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Introduction

The Introduction chapter outlined how UK government policy towards ‘race relations’ (Solomos, 2003), how government responds to and manages the reality of identified ethnic groups within society and how those groups interact, has changed markedly since 2001 with the emergence of the new policy priority of community cohesion. Not only was community cohesion a new term with little previous social policy pedigree (Robinson, 2005) but it has heralded a marked change in language, emphasis and stated policy priorities, and the nature and meaning of those changes remains highly controversial (Flint and Robinson, 2008; Wetherell et al., 2007). This chapter explores this new policy of community cohesion by analysing the 2001 urban disturbances that provoked this significant policy shift, the process of national (Cantle, 2001; Denham, 2001) and local (Clarke, 2001; Ouseley, 2001; Ritchie, 2001) governmental Inquiries and reflection that led to the emergence of community cohesion, and the key themes and concerns that can be detected within community cohesion.

Those themes and concerns are ethnic physical and cultural segregation and the separate and oppositional identities, rather than commonality that results from such segregation; a communitarian concern that the agency of individuals and communities has maintained ethnic separation and is not currently sufficiently utilised to overcome ethnic barriers; the analysis of problematic ‘bonding’ social capital in the absence of forms of ‘bridging’ social capital implicit in this segregation analysis; and an underpinning critique of the ‘race relations’ policy priorities of previous decades that arguably delivered greater equality for each separate ethnic group but badly neglected relations between
groups and forms of common identity and experience, so inadvertently hardening those separate ethnic identities. The justification for, and the logic of, each of those themes and concerns is discussed in this chapter, and this significant shift in British policy is then contextualised by discussing the parallel experiences of two other Western European states, France and the Netherlands. Given how highly contested each of these themes and the overall thesis of community cohesion is in the UK, Chapter 3 then summarises and discusses key criticisms of community cohesion and its key concerns.

Petrol bombs and policy change

The violent disturbances that occurred in a number of towns and cities in the north of England during the summer of 2001 was the most serious outbreak of rioting in Britain since the inner-city disturbances of 1981 and 1985, with those earlier events seen as linked to large-scale youth unemployment and heavy-handed policing of multi-racial inner-city areas (Solomos, 2003). The 2001 disturbances have been frequently described as ‘race riots’ and have apparently led directly to a significant change in government’s approach to race relations policies as the Introduction outlined. The actual events of 2001, the causal factors and the extent to which the term ‘race riots’ is in any way appropriate are discussed here, drawing on the published academic sources that have analysed the actual events of 2001 and their meaning (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008; Farrar, 2002; Kalra and Rhodes, 2009; King and Waddington, 2004; Waddington, 2010; Waddington et al., 2009). In so doing, this section also raises the question of the relationship between the 2001 disturbances and subsequent policy approaches. This section first provides a brief factual overview of the 2001 disturbances, and then discusses how we might understand these events and their subsequent impact through discussion of a number of key issues.

The 2001 riots

The ‘official’ governmental understanding (Denham, 2001) is that three separate outbreaks of violent urban disturbances occurred in the summer of 2001 – firstly in Oldham, Greater Manchester, from 26–29 May, then in Burnley, Lancashire, from 23–25 June, and finally in Bradford, West Yorkshire, on 7–9 July. All of these disturbances involved Asian young men of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin clashing with the police, as well as with white men in the case of Oldham and Burnley. In each
of the three areas, the violence was significant; Bradford witnessed the most serious events, with damage estimated at over £7 million, and 326 police officers injured (Denham, 2001), whilst in both Oldham and Burnley significant numbers of individuals from different communities clashed violently, as well as with the police. All three areas saw pubs, businesses and other buildings burned out, and police in full riot equipment attacked with a variety of weapons that included petrol bombs and cars (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008). In Oldham, an initial racial confrontation escalated to street disturbances that saw as many as 200 white and Asian people clash violently before a slow police response led to prolonged violence between large numbers of Asian young people and the police (Kalra and Rhodes, 2009). Burnley similarly saw direct violence between white and Asian groups, involving an escalating series of tit-for-tat racist incidents including an assault on an Asian taxi driver, a large-scale racist incursion into Asian areas and retaliatory attacks on white pubs that saw one pub burned down (King and Waddington, 2004). The scale and directness of these violent confrontations between white and Asian groups in both Oldham and Burnley, with both sides armed with weapons, means that the term ‘race riot’ can be seen as relevant, an echo of the Notting Hill and Nottingham riots of 1958 which saw violent clashes between whites and African-Caribbean migrants in an era of uncontrolled racial discrimination and prejudice (Sivanandan, 1981). In contrast, the Bradford riot, whilst linked to fears around racist incursions as discussed below, involved a straight confrontation between Asian young men and the police, a prolonged bout of anti-authority violence that was much more reminiscent of the inner-city disturbances of the early 1980s (Solomos, 2003).

