

BULLETIN



**LONE
MOTHERS**

**ROMA
CHILDREN**

**BLACK
FATHERHOOD**

**AFRICAN
AMERICAN
FATHERS**

**SOMALI
PARENTS**

**RECENT
RIOTS**

PARENTING

RUNNYMEDE

DMA
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DIGITAL MAGAZINE AWARDS 2010
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Runnymede is the UK's leading race equality thinktank. We are a research-led, non-party political charity working to end racism.

Cover Image

Makorae (2011)

by Jonathan Oppong-Wiafe

www.jowspirit.com

Editor's LETTER



WELCOME to the Autumn 2011 issue of the Runnymede Bulletin, which I am editing again after a break of some 18 months while Nina Kelly developed the Bulletin, adding new sections and generally improving it.

For this issue of the Bulletin, I was very fortunate to have the assistance of Nat Illumine who helped with all editorial matters and was a tremendous all-round help. Nat's husband, Jonathan Oppong-Wiafe, took some brilliant photos for the cover and inside the Bulletin, and provided some assistance with layout. For the bulk of the page layout work, I would like to thank another volunteer, Andrew Princz.

Our News Section includes an article on the 22 July 2011 twin attacks of a car bomb blast in the centre of Oslo and the shooting of 68 people at Utøya Island youth camp. Claims from the perpetrator that he was acting as a 'martyr' for an extremist anti-Islam, anti-multiculturalism cause have sparked renewed concern about social cohesion and the far-right across Europe.

In short pieces on Generation 3.0, we outline the aims of this ambitious project and consider what it would mean to eradicate racism in a generation.

The theme of this issue of the Bulletin is Parenting.

Following the recent riots in English cities, and in response to attacks on BME parenting, George Mpanga, a young black Londoner, assesses where the accountability really lies. In Vox Pop four young people give their answers to the question 'Do you think that the parents of those rioters under the age of 18 should be held accountable for the actions of their children?'

Despite the negative representations of black fatherhood, organisations such as 100 Black Men of London and their offshoots provide spaces for black men to redress some of the issues they face in parenting their children. Dunstan Creavalle reports on the experiences of black men who, despite marital breakdown, are fulfilling their fatherly responsibilities. Chamion Caballero discusses the initial findings from her interviews with 30 lone mothers of mixed race children about their experiences of parenting and the types of support or problems they encountered

Kate D'Arcy assesses the situation of Travellers in Britain, and pinpoints a specific resource in Cambridgeshire which has helped to bridge the educational divide between pre-school Traveller children and their mainstream counterparts. With Gypsy Roma children struggling in the British education system, Dragica Felja of the Roma Support Group reports on various projects aimed at supporting Roma parents and practitioners working with the Roma community.

Aways Mohamoud discusses the author's research into Britain's single largest group of refugee children – the children of Somali refugees – and looks at the contribution of family resources, family strategies, and parental expectations to the success of immigrant young people.

Nicola Rollock reports on research carried out into the educational strategies of the black middle classes, a group that receives very little attention. Omar Khan explores the ethics of parental choice, and asks 'What is actually in the child's best interests?' Patrice Lawrence argues that whilst it is important to establish boundaries for children, it should be done without recourse to physical discipline.

In View from ...USA, David J. Pate, Jr. outlines the history of African American fatherhood, and asks us to reflect on how policy should – and should not – respond to the question of 'fatherhood' in the UK.

The Winter 2011/2012 Bulletin will have older BME people as its theme.

Robin Frampton, Editor.

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Photo: Jonathan Oppong-Wiafe



Photo: Jonathan Oppong-Wiafe



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Nightmare in Norway

On 22 July 2011 twin attacks of a car bomb blast in the centre of Oslo and the shooting of 68 people at Utøya Island youth camp left 76 people dead in Norway's worst atrocity since the Second World War. Claims from the perpetrator that he was acting as a 'martyr' for an extremist anti-Islam, anti-multiculturalism cause have sparked renewed concern about social cohesion and the far-right across Europe.

The killings began with a car bomb explosion in Oslo which killed eight people and left dozens injured in the vicinity of the Labour Party government offices. As people were evacuated and the emergency services attended to those injured, there was a sense of confusion as speculations were made that the blast was linked to terrorist activity, possibly al-Qaeda.

However, less than two hours later, Anders Behring Breivik had gained access to Utøya Island by ferry, claiming to be a police officer. Armed with a pistol and an automatic rifle, he was able to massacre children and teenagers attending the Labour Party-run youth camp, undisturbed for over an hour on the small island. Following the arrival of the Norwegian police, criticised as too slow by some commentators after they failed to scramble a helicopter, and struggled to transport officers and equipment to the island, Breivik surrendered to SWAT teams and admitted carrying out both attacks. Despite this admission, Breivik denies criminal responsibility.

At the time of writing, Breivik's 1500 page 'manifesto' *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* is being examined by experts,

journalists and academics for clues to the cause of his actions, as well as possible connections to other groups or individuals. In the document, Breivik describes himself as a Christian nationalist and claims to be part of the 'Knights Templar resistance movement' with links to the English Defence League (EDL). The document details the extensive attack preparations and is laden with press cuttings, online communications and Breivik's own rhetoric about 'cultural Marxists', 'multiculturalist traitors' and the allegedly underhand 'Islamisation' of Norway and Europe.

In the immediate aftermath, fears and speculation spread about whether Breivik acted as a lone, 'insane' murderer or whether his actions were part of a wider network of far-right extremists. The Norwegian Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, stated that the political response to the attacks should be 'more democracy, more openness and political participation', calling for the Norwegian people to remain calm and fearless. However, the enduring social and political significance of this atrocity is yet to be known.

Reactions in Norway have been mixed; public unity and mainstream support for multiculturalism appears to be strengthening. However in the hours following the attacks Norwegian Muslims reported harassment and attacks, and in the town of Lillestrøm a 'Nazi' flyer was disseminated bearing references to Breivik and other terrorist 'cells' he claims to exist. Further afield the response has merged into debates about multiculturalism, immigration and European identity, proving that neither the event nor the ideology exist in isolation.

These concerns have somewhat morphed into broader discussions regarding endemic and unknown dangers brewing amongst the Europe's Far Right, and follow widespread mainstream statements on the 'failure' of multiculturalism notably from Cameron, Sarkozy and Merkel. This tragedy also comes at a time after anti-immigration far-right groups have made significant gains in European Parliament, securing 57 MEP seats in 2009 (RedP), doubling the previous number. The reinstatement of border controls in Denmark has, for some, signalled the beginning of the end of the Schengen Agreement of free movement within Europe, and Belgium and France have become the first nations to ban wearing a Burqa and Niqab in public, with others perhaps aiming to follow suit.

The former Norwegian Prime Minister, Thorbjørn Jagland, warned European leaders to be careful over 'inflaming' Islamophobic and anti-immigration rhetoric which could be exploited by extremists, by moving away from statements on the failure of multiculturalism, towards the defence of the more positive 'diversity'. He also called for terrorism to be discussed as terrorism, and to move away from referring to 'Islamic terrorism', as though such acts were consistent with Islam.

The response from governments has been one of outrage and condemnation; Spain's Zapatero has called for a shared European response 'to rise up and fight radicalism, to respond against xenophobia'. However precisely who or what is to be fought, and how, remains a nebulous and contentious issue.

Reactions from the Far Right have varied, and perhaps demonstrated internal fractures. In Sweden and Italy, far-right members who explicitly blamed the attack on multiculturalism and 'Islamisation', rather than Breivik as an individual, were quick to be condemned within their parties. In France, Jacques Coutela, a Front National member, was publicly suspended from the party after an article which carried his name as a byline described Breivik as an 'icon' and a 'defender of the west'.

Following the release of Breivik's manifesto, those who received a copy from Breivik himself or were quoted within it were quick to denounce and disassociate themselves from the views held within. Right-wing Dutch Freedom Party leader Geert Wilders claimed the manifesto, in which he was personally named, was the work of a 'madman' and condemned Breivik as a 'lone idiot who twisted the freedom-loving, anti-Islamisation ideals'. Such comments have fuelled criticism from the left that such anti-Islam and anti-multiculturalism rhetoric lies on a broad spectrum to which Breivik's extremism is at the extreme end.

Immediately following Breivik's arrest UK connections were made. His manifesto was written entirely in English, signed with an anglicised version of his name, datelined 'London, 201a1' and was sent to the BNP, EDL and neo-Nazi organisation, Contact 18. It also emerged that Breivik had online contacts with the EDL and visited the UK to attend an EDL march, although initial anxieties that the EDL held other terrorist 'cells' in league with Breivik were quashed by the Norwegian Police Security Service. Concerns fuelled pressure on the government to prohibit an EDL march planned in Tower Hamlets and one of Britain's largest Muslim communities in September.

Old sentiments have stirred anew. The BNP deny any affiliation with Breivik and denounce the event, heavily criticising connections made between them and Breivik in media coverage as an 'evil' act of the 'Marxist "Liberal" establishment'. On their website, the BNP individualise blame for the attacks on Breivik's 'mental instabilities', but go on to argue that his instabilities 'were no doubt intensified' by the shared circumstances inflicted on all 'indigenous' Europeans through state-condoned 'mass immigration of

people from alien or incompatible cultures'.

In response to renewed concerns regarding far-right activity, David Cameron has ordered new checks on British far-right groups, and Europol have requested information and support from both Scotland Yard and Cressida Dick, the newly instated counter-terrorism officer of the Metropolitan Police. However, whilst the threat of extreme right groups should not be ignored, it is clear that these issues extend beyond local, political and online far-right networks.

The broader ideals of civic multiculturalism have become threatened and views have become increasingly polarised. Open democratic debates on the benefits and potential problems of multicultural Britain have been shut down, leaving politicians in the mainstream on the one hand expounding the economic triumphs of globalisation and the necessity of skilled migrants, and on the other proclaiming the 'utter' failure of multiculturalism across Europe. 'More democracy, more openness and political participation' may be exactly what is required. ●

Research Shows Relationship between Police Discrimination and Recording of Ethnicity

The police forces that no longer require their officers to record the ethnicity of the people they stop and ask to account for their movements have been found to be the forces which are most likely to stop disproportionate numbers of black people.

Out of the 10 forces most likely to use stop and account powers disproportionately against black people, five have stopped recording the ethnicity of those they stop. Twenty one out of 43 forces in England and Wales will cease to record stop and

accounts, according to responses to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act by StopWatch, an action group campaigning for fair policing. A high court challenge is being brought over the decision.

The disproportionate use of police stop powers on ethnic minority communities has long been a racial discrimination concern in the UK. Yet despite measures taken to deal with this problem, the rates of disproportionality are still persistently high.

Earlier this year, the government removed the requirement of police officers to record stop and accounts. These changes were justified by the government as being necessary to cut bureaucracy and save police time. The fact that some police forces are no longer recording stop and account means that it will be impossible to compile statistics to prove that certain ethnic groups are being stopped at a disproportionately higher rate, making it difficult to document police discrimination against minority groups. ●

Police Apology Offered to Family of a Murdered Victim for Not Acknowledging Racial Motivation

The Scottish Police Force has admitted that the murder of a Chinese man should have been treated as a hate crime. Last year on August 12, Simon San was murdered in Edinburgh by a gang of youths. At the time of the incident, San's family had reported to the police that they believed that the attack had been racially motivated. Eye witness statements had also reported racial slurring from San's murderers; however the death was still treated as lacking a racial element.

