Legislating for Equality

In this article, Rob Berkeley, Runnymede’s Director, analyses the recently-published Equality Bill and, whilst broadly welcoming the Bill, outlines four key areas of concern about the proposals.

The long-awaited Equality Bill was finally published at the end of April 2009. The Bill reflects the result of many years of pressure from a wide range of organizations to legislate for improved equality. The Labour government has not been shy of using legislation to promote equality during the past twelve years – including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 which gave us the public sector duty to promote race equality, and the Equality Act 2006 which brought the Equality and Human Rights Commission into existence.

Government announced its intention to move towards a single equality act as early as 2004. It is unsurprising, then, that expectations for the proposed Equality Act 2010 are high. Expectations have been raised by an exhaustive round of consultations including the highly vaunted Equalities Review (Feb 2007),1 the Discrimination Law Review (June 2007),2 and the establishment of a National Equality Panel that will report later this year. Expectations have also been fuelled by frustration with a lack of progress on challenging persistent inequalities in our society, and realistic fears that the economic downturn and a change in government may make the political terrain for action to promote equality even more difficult.

Runnymede has been engaged with the process of delivering the Bill and will continue to follow the Bill through its parliamentary stages. It is imperative for Runnymede’s mission that we have effective legislative powers to tackle discrimination and inequality on the basis of race and ethnicity. Here, we set out the key developments promised by the Bill, consider what it may mean for race equality, outline Runnymede’s response to the Bill, and suggest what may be the key battlegrounds in improving the framework for race equality in Great Britain.

Years of campaigning, research, comment and debate have been put into this Bill by a wide range of NGOs, academics, and units in four government departments that have been brought together in the Government Equalities Office, courts’ interventions in discrimination cases, and changing EC law. It is understandable therefore that when the Bill was finally published, it came in at over 250 pages, with 27 schedules and 198 sections.

On publication of the Bill, the Government Equalities Office published a supporting document,3 setting out what it saw as the highlights of the proposed legislation, identifying the following areas:

- Introducing a new public sector duty to consider reducing socio-economic inequalities
- Putting a new Equality Duty on public bodies
- Using public procurement to

In this issue:

- Rob Berkeley on what’s worth fighting for in the Equalities Bill 1
- Does the Equality Bill miss the point? Spirit Level authors Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett argue that tackling Britain’s entrenched inequalities will require more than legislation 5
- Robin Richardson makes the links between race equality, community cohesion and well-being in schools 6
- Maggie Beirne explores how positive action has led to a transition in policing in Northern Ireland 9
- Jessica Woodroffe considers what the Equality Bill will mean for women and how it will affect the gender pay gap 11

Full contents on p. 32
With social mobility stalled and the impact of the economic downturn being felt most keenly in some marginalized groups, it is particularly timely that our politicians are discussing a new framework for equality legislation. This issue of the Bulletin focuses on the proposals included in the Equality Bill.

I report on the legislation and ask “What is worth fighting for in terms of race equality?” Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett argue that, in its focus on social mobility and equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome, the Equality Bill is unlikely to tackle Britain’s entrenched inequalities. Robin Richardson looks at what we have learned from nearly a decade of race equality impact assessments and how to bridge race equality, community cohesion and well-being in schools. Maggie Beime explores what contribution affirmative action has made to policing and the peace process in Northern Ireland.

The Equality Bill will lead to changes across protected identities. Jessica Woodruffe, Head of Campaigns at the Fawcett Society, considers what the Bill will mean for women, and how it will affect the gender pay gap. The Bill offers some reasons to be optimistic, she argues, but whether the political will exists to promote equal pay during a recession remains to be seen.

In March UKREN organized a roundtable focused on positive action. Kim Vanderaa reports on the seminar where participants from NGOs, business, and policy discussed the concept of positive action and its use in tackling discrimination.

Equality is a central concern to our work on financial inclusion. Omar Khan reports on the latest Runnymede project in which we consider the question of assets in greater detail. A space primarily for financial transaction is the subject of the latest Runnymede Community Study which explores social relations in Surrey Street, a multi-ethnic street market in Croydon. It explains why street markets are important not merely in economic terms, but also in the way they can foster community cohesion and promote intercultural dialogue.

A central aim in Runnymede’s series of Community Studies is to initiate a dialogue on the UK’s smaller and less visible communities. At the House of Commons seminar in February, Souad Talsi – from Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women’s Project – responded to Runnymede’s report on British Moroccans. Here she fills in what are for her some gaps in the report.

This month we launched the educational materials emanating from our Belonging Project at Channel 4. The lesson plans were produced by two experienced teachers and curriculum writers, Professor Chris Gaine and Cristina Bennett. Here, they describe the process of developing the resources and the importance of diversity in the curriculum.

The parliamentary debate about equality highlights the importance of electing the right people to govern. The next issue of the Bulletin will look at the results of the European elections, both in the UK and across Europe, focusing in particular on the rise and impact of Far Right politics.

Rob Berkeley
Director, Runnymede Trust
Runnymede held a conference with the Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) to discuss these proposals in March. The socio-economic duty is extremely limited in its scope but seems to represent a means for the government to reintroduce consideration of class to the political and policy debate. As we highlighted in our publication Who Cares About the White Working Class? (Jan 2009), government steps in this direction seem to be unduly tentative and have unfortunately been yoked to an analysis of society that sees socio-economic status as an ethnicized attribute. This plays into the hands of the Far Right who would seek to hold action to promote race equality and action to reduce socio-economic inequality as in opposition to each other. The proposed duty is expressly limited in its scope. It is only applied to those public authorities that have a strategic role (local authorities but not schools, for example). It only requires ‘consideration’ and not action. The proposed enforcement regime for the duty is weak and it is not yet clear whether there will be an extension of the powers of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to hold public authorities to account in this area. The socio-economic duty has been referred to as a ‘symbolic duty’ or a ‘legacy duty’, introduced to set out a difference in approach between Labour and Conservatives, but also to embed an opportunity to reflect on socio-economic inequality within the policy-making process. Given the greater impact of poverty on Black and minority ethnic communities, consideration of socio-economic inequality will be welcome – but it may take more than ‘consideration’ at a strategic level to begin to make major inroads into the reduction of socio-economic inequality which has reached remarkably high levels in recent years.

The clarification of the definition of positive action will have some limited impact on race equality. The proposed extension to positive action provisions allow employers to:

... pick someone for a job from an underrepresented group when they have the choice between two or more candidates who are equally suitable, provided they do not have a general policy of doing so in every case.

There are unlikely to be many cases where there are two ‘equally suitable’ candidates. While this clarification is welcome and represents a step in the right direction it remains a long-term policy. Given the persistence of inequalities, we have argued that time-limited positive discrimination programmes may be required.

Positive action will not extend to all BME shortlists for political parties. Instead a compromise position has been reached which will allow political parties to reserve places for specified underrepresented groups on their shortlists.

There is also a welcome clarification in terms of public procurement. Government spends 175 billion pounds each year in the private sector. The Bill makes clear that procurement procedures can and should be used to promote equality. Despite its length, as with many parts of the Bill, the details of practice on public procurement will depend heavily on non-statutory guidance and secondary regulations.

In terms of race equality the new Bill does not make many significant proposals for change. It is likely that most change in terms of race equality will come in secondary legislation in the wake of the Bill. Race Equality Schemes, Equality Impact Assessments, and the focus provided by having separate legislation will all be up for discussion over coming months. While the Bill is important for the reasons outlined above, there will need to be vigilance from those concerned about race equality in particular to the way in which the Bill is interpreted and put into practice. Government Equalities Office has launched a consultation on the public sector duties and the Department for Communities and Local Government is preparing its new cross-government strategy for race equality, both of which may well be more significant for protecting the gains made since the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 than debates about new primary legislation.

Responding to the Bill
Runnymede broadly welcomes the Bill because of the extension of a broader range of protected identities and the support this may offer to Black and minority ethnic people who are also lesbian, gay or trans, older, or unfairly discriminated against on the basis of their religion or belief. We have four key areas of concern about the proposals;

1. Enforcement – the experience of working with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act has highlighted for us the importance of clear enforcement protocols in order to ensure that public authorities adopt and fulfil their duties under the legislation. Unfortunately the Bill as it stands is unclear about the enforcement of the Bill. There is over-reliance on the Equality and Human Rights Commission which has limited resources and is unlikely to reach all thirty thousand public authorities. As we have argued elsewhere, the role of public services inspectorates is crucial in offering assurance for the public that public authorities are working effectively to prevent discrimination and promote equality. However, they are not mentioned expressly in the Bill. We are wary that this may lead to ongoing wrangling about the role of inspectorates and how important they believe race equality to be in the delivery of public functions.
2. Multiple discrimination – one of the key reasons for drawing together existing equality legislation is to better serve people and respond to their experiences of discrimination. It is widely recognized that a single identity does not describe the totality of a person’s experience – that, for example, race and gender interact to create qualitatively different forms of discrimination. As discriminations become more complex and ‘sophisticated’, legal protections need to keep pace. It is not difficult to imagine situations where, for example, a Black gay man is treated differently than a both a white gay man or a Black heterosexual man. The Bill is silent on multiple discrimination – despite powerful representations made to government. It is claimed that it is too complex to legislate for. We are keen to see government take this opportunity to recognize that as we all have multiple identities, we are all vulnerable to multiple discrimination, and work to address this in the law.

3. Employment tribunals – we welcome the overdue attention that government has given in the Bill to employment tribunals and the extension of their powers so that they can make recommendations. However, we believe government could have been bolder and it remains unclear how the recommendations that tribunals are now empowered to make will be acted upon or even whether they would influence subsequent tribunal judgements on employers if they fail to act in accordance with the recommendations. Employment tribunals are too often obscure events with limited impact on employers’ practice. A duty to publicize the results of tribunals could increase the impact that they have – impacting on an employer’s public reputation and therefore providing more weight to the tribunals’ findings.

4. Immigration and race – there has always been a relationship between race relations and immigration. Immigration policy and some practice have been kept exempt from race equality legislation. This has been in order to enable decisions to be made on the basis of nationality, but was surrounded by alternative safeguards. The chief among these safeguards was the Independent Race Monitor, who would provide an annual report on the race equality impact of immigration policy and practice. We are concerned that the Race Relations Act was amended in the UK Borders Act 2007 to remove the Independent Race Monitor and merge the function to the office of the Chief Inspector of the UK Borders Agency. Instead of an annual report, we are instead promised race equality as a ‘golden thread’ in other reports. This is unlikely to provide the levels of scrutiny that are needed to ensure that this contentious exemption from equality legislation is not abused.

Overall, and as noted above, we are concerned about the amount of secondary legislation on which this Bill depends – this includes the list of public authorities that will be included under the legislation. It remains unclear as to the status of organizations such as care homes, or academy schools, and parliament will not have the opportunity to debate these crucial issues in terms of the delivery of the Act that they are likely to pass.

The battle or the war? Runnymede has been working closely with colleagues from a wide range of organizations – and in particular with EDF and Race on the Agenda, to build effective coalitions and pool our resources so that we can respond effectively to the Bill as it passes through parliament. It has been remarkable how few voices on race equality have been in a position to articulate their responses to the Bill and to engage in the parliamentary process.

The Bill comes during a particularly frenetic political period – perhaps to be expected in the final year of a parliament with an election looming. The third reading of the Bill is likely to take place in an autumn marked by the build up to a general election. The Bill is a crucial step in establishing the framework for the next period. Given the complexity of equality and discrimination law, it is unlikely that governments will want to return to legislation of this type for a significant period and it is therefore important to get it right. However, the Bill is not the only challenge that race equality faces over the next period. Equal attention will need to be given to the proposals that political parties make in their manifestos, to tackling the newly confident Far Right, ensuring that public service cuts do not impact disproportionately on the most vulnerable in our communities, and building the strength of civic society so that it can engage more effectively in making the legislation have a real impact for people in our communities and neighbourhoods.

The Equality Bill has been long-awaited and should be shaped to provide us with the framework for making progress on the persistent inequalities and discriminations that blight our society. As we have discovered from the past decade of working with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, however, legislation represents just the next staging post in the struggle to make race equality a reality.
Equality of What?

Does the Equality Bill miss the point? In its focus on social mobility and equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome, argue Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, the Bill is unlikely to tackle Britain’s entrenched inequalities.

The Government’s proposed Equality Bill is about equal opportunities, about trying to give everyone ‘a fair chance in life’ and preventing discrimination by ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, class, geographical origin, etc.

This is of course all very laudable - these days you have to be pretty screwed up to be in favour of discrimination. But it also misses what is most important about inequality. In effect the Equality Bill is an attempt to give everyone an equal chance of becoming unequal. In the context of employers choosing between job applicants, you could see it as trying to reduce all forms of discrimination in favour of a more perfect discrimination by ‘ability’ or merit. There are two very serious problems with that.

