



# BRITISHNESS, IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Edge Hill University Research Investment Fund  
Project

A report on young peoples' views of British  
identity and belonging in post referendum UK

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## Contents

Report authors:.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Britishness, Identity and Belonging .....	7
Rationale:.....	7
Context.....	7
From race to religion.....	8
British values and securitisation .....	9
Brexit.....	10
Summary .....	11
The Study .....	11
Overarching Research Questions:.....	12
Methodology and Method.....	12
Outline of the project .....	13
Data collection .....	13
Project Timeline 2017-2019.....	16
Findings .....	17
Interfaith Youth Group.....	18
Muslim Girls High School .....	22
Muslim Boys School .....	26
Church of England High School Group 1 .....	30
Church of England High School Group 2 .....	35
Comprehensive School .....	40

Conclusion.....	44
Next steps .....	46
References: .....	48

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‘As symbols of the future, youth harbour the possibility of an alternative and more liberating world- view, and in doing so they constitute a threat to fundamentalist ideologies’

(Giroux, H. & Evans, B. 2016, 232).

## Executive Summary

The geopolitical transformations that took place in the wake of the 9/11 al Qaeda attacks have been marked by political discourses announcing the end of multi-culturalism in many western democracies and the emergence of an exclusionary politics of national identity. Political debates have pivoted around the incompatibility of Islam with democratic values and widespread anxiety about refugees and asylum seekers. In Europe and the UK, the immigration debate has led to the introduction of citizenship tests, language and civic values exams and other tests of naturalization and compatibility with Western liberal values. In the UK the 2016 Brexit referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union led to a spike in reports of racial violence and harassment. This fearful racialised environment has profound and far reaching implications for students and educators raising questions about its impact on the outlook of young people and how educators should respond to ensure students are prepared for the challenges of a post referendum UK.

The report provides an account of the key findings of an Edge Hill University Research Investment Fund project, Britishness, Identity and Belonging. The project was designed to investigate what young people think being British means to them. Data was collected in 2018 through group interviews with young people, who shared their views on British identity, race, religion and education. Four secondary schools and two youth groups participated in the project. Three events were organised as part of the project including two school linking days and a young peoples' roundtable discussion which explored their hopes and fears as young citizens in a post referendum Britain.

Drawing from Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017) our aim was to foreground and privilege the experiences and the views of young people. We were interested in their counter stories and real-life dilemmas, 'lived up close' and what they could tell us about the sort of education they wanted.

Our findings showed:

- The BAME young people we spoke to racism is a painful daily reality and can take a variety of forms including social media bullying campaigns to verbal abuse.
- Young people want more anti-racist education.
- Young people want to learn about each other's communities, culture and religions through experience by attending exchange visits and schools linking events.
- Young people want to talk about politics and want more political education.
- Young people want open honest debate and 'truth'.
- There is no consensus on what Britishness means and for some it is a racialised concept that can be used to divide people.
- Young people want knowledgeable teachers who are well trained, committed and get the facts right about religions so they aren't misrepresented.

In the next phase of Britishness, Identity and Belonging we will turn the young peoples' observations and recommendations into action by working in partnership with them, their schools and youth groups, including new research partners from schools and colleges that have expressed an interest in joining our project, to form an anti-racist educational network. Our aim is to facilitate programmes of,

- Experiential learning through school links events, so students can learn about culture, religion and lifestyle through encounter and dialogue
- Young peoples' civics events, roundtable events which allow for the open honest debate, particularly centred on questions of race, identity and religion that the young people called for

And to create,

- Curricula, models of learning and teaching and resources that address issues of citizenship, race and identity in post referendum Britain.

## Britishness, Identity and Belonging

### Rationale:

In the period following the 2016 Brexit referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union (EU) there was a sharp and disturbing spike in racist attacks which served to undermine the precarious sense of belonging of many British BAME citizens. The campaign to leave the EU has been fuelled by an emotive discourse saturated with racial messages deriving much of its power from fear of migrants, refugees and the politics of the War on Terror. Beginning with New Labour, successive UK governments have promoted a political narrative singling out multiculturalism as a causal factor in the Northern riots of 2001 and so called home-grown terror attacks. In education the introduction of the DfE requirement that schools actively promote fundamental British values and the Prevent duty have contributed to confusion amongst education professionals about how best to deliver civic, multi-cultural and religious education. However, there is little empirical evidence on how young people and children from all ethnic groups in secondary and primary age settings articulate their sense of British identity and how education professionals might develop curricula that address their questions and needs.

Recent reports highlight both Government and NGO concerns with issues of belonging and identity concluding that there is an urgency for high quality research and resources to address these issues (British Youth Council, 2016; Burnett, 2016; Casey, 2016; UN, 2018). Building upon Vini Lander's existing research on teachers' views of the requirement not to undermine fundamental British values Francis Farrell and Vini Lander began researching secondary Religious Education (RE) teachers' views of the requirement in 2015. This project 'British, Identity and Belonging' (1) emerged from our work with teachers in order to gain insights into the under researched area of young peoples' views of British identity.

The focus of the project is an investigation of the young peoples' views of:

- Race, ethnicity and identity
- British values

And to,

- Create opportunities for young people to co-construct knowledge about what it means to be British and to explore their views through debate and discussion.

### Context

In this section of our report we outline the wider social and political context that formed the backdrop to our research. This overview is a critical contextualisation which serves to emphasise the polarising effects of the racial politics of the referendum campaign and the racial binaries it has given rise to. Raymond Taras



argues that 'Islamophobia never stands still' (2013) and has been on a journey since the early middle ages, constantly evolving to the present day. The same logics could be applied to the broader concept of racism itself. The recent racial and political landscape of the UK has been shaped by a number of key events that have created the social, racial and political reality that the young people we spoke to live with and negotiate. In this short overview we aim to show how racism 'never stands still', often evolving in ways that disguise its intentions. To set the scene we will consider how:

- In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century racial politics has shifted to incorporate religious and cultural markers as signifiers of racial difference alongside biological racism based on skin phenotype
- In the UK context, a shared values policy discourse became a form of government civic nationalism requiring teachers and students alike to not undermine state sanctioned fundamental British values
- The Brexit referendum has contributed to the racialisation of religion, with special reference to the UN report published in 2018 on race relations in the UK
- Black Lives Matter has brought racism back into the forefront of political debate with implications for anti-racist education policy and practice

### From race to religion

In 1999, in response to the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence by a group of white youths, an enquiry led by Sir William MacPherson (MacPherson, 1999) found that the investigation of Stephen's killing had been marred by professional incompetence and institutional racism within the Metropolitan Police force. The report made 70 recommendations to change the attitudes of the police and other public organisations including zero tolerance of racism. However, racism, it would seem, never stands still and new forms of racism have emerged alongside the explicit biological racisms that led to the tragic murder of Stephen. Like a multi headed hydra racist ideology had begun to shift before 9/11 when racist organisations began to exploit the side-lining of religious identities in equalities legislation. The 1976 Race Relations Act provided protection on the basis of a statutory definition of 'racial group' based on ethnic origin, but offered no protection based on religion or belief. In the 80's the definition of racial group was extended to include Jews and Sikhs but offered no protection for diverse multi ethnic groups such as Muslims and Buddhists. Racists began to exploit religion, and culture, particularly in the case of Islam, as the basis of racial difference and incompatibility with 'Western' values. The Rushdie affair in 1989 in which Muslims protested against Rushdie's book, 'The Satanic Verses', created a platform for racists to question the place of Muslims in the UK but it was 9/11 that provided the catalyst for anti-Muslim racism and the demonization of Muslims by the British Nationalist Party (BNP) who launched their 'Islam out of Britain' campaigns in Oldham and Bradford, areas with high south Asian heritage Muslim populations. By targeting religion rather than taking an explicit focus on race, the BNP sought legitimacy for their campaign through its

appeal to the 'Clash of Civilizations' narrative that had gained traction in the neoconservative discourse of both British and US mainstream political representatives in the Conservative and Republican parties.

### British values and securitisation

The next key event to shape the racial and policy environment of the UK were the terror attacks that took place in London on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005, carried out by 4 young British-Muslim men. The attacks led to the introduction of the Prevent strategy, a previously dormant strand of the government's counter terror strategy CONTEST. Implementation of Prevent involved targeting local authorities with high Muslim populations with resources to undertake community engagement events and youth work. However, Prevent has been heavily criticised for the high level of police involvement in its implementation, leading to allegations that it was used to surveil communities and positioned them as suspect (Kundnani, 2015; Thomas, 2016). Prevent was disproportionately focussed on communities that had already borne the brunt of political and media attention in the wake of the 2001 riots in northern towns and cities. These communities were characterised as self-segregating with an excess of insular social capital and a deficit in bridging capital. From our critical perspective we can see a subtle neoliberal discourse at work which responsibilised structurally vulnerable communities living at the sharp end of fear, inequality and under investment. Culture and religion were clearly being singled out in this discourse as causal factors in producing the so called 'parallel lives' these predominantly south Asian communities were allegedly living. The actions of a minority of young men had led to a situation where an entire community, once positioned as conservative and pious (Abbas, 2011) had been transformed into angry hot heads and folk devils (Shain, 2011).