After a year-long enquiry into the handling of Simon San's death, the police have offered a public apology to his family. The results of the enquiry

have found that San's murder was not identified as a 'critical incident' but rather as the result of a robbery. San's murderers had previous racist records which went unaccounted; the police wrongly classified San as Vietnamese; and they did not deal with the perception of the family properly. However, as a result of the enquiry, the officers involved have received a formal discipline and the procedures of the force have been subject to change.

Nonetheless, racism toward the Chinese population has been flagged as an element that the police have not been taking seriously. The University of Leeds, University of

Hull and Nottingham Trent University published a report in April 2009 called *Hidden from Public View? Racism against the UK Chinese Population*. This report established that the police were found to be a problem when Chinese victims had to engage with them regarding hate crime. The report grouped their respondents' feelings of their interaction with the police under the following categories: 'late response', 'no follow-up', 'few prosecutions', 'lack of interpreting services', 'alleged discrimination against Chinese victims by police officers' and 'limited action to tackle concerns'.

Equality Act under Review

The first caste discrimination tribunal held this August has led home secretary Theresa May to reconsider the Equality Act. An Indian couple who both worked for the firm of solicitors Heer Manak in Coventry sued their employers for discrimination after announcing their marriage plans. They believe that as a result of their engagement and consequent marriage they were unfairly treated by their company because they are from different caste groups.

The Equality Act, which was amended in 2010, bans unfair treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation and helps achieve equal

opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. Theresa May is now considering whether to add caste to the categories monitored as a result of the trial. Article 1 Part 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination cites race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin as their categories for protection and so includes caste under descent as an identity open to discrimination.

Runnymede and other UK NGOs have been concerned about caste-based discrimination for some time and this has been addressed to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) this summer. The joint recommendation has been forwarded to the committee that the UK government take on

caste discrimination as an aspect of race discrimination.

Although the Indian Caste system is no longer grounds for segregation in India, a hierarchy based on birth and occupation still exists. At the top of the system sits Brahmin (priests and teachers), followed by Kshatriya (rulers and soldiers), Vaishya (merchants and traders), Sudra (labourers and artisans) and with the Untouchables/Dalits (deemed pollutants) at the bottom.

In December last year the Home Office released a report by Hilary Metcalf and Heather Rolfe on *Caste Discrimination and Harassment in Great Britain*, further supporting the need to address this issue within UK law.

GENERATION 3.0

Spreading the Word

Generation 3.0, the ambitious project reflecting on what it would mean to eradicate racism within a generation, was taken to a whole new audience recently. **Femi Adekunle**, a research student working with the Runnymede Trust, publicised the work done in the first wave of the project at an international education and social change conference at Birkbeck University.

Hosted by the International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship (a joint centre of Birkbeck, University of London and the Institute of Education) the fifth ICEDC conference was called 'Citizenship, Society and Social Justice: new agendas?'. It asked, generally, how citizenship education should engage with agendas of security, social cohesion, volunteering, patriotism and social justice, both locally and

in the wider world. Its ultimate aim was to highlight the many possible relationships between citizenship and education. Accordingly, Generation 3.0 was introduced to an audience of academics, education policy makers and practitioners, trade unionists and civil society activists.

Femi gave a talk at the conference detailing how Generation 3.0 was used in certain schools as part of their citizenship agenda, and the implications of this. His paper detailed our in-depth community research project that spanned the divide between innovative methodologies and critical theory, setting our efforts to promote social justice through effective pedagogy into context. As an intergenerational community multimedia project, this generated a great deal of interest. Still, it was what happened next that aroused the most attention: it was shown how art

and multi-media in conjunction with schools and community groups can be used to respond to the question of how educational institutions and community groups best engage with society to promote social justice. The talk also outlined the contours of a serious challenge: opening a dialogue between activists spanning different generations. It presented some tangible proposals as to how to activate young people to move from voicing an experience to engaging in social action. The importance was emphasized of providing a set of neutral forums and spaces where younger and older people can meet and exchange ideas, knowledge and experience. Lastly, by describing the way in which the project has been taken up by local schools, it showed how citizenship education involving social networking and new media forums can fight for a place in the formal curriculum. ●

A Short Film on Racism in Manchester

As part of Runnymede's Generation 3.0 project – which looks at how we can end racism in a generation – **Riffat Ahmed** has made a short film for Runnymede that focuses on issues of race, gender and neighbourhood politics.

Called *Clench: What are You Fighting For?* the short film tells the story of Ash, a mixed race girl from Old Trafford, Manchester and her experience traveling from a diverse part of Greater Manchester to a predominately white area. On a youth referral scheme, we see Ash travel to the iconic Salford Lads Club where she takes up boxing as a means of

dealing with her troubled past. By portraying Ash's experience of the sport, the film highlights how the boxing ring can be a neutral space where race and neighbourhood politics are left outside.

The film looks not only at Ash's own experience of racism, but also the preconceptions she holds about other people and places.

Clench demonstrates how boxing can become the ultimate visual tool for communication between generations, highlighting that every person has a story to tell regardless of how they look.

The film was screened in the Generation 3.0 Manchester pop-up shop, which took place in Manchester Piccadilly Station in a converted disused shop. It is now available to watch for free on the Runnymede website: <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/projects-and-publications/projects/generation-3-0.html>

Generation 3.0 will be travelling to Croydon in November where a pop-up shop will open on the High Street from 3 to 7 November 2011. More information is available here: <http://www.generation3-0.org/> ●

Written by **Vicki Butler**

Rioting Youth: Can We Point the Finger at the Parents?

In response to attacks on BME parenting, **George Mpanga**, a young black Londoner, assesses where the accountability really lies

In light of the riots questions have been raised with regards to the standard of parenting within the BME community. Many claim that a lack of discipline accounts for a generation of wayward youth, whereas others assert that modern youth culture in itself is a challenge to effective parenting. Perhaps the more contentious arguments come from the conservative school of thought that certain family structures are inherently destructive to the child's development, and contribute to behavioural problems preceding criminality. As a 20-year-old black university student from a council estate I am keen to shed some light on some of the issues faced by our parents today.

Firstly it is important to address young people as social agents who have a degree of autonomy. Studies have traditionally depicted the minority ethnic youth as a victim of circumstance, commonly using socio-economic constraints and cultural displacement to explain their shortcomings. This is a convention largely rooted in the wave of alternative social commentary that came to the fore during the 1970s; the civil rights advancements of the previous decade inspired a backlash against white-focused andro-centric sociology. It was in this climate of progressive re-evaluation that the concerns of ethnic minorities in British society gained more interest. This approach was monumental in exposing the structural difficulties with which minorities were commonly confronted (Scarman Report, 1981). The extension of this discourse into the late-1990s following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry has bred a heightened sensitivity to racial prejudice, appropriately compensating for the prior lack of consideration towards this issue.

Thus parents are faced with the difficulty of striking the balance; whereas there is strong evidence to suggest that some Western institutions practise

racial discrimination, over-exposure to this message has left many of our youth disengaged with their autonomy. Amongst a disaffected minority the explanatory function of 'Babylon' or 'The System' is so far removed from the idea's conceptual basis that it is asserted in the absence of logic or evidence: simply 'common sense'. The problem is that too many young people do not challenge it; a theory which pardons them for underachievement and criminal involvement is regarded as gracious and thus favourable. My discussion with one young black male who rioted illustrated this very fact; when asked why he was vandalising local businesses and not the police station he simply replied:

"The system is f****d; they're all in on it so whatever. I've got to get my s*** somehow and that won't happen any other way."

The vagueness of this retort is typical of the interviews I conducted with rioters. Following my participation in Young Voters' Question Time I was involved in a heated debate in which I quoted the young man in question, in order to convey this nonchalant despondence which many rioters demonstrated. A young lady informed me that these guys were "not angry, but passionate", as their disenfranchisement from society left them indignant to the point of disregard for community on any level. I identified with those feelings of social exclusion but could not accept her argument because of my understanding of a much bigger dynamic at play: the 'Gangster' lifestyle. The challenge for parents has become one of guarding their children against messages which undermine their true potential. In order for standards of achievement and a law-abiding work ethic to be upheld the child should be secure in the knowledge that they have the power to accomplish and transcend. Sadly, Gangsterism is one of the greatest blockades to parental influence today.

As far as the London council estate is concerned, this is based on ego-centric opportunism, despite the fact that parochial crime is an alleged team game. The London 'Bad-man' is an amalgamation of the American Gangster and the Jamaican Rude-Boy. There are subtle variations of Bad-man on the estate; some are showmen, preoccupied with 'flossing' (grandiose displays of wealth); others are gun-men, volatile characters whose reputation tends to precede them; all tend to generate money from bank scams and drug-dealing. Burglary and petty theft are common endeavours but generally considered immature, more befitting of 'Youngers' seeking ingratiation. There is an unspoken fragility about this constitution: it takes for granted qualities of its signatories such as integrity and altruism. This is embodied in the stylised mantra 'Ride or Die', borrowed from inner-city US slang, meaning 'combat or death' for the sake of the gang. Younger boys tend to buy into this notion at least superficially; it is not uncommon to see random Facebook 'Status Updates' declaring allegiance to the team. However the high incidence of police cooperation ('snitching', which is taboo) and infidelity between gang members and girls regarded as 'off-limits' (relatives and girlfriends of other members) suggests that any such unity is conditional, and at best, incidental.

Issues of self-contradiction and unsustainable living are just two glaring inconsistencies in the gangster narrative. Many youths need to re-engage with the decision-making process, as it will challenge this tradition of gratuitous conformity. This starts within the home; parents do their child a disservice when they fail to hold them accountable for their decisions. A common misconception is that delinquents come from undisciplined upbringings; a more accurate statement is that somewhere along the lines they lost a sense of responsibility. ●

VOX POP

Do you think that the parents of those rioters under the age of 18 should be held accountable for the actions of their children?

Photo: Ben Waehenje



Ty Chijioko

Musician

Stockwell, South London

I definitely feel that parents are responsible for their children... for their children's future and past actions... for sure. I also feel that society has a role to play in what children become and how connected each individual child feels to its society!

That being said... I think the UK as a whole does a terrible job of interacting with youth culture. We treat young children's fashion sense and young people's aspirations to do music or art as a nuisance, and so begins a terrible downward spiral. I have seen it work wonderfully abroad in places like Norway, where young people's interest in particular street culture is encouraged, but it is different here!!!

How are we supposed to get on with young people if we don't allow their interest to be celebrated? We got what we paid for. Which was nothing good!



Jay Diamond

Vocalist / DJ
Manchester

There's no clear cut answer to this question. We could say yes and ignore the myriad contributing circumstances, or we could say no, and ignore the fact that a parent has responsibility for their children. In reality we have to accept that no parent can govern and watch their teenage children 24 hours a day.

If a young person makes a bad choice we cannot assume it is solely down to 'bad parenting'; all young people make mistakes along the way and punitive methods such as threatening a family's housing will not solve that problem. We must admit though that some children have a considerable lack of parenting and discipline that leads to their poor behaviour.

Let's acknowledge the contribution of government policy, popular culture, media, the breakdown of family and community, police tactics and poverty. It's not that I think no responsibility should be taken, rather I would be wary of any Conservative typically punitive measures that disguise the deeper factors at play.



