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Integration, Cohesion and National Identity: Theoretical Reflections on Recent British Policy

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Recent policy documents in Britain that have emphasized the importance of integration can be understood as addressing the question of what conditions are required in order to achieve and sustain a just society. The answer they give is that minority cultural groups need to be integrated into society, and that this involves community cohesion, secured through 'meaningful contact', and sharing a national identity based on common values. Here, it is argued that although meaningful contact between members of different cultural groups may promote trust between them, this does not warrant the key role which has been given to the idea of community cohesion. It is suggested instead that policies should aim to foster a widespread sense of belonging to the polity, and that this is not the same as sharing a national identity.

In a speech delivered in December 2006, Tony Blair argued that immigrant groups in Britain were under a duty to integrate, and he outlined a number of measures designed to illustrate its practical implications.[1] The official report into the causes of the disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in the spring and early summer of 2001, together with the policy and strategy documents which have followed in its wake, emphasized the need for integration whilst contrasting an integrationist approach with an assimilationist one.[2] Although in my view many of the practical proposals which have emerged are unobjectionable, they invite challenges which these documents lack the resources to address adequately. I aim to provide a better account of what distinguishes integrationist from assimilationist approaches and then explain how what is worthwhile in recent British strategy and policy can be given a rationale in which this distinction plays only a minor role. My purpose is not to berate the writers of the various documents for the problems they face – after all, they are written by multiple authors for different audiences and purposes – but rather to show how an intellectually coherent rationale for much of what is contained in them might nevertheless be constructed.

CONTEXT AND APPROACH

In the aftermath of the social unrest that occurred in a number of towns in northern England in 2001 – involving violent clashes between Moslems of Bangladeshi and Pakistani

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[1] See Tony Blair, 'Our Nation's Future – Multiculturalism and Integration', a speech delivered on 8 December 2006, available at http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10563.asp, accessed on 30 June 2008.

[2] Home Office, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cantle* (London: HMSO, 2001), hereafter referred to as the Cantle Report.

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origin, members of the neighbouring white community, and the police – the then home secretary David Blunkett argued that there was a need for a stronger sense of common citizenship in Britain, based upon shared values.[3] This was widely regarded as signalling the beginning of a retreat from a policy of multiculturalism, a retreat that gathered momentum as a result of subsequent events, such as the London bombings in July 2005, which were taken to raise doubts about the integration of Moslems within British society and their loyalty to Britain. Although one might question the accuracy of describing this shift in policy as a retreat from multiculturalism, not least because it is unclear whether Britain has ever had a principled commitment to the public recognition of cultural identities as opposed to the pragmatic accommodation of aspects of cultural difference,[4] there is no doubt that the concept of integration has played an increasingly important role in British policy in relation to cultural diversity.

In the presentation and development of this policy, the idea of integration has been contrasted with two other ways of managing cultural diversity, each of which is regarded as defective. The first of these is where minority cultural groups are assimilated, in effect acquiring the identity of the dominant group, whilst the second is where a form of cultural separation is allowed to emerge in which different ethnic groups retain their identities but lead largely separate lives. In this way, a policy of integration is presented as an attractive middle path between tacitly endorsing cultural segregation and intolerantly suppressing cultural diversity. Yet the idea of integration has not been unpacked sufficiently and it remains unclear why it should be regarded as desirable. Indeed, integration has become associated with two contrasting ideas, namely, that of community cohesion fostered through meaningful contact between different cultural groups, and that of sharing a national identity founded on a set of distinctive British values, with no proper consideration of how one is supposed to relate to the other.

In what follows, I try to clarify the concept of integration, argue for the best way of distinguishing it from that of assimilation, and explain its connection with the ideas of community cohesion and national identity. I suggest that the various policy initiatives are best understood as addressing the important question of what conditions are required (in the context of the distinctive forms of cultural diversity that are found in Britain) in order to achieve and then sustain a reasonably just society. The answer they give is that minority cultural groups need to be integrated into society, and that this involves both community cohesion and the sharing of a national identity. I shall argue that although 'meaningful contact' between members of different cultural groups may play a role in promoting trust between them, and in this way make society more stable and enduring, this does not warrant the key role which has been given to the idea of community cohesion. I suggest that Britain needs policies aimed at promoting a widespread sense of belonging to the polity, and that this is a rather different phenomenon to sharing a national identity.

My approach is neither purely philosophical nor simply an analysis of the various recent British policy and strategy documents and how they have been presented to the public. Rather, my aim is to provide an intellectually coherent rationale for much (though not all)

[3] The text of his speech delivered in December 2001 is available from http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2001/dec/11/immigrationpolicy.race, accessed on 30 June 2008.

[4] For a comprehensive account of how (up until the mid-1980s at least) English law accommodated ethnic minority practices, see Sebastian Poulter, *English Law and Ethnic Minority Customs* (London: Butterworth, 1986).

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of that policy, which draws upon the literature in normative political theory, taking the policy and strategy documents as the starting point for reflection. By doing so, I hope to cast light on these documents as well as on issues in normative political theory, though my inquiry is conducted rather differently than it would be if I were engaged in the task of understanding policy and its formation, or in the task of constructing an 'ideal theory' of a perfectly just multicultural society. The former task would require a more detailed analysis of the way in which key terms such as 'integration', 'assimilation' and 'community cohesion' have actually been used in policy documents and public pronouncements, as well as a sustained attempt to recover what policy makers were trying to achieve in the relevant documents – both of which would involve more careful attention to the particular social and political context they were addressing and how they themselves conceived of that context.[5] The latter task would require a wider engagement with the various normative theories of multiculturalism, and indeed might make little mention of the idea of integration, since it has not played a prominent role in recent debates. In these, the main theoretical positions have been those of multiculturalism, 'benign neglect' (in which the state ignores or brackets issues of cultural identity, leaving these issues to be resolved within the private sphere), and assimilation.[6]

ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

In British policy discourses, the idea of integration has generally been introduced by way of a contrast to that of assimilation, with the purpose of explaining why an integrated society is preferable. Consider, for example, a much quoted speech that Roy Jenkins gave in May 1966 not long after he became Home Secretary:

> Integration is perhaps a rather loose word. I do not regard it as meaning the loss, by immigrants, of their own national characteristics and culture. I do not think that we need in this country a 'melting pot', which will turn everybody out in a common mould, as one of a series of carbon copies of someone's misplaced vision of the stereotyped Englishman …
>
> I define integration, therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. This is the goal.[7]

Although Jenkins is here drawing a distinction between integration and assimilation, the characterization that he gives of an integrated society makes it seem no different to a liberal society properly conceived. It is hard to see why we would need a new word for such a society, and difficult to understand why equality of opportunity combined with cultural diversity and mutual tolerance should be described as integration. After all, it seems perfectly compatible in principle with different cultural groups leading largely separate lives.