Throughout New Labour's term a curiously atavistic 'shared' British values discourse began to dominate government speeches and policy. Gordon Brown famously stated that the British values of fair play were like a golden thread that ran through British history. Brown made no mention of the legacies of empire and slavery that starkly contradicted his politicised reconstruction of Britishness. This beleaguered and defensive Britishness was to receive its biggest political boost when it became policy under the coalition government led by David Cameron. In 2011 at the Munich Security Council, Cameron denounced what he called the passive tolerance of state multiculturalism in favour of his government's notion of 'muscular liberalism' (Cameron, 2011 a). In a speech to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King James Bible, Cameron stated that British values were Christian values, effectively setting up a racial hierarchy that excluded non-Christian Britons (Cameron, 2011 b). In 2012 fundamental British values entered the teachers' regulatory framework in part 2 of the Professional Teachers Standards. The standards required teachers not to undermine the fundamental British values of liberty, democracy, rule of law and tolerance for other faiths in both their professional and private lives. What at first sight appeared to be a set of liberal values was in fact a politicised construction of Britishness that took its definition, not from public democratic debate, but from the Prevent counter terror strategy. As Foucault argues policy always has a target, a group that it seeks to regulate (Foucault, 2009). The language of the Prevent

strategy and by extension FBV reveal that government had targeted the Muslim community as the population it seeks to regulate. In the wake of the event known as Trojan horse affair in 2014, FBV went through a second iteration. It was no longer enough for teachers not undermine FBV, they were now required to actively promote FBV. In 2015 the Counter Terrorism and Security Act placed the Prevent duty on schools requiring teachers to monitor and report their students for signs of radicalisation, including non-violent extremism expressed in the form of non-violent vocal opposition to FBV. The FBV requirement has been met with criticism from academics, unions and education professionals across the sector. Concerns have been raised about the potential damage to teachers' relationships with their students if learners think that expression of their opinions might lead to referral. FBV has also created the conditions for a type of banal nationalism (Billig, 2004) to enter education practice, reinforcing racial messages through poster displays of the Queen, the union Jack, red telephone boxes and Churchill thus emphasising cultural tropes but also serving to reinforce the sense of not belonging or not British enough for minority students and teachers (Farrell and Lander, 2019).

## Brexit

Questions of belonging and identity have dominated the Brexit debate<sup>1</sup>. In her report for the UN Professor Tendayi Achiume, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance identified a number of factors that contributed to a hostile environment for ethnic minorities in Britain. Brexit was singled out as a key factor in "conferring legitimacy" to racial and religious discrimination and, "growth in the acceptability of explicit racial, ethnic and religious intolerance" (OHCHR, 2018).

Achiume is not alone in highlighting the ways that religious and racial discrimination elide in this political environment. The political narratives that gained momentum during the referendum were driven by discontent that had its roots in post 9/11 war on terror discourses and the alienating effects of the 2008 financial crash (Virdee and McGeever, 2017). The politics of austerity in regions where there is competition for jobs, housing and resources enabled Leave campaigners such as the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) to turn migrants and refugees into "colonizers", driving a xenophobic post factual narrative of taking back control in order to make Britain "great again" (Houtum and Lacy, 2017,93; Sayer, 2017). The UKIP anti-immigration poster, "Breaking Point" in which lines of dark-skinned refugees were portrayed queueing to cross a border in a way reminiscent of Nazi propaganda was a visceral marker of the extreme direction the Leave campaign had taken (Burnett, 2016; Houtum and Lacy, 2017). Subsequently the post referendum period has witnessed the growth of English nationalism, allegations of institutional racism in the Home Office following the Windrush scandal and accusations of anti-Semitism in the Labour party. Terror attacks in London and Manchester have undermined public confidence feeding widespread anti-Muslim prejudice. The wars and austerity of the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have created an environment where post

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<sup>1</sup> Brexit is the term used for the UK government's decision to hold a referendum to leave the European Union on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

imperial nostalgia and populist “great again” nationalism have become the “new normal” (Houtum and Lacy, 2017).

In the weeks following the vote there was a 58% increase in the number of hate crimes directed at migrants, religious minorities and the LGBTQ community reported during the same period in 2015 (Travis, 2016). Jack Dromey, former Labour Shadow Police Minister suggested that the real figures were much higher, but hate crimes were not being reported due to victims’ fear of reprisals (Travis, 2016). More recently Richard Griffiths of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE, 2016) have reported on this growing trend in parental withdrawal of pupils from RE because of their objections to the teaching of Islam. Griffiths states that “parents with certain prejudices including Islamophobia and antisemitism who wish to remove their children from certain lessons would significantly hinder the ability of the school to prepare a child for life in modern Britain” (Turner, 2018).

## Summary

Racisms old and new continued to blight the lives of minority communities in the post 9/11 period, but the new focus on religion and culture represents a pernicious turn in the development of forms of racism that have had such a bearing on the lives of the young people, their teachers and youth workers that we worked with in this project. Post Macpherson talk of institutional racism appeared to disappear from policy makers’ rhetoric as if the operationalisation of the report’s recommendations was enough to dismantle embedded systemic structural racisms. However, a Home Office Committee report (Home Affairs Committee, 2009) published 10 years after Stephen’s death in 2009, found that stop and search continued to be a major cause of concern for BAME communities, with black men 6 times more likely to be stopped than whites and that black families continued to express deep anxieties about their treatment by the Police. At the time of writing, the Black Lives Matter campaign has thrust issues of race and racial justice back onto the political agenda unequivocally demonstrating that 20 years of neoliberal appeals to meritocracy cannot obscure or bury the deep-rooted trauma of century’s old racisms. As these racisms old and new intersect, the young people, teachers and youth leaders that we worked with find themselves facing the challenges of navigating the uneven racial and classed terrain of 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. Questions of what it means to be a British citizen, who feels they belong, who feels they are left out or don’t belong and what sort of response educationalists can make through anti-racist educational alliances with schools and communities take on a real urgency and have never been more relevant.

## The Study

Political and educational debates on FBV, extremism and what it means to be British have omitted the perspectives of children and young people.<sup>2</sup> To address this gap in

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/guidance-on-promoting-british-values-in-schools-published>

knowledge our research drew upon the expertise of community groups and schools in the North West of England, to gain rich insights into the lives and views of young people in post referendum Britain. Our participants live and work in diverse communities in a region which includes both the urban conurbations of Manchester, Liverpool and the former industrial towns of Lancashire.

### Overarching Research Questions:

1. How do young people describe their identity in relation to notions of Britishness?
2. In what ways has the EU referendum result influenced and changed young people's sense of belonging in Britain?
3. In what ways can education develop or enhance young peoples' sense of belonging in multicultural Britain through developing interfaith dialogue?

### Methodology and Method

The theoretical framework of the project draws from Critical Race Theory and interpretive qualitative methodologies in which young people are co-constructors of meaning and co-participants in the reflexive critical research process. We intentionally set out to privilege and foreground the views of our young participants. Strong models of this interpretive child centred research methodology exist, for example, in British Religious Education, such as Jackson (1997, 2004), Erricker (2000) O'Grady, (2003) and Grimmit (2003) and more broadly in the field of the social sciences (Coppock, 2011; Kellett, 2005; Lushey & Munroe, 2015; Shier, 2006; Sime, 2008).

In devising the participatory research methodology to be employed in this project we seek to promote young people's agency which is often restricted by adult discourses related to the competence of children and young people. As the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12 (1989) states, children have a right to express an opinion on matters or decisions that affect them and that their opinions should be taken into account (Sime 2008). Yet Coppock (2011, 436) argues that academia (and society) has re-inscribed notions of children and childhood that simultaneously seek to protect and subjugate noting "children's powerlessness is confirmed and legitimated through the assertion of their incapacity". So, in this project we draw on Shier's (2006) participatory framework which delineates five levels of participation involving children and young people as co-constructors of knowledge within research projects to ensure that young people:

1. Are listened to,
2. Are supported in giving their views,
3. Have their views taken into account,
4. Are involved in the decision-making process and share power and responsibility for decision-making.

We aimed to develop strong professional dialogic relationships with the young people and staff in school and community settings. Our aspiration was to sustain these links beyond the life of the project in order to develop the project and others which might be borne from the ideas of the young people.

## Outline of the project

Young people in six schools and two community/voluntary settings were invited to participate in the research. In total 61 young people were involved in the first phase of data collection. Full ethical approval to collect data was obtained from our University Ethics committee. The young peoples' teachers, youth workers, parents/carers were provided with information about the project and consent forms as the gatekeepers to the process.