Adam White

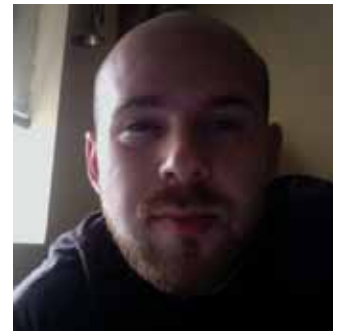
Designer
Ladbroke Grove,
West London

Should the parents of rioters aged 18 or under be held responsible for their kid's actions? Sure – and they should be strung up beside them and hung 'till they're all dead.

But on the other hand, the rioters were just ordinary kids who happened to be out on an extra-ordinary night and got swept up in something they could neither control nor understand, something that was unbelievably exciting, like an 18+ PS3 game come alive and after a couple hours of that, what was wrong with picking up a pair of trainers from a smashed up building and walking away anyhow...?

But then some of the rioters live in very tough situations with hateful, negligent parents who are incapable of bringing them up with any sense of right or wrong and because of a total poverty of wealth, education and social structure, they are going to melt down whenever there's a reason – or just do it anyway.

And some probably went with their parents anyway because they were too young to be out on their own...



Andrew Princz

Entertainment Writer
Harlesden, West London

What has happened to knowing and caring for those in your community? More than ever there is a social gap between the youth and adults of today. It seems as if there is no compassion or understanding, kids are being told they are criminal for the clothes they wear and the elder generation are scared and believe the youth should be condemned to prison. So in a way these parents are responsible for not really knowing and understanding their child. However it is this police state that is harassing these youths, which is why they are upset and it is an issue parents should be concerned about. All these parents can be held accountable for in my view is not standing up against the tyranny of police profiling. It is a horrible day when we can be told 'we are going to search you cause you look suspicious' – 'why, because I'm wearing a cap or a hoodie?'. The police gave up racial profiling in favour of fashion policing but parents have no control over what the police think is criminal. We need to listen to our youth and not tell them how to act but simply be there to understand and not make judgement. Just as with parents we have to understand their situation to help them improve their child's situation too.

Obstacles to Fatherhood: UK

Despite the negative representations of black fatherhood in Great Britain, organisations such as 100 Black Men of London and their localised offshoots provide spaces for black men to redress some of the issues they face in parenting their children. **Dunstan Creavalle** reports on these issues and the experiences of black men who, despite marital breakdown, are fulfilling their fatherly responsibilities.

If an alien landed on any given day and wanted to get a perspective through the British media on the plight of black fathers in London (let alone the UK), he/she would be hard pushed to avoid seeing the same headline: 'Black Men Are Absent Fathers', reiterated time and time again. Based on that, it would be easy for the alien to conclude that black men do not play any role in the parenting of their children.

Although there are high numbers of black women bringing up children without the father's regular participation, it should be noted that there are often obstacles that prevent black men from fulfilling their complete role as fathers. Whilst broken relationships affect all communities, in the black community particularly, this can lead to unique economic challenges for black men simply because statistically, black men have a greater chance of being unemployed. This might go some way in explaining some of the cases of the absenteeism of black fathers. However, in contrast to this, do the media really have the appetite to report on the black men who are prepared to do all they can to ensure the emotional, physical and financial wellbeing of their children?

David Johnson (single father of an 8 year old girl), stated:

"Having had periods of unemployment, when I was job hunting it was essential for me to find an employer who offered flexible start and finish times, so I could drop off and pick up my daughter from school.

I believe my daughter actually benefits from the shared custody arrangements we have. I collect her from school on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, take her home with me, feed her, help her with her homework and then read her a bedtime story. Then take her to school on Wednesday and Friday mornings. Plus, I have her alternate weekends. It means that

I can ensure we spend quality time together every week and I don't miss out on her school life."

Despite the common media stereotype, there are thousands of black men who play a fully active role in the parenting of their children, regardless of the status of the relationship that they have with the mothers of their children.

For the past ten years the 100 Black Men of London's annual Quality Time (a day trip for fathers, responsible male carers and children only, on the Saturday preceding Father's Day), has encouraged black men to come together in a fun and positive way to give our children a message of collective male unity. However, the mainstream media have never had an interest in reporting on this initiative. Having attended eight of the Quality Time trips, I can confirm that black fathers share very similar experiences and that the trip is a rare occasion for them to get together en masse to enjoy a day with children and network with other men, creating the opportunity to discuss their challenges with relationships and parenting.

Chuma Kokayia, (married father of two) commented:

"Education for my parents and as a result for me was a top priority. So my challenge was in ensuring that my kids got a better start than me and were able to realise their full potential. So my first challenge was in deciding where to educate my kids. This led to me decide to leave Tottenham and the community and move to Palmers Green, an area where the environment was better, but [where] as a black person I was a more visible minority. This was very stressful and it took some time to adjust, as I didn't feel as safe and comfortable as in Tottenham.

The children initially went to a private school but when the long

term costs were no longer tenable, I took another decision to move further out to Barnet which had better schools. Again this was a wrench but not as great as the first move. Once again the issues were of being in a mainly white neighbourhood and wondering how I could/would protect my kids from racist attitudes etc."

A common theme shared was that where relationships had broken down, the man was obliged to move out of the family home and attempt to start over again. This in turn was a very stressful period with no support from government agencies and as a result some men have ended up in debt trying to get a property with enough room for their children to stay. Although, there were some men who benefited from split custody arrangements during the week, enabling them to take their children to school, pick them up, help them with their homework and read them bedtime stories, the vast majority from broken relationships, have been forced to become 'weekend fathers'.

For some men who have experienced extremely negative break ups, this can mean that they don't get to see their children at all. Whilst on the surface they may be labelled absent fathers, all they require is some assistance to enable them to fulfil their rights as fathers.

Recognising the need to bring black men together to share their experiences, the 100 Black Men of London held a conference at London South Bank University on Saturday 1st October, entitled Being a Black Man in 21st Century London, featuring a programme that included panel discussions and workshops on a multitude of topics such as fatherhood, prostate cancer, money management and leadership.

For further information on 100 Black Men of London email conference@100bml.org.uk or telephone 0870 121 4100 ●



Photo: Jonathan Oppong-Wiafe

Challenging Assumptions

Chamion Caballero discusses the initial findings from her interviews with 30 lone mothers of mixed race children about their experiences of parenting and the types of support or problems they encountered

'Picture the parents of a mixed-race child, and what do you see? If you believe the stereotypes, you will probably imagine a youngish white mother, probably on a council estate, pushing her frizzy-haired baby in a buggy, with the unreliable black father nowhere to be seen.'

The Guardian, 26 September 2007

As vividly described by the Guardian's Laura Smith, the perception of mixed race families is one which is still rooted in the image of lone motherhood. Longstanding assumptions of these mothers as culturally isolated and materially disadvantaged have also tended to presume inherent difficulties in their family lives, including their inability to raise their children with a strong and healthy sense of self. Yet a recent project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council on the everyday experiences of lone mothers of mixed race children presents a very different picture of this group.

In the one year study, 'Insiders' or 'Outsiders'?: Lone Mothers of Children from Mixed Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds, Dr Chamion Caballero spoke to 30 lone mothers of mixed race children about their experiences of parenting and the types of support or problems they encountered. The findings challenged the assumptions surrounding this group in a number of ways, not least that far from being 'racially illiterate' the majority actively sought to provide a sense of racial and cultural awareness and belonging for their children, as well as for themselves.

Racial and cultural literacy

Traditional perspectives on lone mother mixed racial and ethnic families have tended to assume that these are headed by white women who demonstrate a lack of 'racial literacy' – those cultural strategies and practices parents use to instil a positive sense of identity and belonging in their children and to help

them counter racism and prejudice. Mothers in this study were not only aware of this assumption, but strongly refuted this as part of their personal experience. Firstly, the findings demonstrate that lone mothers of mixed race children are less homogenous than commonly imagined. Even in this small sample, over a third of mothers, including those who identified themselves as 'white British', described themselves as being from a 'mixed' background, racially, ethnically or culturally. This subset of mothers frequently described how the diversity in their own backgrounds meant they were familiar or comfortable with mixedness even before they had their children.

Secondly, mothers across the sample spoke strongly about the importance of passing on racial and cultural knowledge to their children, which they did in a number of ways. In addition to conversations about race and racism, everyday practices such as cooking or hair care were key means through which mothers informed children about their cultural heritage. Moreover, mothers also drew on outside resources in order to achieve these aims, namely through contact with the children's fathers, extended families and communities. The role that fathers and extended family could play in transmitting cultural knowledge or connecting the children to their heritage was important to many of the mothers, although they felt themselves to be culturally literate. Indeed, a number of the mothers said that they had worked very hard to maintain these relationships, especially with fathers, even though doing so could be incredibly complex and challenging.

Identity

The last two decades have seen a notable challenge to the idea of mixed race people as inherently 'confused' and 'marginalised'. Contemporary research argues instead that such identities are fluid but stable, and this perspective was certainly supported by mothers' accounts of their children's identities.

Mothers overwhelmingly indicated that they did not see 'mixedness' as being problematic. Rather, they felt that their children had a well-balanced and positive sense of identity which was a distinctly 'mixed race' one. Yet in their accounts mothers also stressed different aspects of their children's identities as important, whether this was their 'mixedness' (e.g. European and African), a particular aspect of their heritage (e.g. black, Afghan, Christian) or their individuality (e.g. 'she's just Alexa'). These different approaches to difference and belonging – 'mixed', 'single' and 'individual' – are similar to those identified in previous research on couple parents.

What was seen as problematic, however, were external perceptions of their situation. Mothers talked positively about raising mixed race children and noted that, where problems had occurred regarding racial and cultural identities, these were largely due to encountering negative social attitudes outside the home, including amongst professionals and practitioners. While mothers stressed that such attitudes tended not to dominate their everyday experience, they noted that they could certainly shape them.

With little known about the everyday lives of lone mothers with mixed racial and ethnic children, findings from this case study project – small-scale as they may be – are useful for generating much-needed insights into the experiences and needs of these parents. Certainly, the wide diversity of personal histories, approaches and experiences amongst the mothers spoken to in this study suggest that the building of a more complex and sophisticated picture of what it means to be the lone mother of mixed race children is long overdue.

Findings from the project will be published in November 2011. For further details about the findings or the study, contact c.caballero@lsbu.ac.uk ●



Photo: Jonathan Oppong-Wiafe

Early Years Support for Traveller Communities

Travellers remain one of the most disadvantaged minority ethnic groups in the UK. **Kate D’Arcy** assesses the situation of Travellers in Britain, and pinpoints a specific resource in Cambridgeshire which has helped to bridge the educational divide between pre-school Traveller children and their mainstream counterparts.

Definition of the term Travellers

The term ‘Traveller’ is a commonly accepted one that covers a range of identifiable groups including Roma, English Gypsies, Irish/Scottish/Welsh Travellers, Circus people, Showmen and New Age Travellers. Ethnic identity is not lost when members of these groups settle; instead it continues and adapts to new circumstances. Many Travellers today live in a mixture of trailers, mobile homes and permanent housing.

The Eastern Region

Eleven per cent of the general population of Travellers in England reside in the Eastern region. In Cambridgeshire, Travellers are the largest minority ethnic group, yet many remain excluded from mainstream services and opportunities, particularly health and education services.

Disadvantaged groups

Travellers remain one of the most disadvantaged groups in society. Infant mortality is high and one in five mothers loses a child (compared to the national average of 1 in 100). Traveller sites are often located in dangerous environments: beside railway tracks, landfill sites and busy motorways. Difficult living conditions and experiences of discrimination mean that for Traveller parents the safety and well-being of their children is paramount.