First, as human beings, we almost certainly have an in-built tendency to regard poorer people in society as inferior and richer people as superior. All too often we are status conscious and snobbish. That is why poverty is stigmatized. Social position seems to show how valuable and important people are. Does the government think that it is possible to have large inequalities of income and wealth without also having social stratification, class prejudice and stigmatization of the poor? And does it think that it will ever be possible to prevent the rich passing on their advantages – as much psychosocial as material – to their children? And what if social position has deep effects on the development of ‘ability’ so that the children of the poor always appear – from infancy onwards – to be so much less capable than the children of the rich?

Second, the experience of being poor will not become any pleasanter for knowing that the poor are representative of society as a whole – by ethnicity, gender, class origins, religion, etc. Probably the reverse. It would strengthen what is almost certainly the false view that the poor have only themselves to blame. But, even supposing that social mobility were to become a direct expression of low ability or IQ, what moral justification would there be for thinking that people with this disadvantage should also be condemned to much lower status and incomes?

In our book, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, we show that what little internationally comparable data there is suggests that societies with bigger income differences between rich and poor have less social mobility. Bigger income differences appear to increase the barriers to mobility – probably by increasing social distances and downward prejudices, as well as by making the cultural markers of status differentiation more conspicuous.

Even more important than that, however, is that to aim at reducing inequalities of opportunity rather than reducing the overall scale of income differences (inequalities of outcome) is part of a meritocratic view of society which new evidence suggests is largely false. People tend to assume that the social gradient in ability, like the social gradient in health or in children’s educational performance, reflects how people are sorted out according to ability and vulnerability into their respective places on the social ladder. Social mobility is seen as the mechanism which creates social gradients by separating the wheat from the chaff.

However, we have also shown that almost every problem which becomes more common near the bottom of the social hierarchy, is also very much more common in more unequal societies – those with bigger income differences between rich and poor. Whether we look at physical or mental health, violence, teenage birth rates, drug abuse, obesity, levels of trust and involvement in community life, or at bullying in schools and young people’s maths and literacy scores, the pattern is the same. Rates of problems increase step by step according to the amount of inequality in society. More unequal societies have anywhere from two to eight times as much of these problems as more equal societies. And, as our data shows, this pattern holds not only among the rich developed market democracies, but also among the 50 states of the USA.

No amount of social mobility and sorting of the population according to prior characteristics would explain why more unequal societies appear so socially dysfunctional – plagued with many times more of almost every social problem. We show that the only plausible explanation is that social and health problems are created by the extent of social inequality. The data shows, as people have often imagined, that inequality of income and wealth really is divisive and social corrosive. Rather than differences in merit creating inequality, the supposed meritocracy is largely a product of inequality. Inequality imprints itself on us, shaping cognitive and emotional development, from earliest life onwards.

New Labour’s stated ease with income inequality means that its suppressed egalitarian soul is now condemned to trying to perfect the mirage of meritocracy.
Bringing the Stories Together: Tasks and Challenges in Education

In this article Robin Richardson looks at bridging race equality, community cohesion and well-being in schools, drawing on his recently-published book *Holding Together: Equalities, Difference and Cohesion,* and also on the work on equality impact assessments that he has been involved in over the last two years with the DCSF.

Each equality strand has its own inspiring story – struggles, campaigns, demonstrations, behind-the-scenes lobbying, reasoned advocacy; iconic events and turning points; legal landmarks; emotive and distinctive slogans and catchphrases; and solidarity, solace, determination, personal friendships. The distinctiveness of each strand’s story gives it strength and must be cherished.

However, there are both pragmatic and principled reasons why the cherishing of distinctive history needs to be combined with bringing and holding the strands together. To continue the metaphor, the strands must be woven into a single rope, bearing and exerting more weight than any one strand could on its own. The strands have so much in common, including:

- in each there are anxieties about so-called political correctness;
- each is confronted and resisted by much the same coalition of conservative, fearful and oppressive forces, not least in the media;
- in each there is much the same interplay between: a) attitudes; b) behaviours; and c) contexts;
- each is inseparable from issues of social class and socio-economic circumstances;
- each has developed in an international context, including successive European directives and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Further, in each individual institution there is much the same set of practical tasks and challenges. In schools, for example, all the strands pose the following challenges:

- Equality of outcome
  Planning and running programmes which close the gaps in achievement between relevant groups and communities.

- Equality of belonging
  Enabling all pupils to feel they belong to their school, are known and respected, and have a stake in the school’s well-being and flourishing.

- Visibility in the curriculum
  Including equality issues and positive images in curriculum materials, modules and topics, and in the school’s visual environment.

- Understanding
  Ensuring all members of the school community understand the requirements of legislation, and also certain essential concepts, for example the conceptual differences between impairment and disability, sex and gender, and colour and cultural racism.

- Dealing with bullying and harassment
  Reducing and removing prejudice-related harassment, incidents and bullying, and promoting mutual understanding and respect.

- Involvement in decision-making
  Ensuring everyone is involved in the design of measures and projects intended to be of benefit to them – ‘nothing about us without us’ – and taking account of their views and voices.

- Allies
  Fostering and developing the qualities, skills and insights
EQUALITIES

To summarize, it is possible and desirable to harmonize and combine the separate stories and strands in the national equalities framework. Schools need support and encouragement in this, though, from their local authorities, from the inspections framework, and from central government. Local authorities that have already provided valuable written guidance include Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Durham, Hertfordshire and Newcastle. Central government, for its part, has assisted by organizing a series of national conferences and providing an online workbook on equality impact assessments (EQUIAs). An inspiring pattern is emerging.

• Whole-school approaches
Ensuring senior leadership teams and governing bodies give a strong and explicit lead, both in written documents and in oral communications, and are present at significant occasions.

• Monitoring and review
Collecting and using a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence, and maintaining a robust information base, to show the extent and nature of progress towards greater equality of belonging, participation and – most importantly of all – outcome.

• Action plans
Creating and regularly reviewing plans for creating greater equality, and reporting on progress to governing bodies.

Challenges and tasks such as these need to be integrated into the processes of self-evaluation and school improvement that are already in place and that are required by the inspections framework. Further, a list of such challenges can be a useful aid to curriculum planning. There are implications for all subjects, and at all stages and ages.

Parents and schools: Wanted – the views of Black Caribbean professional parents

In discussions about education, a common assumption about black families is that they are disadvantaged, and that their children underachieve at school. A team of researchers at London University’s Institute of Education want to challenge this stereotype by exploring the real life experiences of middle class Black Caribbean parents in planning and making decisions around their children’s education.

Some of the questions the researchers are interested in include:
• What factors did you consider when choosing your child’s primary/secondary school?
• Have there been any points where you have had particular involvement with the school (positively or negatively)? How would you describe your involvement with the school?
• Is your child involved in any particular activities outside school? If so, what do you feel are the benefit of these?
• Have your own educational experiences influenced what you would like for your child in terms of schooling?

The research team would like to interview Black Caribbean parents who are in professional or managerial occupations, and have one or more children between 8 and 18. If this is you, you have an hour to spare, and you would be willing to participate in the project, please contact Nicola Rollock at n.rolock@ioe.ac.uk or ring 020 7612 6000. Nicola will arrange a time and place to meet which suits you, and all interviews will be in the strictest confidence. Nicola will also be very happy to discuss any questions/concerns you may have before you decide if you want to participate.
Tell Me What I Need To Know

The Runnymede Trust designed Tell Me What I Need to Know to help parents, particularly those from Black and minority ethnic (BME), refugee, asylum-seeking and traveller communities to support their children’s education more confidently and effectively.

Although the information and guidance that we provide will be relevant for parents from all backgrounds, we concentrated on these groups because statistics repeatedly show that, while some children from these groups do extremely well, many others fail to achieve their potential. There are a number of reasons for this, but it is clear that if parents do get involved in their children’s learning, both in school and at home, that can make a difference. As our research shows, there is, too, no question that parents in our target group care and want to achieve the best for their children.

One concern consistently repeated by parents is that they don’t have enough information: they don’t understand how the education system works and don’t know their rights. It is clear, too, that there are areas of misunderstanding, mistrust, sensitivity and lack of communication on the part of both parents and schools. Also evident, though, are signs that government, local authorities, schools, teachers, independent agencies as well as parents are searching for - and finding - creative solutions to the perceived problems.

Tell Me What I Need to Know attempts to address the concerns of parents and teachers and to bring together strategies to overcome the hurdles. Examples of ‘good practice’ are drawn from across the country. Since parents are often in the best position to identify and understand their children’s needs, we hope that this information will give them increased confidence to engage more effectively with their children’s schools.

Tell Me What I Need to Know can be downloaded from the website [www.runnymedetrust.org].

Why Preferential Policies Can Be Fair

Criticisms of preferential policies such as positive action are widespread. Much of this criticism, however, stems from confusion about why preferential policies can be justifiable in principle, whatever their consequences in practice.

This paper carefully distinguishes three different justifications for preferential policies, based both on theoretical disputes about the meaning of justice and on the words and actions of political actors in India. These are termed communitarian, compensatory and democratic-distributive, and in discussing how each approach has been canvassed and implemented in India, comparisons are made with other societies in which preferential policies have either operated or been proposed.

The abstractions of this somewhat technical section give way to a discussion that links up with recent developments in the West, suggesting that those concerned with widespread disadvantage among certain communities can benefit from examining how Indian thinkers and policymakers have attempted to deal with the issue of preferential treatment.

Even those who find the idea of preferential policies objectionable might be interested to learn, or rediscover, how democratic-distributive arguments have been employed to justify quotas and positive action in the world’s largest and perhaps most diverse democracy. Achieving equal participation is a key aim of any democratic society, and preferential policies are one possible way of achieving that goal.

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Policing in Northern Ireland: Positive Action and a Cohesive Community

During thirty years and more of conflict, policing in Northern Ireland was part of the problem; since the passage of the peace agreement in 1998, policing has been part of the solution. In some large measure, positive action has been crucial to this turn-around; Maggie Beirne explores some of the changes that have brought about such a transition.

To set this debate in context, it is important to give some idea of the scale of the conflict in Northern Ireland prior to peace talks. More than 3,700 people were killed in the so-called ‘troubles’, 303 of whom were police officers. If one could ever compare deaths on a pro-rata basis, this would be the equivalent in London to the loss of some 20,000 people over 30+ years, of which just under 2,000 were police officers. In Northern Ireland, the police service was deliberately targeted on the grounds that it was an arm of an illegitimate state. This attitude of ‘us and them’ in relation to policing went well beyond those actively engaged in attempting to violently overthrow the state. Whether as a cause, or a consequence, or both, of political divisions, the minority Catholic population in 1998 constituted 8% of the police force, but well over 40% of the population overall. In effect, the majority community policed the minority community.

This was all to change when peace negotiations began in earnest. The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement of 1998 set down detailed terms of reference for an independent international policing commission. In particular, the Agreement noted:

‘The participants believe it essential that policing structures and arrangements are such that the police service is ... representative of the society it polices.... The proposals (of the Commission on policing) should be designed to ensure that policing arrangements, including composition, recruitment, training, culture, ethos and symbols are such that in a new approach, Northern Ireland has a police service that can enjoy widespread support from, and is seen as an integral part of, the community as a whole.’

In September 1999, this commission (called the Patten Commission after its chair, Chris Patten, former Governor of Hong Kong) issued 175 recommendations. This blueprint for policing change was comprehensive and multi-layered, with numerous recommendations specifically aimed at tackling the problems of under-representation of the minority community within the police service. The recommendation that has, however, secured particular interest from around the world was the decision to engage in what has become known as ‘50:50 recruitment’ in order to increase the number of serving Catholic officers. In this regard the commission recommended that:

‘Candidates reaching this standard [of merit] should then enter a pool from which the required number of recruits can be drawn. We recommend that an equal number of Protestants and Catholics should be drawn from the pool of qualified candidates.’

This recommendation was in time given legislative effect in the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, and an independent process was put in place to oversee the recruitment. There are several noteworthy elements to this particular positive action measure.

Firstly, it is time-limited. Patten had recommended a ten year timeframe for these proposals, assuming that this would change the composition sufficiently by securing the minimal 29-33% that is considered to be the ‘critical mass’ for any under-represented community wanting to ensure institutional change. In practice, the legislation created a three year limit to the 50:50 recruitment system, but allowed for it to be renewed, and indeed the positive action measure has been renewed on an ongoing basis since it was put in place. The government has consistently reiterated its commitment to abolishing the 50:50 recruitment arrangements when the target of 30% of Catholic officers has been achieved — and the target is on course to be reached by 2010/11.

