

**Cohesion, citizenship and coherence: Schools' responses to
the British values policy**

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British Journal of Sociology of Education (forthcoming)

Pre-proof - June 2018

**Research funded by the Leverhulme Trust as Major Research Fellowship (October
2016-September 2018). Award number: MRF-2015-170**

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Abstract

In this paper I explore how teachers respond to the requirement to promote 'fundamental British values' (FBV) to their pupils. I offer a preliminary analysis of data drawn from interviews with teachers and (mostly lesson) observations in schools. I argue that first the policy cannot be understood without a consideration of the multi-layered context in which it is being enacted in schools. Second, I locate the policy to promote FBV as a liberal nationalist one and consider some of the problematic issues that arise from this philosophy. Third, I turn to schools and teachers to consider their reactions and responses. I conclude that teachers and schools in my research often did attempt to neutralize potentially exclusionary readings of the policy, and were effective in absorbing the requirement to promote British values. However, I cast doubt on the policy's ability to meet its aims and also raise concerns about the limited amount of time given to pupils' engagement with the values.

Introduction

The constitution of British-ness has been an increasingly visible part of the political discourse throughout this century, in response to concerns about population movements, integration of minorities, cohesion and terrorism. Thus, ex-Labour Prime Ministers Blair, Brown (Labour Party), and Cameron (Conservative) all offered definitions. Cameron perhaps made the clearest incursion into this contested ground with his speech in Munich in 2011 which called for an end to 'passive tolerance' and a renewal of 'muscular liberalism', defined as an assertion of 'British values'. Cameron offered a wide list of values, including equal rights and freedom of speech. A variation of this list was issued by the Department of Education (DfE) in relation to Teacher Standards (2012), and then in November 2014, in its guidance to schools

which stated that teachers should promote the ‘fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs’ (DfE 2014). This wording also featured in the counter-extremist Prevent strategy¹. In terms of ‘placing’ British values within the institution and curriculum of a school, promoting them is positioned as part of a school’s existing duty to develop SMSC, (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education). The English school’s inspectorate, Ofsted, include both how schools promote ‘fundamental British values’ and how they prepare pupils for ‘life in modern Britain’ as part of their inspections of SMSC.

The fundamental British values (hereafter FBV) policy sits at a nexus of what is generally understood in schools as ‘safeguarding’ pupils. Two duties laid on public sector institutions are also relevant. Most obviously, the Prevent Duty from the 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act - to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism – but also the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) created under the Equalities Act 2010, although this is not routinely explicitly linked by teachers in my research to the promotion of FBV (see Moffat 2011 for an example of this linkage). The PSED includes the duty to not discriminate against a pupil who comes under the ‘protected characteristics’ (including race, disability, religion, sex and sexual orientation).

Clearly, the enactment of any policy cannot be considered in isolation from the social and political context in which it was generated. In relation to FBV, this has many layers. There is a broad historical one, a British history that includes colonialism, imperialism and ‘racial arrogance’² which may impact how talk of *British* values is received by minority ethnic groups. In the contemporary moment, a proposal to teach ‘traditional British values’ in schools was first mooted in 2006 by a New Labour government minister, Bill Rammell, and finally enacted by the then

¹ It is interesting to trace *which* values are identified as British. The short version used by the DfE (2014) and Cameron’s longer version both featured in the 2011 anti-extremist Prevent strategy.

² The phrase belongs to Ronan McCrea speaking at a conference on British values at UCL, November 16th 2017

Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, in 2014 in response to the Trojan Horse affair in Birmingham where it was alleged (but not proven) that extremist Islamists had 'infiltrated' schools in the city (for discussion, see Arthur 2015 , Holmwood & O'Toole 2018). Thus, there is a clear link between anti-radicalisation, anti-extremism, and the requirement that schools promote British values. The assumed importance of FBV in 'build[ing] pupils' resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values' was indicated in the DfE's (2015) non-statutory departmental advice on the Prevent duty. With regard to the anti-extremist Prevent policy, steps have been taken in recent iterations to lessen what was perceived to be the positioning of Muslims as being particularly prone to extremism, and include an emphasis on far-right radicalisation (Thomas 2017). However, Prevent has had a long reach, resulting in a continued perception that the policy targets Muslims (Panjwani et al 2018, Mac an Ghail & Hayward 2017, Busher et al 2017). Indeed, latest statistics from the Home Office (2017) show that 65% of referrals for 2015-16 made through Prevent were for Islamist extremism. Other aspects of the contemporary context that contribute to the prominence of ideas of 'British-ness' and belonging (in often virulent public debate), include public alarm and hostility over migration that crystallised in some areas in the result of the 2016 EU referendum. The state has also tightened the processes by which citizenship is granted with, amongst other measures, the need to absorb the obscure content of 'Life in Britain' citizenship tests (Bryne 2017). Additionally, when I was collecting data in schools (2016-2017), the 2016 EU referendum and the terror attacks of 2017 gave rise to an increase in hate crimes (O'Neill 2017). In addition to this social and political context, there are particular features shaping the current educational context. Teachers are responding to multiple policy requirements at any one time and these currently include recent and on-going changes to assessment and syllabi in both primary and secondary schools, at a time when concerns about school funding and teacher recruitment and retention have been prominent (<https://schoolcuts.org.uk/#/> , House of Commons 2017).

