex range of possibilities both in the discussion of policy directions and in relation to the political coalitions which will influence new developments. New policy approaches under discussion include:

- A much greater emphasis on measures to promote dialogue and interaction between different groups, whether to foster social understanding and cohesion or to reduce the capacity of power-holders in minorities to shape the lives of weaker members of their communities;

- Greater attention to basic democratic political values: free speech, equality before the law, equal political rights and tolerance, for all citizens;

- Policies that promote with more or less vigour specific British values and identity, assuming that a consensual, unitary conception of Britishness can be defined. Britishness is understood as including a sense of nationhood and belonging and often a particular conception of British culture, history and traditions; it may be seen as co-existing alongside the other traditions of various groups or as replacing them and assimilating minorities to majority culture; and

- A shaping of policy by the recognition that new more intercultural identities are emerging in everyday interactions, especially among younger people in cities, and that it is important for policy not to obstruct this process.

The various proposals for new policy directions rest on different understandings of the impact of multi-culturalism in our society, influenced by different interpretations of the outcomes of current policies and informed by varying approaches to the relationship between individual identity and culture and to the role of the state. They take place in a setting in which terrorist attacks, riots in which race issues have played a major role and concerns about the growth of

extreme right politics among white members of deprived communities during the past decade have pointed the urgency of the debate.

The objective of this paper is to contribute to the debate about how multiculturalist policies are likely to develop in the UK. In particular, it examines whether the new policy directions represent additions to or a rejection of traditional multiculturalism. Is the claim that 'multiculturalism is dead' convincing? One influence on future directions will be the way in which these issues are understood by leading figures in the policy community. The paper reports findings from loosely-structured discursive interviews with members of the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) from left, right and centre parties, recognised figures in debate including those who have written major policy reports on citizenship, multicultural education and opportunity, researchers in think tanks working on ethnicity and immigration issues, lobby groups and senior academics. It falls into three sections:

- Discussion of the background to the current debate which identifies the main challenges to multiculturalism;

- Analysis of interview material examining how members of the policy community understand the challenges, their views on policy in this field and how they think it should develop; leading to

- Conclusions about the parameters within which future policies are likely to develop.

Background: the challenges to multiculturalism

Two main currents can be identified in recent academic and policy literature raising concerns about multiculturalism in the UK. One focuses on the impact of multicultural policies on segregation and social cohesion. The other concerns culture and individual identity.

Multiculturalism and social cohesion

In the first area, one view claims that the 'politics of respect' damages cohesive solidarity by stressing the cultural differences between groups and allowing them to develop segregated identities (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Goodhart 2004). The core of the argument is that human social sympathies evolve through interaction with others who share similar values and a similar way of life. Emphasis on difference leads members of different communities to 'hunker down' as Putnam puts it (2007). Thus policies which celebrate those differences and insist on respect for them have the unintended effect of dividing communities, undermining overall social solidarities and reducing social trust. This view underlies the claim by Trevor Phillips, head of the then Commission for Racial Equality, that multicultural Britain is 'sleepwalking into segregation' (Trevor Phillips, 2005).

A substantial empirical literature challenges these arguments in the UK, with the main strand demonstrating that deprivation and inequality have a much greater impact on social trust than cultural difference (summarised by Sturgis et al. 2011). Further analysis points out that trends

towards segregation do not typify the residential patterns of ethnic minorities and are exaggerated by many writers (Finney and Simpson, 2009). Concerns about the impact of diversity however remain influential in policy debates. The chief concern is that multiculturalism provides the setting for the development of separate, unconnected communities, and that the possibility of developing closer links through contact over time is limited by official support for cultural difference (Trevor Phillips 2005; Brown 2007).

These concerns can lead in two main directions so far as policy is concerned:

Countering segregation through dialogue and interaction. On the one hand, issues of cohesion and the management of difference lead to arguments which promote the primacy of dialogue and interaction. For example, the Denham report on community cohesion, in the context of the 2001 riots in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford, building on earlier work by Cantle (2001), Ouseley (2001) and others, stressed 'lack of interchange between members of different racial, cultural and religious communities'. It argued that cohesion can be promoted through 'widespread open debate' as well as measures to advance core democratic values and combat disadvantage (Denham, 2001, 3). The valuing of debate is bound up with respect for a common structure of core values essential for modern liberal democracy. Specifications of these values differ but the list typically includes tolerance, freedom of speech, respect for the law and equality in political and legal rights (Rattansi 2011, ch 5; Parekh ch 11, especially p. 337). One important difference lies between those who suggest that respect for such values evolves through interactions in everyday life and those who believe that government action is necessary to instil and reinforce them.