Secondly, the quota system only comes into play when choosing recruits from a ‘merit pool’, so that everyone appointed will have already complied with certain basic standards; this provision is intended to ensure that there will be no lessening of qualifications in the search for a more representative police service.

Thirdly, the figure of 50:50 was chosen to reflect the composition of the workforce at the age of recruitment – the Catholic community having a younger

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demographic profile than its Protestant counterpart. In effect, all things being equal, 50:50 recruitment across the two communities is what one would expect from a completely fair process.

Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly from an equality law perspective, a specific exemption was sought under European Union law to allow for this positive measure. In particular, at the time there was concern about the extent to which the 50:50 system of recruitment would be compatible with the law of the Employment Framework Directive. In order to avoid any potential clash with EU law, an exemption was secured which provides that:

‘In order to tackle the under-representation of one of the major religious communities in the police service of Northern Ireland, differences in treatment regarding recruitment into that service, including its support staff, shall not constitute discrimination insofar as those differences in treatment are expressly authorised by national legislation.’ (Article 15.1 of Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation)

Following the implementation of these special recruitment measures the Catholic component of the police service has grown from 8.3% at the time of the Patten report to 23.7% as of mid-February 2008. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the proportion of Catholic applicants to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) had risen to 42% of applicants in the last recruitment round. Whilst it is important to stress that the 50:50 measure is not the sole mechanism for strengthening confidence in policing across Northern Ireland’s diverse communities, it is an important one. In particular, this measure showed an extraordinary high-level commitment to change. The measure was contentious, and was challenged in the courts, but it was strongly supported by the political and police leadership.

Anyone looking to measure the change in attitudes to policing in recent years need not look too far. In response to the recent murder of a police officer, it was of enormous political and symbolic significance that the First and Deputy First Ministers (DUP and Sinn Fein respectively) were photographed standing side by side with the Chief Constable, urging a common community response. Policing is now a job for ‘us’ and no longer one being undertaken by ‘them’.

Moreover, the focus on the under-representation of people on religious and political grounds has led to important changes in the outreach strategies of the police more generally. In seeking to diversify to include Catholics, the service has also managed to recruit many more women, and is more sensitive to the need to recruit from, and work more closely with, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and smaller ethnic minority communities. Significantly, female composition within the PSNI has increased from 12% in 2001 to 22.1% in 2007, and there are currently 28 officers from ethnic minority backgrounds including Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Chinese and Indian. The PSNI ethnic minority background workforce composition is currently 0.43%, not far from the overall level (0.48%) of the working age ethnic minority population in Northern Ireland.

This is not to say that the recruitment process within the PSNI is operating perfectly in line with demographic patterns and trends. Women in particular are still under-represented among applicants, and disproportionately do less well in the recruitment process. Significantly, a recent equality impact assessment showed, for example, that women disproportionately fail the medical on mental health grounds—something which would seem to merit further examination. Equally, Catholics still disproportionately do less well than their Protestant counterparts at each stage of the recruitment process, although it would appear that the gap between the success rates of the two communities in the recruitment processes is narrowing. A higher proportion of Catholics than Protestants still leave the PSNI—although the figures are quite low compared with the overall number of recruits. Again, this issue would require further monitoring lest it be indicative of a wider retention problem that could become more problematic in the future.

Ultimately, in terms of wider learning from the 50:50 experience in Northern Ireland, the figures speak for themselves. Never before in the history of Northern Ireland has the Catholic representation in the police service achieved these levels. Equally, it is clear that political will played an important role in driving the measures for reform, and that once the decision was taken to engage in such radical positive action measures, neither political opposition, legal action, nor EU Directives, was allowed to stand in the way. It is significant, however, that such a proactive and ultimately successful measure for delivering greater equality required an exemption from an EU Equality Directive to ensure its survival. The extent to which EU law might therefore inhibit individual states from engaging in more radical measures should be a matter of concern. Ultimately however, when 50:50 recruitment is deemed to have achieved its purpose, and is ‘stood down’ in a couple of years’ time, it would be unfortunate if the impact of this particular form of positive action is not considered to see what lessons might be learnt for elsewhere.
Equal Pay: The Gap in the Equality Bill

What will the Equality Bill mean for women, and how will it affect the gender pay gap? The Bill offers some reasons to be optimistic, argues Jessica Woodroffe, Head of Campaigns at the Fawcett Society, but whether there will be political will to promote equal pay during a recession remains to be seen.

Fawcett has welcomed the introduction of the Equality Bill on 27 April 2009 and is pleased that the Government remains committed to the passage of the Bill during this time of recession. We know from previous experience that women often bear the brunt of economic and social crises. Pregnant women or new mothers may be first in line for redundancy; equal pay is seen as an added luxury not affordable in hard times. Women are struggling to balance diminished household budgets or finding that their already meagre pensions are worth even less.

Women’s rights cannot be an optional extra, only available in times of prosperity. As we move along the road to economic recovery, equality is not just morally right; it also makes good business sense. It is for these reasons that we need to see a strong Equality Bill which does not just bring together existing legislation, but updates it fit for the 21st century.

We are particularly concerned that the Government use the Bill to address the shocking pay discrimination which many women face. Progress on closing the gender gap has gone into reverse; over 2008, the pay gap widened for women working full and part-time. Women working full-time earn on average 17.1% less than men. If women working part-time are included, the gap increases to 23%, with the figures even worse for ethnic minority women. While the 1970 Equal Pay Act made it illegal to pay women less than men for doing work of equal value, nearly 40 years later a significant number of employers are still breaking the law.

The current system puts the onus on the individual woman to bring a case after she has experienced discrimination. This means, rather than operating to protect women from discrimination, the current law requires a woman to first be able to identify that she is being paid unfairly, and then have the resources and courage to build a case and source the support necessary to take action. If she does bring a case it could take up to 10 years to conclude under an employment tribunal system that is creaking under the weight of cases and, even then, it will not benefit her colleagues facing the same or similar discrimination.

Fawcett has called for two key elements to be included in the Equality Bill to ensure it prevents discrimination occurring in the first place, and improves the system of redress if discrimination occurs.

First, we need to see the onus put firmly on employers to ensure that they are complying with the law, including a mandatory requirement to carry out pay audits which show the pay gap between men and women by grade, identify whether this is the result of discrimination, and demonstrate how action will be taken to redress any discrepancy.

Second, the Bill must adopt a series of practical legal reforms that would make redress simpler, quicker and more effective. Two key reforms are not yet included in the Bill. Particularly important is provision for ‘representative actions’. This would allow a recognized organization such as a union or the Equality and Human Rights Commission to act as representative claimants in opt-out multi-party actions, taking away the need for individual women to act alone and ensuring many more women get to benefit. Also necessary is provision to allow the use of hypothetical comparators to ensure that women working in female-dominated sectors are not excluded from protection just because there is no man doing the same job in the same organization.

Fawcett has also called for recognition in the Bill that many people face multiple discriminations and that the law must be able to cope with this. Currently the law requires a woman to identify the main cause of her discrimination – in a way which fails to recognize the complexity of modern society. She should be able to bring claims on more than one ground (for example race and gender). Consultations are being held on this issue.

In announcing the Bill, Harriet Harman, Minister for Women and Equality, chose to focus on the pay gap and acknowledged the need for gender pay audits. This is potentially an important breakthrough. According to the Government Equalities Office, over the summer the EHRC will develop a way of measuring the gender pay gap and will then monitor how the private sector is progressing on reporting. It appears that the regulations may be enforced only if this voluntary reporting is considered insufficient. How this develops will clearly be key.

Whatever the outcome of the debate on the exact natures of pay audits, it is clear that faster and more far-reaching action will be necessary. At present, the Bill contains the power to require employers to report on their gender pay gap, but only for the half a per cent of companies with more than 250 staff. The Government has also committed not to use this power until 2013.

Poll findings show that the majority of women and men (83% and 74% respectively) consider that recession should not be a barrier to promoting equal pay. The Government has claimed to agree. The Equality Bill will provide the litmus test as to whether this Government is prepared to promote equal pay and demonstrate that equality is not just for the good times.
UKREN Positive Action Roundtable

On 27 March 2009 UKREN organized its roundtable ‘Positive Action in Theory and Practice: Experiences from the UK and Europe’ in London. Kim Vanderea reports on the seminar, which was organized to enable speakers and participants from a wide range of different backgrounds to discuss the concept of positive action and its use in tackling discrimination.

Over the next three years the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is coordinating the organization of roundtables on positive action in every EU Member State. UKREN was asked to organize a seminar on the topic in the UK. On 27 March 2009 a wide variety of speakers and participants from a range of different backgrounds gathered to discuss positive action from an academic, business, NGO or governmental perspective.

The conference started with a contribution from Melanie West who represented the Government Equalities Office. She gave an update on the new Equality Bill which has recently been introduced to Parliament.

Her presentation was followed by a panel with four speakers including Amanda Ariss (Equality and Diversity Forum), Razia Karim (Equality and Human Rights Commission), Meleha Malik (King’s College London) and Audrey Williams (Eversheds Law Firm). The latter two speakers talked about the moral, political and legal case for positive action. As the conference was predominantly focusing on race, Amanda Ariss was asked to say something about positive action for other strands of equality including gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. Razia Karim provided information about the work of the EHRC around positive action and in particular in relation to the new Equality Bill.

Apart from outlining the theoretical framework, the aim of the seminar was to discuss positive action in a more practical setting as well. Starting with the practical reality in the EU in general, and in different Member States in particular, Michael Privot (ENAR) presented the European experience. Maggie Beirne then talked about the Northern Ireland experience as positive action was used to improve community relations and address inequality. (See the article about this on pp. 9 – 10 of this issue of the Bulletin.)

The last session allowed considerable participation from the floor with a discussion panel – which included Mebs Ahmed (Lancashire Black Police Association), Becky Mason (British Telecom), Sushel Ohri (Transport for London) and Simon Woolley (Operation Black Vote) - starting off the discussion. The speakers were asked to briefly share the experience of positive action in their organizations and any challenges which had presented themselves, after which these issues were discussed between the panel and participants, the latter being given the opportunity to both ask questions and share their perspective on positive action.

UKREN is currently putting together an extensive report of the roundtable including the contributions from all the speakers as well as additional documents speakers used in their presentation or referred to. The report will be published on the UKREN website and will feed into ENAR’s Europe-wide report on positive action which will be published after roundtables have been organized in each EU Member State.

Positive action: definition, aims and challenges

Positive action includes various tools and concepts designed to address the consequences of past discrimination and to ensure equal opportunities for all. There is a wide range of tools, concepts and practices which can be regarded as positive action. Consequently, there is not a one-size-fits-all understanding which could be used in all Member States of the EU; indeed there is even a lack of consensus among stakeholders on the definition of, or most appropriate term for, positive action.

Different terminology is used to refer to positive action including ‘positive discrimination’, ‘affirmative action’ or ‘positive duties’. Positive action tends to be the most commonly used term. It is important to bear in mind that positive action is not the same as positive discrimination. The latter includes the use of quotas and group membership in the selection process for a job, for example, whereas positive action focuses on recruitment policies in ensuring that advertisements reach ethnic communities or that unconscious discrimination does not occur. Consequently, positive action is strongly linked to the recognition of multilayered identities, the limits of legal provisions when discrimination seems to be systematic, the complexity of institutional discrimination and an appreciation of expanding understandings of equality.
‘Sleepwalking to Segregation’?

Is Britain really under threat from ethnic diversity? Is the social fabric crumbling as we ‘sleepwalk to segregation’? In this article, Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson draw upon their recent publication ‘Sleepwalking to segregation? Challenging myths about race and migration’ to demonstrate that many of the contemporary claims about race and migration are myths.

There is a litany that goes like this: ‘Immigrants are a burden, taking jobs and resources, living piled together in segregated areas; segregation prevents integration, clashes with British culture, heightens tension and breeds violence’. It is rightly described as a litany, because of the way the dangers are repeated as a guide to policy, without reference to current and lived reality.

The litany is also made in reverse: ‘Cultural tension makes people afraid, leading to White flight, self-segregation and ghetto-like parallel communities; instead of integrating, isolated minorities find devious ways of bringing new immigrants for marriage and work’. The litany equates immigration, diversity and segregation, labels all as problems and opposes them to integration. Although associated with the right-wing anti-immigration campaigns including MigrationWatchUK, these claims are also made by New Labour, through parts of its community cohesion policy and through Trevor Phillips’ leadership of the Commission for Racial Equality and now the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. Many journalists have too often uncritically joined the same chorus.