I argue, therefore that it is impossible to consider the FBV policy without taking into account the multiple contextual aspects which shape the arena in which teachers are

responding to the mandated requirement to promote British values. Many aspects of this context point to a suspicion, and in some cases, hostility to those that are not 'us'. The notion of 'our values' featured recently in a speech from Ofsted's Chief Inspector.

Through [lessons] pupils should learn about how we became the country we are today and how our values make us a beacon of liberalism, tolerance and fairness to the rest of the world. They [pupils] should emerge with a broad, informed perspective on the world (Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's Chief Inspector. Speech in Birmingham 22/9/17)

The Chief Inspector's positioning of Britain as a 'beacon of liberal values' is open to dissent, and her unproblematised assertion raises questions as to what she would consider 'a broad, informed perspective on the world'.

In the middle of all this, schools are required to adopt and make sense of the requirement to promote British values and here I report on data that discusses how they approach this task. Before turning to the data, however, I will first discuss a small part of the wide-ranging literature around citizenship and national identity.

Citizenship and national identity

In promoting a set of liberal political and social principles – democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance - the British values requirement can be understood as a liberal (or civic) nationalist approach to citizenship³.

Soutphommasane identifies a key tenet of this approach being that 'a shared national identity' is required to sustain a liberal political community, and a 'community of shared belief' (2012 p. 71, 72).

³ Space does not allow a full discussion of variant definitions of liberal or civic nationalism here but see e.g. Müller (2007).

[Liberal nationalism's] central contention is that the constellation of liberal political ideals – individual rights protected by the rule of law, a government administering impartial laws, a deliberative democracy, a welfare state that redistributes resources to those in want and need – can only be achieved if there is a shared national identity among citizens motivating reciprocity and cooperation (Soutphommasane 2012 p.71)

Similarly, Miller and Ali argue 'When people identify with one another as compatriots, over and above the many more specific gender, ethnic, cultural or religious identities they may have, they are more likely to display generalized trust, and to show solidarity' (2014 p.238, also Banting & Kymlicka 2017 p.22).

The risk of this philosophy is that a focus on nationhood will result in individual belonging being defined by an 'ethnic core' (Soutphommasane 2012 p.73), leading to an ethnic nationalist dominance of a 'legitimate' citizen identity and therefore an exclusion of those who are not perceived to be part of the nation, who do not belong and who do not deserve to do so (Banting & Kymlicka 2017, Soutphommasane 2012). Conversi argues that nation-building relies on the *construction* of a shared image, the power of myths, based on the assumption that 'shared identities could be fabricated from above by fostering inter-connectedness through the deliberate cultivation of common allegiances' (2014 p 28). The FBV policy can be understood as an exemplar of this 'deliberate cultivation'.

Liberal nationalists (e.g. Miller 1995, 2000, Tamir 1993), aware of these risks, argue that a dialogue, a critical debate, about the meaning and constitution of nationality and national identity is fundamental, as it would allow the 'thinning' of national identity in order to accommodate religious and ethnic diversity (Banting & Kymlicka 2017 p.22), whilst also maintaining a 'thick' enough identity to generate cohesion. The idea, then, is to define nation as a site of belonging and attachment but to do so in a way that includes the heterogeneity of opinions from culturally diverse groups (Banting & Kymlicka 2017 p. 23). National identity is thus promoted, not through a focus on the importance of homogeneity in private cultures and lifestyles, but