Owing to their often geographically isolated living arrangements, Traveller

communities may not be aware of local services; similarly, services may not be aware of them. An ‘open door’ policy is simply not enough to engage many Traveller families. Direct face-to-face promotion of services through outreach is essential.

Good practice in working with Traveller families

Cambridgeshire’s Race Equality and Diversity Service (CREDS) works with schools, parents and communities to improve access and attainment for black and minority ethnic groups, including Travellers and learners of English as an additional language.

Many Traveller pupils have had little opportunity to attend any form of pre-school or early years settings,

impacting on their social inclusion, attainment and achievement. There are marked differences in the development and achievement of children who have and who have not had access to early years provision. For example, at five years old, there is four to six months difference in child development between those who have attended pre-school and those without pre-school experience. Young Traveller children are therefore already at risk of underachievement. Consequently government policy has recommended that:

‘The most effective way to promote the achievement of Gypsy Traveller Children is to ensure they are able to gain early access to education during the Foundation Stage’ (DfES, 2005:2).



Photo: Cambridgeshire Race, Equality and Diversity Service

For CREDS, early intervention work is a priority and the service employs a range of strategies in order to improve access into early years education:

- Direct work with communities, often initially in the form of outreach, for example offering play sessions in Travellers' homes, and to build a bridge between home and pre-school setting.
- Data collection on all children between 0-5 years in the region to ensure access to necessary services as and when appropriate.
- Delivery of capacity-building and equality work in early years settings to highlight the legal responsibilities, underpin knowledge and develop good practice.

This work has determined and raised awareness of the needs of local Traveller communities, and as a result the Early Years and Childcare Service in Cambridgeshire has

funded a specific post to encourage pre-school attendance within Traveller communities. Below is a short, anonymous snapshot of this work.

Snapshot of practice

Claire (not her real name) currently works with 49 families in 19 settings. Over the past year Claire has secured places for 34 Traveller children in early years settings, five in school and four in children's centres. She describes her role as a bridge between families and provision - as relationships develop she can withdraw. Although work is focused on access into early years, many additional issues are picked up in the course of her outreach work and she is able to signpost families to other relevant services.

Claire recently supported a Romany Gypsy family who live in a council house on a housing estate. The parents have learning difficulties and all three children have special educational needs. Claire supported these parents

with behaviour strategies for the children. She also made links with the local pre-school and supported staff there to build their relationship with parents and provide educational advice for the children. She acted as a link between parents and other professionals involved with the family.

Parents then reported back on how this work has helped their family:

'The way you are with us is absolutely great. You have helped me a lot with school and all the things for the boys. I think if we know people then we can feel safe. You are like a friend to me and my family.'

Good practice is about early engagement and outreach, empowering parents, establishments and staff. The challenge now is to ensure long-term sustainable, joined-up approaches that can reduce Traveller communities' long-held disadvantages. ●

Travellers in the UK - from 1500 to the present

First arrival of Romany people in Britain		English Gypsies and Irish Travellers recognised as ethnic minorities		17,000-50,000 est. Travellers in Eastern Region	
1500		1989		2006	
	1800		2004		2011
	Irish Travellers settling in England		Estimated 300,000 Travellers in UK		First time Travellers included as ethnic groups in Census

Obstacles to Achievement - Roma Parents and Education

With Roma children struggling in the British education system, **Dragica Felja** of the Roma Support Group reports on various projects aimed at supporting Roma parents and practitioners working with the Roma community

Historical Context

The relationship between the Roma community and the various education systems of Eastern Europe has historically been troubled. Few professionals working with this community in the UK, are aware that the Roma used to be subjected to segregated education, and in some cases were forced into special needs education. This practice continues to exist in some countries of Eastern Europe, despite the successful challenge at the European Court of Human Rights regarding segregated education systems in Croatia (see <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3569>).

In most Eastern European countries, children undergo general skills tests before they start attending primary school. As Roma children's first language is Romanes and not the language of the country whose citizenship they have (whether Polish, Czech, Slovak, Serbo-Croat, etc.) they would generally fail to achieve positive results on these tests. Thus, they would automatically be referred to special needs schools even without medical evidence of any learning difficulty.

Even children who managed to get into mainstream education would often struggle: many were segregated into separate classes offering substandard education, and racist bullying was prevalent.

As a result, Roma parents regularly opted their children out of the education system altogether, which in turn has resulted in high levels of illiteracy amongst the Roma parents today. In this way, centuries of discrimination have caused the Roma to be alienated from educational systems in ways similar to their alienation from other areas of society.

To this day, Gypsy Roma and Traveller children have the lowest educational attainment of all ethnic groups in the UK. Their achievement is about 40 per cent below the national standard, throughout the education system.

Roma Education Support Project - models of engagement

Newly arrived Roma families welcome the different education system in the UK, but they often struggle to understand it. The Roma Support Group has been supporting Roma parents through its Education Support Project. Roma parents are assisted in understanding school reports, encouraged to participate in parents' school meetings and take part in the Education Project's steering group meetings, where they can voice concerns about their children's education.

The Roma Support Group also aims to raise awareness about Roma history and culture amongst teachers and non-Roma pupils by organising Roma culture workshops in schools and by lobbying for the inclusion of Roma history and culture in the UK's national curriculum.

Professionals working with the Roma community

The Roma Support Group has developed models of good practice and effective engagement with the Roma community. These efforts have been recognised by the Department for Education who are supporting our new initiative – the Roma Support and Engagement Programme.

The Roma Support and Engagement Programme is our response to a growing need amongst teachers, social workers, youth workers, police officers, etc. to ensure specialist and cost-effective interventions for Roma families across the UK. The Programme offers the following services to statutory and voluntary organisations working with Roma refugees and migrants:

Training

Training tailored to individual services and needs, covering Roma culture awareness; rights to welfare, housing and social care; access to health and education; capacity building and community empowerment.

Expert advice

We offer expert advice on issues related to working with Roma families including:

- Support in regards to Roma families' needs assessment, relevant UK legislation, equality issues, health needs.
- Developing Family Support Schemes which are based on our experience and models of working practice with the Roma community.

Regional forums

An opportunity for agencies working with the Roma community to meet, work together on identifying key issues affecting the Roma community in their respective UK regions, developing action plans and sharing lessons learnt.

Capacity building workshops

Support new grassroots Roma initiatives and community organisations by offering advice on capacity building and development tailored to specific needs.

Resources

Educational resources created by members of the Roma community in London, include a children's book, DVD, CD, Learning Pack and Roma Culture Workshops for schools.

Additional Information

The Roma Support Group is a Roma-led grassroots organisation established in 1998. We are now working with over 900 Roma families in London. We have developed our expertise through front-line work with the Roma community, research, cultural events, publications, lobbying and policy-influencing work. For more information about our work, please visit our website: www.romasupportgroup.org.uk

For more information about the Roma Support & Engagement Programme, please email: rsep@romasupportgroup.org.uk ●

Somali Parents and the Education of Their Children

Aweys Mohamoud discusses Somali parents' expectations, strategies, and resources towards educating their children. The article distils findings from the author's research into Britain's single largest group of refugee children – the children of Somali refugees

My research has focused on the major themes in the lives of Somali children and their families and the challenges confronting them in terms of adjustment to a new society, family and school life, education, employment, identity, goals, and aspirations. In addition to data gathered through qualitative interviewing in London in two different time periods over a decade apart, the study pulls together existing research that bears directly or indirectly on children's immigrant experiences and adaptational outcomes. There is much evidence in this research to support the assertion that family resources, family strategies, and parental expectations are significant factors in the success of immigrant young people. Where that was weak or nonexistent, some of the young people concerned could not escape from the external challenges that confronted them in schools and neighbourhoods.

Families from war-torn areas, on arrival in the UK, largely become part of the inner city poor, and struggle to survive at the bottom of the social heap. Somali young people often fare less well than the children of other new communities in the UK. Somalis' language and culture may have cut many of them off from mainstream British society and decreased their children's access to education and employment; nowadays, however, many Somali young people, especially girls, are successfully navigating the British education system. Parental expectations, family strategies and family resources are significant factors in their success.

A major theme consistently present in Somali parents' conversations is the fear of losing their children to the new culture that they have moved into. A majority of them were preoccupied with external influences, and in particular negative school influences, and keeping their children from becoming involved with the wrong crowd of peers.

So what did the parents do to head off the threat, as they saw it, of losing their children to the streets? In my view, they seem to have operated, wittingly or unwittingly, a three-pronged strategy. The first strategy was Somali parents' high educational values and aspirations for their children. Regardless of education or occupational background, all the parents were aware of the importance of education to the future success of their children. Even those who have themselves had little or no formal schooling strongly believed in the importance of education, and were quite explicit about wanting their children to go to university. To translate this ambition into action, parents across the spectrum of views were paying for extra tuition for their children. Teenagers preparing for GCSE and A-level examinations as well as primary school aged children are tutored, especially in English, maths, and sciences.

The second strategy used by Somali parents to keep their children from acculturating to a different value system is organized religion, in the form of Islam. Islam symbolizes how Somalis define themselves and explain the world around them. Almost immediately after arrival in the United Kingdom, they set up mosques and *madrassas* for their children in apartments, then houses, and after some years, they bought or leased buildings for prayers or religious teaching. Now, almost two decades into their exile, there are Somali-owned (or co-used) mosques and *madrassas* in almost all the areas they live.

In interviews, parents are reaffirming their Islamic faith and tradition, and invariably want to extend these to their children. They do this by taking the children to the mosque for prayer on a regular basis, and to the *madrassah* for after-school religious instruction. In addition to providing spiritual

support, in the view of the parents, the mosque also gives the children a sense of identity and belonging, shores up parents' ties with other parents; and reinforces parental values. The key factor appears to be the connecting of parents and teens to social networks that reinforce their values and attitudes as well as the moral and cultural reinforcement these institutions provide for the messages parents give to their children.

The third strategy used by Somali parents is 'transnationalism'. Parents send their children "back home" for part of their education, and for social and cultural learning intertwined with religious values; they also take their children "back home" to get them out of a negative environment in the host country. In addition, some parents take or send an "unruly" child "back home" because they believe younger siblings are at risk of following his or her example; parents also create social networks and relationships across borders to maximize opportunities for their children. There is also evidence of the young people themselves sending remittances, maintaining social contacts, and an interest in homeland media and politics, and making visits to the home country.

Finally, the group of parents and their children who took part in this research were part of the first wave of refugees who were put to flight by the outbreak of the civil war following the collapse of the central government in Somalia at the beginning of 1991. In almost all situations of refugee flight, the initial, first-wave tends to be more urban and professional in background, better educated, and more fluent in English. Those coming later are more frequently from rural backgrounds, with lower English proficiency, and with fewer skills directly transferable to an industrialized economy. ●

Strategies in education for the black middle classes

Visiting Research Associate at the Institute of Education, University of London, **Nicola Rollock**, reports on research carried out by herself and Professors Carol Vincent, Stephen Ball and David Gillborn, into the educational strategies of the black middle classes, a group that receives very little attention in British educational debates.

Researchers at the Institute of Education, University of London, have recently published new research into the educational strategies of the black middle classes. We found, contrary to popular misconceptions that tend to position black families as disinterested in education, that these families prioritised education and were actively involved in their children's schooling. Education represents, for many, a key means of both supporting their children to be socially mobile and, it is hoped, of acting as a possible barrier against racism in their children's future. And, as our research found, racism is still a concern for many families, despite the relative advantages of their social class.