It might be thought, however, that Jenkins implicitly provides us with an adequate account of assimilation if not of integration: assimilation is a process in which minority cultural groups abandon *all* of their distinctive values and practices, in effect giving up

[5] For an illustration of this approach, see Derek McGhee, *The End of Multiculturalism: Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights* (Maidenhead, Berks.: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill, 2008).

[6] As representative examples of this literature, see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

[7] Roy Jenkins, 'Racial Equality in Britain', in his *Essays and Speeches* (London: Collins, 1967), 267–73, p. 267.

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their particular identities. This understanding of the contrast has echoes in more recent pronouncements. For example, when launching the *Strength in Diversity* consultation document in May 2004, David Blunkett said that 'in Britain integration is not about assimilation into a common culture so that original identities are lost';[8] speaking as chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips argued that is was a mistake to treat 'integration' as another word for 'assimilation', apparently supposing that the latter would require us all to 'speak, look, dress and act the same'.[9] As a classification of policy approaches to cultural diversity, it is unhelpful to suppose that what distinguishes integration from assimilation is that assimilation, unlike integration, is a process which requires minority cultural groups to abandon all of their distinctive values and practices. No one today is an assimilationist in this sense, and it is not clear that many have been in the past. Has the idea that minority cultural groups should be persuaded to abandon, say, their own distinctive cuisines or traditional forms of dance ever really informed public policy in Britain?

Tariq Modood argues that integration, unlike assimilation, is a two-way process. Whereas assimilation requires minority cultural groups to change their practices in order to fit in with the majority group's way of doing things, integration involves a process of *mutual* adjustment.[10] He draws the conclusion that if there is a duty to integrate, it must bind not only minority cultural groups but also the majority, and that the former 'cannot alone be blamed for failing (or not trying) to integrate'.[11] Modood's account of integration seems to me to be on the right track, but it would benefit from refinement in so far as it implies that assimilation is *necessarily* a one-way process. Do assimilationists need to suppose that change has to be achieved in such a way that the dominant cultural group's practices remain as they were if that process is to count as one of assimilation? Why can assimilationists not allow that the dominant cultural group may change its practices as part of a process of assimilation? It seems to me that assimilation in its most general sense is a process in which minority groups change their practices, or aspects of their behaviour (such as the language they use at home or in public), or their values, or indeed some combination of these, so as to become more like members of the majority group, and a policy of assimilation is one which is designed to bring about that outcome.[12] So a policy of assimilation is directed towards minority cultural groups, and a process could not count as one of assimilation unless members of these groups changed

[8] See Home Office press release, 'Sideline the Extremists', 7 July 2004, available at http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Sideline_The_Extremists_-_Home_S?version=1, accessed on 30 June 2008; See also Home Office, *Strength in Diversity: Towards a Community Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy* (London: HMSO, 2004), section 2.2.

[9] See Trevor Phillips, 'After 7/7: Sleepwalking to Segregation', a speech delivered on 22 September 2005, available at http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/cre/Default.aspx.LocID-0hgnew07s.ReflocID-0hg00900c002.Lang-EN.htm#top, accessed on 30 June 2008.

[10] See Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 46–51. For relevant discussions, see also Bhikhu Parekh, 'Britain and the Social Logic of Pluralism' in *Britain: A Plural Society. Report of a Seminar* (London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1990), pp. 63–8; Bhikhu Parekh, *A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Palgrave, 2008), p. 85.

[11] Modood, *Multiculturalism*, p. 48.

[12] Some might say that assimilation essentially involves changing values, but that seems to me to be too restrictive. For example, members of a group may decide that in order to fit in better they should stop speaking the language of their ancestors and instead use the established language of the polity to which they now belong, both at home and in public, and we should surely regard that as involving a degree of assimilation even if it involves no change of values.

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their practices, behaviour or values, but it is not incompatible with the majority group changing its practices or values in response to its encounter with minority groups.

If a policy of assimilation aims to force or persuade minority groups to change their practices, behaviour or values (or aspects of these), so as to become more like members of the majority group, how is a policy of integration supposed to be distinguished from it? The most straightforward way of drawing the distinction allows that there may be overlap between the two but maintains that integrationist policies involve a specific purpose and are not necessarily directed towards cultural minorities: they aim to persuade members of one or more cultural groups (whether a minority or the majority) to change or adapt some or all of their values, practices or behaviour so that the lives of members of different groups become more entwined – in effect so that they lead more of their lives *together*.[13] If this is the distinction, we need to ask why an integrationist policy might be regarded as preferable to a more general policy of assimilation.

IS ASSIMILATIONISM ALWAYS UNJUST?

One reason that might be given for regarding a policy of integration as preferable derives from the thought that assimilationist policies are unjust. But when the distinction is drawn in the way I am proposing, it would be problematic to make the assumption that assimilation policies are always unjust. In a society where the majority group by and large respects individual rights and endeavours to provide equality of opportunity (and any failures to do so go against the grain of its practices), but where the violation of these rights or equal opportunity is a central part of a minority group's practices, assimilation might be *required* as a matter of justice. In practice, of course, things are unlikely to be that clear-cut. It will often be contestable whether treating a person in a particular way constitutes a violation of her rights (or a denial of her equality of opportunity) and, even when there is no room for reasonable dispute, the way of behaving which is at issue may be at the margins of a set of practices rather than at the heart of them, and not be condoned by the norms that govern those practices. There may nevertheless be a kind of continuity between a group's practices and values and this way of behaving, such that a demand for assimilation is not wholly inappropriate. Consider, for example, honour killings. Even when these killings are condemned by the norms which govern the mainstream practices of a particular cultural group, they may be made intelligible by its sexual morality and its dominant attitude towards women. As a result, a demand for assimilation in this context would not be wholly misconceived. In response, it might be said that the demand, properly formulated, is not for assimilation, but simply for respect to be given to individual rights. There is some truth in this, for at root the requirement is to respect individual rights. But it is not mistaken to demand that those who are involved in the violation of individual rights, and who in doing so act from values which sanction their behaviour, should assimilate, that is, change their behaviour (if not their values), so that it becomes more like that of others in their society – including other members of their own cultural group.