The aftermath of these events has been difficult both for the towns and cities themselves, with national perceptions negatively altered, and for the communities involved, with draconian prison sentences impacting especially on the local Asian communities (Burnett, 2004; Kalra and Rhodes, 2009). Whilst these were undoubtedly the most serious outbreaks of violence that summer, the ‘official’ understanding (Cantle, 2001; Denham, 2001) itself is contentious, as it largely ignored similar outbreaks of violence in Leeds, West Yorkshire, on 5 June, and Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, on 14–15 July. The lack of focus on those other events in government accounts suggests that they were viewed simply as ‘copycat’ incidents, a questionable judgement, and leaving those events in Leeds and Stoke badly under-scrutinised. As highlighted in the Introduction, the actual triggers and events in Oldham, Burnley
and Bradford were not discussed in any real detail by the subsequent government-commissioned Community Cohesion Report Team (CCRT) process (Cantle, 2001), or by the governmental response (Denham, 2001). Similarly, the local Oldham review (Ritchie, 2001) did not focus significantly on the actual events, concentrating instead on what are seen as long-term problems of ethnic segregation, racial tension and economic marginalisation. The most significant and revealing focus on the actual triggers and conduct of the violence came in the Burnley local report (Clarke, 2001), which does devote more attention to the events, and amplifies it by including evidence submissions, including one by Lancashire Police that stresses the role of criminality and disputes over drug-dealing and territory within the disturbances.

This lack of an official scrutiny of the actual events is in stark contrast to the forensic examination of the triggers and events of the 1981 riot in Brixton, south London (Scarman, 1981), that is widely understood as having prompted the subsequent and widespread rioting across British inner cities. This analytical gap has only partially been filled by academic commentators, with only one full-length study of the Bradford riot (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008), and that thoughtful contribution limited by its lack of empirical evidence from actual rioters or direct witnesses (Waddington, 2010). Actual eye witness evidence from Bradford, including that of police officers, is drawn on elsewhere (Bujra and Pearce, 2009), whilst analysis of the Oldham and Burnley disturbances (Kalra and Rhodes, 2009; King and Waddington, 2004) has attempted to make sense of the eye witness and journalistic accounts available. These are all drawn on here, alongside community-based research sources (Sutcliffe, 2003), and the perceptions of youth work-based informants in Oldham of the triggers and events there. The aim here in the limited space available is to make sense of the 2001 events in relation to the way they were ‘officially’ portrayed and understood, and to the subsequent change of policy direction apparently carried out in direct response to these violent events.

**Common factors?**

A number of important themes can be detected in this analysis of the 2001 disturbances and their meaning. The first is the actual location of these disturbances. A common factor uniting Oldham, Burnley and Bradford is their past and present economic profile (Kalra and Rhodes, 2009). All three areas had been dominated by the textile and
associated engineering industries, with recruitment of extra staff to the textile industries being the direct reason for the substantial Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities resident in each area (Modood et al., 1997). The subsequent decline and disappearance of that industry has left Oldham, Burnley and Bradford with poverty and unemployment rates above national averages, and with high levels of unskilled, poorly educated individuals seeking work in what has increasingly become an ‘hour glass’ economy that has little space in between the mass of minimum-wage, low-skill jobs and the highly paid professional roles of the emerging ‘knowledge economy’ (Mizen, 2004). Comparatively few of the latter well-paid jobs have yet to develop in post-industrial towns and cities like Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. As is the case nationally (Modood et al., 1997), this unemployment impacts disproportionately on the Asian communities of these areas:

For those aged 16–24, the core group with which much of the post-riot debate was concerned, in each of the three towns, but especially in Oldham, Bangladeshi and Pakistani males in this age group had much lower levels of full-time employment, higher levels of unemployment and involvement in higher education than white British men of the same age.

(Bagguley and Hussain, 2008: 41)

The resulting social exclusion (Byrne, 1999) in each area is significant, and, despite growing economic polarisation within each separate ethnic community, takes spatial forms that harden any existing patterns of ethnic segregation through severely constrained employment and housing options. The CCRT Inquiry process involved visits to other multi-ethnic areas of Britain not experiencing racial tensions, such as Leicester and Southall in west London. The suggestion here (Cantle, 2001) was that ethnic diversity had been managed better in those areas. Whilst it is undoubtedly true that good ‘race relations’ work has happened in those areas, the reality is that physical ethnic segregation of some minority communities in Leicester is as great as that of the 2001 riot areas (Finney and Simpson, 2009), so, arguably, the real difference is that these ‘peaceful’ areas have been much more successful in generating viable post-industrial economies that have produced jobs and the possibility of economic progress for all ethnic groups in their areas than have areas like Oldham (Kalra, 2000). Government has acknowledged the unevenness of ethnic diversity and of the settlement patterns of new migrants (DCLG, 2007a), but the great unevenness of economic
prosperity and of social exclusion also needs to be acknowledged here when considering the causes of, and attempts to prevent, racial tension.