A new book by Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson challenges this equation by investigating the evidence behind each claim and showing each to be a myth. They show that the history of immigration is one of concentration in available cheaper housing followed by slow dispersal as integration has proceeded. There are many reasons why separation might be expected to remain or to increase over time – racist or xenophobic hostility to newcomers, new immigration of family members, strong loyalty to family and to the place of one’s upbringing, minority disadvantage in the housing and labour markets, the natural growth of immigrant populations through births, and the litany itself, which suggests to people who do not live in them that minority concentrations are particularly dangerous places. Yet despite all this, the evidence shows very clearly that minorities and the White populations are more evenly spread than in the past. Migration of minorities away from settlement areas and increased mixing are occurring despite all those reasons for separation.

The litany ignores a great deal of other evidence. Segregation is greatly exaggerated. Britain’s non-White areas are diverse, very rarely mono-ethnic. The White group is the most separated in Britain, in the sense of living in areas with only themselves. The best indicator of integration is the size of the Mixed ethnic population, which is the fastest-growing minority. Minority ethnic groups are as likely to enter a family union outside their own group as White people are with minorities.

Immigration to Britain is not exceptional in the world. Britain’s proportion of immigrants is slightly less than the world average, and has grown between 1960 and 2005 at the same rate as world international immigration. White flight is a myth except as an observation of White moves out of urban minority concentrations; the rate of movement out is the same for minorities. In some cases, White movement is inward to minority concentrations, including in Bradford, Leicester and South London.

Muslims are no more likely to have been charged with terrorism if they live in concentrations of Muslim population than other areas of Britain. Similarly, race inequality is not best reduced by blaming its victims. Inequality in employment, for example, is as great outside minority concentrations as within them.

This book provides detailed evidence to support each of these statements and many more. It is reasonable to ask why the litany of dangerous immigration and diversity is so persistent despite its lack of evidence. Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson suggest that the litany satisfies anxieties about world change in much the same way as did the older and now less acceptable ‘playing the race card’ in politics.

It is to be hoped that the media’s uncritical adoption of MigrationWatchUK as a source of comment is stemmed by their exposed for ‘choosing the figures that suit their story’. Similarly the book may give sufficient publicity to the falsehood and fabrication behind some of the Commission for Racial Equality’s claims, including those of growing segregation and accelerating White flight, to prevent Trevor Phillips from making so many sweeping unsubstantiated and scaremongering claims in the future. The detective work that lays bare trails of false claims repeated in newspapers, government agencies and academic reports may not prevent shoddy reporting but it will give ammunition to those sceptical of the litany and give pause for thought to politicians and journalists who strive to combine integrity with deadlines.
Recognizing the Contribution of Moroccan Women

A central aim in Runnymede’s series of Community Studies is to initiate a dialogue on the UK’s smaller and less visible communities. At the House of Commons seminar last February, Souad Talsi – from Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women’s Project – responded to Runnymede’s report on British Moroccans. Here, she fills in what are for her some gaps in the report.

Unlike other forms of migration to Europe, the Moroccan community’s migration to the UK is truly unique. There was a distinctive difference to the early migration of Moroccans in the 1960s in that both men and women came in almost equal numbers. Employment permits were granted and this was due to the nature of labour needed at the time. A massive surge in the hotel and catering industry, as a direct result of the booming tourist industry, meant that unskilled labourers were needed and it attracted both genders. Equally the NHS’s severe shortage in its auxiliary staffing led to the employment of thousands of Moroccan women alongside Spanish, Portuguese and Filipino women. And so it would be unjust to discuss Moroccan migration to the UK without mentioning the women who have contributed so much and still do. In fact, female Moroccan migration really deserves a seminar of its own.

After almost fifty years the Moroccan community has moved on. Its migration of unskilled labourers to the UK has almost come to a halt, save for those coming to work for the diplomatic services, etc. The thread of migration remaining is mainly as a result of marriage, mainly young British-Moroccan women marrying men from Morocco. Is this because Moroccan young men are better integrated into the mainstream society or are our young women encouraged or even coerced by their parents and others, to marry men from Morocco? This is a key point in understanding the migratory evolution of this specific group and I would wholeheartedly welcome further research in this area.

The so-called élite amongst the Moroccan migrant community in London are temporary visitors and the recent credit crunch has demonstrated this, as many have left the UK, either to go back to their country of birth - France and Belgium mainly - or to seek their fortunes in the Gulf region.

Another group worth mentioning is second and third generation Moroccans born and bred in the UK who still maintain their identity as Moroccans in terms of culture not nationality; but perhaps not in the traditional sense. These are the sons and daughters who decided to intermarry and move away from the concentrated Moroccan areas of London. These young people have links with Morocco but as ‘loyal’ tourists and not necessarily the same loyalty as that held by their parents.

Another group, tiny but equally important is the Moroccan Jewish community which, despite the years of settlement in the United Kingdom, has maintained its traditional Moroccan-Jewish way of life and may well have integrated better and succeeded in the British society but strong Moroccan-Jewish identity remains of paramount importance to them.

The traditional Moroccan migrant community as we know it has been struggling for the last forty years or so not only to gain recognition but also to be self sufficient in every sense of the word, i.e. politically, economically and socially. It cannot do so, however, by continuously been insular and isolated. It has therefore to emerge into the wider community and embrace the ethos of true citizenship. To do this the wider community and those responsible for shaping policies of integration must also act and be accountable for their words and above all provide the means to transfer such theoretical policies into real practical policies that will produce a better, inclusive and more cohesive British society.

- Inclusion not exclusion;
- Cohesion not disintegration;
- Engagement not disengagement;
- Empowerment and not disempowerment.

The UK Government’s definition of citizenship is:

‘Citizenship is about increasing skills, promoting debate, enabling action and empowering citizens to take full ownership of their lives. Citizenship is about rights and responsibilities.’

Rights and responsibilities are indeed the key active ingredients in any form of true democratic citizenship. Participation in dialogue, sharing information and taking responsibility for one’s actions are important components in any such exercise. Responsibilities, however, can only be implanted when one’s rights as a citizen are also given in equal measure; something we witness as lacking on a daily basis as community workers, and thus remaining as a theoretical tool when it comes to reaching those ‘under the radar’.

Another reason why the Moroccan community remains hidden and is perceived as not being able to integrate may well be because with its roots outside the boundaries of UK it has a transnational orientation. However, early empirical evidence, mainly in research carried out in the USA,
demonstrates the opposite – it shows that where there is strong transnationalism there is equal strong integration in the community that the migrant community lives in.

Perhaps those communities remaining isolated and marginalized such as the Moroccan community are so because of the current policies not reaching them. Looking at the current government policies towards its Muslim community one can only watch in despair: the term alone is naïve, inward-looking and certainly identifies one group of British Muslims. The Prime Minister’s recent establishment of both the National Advisory Group of British Muslim Women and indeed the one for young Muslims are exclusively made up of Asian Muslims and no other group member is taken on board. It would be absurd if other community groups in Britain were constituted in the same way.

Identity is sacrosanct when ascertaining one’s citizenship and therefore Islam as a key factor in our lives cannot be ignored when we talk about citizenship; it is, however, not the most conclusive nor the only factor to use in describing the Moroccan community.

True citizenship can be acquired through real community involvement, equality and inclusivity; informing, involving and consulting the community. The policy has to be translated into an effective and practical mechanism and not simply remain as a handbook tool.

To achieve these aims, those in power must:

- Educate to educate
- Educate to empower
- Educate to engage

1. Educate to educate

Improve the way statutory service providers, both on a national and on a local level, involve and consult the Moroccan community and not simply talk to third tier umbrella groups, as the policy of big brother supporting and assisting and indeed speaking on behalf of BME people does not always work and, in our experience, cannot be taken singularly as the only means of supporting small groups.

To do this:

- Wider and better comprehensive consultations must take place;
- Provide the means to enable the Moroccan community to reach out and be involved in the process;
- Adopt a more approachable policy in attracting the right people from within to assist and support the sector to become inclusive - think tank team of experts from within, for example as advisers;
- Adopt a more pragmatic approach of true service delivery that will have lasting effect, a striking example of this is the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea’s budget for interpreting and translation which is staggering compared to the abysmal sum spent on ESOL provision.

2. Educate to empower

Improve on policies of sharing power, consulting and encouraging the Moroccan community to take part. This can be done by a number of means such as:

- Encourage political participation at all levels by means of co-option for instance in Council Committees, encourage school governance, etc;
- Seek out, identify and use real role models from within the community as mentors for the younger generation;
- Demonstrate a real partnership by consulting, involving and indeed engaging the Moroccan community. Above all evaluate its contribution to the wider society and make sure it knows it; giving them a source of encouragement, self-esteem and confidence to continue.

3. Educate to engage

Improve on the current relationships between local authorities and the Moroccan community by allowing it to take to task decision makers and by providing a practical policy to support and develop civil societies working within. This can be done in a number of ways such as:

- Improve on the current policy of accessibility to services by the Moroccan community, by working very closely with the civil society and other voluntary sector and monitoring the output at all times;
- Use and adopt government initiatives in a practical and pragmatic manner to seek out the Moroccan community and provide a platform that allows real engagement by giving it its share of services, wealth and political power. Above all learn to listen to the voice that may be muffled but should be heard;
- Adopt a policy of recruitment to reflect the local Moroccan population, using the resources within to understand better and serve better the Moroccan community.

And finally:

- Provide solid and continuous support to the civil society and voluntary sector working with the Moroccan community to sustain its work in bringing about:
  - Real empowerment;
  - Real engagement;
  - Real citizenship.
The Heart of a Community:
A Multi-ethnic Street Market in Croydon

The latest Runnymede Community Study explores social relations in Surrey Street, a multi-ethnic street market in Croydon.1 Here, Kjartan Páll Sveinsson, Franziska Meissner and Jessica Mai Sims explain why street markets are important not merely in economic terms, but also in the way they can foster community cohesion and promote intercultural dialogue.

Street markets have a special place in Britain’s social and economic landscape. Resisting the development of the dominant paradigm of retail ethos – where shopping is becoming ever more monochrome, atomized and impersonal – street markets remain a quintessentially social space. Shopping for life’s essentials is becoming increasingly anti-social, a purely functional activity on which most people want to spend a minimal amount of time and effort. As a result, the moguls of quick and easy retail – large chain stores designed for the needs of busy individuals – are not only changing the face of Britain’s town centres, but also the meaning of social relations within them. Independent and small businesses – including market stalls – are in retreat.

Not everyone is easy about these developments. Prince Charles, who made a royal visit to Surrey Street Market in 1994, wrote in his foreword to a book dedicated to Surrey Street, A Stall Story: 100 Years of Market Trading:

I believe quite passionately in the importance of preserving and, frankly, celebrating our unique street markets. They are a particularly colourful part of this country’s cultural heritage and it is a cause of great sadness that so many are now under threat because of so-called ‘progress’.2

The Prince observes that the social and cultural aspect of street markets make them valuable above and beyond a mere business venture. Markets are a site of social – as well as economic – interaction, a place where people often come to pass the time of day at the same time as shopping around for bargains. The combination of cheap prices, quality produce and a personal, enjoyable shopping experience attracts a diverse range of people from all walks of life. A market also has the ability to upset social rules and hierarchies prevalent elsewhere in society with its own set of rules and codes of conduct. Thus, a street market can be a valuable tool to meet policy objectives relating to community cohesion. This will not happen spontaneously or inevitably, but, with some investment and the right planning, markets have the potential to bring people, who would be unlikely to have contact elsewhere, together in a relatively safe and neutral social space.

In spite of the immense social and cultural value of street markets, and their potentially beneficial effects on community cohesion, they are in decline throughout Britain. Surrey Street Market is no exception. The market holds over 100 pitches, all of which would have been occupied in the not-too-distant past. Today, there are only 30 stalls, and the current stallholders are concerned that, as people retire, they will not be replaced by new traders. This is obviously a sad development for those who have both an economic and emotional vested interest in the market – the stallholders themselves. But its demise could also have an adverse impact on the wider community. Surrey Street is an inclusive space which serves and welcomes a wide range of people. It may not be a visionary system of multicultural perfection, but it does constitute a place where different ethnic groups interweave with relatively little tumult and agitation. Apart from the possibility of fostering mutual respect and understanding between different groups, the market also represents a public space within which socially excluded individuals often feel accepted and are able to socialize.

Our report, Surrey Street Market – The Heart of a Community, explores how Surrey Street’s stallholders view the market as a community in itself, and their role in serving the wider community of Croydon. The traders are quite aware of the social role they play, and they believe that the market has the potential to become a valuable vehicle for promoting intercultural dialogue. For this to happen, however, policy makers need to accept that the value of a street market goes beyond economic growth and monetary worth. Surrey Street clearly serves an important social purpose. Many people would consider it the heart of Croydon, a place where people pass the time of day. Although street markets have different meanings for different people, they do represent a social meeting space. In Surrey Street, people of diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds rub shoulders with relatively little agitation.