If we are not careful, however, this can become a disguised form of cultural imperialism, with the majority cultural group being complacent about their own culture and the values and

[13] Although on this way of drawing the distinction it would be mistaken to say that assimilation is necessarily a one-way process whilst integration is necessarily a two-way process, it is true that assimilationist policies are directed towards cultural minorities, whilst integrationist policies may be directed towards either cultural minorities or the cultural majority, or both.

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practices which constitute it. For members of this group may routinely violate individual rights (or deny equality of opportunity), and even where their conduct is not sanctioned by the norms that govern the group's practices, the values of that group may make it intelligible. Racist attitudes, for example, may pervade the values and practices of the majority group; even when these would not sanction racist violence, they may nevertheless make that violence intelligible, just as honour killings become intelligible in the light of a sexual morality which sees women's sexual activity outside of marriage as deeply shaming to their family. By parity of reasoning, the demand to change their ways should also be made to those members of the majority cultural group who violate individual rights in acting from values which sanction racist violence.

When assimilationist policies are not directed at ending the violation of individual rights or promoting equality of opportunity, is there at least a presumption that they are unjust?[14] There are, of course, clear examples of assimilationist policies that would be unjust because implementing them would itself violate individual rights. For example, laws which forbid the speaking of a minority language, or which forbid the wearing of a veil, would be unjust for this reason. But we need to distinguish coercive assimilationist policies of this sort from non-coercive policies, such as those which simply provide incentives for minority groups to change their practices. For example, the state may provide funds for festivals that have meaning and significance for the majority group, in the hope that by funding them members of minority groups will be attracted to join in as well. The category of 'non-coercive assimilation policies' is very broad, however, and includes policies which may attach considerable costs to failures to assimilate to the required degree, such as a law forbidding Sikhs from wearing their turbans when holding public office, and these may well count as oppressive, not least in this case because of their potential violation of equality of opportunity. But other non-coercive policies, even when they attach costs to the failure to assimilate (rather than merely provide incentives to do so), may not be unjust; for example, a requirement that the teaching of the majority community's history and literature be given precedence at publicly funded schools.[15]

INTEGRATION AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Even if a policy of assimilation is not always unjust, it might be thought that a policy of integration is nevertheless preferable. When, however, the contrast between assimilation and integration is drawn in the way that I have suggested, they are no longer mutually exclusive. One and the same policy might be both assimilationist *and* integrationist, for it might be directed towards minority groups in an attempt to get them to change their behaviour so that they live more of their lives in contact with other minority groups or the majority group. Furthermore, we do not have to make a general choice between integrationist and assimilationist policies, for in principle it might be the case that an assimilationist policy is justified in response to some minority practices or values, whereas an integrationist policy is justified in response to other practices or values of either the majority or a minority. Indeed, assimilationist and integrationist policies need to be

[14] For relevant discussion, see Andrew Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and Their Normative Significance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 123–6.

[15] Even coercive assimilationist policies need not be unjust; for example, a requirement that those seeking citizenship should pass an English language test before it is granted does not prevent them from speaking their first languages at home or in public spaces.

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placed in a larger context, for they are best understood as answers to the question of what conditions are required in order to create, sustain and reproduce a (reasonably) just society. Let me consider the way in which this question, or at least the relevant part of it, has been addressed in the wider political theory literature.

Some liberal thinkers, such as John Rawls, have supposed that a just society – or, more precisely, a society in which adequate principles of justice are widely shared and govern its basic structure in a way that is open to view – would generate its own support. If we could establish a well-ordered society of this kind, then individuals growing up under its institutions would come to endorse the principles which underwrite them, and the institutions would be sustained from one generation to the next.[16] But that position has been vigorously challenged from a number of different perspectives, which maintain that a just society needs more than shared principles of justice and just institutions to sustain and reproduce itself. These challenges allow us to identify two rather different perspectives, both of which inform British strategy and policy, though it seems to me that only one of them is genuinely integrationist. These perspectives are potentially mutually consistent, but they provide us with rather different kinds of answers to the question of what bonds between citizens are needed to make a polity such as Britain stable and enduring. I shall discuss the second of these perspectives in the next section, and the first of them in the remainder of this section.

The first perspective maintains that *community cohesion* is what is of crucial importance for the sustainability of British society, where community cohesion is defined in terms of the frequency and quality of contact between communities and their members, and that we therefore need law and policy to promote community cohesion. This integrationist perspective lies at the heart of the Cantle Report published after the disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford (and so called because it was the report of the 'Community Cohesion Review' chaired by Ted Cantle).[17] That report claimed 'there is an

[16] See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), sections 69 and 76. In fact, Rawls thinks that principles of justice are inadequate unless they can be realized in a stable way in the best of foreseeable circumstances. He thereby forges a conceptual connection between justice and stability in such a way that it becomes a necessary truth that adequate principles of justice will generate their own support when they are widely accepted and embodied in institutions. But we do not need to assume that justice and stability are conceptually connected in this way. For relevant discussions, see David Copp, 'Pluralism and Stability in Liberal Theory', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 4 (1996), 191–206; Andrew Mason, 'Just Constraints', *British Journal of Political Science*, 34 (2004), 251–68, pp. 252, 259–60; G. A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 327–30.

[17] The Cantle Report strongly influenced the government's 2002 White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain*, Cm 5387 (London: HMSO, 2002). These together informed the 2004 *Strength in Diversity* consultation document and the 2005 *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* strategy document which emerged from the consultation process. See Home Office, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: The Government's Strategy to Increase Race Equality and Community Cohesion* (London: HMSO, 2005). But this has led to the emergence of a much broader definition of a cohesive society that encompasses a number of different ideas. In a progress report published one year after the strategy had been in operation, a cohesive society was defined as one in which 'there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities; diversity is appreciated and valued; people from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds' (Department for Communities and Local Government, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: One Year On: A Progress Report on the Government's Strategy for Race Equality and Community Cohesion* (London: DCLG, 2006), p. 50). This new, much broader, definition also appears in Commission on Integration and Cohesion, *Our Shared Future* (London: CIC, 2007), pp. 40–3.