through the promotion of a shared public culture through social and political institutions and values. This culture would arise from ‘a dynamic national conversation through which a nation renews its self-understanding’ (Soutphommasane 2012 p.76). Such a ‘conversation’ would be expected to result in some degree of revision of traditional ideas about (in this case) British-ness in the hope of identifying and reaching areas of consensus through processes of dialogue. Miller & Ali (2014) argue that an adherence to civic rather than ethnic identities would reduce the possibility of negative feelings towards minorities. ‘Civic’ identities refer to a commitment to the society, its values, and support for its institutions, rather than an emphasis on being born in the country, belonging to the dominant ethnic group. However, they also note that the critics of liberal nationalism claim that ‘national identities are... primordial .., and in particular are tied more closely to the culture of the ethnic majority’ (2014 p.255). Soutphommasane also argues that liberal nationalists underestimate the degree to which culture has an interpretative dimension, and also the extent to which people respond emotionally to issues of nationality and identity. However, national identity is not completely static. Given this, and the liberal nationalist emphasis, described above, on ‘national conversation’, it would seem logical that schools and their students – future citizens – would be involved in debate and discussion on national identity, including FBV. Indeed at a recent government conference⁴ on the role of education in preventing extremism and radicalization, speakers from the DfE , local government and schools emphasised the need for ‘critical thinking’ amongst pupils.

The encouragement of ‘critical thinking’ addresses another risk of the liberal nationalist emphasis on national identity; that is a drift into a conservative form of communitarianism. Communitarians have revived the tradition of civic republicanism in the sense of the emphasis placed upon a substantive ‘common good’ and shared moral values, ‘a collective determination of a set of goals and values for the community’ (Tan & Tan 2014 p.194). In their study of citizenship and

⁴ Conference organized by Inside Government and held in London 28/9/2017

character education in Singapore, a state which explicitly seeks to both foster national unity and allow for ethnic diversity, Tan & Tan comment,

Consistent with civic republicanism, values education is predominantly taught using the transmission approach in which a “good citizen” is one who accepts and demonstrates the values and behaviour of the established social and value system for the sake of maintenance’ (2014 p.195)

The quotation cited earlier from Ofsted’s Chief Inspector appears to indicate such an approach. Voicing similar concerns to Tan & Tan, Mary Healy notes in relation to the FBV policy,

Schools here must demonstrate deliberativeness in the planning and engagement, hence the advice to schools on the need to “challenge opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values” (DfE, Nov 2014, 5). It [the DfE] wants to ensure a change in the behaviour/views to the ‘accepted’ one (Healy 2016 p.8)

In her paper, Healy argues that citizenship should be understood as requiring belonging across three dimensions: formal membership, a sense of belonging and a perception by others that one belongs. Given the context outlined above, many minority groups, but especially young Muslims, may feel that their belonging is not wholly accepted by the majority group. Moreover, as Bronwyn Wood argues young people may hold multiple identities, with this complexity going unrecognised in

Normative and liberal narratives of citizenship [that] assert an abstract notion of belonging that does little to understand or engage with the highly variegated ways that citizenship is both understood and handled by young people in different communities (Wood 2014 p.581, also Starkey 2017)

From this brief discussion of liberal nationalist approaches to citizenship and national identity, I want to take three points to further explore below: whether the nationalist emphasis of the policy provokes concern amongst teachers in my research, the extent to which students are able to debate and discuss issues of national identity, and whether the mandatory promotion of FBV is a viable route for the generation of a liberal nationalist polity as seems to be the aim. First, though, I describe the research design.

Research design

The data discussed here is taken from a small-scale and, at the time of writing, ongoing study funded by the Leverhulme Trust (October 2016-September 2018). This paper is drawn from an early analysis of a data set of 56 interviews and 49 observations. The majority of these (38 interviews with teachers and 45 observations) are from nine case study schools (four primary and five secondary) with different pupil demographics. These nine schools are mostly within Greater London, although they include three in other parts of the country – the North-east, the South-west and the Midlands. Between them, they offer examples of academies and maintained schools, with one being a faith school. They serve a wide range of pupil populations in terms of both ethnicity and social class. I asked my initial contact at the schools (usually a senior leader) to direct me towards activities that they felt promoted British values, and where teachers were willing to be observed (although it was not possible to observe all the respondents teaching). In addition, in order to reach a wider range of schools, I conducted one-off interviews with senior leaders at a further eight schools, including two faith schools. I also spoke with ten other individuals who have a professional interest in and engagement with the British values policy (e.g. faith school advisers, those offering training, and teacher union representatives). Finally, I also attended four training sessions/conferences on the teaching of British values. The data was hand-coded, drawing on initial theoretical categories in existing literature on cohesion, citizenship and policy enactment. These codes are being refined and challenged through engagement with and scrutiny of data. For example, the growing emphasis in schools on values/character education

emerged from the data, and has proved an important element in the analysis (as discussed in Vincent 2018).