Closely allied to this understanding of modern economic dynamics in each of the 2001 riot areas is a reality of significant ethnic segregation. Whilst the implicit community cohesion suggestion that this ethnic segregation is getting worse is highly contested (Carling, 2008; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Ouseley, 2001), it is beyond dispute that Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, and other ex-industrial areas of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Greater Manchester, are amongst the most ethnically segregated local authority areas of England. Here, housing areas are significantly segregated by ethnicity, and schools even more so (Burgess et al., 2005). Originally created by racist practices in housing markets (Kundnani, 2001), this significant segregation has arguably been maintained by poverty, the lack of suitable alternative housing (Phillips et al., 2008) and demographic pressures within different ethnic communities (Finney and Simpson, 2009). It is clear that this local segregation and associated ethnic tensions had been growing for years, if not decades, without any effective action, suggesting a clear failure of local political leadership (Ouseley, 2001; Ritchie, 2001). The initial rejection by Oldham Council of the main recommendations of the local report following the 2001 riots (Ritchie, 2001) suggested both a denial of the local authority’s own historic role in fostering ethnic segregation and a reluctance to show that political leadership (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008). One issue highlighted has been that in the period leading up to the 2001 disturbances, the Race Equality Councils (RECs), local agencies charged with addressing racial discrimination and promoting good race relations at the local level, and which had their roots in the 1976 Race Relations Act (Solomos, 2003), had collapsed in each of the towns subsequently experiencing riots. To some commentators (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008) this might a be a causal factor, but it can arguably be seen as symptomatic of the problematic ethnic relations in the area and of the corrosive long-term impacts of policies of ethnicism that focused on the needs of each separate ethnic community (Malik, 2009). Here, these RECs experienced the withdrawal of local authority funding and support because of the fundamental lack of agreement and cooperation between different ethnic minority community groups, a lack of united common purpose around race equality initiatives that could be seen as a product of past policies (Sivanandan, 2004) and which made their demise inevitable.

The impact of the combination of largely monocultural housing and economic marginalisation on youth identities is the subject of
detailed discussion in Chapters 6 and 7, and this can be seen to accen-
tuate a retreat to essentialised and oppositional identities for ‘losers’
in an increasingly globalised, neo-liberal economy (May, 1999b), a
‘neighbourhood nationalism’ (Back, 1996) stronger than that always
demonstrated by working-class young men (Cohen, 1988) because life
has not offered young men of Asian or white backgrounds the possi-
bility of any other sort of identity in towns like Oldham or Burnley.
Arguably, this analysis allows a direct comparison between the 2001 riots
and those of 1991 that saw serious disorder on (almost entirely white)
socially excluded British social housing estates on the edge of cities
like Cardiff, Oxford and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and which has been
understood as a violent, gendered response to generational economic
marginalisation in ex-industrial areas (Campbell, 1993). The long-term
racial tensions and youth violence around perceptions of ‘borders’ and
territory in ethnically segregated Oldham (Thomas, 2003) and similar
ex-industrial northern towns (Webster, 1995) can be seen as a par-
allel here, with tensions over racial attacks and claims, amplified by
sensationalist media coverage, of ‘no go’ areas for whites in parts of
Oldham central to the pre-riot build-up of tension there (Kalra and
Rhodes, 2009).

This analysis of geographical economic marginalisation and closely
associated ethnic segregation and tensions suggests that the 2001 riots
can be seen as inevitable, but the ‘flashpoints’ model of public disor-
der (Waddington, 2010) rightly suggests that it is the complex interplay
of factors at a number of levels that enables problematic, long-term
social, political or economic problems to result in outbreaks of violence
at specific places and times. This is illustrated by the fact that a num-
ber of other northern towns and cities, such as Rochdale, Blackburn
and Dewsbury, share all the economic and social characteristics outlined
above, and were viewed as being ‘at risk’ of violence during 2001 (Travis,
2006) but did not witness disorder in the way that Oldham, Burnley and
Bradford did. A number of specific factors can therefore be detected in
understanding the outbreak and conduct of the 2001 disturbances in
Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, and consideration of them challenges
the notion that these disturbances were in some ways ‘inevitable’. They
are far-right agitation and the role of local media in fanning this; clumsy
and ineffective policing that had the effect of increasing tension and
violence; allegations of criminality within the specific trigger incidents;
and the accelerant role of new technologies within the disturbances and
the bitterness of their aftermath.
Far-right agitation

Local agitation and inflammation by far-right groups like the British National Party (BNP) and the National Front can be seen as central to the 2001 disturbances, despite little focus on them in the community cohesion national reports (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008), a failure that echoes official analysis of early 1980s disturbances (Solomos, 2003). This was particularly evident in Oldham, with several marches or rallies, often largely made up of racist activists from other parts of the country, in the months leading up to the riots, with the last held on the day the riots started. The impact this persistent agitation had on Oldham’s Asian communities, including the eve of the riot, was obvious to Johnson, a white youth worker with experience of work in Asian communities:

There was a real fear of the BNP coming and doing this and that…they were turning up and we were saying, ‘are they going to be here this weekend?’ The night before the disturbances they were in the pub up at Primrose Bank (a white area), which is on the edge of Bankside (Pakistani area), and if you’ve got a pub full of right-wing extremists, the community is going to say, ‘hang on, they’re only 200 yards up there.’ There’s going to be fear there.