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urgent need to promote community cohesion, based upon a greater knowledge of, contact between, and respect for, the various cultures that now make Great Britain such a rich and diverse nation.'[18] Different ideas are combined together here but one plausible way of disentangling them is to think of community cohesion as fostered by greater contact between cultural groups because (when it is of the right kind at least) it tends to improve understanding between them. The thought then is that better understanding will prevent the growth of fear and mistrust and may also engender mutual respect, both of which help to make major social, political and legal institutions, and civil society, stable and enduring.[19]

There are at least two different versions of this integrationist perspective. According to the first version, a certain level and quality of contact between different ethnic communities or cultural groups is required if British society (understood in this context as comprised of its major social, political and legal institutions, as well as its civil society) is to be viable, that is, possess a minimum level of stability such that it has the potential to endure over time; according to the second version, other things being equal, British society will be more resilient, that is, more capable of enduring over time, the greater the level and quality of contact between communities.[20] Although the first version is more demanding in one respect – it supposes that contact of the right kind is a *necessary* condition for the viability of society – in other respects, it may be less demanding. For example, it might take the view that what matters fundamentally is avoiding the kind of *lack* of contact between different cultural groups, which cumulatively would mean that these groups led largely separate or parallel lives within the same society. This could be interpreted in a minimalist way, as the idea that there needs to be enough contact between different cultural groups for it to be the case that they do not lead separate lives, interacting (for example) only through market transactions which involve nothing more than the buying and selling of goods and services. The implication might be that members of different cultural groups need to come into meaningful contact with each other in at least one important domain of activity (which could be achieved by different individuals encountering each other in different domains), whether through living together in the same neighbourhoods, being educated at the same schools, being employed at the same workplaces, being active together politically, or being members of the same civil associations.[21]

This 'community cohesion' integrationist perspective that has informed British policy appears to go beyond the minimalist view, however, arguing that conditions need to be created to enable the lives of members of different cultural groups to become more deeply entwined, not merely to avoid a state of affairs in which they lead largely separate lives. But what is it that really matters here? Is it personal relationships and relationships between families, including friendships and marriages that reach across cultural groups,

[18] The Cantle Report, p. 10.

[19] 'The fact that people from the same background or culture choose to live or work together is not in itself a sign of breakdown in cohesion. But it is important that we foster mutual understanding and respect between people from different backgrounds and cultures. Communities are better equipped to organise themselves to tackle their common problems if they are not divided by mutual suspicion and misunderstanding of diverse cultures and faiths' (Home Office, *Strength in Diversity*, section 5.3). These ideas are presented more rigorously in Ted Cantle, *Community Cohesion: A New Framework for Race and Diversity*, revised edn (Basingstoke, Hants.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), esp. pp. 50–67, in which he also emphasizes the elements of the broader definition of community cohesion (see fn. 17), according to which community cohesion requires not just meaningful contact between communities but also an end to discrimination.

[20] Note that these two claims are perfectly consistent and could be held jointly.

[21] Indeed, this is one of the themes of the Cantle Report: see pp. 9, 28.

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which matter? Or can living side by side as neighbours, or working together in the same workplaces, or social contact in voluntary associations, or being educated together in common schools, provide the right level and quality of contact? Some of these forms of interaction might seem to be more important than others: for example, being educated together in common schools, which (even if they privilege the history, literature, geography and religion of the majority group) provide space for studying the contributions of minority cultural groups, might be deemed especially important for improving understanding between different cultural groups and fostering mutual respect.

The *Strength in Diversity* consultation strategy document published in 2004 identified two other forms of contact as particularly important for strengthening the relationships and connections between communities: working together politically as active citizens and participating together in voluntary associations of various kinds.[22] More recently, *Our Shared Future* (the report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, published in 2007) identified four spheres where it was felt that 'a focus on interaction would help build integration and cohesion', namely, schools; workplace; sports, culture and leisure; shared public spaces and residential areas. But it emphasized that what matters in these spheres is 'meaningful contact', that is, sustained interactions which break down stereotypes and prejudice, rather than brief conversations that do not go beyond surface friendliness.[23]

It is clear that integrationism, understood as an approach which emphasizes the importance of community contact, is *potentially* assimilationist in a wide-ranging way. For it is just a short step from here to the idea that community contact of the right level and quality requires every citizen to be able to speak English, that it is hindered by separate faith schools, and that it is impeded by specific minority practices, such as the wearing of veils by Moslem women. Indeed, in the wake of concerns about 'community cohesion', each of these views has found expression in laws, policy documents, officially commissioned reports, or the pronouncements of ministers. Since July 2004, applicants for British citizenship have had to demonstrate knowledge of English; furthermore, mandatory English language tests (and also 'Knowledge of Life in the UK' tests) were introduced in April 2007 for all of those seeking permanent settlement rights in Britain.[24] The Cantle Report, whilst not arguing against the public funding of faith schools, saw them as a potential barrier to community cohesion. In order to overcome this barrier, it argued that all schools should offer at least 25 per cent of places to reflect other cultures or ethnicities within the local area,[25] that faith schools in particular should offer 25 per cent of their places to other faiths or denominations,[26] and that education should in general be multicultural and designed to promote understanding of, and respect for, the cultures in the school and in neighbouring areas.[27] In October 2006, Jack Straw (then leader of the House of Commons) described the veil as a 'visible statement of separation and difference' and, whilst defending the right of Muslim women to wear it, nevertheless urged them to reflect upon the implications of doing so for ease of communication between

[22] Home Office, *Strength in Diversity*, section 2.1.

[23] Commission on Integration and Cohesion, *Our Shared Future*, sections 8.1–8.2.

[24] See the Home Office press release in Dec 2006, 'English Language Tests For Those Seeking to Settle', available at http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/migrants-english-tests, accessed on 30 June 2008. The intention to introduce a new language requirement for applicants for naturalization was signalled in Home Office, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, sections 2.11–2.18.

[25] The Cantle Report, p. 33.

