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Abstract

The article provides an analysis and critique of the education component of the 2021 Sewell Report on Race and Ethnic Disparities. It commences by providing a critical summary of the report focusing on its spurious claims to objectivity, the erasure of racism and the inadequacy of its recommendations. The second part of the article focuses on developing a contextualised analysis of the report. Omi and Winant's ideas about racial formation are used to provide a lens through which to interpret the Sewell report as part of a wider hegemonic project of the right to redefine what it means to be British in the context of a deepening organic crises of capitalism. The article outlines the nature of the crisis. It locates the report within a consideration of three 'racial projects' that have shaped education policy, namely the nationalist, multicultural and antiracist projects. Through advocating a 'colourblind' approach to education policy and the selective appropriation of multicultural discourse, it will be argued that the report needs to be understood as part of a wider effort to reconfigure the nationalist project in response to crisis. It is suggested, however, that despite its many flaws, the Sewell report poses challenges for those who have traditionally been aligned to multiculturalism and antiracism in education. The article concludes by setting out a vision for a new progressive project aimed at advancing racial and cultural justice that it is suggested, can begin to address these challenges.

Introduction

The *Report of the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparities* (HMG, 2021) popularly referred to as the Sewell Report was instigated at the behest of the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, as a response to the events of the spring and summer of 2020. These included a series of protests organised by the Black Lives Matter Movement in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by the police in the US and the toppling of the statue of the slaver, Edward Colston by protesters in Bristol. The report can be seen as part of a conscious attempt to 'change the narrative' on race and ethnicity in Britain in the light of these developments. Consisting of a predominantly Black and Asian membership and chaired by the educationalist Tony Sewell, education featured prominently in the report. The key findings of the report, namely, that antiracists have got it wrong, that Britain is not an institutionally racist society, that our institutions including educational institutions have in fact become fairer in their treatment of minorities and that the UK should therefore be held up as a beacon in the arena of race equality for other majority white countries met with delight and dismay in equal measure.

The report was greeted with barely suppressed euphoria from commentators on the right for striking a fatal blow against 'wokedom' (McKinstry, 2021) a victory in the 'culture wars' against the emotional rhetoric of the Black Lives Matter Movement and their attacks on British values (Halligan, 2021), for offering instead a reasoned, data-led appraisal of race relations in the UK today (Goodhart, 2021)[1]. The report was met with despair and anger by

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[1] It was also lauded in the right wing press for providing proof that the lines dividing us in education as in other areas are based on class not race LIDDLE, R. 2021. We finally have proof that the lines dividing us are based on class not race. *The Sun* [Online]. Available: https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/14516018/rod-liddle-race-report/.. As the Chair of the Commission, Sewell was praised for being brave enough to challenge the orthodoxies of the left around the existence of institutional racism and defended against the 'verbal pummelling' he had received HALLIGAN, L. 2021. Dr Tony Sewell: 'When people are this desperate to silence you, you must be saying something true'. *Daily Telegraph* [Online]. Available:

antiracists. It was accused of misunderstanding the nature of racism (Bhopal, 2021) and of whitewashing the experiences of people of colour through denying the existence of institutionalised racism (Runnymede, 2021)[2].

The aim of this article is to provide a critical analysis of the Sewell Report against an understanding of changing discourses on race, ethnicity and education policy in England. The article will commence by providing a critical summary of the report, focusing on its methodological flaws and the limitations of its recommendations. It will be argued, that far from being an objective effort to explain racial disparities in education, the report is highly ideological in nature. The article will contextualise the report against an analysis of the contemporary 'organic crisis' in British capitalism. Drawing on Omi and Winant's ideas about racial formation, the article will consider the report in the context of three 'racial projects' that have shaped education policy, namely the dominant nationalist as well as the multicultural and antiracist projects. It will be argued that in advocating a 'colourblind' approach to education policy and through selectively appropriating aspects of multicultural discourse, the report is best understood as an attempt to reconfigure the nationalist project as part of the wider effort to redefine the 'national popular' (i.e. popular understandings of what it means to be 'British').

It is also suggested, however, that whilst the report has major weaknesses, it simultaneously represents challenges for those who have traditionally been aligned to multiculturalism and antiracism. The article concludes by setting out a vision for a new progressive project aimed at advancing racial and cultural justice in education that can begin to address these challenges. It will be argued that there is an urgent need for a *rapprochement* between multiculturalism and antiracism; for those committed to these projects to more clearly articulate what is meant by institutional racism; to recast the antiracist project more in terms of a positive, radical pluralist vision of the national popular underpinned by principles of racial and cultural justice; to move beyond critique and to focus on how a vision of racial and cultural justice may be realised in practice; to critically embrace intersectionality between struggles for racial and cultural justice with struggles for class, gender justice both in theory and in practice; and, to harness mainstream efforts to change policy and practice with a renewed commitment to grass roots activism. In realising these objectives there is an urgent need to learn from previous eras of mobilisation and struggle for racial and cultural justice[3].

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https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/04/07/dr-tony-sewell-people-desperate-silence-must-saying-something/..

[2] Members of the Commission were accused of playing into a wider divisive Tory narrative on race. Critics pointed to the highly selective use of data, for ignoring many of the submissions to the commission that had identified structural racism as a real issue and for being factually incorrect BARRY, A. 2021. Sewell report response: what does the data really tell us, CHAKRABORTTY, A. 2021. The UK government's race report is so shoddy, it falls to pieces under scrutiny. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/16/government-race-report-evidence..

[3] It is important to be clear about the authors own positionality in relation to the arguments put forward in the article given the highly politicised and often emotive nature of doc9usres about race, ethnicity and education. As will become clearer the authors own background is as an antiracist activist but also as a practitioner teaching in racially and culturally diverse settings and as a researcher in the area of race, ethnicity and education policy both in the UK and in South Africa who has contributed to national policy debates. These experiences have inevitably influenced my own reading of the Sewell report.

The Sewell report as a response to organic crisis

The Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, coined the term 'organic crisis' as a way of describing a crisis encompassing the totality of a system or order. Organic crises are at once economic, political, social, and ideological. That is to say they are fundamentally crises of hegemony (i.e. of intellectual and moral leadership) and they often lead to a rejection of established political parties, economic policies, and value systems. '[C]risis,' Gramsci wrote, 'consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, morbid phenomena of the most varied kind come to pass' (Gramsci, 1992:276). One such morbid phenomenon that will be considered in this article is the reassertion of an English nationalism that whilst claiming to pursue a colourblind approach, has the effect of further entrenching racial and cultural inequalities.

In their influential analysis of racism in 1970s Britain, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham located the emergence of an authoritarian state under Thatcher and a resurgence in state and civil society sponsored racism as an aspect of the organic crisis of the time (Hall et al., 1978). It was exemplified in economic terms by the winter of discontent and in political terms by critiques of the welfare state and the rise of the National Front in response to fears amongst the white population over immigration. In the current era, the organic crisis of British capitalism is demonstrated in economic terms by continued attempts to deal with the aftermath of the 2008 economic crash through policies of austerity exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and overlain by the existential threat posed by climate change. It is also characterised in ideological terms by an attempt to redefine the 'national popular' (i.e. how the British nation is constituted in discursive terms). This has been through a reassertion of a populist nationalist discourse as a response to globalisation and the perceived threat posed by immigration, all of which contributed to the Brexit vote.

In political terms, the way that the crisis has played out has exposed historical contradictions within the governing Tory Party. In his analysis of the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher, Hall (1979) coined the term the 'New Right' to describe the coupling of libertarian, free market thinking linked to globalisation and traditional Tory values around what it means to be British. What we are currently witnessing, however, is a resurgence of the 'Old Right' in which the liberal free market wing of the party has had to increasingly take a back seat in the face of Johnson's populist agenda. The realisation of Brexit and the fall of the so-called 'Red Wall' to the Tories in the 2019 election has, however presented, new dilemmas for the government. Against its basic instincts and historical opposition to state interventionism the Party must be seen to be pursuing a state sponsored, redistributive agenda to appease its new predominantly white working-class base, particularly in the North through a process of 'levelling up'. This is at a time when class based, and regional inequalities have been laid bare by the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic(Blundell et al., 2021). As suggested below, the emphasis on the need to focus on the white working class in the Sewell Report can be interpreted as a way of demonstrating this so-called 'levelling up agenda'.

As was the case in the 1970s, race is once again centrally implicated in these contradictions and in Tory strategies for dealing with them. In ideological terms, the report directly feeds

into the wider 'culture wars' that the Tory Party has been waging against perceived attacks on British values including the toppling of statues the rise of so-called 'woke' culture, the attention given by antiracist activists and others to the dangers posed by 'micro aggressions' of various kinds and demands to 'decolonise the curriculum'.

As with the levelling up agenda, efforts to stir up patriotic sentiment as a response to Black Lives Matter can be seen as a hegemonic strategy that panders to the traditional as well as new Tory support base. In Laclau's (1990) terms, appeals to patriotism in defence of British values can help to suture together what are otherwise quite disparate class interests. Similarly, denying the salience of racism and the existence of structural racism feeds into populist narratives about putting 'our' (read white) working class first. Education is centrally implicated in these Tory culture Wars[4].

The Sewell Report can be seen as part of an ongoing effort to seize control of the diversity agenda from the Labour Party. Labour has consistently attracted the vast majority of Black and minority ethnic votes in the UK and has historically been perceived to take the lead on issues of race equality. (This despite its own historical contradictions around issues of race and immigration) (Back et al., 2002). For example, during Cameron and May's leadership there was a concerted effort to increase the number of Black and Asian MPs and members of cabinet with some success[5].

Significantly, several of these Black and Asian Tory politicians have been at the forefront of the so-called Tory culture wars. For example, during a speech at the end of parliamentary debate to mark Black History month in October 2020, it was Kemi Badenoch, the Equalities Minister and who is of Nigerian heritage who announced that the government was 'unequivocally against' the concept of critical race theory. She went on to state that we 'do not want teachers to teach their white pupils about white privilege and inherited racial guilt', and that any 'school which teaches these elements of critical race theory, or which promotes partisan political views such as defunding the police without offering a balanced treatment of opposing views, is breaking the law' (Economist, 2020)[6].

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[4] This is evidenced, for example, by statements by Ben Bradley, Tory MP for Mansfield, who recently claimed that equality legislation discriminates against white working-class men and that the notion of "white privilege" is ridiculous when white working-class boys struggle academically ECONOMIST. 2020. The Conservative Party's changing stance on race. *The Economist* [Online]. Available: https://www.economist.com/britain/2020/10/31/the-conservative-partys-changing-stance-on-race..

[5] Several senior members of the cabinet including the Chancellor, Richi Sunak, the Home Secretary Pritti Patel, the equalities minister, Kemi Badenoch, the Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi and the Chair of the Tory Party, James Cleverly, are now of African, African diaspora or South Asian decent as are several senior advisors and government aides such as Samual Ksumo, Special Advisor for Civil Society and Communities and Munira Mirza, Head of the Downing Street Policy Unit.