Imposing a unitary British identity to build a core common culture. The second policy direction rests on the argument that equal respect for all cultures also undermines support for a common British identity which would add pride in one's country and its achievements, and commitment to a common national identity to the list of core values. The approach that gives core British values pride of place varies in implications for multiculturalism from those who see British identity as replacing diversity in a logic close to assimilation, to those who see commitment to nation as one element alongside various ethnic, religious, local and other identities. At one extreme, the assumption is that allegiance to Britain involves severing minority cultural ties and abandoning one's culture: 'in 1990, speaking before a Test match between England and India, Conservative MP Norman Tebbit asked, 'which side do they cheer for?' (Fletcher 2011, 2). Conversely Conservative prime minister David Cameron linked 'the doctrine of state multiculturalism' to encouragement for ' different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream' and went on to advocate a 'much more active, muscular liberalism' and 'pride in local culture' (Cameron 2011). However he made clear that that allegiance to British culture did not preclude other identities: 'the key to social cohesiveness' lies in integrated identities: '"I am a Muslim, I am a Hindu, I am a Christian, but I am a Londoner... too"'. The previous prime minister, Gordon Brown, also endorsed British identity , and argued that 'what was wrong about multiculturalism was not the recognition of diversity but that it over-emphasised separateness at the cost of unity…and pushed communities apart' (2007).

A number of policies seek to strengthen 'Britishness', including revisions to the Citizenship Test in 2012, to cover British history, the abandonment of the previous government's programme of education for diversity (DfES 2007) and a ministerial commitment to give a greater role to 'the inspiring story' of 'our island's history' in a wide-ranging curriculum review: 'the trashing of our history has got to stop' (Conservative Party 2010).

The approach centred on national identity assumes that a unitary and cohesive British identity can be established. This claim is vulnerable to challenge from two directions. First, many commentators point out that British traditions include continuing conflicts between class, regional, faith and other groups and imperialist and racist elements in the national heritage, as well as cosmopolitanism, so that the core is essentially a matter of dispute (Rattansi, 2011, ch 5). Secondly, the interpenetration of cultures is seen as a positive advantage and as strengthening national life: 'since each culture is inherently limited, a dialogue between them is mutually beneficial' (Parekh, 2000, 337). Britishness is then bound up with acceptance of the centrality of dialogue rather than commitment to specific traditions.

Culture and individual identity

The second major strand in the debate rests on understanding of the relationship between culture and individual identity and consequent assumptions about rights. From one perspective, individual identity is constituted within a cultural framework, so that it is difficult to think of someone functioning as an individual in modern society without thinking of them in terms of cultural categories (Parekh 2000b, chs. 5, 6). This position is one of the core arguments within the politics of recognition: failure to acknowledge that people are members of cultural groups demeans their status as people and subjects them to the imposition of the cultural values of the dominant group, which damages their personhood (Taylor 1994, 25). Acknowledgement of the importance of social group implies group rights.

An alternative approach sees the relationship between culture and individual identity as more interactive and affords a greater role to individual agency. While people's identities are initially shaped within a given culture they are also aware of and open to other cultural influences, so that identity cannot be simply read off from culture. This leads in three main directions in its implications for policy.

First, classical liberal approaches understand identity as constituted within the individual in a strong sense, independently from society (Green et al, 2009, 21). Individuals are then free to choose to join or interact with others and to form social groups. From this perspective multiculturalism may be oppressive because it limits this freedom by assuming that culture rather than individual choice authenticates identity. From the liberal perspective this misunderstands the nature of personhood. State intervention to endorse multicultural identities should be restricted, and individual choice promoted. Joppke develops the point politically, arguing that liberalism contradicts multiculturalism: the latter offers recognition that the former denies, leading to 'ever-more-radical and extreme acts of claims-making on the part of minorities, until a limit is reached that is currently experienced as a crisis of multiculturalism' (Joppke, 2009, 469; see Vertovec, 2002, 32).

A variant of this approach stresses the importance of reason as the guide to individual choice in the structuring of identity. Sen argues that people have and value a broad range of identities: 'along with the recognition of the plurality of our identities and their diverse implications, there is a critically important need to see the role of choice in determining the cogency and relevance of particular identities which are inescapably diverse' (Sen 2006, 4; Malik 2008).

Secondly, a number of writers point to the development of intercultural engagement and interaction, particularly among younger people in cities (Wood and Landry 2008). Codes of behaviour and lifestyles are not fixed by traditional norms but are the products of individual engagement and choice within and between cultures. This can lead to greater interaction, to the evolution of culture and to the development of convivial and cosmopolitan identities (Gilroy 2004, Modood 2012, Vertovec 2007). This process is seen as largely organic. It can be supported but not imposed by government policies.

The third policy argument focuses attention more on the extent to which multiculturalism is seen to confer a dominant status on a particular concept of ethnic identity (Modood, 2007, 110-6). This 'essentialism', simplifying issues of culture to a 'reified' Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, fundamental Christian or other identity, opens up opportunities for 'ethno-political entrepreneurs' (Brubaker 2005, 10) to promote the 'political fiction of the of the unified group'. This approach 'misses out the diversity, complexity and open-endedness of social phenomena' in this case formation of ethnic identity (Modood, 2007, 1150). Modood points out that for many members of minorities, identity is hyphenated: 'Cuban American, black-British, French-Muslim'.

A variant of this approach argues that the reinforcement of cultural difference may strengthen the authority of power-holders (typically older men) within minority communities. 'Multiculturalism ..has undermined progressive trends…while strengthening the hands of conservative religious leaders' (Kenan Malik 2009, 12). This curbs the freedom to exercise agency, especially for women and younger members: 'multiculturalism then appears not as cultural liberator, but as cultural straitjacket ... denying [members of a minority] the chance to cross cultural borders, borrow cultural influences, define and redefine themselves' (Anne Phillips 2009, 14, Schacher 2007). This perspective condemns multi-culturalism, not so much because it buttresses difference and segregation or constrains dialogue and interaction or undermines national identity or limits conviviality, but because it reinforces power structures. The state should act to restrain the authority of these 'minorities within minorities' to defend the rights of more vulnerable members of these communities (Anne Phillips 2009, 1).