School/organisation	Type of school	Age group	Sex	Age of participants	No. of participants
Islamic Academy	Independent	5-18	Single sex male	14-16	4
Muslim Girls High School	Independent	11-18	Single sex female	14-15	4
Multi-faith ecumenical youth group	Voluntary community group	16-25	Mixed group; All female participants and female youth leader	17-25	6
North West Youth group	Funded charitable group	11-25	Mixed group	15-21	30 (x6 groups)
Church of England secondary school	Voluntary aided	11-16	Co-educational; mixed group	14-15	12 (x 2 groups)
Comprehensive secondary school	Local authority	11-18	Co-educational; mixed group	14-15	5

With the exception of the funded youth group, data were collected using semi structured qualitative focus group interviews with the young people in each setting. We attended the annual meeting of the North West branch of the charitable youth group which meant we had less time with the young people. We were able to organise group discussions by splitting the large group into separate discussion groups. The young people created mind maps of their discussions but we were unable to collect group interview data.

## Data collection

We chose the focus group as our method of data collection because of its alignment to narrative methodology and our privileging of student voice and experience,

“Hence the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge-the participants’ rather than the researchers’ agenda can predominate” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, 377).

Each focus group was scheduled to run up to 1 hour. The teachers and youth workers who facilitated the interviews were both generous and accommodating with time and in some instances the discussions lasted longer than an hour due to the rich dialogue they generated. The high level of engagement by the young people was a reflection of their desire to talk about the politics of identity as was reflected in their feedback to us and to their teachers. Full ethical approval to undertake the interviews was provided by our university ethics committee and arrangements were made for students to leave the focus group if they wished to.

As a stimulus to discussion we showed the young people a short BBC news clip on the xenoracism and the rise of hate crimes in the UK <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41648865>

The young people were invited to talk freely about what they watched which produced valuable insights into attitudes about race and immigration within their communities. The discussion generated by the clip enabled us to lead into our semi-structured question schedule, as follows:

- Being British is on the agenda. How would you define British?
- What does British mean to you?
- In 2016, after the referendum, the British Youth Council highlighted the problem of racial and religious discrimination as an issue that needs tackling urgently.
- What are your views?
- This is what a British 15-year-old student told us about how she felt:
- “...and mostly I don’t feel part of British society is when like, when I see in newspaper articles that my religion...that a lot of us are terrorists ...and that’s where I don’t feel like I fit in, because it’s supposed to be a Christian country and David Cameron has said that in his speeches and stuff like that and so I don’t feel like I belong here as a Muslim person.”
- What would you say to her?
- Should schools be teaching ‘British’ values?
- “We are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us Jo Cox, Maiden Speech, House of Commons”
- Do you agree?
- What do you think teachers and schools could be doing to tackle racism and help all students feel they belong in society?

The focus group method allowed for synergies to emerge through dialogue and shared problem solving. We discussed our rationale for this method with the young people and invited them to evaluate its strengths and potential weaknesses. We emphasised the important role the young people could play as co-producers of meaning, experts in their communities collaborating with us in partnership to

problematise the “biting” real world social problems created by Brexit, problems that, “Cannot be solved by individuals alone” problems that require the insights gathered through the young peoples’ “rich and complex funds of communal knowledge and practice” (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 903). Our intention was to provide a reflexive space to explore Britishness, identity and belonging in which themes could emerge naturalistically and inductively. The sessions were recorded using digital voice recorders and transcribed immediately after the data was collected. The team listened to the recordings and undertook an initial analysis based on a close reading of the transcriptions. A secondary analysis of the transcriptions allowed us to identify the following themes that provide various lenses through which to interpret the young peoples’ views and observations:

- Race and racism
- British identity
- Education
- Prospects

Within these themes we identified sub categories that reflected the highly situated social and cultural locations of the young peoples ‘communities. A key finding to emerge was the importance of locality as an identity resource and a source of security and affirmation for some of the young people. Similarly, we found that for BAME participants the categories of race and racism also included experiences of racism and religious discrimination.

<b><i>Race and racism</i></b>	<b><i>British identity</i></b>	<b><i>Education</i></b>	<b><i>Prospects</i></b>
Experiences of racism	Local identities	Fundamental British values	Not an even playing field
Responses to xenoracism	Religious identities	Race education	Shared human values
Terror		Religious education	Immigration
<b><i>Other forms of discrimination:</i></b> youth sub-cultures, religion, gender and sexuality			



## Project Timeline 2017-2019

<b>Introductory meetings</b>	December 2017	Sharing aims of project with participating teachers, youth leaders & student volunteers
<b>Data collection</b>	January- May 2018	Focus group interviews
<b>School Links Event</b>	June 2018	Interfaith schools linking event
<b>Young Citizens Roundtable Event</b>	January 2019	Roundtable discussion: Young researchers discuss their post referendum hopes and fears
<b>Practitioner Roundtable Event</b>	December 2019	Roundtable dissemination event: Practitioners discuss the implications of a post Brexit Britain for education

## Findings

In this section we present summaries of the young peoples' views, comments and observations. The young people chose age appropriate pseudonyms to protect their identities. Each summary presents the key messages, insights and observations the young people shared with us, grouped under the main themes and sub-categories of each theme. The material we present in this section is a synopsis, but we have included extracts from the transcriptions where the dialogue was particularly revealing, provocative, challenging and in some instances poignant and disturbing. Our purpose in doing so is to foreground narratives that would otherwise remain silent and subjugated. Each section is presented in the order in which data was collected.

## Interfaith Youth Group

### Themes and sub categories:

#### Racism

- Response to anti-immigrant clip
- Experiences of racism
- Fear

#### British identity

- Definitions of British identity
- Local definitions of identity
- Critique of Britishness

#### Education

- Fundamental British values (FBV) in education
- Religious and intercultural education
- Educators

#### Prospects

- Response to Jo Cox quote

#### Racism:

- There's nothing new about racism. Anti- Polish xeno racism appears new, due to the Brexit climate, but for BAME communities racism is nothing new. One young person commented,

*Sabrina, ' OK, first when I'm watching this I looked at it and I thought OK this is kind of linked in with EU leaving and all that kind of stuff but at the same time I looked at it and I thought, I've been a coloured person my entire life, I stand out from the crowd but at the same time like what they're experiencing now which they probably did experience before, they're just experiencing a lot more but people and people look like me and people that look like my friends, like ? We've been experiencing that a longer before this happened, a lot longer before 2016'.*

- Personal narratives and accounts of racist abuse including anti-Muslim racism reveal how sometimes physically aggressive violent racism affects the BAME young peoples' lives. In this excerpt a young Somali heritage woman describes her experience of violent racism,

*Faheema, 'Oh yes. Basically, I was at a job interview and I was on my way home, I was on the way to see [N] , and I was on the bus and there was a Somali guy and a white drunk guy, he was in his 50's, and the other guy was like he came back from work, you could tell he was in his work uniform, sitting there, and it was my mum stood up, and he was going under his breath "Oh, you fucking nigger, Oh, you bastard," and the Somali guy went, "Don't say nothing. Leave him, let him be." And he carried on and carried on and this was from town to Toxteth like about 15 minutes in traffic and at one point he was saying "You black bastard" and everyone on the bus heard and they were all white and they all looked at him and turned away and I went to him and said, "Excuse me?" and he was like, "Yeah?" and I was like "How are you saying that?" and he goes, "I worked for 30 years," and I was like, "Yeah, he just came from work and so have I, you have no right to say that," and he said, "Go*

*back to your fucking country,” and I said, “I was born here, I was born in the Wirral, where shall I go?” And he was like, “Oh you fucking nigger,” and there was the Somali guy gets up to get off the bus and the white guy comes and shoves him, and then the white guy tries to come to me and the Somali guy stops him and then as the Somali guy put his hand up a white man on the bus thought the Somali guy was going to attack the white guy, so he went, “No, no, no,” and the bus driver had to stop the bus and then he gets off the bus and he went “Oh you fucking nigger.” And I was like, I couldn’t hold it, I was like, I kind of retaliated basically, and I was on the phone to her and I was like he’s this and he’s that, and he’s saying this and that, and what shocked me was the fact was that it was on a bus and it was full of people and everyone allowed it to happen, that’s what got me angry.*

- Narratives also reveal Police surveillance and targeting of BAME young people,

*Sabrina, ‘They make us out to be like criminals like everywhere, it’s scary now. I’m not scared of people, I’m scared of the police especially now because I will walk down my street and I will feel a car’.*

- Local community is both a resource and a place where they feel they belong but is also a racialised urban zone of exclusion. Evidence of racist bio-politics in the account of Mzee’s incarceration and death,

*Sabrina, ‘He was British, he was born here, he went to a school here, his Nan was white, I know his... that boy was British, but you know, this is the thing, his Mum hated what they did to him, that she didn’t even bury him in this country. She took him back home to Jamaica to get buried because of what this country did, like the views of the people and the police and the protectors, so-called protectors, like they don’t even, I don’t think the police would look at me and see me as a British person’*