Our research involved carrying out a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews with 62 parents who self-defined as Black Caribbean. Fifteen of this original group were interviewed on a second occasion. This ethnic group was regarded as particularly relevant as a focus of study since evidence continues to indicate that black Caribbean pupils experience some of the lowest academic attainment compared with other ethnic groups. Furthermore, black Caribbean pupils from non-manual backgrounds are the lowest attaining of the middle class groups (Gillborn, 2008; Strand, 2008). All parents were in professional or managerial occupations and had at least one child between eight and 18 years, age groups encompassing key transition points in children's school careers. Fathers comprised 13 of the total sample.

Findings revealed that black middle class parents used a range of strategies, including their class resources, to support their children through the education system. For example, they drew on their professional networks and contacts to access information or advice that might not be immediately forthcoming from the school. Many were also proactive in arranging meetings with teachers and tutors to discuss their children's progress. Some parents reported that teachers were

surprised by such displays of initiative and were baffled and surprised by parents' knowledge about the education system. One parent described how her son's tutor interrupted a discussion they were having about the university admission process, during which she had pulled from her bag the *Sunday Times* list of the top 100 universities, to interrogate her about what she did for a living. Such incidents were not unusual; black middle class parents often found they were compelled to actively demonstrate their knowledge about education, their interest or their capability as parents to white teachers and other school staff to increase the likelihood of being treated as equals.

Many parents were frustrated at the low expectations that school staff held towards their children, levels which were perceived by the school to be acceptable and therefore not challenged:

"... in the final year the expectations from some of his teachers ... [one] said 'Well you got a pass, so what more do you want? We weren't expecting you to get a pass.' (...) [Eventually] he got a mixture of A stars, A's, I think his lowest grade was a B for sociology." (Vanessa, Community Development Officer)

Parents devised a range of strategies to manage these low expectations: one parent moved his son to a different school when he found the school not to be challenging his son academically and another decided to home school her children, not just to support their educational development but to better promote a positive and healthy notion of a black identity deemed lacking at the school.

Despite such experiences, parents seldom explicitly mentioned racism to the school (although it was frequently mentioned as an issue during the course of the interviews), not because they considered it to no longer exist but because they were aware of the resistance and antagonism that the term was likely to provoke in white power-holders. Racism was recognised by parents as being less

overt than when they were children but, nonetheless, pervasive in more subtle, coded forms which white people often did not understand or to which they were oblivious. Managing incidents of racism involved careful analysis and complex strategising:

"...as I say you deal with the situation and you have to almost go into... you are going to drop the voice, [...] you are going to try to talk round it, you try and say look this is why and give an explanation. You have to try not to be angry, you know it is very difficult but you have to – the worst thing you can show is anger right, because then it is all gone, because then you are so obviously the aggressor [in white people's eyes]. [...] you try to be calm in dealing with the situation, 'problem-solve' [slow deliberate, with a level of sarcasm]. [...] I am going to 'problem-solve' here, I am going to work it out with you, we are professionals. I am not going to be emotive about it even though it is a painfully emotive experience, I have got to lose that and I have got to deal with this situation as a 'problem-solving' thing [...] [mild annoyance, frustration] So [it's] almost as if you mould yourself into a certain 'placid' individual, do you know what I mean?" (Ella, Senior Health Professional)

Even in the light of these challenges, the respondents' children achieved top grades at GCSE and A level, going on to secure places at respected universities. However, the findings reveal some of the difficulties they face on the way and may help explain why black pupils from advantaged backgrounds do not do as well educationally as their white advantaged counterparts.

For a full report summary see: www.ioe.ac.uk/Study_Departments/CeCeps_The_Education_Strategies_Summary.pdf
For further discussion of the strategies to manage racism see: Rollock, N. (forthcoming) 'The Invisibility of Race: Intersectional Reflections on the Space of Liminal Alterity', *Race Ethnicity & Education*. ●



Photo: St Saviours' CE Primary School, Walthamstow and Holy Family Technology College, Walthamstow

‘I Want the Best for My Child’

Runnymede’s Head of Policy Research, **Omar Khan**, explores the ethics of parental choice, and asks ‘What is actually in the child’s best interests?’

Who could possibly disagree with the sentiment ‘I want the best for my child’?

There are, however, clear limits to how far parents may act to achieve the best for their child. There are two principal problems here. First, parents need to be attuned to the potential variance between what they think is best for their children, and what is actually in their child’s best interests. Second, parents cannot pursue the best for their children at the expense of other children.

Parents are of course right to want the best for their children. However, children have their own interests and identity, and many children would ultimately disagree with what their parents want for them. Although parents know more about their child than anyone else, the very closeness of a parent’s relationship with their child can make them a poor judge of what’s best for their child.

Furthermore, and this is a point that directly relates to policy, parents aren’t expert in many of the areas of life that allow children to grow into their own person and realize opportunities. While parents do have an especially valuable relationship to their child, there is a sense in which they should act as trustees for their children, in recognition of the fact that they may be pursuing their own interests rather than their children’s interests.

The second limitation of doing the best for one’s child is that we should not deliberately make the lives of other children worse off. This is a difficult area, both from the point of view of morality, and in terms of consequences for policy. Most moral codes require that we treat people impartially. Whatever moral guidance or rules we adopt should be applied equally to everyone, and exceptions to this norm are often viewed as hypocritical.

At the same time, however, almost all moral codes allow some kind of partiality, namely the prioritisation of particular relationships. In fact, familial (or parental) partiality is often viewed (along with

friendship) as the definitive and most obviously justifiable form of partiality - or ‘legitimate partiality’. In moral theory, the most common question is whether other kinds of relationships - shared nationality, for instance - are legitimate forms of partiality, mainly by considering whether these relationships have features that better match a parent-child relationship (legitimate partiality), or are similar to racist prioritisation of co-racials (illegitimate partiality).

Just as important, however, is how far even legitimate partiality can extend. That is, what are the limits of what a parent can do in pursuing the ‘best for their child’. Parents cannot kneecap another child to ensure their own child wins on the athletics track. But while violence is obviously unjustifiable, there are more subtle questions about how far choices that parents make in the best interests of their child might disadvantage other children.

This is clearest in cases where the goods or resources parents pursue for their children are ‘positional’ or relative - that is, where a good’s value depends on its relative scarcity. For example, doing the best for your child by giving it a better education typically means that you are worsening the relative education of less advantaged children - if everyone went to Eton or got PhDs, the relative value of those qualifications would diminish. To be clear, this is only true for positional goods, but education is not only the most obvious example of a positional good, but it is also one that correlates very strongly with life chances and ultimately employment and income.

For these reasons, the political philosopher Adam Swift has suggested that those committed to social justice should not send their children to fee-paying schools unless the schools in their area are failing or would somehow badly harm their child (or of course if a child has special needs). (*How Not to be a Hypocrite* by Adam Swift, Routledge, 2003) Empirically speaking, this is not typically the case.

So in terms of policy, the notion of ‘doing the best for my child’ is inadequate, and in two specific ways.

First, the policy discussion on ‘choice’ too often elides the distinction between the interests of the parent and the interests of the child, thereby assuming that these sets of interests are equivalent. Furthermore, discussions on the professional skills of educationalists, including teachers, doesn’t always foreground their capacity to look after the interests of children who they educate, which is after all the basis of their job.

Second, parents cannot simply pursue whatever they think is best for their child, precisely because there are other children in society. For the policymaker, this again means considering how to ensure that all children have their interest in a good education equally protected when pushy and better-off parents are so much more effective at advancing the interests of their own children, particularly in terms of education.

Finally, it’s worth linking these discussions to race equality. For many parents, ‘doing the best for their child’ means not educating their children in areas with too many difficult children, or even with too much diversity. Selection on the basis of faith can also lead to greater ethnic segregation (*Right to Divide?: Faith Schools and Community Cohesion* by Rob Berkeley, Runnymede 2008).

Here again policymakers are faced with a difficult choice: they must respect the values of parents, but also try to protect the interests of children, and develop a sense of civic participation. School choice results in some children doing better than others because of their parents’ wealth, but it also results in some children not engaging with those different from them and so hinders the equality of citizenship and good relations between different ethnic groups. ●

Is Physical Discipline Part of Good Parenting?

Patrice Lawrence argues that whilst it is important to establish boundaries for children, it should be done without recourse to physical discipline.

Consider this scenario. It's Friday evening, standing in a busy shop staring at the cereals. A woman passes by, propelling a reluctant toddler. As the child's reluctance gains volume, his mother says she will give him a smack. Just words from a harassed parent, so common they garner no notice. But imagine, I'm trailing after my partner moaning that I'd rather be at home watching TV. He turns around and threatens to smack me.... If it is unacceptable to hit another adult, why should it be acceptable to do this to a child?

There are many passionate opinions about the physical discipline of children. I am a parent. And I was smacked as a child. And I wish we would stop it.

I have spoken on the radio about this issue, written articles about it, and made a short film about it. I know my views are in the minority. Ian Duncan Smith and Ray Lewis are championing the return of corporal punishment in school – Lewis seeming to suggest, the younger the child, the better. A recent survey commissioned by the Times Educational Supplement revealed that just under half of 2000 parents polled wanted caning back. (Interestingly, these findings have been interpreted as 'half the nation's parents'. Parents responding to TES polls are representative of the nation? Hmmm.) And, of course, recent riots/social disturbances/opportunistic looting have resurrected the common refrain that 'government has taken away parents' power to discipline their children'. Even the other Lewis, Leona, had her 'say' on that one in the Guardian last month.

I certainly do not believe that smacking is more prolific in any particular community, but as a parent of Caribbean heritage, I am interested in the mythical status that 'beating' has attained. I tried to unpick this in my short film *Licks 'N' Beats*. I heard some extraordinary stories off camera. One person was beaten with a plug flex until his leg burst. Another

was beaten on the day he was reunited with his parents in England after being left in the Caribbean as a baby. Yet, both argued that they would smack their children; they claim that there is a line between 'smacking' and 'abuse'.

But where do parents draw that line? Is it in the same place as the caller before me

Dr Adrian Rogers, former president of the Conservative Family Institute argued on the Eddie Nestor radio show that corporal punishment is cheap, effective and humiliating. In schools, I believe this would mean that the children most likely to be corporally punished are those children who are already disproportionately excluded - Black Caribbean, Gypsy and

“A ‘tap on the hand’ is OK. Canes in schools and wallops around the cheek strike me as a little more than that.”

on the BBC Radio London Eddie Nestor show, who proudly smacked her usually 'lovely' 13-year-old daughter around the face for being rude at the dinner table? The common argument is that a 'tap on the hand' is OK. Canes in schools and wallops around the cheek strike me as a little more than that.

Putting aside the 'smacking or abuse' debate, or indeed the issue of children's rights – funnily enough, a subject not too popular with adults – there are so many reasons to rethink the pro-smacking arguments.

The 'it didn't do me any harm' argument. Frankly, some uttering those words need a second opinion. Is that the best our parenting can manage? Shouldn't we be setting the bar higher than practices that 'don't do any harm'? As a black parent, my parenting must negate unhelpful messages my daughter receives about her place in the world. Think about it. How many scientists look like her on TV? One, space scientist Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock. Compare that to the number of brown-skinned women writhing around in music videos.

Traveller, in some areas Pakistani, children with SEN or those in poorer areas. Is using adult authority to humiliate them really the route to a just, tolerant society? How do you react to public humiliation?