The British values policy in schools

The British values policy is a 'light touch' (McGhee & Zang 2017) enabling policy (Ball 1993). The existing guidance is very brief (DfE 2014) although there was a suggestion, seemingly not taken up, by the Academies Minister, Lord Agnew, that a 'British values curriculum' should be developed (*Schools' Week* Oct 27th 2017). Thus, teachers have the freedom to plan for what they consider to be the most appropriate pedagogic response. However, this assumes unlimited resources of time, creativity and energy, and also overlooks the fact that teachers are coping with the demands of multiple policies (Ball et al 2012). The fact that schools' promotion of FBV is inspected by Ofsted gives the policy a certain status and impetus, but at least three other aspects work to undercut this. The first is the hyperactive (Dunleavy 1987) policy climate referred to above as teachers struggle to respond to fast-moving changes; the second is a performative culture which ranks schools on the basis of test results; and the third is that, as one teacher commented, the curriculum 'space' for explicit FBV promotion is often in assemblies, PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and RE (Religious Education), the latter two being often marginalised areas within a crowded curriculum timetable. Citizenship education is another obvious site for the promotion and discussion of FBV. Indeed, Hugh Starkey (2017) argues that Citizenship Education (CE), since becoming a requirement, has focused more on civic identity with an emphasis on values and dispositions, rather than nationalist symbols of flags and anthems. Thus, it would seem to align well as a site for the promotion of values such as democracy, rule of law etc. However, CE is itself a subject with an uncertain status. This uncertainty was increased by the hiatus in developments when Michael Gove was Secretary of State for Education and it seemed as if he might abolish the subject. Despite being statutory in secondary schools, it is often not taught as a separate subject being included as part of PSHE (which also includes a wide range of health and well-being topics), often taught by non-specialists. In the schools in the research, I noted the limited space for discussion and debate (see below).

Being British

In response to the DfE's (2014) British values guidance, several commentators (e.g. Elton–Chalcraft et al 2017, Richardson 2015, Richardson & Bolloten 2014, and speakers at the NUT and ATL teachers' unions 2015 conferences) expressed concern over the potential divisiveness of labelling a particular set of values as 'British'. Their arguments criticised the idea that these values were in some way uniquely British, and argued that the British label was attempting to impose a common identity with a freighted history on a multi-ethnic population that might hold a number of allegiances. Ex-Prime Minister's Cameron's speech, alluded to above, certainly seems to set up an 'us' and 'them' dynamic, with 'them' needing to be more effectively assimilated into 'our values'.

We have allowed the weakening of our collective identity. Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We've failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We've even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values (Cameron, speech in Munich when PM. 5th February 2011)

This speech has been understood as a decisive retreat from multiculturalism, a direction that several commentators argue has been discernible in government policy throughout the century (Joppke 2014). The speech also focuses attention on the need to integrate minorities – presumed to be unwilling – into liberal values. As with Prevent, there is a particular focus on Muslim communities (Thomas 2017, Busher et al 2017). A headteacher of a state-funded Muslim school in my research spoke of her expectation that the promotion of FBV in her school would be under the Ofsted microscope in a way that would not be the case in other (non-Muslim) schools in her local federation. She perceived that her school would be viewed through a prism affected by the frequent discursive positioning of Muslims as homogenous, isolationist and wishing to follow conservative interpretations of Islam

that clash with British values (Shain 2017, Meer 2010). Similarly, one senior leader at a Muslim-majority secular community secondary school also in my research, noted

People are wary because when you talk about Prevent actually to people's mind-set what that is about is making sure you don't have Muslim extremism [...] [Prevent] says although actually it means any right wing group, but no, that is not what people have in their mind-set. It is not what people do [...] Even the term itself, Prevent, that is for every [Muslim] student in this school, that is what it means, it is talking about them (East Heath School: urban area, working class, multi-racial Muslim majority population).

I turn now to consider how schools respond to the emphasis on securitization and common values (Davies 2016). It should not be assumed of course that schools are merely passive receptors conveying the dictates of government policy directly to their students (Ball et al 2012). Thomas suggests that there is 'ground-level mediation' of Prevent [...] through a 'largely self-generated curriculum response in schools ... that foregrounds ... equality , anti-racism and citizenship' (Thomas 2017 p.315, 316). McGhee & Zhang in their recent review of the way in which British values are presented on school websites argue that the schools featured in their review have responded sensitively to what could be a divisive topic, and therefore have succeeded in 'filtering out some of the muscularity of the imposed duty' (2017 p.12), fulfilling their 'mission of producing well-rounded, and resilient liberal citizens' (p.2). In the next section, I consider this claim in relation to my findings on how schools respond to the task of promoting FBV.