### **British identity:**

- All participants reject simplistic unitary essentialist versions of British identity.
- No consensus about British identity- it’s a label- what really counts is your ‘contribution’.
- Britishness is synonymous with Whiteness and the ‘majority’.
- Strong identification with family and family histories, reflected in a diverse group, including the 2 white participants (Irish and Polish heritage).
- Stronger identification with local community, scouse, Liverpool, One young person commented that Liverpool was her source of identity,

*Clare, ‘So it’s like, I don’t know, I think it’s so strange, even though I was born here, I’d say I’m a Scouse, but I’d affiliate more with Scouse because I think Liverpool is a strong identity’.*

- But most strongly, Toxteth, ‘the only place where coloured people are accepted’. Toxteth was identified as a source of identity,

*Zara, 'Toxteth, not even Liverpool, not even the city, just Toxteth...Not even Scouse, like not Scouse definitely. Like for me not Scouse, nah, it's Toxteth...-and I think you're used to it, it has formed like our personality and everything, like Toxteth was bang on with that because we got to see the way the outside world is'.*

### **Education:**

- Rejection of FBV.
- When FBV is included as a requirement of one of the participants' work, she reworks it as an investigation of religious values.
- The young people regard Britishness in education as an imposition, a 'vehicle' to make us into 'robots' from those who 'we are ruled by'.
- FBV is a way in which an identity is 'imposed' on students.
- Highly critical of weak, essentialist RE as this comment reveals,

*Sabrina, 'My class, teaching the opposite of Islam right there and then, do you know what happened? Kids got the Burqa stuck in their heads, that's the only part that they got, it's the only thing that went, then another custom, do you know little things, OK, so Sikhs have swords, Muslims have Burqas and they oppress women, Christians, they don't really care, and you got Buddhists they just sit in the temple all day. That's what kids got inside their heads. You go there to tell them to teach British values the one thing that's going to go in their heads is the most people that are British are white, so therefore British values mean whiteness'.*

- Educating the educators and more effective CPD is required,

*Sabrina, 'Because the teachers don't want to be educated first of all...I got taught apparently Muslims get buried above the ground. Last time I went to a Muslim funeral mine was about 6 feet under. ...She got mixed up with her information, but you know the worst of it was she didn't look to fix herself, and I know people that were sitting in that class with me went back home and with their mentality they were thinking is that correct?'*

- Critical of mono cultural Church RE (we only learnt about Catholicism).
- Critical of lack of teacher engagement with religious diversity and multi culturalism- the teachers need re-training.
- Value experiential learning and the work of their interfaith group.
- If British identity and values are to be taught, they should be delivered in a discursive exploratory way- like the focus group.

### **Prospects:**

- The truth is people are not unified- that's not 'reality'.
- There is no fair 'level playing field'.
- But...
- People should accept and appreciate differences.
- There are differences between us but as a group of young people we choose not to discriminate because of what we have learnt at LCS,

*Sabrina, 'Look at us now, there could be discrimination between all of us but there's not, because we are just young people from Liverpool who know each, it's what we've been taught in changing our views'.*

## Muslim Girls High School

### Themes and sub categories:

#### Racism

- Experiences of racism
- Response to 15-year-old 'I don't feel like I belong'
- Religion and racism

#### British identity

- Defining Britishness
- Britishness and Whiteness
- Re-conceptualizing Britishness

#### Education

- Alternatives and accommodations
- Islamic and British values education
- Challenging and countering racism with multi-cultural education

#### Prospects

- Response to Jo Cox quote

### Racism:

#### Experiences of racism

- Students' city 'not as bad as places like London'.
- 'It's ok here' [comments challenged by Teacher].
- Examples of daily racist abuse.
- Scarf pulled by pupil from local school.
- Abuse from passers-by in cars. One student described her experience,

*Zahra, 'Yes, I would say like when you are walking and just minding your own business, there will be people who will roll their windows down and they will just purposely shout things out to you, and it's like we're minding their own business and they should and they should carry on with their lives, they have no right to interfere with ours'.*

- Teacher challenges pupils to acknowledge this as racism.
- 'Punish a Muslim' day- social media hate campaign produces panic, fear, some people 'hibernated'. In this sequence the students and their teacher talk about the racist social media campaign,

*Haneela, 'A few weeks ago we had a "Punish a Muslim" day'.*

*Teacher, 'On the 3rd of April'.*

*All students, 'Yes, on the 3rd of April'.*

*Teacher 'It was a letter that got sent out quite nationally'.*

All students, *'It was "Punish a Muslim Day"'*.

Teacher, *"Punish a Muslim Day", 10 points for an acid attack'*.

All students, *'100 for killing a Muslim'*.

Teacher, *'Yes, 100 for stabbing someone'*.

Faiza, *'It was all on social media, everywhere'*.

Haneela, *'WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram even... Yes, people were afraid to leave the house'*.

Faiza, *'Yes, everybody was staying in that day, they were hibernating, and they refused to go out, and there were incidents I think'*.

Zahra, *'...it was more in the main cities, but I don't think we should be afraid to go outside, that this is our country, why should we be afraid to go outside?'*

### **Religion and racism discussed in context of 15-year-old quotation 'I don't feel like I belong'**

- Islam is unfairly presented as 'extreme' in the media.
- If a white person commits a crime 'he won't be classed as a terrorist', as this student commented,

Haneela, *'Yes, I'd say whenever you see a white man for example and he committed a crime, he won't ever be classed as a terrorist but whenever it's a Muslim he'll always be classed as a terrorist and I feel like there's always going to be a bad side to a certain group. So, like towards Christianity there might be a certain group of people that are extremists and that's the same with Islam. But we don't class them as Muslims. Like Islam is peace, that's what it is, so to us they aren't Muslims and she has every right to belong here as a Muslim person and we shouldn't have to feel ashamed at being Muslim in Britain'*.

- Muslims are classed as terrorists.
- Islam is a religion of peace and extremists are not considered Muslims.
- Britain isn't just a Christian country, there are lots of religions in Britain.
- Embrace difference and live together- theme of multi- cultural conviviality and pluralism,

Sumaiyah, *'I don't think it is just a Christian country, there's so many religions living in Britain, I think we just need to embrace and just work together, be part of it together'*.



**British identity:**

- Initial definitions- cultural tropes: weather, fish and chips, being 'one', cosmopolitan harmony 'living peacefully together'.
- [Nb Accounts of racism trouble these initial contributions].
- Britishness and whiteness assumed to be synonymous- teacher challenges this assumption.
- Thinking of Britishness as 'white' becomes a habit,

*Haneela, 'I'd say like every person, one person isn't going to be like fully white, they're not always going to be British, they're going to have ancestors that are going to come from somewhere like Africa maybe and that's how the world develops, like people will migrate to different countries and that's how we start like exploring new cultures and that's how like some British people might love curry and that's come from India so that's how like the world develops and yeah, so we should just learn to accept it and...'*

*Teacher, 'That's an interesting sentence that you said at the beginning. What you said that "not everybody is going to be white". So, you just associated British with white.'*

*Haneela, 'Yes, because...'*

*Teacher, 'Where you yourself are British but you're not white'.*

*Haneela, 'It becomes habit'.*

**Re-conceptualizing Britishness**

- Being British is more than your red passport.
- Identity goes beyond the passport.
- Britishness is described as being honest, helping your neighbour (Islamic values).

*Faiza, 'It goes beyond that, it's the qualities as well you know, honesty, understanding, like learning to work with your community, like keeping a look-out for your neighbours in case they're OK. It's all of those little stuff that brings it all together'.*

**Education:**

- British values are taught through Islamic values curriculum

*Haneela, 'So for British Islamic values, whenever we learn about British values or like rule of law, democracy and individual liberty we sort of link it to Islam and our values, so how British values, so how it exists in our village as well as how it exists in our, as a country. And...'*

*Sumaiyah, 'It's just how you can be British and Muslim at the same time'.*

- Islamic values are needed because people don't follow British values.
- You can be British and Muslim at the same time.
- Proud to British, other countries don't have British values.

*Zahra, 'I'm proud to be British. I think especially, as a sense British values has been introduced it, I think it has always existed but we've not actually noticed it and ever since it has been introduced I feel as though we have been taking it for granted because people in other countries don't have British values and British values is like sort of what helps bring our communities together'.*

- More anti -racist education required.
- More education to tackle religious discrimination required.
- Raise awareness, don't accept racism.