Parents have no power. Absolute rubbish. We have amazing power and we should know it and understand it. We have the power to build our children's emotional resilience, making them proud of who they are and the histories that they belong to. We have the power to stimulate their intellectual curiosity in the world, through books and experiences, through giving them vocabulary to debate, describe and negotiate. We have the power to encourage their compassion and belief in social justice.

Deciding not to smack, does not mean banning discipline. I believe in boundaries, good manners, completion of homework and honesty. I also believe that I have to model what I am trying to espouse. So I will not hit my child.

Blog: <http://purpleumbrella.blogspot.com>

Licks 'N' Beats: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3LG6AeUgBY> ●



This article by **David J. Pate, Jr.** outlines the history of African American fatherhood. It explains how policymakers have shaped and often undermined the position of African American fathers, and allows us to reflect on how policy should – and should not – respond to the question of ‘fatherhood’ in the UK

‘Family’ policies have typically affected men and women differently, historically promoting the notion of men as the ‘breadwinner’ and women as ‘homemakers’. Such policies have also addressed ethnic groups differently, and have been far from benign. Policy makers and researchers have only recently explicitly discussed ‘fatherhood’, although assumptions regarding the responsibilities of fatherhood have taken various forms in the United States since colonial times. The present discourse focuses on the roles that fathers should play, particularly for families affected by welfare reauthorisation and the recent recession. It focuses on a particular notion of ‘responsibility’, namely that fathers should be financially responsible for their entire family, and in its extreme version suggests that economic support is the only or main marker of a good father.

freely without fear of death. Moreover, legal statutes have until recently not allowed African American fathers in low-income families to fully participate as fathers in their families. The effect on the slave father’s authority was crippling:

The slaveholders deprived black men of the role of provider; refused to dignify their marriages or legitimise their issue; compelled them to submit to physical abuse in the presence of their wife and children: made them choose between remaining silent while their wives and daughters were raped or seduced and risking death; and threatened them with separation from their family at any moment. (Genovese, 1976, p. 490)

– slave fathers cutting off toes, hands, and other body parts as a way to render themselves ineffective as workers, and hopefully to remain on the plantation.

Slavery would last for 246 years until it was abolished by the 13th constitutional amendment. After 1865 African American men could theoretically hold office, serve on juries, and vote. However, ‘Jim Crow’ laws and persistent racism fatally undermined federal legislation and further challenged the role of the African American father.

The lingering effects from this historical, institutionalised, and legalised racism have resulted in housing discrimination, poor employment prospects, and poor educational opportunities, further affecting the experience of black fatherhood.

Historical background

These developments have taken place in a particular context for African American fathers, namely the long history of slavery and discrimination that continues to have effects both on fathers and on the imaginations of policy makers. On 20 August 1619, the first black Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. The values and traditions of family structure as these Africans knew and practised them in their home country would be changed forever. In 1662, slavery received legal statutory sanction and was made hereditary, and in 1705 an Act was passed in Virginia which made Negro slaves real property. Slavery then flourished as a cruel and inhumane institution, rendering the psychological state of black Africans impotent.

The combined practice of slavery and the associated racism has had a cumulative effect on the structure of the African American family. United States federal law did not allow black African slaves to be legally married, own property, or travel

The white master almost wholly circumscribed the father’s ability to be nurturing and involved. The slave master could forbid marriage. He could sell the male slave’s wife and children. He determined if the father was sold to another plantation despite his family’s pleas. All of this maintained power and control over the mental capacity of the slave and reduced him to being less than a man. However, there is documented evidence of slave fathers, in fear of sale, establishing a symbolic connection with their children: it was a common practice to give the name of the father to the first-born son (Gutman, 1976). Another example of resistance to separation from one’s family was the act of ‘self-mutilation’

“ The white master almost wholly circumscribed the father’s ability to be nurturing and caring”

Contemporary fatherhood policy: the dominance of the welfare lens

Partly because of these barriers, many of the recipients (or targets) of policies for responsible fatherhood programmes in the United States are black men. These men are the subjects of increasing policy focus, with current concern about fatherlessness and ‘deadbeat dads’ in the social and economic arenas reducing the duties and responsibilities of a father to a one-dimensional identity – the breadwinner.

The current concern with the role of fathers of children on welfare can be attributed to current societal mores, concern for the



rising cost of welfare expenditures, and the economic 'burden' of taxpayers for someone else's child(ren). Notably, the families most subject to poverty are those headed by single mothers, and recent statistics indicate that unmarried mothers account for 41 per cent of all births in the United States (National Vital Statistics Report, 2010).

The continued increase in out-of-wedlock childbearing has led the government to take an increasingly active role in requiring never-married fathers to accept paternal responsibilities, in large part to reduce costs to society. According to a report from the US Bureau of the Census (DeNavas, Proctor and Smith, 2010), children living in families with a female householder and no husband present had a poverty rate of 42.2 per cent in 2010, four times the rate (10.1%) for married coupled families.

Since at least the 1970s, policy makers have sought to respond to these issues directly. These concerns reached a peak with the passage in 1996 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. PRWORA allowed state child support offices to institute more stringent practices to increase the number of men for whom paternity has been established and from whom child support is due. It also promoted voluntary paternity acknowledgment.

This focus on non-custodial fathers is evidenced in the Clinton administration funding programmes that supported non-custodial parents (generally fathers) in work activities, while the Bush administration allocated \$750 million over five years for marriage promotion and responsible fatherhood activities. President Obama has also made father involvement a priority, for example funding \$150 million for Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grants.

But perhaps the most prominent area of policy development has been child support. To reduce governmental costs and the incidence of poverty, from the early 1970s policymakers began to focus on child support collections among the population that received welfare benefits. In particular, policies were established to collect child support from non-custodial fathers. Through these efforts the amount

of child support paid has increased, but large numbers of families still do not receive any child support. This has encouraged policy makers to support punitive measures directed at 'deadbeat dads,' including basing child support orders on imputed income (assuming that a father can earn a certain level, regardless of his actual earnings) and revoking driver's licences and other professional licences for those delinquent in their payments.

The federal office of child support enforcement provides states with a variety of options for the collection of child support. In the United States, if the custodial parent of the child receives welfare (cash assistance from the state), the non-custodial parent is responsible for reimbursing the state for a portion of the cash received for the child. A common method of enforcement is withholding fathers' wages. This method – routine (immediate) withholding of child support from income (rather than waiting for the parent to miss a payment before withholding occurs) – has been associated with higher child support compliance.

However, enforcement tactics are effective when applied to people who have the money or resources to get the money to pay. Those who decide not to pay or are unable to pay child support run up debt that accumulates interest and eventually can incur severe penalties such as the loss of driving privileges or incarceration. Interest on past due arrears is determined by states and can be as high as 25 per cent; interest can also accrue when someone is incarcerated.

Fatherhood beyond the welfare state?

Child support is simply the most obvious way that policy makers have adopted a relatively narrow, economic view of non-custodial fathers, especially black fathers. Yet there have been some more expansive tendencies, considering the emotional and financial role of divorced or unmarried low-income fathers in the lives of their children. Many have suggested that the increased involvement of unmarried low-income fathers should be

advanced by their marrying the mothers of their children.

This concern has been based on the presumption that non-custodial fathers have not been involved in their children's lives. Here the context is research that identifies the effects of increased paternal involvement on children, comparing the status of children in 'traditional' families with that of children whose fathers share in or take primary responsibility for child care, again indicating the dominance of the breadwinner role for fathers (Lamb, 1997).

Two challenges confront this view. First, research on the population of fathers who do not pay child support suggests that non-payers are a very diverse group and that some people lack the capability to meet the court order for child support. Many non-custodial fathers are involved with their children and make 'informal' child support payments as well as paying into the formal child support system (Johnson et al., 1999; Edin et al., 2000; Sorensen and Zibman, 2000; Waller and Plotnick, 2001). Many live with the mothers of their children, provide financial support in excess of the monthly child support order, have physical and legal custody of their children, and face limited employment opportunities.



Photo: Blakeslee Collection



Second, the value of fatherhood is not simply financial: there are many non-economic aspects of fatherhood. Fathers do not fill a unidimensional role in their families and in their children's eyes; there are a number of significant roles and a variety of reasons for paternal involvement. Variations in the definition of fatherhood are often the product of subcultural and cultural factors, rather than of individual characteristics. Most men set goals that reflect their recollection of their childhood, choosing either to compensate for their fathers' deficiencies or to emulate them. Parental involvement can be determined by their own personal motivation, skills, self-confidence in the role of parent, and support, especially support within the family from the mother.

Ethnographic publications have charted the myriad barriers confronted by black men in the urban ghetto, and the likely effect on the economic and non-economic aspects of fatherhood. Low-income African American men even face barriers in being acknowledged as the parent of one's child without the intervention of the legal system.

The absence of the father may be the chief characteristics of the father-child relationship, but other barriers include the father's failure to provide for his family and the quality of the mother-father relationship. In *All Our Kin*, Carol Stack explains the complex nature of the fathering role, community, and kinship

relationships. She notes that the more a father and his kin assist a mother and the child, the more he validates his parental rights (Stack, 1974). Together these publications show the patterns that men develop within their communities to maintain a relationship with their child(ren).

Conclusion

There are some indications that the stereotypical characterisation of black fathers as non-existent, sexual predators, and non-involved persons is being challenged. In terms of policy and legislation, this year, a US Supreme Court case (*Turner v Rogers*) discussed the issue of due process and the provision of counsel for an indigent client when a civil case that could result in incarceration was being heard. Mr. Turner had past due arrears of child support and was placed in jail for over six months. The Supreme Court determined that his due process constitutional rights were violated and

that states needed to review the policy for indigent non-custodial parents owing child support and the enforcement tactic of incarceration.

While this case is some grounds for optimism, 'fatherhood' policy remains primarily punitive, especially for non-custodial African American men. Only modest employment and training efforts have been offered to non-custodial fathers. Unfortunately, the narrow 'breadwinner' vision of fatherhood is not limited to policy makers. Perhaps surprisingly, social scientists have only recently recognised the importance of a father's emotional involvement with his child(ren).

As long as society maintains the 'breadwinner' role as the primary role for successful fathering in America, African American fathers will be further disadvantaged by policies and so be less likely to overcome the long-term effects of slavery and current institutional racism. ●

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Photo: Longman Group Ltd.