One of the key incidents seen as increasing tension in Oldham some weeks before the riots was an incursion by football fans into Westwood, a mainly Bangladeshi area, before and after a game between Oldham Athletic and Stoke City, with far-right activists seen as influential on this fan behaviour. Similarly, BNP leaflets and websites were used to exploit and further inflame the mugging of a white pensioner by Asian young men, a job made much easier by it being termed a racist attack by local police and the Oldham Chronicle newspaper despite clear denials by the victim’s family (Kalra and Rhodes, 2009). The reactionary role of local media can be seen as important here, with local newspapers in both Oldham and Burnley persisting in publishing incendiary and often racist letters, some of them anonymous and emanating from the BNP, in the months leading up to the riots. This, and their irresponsible coverage of issues around claims of racial attacks, made the press culpable in the eyes of the local inquiries (Ritchie, 2001).

Similarly, the Bradford riot can be linked directly to racist political activity, with a far-right rally scheduled for Bradford on Saturday, 7 July, leading to a ban by the Home Secretary, an associated ban on a
previously scheduled city centre multicultural music festival aimed at families of all ethnic backgrounds, and the holding of an anti-racist rally instead in the centre in case any far-right activists gathered. The context here can be seen as being a historical one of large-scale fascist rallies in Bradford in the late 1970s and substantial, violent responses by anti-racists, and a recent one of fascist agitation locally that included BNP leader Nick Griffin speaking at a rally held in a white suburb of Bradford the night before the riot (Copsey, 2008). This racialised context, built on increasing ethnic segregation within the city (Carling, 2008), the febrile atmosphere created by recent ‘race riots’ in Oldham and Burnley, hot weather and persistent rumours that far-right activists had appeared in central Bradford all provided the conditions for ‘flashpoints’ (Waddington, 2010) that led to and escalated the rioting. Arguably, the Bradford riot meant that a far-right ‘strategy of tension’ had achieved exactly what it hoped for (Copsey, 2008), with negative national media coverage of Asian young people fuelling popular fears and moral panics around ‘Asian gangs’ (Alexander, 2000), and resulting in significant political progress for the BNP at the local level, including elected councillors in areas of the north of England like Burnley, Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds (Copsey, 2008). This electoral upswing only subsequently started to decline with the 2010 national and local elections, and the election of a right-of-centre national coalition government.

The role of technology

The far-right agitation outlined above, in the context of long-term ethnic segregation and associated tensions, helped to create a highly racialised and tense atmosphere in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, and in other similar towns and cities, prior to the riots. Arguably, ‘technologies of information flow’ (Kalra and Rhodes, 2009) were an important component in this growing tension and in its rapid escalation once the initial incidents of violence occurred. Relevant here is the use of far-right websites, both national ‘official’ ones and, more importantly, those of local ‘front’ organisations to spread false and misleading information about the nature and reality of racial incidents. Second was the role of mobile phone technology in mobilising large numbers of people rapidly on the basis of a rumour or claimed threat. Here, mobiles can be seen as a crucial element in the cycle of violent incidents in Burnley, and in the rapid escalation of the initial incident that sparked the Oldham riots (Kalra and Rhodes, 2009), as confirmed by white youth and community...
worker David, who has long experience of working with Asian young men in Oldham:

The other thing about the Oldham situation is there are a lot of young Asian men around so suddenly, quickly, there are a lot of people in one place and the distances are not big, and the mobile phones are effective and suddenly everyone’s there.

Similarly, the spreading of false information rapidly by community-based pirate radio and mobile technology were both crucial to the escalation of the 2005 Birmingham disturbances (King, 2009). Above all, modern technologies also played a crucial role in the large number of arrests made and convictions achieved in the wake of the riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008). High-quality photography and video footage taken during the riots, some of it by dedicated, front-line information-gathering police units now formally known as ‘forward intelligence teams’, successfully captured clear images of many of the rioters, with subsequent media campaigns used to identify those involved. The clarity of such evidence partially explains the severity of the sentences received by many, especially those involved in the Bradford disturbances, and despite the fact that many had handed themselves in to the police following family pressure (Burnett, 2004). The length of these sentences following events arguably provoked by far-right agitation and police mishandling has left bad feeling in some parts of the Asian communities affected (Burnett, 2004), a feeling exacerbated in Oldham by the lower sentences given to the white men regarded as responsible for the trigger incident as a slow police response prevented the sort of detailed technology-based information gathering that subsequently convicted many of the Asian young men who had reacted (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008).

Police mishandling?

Clumsy and questionable policing is also an identifiable issue in relation to both the longer-term causes and the immediate triggers of the 2001 disturbances. An identifiable longer-term policing issue is the role of Greater Manchester Police (GMP) around racial incidents and attacks within Oldham. Prior to the 2001 disturbances, Oldham had consistently recorded the highest number of ‘racial incidents’ in the Greater Manchester area and was one of the few locations nationally to show a larger number (but not proportionally, given the much larger white
population) of racial incidents with white people as victims, rather than the reverse situation common elsewhere. Arguably, such data showed both the confusion following the Stephan Lawrence Inquiry (Macpherson, 1999) which emphasised that the victim’s perception was crucial to the definition of a ‘racial incident’ and the highly racialised atmosphere in Oldham, whereby whites felt they were the real victims of racism in an echo of what has been termed the ‘white backlash’ (Hewitt, 2005). GMP’s decision to present these raw racial incident statistics without any contextualisation of population size and proportionality of likely risk, and their silence as sections of the media and public used these to claim that whites were indeed the ‘real’ race victims, greatly increased racial tensions in the town, arguably setting the scene for the reporting of ‘no go’ areas and the racialisation of the attack on pensioner Walter Chamberlain (Kalra, 2002; Ray and Smith, 2002) by the local press. Indeed, Rafiq, a Bangladeshi-origin, Oldham youth project co-ordinator felt that the Oldham division of GMP were giving their own response to the Lawrence Inquiry’s finding of ‘institutional racism’ within the police through this action:

It doesn’t surprise that the policeman in charge at the time (1999–2001) is no longer a policeman. I think they retired him off early or something, but he’s no longer a policeman. At the time I think he had a political agenda of trying to undermine some of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry recommendations.