[6] Other examples include Pritti Patel, the Home Secretary, who has been at the forefront of Tory efforts to clamp down on the Bristol protestors who toppled the status of C18 Century philanthropist and slaver, Edward Colston and was highly critical of the police for their apparent lack of action. Significantly, Munira Mirza, who Johnson charged with appointing the Sewell Commission had previously been on record as denying the existence of institutional racism WALKER, P., SIDDIQUE, H. & GRIERSON, J. 2020. Dismay as No 10 advisor is chosen to set up UK race inequality commission. *The Guardian* [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/15/dismay-over-adviser-chosen-set-up-uk-race-inequality-commission-munira-mirza..

It is in this context of a wider effort to take control of the equalities agenda and to 'change the narrative' that the Sewell Report must be understood and interpreted. Appointing a predominantly Black and Asian panel can itself be seen as an effort to secure legitimacy for the panel. The Commission was appointed by Munira Mirza, Head of the Downing Street Policy Unit who had previously stated that she did not believe that institutional racism was responsible for racial disparities (Plummer, 2021). In keeping with the key messages of the report, the commission members were presented by the right-wing press as individuals who had rejected victimhood status and had managed to 'pull themselves up by their own bootstraps' to get where they are today. In stark contrast, the liberal press pointed to the track record of the Chair and members of the Commission. A controversial appointment, Sewell had previously expressed openly homophobic views, later retracted (Rawlinson and Dodd, 2020). Indeed, Sewell's appointment had been questioned by the Chair of the Runnymede Trust and had been subject to a legal review. Sewell along with several other members of the Commission had also previously spoken out against the idea of institutional racism[7] and several were known for their right of centre views and history of links with the Tory Party (Plummer, 2021)[8]. Having provided some context for the Sewell Report, the next section will provide a critical summary of the report.

The Sewell report - a critical summary

The aim of this section is to provide a critical overview of the education components of the Sewell report. The summary will focus on three aspects in particular which are germane to the overall arguments presented in the article, namely the claims to objectivity in the report, the erasure of racism as a major concern in education, and the shortcomings of the main recommendations that arise from the flawed analysis.

The Sewell report set out to investigate race and ethnic disparities in the UK. Besides education and training, the report also covers employment, fairness at work, and enterprise; crime and policing and health. The overall message of the section on education reflects the overall message of the report, i.e. that if racism does exist, it plays a relatively small part in determining racial disparities compared to other factors, notably socio-economic status, geography and family structure. The key message is encapsulated in the following quote:

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[7] In a 2010 piece for Prospect magazine, for example he said evidence of the existence of institutional racism was "flimsy", adding: "What we now see in schools is children undermined by poor parenting, peer-group pressure and an inability to be responsible for their own behaviour. They are not subjects of institutional racism. They have failed their GCSEs because they did not do their homework" SEWELL, T. 2010. Master class in victimhood. *Prospect* [Online]. Available: https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/black-boys-victimhood-school.. In a 2017 column for the Sun, he said: "Too often we have statistics which are misused in a way which casts minorities as victims of racism and white privilege" and claimed the government did so to seem appealing. SEWELL, T. 2017. Theresa May's race report is wrong....labels like 'racial injustice' do more harm than good. *The Sun* [Online]. Available: https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4656785/race-disparity-audit-racial-injustice-harmful/..
[8] The Commission also exposed tensions in the Tory Party itself leading one commentator to question whether the report had in fact been deliberately provocative and should be seen as part of an ongoing internecine struggle within Downing Street over race, resulting in the resignation of the government's race advisor, Samuel Ksumo WATSON, I. & SCOTT, J. 2021. Race report: Was controversy part of the plan? BBC News..

> *It is very difficult to judge on a national level the extent to which racism could be a determining factor in educational outcomes amongst ethnic minority groups. However, the fact that ethnic groups within the same system can have quite divergent educational outcomes, and that even within the major ethnic groups there are quite distinct trends, suggests that other factors may be more influential. Indeed, if there is racial bias within schools or the teaching profession, it has limited effect and other factors such as family structure, cultural aspirations and geography may offset this disadvantage (HMG, 2021 69).*

The myth of objectivity

The report is liberally interspersed with assertions that it is evidence- and data-led. This is, however, palpably not the case. To begin with as has been discussed, Sewell and indeed several of the other commissioners had previously gone on record as denying the existence of institutional racism. The report is more accurately interpreted as an ideological effort to confirm rather than critically evaluate these prior assumptions. For example, the report is highly selective in the evidence on which it draws, limiting itself for the most part to commissioned research that fits the central narrative. Notably absent from the discussion are submissions from organisations that provided evidence in support of institutional racism as a significant driver of racial disparities (Gillborn et al., 2021)[9]. Where reference is made to one submission that did highlight the significance of racial bias amongst teachers this possibility is quickly shut down in the report as the following quote illustrates:

> *It is very difficult to measure the extent to which an organisation's culture is inclusive or biased, but we feel it is important to shift discussions about systemic or structural racism onto more objective foundations. Rooting these terms in observable metrics gives us the chance to not only measure how people feel, but also analyse both the causes and where things are getting better. Institutions need to also acknowledge improvements and use both quantitative and qualitative evidence transparently, to show a fuller picture (HMG, 2021 36).*

Despite references to having taken account of qualitative evidence, the report exclusively focuses on quantitative evidence relating to the so-called 'attainment gap' between ethnic groups to develop its main arguments[10]. For many antiracists including those working within

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[9] Important to note here, however, is that the CRRE submission points out that they or indeed other scholars who have argued about the central role of racism have ever suggested that institutional racism is the *only* cause of disparities.

[10] Underlying much of the report is a positivist, empiricist approach to evidence in the social sciences. As Bhaskar and other critical realists have argued ARCHER, M., BHASKAR, R., CORRIER, A., LAWSON, T. & NORRIE, A. (eds.) 1998. *Critical Realism: essential readings,* London: Routledge., the supposed objectivity of such an approach rests on an 'epistemic fallacy', i.e. on the idea that what we choose to measure and what we observe from our measurements can be considered a reflection of reality provided the statistical methodology employed is suitably robust. This fails to take account of the extent to which what we choose to measure (i.e. the indicators that we deploy in statistical analysis are not 'objective' but are themselves based on preconceived ideas/ assumptions about how reality is constituted). There is also an epistemic fallacy involved in assuming that what we observe equates directly to reality. Statistics in this sense only ever provide a 'surface actuality' DANERMARK, B. 2002. *Explaining society : critical realism in the social sciences,* London, Routledge. of more or less strong associations/ correlations between elements. Whilst measuring correlates

critical race, postcolonial or decolonial perspectives, the failure to seriously engage with qualitative evidence is highly problematic as it is through accessing 'lived experience'[11] that the often-subtle ways in which racism operates and manifests itself at an individual and group level come to light[12]. It is an example of what (Fricker, 2007) describes as testimonial injustice where the voices of victims of racism are themselves marginalised from debate[13].

The report relies heavily on a secondary analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) carried out by Strand (2021) to make its major claims. Strand shows that the groups most at risk of underachieving at age 16 are white British, Black Caribbean and mixed white/ Black Caribbean heritage learners. Learners (particularly boys) from certain minority ethnic groups including Indian, Chinese and Black African groups outperform learners of white British heritage regardless of socio-economic status. Leaners of Black Caribbean and white/ Black Caribbean heritage are the only groups that underperform compared to their white British peers once socio-economic disadvantage is controlled for with children of Pakistani heritage performing at an equivalent level[14].

The overall findings concerning the significance of socio-economic status in predicting attainment are not new. They update the findings of similar analyses over a number of years[15]. In order to explain the observed disparities, the report, following Strand (2021)

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can of course be useful and important, dealing with complex open systems also requires going behind the numbers to understand qualitatively what is going on. It is the job of social scientists to develop theories that provide the 'best fit' for observed phenomena from a rational appraisal of the available evidence (both quantitative and qualitative). It is the argument of this article that any theory of underachievement must necessarily involve a consideration of institutional racism as contributing in part to disparities because of the sheer weight of evidence (both qualitative and quantitative) there is to support this view.

[11] The rejection of the idea of 'lived experience' as a basis for evaluating disparities has also recently been made by other senior Tories including Liz Truss TRUSS, L. 2021. *The new fight for fairness – My speech at the Centre for Policy Studies* [Online]. Available: https://www.elizabethtruss.com/news/new-fight-fairness-my-speech-centre-policy-studies [Accessed 10 June 2021]..

[12] See for example the excellent response to the report by Manny Hothi HOTHI, M. 2021. The Sewell Report was wrong about lived experience - here's why., the Director of Policy at the Trust for London.

[13] Qualitative research including interviews, narrative inquiries, classroom observations etc. have proved crucial either on their own or in combination with quantitative evidence in highlighting how everyday racism including racist stereotyping, name calling a bullying impact on learners of colour or how classroom interactions between white teachers and Black youth easily become racialised (some of this evidence is highlighted below).

[14] Low SES boys of Pakistani, White Other and Any Other ethnic group also have a mean score well below the grand mean, but still score substantially higher than comparable white British and Black Caribbean and Mixed white and Black Caribbean boys. Among students from average SES backgrounds, only Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean boys and White British boys have mean scores below the average for all students. There are only two instances of ethnic under-achievement compared to White British students of the same SES and sex. First, Black Caribbean and Black African boys from high SES families score lower than comparable White British high SES boys. Second, Pakistani girls from high SES backgrounds do not achieve as well as White British high SES girls, and also substantially below high SES Pakistani boys, who have the highest mean score of all groupings.

[15] See for example; DEMIE, F. & MCLEAN, C. 2017. Black Caribbean Underachievement in Schools in England. Lambeth: Lambeth Education and Learning, STRAND, S. 2015. Ethnicity, deprivation and educational achievement at age 16 in England: Trends over time. London: DfE, BENT, E., HILL, J., ROSE, J. & TIKLY, L. 2012. Making the Difference: Ethnicity and Achievement in Bristol Schools. Bristol: Bristol LA, DFES 2005. Ethnicity and Education: The evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils. London: DeFS, ibid., TIKLY, L., HAYNES, J., CABALLERO, C., HILL, J. & GILLBORN, D. 2006. Evaluation of Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement Project. London:

alludes to two related theories. The 'immigrant paradigm' proposed by Kao and Thomson (2003) is invoked to explain why some groups outperform indigenous white students. Here, it is argued that immigrants devote themselves more to education than the native population and hence are more likely to succeed[16]. Research that is not mentioned in the report has, however, consistently shown that learners of Chinese and Indian heritage are also subject to racist stereotyping and bullying even if they do outperform other white and ethnic groups in terms of attainment (Qureshi, 2013, Francis et al., 2017). This would suggest, *contra* the report, that these groups succeed despite the existence of racism targeted at them.