[26] The Cantle Report, p. 37.

[27] The Cantle Report, pp. 35, 49.

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members of different cultural and religious groups and indeed for community relations in general.[28] Tony Blair (then prime minister) supported Straw's stance and, in what was presumably an implicit reference to the case in which the Yorkshire School Authority suspended a Muslim teaching assistant for refusing to remove her veil in class, claimed that it was a 'matter of plain common sense that when it is an essential part of someone's work to communicate directly with people being able to see their face is important'.[29]

SHARING A NATIONAL IDENTITY

The community cohesion approach has also been combined with a rather different one – arguably not a form of integrationism at all – which maintains that a shared national identity is important in order for society to be stable and enduring (where society is again understood as comprised of the major social, political and legal institutions as well as civil society). David Blunkett gestured towards this idea in the speech he gave in December 2001, after the publication of the Cantle Report, when he argued that there needed to be a stronger sense of British Citizenship[30] and in the 2002 White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Havens*.[31] It was developed more explicitly by Gordon Brown (whilst still Chancellor of the Exchequer) in a talk in January 2006 on 'The Future of Britishness',[32] and by Tony Blair (whilst prime minister) in December 2006 when he argued in favour of recognizing a duty to integrate.[33] The precise theoretical underpinnings of such an approach are not easy to reconstruct, however. The claims being made are compatible with at least two different formulations. In its most demanding version, the claim is that British society will be viable, that is, achieve a minimum level of stability such that it has the potential to endure over time, *only if* citizens share a national identity; the less demanding version is the claim that, other things being equal, British society will be *more* resilient, i.e., more capable of enduring over time, when citizens share a national identity. Since Blair and Brown explicitly conceive British national identity as an identity constituted by shared values rather than a shared ethnicity, both of these versions would lend support to an approach which is potentially assimilationist in character and which maintains that policies should be designed to persuade members of cultural minorities to share the national identity (whatever that is taken to be), abandoning or adapting those practices which embody values that are inconsistent with doing so.

Although Blair and Brown (following Blunkett and Cantle) regard this approach as a kind of integrationism – believing that a society is integrated when it is united around a set of shared values – in my view it is not helpful to do so. For this approach does not require the lives of members of different cultural groups to become more entwined, for them to lead more of their lives together.[34] Two people, or two groups, may share values

[28] See McGhee, *The End of Multiculturalism*, p. 96. The quotations are from an article on the BBC website, 'In quotes: Jack Straw on the veil', available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5413470.stm, accessed on 30 June 2008.

[29] Blair, 'Our Nation's Future'.

[30] David Blunkett, in a speech delivered in December 2001, available from http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2001/dec/11/immigrationpolicy.race, accessed on 30 June 2008.

[31] Home Office, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, sections 2.2–2.3.

[32] Gordon Brown, 'The Future of Britishness', available at http://fabians.org.uk/events/speeches/the-future-of-britishness, accessed on 30 June 2008.

[33] See Blair, 'Our Nation's Future'.

[34] Trevor Phillips goes even further, arguing that in a truly integrated society 'who people work with, or the friendships they make, should not be constrained by race or ethnicity' (Phillips, 'After 7/7').

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but their lives not be integrated in the least – indeed, they might be geographically separated such that their lives do not even come into contact with each other. So to label this second approach as integrationist masks the very real differences between it and one which argues for greater community contact on the ground that this will lead to greater understanding between communities, resulting in less fear and mistrust between communities (and, ideally, mutual respect). The only clear way of linking these two approaches would be to maintain that without a core set of shared values, a national identity which binds together different communities, it will be difficult when different communities do come into contact for them to understand each other and for mutual respect to develop. But how much sharing of values is required before mutual understanding becomes possible? Why does the possibility of mutual understanding (and indeed mutual respect) require them to share a distinctive set of values rather than, say, values which are culturally universal, such as a commitment to telling the truth and a willingness to keep agreements?

The idea that a shared national identity is important for stability, however it is developed, is bound to attract criticism. In the way it has been presented in Britain, it is in effect a form of liberal nationalism and faces difficulties which have beset defences of that position within normative political theory.[35] Some of these difficulties can be presented in the form of a dilemma. Either the values which are supposed to constitute the shared national identity are 'thin' and widely shared but not distinctive to a particular political community, in which case it will be unclear how this position goes beyond the idea that when citizens converge upon an adequate set of principles of justice, and their institutions realize these principles, then these institutions will generate their own support. Or these values are 'thick' and controversial, in which case any attempt to impose them, or even to foster them by non-coercive means, would threaten to be assimilationist in an oppressive or unjust way.

The second horn of this dilemma is not necessarily inescapable. As I argued above, assimilationist policies need not be unjust, especially when they are pursued using non-coercive means. But it is the first horn of the dilemma which British policy and strategy documents are impaled on. These documents, together with a number of ministerial speeches, identify a set of values as 'British' which are widely shared but not at all distinctive. The *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* strategy document singles out 'respect for others and the rule of law, including tolerance and mutual obligations between citizens' as 'essential elements of Britishness'.[36] Blair lists Britain's essential values as 'belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country and its shared heritage'.[37] Brown argues that a 'distinctive set of values' has emerged from 'the long tidal flows of British history', but his list of liberty, civic responsibility, fairness and tolerance does not fulfil its promise.[38] When we cast our net

[35] For influential defences of liberal nationalism, see Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Margaret Moore, *The Ethics of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For critiques, see Arash Abizadeh, 'Does Liberal Democracy Presuppose a Cultural Nation? Four Arguments', *American Political Science Review*, 96 (2002), 495–509; Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging*, chap. 5; Andrew Vincent, 'Liberal Nationalism: An Irresponsible Compound?' *Political Studies*, 45 (1997), 275–95.

[36] Home Office, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society*, chap. 4, section 4.

[37] See Blair, 'Our Nation's Future'. The last of these might seem to involve something distinctively British but only because it is an attitude towards Britain rather than a specific value.