The resulting bad feeling towards GMP amongst Oldham’s Asian communities was compounded when the rioting broke out on 26 May. Having failed to prevent racist football fans marauding through Asian areas in the weeks previously, GMP’s response to the large gathering of Asian young men prompted by the incursions of white racists, some of whom had earlier attended a BNP march, was to hem them in and effectively cordon off the mainly Pakistani area of Bankside. Local youth worker Habib commented that:

The Police made mistakes, major ones and minor ones, in the sense that the way they policed was poor. The strategy of trying to hem Bankside in from blowing up actually caused more of a hassle than they needed.

Accusation of police mishandling of public order situations was also made in Burnley, where Lancashire Police were seen to be very
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slow to control large groups of white men from gathering and moving towards Asian areas, a failure compounded by allegations of brutality in their treatment of Asian men later in the events (King and Waddington, 2004). Perhaps the most serious criticisms of policing came in Bradford, with the suggestion that the violent escalation of the rioting on 7 July can be seen as a failure of policing at certain key ‘flashpoints’ during the day, such as the surrounding of a peaceful anti-racist rally with police officers already in riot gear, their failure to anticipate and deal with racist behaviour by a small group of white fascist sympathisers before they attacked an Asian man, and the arguably unnecessary chasing of Asian young men back towards the Pakistani-dominated area of Manningham that fundamentally altered the nature of the confrontation from political protest to a perceived community defence (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008). This latter tactical approach might directly be traced to criticisms made of the police for not defending the city centre against damage following earlier rioting by Asian young people in Bradford in 1995, a decision that arguably prolonged the 2001 rioting and greatly increased its intensity (Bujra and Pearce, 2009). This perception of being a community under police attack, coupled with the view that the racist agitation of far-right groups was not being taken seriously by the police, created the belief for some Asian young men in Bradford of the ‘right to riot’ (Jan-Khan, 2003).

Criminality?

The consistent police response in 2001 to such allegations of mismanagement was that violent and unjustifiable criminality lay at the root of such disturbances, giving the police little room for manoeuvre. Here, there are clear parallels to long-established perspectives of urban riots that portray them as inherently criminal, the ‘madness of the mob’ led by manipulative agitators. The immediate aftermath of the Bradford riots saw a range of political figures, including the city’s Labour MPs, implying little sympathy for the cause or motivation of the rioters and suggesting that drugs ‘turf’ and criminality had played a large part in the actions of a criminal and unrepresentative minority (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008; Ward, 2001). A similar perspective was put forward in Lancashire Constabulary’s submissions to the Burnley Inquiry, where they suggested that violent disputes between white and Asian drugs gangs which had lain behind a recent murder in the area had reignited, so sparking the Burnley riot in an already tense and racialised environment (Clarke, 2001; Kalra and Rhodes, 2009). This perspective found
support in the official Burnley report: ‘I am convinced that what was described as a “race riot” was in fact a series of criminal acts perpetuated by a relatively small number of people’ (Clarke, 2001: 8). This suggestion of criminality as a key cause for the 2001 riots was summarily dismissed by central government (Denham, 2001: 9), just as far-right agitation and police mishandling of ethnic relations were marginalised. Here, government’s position implied that ‘triggers’ of criminality should not be confused with the profound racial tensions between communities, and between Asian communities and the police, both in these 2001 disturbances and in the preceding years. Nevertheless, interviews with active participants in the Bradford riot show that ‘Many rioters acknowledged that they had histories with the police and that a desire to get even played a part for some of them’ (Bujra and Pearce, 2009: 66).

Certainly, the suggestion that outside agitators were responsible for the 2001 riots seems misplaced. The riot in Leeds on 5 June, sparked by a very heavy-handed police arrest of an Asian motorist in the context of the recent events in Oldham, largely involved young Asian men, either from the immediate Harehills area or other areas of inner-city Leeds, with a local ‘gang leader’ quoted as saying ‘The police are trying to turn this in to a race issue, but it’s not. It’s about police intimidation’ (cited in Farrar, 2002: 12), and evidence that non-Asian young people were involved. Similarly, the vast majority of those arrested and charged for the events in Bradford were resident in Bradford, or the neighbouring town of Keighley (Bagguley and Hussain, 2008).