The immigrant paradigm, however, clearly cannot explain the continued underperformance of Black Caribbean, white/ Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage leaners. Here, drawing on Strand once again, the report argues that 'selective assimilation' theory may hold the key. Thus, whereas Indian immigrants tended to disperse in terms of the geographic areas in which they settled and to be prepared to selectively assimilate into British culture whilst maintaining their own cultural identities, this was not the case with Pakistani immigrants who tended to be more segregationist. The implication is that it is this failure to properly assimilate that is responsible for Pakistani underachievement. The possibility that the prevalence of Islamophobia in the education system and in society (see below) may at least provide part of the explanation is not considered. In the case of people of Caribbean heritage, the report points out that they have tended to settle in areas affected by poverty and so have, like the white working-class groups that surround them, developed a less optimistic view of the potential of education[17]. A key explanatory theme running through the report is the impact of family structure and the higher likelihood that Black Caribbean and white/Black Caribbean learners come from 'broken homes' with absent fathers who fail to act as satisfactory role models for Black boys, a theme Sewell has pursued for many years (e.g. Sewell, 2017, Sewell, 2010, Sewell, 2009). Negative peer pressure is also invoked in Strand's background paper as contributing to lower aspirations for Black Caribbean learners

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DfES, BHATTACHARYYA, G., ISON, L. & BLAIR, M. 2003. Minority Ethnic Attainment and Participation in Education and Training: The Evidence. London: DfES.. These all show similar trends in relative attainment once socio-economic status is taken into account. Strand's analysis of the LSYPE 2 data set updates these findings. It also uses a composite measure of parental occupation, parental qualifications and income as a measure of socio-economic status which is a more robust indicator than eligibility for free school meals which has often been used in the past.

[16] There is indeed other evidence to support this view focusing on the relative importance attached to education by some groups, e.g. learners of Indian, Muslim and Chinese heritage, the provision of tutoring outside school and pressure to do homework FERNÁNDEZ-REINO, M. 2016. Immigrant optimism or anticipated discrimination? Explaining the first educational transition of ethnic minorities in England. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility,* 46**,** 141-156, KHATTAB, N. & MODOOD, T. 2018. Accounting for British Muslim's educational attainment: gender differences and the impact of expectations. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 39**,** 242-259..

[17] Drawing on Strand's interpretation of Ogbu's OGBU, J. 1979. Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective. *Crisis,* 86**,** 17-21. work, the report makes a distinction between 'voluntary minorities' (such as immigrant groups who may be recent arrivals to the country and have very high educational aspirations) and 'involuntary' or 'caste like' minorities (such as African Americans or Black Caribbean and White working class pupils in England) to explain why the latter group hold less optimistic views around social mobility and the transformative possibilities of education.

whilst it is referenced in the report itself as contributing to higher rates of school exclusion for this group (below).

These interpretations of the evidence cannot be considered 'objective' as claimed by the report for the following reasons. Firstly, the way that the analysis is framed immediately rules out a recognition of racism *ex ante* as a possible causal factor in explaining disparities through its definition of 'explained' and 'unexplained' disparities[18]. Secondly, the report is blind to the way that intersectionality works in education and in other spheres, i.e. the extent to which race, class and gender are intertwined and mutually implicated in the reproduction of inequality. As Hall et al (1978 394) put it 'race is the modality in which class is lived'. It is not possible to simply control for class through the use of multivariate analysis as the authors of the report wish to do. Further, correlation does not equate to causality. The existence of a strong association between class and attainment does not mean that the experience of racism has also played a significant role in the way that class advantage is itself constituted and reproduced through education[19].

In order to explain the racial disparities, the report makes reference to sociological theories that identify the causes of disparities as arising from factors outside of the school, notably geography, family structure and a failure to properly assimilate on the part of some groups. Clearly, out of school factors are crucial in helping to explain disparities. The underlying causal pathways between each of these factors and underachievement are however, complex and contested. They cannot be simply read off from statistics. For example, the links between broken homes, absent fathers and underachievement (a dominant theme in the report) is not straightforward and often relies on deficit views of single parent Black and mixed-race families and in particular Black and (in the case of many mixed-race families) white, working class mothers[20]. Further, whilst there is evidence of the effects of negative

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[18] The authors distinguish between 'explained racial disparities [which] should be used when there are persistent ethnic differential outcomes that can demonstrably be shown to be as a result of other factors such as geography, class or sex' and 'unexplained racial disparities' which refer to 'persistent differential outcomes for ethnic groups with no conclusive evidence about the causes'. Racial disparities can only be attributed in this definition to factors other than racism, notably geography, class or sex, whilst unexplained disparities refer to situations where there is no evidence as to the cause of the disparity. This rules out the possibility that racism may be a cause of disparities *ex ante* PORTES, J. 2021. Race Report: Sewell Commission Couldn't Find Something it Wasn't Looking For. *Byline Times* [Online]. Available: https://bylinetimes.com/2021/04/09/race-report-sewell-commission-couldnt-find-something-it-wasnt-looking-for/..

[19] For a statistical critique of the Sewell report, see Jonathan Portes' ibid. response to Sewell.

[20] According to data from the Runnymede Trust REYNOLDS, T. 2010. Single Mothers not the Cause of Black Boy's Underachievement. nearly two thirds of Black Caribbean children are growing up in single parent families, a rate nearly three times as high as the overall average of about 22% in the UK. However, these figures can be misleading. As Reynolds REYNOLDS, T. 2005. *Caribbean Mothers: Identity and Experience in the UK,* London, Tufnell Press. has argued, many supposedly absent fathers are in fact actively involved in raising their offspring and Black boys may also have other male role models in the form of uncles or siblings that play an active role in the lives of Black Caribbean boys. Further, there is also evidence that many Black Caribbean boys raised in single parent households have a very positive sense of their self-identity and efficacy and have high educational aspirations despite the struggles faced by single mothers. We found similar findings in our research into the attainment of learners of white/ Black Caribbean background, i.e. that mixed race boys raised by single white mothers also often had a very stable sense of their identities despite the stereotypes that mixed race children suffer for identity confusion TIKLY, L., CABALLERO, C., HAYNES, J. & HILL, J. 2004. Understanding the Educational Needs of Mixed Heritage Pupils. London: DfES.. It is in the face of this more nuanced picture that socially conservative views that stigmatise single parent families and the parenting skills

peer pressure on attainment (Demie and McLean, 2017), there is also evidence that young Black men can act as a source of pride and strength for each other to succeed (Wright et al., 2020). What this means is that whereas these factors may indeed play an important role in relation to achievement a simple causal relationship cannot be simply assumed. Even where causal pathways can be identified, these do not in themselves rule out the possibility that racism is also a contributing factor. That is to say that, given the weight of evidence, any theory of underachievement must inevitably embrace the idea of multicausality with racism as one major contributing factor (below).

The erasure of racism

A key argument of the Sewell report as a whole is that the term 'racism' has become inflated to the point where it is rendered meaningless. Speaking about institutional racism specifically, the authors of the report endorse the definition provided by the MacPherson Inquiry into the death of the teenager Stephen Lawrence, namely

> *The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (HMG, 2021 34)*

However, they go on to argue:

> *The term [institutional racism] is now being liberally used, and often to describe any circumstances in which differences in outcomes between racial and ethnic groups exist in an institution, without evidence to support such claims….. If accusations of 'institutional racism' are levelled against institutions, these should – like any other serious accusation – be subject to robust assessment and evidence and show that an institution has treated an ethnic group differently to other groups because of their ethnic identity. (HMG, 2021 34)*

There is, however, substantial quantitative and qualitative evidence collected over many years and elided by the report that racism is indeed deeply embedded in systems and processes in educational institutions. For example, part of Strand's own analysis (which was omitted from the main report) suggests that low teacher expectations can contribute in the cases of some groups to them being disproportionately represented in lower ability sets and entered for lower examination tiers, a finding that is confirmed by a number of other studies (Tikly et al., 2006, Demie and McLean, 2017, Wright et al., 2020).

The issue of school exclusions draws attention to another example of institutional racism. Learners from Black Caribbean backgrounds are twice as likely to be temporally excluded and four times as likely to be permanently excluded from school (Demie, 2021) with learners from white/Black Caribbean backgrounds also considerably over-represented. The Commission, drawing on the earlier Timpson report (Review, 2019) argues that much of this

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of working-class mothers (both Black and white) play an ideological role in assuming causality when causality cannot be assumed.

over-representation can be explained away by other factors. One such factor is that Black Caribbean and mixed-race learners are more likely to be diagnosed with special educational needs (SEN)[21]. This ignores the considerable evidence that low teacher expectations and negative stereotypes of Black male identities along with the uneven and at times culturally insensitive application of school behaviour management policies play an important role in explaining the exclusion of Black males and females from school (e.g. Demie, 2021, Tikly et al., 2006)[22]. As the educationalist Bernard Coard first pointed out as long ago as 1973 in his seminal analysis of how the *West Indian child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the English Education System* (1971), the reasons why Black learners are labelled as SEN in the first place is often on account of low teacher expectations and low self-esteem linked to a lack of representation of Black identities in the curriculum and amongst staff and a failure to communicate to the parents of Black Caribbean learners how the system works. Sadly, these issues have not gone away. They remain a structural feature of our education system today (Lindsay et al., 2006). In keeping with the MacPherson definition, it is not just the existence of these practices but the institutional failure to do anything about them, that makes them a *prima face* example of institutional racism.

There are many other examples of institutional racism in the MacPherson definition of the term that the report glosses over or simply ignores. For example, a consistent finding from research is the impact on the sense of identity of Black and minority ethnic learners arising from the under-representation of Black and minority ethnic teachers in schools and particularly in senior leadership positions (Bent et al., 2012, Tereshchenko and Mills, 2021). The report alludes to this fact but elides the evidence of its impact[23]. Further, with regards to the curriculum, whilst the report calls for greater inclusivity in the representation of people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, it fails to acknowledge the extent to which the existing curriculum whitewashes British colonial history (below). A further key omission is any discussion of language support including for newly arrived and refugee learners (these groups are not mentioned in the report despite their growing numbers). Whereas, in previous eras, the government actively supported English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision through, for example, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and through the work of dedicated EAL specialists based in local authorities and schools, the removal of earmarked funding for EAL, successive cuts to LA budgets and academisation

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[21] The authors of the report also allude to the challenges of bad behaviour faced by teachers in inner city schools and elsewhere Sewell himself has placed a large emphasis on the effects of anti-academic street cultures influencing the misbehaviour of Black youth SEWELL, T. 2010. Master class in victimhood. *Prospect* [Online]. Available: https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/black-boys-victimhood-school..

[22] Our own national studies of Black Caribbean TIKLY, L., HAYNES, J., CABALLERO, C., HILL, J. & GILLBORN, D. 2006. Evaluation of Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement Project. London: DfES. and white/ Black Caribbean achievement HAYNES, J., TIKLY, L. & CABALLERO, C. 2006. The barriers to achievement for White/Black Caribbean pupils in English schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 27**,** 569-583, TIKLY, L., CABALLERO, C., HAYNES, J. & HILL, J. 2004. Understanding the Educational Needs of Mixed Heritage Pupils. London: DfES. accumulated considerable qualitative evidence of the biased way in which some white teachers applied behaviour management policies. Many Black parents we spoke to, testified to this. Whilst acknowledging the importance of good behaviour management policies many complained that their children were unfairly targeted by teachers. Many of the Black learners we spoke to complained about how they were more likely to be called out for bad behaviour by their teachers and in a way that they perceived as being unjust and disrespectful and which led to an escalation of the issues rather than their resolution.

[23] The report refers instead to evidence from studies relating to gender and achievement that what learners value are teachers who are consistent and even handed and supportive of them.

have led to a much more fragmented and uneven provision of EAL support in schools (NASUWT, 2012). This dismantling of proper provision can itself be seen as an example of systemic racism in that it fails to meet the needs of a disadvantaged group of learners[24].