These debates have been given added force during the past decade by three developments: first terrorist attacks by small groups of Muslim extremists have intensified political concerns about ensuring that all cultural groups accept core values of democracy, free speech and respect for the rule of law. Some commentators interpret multiculturalism as a policy of appeasement and argue that it opens the way to violent extremism (Melanie Phillips, 2006, 1). Secondly riots with a strong racial element in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001,

and Birmingham in 2005, followed by the 2011 riots in many major cities, which escalated beyond racial issues, deepened concerns about the success with which the British polity was managing issues of difference and disadvantage. This intensified the dispute about the extent to which future policies should seek to promote a common British culture as opposed to the encouragement of dialogue between separate cultural groups. Thirdly, there have been concerns that multiculturalism fosters the development of white working class racism in disadvantaged communities because it nourished the fear that the politics of respect diverts scarce social resources (social housing, places in popular schools, access to jobs) to ethnic minorities and away from the majority (Dench et al., 2006, Hewitt 2005). This raises political concerns. Labour politicians fear the loss of votes from traditional supporters. Politicians of all mainstream parties face the possibility that the extreme right may exploit an opportunity to gain support (Goodwin 2011, 98-9). This intensifies concerns about segregation.

A conceptual framework for the policy debate

Multiculturalism has been called into question from a number of directions. This brief discussion attempts to summarise a large and complex literature concerning policy debates and their implications as background to the analysis of interview material. It indicates that issues in relation to the management of diversity and policy development in this area cross-cut traditional left, centre, right debates in British politics. They include both debates about the role of the state in relation to the individual and about the relationship between community and agency. One outcome is that uneasiness about multiculturalism does not immediately lead to in a particular policy direction. It is compatible with attempts to establish a unitary British identity, to promote more vibrant inter-community engagement, with perspectives that suggest social ideas have moved beyond cultural difference to conviviality and interculturalism, and with support for opportunities for individuals to define themselves outside scripts laid down by a defined cultural tradition.

One way of structuring the debate is to argue that possible positions may be ranged along two dimensions, one drawing on political, the other on more sociological approaches. One concerns the role of government and particularly the importance of state intervention: to what extent is intervention through law, regulation, subsidy, encouragement and political leadership in fostering a particular identity or range of identities socially desirable; how far is such a process damaging to social cohesion? The other deals with the importance of group membership as opposed to individual agency in establishing identity: to what extent are people constituted as persons through the cultural traditions of the group or through individual choices, , and what are the implications for the balance between individual and group rights?

Traditional multiculturalism argues for a strong role for government through the Equalities Act and the EHRC to create conditions in which minority communities may thrive and their members enjoy equal rights and opportunities, and in which discrimination is constrained. Identity is nourished through community membership. Minority communities are officially endorsed and supported. Conversely, liberalism sees people as self-sufficient and as authors of their own identities. They should be free to choose, and this freedom should include

choices about which cultural practices they wish to follow. Sen develops this approach with much greater acceptance of the range of cultural approaches individuals in practice adopt.

When shortcomings emerge in traditional multiculturalism in its task of achieving civil order and conditions for human flourishing, one response is to argue that the barriers between the various communities are too powerful and that greater interchange and dialogue is necessary to resolve differences and more importantly promote trust and social cohesion. This stance is at the heart of official responses to the 2001 mill-town riots, summed up in the Denham Report (2001) and is prominent in the Neighbourhood Renewal policies of the Labour government from 2000 and the New Deal for Communities (Powers 2012, 9-10). State intervention is necessary, but must also include support and encouragement for interaction, so that the significance of cultural group in identity is somewhat diminished. It can be understood as moving towards a weaker multiculturalism, which 'begins by accepting the reality and desirability of cultural diversity' and is 'dialogically constituted' (Parekh 2000a, 340). In other words, the community accepts cultural difference but evolves its various cultural practices through interaction, negotiation and accommodation. Towards the end of the spectrum that regards interventions to promote multiculturalism as socially damaging lie arguments for the promotion a strong British sense of identity. These range from those giving a primary role to a 'British' mono-culture, through to approaches that seek to add core British identity alongside elements of group identity in framing individual citizenship. They may carry stronger (for example, no minority exemptions from national dietary and dress codes, religious practices, burial rites or legal frameworks) or weaker (common nation-centred history, civic and political curricula in schools) policy implications. These views accept intervention but see its role as shaping a mono-cultural identity.

Analyses which claim that social diversity allows new cultural forms to flourish also tend to be critical of state intervention, which might damage such developments. They argue for a stronger role for individual agency in the construction of identity. To a lesser or greater extent, individuals choose for themselves the practices they will follow and how they will live their lives. These positions, which use terminology like 'intercultural', 'convivial', 'super-diverse', 'cosmopolitan' and often refer particularly to young people in cities, span greater or lesser degrees of supportive intervention, and of cultural bases for individual identity and accord a greater or lesser role to communal identity.