[38] See Brown, 'The Future of Britishness'. In his speech on 'Managed Migration and Earned Citizenship' (20 February 2008), Brown added 'internationalism' to his list, understood as a kind of

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wider and look at the pronouncements of other public figures who think it important for British citizens to share a national identity, the values which they identify are equally unexceptional (at the level of principled commitment at least, even if it remains remarkably difficult for societies to live up to them). For example, Trevor Phillips, when chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, mentions values such as 'an attachment to democracy, freedom of speech, and equality', and traditions such as 'a common language, good manners and our care for children'.[39] Again it is hard to see why any of these should be regarded as distinctively British. In response to this charge, it might be said that there is no need for them to be distinctive. These values can be what make a group of citizens British even if the values are not distinctively British.[40] But then the question is: why not simply say that we need a society based on a shared respect for individual rights, democracy and equality of opportunity? That position may be plausible, but it makes no mention of the need for a shared national identity.

One apparent way out of the problem I have raised might be to say that it is not the values themselves that are distinctive, but the specific interpretation that has been given of them or the specific way they have been understood within the nation's history and traditions.[41] The most obvious way of making this case, however, is by reference to the institutional and historical realization of these values, that is, the concrete institutional forms in which democracy, liberty, tolerance, fairness and civic responsibility have been nurtured.[42] So, for example, we might point to parliamentary institutions as the distinctively British way of realizing democracy, or to the National Health Service as the distinctively British way in which fairness in the context of health care has been institutionalized. But then it looks as if it is not distinctive values that are doing the work, but specific institutions and the value judgements we make about them. And what underlies this argument is the idea that we should identify with our concrete institutions *because* we share the same values.[43] My contention in the next section is that there is a better way of developing this underlying idea, one which makes no reference to the importance of sharing a national identity.

TRUST AND A SENSE OF BELONGING

If community cohesion or sharing a national identity is conducive to the sustainability of British society, what underlying mechanisms are involved? One proposal would be the following: when citizens share a national identity, or where there is the appropriate kind of community cohesion, levels of trust between citizens (and especially between members of different cultural groups) are likely to be greater. But this proposal needs unpacking before it can be regarded as plausible.

(F'note continued)
outward-lookingness (available at http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page14624.asp, accessed on 30 June 2008).

[39] Phillips, 'After 7/7'.

[40] The Commission on Integration and Cohesion's *Our Shared Future* report highlights the point that these values are not distinctively British: see section 5.12.

[41] Home Office, *Governance of Britain*, Cm 7170 (London: HMSO, 2007), pp. 57–9.

[42] This would have resonances with Habermas's idea of constitutional patriotism: See Jürgen Habermas, 'Appendix II: Citizenship and National Identity', in his *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, translated by William Rehg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 491–515.

[43] See Home Office, *Governance of Britain*, p. 57, and Brown, 'Future of Britishness'.

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To explain how trust can sustain institutions and civil society, we need to draw the distinction between trust and well-founded trust: A may trust B to behave in a particular manner, but his trust is badly founded if B does not regard himself as having a reason to behave in that way. If A's trust of B is to be well founded, A must be justified in believing that B will behave in the manner that A expects; and for that to be the case, B must generally regard himself as having a relatively strong reason to do so.[44] In what follows, I shall focus specifically on trusting others *to act fairly*. When fellow citizens who have not met before, and are unlikely to meet again in the future, trust each other to act fairly when they encounter each other in civil society, and this trust is well founded, the benefits are obvious: they are better able to go about their daily lives, for they can be justified in expecting shopkeepers not to short-change them, builders to use the materials they say they will, and emergency dentists to do what work is needed rather that what pays the most.

Institutions can usually be designed in such a way that those who occupy roles within them have strong reasons to behave fairly, for example, they can often be designed so that corruption is readily detectable and career progression, or retaining one's job, depends on not behaving corruptly.[45] But in general, in civil society, even when there is extensive legal regulation, there is bound to be relatively wide scope for individuals to act unfairly without detection. Unless individuals regard the unfairness of a course of action as itself providing a significant reason not to perform it, trust will not be well founded, and we have reason to expect levels of trust to decline across society. The problem of trust in society in effect has two dimensions: first, individuals need to be motivated to act in trustworthy ways, that is, to act fairly when there is little chance that they will be found out if they do not do so; secondly, individuals need to learn to trust others when it is reasonable for them to do so, that is, they need to learn to be trusting. Both of these can present significant barriers, and there is evidence that they pose a larger problem in heterogeneous compared to homogeneous societies.[46] How then is community cohesion or a shared national identity supposed to overcome these barriers?

In relation to community cohesion, the idea is that when contact between different cultural groups is of the right quality and frequency, this promotes mutual understanding and respect, which in turn leads to higher levels of trusting behaviour.[47] This is plausible

[44] If B regards himself as having such a reason, then we might also say that, from A's point of view, B is trustworthy.

[45] See Russell Hardin, 'Trusting Persons, Trusting Institutions', in Richard J. Zeckhauser, ed., *Strategy and Choice* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 185–209, especially pp. 201–5.

[46] See Kenneth Newton, 'The New Liberal Dilemma: Social Trust in Mixed Societies' (paper prepared for the ECPR Workshop on Social Capital, The State and Diversity, Helsinki, 2007); Robert Putnam, '*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30 (2007), 137–74.

[47] In Robert Putnam's terms, the idea is that cross-cultural contact creates bridging social capital: see Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), pp. 22–3. See also Cantle, *Community Cohesion*, pp. 200–1. On the basis of empirical evidence, Putnam expresses scepticism about contact theories of this sort (see Putnam, '*E Pluribus Unum*', pp. 148–9), but the evidence is inconclusive against community cohesion hypotheses when they are carefully formulated, since so much will depend on the proviso that the contact between cultural groups has to be of the right kind or quality, for example, that it must be meaningful. As Putnam implies, however, there is a danger of making the hypothesis impossible to falsify, for example, by dismissing apparent counter-evidence on the grounds that there is a lack of the required meaningful contact (Putnam, '*E Pluribus Unum*', n. 14). Eric Uslaner avoids this pitfall, marshalling evidence for the claim