Issues of institutional racism are not confined to primary and secondary schools. The report acknowledges the under-representation of Black and minority ethnic learners in apprenticeships but does not acknowledge the evidence that racial bias on the part of employers plays a part in this underrepresentation (Little, 2021). Further, although the report points out that Black and minority ethnic learners are more likely to access higher education compared to white British learners, Black learners remain underrepresented in 'high tariff' universities (i.e. universities with the most demanding entry requirements) whilst Asian heritage learners are clustered in 'mid-tier' universities (HMG, 2021). The report attributes this to poor career guidance. However, there is significant evidence - once again ignored by the report - of discriminatory practices in admissions processes to universities (Boliver, 2013, Boliver, 2015). Black and Minority Ethnic learners are also more likely to drop out of university, have more negative experiences than their white counterparts and leave with lower academic qualifications partly on account of bias and discriminatory practices within universities (UUK/NUS, 2019, Walker, 2019).

Inadequate solutions
In seeking to address racial disparities, the report argues for the need to focus on all learners from low SES backgrounds including an emphasis on white British learners as a group most at risk of underachieving. The report sets out a list of strategies for addressing the needs of all low SES learners including a focus on early years education, improved support for parents of young children from disadvantaged backgrounds, better targeting of funding to schools with high proportions of low SES learners, extending the school day for this group, support for high performing academy trusts, and investing in the 'core offering' provided by schools, namely good leadership and governance, good curriculum, good teaching, good behaviour and culture, good pastoral support and high aspiration. These recommendations whilst laudable, are not new. They echo decades of research in the area of school effectiveness and improvement. What they fail to address is the need to also tackle racism head on in the education system. In this respect it is important to note that efforts to tackle socio-economic disparity and racism are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, as will be suggested below, they can be mutually reinforcing.

As others (e.g. Sveinsson, 2009) have convincingly argued, the issue of class inequality - as it effects white, Black and minority ethnic learners is indeed a pressing issue in the English education system which has since its foundation been deeply unequal in the opportunities and outcomes experienced by people from different social class backgrounds[25]. However, as Gillborn (2010) points out, discourses about the need to focus on the white working class in

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[24] Recognition of the importance of language is not confined to learners for whom English is an additional language. Language support also needs to take account of the diverse linguistic needs of native English speakers including some Black Caribbean learners who speak different dialects of English.

[25] In this regard, there is hypocrisy in government claims to be 'levelling up' in class terms through education. As the Sewell report itself notes, government failure to meet 2019 election promises have resulted in 'pupils from more affluent backgrounds are attracting larger increases to funding rates compared with those from more disadvantaged backgrounds'.

the context of a discussion of racism and education serves an ideological purpose as they feed into wider discourses about white victimhood exploited by right wing politicians.

A key recommendation of the report is to do away with the unhelpful use of the term 'BAME' because it homogenises the experiences of different Black and minority ethnic groups in the education system. Once again, this is not a new recommendation, although it is heralded in the report as such[26]. It is argued here, however, that this insight might also be usefully extended to recognise the existence of multiple forms of racism that affects different Black and minority ethnic groups in different ways. This is to acknowledge, for example, the existence of Islamophobia as a distinctive form of cultural racism (Meer and Modood, 2009). Despite the prevalence of Islamophobia in society and in the education system (below) it is not referenced once in the Sewell report.

Of particular relevance in the context of the Sewell report is the nature of specifically anti-Black racism. This is also not referenced. The idea of anti-Black racism has been developed principally in the US in the context of the BLM movement[27]. It centres on the role of fear on the part of some white teachers of Black bodies but also hostility to manifestations of Black counter cultures of resistance (Lopez and Jean-Marie, 2021). Recent, careful ethnographic work in inner city schools in England has detailed how processes of racialisation of learners from Black backgrounds by some white teachers leads to the uneven and culturally insensitive application of behaviour management policies (Wright et al., 2020). These findings are echoed in previous studies that have focused on learners from Black Caribbean and white/ Black Caribbean backgrounds in particular suggesting that these groups are more likely than learners from Black African backgrounds to experience low teacher expectations (e.g. Demie and McLean, 2017, Demie, 2021, Tikly et al., 2006). A topic for further useful research would be to better understand how processes of racialisation may differentially affect different groups of Black learners including those of African and Black Caribbean heritage.

A key recommendation of the report is to include more references to the role of Black and Minority ethnic people in the development of 'The Making of Modern Britain' teaching resource which it counterposes to the supposed 'negativity' of demands to decolonise the curriculum.

> *The 'Making of Modern Britain' teaching resource is our response to negative calls for 'decolonising' the curriculum. Neither the banning of White authors or token expressions of Black achievement will help to broaden young minds. We have argued against bringing down statues, instead, we want all children to reclaim their British heritage. We want to create a teaching resource that looks at the influence of the UK, particularly*

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[26] Multiculturalists and antiracists have made the same argument for many years.

[27] In the US context, these forms of analysis are invoked with respect to the treatment of African Americans in education and in the criminal justice system. There is scope for extending this kind of research in the English context including how it might differentially affect learners of Black Caribbean heritage who may be more likely to manifest forms of cultural resistance in the form of rap music, hair styles or the use of dialect in the classroom.

during the Empire period. We want to see how Britishness influenced the Commonwealth and local communities, and how the Commonwealth and local communities influenced what we now know as modern Britain. One great example would be a dictionary or lexicon of well-known British words which are Indian in origin. There is a new story about the Caribbean experience which speaks to the slave period not only being about profit and suffering but how culturally African people transformed themselves into a re-modelled African/Britain (p.8).

The historian David Olusogu took issue with the glib and historically inaccurate references to slavery in the above quote (Olusoga, 2021). The quote reinforces criticisms such as those made by the Equalities Minister (above) of critical race theory and of the decolonising the curriculum movement. It can also be seen as an effort to appropriate multicultural discourse around diversity and the curriculum but to harness these ideas to a sanitised account of history that downplays and distorts the role of the British Empire in violent acts of dispossession, conquest and slavery (Heath, 2020, Tomlinson, 2019). It stands in stark contrast to antiracist initiatives in the curriculum which have sought both to highlight the positive role of people from Black Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in the making of modern Britain whilst also highlighting their efforts in struggling against slavery and colonialism (below).

In history as in other areas of the curriculum, a key concern is to develop amongst all learners regardless of their racial or ethnic background, an ability to think critically about past injustices as a basis for developing what Sriprakash et al (2020) describe as 'reparative futures' i.e. exploring the possibilities for developing a more inclusive sense of British identities based on a critical engagement with the past. For multiculturalists, this equates to developing an inclusive British identity through fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding (Uberoi and Modood, 2013). This must necessarily go beyond the superficial representation of diversity implied in the above quote.

The report also foregrounds the importance of a content-based curriculum and evokes Michael Young's (e.g. Young, 2013, Young and Muller, 2013) ideas about giving disadvantaged learners access to the 'objective', 'powerful knowledge' contained in the academic disciplines that enable learners to go beyond individual experiences. As has been argued, elsewhere, however, so-called powerful knowledge is also Eurocentric in its content and assumptions and cannot, therefore be understood as being 'objective' in the sense implied by the report (Tikly, 2020, Rudolph et al., 2018). The disciplines emerged in a particular historical, social and cultural context and have their own historicity. Thus, whereas Western science, for example, continues to play a crucial role in the fight against poverty and disease, it has also been complicit in the development of eugenics which has been used to legitimise colonialism and inequality and in the development of technologies that have contributed to human conflict and environmental destruction. The disciplines have also often been complicit in the 'epistemicide' by which Santos means the destruction and expropriation of other indigenous, non-Western ways of knowing the world (de Sousa Santos, 2017, Santos, 2012). Demands to decolonise the curriculum are not about banning white authors as the quote above simplistically implies, but rather about enriching the curriculum through drawing attention to what can potentially be gained from insights

derived from indigenous, non-Western as well as Western knowledge systems in the quest for more sustainable and socially just futures for humanity and for the planet[28].

Unsurprisingly given what has been discussed so far, the report completely ignores the vast amount of evidence built up over many years as to how schools can effectively tackle racism as integral to efforts to close the attainment gap. Research has consistently pointed towards the value of a whole school approach which recognises the ubiquitous, multi-dimensional nature of how racism operates in complex educational organisations (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003, Tikly et al., 2006, Tikly et al., 2004, Bent et al., 2012, Demie, 2021, Demie and McLean, 2017). Summarising, at the heart of such an approach lies a leadership that acknowledges racism, takes seriously issues of racial and cultural justice and has zero tolerance to the underachievement of all groups of learners; embedding a concern with tackling racism into school policies rather than adopting a colourblind approach; effectively monitoring and acting on incidences of racialised bullying; creating a safe learning environment in which learners can critically engage with issues of race and ethnicity; the effective use of data to track the attainment of different groups of learners across the curriculum, to identify successful practice and to challenge stereotypes of groups at risk of underachieving; a curriculum that reflects the diversity of British society but also equips learners with the information and skills required to form an accurate view of Britain's colonial past; strategies to engage Black and minority ethnic parents who either have ignorance of the English education system because they are newly arrived or who may themselves have had negative experiences of the education system so that they can support their children's learning; ensuring that Black and minority ethnic parents are represented on governing boards of schools and that their voices are heard in institutional governance; putting in place measures to diversify the workforce; investing in staff development that engages with conscious and unconscious bias but also with the nature of racism, its effects on learner outcomes and wellbeing and strategies for addressing it. These approaches encapsulate but go beyond the measures outlined in the report. Furthermore, where schools have these measures in place they can benefit not only Black learners but all learners as ultimately they are concerned with identifying and responding to diverse learning needs.

Whereas this section has focused largely on the methodological flaws and key omissions in the Sewell report, the next section will provide a deeper understanding of the ideological nature of the report in advancing a re-assertive nationalist project. The section will start, however, by setting out a theoretical framework that can guide the analysis.

Racial formation, racial projects, racism and antiracism

The aim of this section is to set out a theoretical framework that can help explain how key terms such as race, racism and institutionalised racism can be understood and that can serve as a basis for considering the Sewell Report in relation to the broader policy context of race and education in the UK.

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[28] As Santos explains, this is not an argument for relativism as some critics of decolonising the curriculum suggest but rather a recognition that insights from Western and non-Western knowledge systems, are valuable for solving different kinds of problems.

Here Omi and Winant's (2015) ideas about racial formation and racial projects have been found particularly helpful[29]. A key starting point for Omi and Winant is in recognising the nature of race as a socially constructed 'master category' in sociological analysis. The socially constructed nature of race has, however, shifted over time from pseudo-scientific accounts to more culturally oriented ones. Omi and Winant see race as co-existing with other master narratives of class, gender and sexuality. Although they perceive these master categories as being relational and intertwined, they argue the importance of considering race as a distinctive analytical category. Here work on intersectionality is relevant because it allows for a consideration of how racism intersects with other regimes of inequality including those based on class, gender and sexuality to produce complex dynamics of inequality at the level of policy, an institutional level and at the level of individual and group identities and agency[30].

The authors define racial formation as 'the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed' (Omi and Winant, 2015 624). That is to say that changing discourses on race need to be understood historically and in relation to how they have served to legitimise (or indeed to challenge) racially defined hierarchies within the state and civil society. Racial formation involves processes of racialisation, a term that the authors use to emphasise how 'the phonemic, the corporeal dimension of human bodies, acquires meaning in social life' (ibid).