10 KEY FACTS ABOUT...

PARENTING

FACTS EDITED BY REBECCA WALLER

1 More than half of all black Caribbean families consist of lone parents with dependent children

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

2 Children from ethnic minority backgrounds are over-represented in foster care: 17% of looked after children are from ethnic minority backgrounds, despite ethnic minorities constituting only 13% of the general population

www.communitycare.co.uk

3 Rates of teenage motherhood are significantly higher among young black women and despite constituting only 3% of the population aged 15–17, they accounted for 9% of all abortions given to women under the age of 18

Department for Education and Skills

4 Black fathers are twice as likely as white fathers to live apart from their children

The Fatherhood Institute

5 Almost seven out of 10 Bangladeshi children live in households with incomes below 60% of the national average (median) compared with fewer than three out of 10 white children

End Child Poverty

6 More than half of families with a disabled child live in or near the margins of poverty

www.equalityhumanrights.com



Photo: Jonathan Oppong-Wiafe

“The value of childcare taken on by grandparents each year is estimated at £3.9 billion”

7 One in four of all families, and half of all single parents, rely on grandparents to provide childcare each week. The value of the work is estimated at £3.9 billion a year

www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

8 Research shows that 30,000 women every year lose their job as a result of pregnancy-related discrimination. Ethnic minority parents have less access to maternity pay, paternity leave and flexible working options than other parents

Fawcett Society

9 Ethnic minority households are more likely to include a grandparent, parent and child living under the same roof. This often leads to the expectation that grandparents will take on high levels of childcare

www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

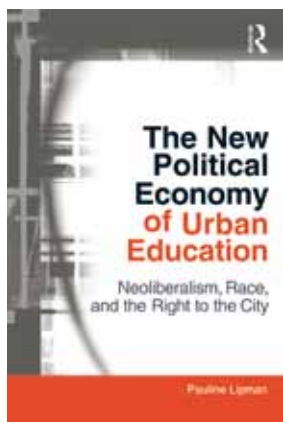
10 While less than 5% of white grandparents and 7.5% of black grandparents live with one of their children and grandchildren, more than 30% of Indian grandparents live in a multigenerational household

Millennium Cohort Study



The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City

Pauline Lipman, Routledge, 2011
Book review by Kate D'Arcy



Pauline Lipman's book provides a detailed analysis of the current political, economic and ideological underpinnings of urban education and documents the central role that race plays within this context. Although Lipman uses Chicago as her focus she draws parallels with other cities, and as such it is informative for British readers. She raises conflicts over US charter schools, which are publicly funded, yet run by private operators or community organisations. These schools are driven by a localism agenda, which is being promoted in the UK, and reflect some of the issues surrounding the current free school model and 'Big Society' ideology of the UK coalition government. Her research into charter schools in the US has shown that although schools in these systems are more flexible they are also more segregated by race and poverty than public schools.

Lipman highlight issues of inequality, injustice and the holding of 'the right to the city'. She shows that neo-liberal education policies continue to benefit the wealthy and disadvantage black and minority ethnic groups. She suggests that educational and political initiatives

to reduce poverty, such as mixed-income schools, have a racial subtext because they involve dispersing and resettling poor families, often Latino and African American families, among those families with higher average incomes. This agenda physically uproots and disperses communities, disrupting their social networks and cultural practices. Although the political agenda that drives these actions suggests the aim is educational equality and social justice, Lipman argues that they are centred upon racial containment and exclusion.

Lipman's book provides a critical insight into education policy as a part of a much larger agenda to privatise public services and restructure urban spaces to serve investors. Her book highlights the influence of market system approaches within education which have created greater race and class inequalities. She suggests that although there is rhetoric of choice within such systems, in reality the only parents who can navigate them to obtain the best results for their children are those with the right mix of cultural and social capital.

Along with in-depth policy analysis, this book incorporates grassroots level accounts of school experiences as voiced by parents and teachers, and analysis of corporate educational projects, such as those funded by the Gates Foundation, to highlight the intersectionality of power and knowledge. Lipman writes about her concerns regarding democracy and equality within the growing influence of corporate foundations upon public policy and the increasing number of venture philanthropists in education who are becoming part of the "shadow state". Although her book is centred upon the US, her concerns are relevant, and a useful insight into increasing corporate management of British schools.

This book is therefore a strong contribution to the national discourse on the role of education. Lipman also theorises how education and educational activists should respond and work towards education systems that are equally accessible to all children and adults. This book is for anyone interested in race equality, education and social policy. ●

thecoupleconnection.net: Mixed Families

<http://thecoupleconnection.net/articles/categories/mixed-families>
Resource review by Nat Illumine



The coupleconnection.net is a new online resource offering relationship advice for mixedrace couples and families. In conjunction with One Plus One and university-based researchers, a new resource has been launched on the site. Focusing on both the similarities and differences experienced by those in mixed race families, whether racially, ethnically or religiously mixed, video and written testimonials are provided from real people in contemporary situations. There are articles on particularly contentious issues such as dealing with disapproval and rejection from extended family and the wider community, and creating identities and a sense of belonging for children.

The video testimonials represent couples of various races and age groups across England, thus showing a breadth of different viewpoints. For all these couples, like same-race couples, the major issues revolve around the same things: employment, finance, child-raising, emotional stability.

The core articles focus upon experiences of community and family rejection and creating positive identities for children, including strategies for dealing with these situations. Also included are links to mixed race support groups - all national forums for individuals and families of mixed race, as well as further reading and research on the subject.

It is refreshing to see mixed race couples portrayed with the same normalcy afforded same-race couples. Much is made of the perceived benefits of inter-racial mixing. Given that mixed race couples are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the UK, resources such as this are going to continue to be useful to those struggling with the realities of negative attitudes towards inter-racial mixing. ●



Thinking through Islamophobia

The outcome of a workshop at the University of Leeds in 2008, this anthology of 28 essays attempts to set out the complex and varied ways in which the term 'Islamophobia' is used. As well as discussions in relation to the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK, there are also contributions regarding these debates in Russia, Greece, China, Thailand, India and Turkey. As a result, the collection reflects some of the continuities between 'Islamophobia' in different contexts, but highlights the geopolitical and socio-historical specificities which determine how the concept is invoked and utilised at particular moments.

For those interested in the British context, Mir and Modood discuss the process of racialisation of Muslims and argue that Islamophobia pertains to religious groups and communities rather than (opposition to) Islamic beliefs. Khan's and Tyrer's contributions both explore how Islamophobia emerges from the context of 'the war on terror' and Sian presents an interesting discussion of Islamophobia in the UK Sikh diaspora, noting how historical narratives arising in India inflect contemporary UK Sikhs' conceptualisations of Muslims. Fadil's article, although focused on the Belgian Left and its relation to Islam, echoes many of the debates in the UK about 'political correctness' and the way some quarters of the progressive left are implicated in contemporary Islamophobic discourses. In particular, Fadil highlights the displacement of socio-economic frameworks by 'culturalist' ones to interpret issues of social justice.

The way in which other aspects of difference, such as gender and sexuality, work through and against Islamophobia, are also explored. Millward, writing on the 'new racism' in football, shows how it is constructed through hegemonic ideas of white masculinity. Ranasinha reflects on how postcolonial works of literature in English (by authors such as Hanif Kureishi), feed into notions of the repression of women as endemic to Islam. Moors examines the importance of the 'veil' debate in the Netherlands and

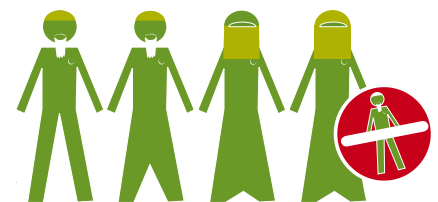
Bano discusses how, in debates about Sharia law in Europe, Muslim women's agency as Muslims has been framed out. Kuntsman, Haritaworn and Petzen reflect on 'queer' complicities in globalised formations of 'the war on terror' through discussion of the German and Israeli contexts.

Some interesting discussions are certainly prompted by this anthology. For example, in discussing whether the Chinese state's quashing of the Uyghur disturbances constitutes Islamophobia, Yi considers whether Islamophobia is a Eurocentric concept. Tlostanova looks at the relationship between increasing Islamophobia and the end of the Cold War through analysis of Russia's own precarious relationship with Europe. Aktay explores the idea of Muslim Islamophobia in Turkey and traces the historical roots of this discourse in Kemalism and a Eurocentric conceptualisation of modernity.

In concluding, Vakil, in spite of all the difficulties in its definition, sets out a commitment to the term Islamophobia and argues that its retention will lead to a more robust conceptualisation in time. Moreover, a debate on terminology is considered almost superfluous. However, none of the authors in this anthology deny that Islamophobia is a problem but unless it is defined clearly, how can it be countered and kept on the policy agenda? It is unclear as to why alternative terms such as 'anti-Muslim racism' were not considered appropriate, given that the term highlights the continuities with other racisms, both past and present, but also draws attention to the particular specificities of the fact that it is directed at Muslims or Islam.

Throughout the collection, various references are made to the Runnymede Trust's 1997 report *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All* which is widely credited with bringing the term into widespread usage. And, although acknowledging Runnymede's role in getting Islamophobia onto the mainstream policy agenda, Sayyid, in

S. Sayyid | AbdoolKarim Vakil editors



Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives

Edited by Salman Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil, 2009, C. Hurst & Co
Book review by Naaz Rashid

particular, is critical of the report, arguing that the report adopted a different approach to defining Islamophobia from the way it analysed anti-Semitism. This would suggest that on one level the editors do recognise that how we define Islamophobia (or the terminology we use) matters.

A criticism would be that, although the collection is book-ended with an introductory and concluding chapter, the rest of the articles do not appear to be arranged in any particular order. This no doubt reflects the authors' desire to acknowledge the breadth of discussion regarding the concept of Islamophobia, but from a reader's point of view, a more thematically organised book might have been helpful. It is perhaps most insightful regarding Islamophobia in a northern European context, although there are some interesting diversions from elsewhere. This book does not answer any policy dilemmas in a straightforward way but may provoke some interesting discussions along the way. ●



REVIEWS EDITED BY ROBIN FRAMPTON



A Better Life

Directed by Chris Weitz, 2010

Film review by Rebecca Bryce



Aspirations in America

A Better Life is the latest film from Chris Weitz (who, with Paul Weitz, directed *About A Boy*) and it is a real credit to him and to all of the actors (Demián Bichir, José Julián, Dolores Heredia, Joaquin Cosío and Carlos Linares). The movie tells the story of a Mexican illegal immigrant, Carlos (Demián Bichir), living in Los Angeles as a single father trying to give his estranged teenage son a better future, whilst also keeping his citizen status secret. He is a gardener working for a fellow Mexican – through his life we gain an insight into the life of an illegal immigrant in the US. They have to do the lowest paid jobs, work for long hours and put their health at potential risk to scrape a living. Carlos' boss wants him to buy his truck because he has saved enough money to go back to Mexico and run his own farm. Carlos is tempted by the prospects that buying the truck would bring but he fears that it will make him more vulnerable to being caught by the authorities on a potential driving offence, especially as a dishonest lawyer ripped him off after promising him fake identity documents for cash.

Carlos' son, Luis (José Julián), is a fourteen year-old boy struggling with choosing between following the path of education, which his father so desires for him, and getting involved with a gang. The latter seems to be the only brutal option for many young, poor urban Mexicans. Luis is Carlos' reason for living and he is aware of the challenges facing his son and so he decides to buy the truck. For a brief period things are looking up, Carlos is his own boss and he decides to take on a fellow illegal immigrant, Santiago, to help with his work. However, the events that follow send Carlos on a downward spiral and lead to his eventual discovery by the police force.

The film demonstrates the differences in attitudes between the generations and how factors such as belonging, pride, wealth and discrimination all impact on

an individual's being. The whole film is told from a Mexican perspective and we barely come into contact with any other ethnic groups, except for a dim white employer, the police force and an intimidating scene in which Carlos and Luis find themselves in black gang land. The audience is exposed to the struggles of Mexican people in the US and the extensive poverty that many ethnic minority individuals face, which leads to interracial tension, as demonstrated by a spray-painted wall shown in the background as Carlos and Luis look for their stolen truck: 'too many Mexicans, not enough bullets'. On top of this, illegal immigrants are treated with brutality by the authorities, from their official title 'alien' to their deportation, which often means parents are forced to leave their children to survive on their own.

What is interesting is that even after all of this, despite all of the trials and tribulations Carlos goes through and even when he is expelled from the US, he does not lose hope or humanity and give in to anger or despair at his situation. The viewer is exposed to Carlos' vulnerability through a conversation between father and son when we learn why Luis' mother left. Carlos tells of his heartbreaking battle with the sacrifice he had to make – being a single parent with no support system or legal status, he had to prioritise making money over spending time with his son. The ending should be depressing because it seems Carlos' dreams have been shattered but his positivity and sense of belonging to America is uplifting. *A Better Life* tells the story of the American Dream that so many people are inspired by – hope and the opportunity for a new life.