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enough, but it leaves open the possibility that the minimalist thesis identified earlier is correct: that the level of community contact strictly required for the major social, political and legal institutions and civil society in Britain to be viable is relatively low. So long as members of different cultural groups come into contact with each other in a meaningful way in at least one important domain (that domain perhaps being different for different individuals), whether housing, education, the workplace, civil society, or politics, this is sufficient to generate the level of trust needed to sustain British society. If the minimalist thesis is correct (and I do not know of any evidence which undermines it), then it is not clear that it would justify the centrality and importance given to community contact in, for example, the *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* strategy document published in 2005. The minimalist thesis is of course compatible with accepting that levels of trust would be raised even higher if each individual was to come into meaningful contact with members of other cultural groups across a variety of different spheres of activity.[48] If that idea were accepted, the relevant question would be whether the costs of promoting widespread meaningful contact of this kind across different spheres would be justified by the higher levels of trust this might create, given that a level of trust sufficient to make society stable and enduring could be achieved without doing so.[49]

Why should it be thought that levels of trust will be higher when citizens share a national identity based on shared values that are in some way distinctive, or embodied in distinctive institutions or practices? Here, the most plausible idea is that when people share something distinctive, they develop a sense of belonging together – indeed, a sense of belonging together amongst compatriots is properly regarded as partially *constitutive* of what it is to share a national identity. By a sense of belonging together, I mean a belief amongst them that there is some reason why they should associate together or co-operate with each other, which goes beyond the fact that they have been thrown together for a variety of different reasons. A sense of belonging together is likely to increase levels of trust of the relevant sort, for a person who sees himself as deeply bonded to his fellow citizens will be more likely to behave fairly towards them, even in circumstances where he knows he will not come into contact with them in the future, and his fellow nationals will (again, partly because of their bond) expect him to behave in this way.[50]

But this mechanism leaves open the possibility that levels of trust may be increased in ways that are not dependent on sharing a national identity.[51] Suppose we distinguish between a sense of belonging *together* and a sense of belonging *to a polity*, as I have done

(F'note continued)
that in the United States at least the contact that whites enjoy living in diverse neighbourhoods boosts their generalised trust, with additional increases occurring when they have friends from other backgrounds or belong to the same groups, whereas for African-Americans having friends from different backgrounds increases generalised trust, though merely living together in the same neighbourhoods does not. See Eric Uslaner, 'Segregation, Mistrust, and Minorities', *Ethnicities*, forthcoming.

[48] A secondary mechanism might also be postulated: the kind of meaningful contact which the community cohesion approach aims to promote may generate a sense amongst citizens that they are 'in it together', which may in turn raise levels of trusting behaviour.

[49] The costs here may not all be financial, especially if, for example, faith schools or the wearing of a veil are regarded as barriers to it.

[50] When citizens share a sense of belonging together, this may also mean that they are more inclined to support redistributive policies on grounds of social justice as a result of greater fellow feeling. See Miller, *On Nationality*, pp. 93–6.

[51] Daniel Weinstock discusses some of these ways in 'Building Trust in Divided Societies', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 7 (1999), especially pp. 300–5.

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elsewhere. Citizens possess a sense of belonging together if and only if they believe that there is some reason why they should be part of the same polity, other than that they happen to live within its borders. In contrast, they possess a sense of belonging to their polity if and only if they identify with (most of) its major institutions and practices – both state institutions and practices, and institutions and practices in civil society – and feel at home in them. When a person identifies with an institution or practice, he regards himself as lying in a special relationship to it: he sees it as *his* in an important sense. In order to be able to identify with it, he must in general be able to perceive it as valuable, see his concerns reflected in it, think that he can trust it to operate in accordance with the rules which are constitutive of it, and feel at home in it. When a person feels at home in a practice or institution, he is able to find his way around it and experiences participation in it as natural. In order to be able to feel this way, he must not be excluded from the practice or institution, be marginalized in relation to it, or see it as deeply unjust in some other way.[52] Might not a sense of belonging to the polity, when it is widely shared by citizens, and each knows that it is widely shared by the others, provide a basis for them to trust *each other*, and thereby play an effective role in sustaining those institutions and practices? When citizens identify with their major institutions and practices and feel at home in them, and they know that their fellow citizens also think and feel the same way, there is a basis for them to trust each other. For they will be inclined to regard themselves as 'in it together', each with a stake in the continuation of their institutions and practices, and as a result be more inclined to treat each other fairly even when they know they could get away with not doing so; and they will also expect others to behave in the same way – even if there is no deep reason (in terms of distinctive shared values, shared ethnicity, shared history or shared first language) why they should be fellow citizens.[53]

This idea has the potential to provide a better grounding for the ideas presented in various British policy and strategy documents, one that is both more coherent and avoids the problems that beset the 'community cohesion' approach and the 'national identity' approach. The most obvious advantage of the alternative I am proposing is that it does not require citizens to share values in any demanding way. So long as citizens converge on a range of value judgements regarding the desirability, on balance, of their major institutions and practices, they feel at home in these institutions and practices, and trust them to operate in accordance with the appropriate rules; this provides the basis for them to identify with these institutions and practices. Different citizens may identify with the same

[52] See Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging*, p. 127. Some have seen this as at least a partial basis for a distinction between ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism: see Barry, *Culture and Equality*, p. 80. This is not how I see the distinction, however. Even under civic nationalism, the idea is that people have a sense of belonging together, fostered by, for example, national myths or shared values. The distinction between a sense of belonging together and a sense of belonging to the polity might, however, form the basis of a distinction between nationalism and patriotism. And I do not have any deep objection to saying that those who share a sense of belonging to the British polity have a 'British identity', provided that this is not taken to imply that they have a sense of belonging together in the technical sense I have identified.

[53] It might be thought that there is a whiff of circularity here: identifying with an institution is being explained, in part, as a consequence of trusting it to follow its rules, and then that is supposedly playing a role in explaining why individuals will be inclined to trust each other. But there is no real circularity here. Of course, trusting an institution involves trusting the individuals who occupy the positions within that institution to apply its rules properly, but this is still a different kind of trust to the trust that may exist between strangers whose interactions are not being mediated by any particular institutional roles, and which I am claiming identification with institutions and practices may help to facilitate.