*Zahra, 'Sort of like how before we were talking about our incidents and we sort of accepted the fact that there is racism in our society but we should tell students like you know, like you shouldn't feel as though, you shouldn't accept all this racism and I think we should sort of like teach students as well how we have to tackle that'.*

### **Prospects:**

#### **Response to Jo Cox quote**

- We're all human, shared humanity transcends social and cultural differences
- Differences are what makes life and people interesting
- Being British unites us- reclaiming the concept of Britishness [note, the students do not know about the origins of the definition of FBV in counter terror legislation.],

*Haneela, 'I feel as though like the idea that we're British makes us united and like at the end of the day we all have the same purpose, like we all go to school, we work and we want to just like enjoy our life and I think that's just sort of the things that we have in common so we should be able to do that and like not just because, we should not be able, we shouldn't like not be able to do that just because of our religion, or just because of our own personal beliefs'.*

## Muslim Boys School

### Themes and sub categories:

#### Racism

- Response to anti-immigrant clip
- Fears
- Religion and racism
- Racism as crossing the line
- Causes of racism
- Media indoctrination
- Response to 15-year-old 'I don't feel British'

#### British identity

- Definitions of British identity
- Religious values and religious identity

- Localised identities

#### Education

- Alternatives to Fundamental British values (FBV) in education
- Educating minorities

#### Prospects

- Response to Jo Cox quote
- A new educational approach, 'Our values'

#### Racism:

- It could be us, because we are different.
- The 'protectors' (Police) don't seem to care much.
- Racism and religious discrimination 'seem to collide'.
- Dark colour seems to be associated with 'religious or Islamic people'.

*Musa, 'It seems like the racial and the religious now coincide with each other...and the fact that there's some sort of merge and then on top of that, you won't necessarily get a racist comment and you won't necessarily hear a racist comment but you'd hear something against your religion but you'd feel it to be racist and then they might choose your skin colour as a way, and your religion at the same time, or your skin colour representing your religion and vice versa, and then because like they associate a dark colour with religious people or Islamic people or Muslims or something, then they'd use that and it's more of a, I think sometimes because there's a new sort of hype, savage jokes, so you'd crack a joke, a savage joke and it would be at the expense of a dark skinned person or a white skinned person but it would be seen as something more open, rather than a racial, and then sometimes they go too far'.*

- Freedom of speech and democracy are abused online and, in the media, providing racists with license to be abusive, for example, the referendum campaign.

Adam, 'And then also with the, because obviously after the referendum, the Brexit referendum, the majority of the country voted to part ways with the European Union so then I think that gave people that little bit of, I think that sparked a little bit of courage in people and they thought you know what, other people are with us in this kind of mindset that we don't want other people in our country, we want this country to be for ourselves, so that's given that little bit of tenacity just, you know, to try and sort it out themselves like those lads were doing as well' (racist vigilantes in the video).

- Racists don't know their 'responsibilities', they cross 'the line'
- Muhammad [pbuh]<sup>3</sup> embraced diversity,

Musa, 'When we see our prophet we see him as a guide, and he embraced diversity, he didn't like discrimination and all that, so racism if you put it in our terms, in our terms right now, racism and discrimination and all that sort of stuff'.

- Racists are 'scared', racism is caused by ignorance and poor up-bringing, and lack of religious values
- Britain has never been homogeneous
- 15-year-old doesn't feel British because of the way Muslims are portrayed as 'extreme'
- The Britishness she feels alienated from is a fraud and a façade- people should be looking up to her.

Musa, '...you have to be like that if you sort of dismantle it [British identity] and you say that ...the whole façade is a sort of fraud, the advice I would give to her is you're not looking up to anything, in reality you're the true person, you're real, they should be looking up at you. They should be looking up to you'.

### **British identity:**

- It has no real meaning

Haroon, '...I mean how can you say that someone is not British when he lives in Britain, earns money like everyone else and he lives a free life like everyone else and follows the rules, follows the law, how can he not do that? And in every respect I don't think it is a major point, it shouldn't be like even in there, on that agenda'.

- Notions of Britishness creates conflict and racism

Adam, "I think there's this connotation that Britishness means you have to be white and you have to have lived here and you have to have English heritage, but I think British just means that you are a citizen of the United Kingdom...'

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<sup>3</sup> Pbuh, 'peace be upon him': a special complimentary phrase or durood, attached to the names of the prophets in Islam.

- Britishness is a sign of superiority.
- It is a vehicle for nationalism.
- State secularism is a form of assimilation.
- Requires you to 'forget your religion'.
- It's a 'mechanic' for division.

*Faisal, 'the French expect you, if for example I came on holiday to France, they would expect you to forget, forget your culture, forget the way you were brought up, forget your religion'.*

*Interviewer, 'It's very interesting that you mentioned France because the French have this tradition of kind of secular republicanism'.*

*Adam, 'Assimilation....I think this just touching on this word Britishness again I think it's a mechanic for a division, seeing people that, if you have to forsake all your other cultures and traditions and you have to embrace this British way of thinking, British mentality, British way of living so then I guess people who you know, like Hussein was saying, this nationalism that when people come here then they kind of force them upon themselves and you have to forsake all of your other traditions, wherever you've come from, your heritage, forget about that, you're British now, you're in Britain now, you live in Britain, follow what we do, think how we think and you've got to live up to the British name'.*

- To question peoples' values is an insult to generations who have worked hard and contributed.
- Everyone gets on in parts of the students' multi-cultural city.
- The boys feel safe in their communities.

*Adam, 'I think that in Preston, because it's such a diverse community, just from my personal experience, I think people have already become tolerant towards other faiths and religions so that this, so this kind of negative connotation around religion it kind of doesn't seep into them, because they've already got this mind-set that there is a possibility that we can all live in harmony, like in my local area we've got, there's a mosque, there's a Buddhist temple, there's a Hindu temple, there's a church, you know we've got all religions, it's a small locality, and I don't think we've ever had any racial abusive incident there'.*

### **Education:**

- Strong emphasis on religious values- iman into amal.
- Emphasis placed on religious Islamic citizenship.
- GCSE secular citizenship is valued- the better alternative to FBV.
- Stories of the Prophet [pbuh] are the source of the students' values.
- Education should promote wisdom, it is more than 'knowledge'.
- Knowledge requires wisdom.
- Knowledge requires wisdom because some people misinterpret the Qur'an.
- Racism needs tackling through education and school linking programmes.

- FBV are just guidelines about how to be good and moral education has always been part of the curriculum

*Adam, 'I think what most about teaching British values I think British values they are basically, basically they're basically just guidelines about how to be a good human being so you can find, they might not be called British values but you can find similar things in every single culture and religion, culture in the world. So I think they should be taught but not as British values, but as something else, what we've had is for the first 15 minutes of every day we have a form class, and in there the teacher will just give us, you know, just tips on how to be a good human being, how to treat your neighbours, how to treat your parents, you know? How to respect knowledge. Just basic things which everyone acts upon, and then it will just create these harmonious communities. I think British values should be taught, yes'.*

- Concern that values education needs to be an inclusive 'our' values as opposed to what feels like exclusive British values

*Musa, 'When I went to Manchester I went to watch a wrestling show and after the Manchester bombings I was afraid. Now this person was supposedly a Muslim, and if there is a stereotypical people in a bunch of people there shouldn't be any conflict, and if I'm scared of somebody from my own religion how does that make me any different from somebody else from another religion?... So once again if you put in "our values" it becomes, there's no longer going to be any stereotypical, because if the main part is "our" rather than "British" ... And if you are sure that they're "our" and it is inclusive rather than exclusive then everybody, then everybody feels that we're part of one... if you see it as "our" you think I can be there, I can get there, so no matter how excluded you feel there will still be some sort of inclusion being shown'.*

- Christian and Muslim values correlate
- Minorities need educating about how to deal with hate crime and racism

### **Prospects:**

- We've got a lot in common- Muslim, Sikh, Christian could sit down together and talk for hours
- What we have in common gets ignored by people looking for differences- this is where the negativity starts

*Haroon, 'I think it's how they're viewed by people, even the things we have in common people never take an eye to it or look at how much we have in common'*

- We should develop a curriculum called 'Our values'.

## Church of England High School Group 1

### Themes and sub categories:

#### Racism

- Responses to anti-immigrant clip
- Racism in the community
- Islam and political correctness
- Responses to 15-year-old 'I don't belong'
- Fear
- Education
- FBV
- Racism and religious prejudice

#### Prospects

#### British identity

- Defining Britishness
- Response to Jo Cox quote
- Immigration and the EU

#### Racism:

#### Response to xeno racism clip

- Violence is unacceptable but over population is a problem
- Brexit has made violence 'acceptable'
- It's a bombshell
- It's an opportunity to hate
- It's an opportunity to retaliate

*Piers, 'I think people think it's more acceptable to be violent towards other people because since we've voted to leave the EU I think people think that the whole population is kind of on-board with them and has the same point of view that they didn't like immigrants even though that's exactly what leaving the EU means'.*

*Peter, 'It's just that seeing the video is just like a bit of a bombshell for me, like seeing how people can be so racist and all that, it's pretty, what I'm saying, I just don't understand where it all comes from to be honest'.*

- Racists want to eradicate multi culturalism through violence.
- What would happen if the racists went to the immigrants' country- how would they feel?
- British think they are the greatest-superior.

*Gill, 'It's crazy because it's so conditional because if you were born somewhere else you wouldn't have those views at all but because you're born here you think it's the absolute truth that being British is the greatest, if you're born in Britain you're better*

*than somebody who was born somewhere else and has come here but that could have been completely different by just you being born somewhere else and you wouldn't think that if you weren't born here so it's weird that people think that's the opposite truth'.*

### **Racism in the community:**

- Not diverse or multicultural.
- Not seen any evidence.
- Might see a different side to the community if there was more diversity.
- Heard things people say- verbal racisms- prejudice rather than discrimination.