Commentators who point to the way in which some cultural traditions confer authority on particular groups, especially older men, to control the behaviour of younger people, especially women, in their communities, argue that individuals should play a greater role in constructing an authentic identity, but that state power should be deployed in support and to frame the conditions in which they are able to do so. Government should enforce strong laws against oppressive community power in such areas as forced marriage, genital mutilation and restrictive gender codes.

The framework points to the way in which the politics of multiculturalism cut across central debates in political science, sociology and moral and political philosophy about the role of the state in relation to the individual and of cultural membership in constructing and enabling

identity. The arguments are wide-ranging and of considerable complexity. Any discussion must include both cultural and political institutions. The framework also shows that there is no obvious relationship between individuals' position on one dimension and on the other, since support for different degrees of state interventionism can relate to different views on the role of group culture and the status of individual rights.

II. The interviews

We explored issues related to the role of government and of group culture in sustaining diverse identities through a series of interviews carried out between November 2011 and October 2012 with individuals prominent in debate and actively engaged in policy-making. These include politicians from each main party, who sit on the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee and are directly involved in policy debate and other Conservative and labour MPs; Sir Keith Ajegbo, who chaired the 2007 Curriculum Review which established how citizenship and diversity should be taught in schools; Lord Parekh who chaired the Commission on Multi-Cultural Britain, which defined multiculturalism in modern British politics; a range of think-tanks, left and right-leaning and non-aligned; and commentators such as Kenan Malik, a prominent intellectual critic of multi-culturalism and Lord Ahmed, a leading members of the British Muslim community. The interviews covered all the major strands in discussion on multi-culturalism analysed earlier and provide insight into the full range of current policy debate. (see Appendix for details of the interviewees).

The interviews explored respondents' understanding of multiculturalism and of current challenges to it and of the way policy should develop. They were loosely structured around a schedule that covered:

- General discussion of multiculturalism and of its strengths and weaknesses;

- The relationship between multiculturalism and social cohesion;

- More detailed comments on specific policy areas, current in debate; and

- Views about future policy directions.

Respondents discussed multiculturalism both as a general policy approach and in relation to more concrete issues and paid specific attention to possible future policy developments.

The interviews varied in length from 30 to 90 minutes. They were recorded and analysed in relation to the two themes identified in the conceptual framework (the roles of government intervention and of group culture in shaping identity) through an iterative process that involved identifying key responses in relation to the themes, seeking to establish patterns of response and then applying these patterns recursively to the interviews. The object was to delineate the range of positions that were held across the policy debate and to consider how understanding of current issues related to ideas about the best way forward in policy. The analysis examines how the two dimensions of the role of state intervention and of the balance between group and individual in the formation of identity interact. It falls into four sections, presenting general views on the state of multiculturalism, on how the assertion of British

national identity and the pursuit of more dialogic negotiated positions interact in relation to social cohesion, more specifically, on how high-profile issues should be managed, and discussion of possible future developments in multicultural policies.

The impact of multiculturalism and unease about multicultural policies

The core understanding of multi-culturalism as 'respect for diversity' (as Lord Ahmed, a Labour peer, put it) was shared across the interviewees. This did not preclude references to problems by the majority of those interviewed, primarily to do with the possible divisiveness of support for cultural differences. Julian Huppert (Liberal HASC) talked of 'having a variety of different cultures all intermixed .. generally in a good way'. James Clappison (Conservative, HASC) states 'I am all for people having their own way of life'. Alveena Malik from the Young Foundation stressed the positive benefits of multiculturalism in allowing migrants from the 'Windrush period' to 'retain their values, cultural practices and traditions alongside British traditions and values'. Simon Woolley, from the lobby group Operation Black Vote, was a particularly ardent enthusiast of UK approaches to multiculturalism. . Lord Ahmed, Julian Huppert, David Lammy and Alun Michael (Labour HASC) also spoke particularly enthusiastically about British achievements in managing diversity. However, while there is a strong sense of respect for the values of different cultures, most respondents from the left, centre and right of the political spectrum and also those adopting more modern, culturally influenced approaches (Katwala or Lammy on the left and Alveena Malik; Huppert in the centre; Barwell on the right) and those located within more traditional class-centred viewpoints (Field on the left, Clappison on the right) all in various ways express concerns about the segregative effects of current multi-culturalist practice. This underlines the sense of unease with existing direction in policy discussed earlier and the fact that it spreads beyond standard political divisions of government and opposition or left, centre and right.

Some supporters of multiculturalism commented on the range of meanings associated with the term and the risks associated with multicultural policies. Lord Parekh (Labour Peer, chair of the influential Runnymede Trust *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, 2000b) distinguishes multicultural (a society where diversity is accepted, 'the people's creation'), and multiculturalism (a policy programme 'the product of state engineering'). Both can co-exist, but problems are associated with the latter. Gavin Barwell (a Conservative back-bencher) pointed out that many of his constituents in Croydon would extend the term to include 'anti-racism', and some politicians use it to mean separate treatment for different ethnic groups, which generates problems of segregation.. Alveena Malik referred to the development of a 'silos' mentality among ethnic communities. A generational shift towards more dynamic, hybrid and cosmopolitan understandings of cultural differences among young people in large cities calls for a different approach. David Lammy, a Labour ex-Minister, similarly underlined the 'evolving' nature of multiculturalism in Britain; 'sometimes you have to refashion, remodel it'. Sunder Katwala, director of the British Futures think tank, defined multiculturalism in terms of 'an approach to diversity that seeks to accommodate and recognise difference. He accepted that 'there is a debate to be had about the segregative or integrative effects that multiculturalism has had'. He acknowledged concerns that

multiculturalism became 'too racially led... . it came to be about ethnic minorities, but not overall British identity'.