School practices

Here I indicate the forms that the promotion of FBV takes in schools in my research, outlining briefly four main approaches: *Representing Britain*, *Re-packaging*, *Re-locating* within school values, and *Engagement* with FBV. These are not completely discrete approaches, nor do schools necessarily adopt just one.

The first approach - *representing Britain* – has two elements. One is mentioned above - posters and displays listing FBV, often with union jack-themed decoration. Such decoration introduces the second element of this approach, particularly popular in primary schools, which is to refer to British symbols rather than values (also Moncrieffe & Moncrieffe , 2017). This approach has been criticized by Ofsted’s Chief Inspector of Schools when she argued that ‘crafting a picture of the Queen out of sequins’ was ‘charming’ but ‘not teaching children about our common values’ (Spielman, Speech in Birmingham, 22/9/2017). However, despite this and previous similar signals from Ofsted, it is an approach that still persists.

Nearly all schools in my research *re-packaged* their existing activities to some extent, and this demonstrates schools’ ability to absorb the FBV policy. Auditing and emphasising current practice is a recommended approach for teachers to take by those who offer support and training with FBV (see e.g. The Key, ‘Doing SMSC’⁵), as is a cross-curricular response. Thus schools offer their existing practices as evidence of the promotion of FBV. The school council provides opportunities for the practice of democracy, the rule of law is covered by following school rules, individual liberty by learning to make ‘good’ choices and so on.

The third approach – *relocating FBV as school values* – is another form of absorption. This differs from *Repackaging* as it describes two schools in my research which had particularly strong values frameworks . By this I mean, an approach beyond a school signalling particular values on its website, but rather disseminating those values (respect, resilience etc.) throughout the school’s practices, and teaching those values explicitly (an approach sometimes known as character education). In these schools, FBV tended to be absorbed into their general values work (see Vincent 2018 for discussion).

⁵ The Key: <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/curriculum-and-learning/curriculum-guidance-all-phases/structuring-curriculum/promoting-british-values-in-the-curriculum/> . Doing SMSC: <http://www.doingsmsc.org.uk/british-values/>

The fourth approach - *engagement with FBV* - takes a critical approach to the values by, for example, looking at the advantages and limitations of democracy. Elements of this approach were sometimes taken by some of the case study secondary schools, but not systematically, and none followed an explicit programme of engagement with FBV. Rather they tended towards absorption.

As the repackaging approach was so widespread in my data, I agree - to some extent - with McGhee and Zang's argument that these schools have 'normalised' British values, smoothed the sharp nationalistic edges, and absorbed the requirement to promote them. One example of this is the fact that the naming of the values as 'British' was perceived as potentially problematic by the majority of teachers who participated in the research, as the following quotation from a teacher at Point High suggests. Thus, although, as suggested above, there are numerous examples of schools that have responded to the FBV requirement with union-jack themed displays, the majority of the case study schools in my research sought to avoid this element, referring, instead, to the values as universal or school values as the second quotation below suggests.

I think labelling it 'British' creates this kind of division between the British and the non-British...Essentially what it is really doing is targeting British Muslims and I think it ostracises them and it makes them feel that they are not part of society. The word 'British' also I think you know puts an ownership on those values. You are trying to teach children about a global world. I am very much [teaching] connecting the local to the national to the global [...] then suddenly you have to be teaching them about being British. (RE and Citizenship teacher, Point High School: urban area, multi-racial, mixed class population)

We were I think more concerned not necessarily about British values [ie the values themselves] but more about how we present them. We were kind of looking at the use of the flag and stuff like that and what connotations that might have... We wouldn't necessarily call them 'British' values to the kids

(Senior Leader, Kenton Secondary: urban area, multi-racial, working class population)

Indeed, Kenton Secondary School produced a FBV poster featuring an outline drawing of the British Isles and a list of the values. The inclusion of the map of the British Isles infers that FBV are for everyone who lives in Britain, avoiding any potential reading of the union flag as jingoistic and exclusive. This decision speaks to other research that suggests that some teachers and trainee teachers are unhappy with what could be described as an 'uncritical patriotism' (Miller & Ali 2014, Jerome & Clementishaw 2012, Struthers 2017, Osler 2011).