*Piers, 'I think going back to the whole bit about people thinking or saying racist things it says discrimination not prejudice. There's a difference between having an opinion and actually acting it out, I think the prejudice part of it, people being racist, thinking it, does exist, I've heard it or seen it and things like that...but discrimination side of it I haven't seen any of that at any point'.*

### **Religion and racism discussed in context of 15-year-old quotation 'I don't belong'**

#### **Islam and political correctness**

- Islam is untouchable, we can't speak openly.
- Islam 'Muslims' (conflated with terror) need to be discussed openly.
- It's not wrong to criticise religion.

*Gill, 'I think it's not wrong to criticise a religion or something, especially when in other parts of the world it's been used as a political drive as well. Like if you were allowed to criticise a political party you can criticise religion or anything else, it shouldn't be so untouchable that nobody wants to talk about it because that way these people are going to see that and see it as an easy target because we're so afraid of offending people that we will never really get to talk about the issue and look for a solution to it'.*

- Fear of causing offence means solutions won't be found.
- We are a conservative and Christian country.
- It's hard not to come across as racist.

#### **I don't belong**

- Break unnecessary boundaries.
- Not surprising as there's been more 'minor' attacks on Muslims by white people than major terror attacks.
- She's been treated 'differently' so no surprise she feels like this.



*Megan, 'I don't blame her for not feeling part of it because there's probably been more like minor attacks by white people on Muslims than there has been like major terrorist attacks'.*

- National identities like British or Pakistani are just 'titles.

### **Fear**

- Fearful when in London- is it a Muslim attack? Needs open discussion,

*Piers, 'Like I think there is a difference between a racism and being worried in a sense about yourself and your country. It's like if you're attacking someone because they're black or something like that it's like well there's no, what motive have you got for that, but for certain things, I don't know, I sound really racist saying this and I don't really want to say it but it's like there's if the people like Muslims and all that, there is that fear factor that oh, that guy might be a terrorist or something like that, that people have that motive for that. I think it is a form of racism but it's not racism as you'd think of it. Like in the video there were the Polish people being attacked, that's just pure racism, there's no reason for that at all. That's just people being racist, they obviously haven't been taught anything, but I think there is a difference between what I've just said and all that... I think'.*

- There is a fear factor- is the guy a terrorist?
- There's a difference between being worried for your country and racism
- Islam isn't a race.
- You are made to feel bad if you want to talk about Islamic extremism.

### **British identity:**

- British is a mixture.
- You've 'tried', it's about your personal qualities.
- Being a valuable member of society.
- Can you be 'pure' British?
- Accepting our values.
- It's a title, it doesn't mean anything.

*Gill, 'Well there shouldn't be something like Britishness or like Pakistani or whatever feeling when you're in that sort of country, and I'm just going to repeat this again but boundaries. Just we need to break them down'.*

- It's on the agenda because of immigration, the EU have let too many people in.

### **Education:**

- They shouldn't teach the values (FBV), they should teach accepting people from other countries.
- As a conservative, FBV should be taught.

- FBV is 1984, Big Brother is watching you.
- Teaching FBV means we all have the same values.
- It's a convenient government tactic to make us believe the same thing.

*Peter, 'Can I just say that if we would've teach British values, like how a British person would think, at the beginning I've got this 1984 vibe, like Big Brother is watching and all children are learning this one thing'.*

*Piers, 'There you go. If we're all following one particular thing, if we all have like the same general outlook on things, we all know the same stuff, we all taught the same thing, I reckon there'd be a lot more, I think people would just be a lot more peaceful with each other I think because there wouldn't be massive like huge diversity that there is, I think people would be the same and there wouldn't be as many issues, as in hate crime that is'.*

- There's no such thing as FBV, we are stereotyping ourselves.
- It's about conformity.
- Why not teach other people's values or morals in general?
- People won't agree on shared values.
- You can't teach biases.
- Teach good citizenship instead.

*Megan, 'I think instead you should just teach them how to be like good and good citizens rather than just focusing British values are because you can't define them yourself what they are based on an opinion'.*

### **Education, racism and religious prejudice**

- Raise the penalty for hate crime.
- Stop tip-toeing and trying to be politically correct.
- Don't hide politics (from teaching).
- Say it straight.

*Megan, 'I think you should definitely, you shouldn't try and hide things, the teacher shouldn't hide things like politics, you just say it straight and open because if people don't know the facts that's how they're going to get more frustrated and that causes things like hate crime and racism, and religious discrimination becomes more apparent because people get frustrated that people, like politicians, are trying to hide away from the facts that need to be said, like people can base their opinions on the facts rather than basing it off things that aren't necessarily right'.*

- Avoidance of issues and debate leads to hate crime.
- You can't stop racism.

### **Prospects:**

- Response to Jo Cox quote.
- She was right, we all want the same thing.

- We're all mortal, focussing on our differences is 'weird'.
- We live like individuals (lack of social cohesion, atomisation).
- We should be united under one flag 'The World'.

### **Immigration and the EU (nb mainly pro- immigration, student 1 is opposed to immigration)**

- Brexit based on the idea that immigrants would magically disappear.

*Megan, 'I think people had like this idealistic idea that as soon as like would you leave the EU then all the immigrants will leave but in truth that is never going to happen because you've got to think of how many immigrants have come to this country and are doing great things, you can't just pick out the minority and say that you don't want them, because it's not going like that, people just assume that if everyone leaves, and it's going to be like a perfect Britain'.*

- There's no such thing as the 'perfect Britain'.
- Immigrants are not our responsibility.

*Piers, 'They aren't our responsibility. Immigrants are not our responsibility. Our government has enough trouble keeping us safe and we are their priority, immigrants are not their priority so the whole immigration part should be a very, very small argument of it. It's just what's better for our people, that's what should matter more than anyone else'.*

- Letting Muslims in is dangerous.

## Church of England High School Group 2

### Themes and sub categories:

#### Racism

- Responses to anti-immigrant clip
- Causes of racism
- Racism in the community-banter & jokes
- Racism and religion
- Islamophobia
- Response to 15-year-old 'I don't belong'

#### Education

- Single sex and religious schools
- School links and diversity education
- Education to tackle 'behind the teachers back' racism
- FBV and choice in education

#### British identity

- Defining Britishness
- Secular and religious identity

#### Prospects

- Response to Jo Cox quote
- Humanology

#### Racism:

##### Response to xeno racism clip

- Makes you feel unsafe.
- Caused by ignorance.
- Its 'modern' racism.
- The Poles were our allies in the war, why are they targets of racism?
- Immigrants help the economy and the NHS.

*Lewis, 'People say that they've kind of come over and taken our jobs, but like we've kind of got Turkish people working here as kind of barbers and everyone kind of says if we leave the EU to stop immigrants coming in and to improve the NHS, but it's the immigrants coming in that like, and the NHS is struggling and everyone knows it, and it's the immigrants who are coming in as trained doctors and kind of go in and work in our NHS and help save people's lives so we're kind of leaving the EU to stop people coming in to try and make the NHS better but the people coming in are making the NHS better'.*

- Critique of 'they've taken our jobs' narrative.
- Migrants, refugees have been through hell, to be British is to 'welcome' (alluding to Middle East wars).

- Leaving the EU has increased racism and will continue to 'make people aggressive' towards minorities.
- Racism is 'learnt', 'being part of the crowd'.
- Everyday banal racisms, banter, where is the 'line'?
- Racist banter goes on behind the teacher's back- 'but not in our school'.

## Religion and racism

- Scared of Islamic people- fear gives rise to discrimination- but it's unfair 'they could be the nicest people'.
- All started with 9/11.

*Rachel, 'But like they're looking at 9/11 and thinking "Oh my God, they're evil", it's just 9/11, it's the Manchester bombing, and it's everything that kicked off and it's like, well damn, this is going to happen everywhere, and it's just like it's not, it's not going to happen with the same race, the same religion or anything along those lines.'*

*Lewis, 'I'd say, you can understand, say if you have like a family member who died-'*

*Jack, 'Who died?'*

*Lewis, '-in the Manchester Bombing'.*

*Rachel, 'Then you'd be able to understand it'.*

*Lewis, 'Then you'd get that like view that most of them are bad and you wouldn't really be able to forgive them. But it's like with anything, it's like say with Muslims, like 99% of Muslims don't have that view at all and would absolutely hate people who did, but it's just a small minority of Muslims who think like that and wreck it'.*

*Jack, 'They wreck it for everyone else'.*

*Nick, 'Yes. Because on the day of the Manchester Bombing it was all the, everyone was saying oh it's the Muslims' fault, but actually it was the Muslim taxi drivers that were going in and giving people lifts to hospital so it kind of shows that...'*

*I think it will be one of the hardest things ever to kind of end, Islamophobia just because it's already kind of deep-rooted into society and it will take kind of 100 to 200 years because people our age will be kind of racist and that will take like I think like decades to get out of them, and get them to be kind of accepting towards people like that.'*

- Manchester bomb creates environment of fear and paranoia.
- Terror is caused by a minority-like the racists, they 'ruin the view of the British'.
- Muslim taxi drivers took people to the hospitals.