In some cases anxieties about multiculturalism move beyond segregation to concerns about the erosion of national identity. Clappison suggests that multiculturalism 'has been used as saying existing [majority] forms of culture are no longer legitimate..that's not been helpful'. David Goodhart, director of the non-aligned think tank, Demos, argued that multiculturalism may be understood as 'the right to be separate' but multicultural practice is 'asymmetrical': it promotes minority separateness but regards majority identity 'as illegitimate or in some sense unproblematic'. This argument is made yet more strongly by Frank Field, a Labour back-bencher, 'no-one from the elites wanted to assert English identity..'.

Both Anthony Painter and Sunder Katwala expressed concerns that the term 'multiculturalism' has itself become problematic. It is now heavily freighted with associations of groupism (essentialised group identities) and segregation (regardless of whether or not multicultural approaches have indeed had this effect). Sunder Katwala proposed jettisoning the term in favour of terms such as 'inclusive British identity' 'fairness' and 'anti-discrimination': the concept of 'multiculturalism' had become associated with the promotion of 'diversity' rather than 'commonality', and was therefore no longer palatable to the British majority, On the basis of a similar rationale, Anthony Painter suggested using the term 'cultural pluralism' rather than 'multiculturalism' 'because 'multiculturalism' has been used in a certain political way that I don't think is helpful anymore'.

Social cohesion: the role of state intervention; group versus individual identity

This issue is pointed in answers to a specific question about the balance 'between the need to respect cultural differences and the need to maintain shared values and social cohesion'. This provoked responses on whether and how the state should support cohesion and on the status of British values and identity. These are the issues that emerged in the earlier review of the literature and debate. They are summarised in the conceptual framework in terms of how far state policies to promote multi-culturalism are valued, as opposed to people's understanding of the balance between group culture and individual agency in creating identity, and of the relationship between group rights and individual rights.

The differences between respondents on these issues may be contrasted along the two dimensions. Almost all those interviewed argued that a common basis in institutional forms embodying shared democratic values (freedom of speech, equality before the law, equal political rights) was essential. They differed in whether and how far additional state interventions and cultural directions were necessary. While the positions taken by individuals vary by degree and sometimes shade into each other, those who stress the role of government in promoting national identity may be distinguished (notably Clappison, Conway (associated with Civitas, a non-aligned classical liberal think-tank), Barwell, and, from a rather different perspective, Frank Field). This position is located predominantly but not exclusively on the political right. Others tend to rely much more on the cultural role of common social values

(Lord Ahmed, Julian Huppert, Alveena Malik, and Anthony Painter, associated with the non-aligned think-tank, Demos and this is shared across a broader range of non-aligned, centrist and left viewpoints. Located somewhere between unitary national identity as the basis of cohesion and common values is the view that specific steps should be taken to guarantee a dominant position for the majority culture. This position spans right and left and is shared by David Conway, Frank Field, David Goodhart and in some ways Matt Cavanagh, from the centre-left think-tank IPPR, and Sunder Katwala.

Some commentators point to the importance of interventions to combat disadvantage and discrimination rather than sustain cultural differences and express concerns about residential divisions (Sunder Katwala, Simon Woolley and also Gavin Barwell). A substantial number argue from various perspectives that the ways people deal with cultural relations and diversity in their lives and communities are continuing to evolve (Lord Ahmed, Julian Huppert, Alveena Malik, Anthony Painter, and from his own position, Lord Parekh). On the one hand this limits the applicability of state interventions, which may lag behind people's everyday life practice. On the other, it contrasts with the approach that stresses the role of government in promoting an identity centred on nation as the core of social cohesion.

British identity. The argument that a sense of British identity is needed alongside a respect for cultural diversity is put clearly by Gavin Barwell: 'we need to promote difference, but need to have something that binds us together into British society..' This is where we have 'gone wrong'. This includes the promotion of core political values such as tolerance, respect for democracy and the rule of law, although these are acknowledged as shared with other societies. In a similar vein, James Clappison states that it is important to have: 'something that brings everyone together..feeling the same allegiances and feeling pride in the same things'. In relation to the promotion of national identity, he states that 'I don't think we should be ashamed to have pride in our national culture and the symbols of our national culture. I think people are very proud, for example, of the armed forces… the royal family.. and other symbols of our national life. David Conway discusses the issues in terms of 'constitutional patriotism', but social cohesion cannot be those cold institutions which are common to lots of [societies]. It has to be ..particular to that society'.