Racial formation theory has been criticised by some exponents of the theory of structural racism and critical race theory (CRT) for failing to adequately take account of the concepts of whiteness and of white supremacy that they argue must be understood as foundational for an understanding of structural racism (Feagin and Elias, 2013). As others have argued, however, racial formation theory can be considered complimentary to CRT and to ideas of systemic[31] and institutionalised racism in that it allows for a more nuanced understanding of how intersecting and competing racial projects have at an aggregate level worked to sustain white supremacy (Golash-Boza, 2013, Golash-Boza, 2016).

Omi and Winant coin the term 'racial projects' to capture the simultaneous and co-constitutive ways that racial meanings are translated into social structures and become

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[29] To date their ideas have had limited uptake in the UK CABALLERO, C. & ASPINALL, P. 2018. Mixed Race Britain the Twentieth Century. London: Palgrave Macmillan. perhaps reflecting the US centric nature of Omi and Winant's work.

[30] The idea of intersectionality has a long history. Following Walby WALBY, S. 2009. *Globalization and Inequalities: complexity and contested modernity,* London, Sage., the view of intersectionality proposed here is that race can best be understood a distinct 'regime of inequality' that operates at a number of scales from the global to the national to the institutional and the individual level. In this non-reductionist understanding the question of causal primacy cannot be read off from any pre-existing assumptions (e.g. about the primacy of class) but needs to be understood conceptually and empirically as these intersecting regimes play out in specific institutional contexts to produce difference TIKLY, L. 2020. *Education for Sustainable Development in the Postcolonial World: Towards a transformative agenda for Africa,* Abingdon, Routledge.. Such an understanding is significant when interpreting some of the assertions in the Sewell report about the primacy of socio-economic status over race (below).

[31] For our purposes, systemic racism refers to the extent to which racism is an inherent feature of multiple systems including the education system but also health, criminal justice, housing and other social systems. It draws attention to how these systems interact to reproduce racial and cultural inequalities.

racially signified' (ibid)[32].[6] A 'racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines.' (Omi and Winant, 2015 713). Racial projects can operate at a number of scales from the societal to the individual. Discussion will focus below on three racial projects that have operated at the level of society and its institutions and have been particularly influential in shaping education policy.

Significantly in relation to the discussion of the Sewell report, a 'racial project can be defined as racist if it creates or reproduces structures of domination based on racial significations and identities' (ibid). However, rather than envisioning a single, monolithic and dominant racist project, the authors suggest that 'racist projects exist in a dense matrix, operating at varying scales, networked with each other in formally and informally organized ways, enveloping and penetrating contemporary social relations, institutions, identities, and experiences. Like other racial projects, racist projects too converge and conflict, accumulate and interact with one another' (Omi and Winant, 2015 732)[33].

This nuanced understanding of racist projects is important for our purposes. Firstly, it points to the need to specify different racisms[34] in education and wider society including for example, different forms of anti-Black racism and Islamophobia[35]. Importantly for our purposes, Omi and Winant also acknowledge that racial projects can be antiracist. The authors define antiracist projects as 'those that undo or resist structures of domination

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[32] This resonates with Hall's understanding of race a 'floating signifier' in which different understandings of 'race' have been articulated to differing economic and political interests HALL, S. 1996. New ethnicities. *In:* MORLEY, D. & CHEN, K. (eds.) *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies.* London: Routledge..

[33] In the discussion below, the Nationalist project will be presented as an example of a racist project but one that mobilises (in sometimes contradictory ways) other racist projects including Islamophobia and anti-blackness.

[34] One distinction is between biological racism in which discrimination is based primarily on a person's skin colour and cultural racism in which discrimination is primarily focused on a person's religious beliefs, language, values and world view. As has been noted for many years now, there has been a gradual shift from the former to the latter expressions of racism in popular discourses BARKER, M. 1981. *The New Racism,* London, Junction Books. partly as a consequence of the success of struggles against overt biological racism including apartheid in South Africa and the racial segregation and the colour bar in places like the US and in the UK. The two forms persist, however, and remain intimately intertwined. As contemporary literature on the specificities of anti-Black racism LOPEZ, A. E. & JEAN-MARIE, G. 2021. Challenging Anti-Black Racism in Everyday Teaching, Learning, and Leading: From Theory to Practice. *Journal of School Leadership,* 31**,** 50-65. and Islamophobia ELAHI, F. & KHAN, O. (eds.) 2017. *Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all,* London: Runnymede Trust. for example, make clear both of these racisms involve a complex juxtaposition of corporeal/ phenotypical and cultural elements.

[35] Islamophobia is a specific form of cultural racism. Whilst Islamophobia involves processes of racialisation, it is arises principally through processes of cultural othering resulting in a misrecognition of Muslim identitiesMEER, N. & MODOOD, T. 2009. Refutations of racism in the 'Muslim question'. *Patterns of Prejudice,* 43**,** 335-354, MODOOD, T. 2005. *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain,* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.. The Runnymede Trust define Islamophobia as 'any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life' ELAHI, F. & KHAN, O. (eds.) 2017. *Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all,* London: Runnymede Trust.. As will be argued below, Islamophobia has become a structural feature of the English education system.

based on racial significations and identities' (Omi and Winant, 2015 735). As with other racial projects, this understanding also allows for a plurality of antiracist projects.

The idea that racist and antiracist racial projects can co-exist and compete for hegemony is consistent with the Gramscian idea of organic crisis outlined above and allows for the possibility that dominant racial projects are contested. In the US, this has been through the discourses of civil rights and more recently of Black Lives Matter. In the UK, as suggested below, the current racial formation can be understood as arising from competing racial projects of nationalism, multiculturalism and antiracism. (Note that 'antiracism' here refers to a distinctive racial project that self-identifies as being antiracist. It will be argued below that both antiracism and multiculturalism can be considered more or less antiracist in their effects, i.e. in the extent to which either have the effect of undoing or resisting structures of racial domination *in practice*).

Extending Omi and Winant's definition of racist and antiracist projects, however, it is useful to consider a framework of values that can be used to develop a finer grained, normative assessment of claims about whether or not a particular discourse or policy can be considered racist or antiracist. Such a normative basis is absent from the Sewell report and racial disparities are defined narrowly and instrumentally in terms of the attainment gap. This does not allow for an appreciation of other manifestations of racial disparity including, for example, racialised bullying or the injustice in not seeing your identity and family's history adequately reflected in the mainstream curriculum.

The normative framework offered here builds on Nancy Fraser's (2013) three dimensions of global justice but expands these. Each of these dimensions has been discussed at greater length elsewhere (Tikly, 2020). Thus, racial justice has a *distributive* aspect which can be understood in terms of how resources are allocated between differently racialised groups. This does not necessarily mean that resources must be allocated equally if the intention is to reduce or eliminate disparities in opportunity and outcome. It may also mean targeting resource at addressing specific needs such as language needs or the needs of newly arrived, refugee learners. This dimension is relevant for considering the extent to which resources are deployed in a way that can close the attainment gap between different groups.

The second dimension is *recognitional* justice which focuses on the extent to which the rights and identities of different groups are recognised in policy and practice. It relates to 'positive' rights such as the right to worship according to your religious faith, to have your mother tongue recognised and supported or for the histories, cultures and identities of people of colour to be reflected in the curriculum. It also relates to 'negative' rights including, for example, the right not to be subject to racialised violence. Closely related to recognitional justice is the idea of *epistemic* justice, i.e. the extent to which learners have access to the knowledge contained in the curriculum but also the extent to which the curriculum recognises a plurality of ways of understanding and conceiving of the natural and social world and the ability for learners to critically evaluate and mediate between these. Another dimension of recognitional justice is the idea of *reparative justice*, which is achieved through acknowledging and seeking justice for enduring histories of racial and colonial domination. This is evidenced for example in demands for reparations for the injustices of slavery and the forceful expropriation of land during the colonial era

(Sriprakash et al., 2020). A final dimension that underpins the others is *representational* justice, i.e. the extent to which the agency and voices of Black and minority ethnic learners, parents and community organisations are genuinely engaged in processes of decision making at the institutional, local and national scales. Ensuring representational justice provides the only fair basis on which competing claims to justice can be evaluated and resolved. Discussion will return to a consideration of these dimensions in the sections below.

Racial formation in the UK and in education policy
Omi and Winant describe distinct periods of US history understood through the lens of changing racial formation. They describe the shift from overt racial domination exemplified by Jim Crowe laws, segregation, the wide-spread practice of lynching and the McCarren-Walter immigration restrictions, to the evolution of a new racial formation in the wake of what they describe as the *great transformation* brought about by the civil rights movement. The new period of racial formation quickly became dominated, however, with a conservative reaction since the 1970s that has sought to effectively reverse the gains made by the civil rights movement. They identify Obama's election victory in 2009 as signifying a new period of hegemony characterised by 'colourblindness' that has sought to underwrite the neoliberal project in America.

Applying the ideas of racial formation and racial projects to the UK context, it is possible to identify similar shifts in racial formation at a general level, although with significant differences in how they have played out between the two national contexts. The UK has also seen a shift from the overt racial domination involved in the colonial project and the slave trade to overt segregationist policies pursued against newly arrived immigrants in the post-war period to the development of a new period of racial formation. In the UK, however, this has taken a different form.

Space does not allow for a full historical analysis here (see for example Tomlinson, 2019 for a recent historical review of race and education). As others (Donald and Rattansi, 1992, Tikly et al., 2007, Tomlinson, 2019) have argued, the immediate postwar period up until the late 1970s can be described in terms of the politics of assimilation in which government funding, including support for language provision under section 11 of the Local Government Grant was targeted at ensuring immigrants were fully assimilated into the British way of life with little regard for their own cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Racial politics in the wake of the inner-city riots of the late 1970s and the publication of landmark reports including the Swann and Parekh reports which advocated multiculturalism can broadly be defined as integrationist (below).

Multicultural approaches have, however, been subject in the past to sustained attacks both from exponents of the nationalist and antiracist projects. For many nationalists, multiculturalism has constituted an attack on British values through promoting cultural relativism. For some exponents of antiracism, multiculturalism has been criticised for a superficial focus on celebrating diversity[36] rather than tackling the underlying causes of

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[36] Multiculturalism was often referred to by some antiracists in derogatory terms as the 'saris steel bands and samosas' approach DONALD, J. & RATTANSI, A. (eds.) 1992. *'Race', Culture and Difference,* London: Sage..

racial inequality which were argued to be structural in nature[37] . Conversely, multiculturalists have sometimes criticised antiracists for failing to take sufficient account of forms of cultural racism including Islamophobia and for conflating under the political category of 'Black', groups that have very different experiences of racism (Modood, 2005, Modood, 2017).

What has been gradually emerging since the Thatcher era has been a new racial hegemony organised around the principle of 'colourblindness'. As in Omi and Winant's description of racial politics under the Obama administration, colourblindness is exemplified by claims (echoed in the Sewell report) that we are moving towards a 'post-racial' society in which institutional racism is deemed to no longer exist and in which we can all supposedly fall in behind a common notion of Britishness. For Omi and Winant, 'colourblindness' is articulated to neoliberalism in that individuals are defined increasingly as consumers of goods and services rather than as members of racial and ethnic groups. It is suggested that the Sewell report can be interpreted, in broad terms against the backdrop of this gradual shift in racial formation, although as suggested above it is currently being articulated in relation to a resurgent nationalism in which concerns with sovereignty underpinned by socially conservative views have been in tension with and have often predominated over laissez faire economics.