**Summing up the 2001 riots**

The necessarily short summary presented above of the 2001 riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford has attempted to summarise the evidence available and to pinpoint key issues. In doing so, it has tried to emphasise the local specificities and histories that have arguably been downplayed in the subsequent policy discourse (Kalra and Rhodes, 2009). It can be seen here that any suggestion that the riots were ‘simply’ about ethnic segregation was inevitable, or even that they were ‘race riots’ is somewhat simplistic. Whilst racial conflict between different communities was central to events in Oldham and Burnley, conflict between Asian young men and the police was central to all the outbreaks for a number of reasons, as shown by the under-reported events in Leeds.
that focused on heavy-handed policing (Farrar, 2002). Police mismanagement of multicultural communities and their inevitable tensions was clearly a causal issue, as was persistent and cynical far-right agitation that was not effectively countered at the local level. Underpinning all this was the geographical reality of economic marginalisation and social exclusion in all areas, with each area having spatial hotspots where relative poverty combined with ethnically segregated communities to provide a reality of persistent, low-level tension and violence, both between different ethnic groups and with the police, so making the 2001 riots less of an aberration for such areas than they first appeared (Kalra and Rhodes, 2009). Here, rather than the riots being simply about criminality, or being a rejection of British identity and values, these violent disturbances were arguably more about frustration at that very British citizenship being denied to many Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin young men, through economic marginalisation, housing deprivation, and policing that seemed more interested in controlling them than dealing with racist violence (Amin, 2003; Kalra, 2002). Nevertheless, direct conflict between different, often spatially separated, ethnic communities was a key factor, a reality re-emphasised by the events in the Lozells area of Birmingham in 2005, where several days of violence between African-Caribbean and Asian communities involved murders and serious inter-communal violence (King, 2009). Those events seemed to confirm some of the key issues present in the 2001 riots.

The governmental response: community cohesion

Predictably, following the 2001 disturbances discussed above, local inquiries produced reports focusing on specific circumstances in Oldham (Ritchie, 2001) and in Burnley (Clarke, 2001), with a report on ethnic segregation and tension in Bradford produced before but published shortly after the Bradford riots (Ouseley, 2001). The outbreaks of violent disorder in Leeds and Stoke-on-Trent did not result in any local inquiry process, and barely warranted a mention in subsequent national government publications. Less expected was a central government Inquiry and its two resulting reports (Cantle, 2001; Denham, 2001) which looked more broadly at the state of national ethnic relations, offering a new national policy priority, community cohesion. Following the 2001 disturbances, the Community Cohesion Review Team, under the chairmanship of Ted Cantle, a former Chief Executive
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of Nottingham City Council, was asked by the Home Office to produce an analysis of the causal factors and recommendations for future governmental action. This remit was addressed through a series of visits to the areas experiencing disturbances, and to other multicultural areas, holding evidence-gathering sessions at each location (Cantle, 2001). This methodical process would ‘appear to be evidence-based policy making in action’ (Robinson, 2005: 1412). Unlike inquiries into previous urban disturbances (Scarman, 1981), which had examined the ‘trigger’ incidents and resulting events of riots in detail, the resulting report (Cantle, 2001) did not, as discussed above, examine the actual events of the 2001 disturbances in any depth, confining themselves to restatement of the brief facts. In so doing, this inquiry process and the resulting long-term policy shift thus made only a very limited acknowledgement of the local specificities and causal processes discussed above. The clear implication was that these 2001 disturbances were symptomatic of much wider and deeper realities around race relations (Solomos, 2003) within Britain’s towns and cities, and that these violent local events had provided an appropriate opportunity for central government to review and alter national policy approaches and priorities. Here, debates already underway, such as through the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CFMEB) (2000), were important. The independent CFMEB process, under the chairmanship of distinguished academic expert on multiculturalism, Lord Bikhu Parekh, included a number of key national academic and political commentators on ethnic diversity. The resulting report received considerable media criticism, particularly centred on what was perceived to be its anti-British tone in suggesting that Britishness ‘has largely unspoken, racial connotations’ (CFMEB, 2000: 38). Whilst such media attacks were predictable, the report’s focus on Britain being a ‘community of communities’ struck Joppke (2004: 250) as a ‘reassertion of orthodox multiculturalism’, just as it was being seriously questioned in wider society, with comparatively little focus on the wider meta community. However, within its concerns with the proper and constructive balance between ethnic diversity and societal unity, the CFMEB report stressed the need for policy to promote ‘cohesion’, and a clear thread of continuity around both language and concern can be found between the pre-riots CFMEB and the later community cohesion reports (Cantle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001):

Cohesion... derives from widespread commitment to certain core values, both between communities and within them: equality and fairness; dialogue and consultation; toleration, compromise and
accommodation; recognition of and respect for diversity; and by no means least – determination to confront and eliminate racism and xenophobia.