The emphasis on national symbols as the foundation for social cohesion alongside a respect for diversity derives from a classical liberal approach to citizenship. This perspective stresses the value of allowing individual freedom to follow their own way of life 'so long as it does not damage the rights of others'. It then needs to identify something outside the cultural choices of free individuals and the democratic institutions that guarantee those choices to supply national cohesion.

The Labour MP Frank Field, also endorses national identity-building taking a more top-down approach. Multiculturalism, by valuing all cultures meant that 'no-one from the elites wanted to assert English identity'. Minorities could choose their own way of life: 'I don't blame them for setting up the equivalent of a village way of life…what else do you do when the majority is so disinterested both in their own.. and in your way of life?' He argues for integration based on explicit contract: 'a social highway-code' drawn from all religions and

'transcending cultural differences' to which minorities could 'sign up'. This perspective shares the idea that nationhood and social cohesion would be imposed from the top down with the approach that stresses loyalty to national institutions. There are implications for citizenship tests, educational curricula and a common understanding of history discussed earlier. It assumes a unitary British identity. It is vigorously rejected by Sir Keith Ajegbo, author of the curriculum review, 'Diversity and Citizenship', who advocates the need for on-going discussion, debate and negotiation over the nature of British identity, but sees an important role for education in ensuring that people recognise diverse cultural practices (2007).

Evolving common values. Most of those interviewed understood social cohesion as a matter of shared values and social practices, something that evolves in everyday life rather than being developed through policies endorsing specific institutions and so subject to change and requiring space for negotiation. This raises issues about segregation and about divisions between communities and about the way in which community interactions occurred. It opens the way to a fluid and plural rather than a fixed and pre-defined notion of identity. Some commentators stressed the pace of change in big cities and among younger people.

This approach moves away from a unitary basis for cohesion: 'cultural traditions shouldn't exclude. They must be open to other people's views and must not push forward their views as the primary and only way of doing things' (Alveena Malik, a point echoed by Anthony Painter, who also speaks of 'cultural pluralism').

This perspective typically opposes a top down approach: 'forced marriages don't work' (Lord Ahmed). Simon Woolley argues that 'light touch' multiculturalism facilitates the development of 'multi-faceted identities … The idea you get social cohesion by asking people to abandon their culture is completely wrong'. Lord Parekh nuances the approach: multiculturalism does not fit an 'ideological template'. It is 'a kind of spontaneous vernacular cultural openness that you find on the streets of London which we celebrate…not organising people into communities'. However, there is also an important role for government in ensuring that recognition of cultural difference is ingrained in public life.

A number of commentators from the centre, left and non-aligned positions argue that the majority culture should be assured a dominant position.. This is reminiscent of the top-down national cultural approach of Clappison and Barwell and is evident in David Goodhart's concern (mentioned above) about the 'asymmetry' of treatment between minority and majority cultures. Matt Cavanagh argues that 'valuing cultural diversity should not be equated with moral relativism'. Sunder Katwala points out that an exclusive focus on minority cultures may fail to sustain a national identity and lead to a sense of grievance ('what about us?') among the white majority. Katwala, Simon Woolley and also Gavin Barwell suggest that measures to combat residential segregation ('white flight', Woolley) may be needed to allow cohesive identity to develop.

The theme of evolving cultural accommodation is taken further by those who emphasize processes of generational change, so that 'the context has changed' (Alveena Malik, see also

Lammy, Katwala). This leads to a further concern: younger people who wish to pursue more inter-cultural life styles may be constrained by traditional multi-culturalism, as Anne Phillips argues (2009). David Lammy points to problems for young people 'growing up not just in local environments but in parochial environments'. However, no other respondents referred to the constraining authority of 'old men' within minority communities. The main concern with multiculturalism is about segregation between communities rather than coercion within them.

. Many respondents express concerns about aspects of multi-culturalism, as leading to segregation, undermining national identity or constraining an organic social process of conviviality, but there is a sense of general support for diversity It is possible to identify a right-centre-left political spectrum between those who see the way forward in terms of more top-down process of national identity formation and those who stress processes of interaction and dialogue taking place within society, provided that discrimination and disadvantage are addressed. However this would over-simplify the debate in two ways. First it would leave out the distinctive positions of those like Frank Field who favours an explicit state-guaranteed social contract, and those, like Lord Parekh, who make a strong distinction between the role of government in providing common institutions and the role of civil society in providing the space and opportunity for more convivial process of negotiation and accommodation between cultures to take place. Secondly it would narrow the perspective and divert attention from the range of different positions on the balance between state actions and cultural processes and on the extent to which the management of cultural diversity should be a matter of individual agency rather than group rights. Thus David Lammy is concerned about residential segregation, disadvantage and opportunity, but also sees the generational changes in intercultural conviviality as part of the solution. Simon Woolley argues 'the key to light-touch multiculturalism is actually ensuring greater equality. By gaining greater equality and greater respect, awareness of diversity, actually you get greater social cohesion'. For Clappison and Barwell, national identity is a cultural process surrounding the symbols of monarchy, the armed forces and other institutions, as well as something to be promoted by government. Discussion of these issues in relation to specific policy areas brings out further the extent to which a simple left-centre-right framework fails to do justice to the complexity of the positions in debate and shows how culture also plays an important role.