Racial formation in post-war England has been characterised by the co-existence of competing racial projects within the state and in civil society, namely those of nationalism, multiculturalism and antiracism. These projects as they currently manifest themselves are summarised in table one below:

Table one: Racial projects in society and in education policy in England in the 2020s

	nationalist	Multicultural	Antiracist
Intellectual foundations	Conservative traditionalism	Liberalism, human rights, pluralism	Critical race theory, decolonial/ postcolonial scholarship, Neo-Marxism
Support base	Conservative elite, sections of the Black and Asian middle classes, sections of the white working class	Urban liberal elites, civil society organisations and think tanks, many local authorities, educators	Antiracist educators, sections of the labour movement, anti-racist social movements
Understanding of 'race' and 'culture'	Race and culture as essentialised social categories	Race and culture as socially constructed categories	Race and portrayals of non-Western cultures as

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[37] During the 1980s, and in the context of the report into the murder of the teenager Stephen Lawrence, there was a degree of rapprochement between these positions signified by the recognition in the report and by the liberal establishment at the time of a institutionalised racism as a factor in the police's mishandling of the murder enquiry.

			fundamentally ideological in nature
Understanding of racism	Isolated acts of prejudice on the part of individuals	Social arrangements that discriminate against racially and culturally defined groups	Systemic/ structural
Policy orientation	Assimilationist	Integrationist	Transformative
View of race relations in the UK	Meritocratic	Discriminatory	White supremacy
View of education system in relation to race relations	Facilitates social mobility	Discriminatory	Institutionally racist
Approach to race and the curriculum	Emphasise Britain and British values	Understand and celebrate diversity and intercultural understanding	Decolonise the curriculum
Approach to closing the attainment gap	Focus on socio-economic disparities and raising aspirations	Focus on raising teacher expectations, language support	Systemic feature of the education system
Approach to school exclusions	Focus on socio-economic disadvantage	Focus on teacher bias	Systemic feature of the education system
Approach to teacher education in the area of race and ethnicity	Focus on subject knowledge, contribution of BAME to British history and literature	Unconscious bias training	Antiracist training
Landmark policy texts in education	Timpson, Sewell	MacPherson, Swann, Parekh REAA, Equalities Act	Rampton Report, Macpherson report

These racial projects should not be seen as fixed but rather as having fluid boundaries between each other that change over time. As we will see below, the Sewell report as a contemporary manifestation of the nationalist project borrows heavily from the multicultural racial project in key areas. Furthermore, many antiracists may also ascribe to ideas more closely associated with the multicultural racial project and vice versa. It is important to acknowledge how these projects often co-exist in contradictory ways within an

overall racial formation, in policy, within institutional practices as well as at the level of individual belief and action. The authors own position, for example, can be described as straddling the antiracist and multicultural projects[38]. Adherence to one racial project or another also cuts across party lines depending on the historical context. Whereas the nationalist project provided the major impetus for the hegemony of assimilationist approaches to policy in the immediate post-war period, it now provides the major impetus for a colourblind approach to policy. Despite the fluid, intersecting and changing nature of racial projects, they are considered useful as a heuristic devise.

The nationalist project in education

The nationalist project can be seen as the dominant racial project in the post-war era and is currently once again in the ascendancy. It is reflected strongly in the Sewell report. It is organised around an essentialised view of British values and institutions such as the family and the monarchy, a belief in law and order and a glorified view of British history that extolls Britain's role in the world, its right to sovereignty and elides the more barbaric aspects of empire including the expropriation of land, massacres, indentured labour and slavery.

It has also been associated in the past with essentialised views of race including ideas about the links between race and intelligence such as those popularised by some psychologists in the 1970s (e.g. Eysenck, 1971). With their origins in the eugenics movement of the 19th and early 20th Century, these ideas continued to cast a long shadow in the post-war period[39]. Although nowadays direct references to scientific racism are rarely used in public discourse having been largely discredited in the aftermath of the holocaust, the basic ideas of a linkage between genetics and ability has recently resurfaced[40].

To the extent to which racism is perceived to exist within the nationalist project, it is largely perceived as the accumulation of acts of individual prejudice rather than being systemic and institutionalised[41]. In this vein and as shown above, whilst acknowledging the existence of instances of individual teacher bias, the Sewell report argues that 'if there is racial bias within schools or the teaching profession, it has limited effect and other factors such as

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[38] My own background as an activist has been in grass roots antiracist struggles whereas much of my research has been broadly on work aimed at closing the attainment gap within a broadly integrationist frame of reference. Below I argue for a greater *rapprochement* between Multiculturlaism and Antiracism.

[39] They were clearly reflected for example in key policy texts such as the 1967 Plowden Report which was otherwise noted as a liberal document in that it advocated child centred education TOMLINSON, S. 2019. *Education and Race: From Empire to Brexit,* Bristol, Policy Press..

[40] Dominic Cummings in his time as advisor to then education secretary Michael Gove quotes studies that supposedly showed that 60-70% of success in National Curriculum tests depended on heritability meaning that focusing on the education of children 0-3 was apparently useless. Many Sure Start programmes were closed down following this announcement ibid.. Boris Johnson has also publicly stated that 'human beings are very far apart in their raw ability…as many as 16% of our species have an IQ below 85…while 2% have an IQ above 130 ibid..

[41] A key finding of the Scarman Report in 1981 into the Brixton riots SCARMAN, L. 1981a. London: HMSO., for example, found evidence of individual acts of prejudice by police including the disproportionate use of stop and search on young black man but no evidence of institutional racism.

family structure, cultural aspirations and geography may offset this disadvantage (HMG, 2021 69).

The above quote illustrates another key aspect of this project, namely a tendency to subsume issues of race under the wider umbrella of socio-economic disadvantage. This aspect was exemplified for example in early post-war education policy which rarely mentioned race[42]. The implication then as now is that resources ought to be targeted at disadvantaged communities which are predominantly white rather than at tackling racism. Then as now, the education system is seen as a largely meritocratic institution enabling social mobility provided the disadvantaged have the necessary aspirations and are prepared to work hard.

This philosophy of 'getting on your bike' (as Conservative MP Norman Tebbit once famously put it) or 'pulling yourself up by the bootstraps' pits itself against the politics of 'victimhood'. It is shared by a wide range of constituencies. Under Thatcher it was used to appeal with some success to the aspirational working class who could now buy their own council homes. It also increasingly appeals, along with socially conservative views about the family, to some sections of the immigrant community. The philosophy is clearly reflected in the Sewell report which explicitly argues that a focus on racism in education reenforces a sense of victimhood and dampens aspirations.

There are two main policy orientations within a nationalist approach. The first, noted above, is a colourblindness that refuses to acknowledge the existence of systemic and institutionalised racism and subsumes racism as an issue to socio-economic class[43]. The second is towards assimilation in which racial and cultural minorities are expected to adopt British values and traditions. It has been reflected in wider policies on immigration instituted by both Tory and Labour governments over many decades dating back to Powell's 1968 Rivers of Blood Speech with fears over immigration often centring on the ability of British society to 'absorb' immigrants[44].

Education has been a key battleground for assimilationist ideas. Policies such as the bussing of immigrant children in the 1960s and early 1970s were aimed at ensuring assimilation. As

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[42] A DES circular in 1974, for instance argued that 'Immigrant children share with indigenous children the disadvantages associated with an impoverished environment' DES 1974. Educational Disadvantage nad the Needs of Immigrants. London: HMSO..

[43] The Scarman report SCARMAN, L. 1981b. <div aria-level="1" class="zNLTKd" role="heading" style="direction: inherit; font-family: "Google Sans", "Product Sans"; font-size: 34px; line-height: 40px; background-color: rgb(255, 255, 255);">The Brixton Disorders, 10-12 April 1981 The Scarman Report : Report of an Inquiry. London: HMSO. into the causes of the Brixton riots in 1981 is a good example of previous government-commissioned reports that have sought to deny the existence of institutional racism.

[44] These sentiments were echoed in later years by Margaret Thatcher's famous 1978 speech about the fears of Britain being 'swamped' by people of a different culture and in Norman Tebbit's 1990 famous 'cricket test' by which he suggested that loyalty to the country equates to support for the English national sports team. Teresa May's 2012 efforts whilst Home Secretary to create a really hostile environment' is a more contemporary example of the rhetoric that is used to legitimise assimilationist policies. It led directly to the Windrush scandal.

mentioned, section 11 funding from the 1970s was targeted at immersing newly arrived immigrants into English with little regard for the evidence of the pedagogical and psychological benefits accrued to the learner from a bilingual approach. Conservative criticism of multicultural policies in the 1970s and 1980s, influenced by the Black Paperites including thinkers such as Cox and Scruton railed against the cultural relativism implicit in Multiculturalism which was seen as a threat to the teaching of British values[45].

The debates over the curriculum and in particular the history curriculum at the time of the introduction of the national curriculum in 1988 can be seen as a triumph for the nationalist, assimilationist project in education. Against the progressivist ideals of education during the 1970s and the perceived evils of mutliculturalism as it was beginning to manifest itself, it proposed a highly content-driven approach with a history curriculum firmly focused on British history. Contemporary debates about the supposed dangers of decolonising the curriculum find echoes in this and in previous eras. Subsequent reforms to the curriculum have reinforced this tendency (Tomlinson, 2019)

As Tomlinson (2019) goes on to argue, by the 1980s, religion had been added to race as a source of white hostility as Muslim communities began to request that predominantly Muslim schools be funded on a par with other grant-maintained faith schools. The burning of Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses* in Bradford in response to the issuing of a fatwa by Iran's Supreme Leader against Rushdie added fuel to the fire of anti-Islamic sentiment. The aftermath of 9/11, the fallout from the Iraq war in 2003 and from the July 7 bombings in London in 2005 as well as disturbances between Muslims and white youth in Northern towns (below) and more recently, the rise and then defeat of ISIS have deepened fear and hostility. This has been demonstrated by a rise in violent hate crimes against Muslims (Awan and Zempi, 2017).

The prevent agenda introduced under Labour as part of its anti-terrorism strategy and continued under the Tory/ Liberal Democratic coalition government has placed a statutory responsibility on schools to report signs of non-violent extremism. It has, however, been strongly criticised by the Muslim community both with respect to the extent to which it homogenises Muslims but also because it has been disproportionately applied to Muslims with children as young as three being reported as a potential terrorist threat. As such it has been counter-productive in terms of winning hearts and minds amongst Muslims and has served to undermine trust in the British values it was supposed to protect (Cohen and Tufail, 2017, O'Toole et al., 2012). An assimilationist ideology also lay behind the introduction of

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[45] Incidents such as the Honeyford Affair in which a local headteacher in Bradford, Honeyford, wrote to the Times Education Supplement campaigning about the introduction of multicultural and antiracist curriculum by Bradford LEA added fuel to the fire and reinforced a sense of White victimhood that was exploited by the right as did the incident in Dewsbury in 1987 when a group of white parents insisted that their children should not be taught in a school with Asian children. Another example of a growing sense of white victimhood were the attacks in the press in 1991 against Culloden Primary school in Tower Hamlets for giving too much emphasis to speakers of a second language.