This is not to say that the market is free from tension. Indeed, some of the long-term stall holders expressed a nostalgic longing for Surrey Street’s past glory, and implied that they did not necessarily consider the ethnic diversity an altogether positive development. Nonetheless, all interviewees said that tensions between different ethnic groups are at a minimum, and it appears that the market is progressively becoming more intercultural and accepting of difference. The reason for this development is difficult to pinpoint. It could partly be a result of everyday contact diminishing prejudice, and partly the pragmatic understanding of stallholders that their livelihoods now depend on a highly diverse customer base. Whatever the reason for the relatively successful multiculturalism of Surrey Street, the important point is that the market is a focal point of social relations in Croydon city centre.

1 Surrey Street Market – The Heart of a Community by Kjartan Páll Sveinsson, Franziska Meissner and Jessica Mai Sims was published online in June 2009 (ISBN 978 1 906732 24 0) and can be downloaded from the website [www.runnymedebust.org]  

Assets, Ethnicity and Equality

In Financial Inclusion and Ethnicity,1 Runnymede outlined how many Black and minority ethnic (BME) people have reduced access to financial products and services such as banking, credit, savings, insurance and financial advice. We also explained how lack of assets more generally led to some BME people paying higher costs for credit or insurance as they are deemed more risky by financial institutions. Omar Khan describes a current project funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in which we consider the question of assets in greater detail, and extend our observations, including ethnicity and further equality issues.

The first part of our report charts the existing evidence on asset-holding in the UK. We cite existing evidence on how assets are much more unevenly distributed than income, and also explain how assets are distributed among different age groups. Assets build up over a person’s lifetime, and those who can save up consistently and in significant amounts during their working lives will through the compounding of interest have much larger assets than those who are able to save more intermittently and in smaller amounts. Evidence suggests that all BME groups have much fewer assets, less savings products, and are more likely to have no assets.

Having low amounts of assets – or indeed having no assets – is of course bad for people who run into financial difficulty or require emergency funds to buy a necessary product, but assets also have further impacts on the take-up of other financial goods and services. More specifically, those who don’t have any savings or assets are exposed to high charges for credit and insurance products, and so are likely to find themselves in further financial difficulty.

There is also some evidence that those who save early on in life are more likely to save through their lifetimes and that assets have a stronger influence on a person’s life chances than does income. More foundationally, assets have been particularly important for thinkers on both the left and the right, especially the idea of an ‘ownership society’. Whether this ideal is used to defend the importance of property rights or to link the distribution of assets to citizenship status, assets have long inspired political thinkers and activists beyond their financial implications.

**Why do assets matter?**

This raises the key theme of the second section, which is to consider why assets and asset-building policies are important. Although everyone seems to agree that it would be better if everyone had more assets in the UK, they don’t agree on why assets are important. Simplifying greatly, we can distinguish efficiency and justice-based considerations for increasing assets. Three more specific arguments explain the differences between efficiency and justice-based arguments. First, consider the notion that everyone should have a basic level of assets. From a justice point of view, this is because having a minimum level of assets is necessary for people to live decent lives or to combat poverty, while from an efficiency perspective this may be necessary to ensure that the most talented and entrepreneurial people have access to markets.

An alternative argument is that assets should be more equitably distributed. Defenders of this argument would point to the link between asset-holdings and social mobility, or to the notion that vastly unequal asset-holding obstructs the idea of equal citizenship. Conversely, an efficiency argument for more equitable asset distribution would again reference the importance of open competition to fully functioning markets. A third and final argument for asset-based policies suggests that assets have wider behavioural effects. Here we might distinguish right-leaning and left-leaning arguments as well as justice-based and efficiency arguments. Taking efficiency arguments first, it is sometimes argued that asset-holding allows people to make more informed financial decisions, and also alters their behaviour with respect to markets more generally.

This may also be taken as a more normative or justice-based argument regarding the kinds of behaviour that make one a better person. Critics suggest that behavioural arguments regarding financial behaviour endorse certain normative judgements and that less consumerist attitudes are in some senses then deemed ‘worse’. At the same time, left-leaning defenders of asset-building may also emphasize ‘behavioural’ concerns - how more equal asset-holdings make people more civic in the way they treat one another and encourage them to realize their shared obligations (because they share society’s resources more equitably).

Whatever the force of these various arguments, the key point is that different arguments for asset-building policies will result in different evaluations of their implementation, and also impact the way those policies are designed. In the final two sections of our report, we apply these insights to existing and possible asset-building policies. Take the...
case of the Child Trust Fund, a policy that provides every child born in the UK with either £250 or £500 depending on their economic circumstances.

**Asset-based policies**
The Child Trust Fund is explicitly called an ‘asset-based welfare’ policy. Two elements of the policy are worth noting, as they highlight the issues we address in the first sections of our report. First is that everyone gets an initial sum of money from the government, but parents and grandparents are allowed to ‘top up’ this amount every year. To take into account the differential capacities of richer and poorer families to save into a Child Trust Fund, the government provides an extra initial and secondary sum (at age 7) to those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Second, there is no restriction on what an 18-year-old may do with their Child Trust Fund when it matures, a feature that was subject to considerable debate in the Treasury and that concerns some parents and critics who fear that young adults will ‘waste’ their savings.

If the intention of the Child Trust Fund is to ensure that young people better understand financial products and services and change their behaviour in a more prudent way, it is obviously important that young people do not ‘waste’ their fund. This explains the government focus on financial education in the curriculum. But if the idea is to equalize assets, the sums involved in the Child Trust Fund — and the fact that wealthier families will be able to build up larger funds through ‘topping up’ — suggest that it will fall short of that aim (or rather suggests that more equal asset-holding is not the aim).

Consider an alternative policy, namely greater inheritance tax or a wealth tax (of say 2% per annum). If the resultant revenue were used to provide assets to everyone, these sorts of taxes would be a more appropriate policy than the Child Trust Fund. Here it is worth comparing the distributional effects of income tax and benefits. Prior to the distribution of tax and benefits, the upper quintile of earners have 16 times the income of the lowest quintile; following tax and benefits, this reduces to a ration of 4 to 1, with benefit transfers having by far the greatest equitable impact. On the other hand, a more equitable distribution of assets through a wealth tax may also be more economically efficient as it transfers assets from those without entrepreneurial skill and forces people to leverage their assets more efficiently. In any case, assets are very little taxed compared to income, a policy emphasis that will have to change if we really want a more equitable distribution of assets.

By way of a conclusion we return to how this relates to ethnicity and other equality strands. As we have already indicated, assets are very unevenly distributed. Where this inequality corresponds with other factors such as ethnicity, gender or disability, this obviously results in those people having worse access to assets, resulting in the market-related and civic-related consequences we have already outlined. If evidence strongly suggests that asset inequalities obstruct social mobility and fair access to market competition, the normative argument that civic inclusion requires more equal asset holdings is perhaps less controversial in 2009 than it would have been in the recent past. For those BME people (and indeed others) currently lacking assets, asset-building policies might also be a surer way of contributing to civic inclusion and indeed ‘community cohesion’.

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**Financial Inclusion and Ethnicity: An Agenda for Research and Policy Action**
by Omar Khan was published by The Runnymede Trust in July 2008 (ISBN 978 1 906732 06 6). Contact Runnymede for printed copies, or download an electronic version from the website: www.runnymedetrust.org

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**Request for Research Assistance**
Runnymede is currently exploring two research projects on financial inclusion. These focus on savings and financial advice respectively. Our interest is in whether different Black and minority ethnic groups make different financial choices, get different financial advice, and how they make decisions on savings products. We would like to try to get evidence from different people and communities across the UK.

This research takes place at a time when the Government is developing policy to tackle financial exclusion and considering the extent to which financial exclusion differs between and among different groups. The Thoresen Review recommended extending financial advice for everyone in the UK, and we agree with many of their recommendations. For money guidance to be effective, however, we need to know where people are currently accessing advice, and what sorts of decisions they are making. We are therefore requesting assistance from anyone willing to discuss their experience, especially those who provide financial advice.

Runnymede is also currently designing an on-line survey to inquire into people’s savings and attitudes towards and experience of financial advice. We would appreciate readers filling out this survey, due to be launched in early July. For further details on the survey, please see our website. To contact us on the financial advice or savings projects, please contact Omar Khan at o.khan@runnymedetrust.org or Phil Mawhinney at p.mawhinney@runnymedetrust.org
Runnymede’s NQT Achieving Race Equality in Schools Training Programme

Nicola Rollock describes Runnymede’s teacher training programme, which is aimed at Newly Qualified Teachers and is designed to overcome commonly-held fears about teaching learners from a minority ethnic background.

The annual survey of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) carried out by the Training and Development Agency (TDA), has consistently found that the percentage of NQTs who feel their training prepares them to teach learners from a minority ethnic background has been lower than other areas of initial teacher training. In 2007, for example, 38% of NQTs reported their preparedness in this area as good or very good compared to 60% of those giving the same rating for their training preparing them to teach learners of different abilities. Responses to the question about preparedness to teach learners from minority ethnic backgrounds has tended to vary according to the region, sector and training route where training has taken place.

The Runnymede Trust has run the teacher training programme Achieving Race Equality in Schools for over five years. To date, it has been delivered to outstanding feedback to over 300 teachers across England, and to British teachers in Germany and Cyprus. In September 2008, we received funding from TDA/Multiverse to deliver 12 day-long sessions aimed specifically at NQTs to help address their need for improved training in race equality and cultural diversity.

Overview of the NQT training programme
In order to meet the specific needs of NQTs, Runnymede’s existing Achieving Race Equality in Schools programme was revised to take account of the fact that as a group they will have less school-based experience and are likely to be less confident in engaging with the topic of race equality.

The NQT Achieving Race Equality in Schools training programme emphasizes strategies which ensure that race equality and cultural diversity remain a central part of learning and teaching; it highlights ways that NQTs can adapt existing schemes of work so that they reflect cultural diversity and race equality and, importantly, presents various opportunities for NQTs to develop their own ideas and learning experiences to take away with them at the end of the day.

As well as offering an overview of the duties on race equality and community cohesion, NQTs also explore the historical background to debates on race and education to give them some context to current inequalities within the school system.

Most of the activities used on the day have been adapted from Runnymede’s school resource Complementing Teachers, which each local authority purchases for their NQTs as part of the training, and is tailored specially for the programme. This offers NQTs a firsthand insight into the wide remit of the lesson plans and activities and introduces them to the practicalities of adapting and differentiating their work depending on the characteristics of their school.

Feedback from NQTs
To date almost 100 NQTs from across England have attended the training and given outstanding feedback. For example, at the beginning of the day only 48.5% rate their teacher training as having prepared them to teach learners from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. This rises to a remarkable 97.5% when they are asked the same question at the end of the day. Similarly, only 22.7% report having enough resources to help them teach about cultural diversity before they complete the Runnymede training compared to 99% at the end of the day.

Examples of NQT comments:

‘I feel more confident in dealing with the teaching of cultural difference.’

‘I wasn’t sure what to expect but today has made me consider how to promote culture diversity in my mainly white British classroom. An excellent day – thank you.’

Runnymede now hopes to be able to work with Government agencies such as the TDA and the QCA to continue to deliver this programme on an annual basis.

For further information about Runnymede’s teacher training programme please contact Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Senior Research and Policy Analyst at the Runnymede Trust (email: debbie.weekes-bernard@runnymedetrust.org)

‘Sun of Ideas; Watering can of discussion’. Sample piece of work from one of the activities.

This piece of work is taken from the ‘Kite’ activity at the end of the day where NQTs are encouraged to reflect on what they have learnt and the ideas that they will be taking away with them. This group of NQTs wrote the following about their picture:
‘The tree represents us and our current practice. The water and the sun are what we have learnt today and how it has helped us grow. The greens lines [rays shooting from the tree] are what we are passing on to our classes and others’.

For further information about Runnymede’s teacher training programme please contact Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Senior Research and Policy Analyst at the Runnymede Trust (email: debbie.weekes-bernard@runnymedetrust.org)
The role of academic research in policy and politics is often circumspect. While claims of ‘evidence-based policy making’ seek to assert that research has more than a passing relationship to the political process, it is clear that in a straight up fight politics would trump evidence any day. Political decision making is by definition political and politics is as R. A. Butler reminded us ‘the art of the possible’. Recent government pronouncements on immigration policy, drugs policy, social housing, and knife crime interventions all highlight that ‘just the facts’ are rarely enough, and are too often only a minor consideration in the development of policy.