Another way in which some teachers have sought to 'smooth' the British values policy was the way in which some sought to 'roll up' within the concept a wider set of values around equality (see Moffatt 2011). This approach is described by a Prevent education officer in my research, who suggests that promoting FBVs encourages (or should do) debate and discussion with the children, with the aim of promoting equality and appreciation of diversity.

It is all about promoting a diverse society and making sure children feel safe. So it is also about homophobia, sexism, you know all of those things [...] What [FBV] is about is making sure that all students know that they live in a society in which they feel safe and secure and they live in a society where it is perfectly acceptable to adopt religious or political beliefs of somewhere else. What is not acceptable is to threaten or to make people feel uncomfortable if they do have different views. [The FBV policy is about] allowing time, putting importance on critical thinking again, on different religions, on different political points of view. So I think that is a really, really good advantage to it (LA Prevent officer)

However, I also want to argue that schools' responses to the FBV policy are not – cannot be – simply narratives of school stoicism, creativity, perhaps even resistance, and determination to stick to their locally-determined goals, values and ethos.

Although there *are* those elements, I also want to argue that the story also contains aspects of 'ad-hocery', stereotyping, and a performative context that limits the time for explicit engagement with the values.

Ad hocery

The ways in which policy is enacted in schools is of course intricately shaped by school-specific factors, such as intake, history, ethos, staff, resources, environment and budget (Braun et al 2011). Additionally, Stephen Ball (1993) has long argued that analyses of policy should include a recognition of chance, circumstances, 'ad hocery'; that developments in policy and practice are often not planned as such but happen due to a constellation of structured, but also random, events. There is perhaps two types of ad-hocery guiding developments at school level: a broad ad hocery of who, where and when in an institution. Here I am thinking of factors such as key members of staff and their specialisms and areas of interest, the current Ofsted ranking and whether a school is expecting an inspection, the micro-politics of a school, and the relationship between members of staff in a department or in the senior leadership team, and/or between the senior leadership team and the body of teaching staff. For example, in one of the case study secondary schools, Valley High (urban area: mixed class, multi-racial population), a long-serving teacher had established an emphasis on citizenship education stressing debate and discussion of contemporary political and social issues. When he left the school, much of this emphasis left with him ('one of the most fantastic subjects got ground down, down to the ground!' PSHE teacher, Valley High).

The second form of ad hocery relates to responses to policy, whereby a policy is signalled by the government and schools respond in the most manageable way possible. In terms of British values, this has led to a proliferation of union jack framed displays, lessons on the Houses of Parliament (democracy), and visits from the police (the rule of law) (Moncrieffe & Moncrieffe 2017). None of the case study schools persisted in this approach, although the initial response at Shire Primary School (suburban area, White British, mixed class population) was to produce union jack framed displays for each value. This was not repeated however, as the school

invested in a commercial PSHE scheme which promises coverage of British values. Several teacher-participants told me of neighbouring schools which had responded in what they saw as a superficial manner. Describing his child's primary school, one senior leader at Kenton Secondary said: 'I can imagine a meeting where they said: "Let's put up those words [the British values] in the hall". You can imagine the conversation...' . A senior leader at Moreton Grange (urban area, White British, predominantly working class) described 'a ridiculous assembly on fish and chips' that she observed at another local school (see also Vincent 2018, Lott 2017).

Stereotyping

Some schools' reactions suggested a degree of stereotyping of their pupil populations and their perceived 'needs'. Certainly, decades of research on the school experiences of working class and Black and minority ethnic children argues (and I am here presenting a highly condensed version) that schools are not benign institutions, but act in the interests of the middle classes, and from within a place of white privilege, and institutional racism. White privilege is a concept derived from critical race studies that argues that the privileges accrued by having a white skin are largely unnoticed by white people, and are instead taken for granted as how things operate; whiteness being a 'seemingly unmarked and invisible category' (Harman 2010). Given the rise of anti-Muslim prejudice, the body of scholarship on the experiences of Muslim children and young people is increasing, including that using critical race theory (CRT) (e.g Crawford 2017). Researchers argue that Muslim students of South Asian heritage, once categorised by their race, and positioned as passive and hard-working 'Asian' students (Shain 2017), are now understood as part of the apparently homogeneous category of 'Muslim', the focus of an anti-radicalisation, anti-extremist campaign which sees them as both vulnerable (at risk of radicalisation) and as a threat (as part of an isolationist, anachronistic tradition, Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2017 p.2). There is also a large body of research on class bias in the education system, dating from Jackson & Marsden's 1960s ethnographic work. Class intersects in a number of different ways with the positioning of children from different ethnic groups, shaping their educational experiences (see e.g. Rollock

et al 2015 on the Black middle classes, Francis et al 2017 on British Chinese families, Ingram 2009 on white British working-class children).