British citizenship tests under the Nationality, Citizenship and Asylum Act implemented by the Labour government in 2002[46].

To what extent can the nationalist project be considered racist in Omi and Winant's terms and how might it be evaluated against the view of racial justice outlined above? It will be recalled that racial projects intersect in complex ways at the level of policy, the institution and the individual and assessments of whether individuals and groups have been disadvantaged by a specific project require careful analysis within specific contexts. Nonetheless, and in relation to the first dimension of racial justice, the overall effect of a colourblind approach which has been integral to the nationalist project has been to redirect resources aimed at tackling racial disparities and racism to predominantly white constituencies[47]. The national project with its assimilationist and colourblind tendencies has also resulted in a lack of recognition for diverse cultures. This is reflected in successive attacks on the multicultural curriculum and the promulgation of a British nationalist world view that largely ignores Britain's colonial past. In terms of participatory justice, the nationalist project has provided limited opportunities to engage with the concerns of Black and minority ethnic communities except where some representation and voice has served a legitimatory purpose for the nationalist project itself (the Sewell report being a good example of this). By way of contrast the nationalist project has often been highly effective in closing down the voice and agency of Black and minority ethnic grassroots organisations whether it is through dismissing the expression of their concerns in official reports (e.g. Rampton report) or in the criticisms and belittling of Black Lives Matter movement in parliament and in the Sewell report.

The Multicultural project in education

Multiculturalism as a distinctive racial project can be seen to have emerged in the 1970s in first the US and then in the UK as a response to the civil rights movement and the articulation of a new radical politics centred around racialised and gendered identities (Modood, 2013). In this project, race is seen primarily as a social construct rather than as an essentialised characteristic and racism is seen largely in terms of social arrangements that unfairly discriminate against racially and cultural defined groups. Multiculturalism in the UK context has drawn on two main philosophical traditions (Uberoi and Modood, 2019). The first is that of classic liberalism which is premised on a framework of individual rights and freedoms that are considered universal including the idea of universal human rights. The

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[46] The preceding white paper introduced by Home Secretary Blunkett had also proposed that children of asylum seekers should have separate schooling echoing Thatcher's earlier concerns that these children were 'swamping' British schools.[9] Although this part of the Act was dropped the policy of dispersing asylum seeking and refugee families meant that they were often relocated to areas hostile to their presence and experienced increasing racist abuse and hostility by young White people (Tomlinson, 2019).

[47] Indeed, it was a colourblind approach to school funding that led Cameron's coalition government to redirect funding specifically targeted at providing language support and closing the attainment gap through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant to the Direct Schools Grant that schools had discretion to use as they wished. This despite evidence that the strategies funded through the grant were having an impact (Tikly et al, 2004). The result was a loss of expertise at a local authority and school level, particularly in language support (REF NAS/UWT).

second is pluralism which is based on a recognition of culturally relative world views and on the need to develop inter-cultural understanding and dialogue. Both of these feed into a broadly integrationist approach for managing diversity, i.e. an inclusive view of British citizenship and identity that embraces diversity, encourages inter-cultural dialogue and is underpinned by anti-discriminatory as well as religious and cultural rights and freedoms (Uberoi and Modood, 2013).

Multiculturalism has driven the development of much government policy including a series of acts introduced by Labour governments. These include the *Race Relations Act* (1965) which banned overt discrimination in public places; the *Race Relations Amendment Act* (2000), which placed a duty on organisations to actively promote race equality (which in education meant measures that aimed at closing the attainment gap); and, the *Equalities Act* (2010) which consolidated legislation relating to race, gender and disability under one legislative umbrella and defined race and ethnicity as two of several protected characteristics and also put an onus on schools to actively promote equality.

Integrationism has also underpinned key reports and initiatives[48]. The 1985 Swann report (HMG, 1985) advocated a multicultural curriculum and the provision of bilingual EAL support for immigrants. During the 1980s several Local Education Authorities (LEAs) including the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) began to adopt multicultural policies and to set up specialist units to support multicultural education and EAL provision. The idea for a Black History month originated in the US and was introduced by ILEA in 1987 much to the dismay of Margaret Thatcher.

The 2001 *Report into the Future of Multiethnic Britain* chaired by Bikhu Parekh (2001) was a landmark report for the multicultural project in that it set out the intellectual case for multiculturalism. It argued that Britain should develop both as a community of citizens (the liberal view) and as a community of communities (the pluralist view). It was the first report to acknowledge the existence of different racisms including biological and cultural racisms (e.g. Islamophobia). The report was significant in setting the future multicultural agenda in education arguing for the monitoring of attainment by ethnicity, a curriculum based both on a notion of common citizenship and respect for plural values and improvements to teacher training.

A key theme of the Parekh report, namely the importance of social cohesion spoke to growing concerns about a lack of community cohesion and integration on the part of some Muslim communities[49]. The Cantle report in 2001 placed an onus on schools to foster

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[48] The 1977 *Report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration on the West Indian Community* COMMISSION FOR RACIAL, E. The Select Committee on Race Relations & Immigration. Enquiry on the West Indian community: Evidence on education. Commission for Racial Equality. was the first report to identify Britain as a multiracial, multicultural country.

[49] These concerns had been precipitated by growing tensions between Muslim and white youth in Northern towns which led to outbreaks of violence in 1995 in Bradford and again in Oldham, Bolton, Bradford, Burnley in 2001.

greater social cohesion through teaching citizenship education focused on a common set of British values. The social cohesion agenda has subsequently been pursued by the coalition government. However, whereas the vision of cohesion set out in the Parekh and Cantle reports was based on a pluralist understanding of recognition and representation of the agency and voice of minority communities, the vision set out in more recent Tory government statements such as the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* (HMG, 2018) is altogether more assimilationist in tone despite its assertions to the contrary[50].

To what extent can the multicultural project be considered antiracist in Omi and Winant's terms and how might the project be assessed against the dimensions of racial and cultural justice? To the extent that multicultural policy has allowed resources to be targeted at Black and minority groups, and where initiatives such as the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant were implemented successfully, they have contributed to closing the attainment gap. However, these initiatives have tended to be short-lived and have quickly become subsumed within wider strategies to target resources at disadvantage in general. Multiculturalism has also only been partially successful in guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of Black and minority groups in education. Thus, whilst the race relations and equalities legislation has sought to limit overt discrimination and racial violence, it has often failed to be properly implemented. This is evidenced by the continuing prevalence of racial bullying in schools and the failure to close the attainment gap in the case of Black and minority ethnic groups most at risk of underachieving.

Despite early efforts to diversify the curriculum, multiculturalism has also been limited in its scope by the imposition of a dominant nationalist agenda. A criticism of multiculturalism on the part of advocates of the antiracist project is that it has rarely attempted to implement a curriculum that would allow spaces for learners to explore the possibilities for reparative justice as a basis for more racially and cultural just futures in education (Sriprakash et al., 2020). Finally, and in terms of representational justice, despite the commitment to pluralism in important texts such as the Parekh report, multiculturalism has had limited success in engaging the voices of Black and minority ethnic learners, parents and communities. For many supporters of the antiracist project, these limitations arise because of the failure of the multicultural project to adequately acknowledge and take account of the structural nature of racism and of white supremacy.

The Antiracist project in education
The third racial project that has been evident in education, that of antiracism has operated for the most part as a counter-hegemonic project in relation to the more dominant

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[50] For example, whilst the report couches itself in the language of integration and Multiculturalism and the recognition of religious freedom for different faith groups, it remains premised on the idea of immutable British values but does not specify what these are or indeed the process by which they might be determined. Neither does it allow for a questioning of some British values that remain altogether too common including racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, classism, disablism etc. At no point in the report is racism mentioned as an obstacle to integration and cohesion. Furthermore, whereas the Green Paper acknowledges the need for migrants to learn English, it says nothing about the right to develop community languages alongside English.

nationalist and multicultural projects. It can be seen to have diverse roots in the struggles against colonialism and imperialism and in the development of pan-Africanism and neo-Marxism in the 1970s and 1980s. Antiracism as a contemporary racial project was given an enormous impetus during the civil rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s in the US and UK exemplified by the grass roots campaigns such as the Bristol bus boycott and against racist immigration, employment and housing policies. It was given a further impetus by the grass roots struggles against the National Front in the 1970s and 1980s and the rise of the anti-apartheid movement in the wake of the 1976 Soweto uprisings and campaigns to free Nelson Mandela from prison in the late 1980s.

At a general level race in this project is perceived as an ideological category and racism as a structural feature of white majority, capitalist societies. The ideas of structural[51] and institutional racism have a long history in this tradition and can be traced back to the 1967 book authored by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton entitled *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*[52]. These ideas have been developed by advocates of critical race theory who have argued that racism is a normal (rather than an aberrant) feature of white majority societies. As noted, antiracists have often been critical of multiculturalists for focusing too much on issues of cultural recognition rather than challenging the structural nature of racial inequality.

Within education, antiracism is reflected in the early grass roots campaigns by the West Indian community in the UK during the 1960s and 1970s in response to the growing perception that their offspring were being discriminated against by teachers and over-represented in special educational needs classes and generally failed by the education system. During the 1970s and in the context of the rise of the far right, the education system was key battle ground between the Anti-Nazi league and supporters of the National Front. Antiracism as a racial project continues to be reflected in grass roots movements against school exclusions[53] as well as in efforts to develop antiracist materials for use in the curriculum. Contemporary examples include the Black Lives Matters protests and efforts within higher education to decolonise the curriculum[54]. Another example of such initiatives is the work of the Bristol-based artistic co-operative that produce history materials for key

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[51] Structural racism is often used by exponents of the antiracist project to refer to the extent to which racism is a structural feature of the capitalist system itself, a view that informs for instance the concept of racial capitalism ROBINSON, C. 1984. *Black Marxism: The making of the Black radical tradition,* London, Penguin..

[52] Carmichael and Hamilton wrote that while individual racism is often identifiable because of its overt nature, institutional racism is less perceptible because of its "less overt, far more subtle" nature. Institutional racism "originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than [individual racism]" CARMICHAEL, S. & HAMILTON, V. 1968. *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America,* New York, Vintage Books..

[53] See, for example, No More Exclusions, which is a grassroots movement aimed at abolishing exclusions (https://nomoreexclusions.com/) (accessed 21 May 2021)

[54] The decolonising the curriculum movement draws on a long tradition of anticolonial critique of the Western-centric nature of the curriculum. It was given an impetus by the *#RhodesMustFall* Movement started by students at the University of Cape Town in 2015 and subsequent movement in US and UK universities such as the *#WhyismyCurriculumWhite* movement.

stage three. The materials highlight the achievements of people of African and African diaspora heritage including in the fight against racism and colonialism[55]. These movements develop earlier antiracist initiatives in the curriculum undertaken in some Local Education Authorities and schools that sought to challenge the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum, the marginalisation of non-Western knowledge systems and to encourage a critical engagement with Britain's colonial past through the curriculum.