This is not to paint a completely depressing picture for social researchers – I’m not advocating that Runnymede or others should pack their bags. Instead, it becomes incumbent on social researchers to become more adept at influencing the policy agenda – evidence and politics, if they believe that the evidence is crucial to improved policy making. It is increasingly proved to be insufficient to engage in influencing policy only at the esoteric level. Merely having a conversation among like-minded researchers is, I am sure, very edifying for those involved but does not help the politician deal with the ‘folk evidence’ constructed in the pages of the tabloids, in the canteen, and on the vaunted Clapham omnibus. There are a few shining lights in the firmament of social research that show a way ahead.

Options for a New Britain builds on the 1996 publication Options for Britain in which an Oxford-based group of public policy researchers set out what they believed to be the key policy options for a new government. They noted then that, too often, the pre-election debates that seem to be important do not turn out to be the most crucial issues facing the country and can ‘obscure the very real policy options that are available and need to be discussed’. Remember the war of Jennifer’s ear in 1992, or the timidity over tax policy in 1997? Both debates seemed to be crucial at the time but merely obscured bigger questions about the proper role of public services and the need for reform that still rages now as government seeks another (don’t call it a) re-launch, and opposition parties try to avoid revealing any policy commitments – depending on your position, they’re keeping their powder dry, or the electorate in the dark. Options for Britain was successful because it was public, timely, non-partisan, practical, and engagingly written. It is not by accident that the researchers who edited the first volume became closely linked to the New Labour project, with both David Halpern and Stewart Wood going on to work in Number 10 for Blair and Brown respectively.

Options for a New Britain tries to build on this legacy. How ‘new’ the Britain the authors reflect on is arguable, but the formula is simple and effective. Recruit some of the leading lights in public policy to focus on their particular area of expertise. Ask them to reflect on progress made since 1996. Require them to commit on paper that which many academics are loathe to do – a series of recommendations (‘options’ in keeping with the book’s title) for policy action.

The results are worthwhile as numerous comparisons are made between the Major and Brown governments, between the New Labour project and Cameron’s Conservatives, between the recession of the early 1990s and the global credit crunch of the late noughties. Options for a New Britain sets out the terrain on which much of the forthcoming election campaign should be fought (though politics may again trump the evidence here), and the range of issues that the next government (of whatever hue) will have to make decisions about. Bulletin readers will be most interested in the chapters on Diversity and Extremism (which, interestingly, makes its debut here as an issue in comparison to 1996), Education, Housing and Social Mobility. That said, the entire book provides a useful primer across a swathe of policy areas.

That said it is not a perfect collection. The editors explain their decision-making about the topics that are included and excluded, arguing that they have selected the top 14 issues. Immigration does not feature in the top 14 which in my opinion is an oversight. Readers may not agree with the analysis of all of the issues – in particular Uberoi and Saggar’s decision to view issues such as immigration, education, and housing as an issue in comparison to 1996), Education, Housing and Social Mobility. That said, the entire book provides a useful primer across a swathe of policy areas.

The collection unfortunately falls foul of a trap that bedevils much academic research on public policy, as it does governments; ‘Events, dear boy, events’. The collection understandably makes no prediction of the global credit crunch and therefore can take no account of the strictures of future public spending rounds in setting out its future options. A week is a long time in politics – considered academic research-based responses can take longer.
The Public Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson into the death of Stephen Lawrence forms the second of two high profile Inquiries into policing and race relations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Preceded by Lord Scarman’s report into the Brixton disorders of the early 1980s, Macpherson and his advisers were charged to ‘inquire into the matters arising from the death of Stephen Lawrence (…) in order particularly to identify the lessons to be learned for the investigation and prosecution of racially motivated crimes’ (Straw, 1997). In the 10 years since the publication of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (SLI), there have been countless changes to policy within the criminal justice system and within education, not only as a direct consequence of the Inquiry and its 70 recommendations but also as the result of the climate of change that the Inquiry provoked. One of the many challenges in analysing the vast literature surrounding the SLI has been capturing the extent of the tension, change and determination as well as the resistance that served as the backdrop to the various policies, advisory groups and meetings that emerged as a result of the Inquiry. Policing and the Legacy of Lawrence usefully addresses this gap by offering a series of insightful chapters which reflect on the impact of the Inquiry some 10 years after it was first published.

Written by practitioners and academics predominantly from the field of criminology and criminal justice, this edited collection covers topics that include: the development of Independent Advisory Groups; police training and racist incidents; and personal accounts and reflections about the Inquiry, police and racism by those such as Ben Bowling, John Grieve and Bill Griffiths who either contributed to the Inquiry itself or were responsible with others for driving many of the changes that resulted from it. These chapters are by far the most powerful of the collection, offering a compelling reflection of history as it was being made, as well as providing an intriguing retrospective of individual choices, decision-making and professional careers.

Sensitive to the recommendations of the SLI and the sentiment expressed by Macpherson and his advisers that in order to eliminate racism from society there also should be commitment from agencies other than those relating to policing, Policing and the Legacy of Lawrence also includes a chapter which considers the extent of progress in meeting the SLI’s recommendations on education. The chapter demonstrates how Macpherson and his team could have gone further in holding the education system to account, not least in the handling of racist incidents and exclusions from school but also by including recommendations aimed specifically at school governors, teacher trainees and teachers and those bodies who have responsibility for them.

This is a useful and timely book that will continue to have relevance, notably for those working in the fields of race equality, criminal justice and policing, well after the attention surrounding the 10 years since the publication of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry has subsided.

References


Moving up Together

Moving up Together: Promoting Equality and Integration amongst the UK’s Diverse Communities
Jill Rutter, Laurence Cooley, Naomi Jones and Rachel Pillai
ippr, 2008
Reviewed by Kjartan Páll Sveinsson

Slowly but surely, our understanding of Britain’s emerging super-diversity becomes greater and more sophisticated. Slowly, because the field of inquiry is vast; surely, because an ever increasing body of high quality research on the subject is being amassed. The latest contribution is ippr’s Moving up Together: Promoting Equality and Integration amongst the UK’s Diverse Communities. The report is an impressive culmination of an in-depth investigation into four case study communities of people born in Bangladesh, Iran, Nigeria and Somalia, in three locations across England.

The report examines the factors influencing the socio-economic integration of the four communities, and seeks to explain why some migrant communities appear to be doing better than others. The result is an intricate picture with no easy answers. The overarching message is that a range of government policy agendas need to recognize the increasing diversity between and within migrant groups. This diversity is in itself complex, not only in terms of a myriad of identities, but also in terms of experiences and trajectories. As a result, the report argues, the factors that influence migrants’ socio-economic integration are composite and can differ from place to place, from group to group and from individual to individual. It follows, then, that there is an urgent need for policy makers and practitioners to ‘better understand the complexity of factors that influence integration’ (p. 97). The topics of the report range from housing to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to employment, but at the centre stand the narratives of migrants themselves and how they experience and conceptualize their own socio-economic integration. This is exactly what makes the report so valuable. As the authors rightly point out, the integration policy agenda tends to treat migrants as a homogenous group, yet there are major differences between and within communities in relation to qualifications and employment experiences. Integration policy needs to support flexible and personalised approaches to integration’ (p. 98).

Moving up Together is a timely, welcome, and above all insightful and informed contribution to the growing literature on the development of Britain’s super-diversity. The evidence is presented in a clear manner, and the recommendations are eminently sensible. The core message – that migrants’ views and experiences must be central to any integration policy – is one that is long overdue. The ippr migration team has shown an aptitude for changing the course of migration debates when it is most needed. Hopefully, Moving up Together will prove to be the beginning of one of those moments.

Race and Sport

‘Race’ and Sport: Critical Race Theory
Kevin Hylton
Routledge, 2009-02-27
PP. 150; £24.99
ISBN 978 0 41543 656 4
Reviewed by Nicola Rollock

‘Race’ and Sport: Critical Race Theory offers a detailed theoretical examination of the relationship between race and sport. Drawing on Critical Race Theory, a theoretical concept explored by relatively few scholars in the UK, Kevin Hylton demonstrates how sport, as with other disciplines and areas of society, consistently operates to privilege whiteness and whiteness discourse while simultaneously disadvantaged minoritized groups.

Hylton describes the way in which racism has transformed from overt, explicit acts into more ‘subtle incarnations of even more insidious practices’ identifiable in the racially coded debates of, for example, citizenship, immigration and nationhood. Hylton argues that in sport such discourse can act as a ‘majoritarian device to set new communities apart from others by questioning national allegiances through cultural and civic preferences’.

‘Whiteness and Sport’ is, perhaps one of the most interesting chapters of the book in that Hylton attempts to deconstruct an aspect of identity that is seldom the subject of conversation in sport, although clearly its absence in debates on race is not limited to this field. The privilege and unquestioned normality of whiteness is helpfully interrogated as Hylton calls for a serious engagement with the concept in order to understand and challenge the power imbued in race inequalities across sport, leisure, education and also the media.

‘Race’ and Sport: Critical Race Theory is a detailed and thought-provoking book which will be particularly useful for students and academics.

**Mixed-race Identities**

*Mix-d: UK. A Look at Mixed-race Identities*
Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust, 2008
Pp. 64; £15.00; ISBN 978-0-95595 050 6
Reviewed by Jessica Mai Sims

*Mix-d* UK is a publication that emanated from a photography exhibition in Manchester in October 2007, which was brought together by the Multiple Heritage Project. The Project’s aim is to ‘…accelerate the conflict out of mix-d, remove the awkward silence surrounding the subject and locate people of mixed-race backgrounds in the centre of the discussion’. The exhibition was a reflection of the images taken by some of Manchester’s residents who identify themselves as being mixed-race.

The book’s aim is to visually show what is already known about the ‘mixed’ group: that is, it is not homogenous, but rather it is ‘diverse, cutting across cultures, religions, regions, nationalities, histories, and ethnicities’. It is not a photography book but rather a book that uses images to talk about mixed-race identity. Along with pictures, the book contains quotes from the participants in the project, terms that people use to describe themselves, and positive outlooks they hold about being mixed. The volunteers wanted to be part of the project because they felt that there were few opportunities to have their voices heard.

One quote featured, ‘It’s not what people call you but what you answer to…’ illustrates the identity choice that individuals make. Some of the terms used in the publication are striking, in that some follow the ‘standard’ ethnic monitoring options, while others are more specific:

- Mixed Black African; Irish + Montserratian; German/
- Guinea African; English/Greek/Jamaican; Welsh/Arabic;
- Mauritian/Irish; Pakistani/British; Kenya/Pakistani/British;
- Afro-Celt/Jamaican, Mixed-Race; Egyptian and Jewish/Salford and Jewish.

The publication supplements the Multiple Heritage Project’s work with young people, parents and carers and professionals, by presenting a collection of strikingly unique images of individuals. *Mix-d: UK. A Look at Mixed-race Identities* would be of use for parents or professionals seeking to explore issues of identity with young people, or indeed anyone interested in contemporary Manchester.

1. Examples of two photographs from the publication.

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**The Pigment of Your Imagination**

*The Pigment of Your Imagination: Mixed Race in a Global Society*
Joy M. Zarembka
Madera Press, 2007
Reviewed by Jessica Mai Sims

In *The Pigment of Your Imagination*, Joy Zarembka puts together a collection of voices of people who have one black and one white parent in former British occupied countries, to reflect on how race is experienced by people of mixed descent.

In the preface, Joy reflects on her own experiences of being a member of an interracial family growing up in the United States, and her journey in self-identification. After a brief introduction to race in the US, the book is then divided into four sections focusing on Britain, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Jamaica. Each section is then introduced by a brief introduction to the particularities of race in the country, and reflects on Joy’s personal experiences and thoughts on travelling in the country, with reference to her American identity and assumptions of race. The following chapter in each section then often takes an intergenerational approach within families, featuring people’s ideas and experiences on race and racism within their country of residence, and also considers the decisions that have led to their own self-identification in a life story style.

The book is a cross between travelogue and ethnography, providing light reading for those interested in personal accounts of racial identity across the globe.
Research Report on British Chinese Internet Use

British Chinese Online Identities
David Parker and Miri Song
ESRC, September 2008
Pp. 24

‘I think that living in London the past eight years has allowed me to embrace being both British and Chinese and I think the boom in this kind of British-Chinese website and the events I’ve attended have really helped me feel more comfortable with that identity.’

This statement by one of the research participants offers a concise and representative summary of the report – how British-Chinese young people have created online spaces which allow their members to negotiate an understanding of British-Chinese identity and to strengthen community networks. Dr Parker and Dr Song’s report does not, however, completely share the optimism of some of its research participants. The monograph, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, seeks to explore (very successfully) how the British-Chinese young people use these online spaces and how their interaction influences the formation of civil society and engagement in politics. The authors then use the findings to attempt an explanation of the still limited presence in public life by the British-Chinese despite their successes in other fields. It concludes that the potential and the success of these websites have not been fully exploited and calls for government bodies to make a greater effort to engage with the British-Chinese.