Specific policy areas

The interview schedule directed attention to issues currently at the forefront of discussion: faith schools, sharia courts, forced marriage, arranged marriage, dress codes (included veiling), political representation and reform of the House of Lords. Should minorities be allowed exemption from common legal requirements and practices on grounds of culture or faith?

The main theme in responses was pragmatism. Individuals accepted exemptions as appropriate and fitted them into a logic of multiculturalism or national identity by reference to regulation or negotiation between the different cultural communities with a strong practical element in policy-making. Lord Ahmed's position typifies an across-the-board acceptance of

multicultural exemptions from common schooling in faith schools, in relation to sharia courts, dress codes and in representation of non-Christian religious groups in the House of Lords. This is argued in terms of the valuing of diversity and may be seen as strong traditional multiculturalism. A more nuanced position is described by Sunder Katwala and Julian Huppert as 'pragmatic', by Anthony Painter as 'common-sense', by Simon Woolley as 'light-touch' and by Alveena Malik as resting on negotiation. Gavin Barwell (on the political right) from a more liberal perspective argues that 'a fine balance has to be struck' between exemptions and 'the general principle that the law of the land should apply to everybody'. The utilitarian approach of examining whether 'you are doing anything that hinders the rights of others' has to be applied on a case-by-case basis. James Clappison (also on the right) says simply 'I am all for people having their own way of life'.

From a position more to the left, Matt Cavanagh states 'you just have to have a discussion about which parts of the culture are going to be tolerated'. This is close to Lord Parekh's rejection of a pre-ordained multicultural 'template': 'in small and large ways, communities integrate with each other .. there is no grand design'. David Lammy raises concerns about 'some aspects of arranged marriages' in particular in relation to women, but says: 'I am confident that social mobility and education.. deals with the problem'. Field was the only respondent to oppose exemptions to rules. The object was to privilege existing English cultural norms. For example, he supported Christian (but not Muslim or Sikh) faith schools. Huppert is relaxed about dress codes and sharia law 'so long as there is clear consent' but opposes faith schools; 'I don't think it is right to have state-funded faith schools. I don't think the state should be indoctrinating people or funding that indoctrination... faiths are …welcome to have their own Sunday schools … but I don't think you should have state-funded faith schools'. Although Conway accepts some existing exemptions to rules, he regards the granting of such exemptions as potentially a 'slippery path': However, he would accept some faith schools as preferable to less formal religious schooling over which there would be little control.

The discussion of the respondents' more general understanding of multiculturalism and how it emerges in relation to the main policy controversies highlights two points: first, a simple left-centre-right pattern fails to capture the range of responses. There are indications of a division between those that might be termed traditionalists and those who adopt a less centralist view. The former stress the role of the interventionist state, whether in relation to a multicultural policy agenda, the imposition of national identity or the management of community tensions, while the latter group place more emphasis on the role of organic community processes or on individual choice and agency. Secondly as the discussion focused more on the policy issues which are currently high on the agenda, positions became more nuanced and pragmatic with those from different backgrounds talking in terms of negotiation, discussion and settling cases on their merits. The theoretical differences become rather more blurred. The emphasis is much more on making things work and less on preserving particular frameworks except among a very small group.

Most of those interviewed, representing a wide range of viewpoints, express unease about multiculturalism as currently practised, when considering it as an overall policy framework.

When it comes to discussion of specific issues, solutions tend to be more pragmatic and to allow a larger role for interaction and dialogue as suggested for example in the Denham report. This implies a common core of values, but it is the values that underpin dialogue: tolerance, legal and political equality, free speech. One way of putting it would be to say that the politics of recognition thrives in terms of a weak multiculturalism that respects difference but requires openness on the part of members of different communities and an underpinning of individual democratic rights. Strong multiculturalism that focuses centrally on protecting group rights and maintaining cultural practices in minority communities receives much less support because it is seen to entrench difference. Those positions that promote specific interventions, whether to impose British national identity or to constrain authority within communities, are much less prominent in the discussion.

Policy futures and the constraints on multiculturalism

So far the discussion has been structured in terms of existing policies and the areas highlighted in current debate. The interview schedule went on to address the question of how policy should develop and of the conceptual framework within which diversity should be managed in the future. In general the pattern of answers indicates support for a pragmatic and incremental development of multiculturalism rather than a rupture or U-turn in policy. Even those who place most emphasis on the problems of multiculturalism as leading to a more segregated society appear to think in terms of gradual changes. Alveena Malik's solution to the problem of 'silo' mentalities is 'more openness', a process that she sees as well-developed among younger people. One tactic is to side-step race and 'mobilise around common community issues such as noise pollution or traffic'. Sunder Katwala refers to more 'granular' and low-level approaches to social divisions, for example tackling 'residential segregation', a position also taken by Lammy. Alun Michael points out that we 'deal with most of our major issues by incremental changes'. Simon Woolley's approach emphasizes 'light touch' policy direction. All this fits within Lord Parekh's overarching strategy of communication and negotiation, which should be pursued as an evolutionary process, without offering a predetermined 'template' for exactly how cultural difference should be managed.

The rather different approaches of those like Frank Field, who sees citizenship very much in contractual terms and requires minorities to sign up to core values as a condition of membership, take the debate in a rather different direction and one in which cultural values are imposed. David Conway's notion of a historically-based English citizenship has similarities in the dominance of a particular cultural system, but it is one which is understood to be rooted in a national heritage. He stresses the use of nation-centred material such as Marshall (1905)..