Antiracism has, however, had relatively little purchase in government policy at a national level. Indeed, it has often been vilified by nationalist politicians and the right-wing press. There have, however, been rare moments where it has gained some foothold at a national level[56]. For example, the 1999 MacPherson report into the death of the teenager Stephen Lawrence (HMG, 1999), although integrationist rather than explicitly antiracist in tone, was the first official acknowledgement of the existence of institutional racism and had implications not just for the criminal justice system but for other institutions including education. It became an important point of reference for antiracists who had historically identified institutional racism as the major barrier in the way of achieving racial justice in education and society. The Sewell Report can be seen as an effort to push back on this achievement through its efforts to dismiss the concept of institutional racism. During the 1980s Antiracism did gain some foothold, however, in the work of a small number of local authorities despite these efforts often being pilloried in the press. Antiracism also gained some traction within teaching unions such as the NUT which first published antiracist guidelines for schools in 1992 (Tomlinson, 2019).

So to what extent can antiracism understood as a racial project be considered to be antiracist in Omi and Winant's terms, i.e to what extent has it actually impacted on policy and practice and how might it be evaluated against the dimensions of racial justice? Firstly, in relation to distributive justice, the biggest success of the project is the extent to which the idea of institutional racism has become accepted within mainstream policy discourse. This has provided a basis and a rationale for government-led initiatives that have sought to tackle institutional racism as part of efforts to close the attainment gap. However, as we have seen, these efforts have generally tended to be short lived. The definition of institutional racism that did become established in policy has also been contested. What is emerging in the Sewell report, for example, is a watered-down version that is reduced to individual acts of prejudice rather than a focus on the *processes* that lead to systematic discrimination that antiracist project has often sought to highlight. This points to the need for antiracists to clearly articulate a fuller understanding of the term (below).

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[55] See https://cargomovement.org/classroom/ (accessed 21 May 2021).
[56] For example, the Rampton committee set up in 1979 by the Conservative government in the wake of the inner-city disturbances of 1980 into the educational needs and attainment of West Indian pupils identified low teacher expectations and racial prejudice among white teachers and society as a whole as the main obstacle to raising the attainment of this group. This report was rubbished by the press and rejected by the government and the Swann Committee (above) was established in its place.

Antiracism has also had mixed success in relation to aspects of recognitional justice. On the positive side, this has included the identification of different forms of racism including a recent focus on anti-Black racism. There is however, scope for deepening these understandings including how anti-Black racism may differentially affect different groups of Black learners including those from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds. Further, as noted, antiracists have also been criticised by some multiculturalists for focusing largely on colour racism and failing to recognise the specificities of cultural racism including Islamophobia.

In relation to recognitional justice, antiracist scholarship has also focused on decolonising the curriculum and has provided a rich critique of the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum, the whitewashing of Britain's colonial past and the absence of the histories, experiences and voices of people of colour. It is further argued below, however, that there is important work to be done in better understanding how these initiatives can be put into practice. This is linked, it will be suggested with the need for the antiracist project to recast itself in more proactive as well as oppositional terms as contributing to the achievement of racial and cultural justice and an inclusive vision of Britishness. This in turn draws attention to a tension within the antiracist project. For some exponents of antiracism, there has been a reluctance or unwillingness to engage in seeking to realise change within the mainstream education system. This is partly based on the pessimistic view that genuine change cannot be realised unless the whole edifice of capitalism and white supremacy is completely dismantled, a scenario that in the current context seems extremely unlikely.

Finally, in terms of representational justice, antiracism has, largely through the actions of grass roots organisations, drawn attention to specific issues in education including campaigns against the over-representation of Black learners in SEN classes and against school exclusions. Furthermore, the establishment of supplementary schools as a response to the racist nature of the mainstream education system has drawn positively on a long tradition of Black self-reliance (often with Black women at the forefront) with its roots in Pan-Africanist thinking (Andrews, 2016, Reay and Mirza, 2001). There is much to be learned from these movements about successful practice for teaching Black learners. It should also be pointed out that this version of collective self-reliance stands in contrast to the individualism implicit in the nationalist project. It provides useful lessons from which a reconfigured antiracist project can build upon.

Beyond Sewell: The struggle for racial and cultural justice in education

It has been argued that the Sewell Report is flawed in its analysis and limited in its recommendations. It has also been argued that the report is best understood as part of a wider ideological effort to advance a reconfigured nationalist project as a response to the wider organic crisis in British capitalism. A central feature of this emerging nationalist discourse has been the further deepening of a colourblind approach to issues of racism in education. It has also involved appropriating some of the language from the multicultural project including for example, language around cohesion, integration and even the idea of

multiculturalism itself. These have been harnessed to what remains in essence an assimilationist approach in education. It has also been argued that through failing to identify and tackle racism as a serious issue in the education system, the Sewell report can be seen to perpetuate rather than to challenge white supremacy in education (whatever the stated intentions of the authors of the report may have been).

Despite its many shortcomings, the Sewell report as an example of a redefined nationalist project, does however, pose new challenges for multiculturalists and antiracists. In this concluding section, specific challenges are identified along with some suggestions for possible ways forward. One challenge is that antiracists specify more clearly what is meant by institutional racism. As discussed in previous sections, there is a wealth of quantitative and qualitative evidence on which to draw. A consistent picture has emerged over many years of conscious and unconscious processes and colourblind policies that have the net effect of discriminating against some Black and minority groups because of their race and/or ethnicity. There is also a need, however, to deepen research and understanding on the nature of institutional racism. This is to acknowledge that racial projects are not static over time but also that processes of racialisation give rise to distinctive forms of racism including Islamophobia and anti-Black racism that need to be better understood and challenged.

A criticism of efforts to decolonise the curriculum in the Sewell report is that they are essentially negative. It has been argued that the supposedly more positive vision of diversity contained in the report perpetuates an ideological view of Britishness in which British colonial history is elided. Nonetheless, it does pose a challenge to Antiracists about how the struggle against racism can be cast in positive terms.

At a philosophical level, this implies seeking to articulate a new 'planetary humanism', i.e. a view of human nature and of social reality that is based on a positive recognition of diverse racial and cultural identities but also how these intersect with class and gender based identities (Gilroy, 2006, Mbembe and Posel, 2005). Such an inclusive vision has often been at the forefront of antiracist and anticolonial movements and is reflected for example in the speeches of visionary leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Steven Biko, Angela Davis and Martin Luther King. Such a vision stands in contrast to the narrow, exclusionary idea of what it means to be British contained in much contemporary nationalist discourse.

Striving towards such a vision does, however, necessarily involve engaging with past and ongoing injustices against people of colour but also class, gender and other inequalities. Through opening up possibilities for learners to engage with the idea of reparative justice, education can enable a process of reflection on the traumas of the past and on their links to existing inequalities as a basis for beginning to articulate such a planetary humanism (Sriprakash et al., 2020). Here, there is much that can be learned from similar processes elsewhere in the world including in former colonised countries that are still recovering from the violence and trauma of the colonial encounter (e.g. Bellino et al., 2017). It also involves

encouraging processes of inter-cultural dialogue as a basis for articulating an inclusive sense of British identity (Uberoi and Modood, 2013).

There is also a need, however, to move beyond purely philosophical concerns and begin to articulate what a vision of racial and cultural justice in education might look like in practice[57]. There is room for a greater *rapprochement* between the antiracist and multicultural projects in this regard[58]. One area of policy and practice where such a joining of forces could take place is in terms of developing an expanded view of racial disparities in education that engages with but also goes substantially beyond the reductionist understanding contained in the Sewell report. For example, in seeking to address the attainment gap it is important to build on previous government and local authority initiatives aimed at closing the attainment gap whilst simultaneously addressing institutional racism. It has been suggested that the whole school approach that emerged through some of these initiatives provides one valuable starting point for such an endeavour.

Work to embed systemic approaches to change has, however, become significantly more challenging under the increasingly fragmented and unequal education system put in place by successive Labour and Conservative governments. Arguments for a systemic approach to tackling racism, therefore, need to be articulated to demands for a less fragmented, more coherent and equal education system. They also need to be supported by new research into how anti-Black, anti-Muslim and other racisms continue to provide a barrier to attainment for differently racialised groups. It is also crucial as a counter-hegemonic strategy to articulate how efforts to create more racially and culturally just institutions complement rather than contradict efforts to address class, gender and other sorts of disparities and injustice. Demands to tackle racism as well as to tackle other forms of inequality are not mutually exclusive as the Sewell report implies. For example, it has been found in the past that where schools have applied a whole school approach to tackling racial disparities, this has benefited *all* learners because it helps institutions to base interventions on a more nuanced understanding of the needs of all learners (Blaire et al, 2003; Tikly et al, 2005; 2006; 2012). This is not to repeat the simplistic one size all approach to school improvement contained in the Sewell report, but rather to genuinely empower educators, leaders, parents and learners to recognise the complex ways in which different forms of injustice intersect in education to reproduce disparities and to engage educators as active agents in addressing these.

A key area of focus for realising positive change is in the curriculum. Antiracists have often challenged the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum. It has been argued that this is

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[57] This means engaging in a 'war of position' (Gramsci, 1992), i.e. an ongoing struggle for hegemony in the 'trenches' of the state and of civil society rather than waiting for the edifice of capitalism and white supremacy to crumble.

[58] Such calls are not new MODOOD, T. & MAY, S. 2001. Multiculturalism and education in Britain: an internally contested debate. *International Journal of Educational Research,* 35**,** 305-317. but need to be made with renewed urgency.

important for making the knowledge in the curriculum more representative of the experiences of diverse learners but also for preparing all learners for the challenges facing our planet including the climate crisis and the threat of biosphere collapse and for preparing all of our learners to participate as equal citizens in a diverse world. In this respect, there is a need to link up concerns with decolonising the curriculum with struggles to better reflect working class histories and identities and to challenge gendered norms and stereotypes. This understanding transcends the narrow view of citizenship based on a nationalistic conception of 'British values' set out in the Sewell report.

Epistemic justice, however, is not confined only to issues of representation. The other side of epistemic justice is the need to increase access to the curriculum for groups who have historically been disadvantaged in gaining such access. Such concerns should not be the prerogative of right wing, nationalist politicians. Writing in the 1980s, the Black educationalist Maureen Stone (Stone, 1981) drawing on Gramsci, argued that if the next generation of Black learners are to be empowered to use education to realise meaningful change at an individual and societal level then this requires first getting to grips with 'powerful knowledge' and be able to transform and harness this knowledge in their own interests. Indeed, it has been the desire to increase access to the mainstream curriculum that has partly driven the supplementary school movement amongst the Black Caribbean (Reay and Mirza, 2001) communities and support for extra tuition amongst Muslim communities (Khattab and Modood, 2018). That is to say that demands to enrich the curriculum through embracing diversity need to go hand in hand with efforts to increase access to and attainment in the existing curriculum.

Underpinning a new counter-hegemonic project for racial and cultural justice in education must be a new radical politics in education that can galvanise the agency and voices of racialised and minoritised communities. As noted, there is a long tradition of grass roots, community activism on which to build. In realising change there is room for learning from the past histories of the antiracist and multicultural projects. There is much to learn from the former about the power of grass roots activism and struggle in realising change. There is also much to learn from the latter about how a new radical, pluralist politics might be conceived and realised in policy terms. Despite Sewell, the struggle for racial and cultural justice in education continues apace.

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