Given this history, it is perhaps unsurprising that schools' perceptions of their local populations were sometimes marked by rather blunt categorizations, assumptions and generalizations of the ascribed views and attitudes of local populations. Teachers' perception of pupils' 'needs' led them to deploy FBV to 'gather in' and generate support for liberal values amongst the two main groups that teachers positioned as residing outside them - the white working classes and the potentially too-conservative Muslim populations. In one primary school with a majority minority ethnic, mainly Muslim, population, there was a strong emphasis on an impressive range of equalities work. However, it was, at least in part, informed by the head's wariness of 'entry-ism', the possibility of conservative Muslim parental influence on the school. He expressed his concerns with some antagonism, ('When it suits them, [the Muslim parents] are off for Eid but "I'm not going to the mosque and I like a whisky. I'm quite partial to bacon"'). He understood the school's emphasis on equalities work as a manifestation of his responsibility to protect children vulnerable to the antiquated and illiberal views of their parents.

There has been a strong backlash about letting girls – you know 'I don't want my daughter to be in the SRE [Sex and Relationships Education] lesson, she is too young for that' What? Do you think she is going to get pregnant? Would you like her to be a dutiful little girl wearing a hijab is that it? Because you won't let your wife learn English. It is very oppressive. So we are kind of flying the flag for those children (Garden Primary, suburban area, Muslim majority, mixed class population)

Parental resistance to SRE is certainly an issue for primary school headteachers (a 2011 survey reported that majority parental opposition <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-13292133>). However, the head's determined emphasis on positioning himself, the staff, and the school's curriculum as a bulwark, shielding the children against their parents, community and religion

was, I argue, symptomatic of a political and social climate hyper-vigilant to the possibility of illiberal actions from Muslim populations (also Holmwood & O'Toole 2018; for a different approach to parental concern over SRE, see Moffatt 2011).

Teachers in the research, especially those with a substantial white British working-class population, spoke of the need to address prejudicial attitudes that the children brought from home. A teacher at Moreton Grange Secondary Academy observed that that the town was very 'insular', and that there are some 'not particularly pleasant attitudes from home', so 'tolerance is a very important attitude to teach in this school'. One particular issue (which I found repeated in several of the other schools to varying degrees) is that the staff reported the pupils equating 'Muslim' with religious terrorist.

When terrorist issues happen for example, obviously they talk a lot out there about it and quite often we get parroted views coming back. You can imagine what those parroted views are without me repeating them. And it can be difficult to, not re-educate, but to give them a more balanced view, should we say of that. Especially when we don't have an overly diverse population (RE teacher, Moreton Grange, urban area, White British, predominantly working-class population).

I think the area sort of dictates what aspects of British values need to be focussed on. So I would say here that tolerance of other cultures, communities, people of different religions etc etc. that is something that we need to focus on in this school because of the demographic of our students and the catchment areas they come from (departmental head, Moreton Grange)

The teachers' emphasis on tackling stereotypes was admirable, but it is important to note the link made by several respondents in different schools between white British, working-class populations, and prejudice.

There is evidence therefore in my research that teachers are focusing their efforts on teaching ‘tolerance’⁶ and respect to those they see to be most in need of it. They were most likely to identify white British working-class children. With the exception of the headteacher cited above at Garden School, none of the teachers suggested that Muslim families were also in need of a focused emphasis on British values and equality legislation (although see Keddie 2014).

Limited engagement

A concern with alienated young people has often led for calls for ‘more citizenship’ initiatives and education (Soutphommasane 2012 p. 233). In this policy moment, the concern has resulted in FBV. I suggest that debates on developing the often amorphous area of citizenship education have now become imprinted with the mandatory requirements of the Prevent duty and FBV, and that the implications of this subtle shift, are as yet unclear. As noted above, CE itself has long been a contested curriculum area with a liminal status in many schools (Starkey 2017). My data shows a limited space for discussion and debate with pupils about the values themselves or of broader contemporary political and social issues that might include engagement with the FBV. When such issues *were* addressed (e.g. migration, stereotyping, terrorism, voting and elections), the pattern of most of the lessons I observed in both primary and secondary sectors was a stimulus such as a video clip, a relatively brief question and answer session, and then the pupils proceeded to written work for the majority of the session (for reasons of space I have not included detailed lesson analysis here, but this will be the focus of future writing). Given the overwhelming focus on written exams and their results, this pattern is unsurprising. Busher et al (2017), in recent conversations with school staff on the Prevent duty, note that their respondents ‘offered relatively little support for the idea that the duty has led to a “chilling effect” on conversation with students in the classroom’ (2017 p.6), although they later note that BME teacher respondents were less likely to take this view than White British teachers (p.53). More positively, they add that in

⁶ ‘Tolerance’ is one of the FBV but it is, as several teachers in the research and a referee of an earlier version of this paper, pointed out a very limited term.

some schools, staff reported newly emphasising CE, and debate and discussion. This last however is not generally reflected in my own data, although there were pockets of such work.