The exposition is written in the context of two surveys. Parker and Song use the Department of Communities and Local Government’s 2005 Citizenship Survey as the basis for their analysis, a survey which was updated in 2007, but which has revealed negligible changes. The survey found low participation of Chinese people in comparison with other groups, in terms of volunteering and voter registration. This is particularly interesting, as the Chinese population in the UK continues to increase with the more recent migration of mainland Chinese people into the UK. The figures presented in this study are extreme – only 2% have participated in any form of civic activism, i.e. engaging in decision making relating to the local community, the lowest of any ethnic group. This survey identified the need for an exploration of the extent to which new media might help promote political and social participation.

In their own research, Song and Parker sought the views of people who used the British-Chinese websites (British Chinese Online and DimSum) on their levels of civic engagement and belonging. The findings paralleled those of the government (showing that only 44% of the respondents voted regularly in national and local elections, and 31% did not vote at all), yet whilst the governmental survey presented a bleak prospect for this group – the group least likely to strongly feel that they belonged to Britain – Song and Parker’s research discovered the ability of the sites to create an emergent ‘British-Chinese civil society’, one which is ‘drawing a hitherto underrepresented group into the public domain’. They found immense potential in the websites, recognizing their ability to reach an audience that has been, so far, unresponsive to conventional approaches.

With regards to the idea of a British-Chinese civil society, Parker and Song present an excellent critique of Robert Putnam’s bonding, bridging and linking social capital. They state in relation to their research, before the ‘bridge’ can be made between groups, facilitating political participation, the bond within the group is needed, something that the Chinese community hitherto lacks but something which the websites can foster. The pages are being used by the young British-Chinese to overcome feelings of alienation, to develop civic engagement through a variety of campaigns they promote, such as the demonstration in Trafalgar Square protesting against the introduction of a points based immigration system, and a major fundraising effort to help the victims of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. The resource that will shape the participation of British-Chinese people in political structures would be their access to linking social capital. Parker and Song are careful to emphasize that the burgeoning participation is still very much a work in progress, and whilst these sites have indeed drawn together and mobilized the British-Chinese population they have yet to overcome the ‘wider structural forces hampering extensive political participation’. Although Chinese people feel the most ‘un-British’ of all ethnic groups, this situation is far from static, which gives us grounds for optimism.

This monograph succeeds in challenging the assumption that British-Chinese people are disinterested in social or political issues, or of even engaging in other areas of British society. Even more beneficially, it leaves the reader satisfied with their increased understanding of British-Chinese attitudes, by raising the awareness of this under-represented ethnic minority group. The success of the study is in shifting the attention of research on British-Chinese from the catering trade towards wider representation in contemporary society. In addition, the authors’ focus on online identities contributes to further work on the implications of new technology on community building and transnational identities. Where the study could perhaps go further is in identifying the scope for connecting the older generation of migrants from Hong Kong with the newer arrivals from mainland China, in order to determine the feasibility of bonding, bridging and linking.
The Chinese Arts Centre opened in Manchester in 1986 with the aim of raising the profile of artists of Chinese descent. Over the past 21 years, the Centre has achieved this through exhibitions, residencies, artist support schemes, publications, agency work, advocacy, consultancy, commissions, festivals tours and collaborations. More recently the Centre has expanded its work to include artists of Chinese descent based in Britain and abroad.

To celebrate their 21st anniversary, curators past and present interviewed artists who have been associated with the Centre, for each year it has been in operation. The publication begins with two discussion chapters, one between curators past and present, and one with a selection of artists on a shared theme (food). In the first chapter, the curators reflect both the development of the Centre and of Chinese arts in the UK generally, and consider what the role of the Centre should be in the next 21 years. The second discussion brings together three artists who have used food in their work – either as a material or as subject matter – with the aim of exploring why food has been a potent source of inspiration.

Following these discussions, the curators turn these questions to interviewees. During the interviews the artists spoke positively about their relationship with the Centre, feeling that it was instrumental in raising the profile of Chinese artists in UK. Many cited the expertise it has developed and one interviewee, Anthony Key, thought that, ‘in the next 21 years if Chinese Arts Centre finds itself redundant because of the success of British Chinese artists in their own right then perhaps it should become a museum having recorded as well as been part of British Chinese art history in the making’.

Within Key’s statement about the future of British Chinese arts, or the Centre generally, lies a topic that is present in all interviews: the ambivalence of relating ethnic and national identity to artistic practice. Some interviewees spoke of the pitfalls of being identified as ‘British Chinese artists’: Gayle Chong Kwan worried that the focus on ‘Chinese-ness’ could simplify an artist’s work, while Erika Tan felt that there is a danger that British Chinese art as such can be reduced to tokenistic celebrations of ‘diversity’. In her interview, Lesley Sanderson said the danger of the rising interest in Chinese art could be that artists ‘“Orientalise” aspects of their practice because this might make their work more successfully packagable and fit into the current interest in Chinese-ness’. Kwong Lee has argued that the term ‘British Chinese artists’ should be treated as a strategic, rather than defining, term – that whilst artists can be British Chinese artists, they can also be British artists and Chinese artists. While heritage may influence their subject matter or the materials they employ, it should not be assumed to be their message. The tone of the interviews throughout the volume indicate that, for the artists, there is a struggle between referencing personal perspective and being held to represent an entire group’s experience.

Greater than this, perhaps, is being recognized and represented on equal terms with other artists. JJ and Cai, best known for their controversial performance art, felt that there has been no established British Chinese artists because of the limitations of British art institutions:

‘Why are there no British Chinese artists being promoted or recognised at a certain level? That’s certainly the problem of the British institutions. The cultural strategy is that they want Chinese Arts Centre to promote Chinese artists in Britain, but, strategically, it is wrong. The Arts Council and directors of museums should see this as a mistake. They should not ask only Chinese Arts Centre to do this. Instead they push Chinese Arts Centre to the front to promote the Chinese arts scene in Britain. The result is that it channels Chinese artists into a dead end.’

The publication is a visually stimulating collection of the works of the interviewees involved, as well as a collection of voices providing an account and critique of the development of Chinese art in the UK. From the collection we are left with the question ‘Can equality policies remedy the marginalization of artists from ethnic minority backgrounds?’

Reviewed by
Jessica Mai Sims

21: Discussions with Artists of Chinese Descent in the UK
Chinese Arts Centre, 2008
Pp. 156; £15.00; ISBN 978 0 954544 04 1
With cheaper means of communication – by telephone, the internet, as well as face-to-face meetings made possible by budget air travel – people are able to remain more connected to their place of origin so it is becoming more appropriate to think of migrants in a transnational sense. The Chinese, even without these modern day conveniences, have had a history of remaining connected to their ancestral home even as far back as the mid 19th century out of necessity, because of the restrictions on their settlement, citizenship, employment and marriage in most of the countries that they went to live in.

Kuah-Pearce, Khun Eng and Andrew P. Davidson compile an assortment of articles on the global Chinese diaspora, focusing on what the title suggests: how memories, symbols and migration impact identities and feelings of belonging. What is perhaps most interesting for readers in empirical studies is the editors’ exclusion of case studies from America, Canada and the UK, instead opting for areas less prolific in literature, such as other East Asian countries and Australasia (and the sole European country, Germany). From the collection, the reader develops an understanding of the intricacies of Chinese populations in the different countries with reference to origin – People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan – and gender, generation, and social class.

It is interesting to note the similarity of the transmission of cultural symbols and memories of people in the various countries studied. However, it is the particularities of specific country environments that are most relevant to the UK reader – with special reference to studies of Chinese people living in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Germany. Racism, exclusionary immigration and citizenship legislation, and a contemporary rise of conservative politics, has affected feelings of belonging for Chinese people in various countries. Exclusionary citizenship legislation and the perceived threat from China threat by no means limited to western countries, however; Chapters 8 and 9 discuss policies and attitudes in Korea and Japan.

There is a common theme to many of the chapters, that race, ethnicity and culture provide identity but also serve as a restraint as they provide a basis for exclusion. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the influence on transnational networks with the ‘home country’, and contemporary politics in the ‘reception country’ (Australia) on identity formation and authenticity. If feeling ‘at home’ is about being centred, creating a personal space of identification and belonging (Davidson, p. 13), how is that achieved in an environment that increasingly rejects difference or differentiates ‘others’?

This also seems to ring true for the Chinese in South Africa. Even after a century of Chinese presence in South Africa, we learn in Chapter 11 that feelings of belonging are limited by a history of marginalization and exclusion through strict immigration and citizenship legislation, apartheid which considered Chinese as not white enough, and later democratization which classified the Chinese as not black enough. In this chapter, Accone and Harris describe how these policies have contributed to feelings of exclusion, which can reflect the apolitical nature of the Chinese in South Africa.

Davidson and Dai’s article on Chinese migration to New Zealand (Chapter 6) similarly outlines the different measures taken to restrict Chinese movement in the beginning of the 20th century, such as taxes imposed on those wishing to migrate, and mandatory fingerprinting on arrival. The history of restriction is then linked to the opportunity for social networks to develop, and how these networks have influenced feelings of identity and belonging for subsequent migrants.

Chapter 10 describes how, despite a long history of Chinese migrants in Germany dating back to the late 19th century – as diplomats, students, seamen and laundry workers – wider society have continued to base modern images on Orientalist and outdated memories of the Chinese. These views have included association with drug trafficking, opium dens and triad gang violence. As with many other Chinese diasporas described throughout the volume, the people making up the population in Germany come from many places that link back to different points in Chinese history. In her chapter, Leung makes one of the most telling statements of the book. Even though the statement refers to a (Chinese) refugee from Vietnam, it illustrates a more general process of identification to ‘home’ over generations: ‘Ironically, China is a place with no concrete memories. In [this Vietnamese refugee’s] case, home is an imagined place, a reinvented past in some ways, which is anchored in the Chinese language, religious rituals as well as communal and family memories’.

In all, the collection of articles make for very informative and thought-provoking reading. From a Runnymede perspective, this volume has the added value of discussions on the experiences of third and fourth generation Chinese throughout the case studies, with their feelings of belonging to their ‘ancestral home’ and country of birth. The focus on less researched countries provides for an opportunity to add to understandings of Chinese migration history in different countries, whether out of pure curiosity or as part of more academic pursuits. Most importantly, and as the title suggests, the volume consistently gives insight into how one can feel ‘at home in the Chinese diaspora’, rather than in a physical space.
From Cable Street to Oldham is an edited collection of accounts, presented decade by decade, of community resistance against extreme right groups and individuals. Starting with a lively description of the Battle of Cable Street, the study describes major events and developments in the struggle against fascism and racism.

David Williams describes how, on 4 October 1936, tens of thousands of people prevented a fascist march organized by the British Union of Fascists (BUF) from taking place in East London, home to a large part of the Jewish community in London. The event is arguably the start of the organized struggle against fascism and anti-Semitism, which were both on the rise at that time. After a description of the ‘battle’ and its aftermath, David Williams looks at the 1940s, especially the period after the Second World War. Britain received Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, Poland and Austria and despite the horrors of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism prevailed. The Jewish community organized itself when four Jewish ex-servicemen initiated the creation of the 43 Group, which derived its name from the original numbers of members. The 43 Group’s action was marked by violent opposition. During the years that followed, the number of anti-Semitic and anti-Fascist organizations increased.

In his chapter ‘The 1950s: Anti-racism is born’, Gerry Gable considers the impact that developments in international politics had on local communities as the colonial age ended and immigrants from the New Commonwealth started arriving in Britain. The struggle against fascism became the struggle against racism and the main battleground went from the streets to the workplace. Apart from racial prejudices, new communities were faced with outright racial violence including the Notting Hill riots and the murder of Kelso Cochrane on 17 May 1959 which led to the creation of anti-racist organizations and the Notting Hill carnival.

In ‘The 1960s: The War on the Streets’, Gerry Gable describes how the 1960s saw a revival of more confrontational anti-racist activism as local communities sought to disrupt fascist and racist rallies in London.

The chapter covering the 1970s, by Gerry Gable and David Williams, then outlines a variety of initiatives in the anti-racist movement in this decade, as a response to the creation of the largest post-war fascist party, the National Front, which at one point was considered Britain’s fourth party despite the fact that it never gained a single council seat. The creation of the Anti-Nazi League provided an effective challenge to the NF’s success as the organization integrated increased awareness of racism and discrimination into a wider context of campaigns against racist immigration controls, racist policing, sexism and homophobia.