(CFMEB, 2000: 56)

The CFMEB report suggested British citizenship ceremonies for new citizens (p. 55) and a much closer relationship between ‘human rights’ and ‘race equality’ policy processes (p. 99), both later enacted by the Labour government in the name of community cohesion (Cantle, 2001; Home Office, 2005), and which were portrayed by critics as evidence of a post-2001, negative turn in the government’s commitment to race equality, and as contradictory to the CFMEB proposals (Alexander, 2007; Back et al., 2002). Therefore, whilst some aspects of the CFMEB’s recommendations, particularly their focus on Britain as a ‘community of communities’, with these ‘communities’ appearing to be implicitly fixed and essentialised ethnic entities, seemed to be a continuation of unreconstructed multiculturalism, other aspects of the report called for greater action to promote common values and cohesion: ‘Britain needs common values to hold it together and give it a sense of cohesion’ (CFMEB, 2000: 53). This suggests that the 2001 disturbances provided the moment for those calls for a re-balancing of race relations policies towards cohesion and forms of national unity and identity to be actioned more decisively by government:

Our central recommendation is the need to make community cohesion a central aim of government, and to ensure that the design and delivery of all government policies reflects this.

(Denham, 2001: 2)

The other policy antecedent that should perhaps be acknowledged is the wider ‘social exclusion’ policy focus prioritised by the Labour government from 1997 onwards. This presaged considerable policy focus on, and budget allocations around, social inequalities and marginalisation, and led to significant reconfiguration of education and welfare services in order to address these issues (Mizen, 2004). Issues such as youth disengagement and unemployment, teenage pregnancy and school truancy and exclusion were all addressed under the banner of ‘social exclusion’, a concept arguably flexible and slippery enough to enable government to move seamlessly between redistributive narratives and perspectives that focused much more on the agency and negative social capital of
some individuals and communities seen as contributing to their own ‘exclusion’. Here, the suggestion was that some ‘socially excluded’ communities were spatially and culturally cut off from the ‘mainstream’, living lives different and separate to those regularly engaged in employment or education, with unhelpful attitudes and lifestyles growing and becoming a barrier in themselves as a result (Levitas, 2005), an echo of the key themes of community cohesion explored below. A clear ‘third way’ (Giddens, 1998) parallel can be seen here between the ‘socially excluded’ and ethnically segregated Asian and white communities in British towns and cities suffering ethnic segregation and tension, a parallel focused on the interplay between structural realities and individual and community-based cultural responses seen as part, arguably a large part, of the problem.

The CCRT Inquiry process led by Ted Cantle introduced and defined the new term of community cohesion, a development accepted by central government:

Community cohesion requires that there is a shared sense of belonging based on common goals and core social values, respect for difference (ethnic, cultural and religious) and acceptance of the reciprocal rights and obligations of community members working together for the common good.

(Denham, 2001: 18)

In advancing this term, the CCRT Inquiry process was deploying a concept with no real history or familiarity within ‘race relations’ policy circles. Discussion of the actual meaning of community cohesion is surprisingly limited within the reports (Cantle, 2001; Denham, 2001), suggesting that the term had rapidly been adapted from work on ‘social’ (economic) cohesion (Forrest and Kearns, 2000) and applied to ethnic segregation. The local reports on the Oldham (Ritchie, 2001) and Burnley (Clarke, 2001) disturbances did not use the term community cohesion, focusing instead on ‘parallel lives’, but the meaning and core analysis was largely the same. This was also true of the report on ethnic relations in Bradford (Ouseley, 2001) produced before, but published after the Bradford riot of July 2001, and which focused on ethnic ‘segregation’. The solution proposed by both national and local community cohesion reports was cross-ethnic contact and dialogue, something that urgently needed to be prioritised, in their view:
The promotion of cross cultural contact between different communities at all levels, foster understanding and respect, and break down barriers. The opportunity should be taken to develop a programme of ‘myth-busting’.

(Cantle, 2001: 11)

The concern here is clearly that such contact should help to promote shared identities and common norms and values, a conception of shared citizenship that is sensitive to difference, but which must override any separate loyalties:

Respect for cultural diversity must be balanced by acceptance that in key respects people must come together much more than has happened recently in Oldham, if necessary laying aside some of their cultural preferences.

(Ritche, 2001: 7)

Whilst the overarching narrative of segregation and parallel lives is shared across all the 2001 national and local community cohesion reports, actual definitions are limited, meaning therefore that greater clarity on the concerns and approaches of community cohesion has come with the implementation of policy approaches and funding regimes in its name (Home Office, 2003a, 2005; LGA, 2002) and, in particular, through the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (COIC) (DCLG, 2007a), established in the wake of the 7/7 London bombings of July 2005, and whose recommendations re-energised many of the original proposals made by Cantle.

Whilst the fact of another inquiry process on community cohesion within five years of the first might seem surprising, COIC can be seen as a product of a confluence of forces and events, with the 7/7 bombings, the failed attacks of two weeks later and parallel foiled Islamist plots all making explicit the concern arguably implicit in the 2001 community cohesion reports about dangerously separate and oppositional identities growing amongst young British Muslims, whilst at the same time popular concerns around large-scale immigration were at their height following the accession of Eastern European countries to the European Union (EU) that led to significant inward migration to Britain in search of employment denied by many other EU states. The response of COIC focused very much on local realities and strategies, a reflection of the great spatial variations in recent immigration. In its focus on
‘shared futures’, and the rights and responsibilities of all communities in building that shared future, COIC took one of Cantle’s key themes further, by recommending that government should in future presume against funding and support for community organisations representing or engaging with one ethnic or faith community only, whilst warning of the dangers of white alienation from policies of multiculturalism that seem to ignore them through a focus on each separate ethnic minority community (DCLG, 2007a). Alongside this COIC refined the working definition of community cohesion used by government, linking it with integration to reflect their focus on the issue of significant immigration and the urgent need to integrate new arrivals. This integration focus on new migrants can clearly be seen as distinct from the focus of the 2001 community cohesion reports, which were concerned with relations between settled ethnic minority and white communities. Nevertheless, the approach of COIC was consistent with the key themes of community cohesion set out here. COIC’s definition of cohesion and integration was:

**Our new definition of integration and cohesion is therefore that**

An integrated and cohesive community is one where:

- There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country
- There is a strong sense of an individual’s rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment
- There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny
- There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common
- There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods.