- Islamophobia will cause Muslims to ask, 'why am I here?'
- Islamophobia is 'deep rooted' and will take 'years to kind of end'.

### **Religion and racism discussed in context of 15-year-old quotation**

- Islamophobia makes me feel sick.
- Some people don't want her here and will be mean to her.
- Lewis feels more Christian than British- 'I want to step away from here'.
- Christianity is about accepting people.

*Lewis, 'Yes, I kind of think that's why I, there's kind of like a part of me as a Christian feels like I'm more kind of Christian than British just because I wouldn't want to be known to be discriminatory whereas if I call myself a Christian rather than a British person it kind of feels like I'm more accepting towards everybody. .... Yes, because for me I would want my country to be somewhere where everybody is welcome, and everybody can kind of come in and feel like it is a home'.*

- We are going to end up like America, building walls.
- She feels like this because she's not white.

*Rachel, 'Because she's not the same colour people think "Oh she's automatically bad in some way." But she's not. She's British'.*

- Racism treats colour as a 'disability', it disables people.
- It's not her colour it's the way other (white?) people react to her that is the problem.
- It's not her fault, if people did not react to her colour she would feel British.

*Sophie, 'That girl on the sheet, that she didn't feel British, it's not because of like her skin colour because it's how everyone else reacts to her skin colour. Like publicity and stuff, it's all about Islamophobia and things but if that didn't exist then she would feel British and everyone would accept her'.*

### **British identity:**

- Hard to describe.
- Cultural tropes: fish and chips, a cup of tea, the pub, crumpets.
- A block of land in the middle of the ocean.
- Feels Christian rather than British.

*Lewis, 'Yes, I kind of think that's why I, there's kind of like a part of me as a Christian feels like I'm more kind of Christian than British just because I wouldn't want to be known to be discriminatory whereas if I call myself a Christian rather than a British person it kind of feels like I'm more accepting towards everybody'.*

**Education:**

- Single sex or single faith schools might not prepare young people to deal with racism- implication, too sheltered.
- Education should allow people to mix and be more diverse, want, 'More diversity'.
- Integrate more religions and 'races' into schools.
- More surveillance of racism and the 'horrible comments people make'.

*Jack, 'Integrate more religions and races into schools. Like mainly I don't think there's a black person in our year'.*

*Rachel, 'Yes, but if we keep more of a surveillance on the racism and on like the horrible comments people make'.*

- Education should challenge media stereotypes and show why Muslim people are 'good for our country'.
- Lessons need to show the good and the bad side of religion (be more realistic).
- Lessons should address terrorism.
- They (we?) need to be told the truth in education- (education as truth telling, Parrhesia).
- British values, what are they? 'If I knew what they were'.

*Rachel, 'British values? I want to know what they are'.*

- We don't get choice about what we are taught we just go along with it.
- We are British, so we should learn about them (whatever they are?)

**Prospects:****Response to Jo Cox quote**

- We're all human, we all have 'decent compassion inside'.
- We want the best for each other.
- Differences exist but we have more in common.

*Lewis, 'I kind of feel like there's far more in common because we've all got that kind of decent compassion and that kind of, we all kind of want the best for each other and the best for ourselves that that kind of unites every single person in the world really so I kind of think there's far more, like everyone in this room has something in common in terms of like our opinions that are kind of inside us than what we have kind of like different'.*

- Rethink what we mean by human and human rights.
- Education should deal with politics (case for Citizenship and political education).
- We need a new subject 'humanology'.

*Jack, 'I agree with that. I think that we have a human right to free speech to express what you believe in, but the human, I think it needs to be redone to like, to give us more value of who we actually are, like Jenny just said, our human rights'.*



## Comprehensive School

### Themes and sub categories:

#### Racism

- Responses to anti-immigrant clip
- Racism in the community
- Sugar coating
- Religious identity and difference
- Responses to 15-year-old 'I don't belong'
- Racism and socialisation

#### Difference

- Being different, religious, nerd, goth, LGBTQ, 'I don't belong'
- Bullied for being different

#### British identity

- Defining Britishness inclusively

#### Education

- FBV
- Why not world values?
- Replaces a 'problem' with another 'problem'

#### Prospects

- We need more 'representation'
- Discrimination needs tackling

#### Racism:

- Response to xeno racism clip.
- Anti- immigrant sentiment conflated with anti- Muslim feeling.
- Makes me feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, disgusted.
- Not everyone is like that, it's a poor representation of the country.

*Ruby, 'It's almost like a poor representation of our country because not everyone is like that, but because these people are so out there about their racism by attacking people and being so open about it, it gives a generalisation that the whole country is like that, and it needs to stop being published as much, and don't just talk about all these attacks, something needs to be done about it so it stops getting out there as much because then they win in a way, because they're getting what they're wanting because people will stop coming to the country and so they'll just get what they want, in a way'.*

- Racism is caused by ignorance, 'they're not educated'.
- We all 'came here' from our 'ancestors'.
- Immigrants contribute and pay taxes, immigration isn't a cause of terrorism.

*Scarlett, 'I just think it's partly hypocritical because at one point or another we're all going to have to move here with our ancestors, as to be British, so what difference is it us coming here thousands of years ago and then coming here now?'*

### **Racism in the community:**

- Racism is expressed in jokes, banter, messing around.

*Tim, 'Well like sometimes like at break like I'll hear someone say like a joke about someone, or something, but they won't go like, they won't go mad about it, it's not normal but it happens often like they won't go mad and tell Teacher about it. They'll laugh about it and just ignore it'.*

- They won't tell the teacher.
- You're used to it, like a habit.
- Its sugar coated.

*Sara, 'It's mostly sugar coated, like it's there but like most people won't pick up on it because it's mostly pushed it into the corner and to the back because I think that's everyone's initial reaction like if you heard something a bit racist, you don't know what to say and you're just a bit like, not intimidated but you just feel a bit embarrassed and a bit like, oh. You just don't know how to react to it, I think people just kind of laugh because it's the easiest thing to react to'.*

- You hear racist words in music and the media.
- They laugh it off (denial, its pushed into a corner).
- It doesn't affect them (in this white majority context).
- Racism starts at home, in the community.

*Sara, 'Going back to what we were saying before, we could do so much as a school, there's like assemblies, PSHE lessons, RE lessons, but the thing is I don't think that school is the problem, I don't think it's an issue because there are people that can help with that. I think the problem starts at home, and if you're going to take actions I'd say do it, have like lessons at home and stuff...'*

*'There's no point in teaching in a lovely assembly talking about how as a country we can all work together and we are all the same and then you go home and you're back in a racist environment again, because one person giving a speech in assembly like 15 minutes isn't going to change the complete mind set of a whole life. And maybe like they have had some issues in the past with a group but as I said one assembly is not going to change when you go back home and the parents' views and the family's views, and I just don't think it, obviously it should be addressed at school but definitely more it's to do with home'.*

### **Religious identities as 'different':**

- Comments have been said against me 'God doesn't exist'.
- Being religious is weird, science is seen as truth, 'proof'.

*Scarlett, 'but I feel that if you go up to someone who is Christian and say God can't exist or like you can't live here because of your heritage, it isn't taken notice of and it*

*should because it's just not right, and I feel it's often kind of ignored and pushed aside'.*

- Religion is represented negatively, through attacks (terror), positive stories (interfaith) don't get publicity.

### **Religion and racism discussed in context of 15-year-old quotation 'I don't belong'**

- Stay strong, have courage, up to you what you believe.
- Sympathy.
- Anti- Muslim feelings are caused by 'fear', leads to fear of a whole religion.

*Zara, 'Personally I would just say sorry that she feels that way and she doesn't have to feel you don't belong in somewhere that you call home, I would really say sorry about that because it's just a small group of people who have these extreme views and it's not fair that you can't feel welcome in somewhere where you have family and a job and you're working hard and you feel sympathy towards that'.*

- She should believe what she wants to as long as she abides by the law.
- She shouldn't feel like this at her age.
- Politicians (Cameron) should do their research before they say things.

### **Being 'different':**

- Young people need to fit in.

*Scarlett, 'I feel one of the main issues in today's society is compliance and the need and want in young people to fit in, because I think personally I'm not, I don't feel like that, I don't feel the need to listen to the same music as everyone and wear the same clothes but I know a lot of people all do, and I feel like yeah, it kind of like gives our generation a kind of look and a kind of general voice..., I'm a complete nerd, I am being honest I am, and-.... But I mean I feel like there's nothing wrong with that but why have you got to be someone you're not?'*

- Discrimination caused by sexuality.

*Ruby, 'Yes, we spoke about banter versus bullying earlier on and there's a bit of a mirror to the underlying homophobia in schools as well'.*

- Discrimination caused by fashion and music tastes.