After describing the downfall of the NF, the study moves once more to the anti-racist struggle of minorities themselves.

In ‘The 1980s: Here to Stay, Here to Fight’, Nick Lowles and Paul Mezszaros describe how the Asian community in particular was successful at organizing itself: a number of youth organizations were created across the country and in London and Bradford in particular. Although there were violent episodes, the main battles were no longer fought on the streets, but in politics as the Asian Youth Movement, for example, started to provide legal services to prevent people from being deported. This illustrates a shift in the anti-racism struggle as the second generation of migrants started to claim their political and socio-economic rights. After highlighting the fight against racism by the AYM in Bradford, the focus returns to London for the 1990s in David Williams’ chapter ‘The 1990s: East End Reprise’. The rise of the British National Party is described as well as events during the local elections of 1993 in East London.

The publication ends with Nick Lowles’ chapter ‘The 2000s: Pavement Politics’, which gives a detailed account of events in West Yorkshire during the early 2000s in relation to the General Elections of 2001 and 2005 as well as local elections. The chapter explains how disturbances in Oldham and other northern cities led to campaigning against the BNP by organizations including Oldham United Against Racism, Searchlight and the Bradford TUC.

Altogether the book gives a highly varied and detailed account of the anti-racism struggle over the past seventy years. Although the focus is on local action and community resistance, larger trends and developments in national politics are also woven in, to give a rich and rounded overview of the development of the fight against racism from its beginnings in the 1930s at Cable Street to the creation of the wide variety of organizations that operate today.
This book opens with the line ‘people have moved around the world for thousands of years’. It is indicative of the style of this book that it engages you with the everydayness of this issue. However, it very carefully and thoughtfully proceeds to reveal and unravel the experiences of new migrants in the UK that leads us to question how it is that, given this everydayness, we can be so challenged in developing policy and practice that meets their needs and enables them to be included in society.

This book focuses on the experiences of newcomers in education, training and employment (ETE) and also gives consideration to the perspectives of providers and agencies facilitating their access. It looks beyond London in order to examine the dispersal system: how it has developed; and how effectively it meets the needs of those who have been dispersed. It concentrates its research in the West Midlands region, especially the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton.

It helpfully sets out the context for current practice on ETE provision, explaining the flow of migrants and newcomers to the UK over time and how attitudes and thinking has shaped policy development. It also highlights the challenges facing those researching asylum seekers in dispersal regions before sharing and examining the research findings. The final chapter summarizes the key issues facing newcomers and considers ‘from exclusion to integration via employability’. It is important to stress that this book does much more than provide a critique of existing practice but draws out and identifies opportunities to develop and change our approaches around ETE to better include new migrants.

New Migrants in the UK

New Migrants in the UK: Education, Training and Employment
Jenny Phillimore and Lisa Goodson
Trentham Books, 2008
Reviewed by Shaila Sheikh

Publications Received

Appearance in this list does not preclude a review in a later edition.


**Belonging Educational Materials**

*Belonging* is a transnational initiative devised and led by Manifesta in collaboration with Runnymede. The project organized a series of video workshops in suburban locations with young people from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds – in London (Newham), Lisbon (Casal da Boba) and Paris (20th arrondissement).

Focusing on themes around migration, identities and the making of new communities, *Belonging* explored how young people talk about belonging. The 43 short films which resulted from the workshops provide a valuable insight into the thoughts of young people in urban and suburban settings in the three countries. All the films can be viewed at [http://www.runnymededtrust.org/projects/belonging-films.html](http://www.runnymededtrust.org/projects/belonging-films.html)

Two experienced teachers and curriculum writers, Professor Chris Gaine and Cristina Bennett, devised lesson plans, with additional advice from Tracy Barker. The lesson plans use some of the *Belonging* films as well as information about the areas in the suburbs of London, Paris and Lisbon that provide the backdrop for them. The materials also contain a simulation exercise for use in the classroom.

When Chris Gaine first saw the films made by the young people, it made him think about a module he teaches to third year university students called ‘Youth, Globalization and Identity’:

> ‘What often strikes me in working with these students is how much is filling in gaps that could have been plugged at school – were it not for years of a curriculum sometimes more nationalist than national, with a short memory about European colonialism. On the whole, young people can leave school in Britain with no real grasp of why particular ethnic groups are here, what is the historical and economic connection with the countries they, their parents or grandparents migrated from, what are the processes that lead to relative concentrations in some urban areas, and what they might feel like. It’s unlikely to be very different in France or Portugal’.

Not all the films are explicitly about race, colonialism and the city, but most are influenced by these things. The educational materials include a map showing the size of the British Empire and how far around the world it spread, in an attempt to educate young people about why immigrants to Britain might say ‘We are here because you were there’.

Chris Gaine and Cristina Bennett met most of the young people involved and ran a workshop for them in Paris, where each national group met the others for the first time. They then set about devising teaching materials, based upon the films, which would fit into the secondary curriculum. Based on the British national curriculum, they selected the final year of Key Stage 3, Year 9 (13-14 year olds) as the target audience, not least because at this age young people are beginning to break free of received wisdoms and consider alternative perspectives that they may not have acknowledged before.

Having made the decision about who to target with the teaching materials, the next decision was which films to use. Cristina Bennett explains how they went about this:

> ‘On the basis of my knowledge and understanding of the minds of 13 and 14 year-old learners in a classroom – and how they might respond to the content, settings, themes and underlying messages within the films – coupled with some suggestions about the range of curriculum areas that might be able to use these short films to stimulate awareness and understanding, the next decision was which films to use. After discussion, it was decided to select the final year of Key Stage 3, Year 9 (13-14 year olds) as the target audience, not least because at this age young people are beginning to break free of received wisdoms and consider alternative perspectives that they may not have acknowledged before.

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debate and explore modern global experiences, our initial selection was chosen. Then, another dilemma – which curriculum areas would be the best vehicles for transporting these films into classrooms?

As so many issues – ranging from inter-generational misunderstanding to personal disillusionment and loss – were bursting from these fresh interpretations of belonging to somewhere, someone or something, it seemed ideal to develop the lessons across the curriculum. By devising a short scheme of work that encompasses a range of subjects, we are enabling teachers to offer a broad range of perspectives for exploring ‘belonging’. The subjects we chose: citizenship, history, English and geography.

The film selection, accompanied by eleven hours of detailed lesson plans, and supported by a whole range of printable materials: PowerPoint documents, information sheets, worksheets etc to use either directly, or to act as a basis for something else, are all free and online. Although the lessons are designed to be used by a group of teachers all planning and working together, they can be used as single subject foci; but they will have a more lasting impact on learners if they are part of a linked programme encompassing citizenship, history, English and geography, perhaps exploiting the recent relaxation in the British national curriculum that encourages integrated cross-curriculum schemes of work through a common theme or topic, or, in the form of special focus weeks around particular themes; certainly the intention was that these eleven lessons should hang together and inform each other. They’re all carefully linked to the British national curriculum cross-

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### BELONGING: Making Global Connections

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<th>GEOGRAPHY: Lesson 1 (of 3)</th>
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#### BELONGING FILM(S) TO USE:  
Entre-deux; Circling Around; Being Here.

#### PREPARATION / RESOURCES NEEDED:  
A3 world map outlines – one per learner; access to atlases or world maps for reference; equipment for viewing / projecting films; teacher preview all three films to select most effective for learners.

#### Learning intentions:
- to consider and explore how we are connected to other parts of the world;
- to identify and present a ‘sphere of influence’;
- to reflect on the significance of global influences;
- to use visual mapping for gathering ideas.

#### Starter (10 mins):
(This ‘starter’ activity can be done using any of the three films suggested – teacher should watch each film to decide which would have the most valuable impact on learners).

- **Whole class** – watch one of the films; whilst watching, draw **people, places and interests** strands on a visual map and note some global connections that are evident in the life of the young person in the film.
- **Pairs** – compare responses.
- **Whole class** – feedback with teacher guiding learners to particular countries / continents on world map.

#### Main part (40 mins):
- **Learners** (individually) – begin constructing own visual maps listing own global connections on **people, places and interests** strands.
- **Pairs** – compare visual maps.
- **Teacher** – suggest each pair find and select one thing in common from their lists to share with whole class.
- **Teacher** – model (using world map) how to begin mapping, personal global connections to show a ‘sphere of influence’.
- **Learners** (individually) – begin mapping (on their own A3 copies of a world map) their own global connections from their people, places and interests lists.

#### Reflection (10 mins):
- **Teacher** – ask learners: How do all your global connections shape who you are and where you belong?
- **Learners** (individually) – compose a short piece of reflective writing in response to the question – these responses should include learners identifying which of these global connections are most important to them with an explanation of why.
- **Pairs** – share responses; if time, some could be shared with the rest of the class.

#### NOTES / EXTENSION IDEAS / POSSIBLE HOMEWORK ACTIVITIES:
Real Histories Directory – Website of the Month: enCompassCulture

Our Website of the Month for May is enCompassCulture (www.encompassculture.com), a site set up six years ago by the British Council to connect readers from all over the world and to get them talking about books. We interviewed enCompass’s Reader in Residence, Susan Tranter, to find out more about what students (and teachers) can get from the site.

Real Histories Directory: What are the aims of enCompassCulture?

Susan Tranter: The site is a kind of virtual reading group, a place where people can come together to chat about books, find out about authors, get ideas for what to read next, and have some fun.

RHD: How can teachers/schools make use of the site?

ST: There’s plenty for teachers and schools on the site. For a start we’ve got loads of great booklists themed on topics to appeal to different age groups, or classes working on projects like climate change. Youngsters can be encouraged to add their own reviews of books they’ve been reading, or to contribute to our discussion board. And then there’s our fantastic reading group twinning service, where we pair up groups from the UK with readers from around the world. Both groups will agree to read the same book, and then get together online to chat about it, sometimes with the author as well. We’ve had reading groups in UK schools chatting to their peers in Nigeria, India, and Uzbekistan, to name but a few. It always makes for an interesting exchange!

RHD: What benefits do you think young people gain from being able to interact with others around the world?


Legistating for Equality 1  
Rob Berkeley

Equality of What? 5  
Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickles

Bringing the Stories Together: Tasks and Challenges in Education 6  
Robin Richardson

Policing in Northern Ireland: Positive Action and a Cohesive Community 9  
Maggie Berme

Equal Pay: The Gap in the Equality Bill 11  
Jessica Woodroffe

UKREN Positive Action Roundtable 12  
Kim Vanderaa

‘Sleepwalking to Segregation’ 13  
Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson

Recognizing the Contribution of Moroccan Women 14  
Souad Tali

The Heart of a Community: A Multi-ethnic Street Market in Croydon 16  
Kjartan Sveinsson, Franziska Meisner and Jessica Mai Sims

Assets, Ethnicity and Equality 17  
Omar Khan

Runnymede’s NQT Achieving Race Equality in Schools Training Programme 19  
Nicola Rollock

Book Reviews 20

Publications Received 28

Belonging Educational Materials 29  
Chris Gaine and Cristina Bennett

Real Histories Directory Website of the Month: EnCompassCulture 31  
Vastiana Belfon


This issue was edited by Robin Frampton

ST: It’s great to see young people using the online chats to interact with others from totally different backgrounds. Their situations and lifestyles are probably completely different, but it’s always the similarities of their interests, insights and enthusiasms that come through really strongly. People get the chance to ask questions, voice their opinions, and have some healthy debate. Talking about books - especially books about different cultures - is a great way of getting young people to look beyond their usual surroundings, and see things from a different perspective.

RHD: How can young people interact with their favourite authors?

ST: From time to time we’ve hosted chats where young readers get to quiz writers. There’s usually a frenetic hour or so where the youngsters will fire off all sorts of questions - asking everything from where the writer gets their motivation, and why they developed a character a certain way, to more blunt questions about their lives. One of my favourites was ‘How did you become a famous author even though you are a school failure?’ Only young people are that honest!

RHD: As Reader in Residence, have you gained any particular insights into young people around the world and have there been any surprises?

ST: Every chat is different and unpredictable, and that’s what makes it exciting. You never know what questions will pop up next. I’ve really realised how good young people are at making connections with each other, and the internet helps with that. Even the shy kid who sits at the back and never speaks in class can find a voice and be recognized. The technology is a great leveller in this sense; everyone’s equal. It seems to me a genuinely positive use of the internet, forging connections with people you would otherwise never have got to meet or chat to. And the fact that books are the catalyst for that is brilliant.

There is a wealth of material on the site to encourage children and young people to read - and to read more widely - and many resources for teachers, including reading kits written for, and by, teachers.

The Runnymede Trust Real Histories Directory can be found at http://www.runnymedetrust.org/resources/real-histories-directory.html

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