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institutions and practices for different reasons, and their contrasting reasons may derive from different values or very different interpretations of the same values,[54] so, for example, some may value the National Health Service on grounds of fairness – because, say, it provides health care for all independently of a person's ability to pay – whereas others may value it solely because of the quality of care it provides, or because it met their needs when they were ill.[55]

Fostering a widespread sense of belonging to the polity in a multi-faith, culturally diverse society is a serious challenge, especially when cultural and religious minorities have a history of being discriminated against in it (and key institutions and organizations, such as the police force, have been deeply implicated in this history), or when there are high levels of unemployment that disproportionately affect these minorities. But at the very least, it requires measures to promote individual security, to end the discrimination to which these groups have been subjected, and to improve the opportunities of those who are most disadvantaged. Many of the policies in Britain, which have been designed to improve the life chances of members of ethnic minorities and to fight the discrimination they have experienced, could be re-conceived as part of a strategy to foster a widespread sense of belonging to the polity (even if doubts are possible about their effectiveness or whether they go far enough). Even the idea that we need to promote community cohesion might have a role to play here, on the basis that meaningful contact between members of different cultural groups may enable citizens of different faiths and cultures to feel at home in civil society.

Moving up a level of abstraction, much of what is fundamentally important for fostering a widespread sense of belonging to the polity might be captured under the rubric of securing *equality of status*, for it will be hard for a citizen to have such a sense unless he or she is treated as an equal both by institutions and by fellow citizens in civil society. But it is important to note that equality of status between citizens cannot be secured simply through the provision of equal rights and equality before the law, not least because it may require modes of behaviour in civil society that are partially constitutive of what it is for citizens to be recognized as equals or (to put the same point in a different way) for 'social equality' to be achieved. Social equality is expressed and sustained through informal practices in civil society, and requires citizens to behave respectfully towards one another (perhaps even in ways that go beyond what justice alone requires.)[56] So, for example, it may require civility in one's ordinary dealings with others, and it may require us to take a stand against racial prejudice in subtle or not so subtle forms when we see it.[57] There is an

[54] In this respect, my proposal differs from the one which might be derived from Habermas's model of constitutional patriotism, for according to that model the identification with major institutions derives from agreement on fundamental universal principles. See Habermas, 'Appendix II: Citizenship and National Identity'.

[55] At the risk of proliferating distinctions unnecessarily (but in the interests of clarity), it is also worth pointing out that a further distinction might be drawn between a sense of belonging together and a sense of belonging to the same polity as others: both necessarily involve recognition of others as fellow citizens, but the former unlike the latter invokes the idea that there is some reason why this group of citizens should associate together – that is, work together politically – other than that they happen, for a variety of different reasons – to be citizens of the same state. Cf. Barry, *Culture and Equality*, p. 80.

[56] David Miller defends an ideal of social equality distinct from that of justice. See David Miller, 'Equality and Justice', in Andrew Mason, ed., *Ideals of Equality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 21–36.

[57] See Lawrence Blum's instructive example of a white customer who refuses to put their money into the hands of a black cashier in order to avoid physical contact with her: Lawrence Blum, 'Race, National Ideals, and Civic Virtue', *Social Theory and Practice*, 33 (2007), 546–51.

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overlap between social equality and the expansive notion of an integrated and cohesive society, which is to be found in both the *Improving Opportunity* strategy document and the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's report, *Our Shared Future*. My suggestion, in effect, is that we should value the relationships that constitute such a society at least in part because they are conducive to fostering a widespread sense of belonging to the polity.

Social equality is not the only thing that matters, however. Indeed, some of the other measures that have emerged from British policy and strategy documents in response to the challenges posed by cultural diversity, and which have an assimilationist character, might be justified not only in terms of improving opportunities but also in terms of the direct contribution they make to promoting a sense of belonging to the polity. For example, the policy of requiring applicants for citizenship to demonstrate the ability to communicate in English and pass a 'Knowledge of Life in the UK' test might be justified on the grounds that citizens will be unable to feel at home in British institutions and practices unless they have a basic mastery of English and unless they have at least a rudimentary understanding of the workings of these institutions and practices. Note, however, that the approach I am recommending need not suppose that there is anything problematic about Muslim women wearing the veil, and it may be supportive of publicly funded faith schools on the grounds that these help to foster a sense of belonging to the polity amongst religiously committed parents and their children.[58]

Of course, fostering a widespread sense of belonging to the polity is a demanding project and there may be limits to what public policy can do. Such a sense of belonging is affected in complex and often unforeseen ways by policy decisions. There may be something in the idea (which has been expressed in strategy documents such as *Improving Opportunity*) that too much perceived focus on the needs and interests of minority groups alienates members of the majority cultural group by making it appear that these minority groups are receiving preferential treatment.[59] Even if these policies are required as a matter of justice, care needs to be taken in how they are presented and implemented. A group's sense of belonging to the polity may also be affected by foreign policy decisions: the way in which British foreign policy has adversely affected Muslims beyond British borders surely has a key role to play in explaining why so many young Muslims find it hard to identify with the British polity and feel at home in it.[60]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The distinction between assimilation and integration has come to the forefront again in British public policy, with integration seen as the key goal. The notion of integration is a slippery one, however, and is being used to defend two rather different approaches to building trust between members of different communities, one of which aims to do so through improving community contact, whilst the other focuses on the importance of sharing a national identity for building that trust. There is nothing incoherent in combining these approaches, but we need to recognize that they are differently motivated.

[58] See Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging*, chap. 6.

[59] This idea is gestured towards in Charles Clarke's Foreword to *Improving Opportunity*: 'This strategy is not about putting all people from minority ethnic communities in one category and those from the majority in another. That fails to recognise the progress of many, and can fuel the politics of division'. See McGhee, *The End of Multiculturalism*, pp. 100ff. and pp. 113ff., for further discussion.

[60] See McGhee, *The End of Multiculturalism*, pp. 64ff.; Modood, *Multiculturalism*, p. 150.

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I have argued that a policy of integration, conceived as an approach to improving the quality of contact between members of different ethnic groups and faith communities, is best seen as one limited strategy that can be employed to raise levels of trust. I have also suggested that a widespread sense of belonging to the polity – a different phenomenon to that of sharing a national identity – can play an important role in building trust, and indeed the need to promote it can provide a better rationale for the variety of different policies that the British government has tried to wrap together under a strategy of improving opportunities and promoting community cohesion. Furthermore, assimilation should not be regarded as something which is necessarily bad or unjust. Although many assimilationist policies are unjust and make it harder for those directly affected to feel a sense of belonging to their polity, in some cases they can facilitate that process, for example, policies which promote the learning of English and which make that a requirement of naturalization.

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