Policy aims

As discussed in the earlier sections of this paper, the FBV policy as a liberal-nationalist initiative apparently aims to develop a sense of belonging to and identification with the nation-state, a sense of solidarity between (future) citizens. The development of solidarity – which Banting & Kymlicka (2017) define as mutual tolerance and an openness to newcomers, a concern with equalities (e.g of sexual orientation) and democratic processes - is something most schools would claim as an aim. Of course, schools are not operating at a societal level (although obviously not isolated from it). Instead, they are focused, relatively small-scale institutions, that commonly emphasise the development of particular attitudes and behaviours, including respectful personal relationships. As they absorb British values into their practices, the values are lived out by staff and pupils (in theory anyway) within the small theatre of the institution. These processes of absorption appear sufficient for a school to pass muster as required by Ofsted when inspecting the promotion of FBV. However, it is doubtful as to whether a ‘regular encounter’ (Healy 2016 p.10) with FBV in the school context will ensure pupils develop a sense of belonging at a national level. This is especially pertinent given Healy’s (2016) three dimensions of belonging outlined above: formal membership, a sense of belonging and a perception by others of one’s belonging. The latter, as discussed above, is not secure for all minority groups, including Muslims. Whilst staff can focus on developing pupils’ sense of legitimate belonging to their own institution, there can be no guarantees that this will travel with students into adult life experiences.

Concluding thoughts

The majority of teachers in my research were alert to and sought to neutralise much of the exclusionary potential of FBV. There was evidence of progressive initiatives in the participating schools emphasising social justice and equality (these will be discussed in more detail in a future publication), but there are also elements that

confine or prevent these initiatives. Teachers cannot erase the wider context of wariness and hostility towards Muslims, nor the performative context in which they work, and which I argue, limits the time given to discussion generally, and to subjects which validate debate, such as Citizenship, PSHE and RE – all of which, under the current accountability system, are low status⁷.

It seems that what we are witnessing in the FBV policy can be described as a ‘civic rebalancing agenda – where greater social harmony can be realised through emphasising a stronger commitment to British-ness as a core identity’ (Keddie 2014 p.540), what Lockyer calls a ‘reconstructive citizenship intervention’ designed to remedy failing political systems (cited in McGhee & Zhang 2017 p.3). This then is a change to the idea of a public culture from one that was both ‘thin and capacious’ (Uberoi & MacLean 2007 p.46) to one that is ‘thicker’ and more demanding in terms of allegiance.

On the face of it, the FBV policy aims to create a deep civic rather than cultural understanding of identity, that is, emphasizing an attachment to values and institutions, rather than religion, place of birth or language (Miller & Ali 2014). However that is undercut by two aspects, first the tendency in some schools to present being British as being about particular tastes, pastimes and royal and imperial history (Bryan 2017), and second, by politicians’ pronouncements that, as Starkey argues, have been ‘a series of rhetorical interventions promoting a nationalised conception of citizenship ... an essentialised national identity, sometimes referred to as British-ness’ (2017 p.16). Banting and Kymlicka make a pertinent argument in relation to both this and Healy’s emphasis on being perceived to belong when they note: ‘The prospects for inclusive solidarity [may] depend less on pre-existing feelings of solidarity and more on the ability and willingness of political elites to create policy regimes that will over time foster the very solidarities needed to sustain them’ (2017 p.49). FBV does not seem to provide an exemplar of

⁷ Schools are now held accountable by their progress and attainment across 8 subjects. The way this is measured increases a focus on ‘EBacc’ subjects – traditional academic subjects, which as currently defined do not include RE, Citizenship nor PSHE.

such a policy regime. Liberal nationalists, as discussed above, position dialogue about national identity as vital, if conservative communitarianism is to be avoided. Thus, without a critical engagement with notions of identity, belonging and citizenship, the risk remains that promoting FBV will in fact promote a 'myopic and exclusivist approach to citizenship' (Gholami 2017 p.809).

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