*Libby, 'Like emo-phobia which is discrimination against sub-groups like Goths, chavs, emos and I don't think that's something that should be ignored either because I've experienced that being kind of a Goth myself but I think that it's still a problem and it still affects people in the same way that sexism and racism does but it needs to be talked about more'.*

**British identity:****Education:**

- Lovely assemblies don't work.
- School isn't the problem, racism starts at home, in the community.
- FBV.

*Scarlett, 'I kind of fit in with British values. I don't know, I don't fit in, the fact that it's called British values, why not it be World Values? Why is it just British? Even like by trying to get rid of discrimination it's focusing on one group not the world, not everybody, so even by just saying you should respect all, it's still British values, it's still focusing on like what people in Britain should think and should we think differently to the rest of the world? Or should the rest of the world think the same as us? And I just think you shouldn't focus on British values, you should just focus on the values that everyone should have like anywhere, not just like a select group of values.'*

**Education, racism and religious prejudice**

- Raise the penalty for hate crime.
- Stop tiptoeing and trying to be politically correct.
- Don't hide politics (from teaching).
- Say it straight.
- Avoidance of issues and debate leads to hate crime.
- You can't stop racism.

**Prospects:****Response to Jo Cox quote**

- She was right, we all want the same thing.
- We're all mortal, focussing on our differences is 'weird'.
- We live like individuals (lack of social cohesion, atomisation).
- We should be united under one flag 'The World'.

*Scarlett, 'I just feel in general discrimination is what needs to be tackled, in general, I don't think it needs to be given, even needs to be given a name, I think it should just happen and people should kind of like try to work to overcome it because there are so many types of discrimination and homophobia and racial discrimination, we've not even talked about sexism at all which definitely, which really goes on a lot, a lot more than people actually realise...'*

## Conclusion

In this first phase of Britishness, Identity and Belonging the data we have collected reveals a complex and multi-faceted social, cultural and racial reality in the lives of young people we in the North West of England over the period 2017-2018. This period witnessed significant increases in reports of hate crime. The Home Office Statistical Bulletin 20/18, published in 2018, reported that hate crimes had doubled since 2012/2013, from 42, 255 to 94, 098 offences, an increase of 123%. The report identifies specific spikes following the 2016 EU Referendum and 2017 terror attacks. Of particular relevance to our study are the figures recorded for religiously aggravated hate crimes. The report states that it is possible for a crime to be motivated by more than one factor and identifies hostility towards the victim's race and religion as an example. The report echoes the UN special rapporteur's findings and the young peoples' comments about the racialisation of religion and culture. Religion is one of the centrally monitored strands recorded by the Police over the period 2011-2018. Of the five<sup>4</sup> hate crime strands that were monitored religion shows the biggest increase recording a 40% growth between 2011 and 2018 (Home Office, 2018, 12).

Set against the backdrop of these statistics, the young peoples' narratives showed a deep concern about anti-immigrant attitudes and the racist narratives. The minority ethnic young people and the Muslim students openly discussed their fears and racist incidents that they had endured, but also strongly emphasised the value of education and intercultural exchanges as a means of tackling prejudice and creating deeper understanding between young people. The student groups in the comprehensive and Church of England High Schools displayed a concern that anti-racist education wasn't going far enough to tackle the root causes of prejudice. What is striking about all of the group interviews is the young peoples' commitment to open debate and their interest in the political issues shaping their lives and their desire to know more about the diverse beliefs and cultures of their modern pluralistic towns and cities. There is much in these narratives to be optimistic about, they resonate much more with Paul Gilroy's concept of multi-cultural conviviality and Bhikhu Parekh's image of modern Britain as a plural 'community of communities' (Parekh, 2000) than the fearful debates that characterised the referendum campaign. The young peoples' desire for open debate, political and cultural education made a refreshing and stimulating contrast to the post truth populist politics of the older generation of politicians and commentators whose economic and political agendas led the UK into Brexit.

Whilst there is much to celebrate in these narratives there are also aspects which are troubling and highlight systemic structural issues which require addressing through further research, political and educational activism, new practice and models of anti-racist education. The racist incidents, anti-Muslim discrimination and reports of police surveillance that were shared highlight the challenges for youth living in urban communities that have suffered from economic and structural decline. In line

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<sup>4</sup> The hate crime strands are, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender, (see Home Office, 2018, 12)

with the tenets of Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017) we have endeavoured to both privilege and open a window onto these 'ignored realities' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, 46) as 'counter stories' to meritocratic neoliberal discourses that claim that there is a level playing field of equal opportunity for all.

In this concluding section we offer a summary of what we think are the key messages that emerged through the young peoples' narratives and then proceed with some considerations of next steps and actions that should follow from this investigation.

### ***What the young people told us about race and racism***

- Racism is a painful reality for BAME young people and can take the form of verbal abuse, threats of violence, bullying on social media (Punish a Muslim day) and physical harassment such as pulling head scarves.
- Banal everyday racist banter often goes on 'behind the teacher's back' but it should be challenged openly.
- Migrants bring skill and knowledge and are welcome in the UK.
- Racism has its roots in ignorance and fear. It should also be tackled in the home as well as in school.

### ***What the young people told us about education***

- They enjoy discussing political issues and want more politics education. They value honesty and want transparent discussions which address the tough issues such as terrorism because dialogue is the way to create understanding
- They want much more religious and intercultural mixing, they are all equally curious about each other and want to know more through school linking events and experiential RE lessons and visits to faith communities.
- They want their teachers to be knowledgeable and committed so they get the facts about religion right.
- They are not sure what makes British values 'British', but they support the teaching of values.
- The religious values of their own communities provide their primary source of values, guidance and belonging.

### ***What the young people told us about identity***

- There is very little consensus about British identity. Britishness is highly contested, for some it is synonymous with class and Whiteness, for others it connotes community and togetherness and is an identity that can be shared, but it is overshadowed with racial meanings.
- Religion for some young people is their main source of identity and trumps Britishness. For others their city or town gives them their sense of identity and belonging.
- There is a keen awareness of the plurality of cultures and heritages that make up modern Britain. Pluralism is valued.

## Next steps

A significant percentage of young people aged 18-25 voted in the referendum. Initial predictions indicated that up to 36% of young people would vote, but the actual figure was 65%. Their vote is highly significant as it shows that young people are concerned about the political and economic future of the UK. 71% of the 18-25 year olds who voted, voted to remain clearly indicating that the racialised rhetoric of the Leave campaign had failed to influence them (YouGov <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2016/06/27/how-britain-voted>). A survey carried out by BMG (2016) research has revealed that 74% of young people who were too young to vote in 2016 would back Remain if a second referendum were held which would result in an overall victory for the Remain side. The majority of the young people we interviewed were too young to vote in the referendum, but their openness and commitment to a diverse and plural community of communities suggests that like the young people who responded to the BMG survey, they too would be in favour of remaining in the EU.

What the young people told us has enabled us to set out an agenda for further research and actions to develop new alliances and non- hierarchical communities of anti -racist educational practice in partnership with them, their teachers, schools and youth groups. Their narratives demand an educational response that acknowledges the legacies of colonialism as it plays out in their lives today. In their descriptions of Police surveillance and the tragic death of Mzee Mohammed the Liverpool interfaith group highlighted the painful realities of structural racism and their experiences of power. These critical counter narratives and the students' challenging questions about the relationships between religion, politics and terror require attention to issues of post- colonial power, race and geopolitics. Soft multiculturalist approaches that orientalize difference, avoid or mask structural racism would have little credibility in the classrooms of the young people we interviewed. The young people wanted honest agonistic discussion and were dismissive of anodyne educational discourse that avoided difficult questions and essentialised racial, religious and cultural difference. New interpretive approaches to critical race education in the racial and political terrain of the post Brexit era require a willingness to work honestly in and through the spaces of cognitive dissonance and fear to develop understanding and equip students to make sense of the complex social realities of 21<sup>st</sup> Britain. In response to their call for more political and civic discussion, debate and intercultural mixing we have organised three highly successful events. These events were,

- A school linking event between the Church of England High School and the Muslim Boys School
- A community links event between the Muslim community, mosque and madrasah that served the Boys and Girls schools and the interfaith youth group
- A roundtable 'civics' event held for all the young people at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, focussing on their hopes and fears for the future in a post Brexit Britain; multi-faith workshops with faith representatives for the young people.

This project is very much a seed corn pilot investigation. Our next steps will involve us building on the model that we have begun to develop through these events in order to provide resources and networks to schools, colleges and youth groups. We envisage a second phase of 'Britishness, Identity and Belonging' in which we address the need for anti-racist education by developing research informed models of curriculum and expand the network of participating schools and colleges. In this way, in partnership with the young people and their communities, we aspire to Giroux and Evans's vision that recognises youth as symbols of the future and the possibility of a more liberating world view that sets down a challenge to all ideologies that empty politics of meaning and feed on fear (Evans and Giroux, 2016, 239).



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