III. Conclusions

General views on multiculturalism among the members of the policy community interviewed point to a broad acceptance of the value of respect for diverse communities , combined with disquiet over the segregative aspects of current policies and a strong desire for change among nearly all commentators. Ideas about how policy should develop do not seem to fit neatly

within a traditional left-centre-right framework, but indicate some divisions between those who think in terms of top-down intervention to impose a more cohesive and unitary nationally-based culture, and those who pay more attention to continuing intercultural processes between community groups, the traditional as against the dynamic approach.

As the analysis paid attention to the specific policy areas that are currently the focus of debate, the divisions at the level of overall social analysis become more blurred. There are more frequent references to pragmatism, case-by-case decisions, incremental change and dialogue and accommodation between communities. Comments about future policy directions follow this path in most cases, with only two of those interviewed suggesting very different directions for policy and one rejecting the link between multiculturalism and segregation completely. This reflects Meer and Modood's arguments that contest 'the idea that British multiculturalism is subject to a wholesale 'retreat' and suggest instead that it has been, and continues to be, subject to productive critique that leads to something best characterised as a 'civic re-balancing'' (Meer and Modood 2009, 473). Such rebalancing involves both the greater conviviality stressed by Gilroy and Vertovec and also elements of communitarianism that allow dialogue and interaction between culturally different communities.

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Our analysis is based on a relatively small sample. We do not claim that our findings are comprehensive or fully representative of the entire spectrum of attitudes towards cultural diversity. Our interviews are prominent commentators and proponents of the main strands in current policy debate and provide an indication of the range of views shaping policy directions. While political rhetoric typically refers to segregation, the claim that 'multiculturalism doesn't work' and to communal divisions, practical policy development seems likely to pursue more gradual shifts rather than a rejection of the developed tradition. An expansion of community dialogue and reliance on the informal processes of exchange and cultural interpenetration, with some support from government and continued emphasis on combating disadvantage and discrimination seem the most widely supported outcomes.

In terms of the conceptual framework discussed earlier, the dominant position remains multicultural, including state intervention to guarantee basic individual rights and respect for difference. There are also indications of a shift from strong to weak multiculturalism in the pragmatic willingness to discuss and accommodate different religious and cultural practices. Views that endorse the pre-eminence of a 'British' culture have some support, but it is an identity that includes respect for diversity. The classic liberal solution of rolling back state intervention does not seem to gain great support. The state continues to carry major responsibility, but must operate in a way that fosters core values of democratic dialogue and must not damage intercultural relationships in people's day-today lives. People as individuals are accorded a stronger role in shaping their identities, but group culture remains legitimate and is the basis for exemptions from legal requirements in the contested areas.

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Appendix: those interviewed.

Home Office Select Committee

James Clappison, Conservative Hertsmere, Home Affairs Select Committee: 19/03/2012

Julian Huppert, Lib Dem, HASC: 10/11/2011

Alun Michael, Labour/Cooperative Cardiff South, HASC, former Deputy Home Secretary: 19/12/2011

Back-Bench MPs

Gavin Barwell, Conservative Croydon Central, PPS, Rt. Hon Greg Clark, Minister for Cities: 20/02/2012

Frank Field, Labour Birkenhead, chair, Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances, co-chair, Balanced Migration (lobby group, believes that 'immigration should be brought down to the level of emigration'): 06/03/2012

David Lammy, Labour Tottenham, former Minister of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, author, f *Out of the Ashes,* Guardian Books 2011: 27/03/2012

Authors of Major Reports

Sir Keith Ajegbo, former inner-city headteacher, led DCSF 'Diversity and Equality in the Curriculum' review 2007: 12/01/2012

Lord Parekh, Labour, Emeritus Professor, Hull University, Chair, Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, 1998-2000 former vice-chair CRE: 15/05/2012

Think-tanks and Lobby Groups

Matt Cavanagh, IPPR Associate Director Immigration, former SPAD, Labour govt.: 24/01/2012

Myriam Cherti, IPPR senior research fellow, immigration: 16/12/2011

David Goodhart, Demos Director, former editor *Prospect* : 06/02/2012

Sunder Katwala, British Future Director, think-tank dealing with 'identity and integration, migration and opportunity', former general secretary, Fabian Society: 22/03/2012

Alveena Malik, Young Foundation (' brings together insights, innovation and entrepreneurship to meet social needs'), Director 'UpRising Leadership' programme, former ICOCO, CRE: 08/03/2012

Anthony Painter: author of Searchlight 'Fear and Hope', 2011, Demos Associate, 'Open Left Coalitions' project: 21/11/2011

Simon Woolley, Director, Operation Black Vote ('enabling the African British and Asian British communities to claim their places in European politics'), commissioner for race, EHRC: 10/04/2012

Professor David Conway, Emeritus Professor, Middlesex University, Civitas think-tank (classical liberal, non-partisan): 09/01/2012

Leading Commentators

Lord Ahmed, leading member, Muslim community, Labour: 13/02/2012

Kenan Malik, writer and broadcaster, prominent left critic of multi-culturalism: 12/10/2012.