This film is a 'must see' for anyone who wants a gritty but heartfelt insight into the realities of being a Mexican in the US and how morality and love can help a person to rise above denigrating alternatives. ●



REVIEWS EDITED BY ROBIN FRAMPTON

Resolving the Complexity of Exclusion

On 2 November 2004, Mohammed Bouyeri murdered the writer and director Theo Van Gogh, shooting him eight times as he cycled to work. Affiliated with the Muslim Hofstad network, Bouyeri's actions have become emblematic of the argument that cultural diversity is irreconcilable, leading only to violence.

This new collection questions this argument, using an innovative blend of sociology, psychology and political science to outline current academic thinking about belonging and political action. Sweeping through discussions about how identity is formed, how it links to political participation, and when and why groups choose to integrate or radicalise, this book outlines the life-course of European political lives. This is an ambitious task, and it develops through four related sections.

Although the opening chapters are intriguing up to a point, the later, less theoretical sections are more consistently engaging. The unifying aim of Section Two, dealing with forms of political participation, is to "provide ... a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of when and how people make their own history" (p. 91).

Aside from two chapters on America, the essays all deal explicitly with Europe, or with more general theories of group relations. It would have been interesting to see the book's sophisticated framework applied to more global settings.

This is, however, the only serious limitation to an otherwise elegant editorial vision. While its substantive breadth is not always matched by the quality of individual contributions, the book's thematic unfolding is successful, and there is a refreshing insistence that identity is complex, multiple and layered. The book's multidisciplinary emphasis is perhaps of greatest interest to research professionals, but it nonetheless provides

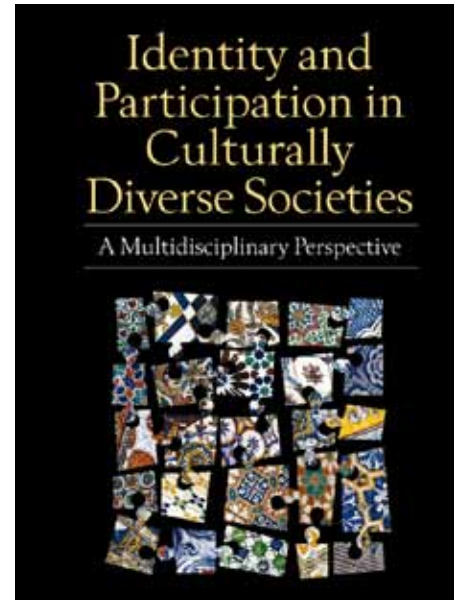
a compelling case that social science is at its most advanced when transcending disciplinary boundaries.

Finally, the most successful part of the book is the section struggling to understand processes of 'radicalization'. Here the collection's more latent purpose becomes clear: to use social science to "run counter to popular myths about identity that circulate in both academic and commonsense discourse" (p. 5).

The authors argue that the problem of cultural conflict is not social diversity but rather the radical homogeneity of some political groups. Radicalization is an essentially social process: "people do not radicalize on their own but as part of a group" (p.182). Given this, the most dangerously radical organisations are those that are most inward, internally conformist, and rejecting of the wider world.

This is a compelling argument, persuasively illustrated. Chapter 11 gives a detailed analysis of the Hofstad network, patiently tracing the personal alienation and political resentment that led to the murder of Theo Van Gogh. Katherine Blee's fine-grained account of women's role in American racism indicates that radical intent is not always the most important criterion of group membership – and that commitment to the cause flickers, wavers, and sometimes disappears over a lifetime.

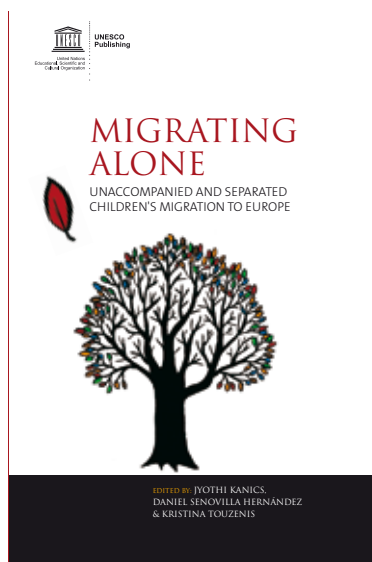
In short, this collection persuasively demonstrates how meaningless it is to understand radical action through clumsily denouncing entire systems of belief. Doing so fails to resolve the conditions leading to violent resentment, and can exacerbate the sense of injustice from which they emerge. By contrast, painstaking and sophisticated empirical work can counter prejudice and misunderstanding, and enhance our ability to resolve the complexity of exclusion. ●



Identity and Participation in Culturally Diverse Societies: A Multidisciplinary Perspective

Edited by A. E. Azzi, X. Chrysochoou, B. Klandermans and B. Simon
Wiley-Blackwell, 2011
Book review by Robert Trotter





Migrating Alone: Unaccompanied and Separated Children's Migration to Europe

Edited by Jyothi Kanics, Daniel Senovilla Hernández and Kristina Touzenis
UNESCO Publishing, 2010, ISBN 978-9-23104-091-7.

Publication reviewed by Claudia Santoro

This UNESCO publication looks at the planned, forced or spontaneous decision to abandon the household from the point of view of a young migrant, and tries to deconstruct the disparity between principles agreed by governments and the reality of individual lives whose dignity and human rights are violated.

Originating from the findings of a conference organised by MIGRINTER and the International Juvenile Justice Observatory in 2007, the issue of unaccompanied minors was brought into an international forum where researchers and field practitioners shared experiences in order to map the phenomena.

The conference focused on the comparison of legislation frameworks, presented the state of the situation of children who lack protection and looked at the issues connecting different angles: providing a detailed judicial review of the legal tools established to protect

separated children, and analysing the complex and diverse situation in which children in Europe live. Children's pre-migration experiences in their countries of origin were also considered, offering detailed regional focuses constructed through extremely accurate and innovative field research, therefore providing the scientific background which is necessary to detail the phenomena and build social policies.

The first section looks at the situation of unaccompanied children in European countries, where the issue is evolving in different ways and requires harmonisation policies and EU intervention. Indeed, even in countries where a protection system exists, these practices rarely grant minors the treatment they are entitled to and their rights too often get lost in the machinery of countries' bureaucracy systems or in forced return policies.

The authors have attempted to shape a paradigm in which children are placed in mainstream facilities, but with their integration monitored and every single case analysed separately. This is because unaccompanied minors are not only children and migrants, but also potential victims of sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation.

The book extensively clarifies the role of the guardian: a figure established to ensure that the rights of every single child are represented. It shows that although detailed legislative guidance states that the legal protection must be additional to the appointment of the guardian, in over half of the states analysed this person is merely a legal representative, rather than someone who should ensure children's physical and physiological well-being.

Migrating Alone also investigates the reasons that young migrants move: starting from a solid research-based background that links up young migrants from Albania, Morocco and Romania with targeted EU settings, authors draw trajectories built of transnational media, criminal trafficking and marginalisation. The desire to support families emerges as one of the major reasons explaining migration, but there are also children who

leave their home voluntarily, escaping violence perpetrated by members of their own families.

The situation of young migrants, both in the host and origin country, suggests the necessity to deconstruct the paradigm of minors' victimisation is an indispensable step of social intervention, seen as the unique way to focus on needs and priorities.

Moreover the comparative approach connects reasons for leaving with diverse experiences in the host countries, providing a context that presents the challenges of the reception, which apart from being driven by a re-educational priority, needs to build new possibilities.

The book contains other relevant contributions, including a significant explanation that draws highways of migration, risks and vulnerability and links the North and South of the world.

The book makes the point that considering unaccompanied children merely as migrants rather than children decreases the possibility of their being protected, as the international standards protecting migrants are much weaker than those established to ensure children's rights.

The conclusion is left to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights who summarises the findings of this study and warns that data collection on unaccompanied minors lacks homogeneity, accuracy and regularity, and that a mapping process is therefore needed.

Separated minors need life projects taking into account the multiple discriminations they face, and those projects need the commitment of states, formal training and a structured monitoring process. As Commissioner Hammarberg concludes: "Europe cannot fail with young newcomers". It is necessary to remember that whether they migrate to escape violence or improve their condition, separated children are 'future-seekers' and the first step for their harmonic integration into society is remembering they also have human rights. ●

Director's COLUMN

Runnymede director **Rob Berkeley**
on what we don't know about the
August riots



Why myths are driving the policy agenda

We've already learnt a great deal from this summer's catastrophic riots. We've mostly learnt what we do not know; we do not know why so many people thought that they would be justified in using the opportunity to indulge in burning and looting; we do not know what role inequality in general and racial inequality in particular played in rioters' motivations; and we do not know what needs to be done to ensure that riots of this kind do not happen again.

For social policy researchers, the riots should have been humbling and led to revisiting some of the assumptions we have been making about our society. Instead, we've also had confirmed for us the challenge in our current political climate of making policy decisions based on evidence. Instead of an approach which sought to gather and understand the evidence, we had a near immediate rush to off-the-shelf theorising. The riots, it seems, have been all things to all people and have only served to confirm existing views rather than being an opportunity for reflection. This rush has led to a number of myths about the events of the summer: rioters were all 'criminal, pure and simple'; these riots were nothing to do with racial injustice; criminal gangs were key players; young people are out of control; family structures in our cities are not providing the necessary moral framework; black culture is pathological, etc.

The lack of evidence has created a vacuum into which these competing theories have been thrown, and the government's initial rejection of a public inquiry in favour of a more poorly resourced select committee review and a public engagement 'victims' panel', may

not provide us with the understanding that will cut through the miasma of opinion to discern what really happened and how we make sure it does not happen again.

Runnymede is keen to gather evidence that may give us some indication of the solutions to the problems made evident on our streets in August. Over the coming weeks we will be making our contribution to the necessary evidence gathering

inclusion for people from minority ethnic communities, how to hold local authorities to account for the decisions they make on racial inequality, and how to measure the impact of spending cuts on people from minority ethnic communities.

In this Bulletin we have returned to the issues of family policy based on the understanding that the solutions to racial injustice in the UK require us to use all the resources at our disposal. Those who

“Those who do not have supportive families are too often denied the support they need”

and analysis by starting a programme of research engaging policy professionals, young people, and people who are rarely enabled to have their say in policy debates. We will also be taking the discussion about racial injustice to the high streets once more with the second phase of our Generation 3.0 project – reasserting our shared ambition to end racism in a generation.

StopWatch will continue to shine light on the decisions made around addressing racial disproportionality in the use of police stop powers. We will continue to work with other NGOs to build action on the report of the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on race equality in the UK. Our research efforts will consider ageing and financial

do not have supportive families are too often denied the support that they need to thrive. As articles in this Bulletin show, supporting families is a crucial part of addressing inequalities.

The policy responses to the summer's riots are coming thick and fast, with reformers emboldened to dust off their pet projects. It is crucial in this period that we make decisions based on evidence rather than speculation, and consider carefully the implications of the decisions made. Instead of trying to understand the riots in order to ensure that social breakdown of this kind does not happen again, we are at risk of allowing the myths to drive the policy agenda. The chances of lasting solutions are in danger of eluding our grasp. ●

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