(DCLG, 2007a: 10)
Below, this chapter outlines the key themes and concerns evident from the community cohesion reports and the way they were articulated by government ministers.

**The key themes of community cohesion**

*Segregation and ‘parallel lives’*

Despite this lack of clarity or pedigree as a term, it is clear that community cohesion is centrally concerned with what it sees as a reality of significant ethnic/racial segregation, and the resulting lack of integration or ‘cohesion’:

> The team was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation of our towns and cities. The extent to which these physical divisions were compounded by so many other aspects of our daily lives was very evident…many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges.

(Cantle, 2001: 9)

Both national and local reports discuss ethnic segregation, or ‘parallel lives’ and the apparently negative experiences stemming from it, with this meaning for Oldham:

> A system of separate development within the town in which people from different ethnic backgrounds live lives largely separated from one another.

(Ritchie, 2001: 3)

Here, the term ‘separate development’ may sound like hyperbole and is more suited to Apartheid-era, South Africa, but in the aftermath of the Oldham disturbances there was a serious proposal to build a dividing wall between specific white and South Asian areas of the town to reduce the possibility of ‘border’ conflict (Sutcliffe, 2003). The implication here is that parts of British towns and cities were starting to resemble the rigid sectarian divides of Northern Ireland, and it is no coincidence that post-2001 efforts to build community cohesion in Britain have drawn on organisations such as Mediation Northern Ireland and the experience they have of trying to break down rigid barriers between Loyalist and Nationalist communities in Northern Ireland. Whilst not using the term community cohesion, the local Oldham report (Ritchie, 2001) focused heavily on the ‘parallel lives’ lived in
Oldham, and the lack of shared understanding, respect and common values apparently flowing from this segregation. The clear implication within the community cohesion discourse is that physical ethnic segregation has deepened and hardened the lack of common identity, and the tension and mutual fear that results from that lack of commonality, suggesting that this segregation was causal to the growing pre-riot tensions outlined above. Central here is how profound ethnic segregation breeds separate, monocultural identities, with lack of meaningful or positive contact with the ‘other’ encouraging the growth of oppositional, exclusive identities that are suspicious of and antagonistic to communities and individuals of a different ethnic background. This analysis would see the phenomenon of Islamist extremism (Hussain, 2007), or increased support for overtly racist political parties with neo-Nazi roots (Copsey, 2008), as an inevitable by-product of such a generalised situation of separate monocultural communities and identities.

Also implicit within the national and local community cohesion reports was the feeling that this physical and cultural ethnic segregation was actually getting worse in some areas, a highly contested suggestion that Chapter 3 examines in greater detail. The report by Sir Herman (now Lord) Ouseley (the former Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the government agency charged with policing Britain’s anti-discriminatory measures and now amalgamated within the Equality and Human Rights Commission), which was prepared before and published after the Bradford disturbances of July 2001, is blunt about the extent of the local ethnic segregation in Bradford: ‘We have concentrated…on the very worrying drift towards self segregation’ (emphasis added) (Ouseley, 2001: Introduction). Any suggestions that the use of the term ‘self’ in relation to segregation was simply a slip are dispelled later in the same report:

Self-segregation is driven by fear of others, the need for safety from harassment and violent crime, and the belief that it is the only way to promote, retain and protect faith and cultural identity and affiliation.

(Ouseley, 2001: 10)

This suggests that ethnic segregation is real, problematic and partially at least due to the choice or agency of communities, a theme echoed by the CRE (2001), who spoke of ‘congregation’, or self-segregation in their own post-riots report. Whilst acknowledging the continuing reality
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of racism locally and nationally, the CRE focused on the heavy geographical concentration of Asian communities in the areas witnessing disturbances, with the clear suggestion that this is a problem in itself. The existence and importance of ethnic ‘segregation’ in Britain, and its relationship to issues of racial tension or inequality, is highly contested (Finney and Simpson, 2009; Flint and Robinson, 2008; Kalra, 2002) in a situation of shared educational content and common cultural interests amongst Britain’s diverse youth population, but others feel that Britain is ‘sleepwalking towards segregation’ (Phillips, 2005) and that community cohesion has provided a timely focus on this issue. The issue of ‘self-segregation’ highlights a controversial theme of community cohesion, the suggestion of considerable agency by individuals and communities in the creation and acceptance of the present segregated reality, which is explored below. The solution clearly proposed by community cohesion is to break segregation down through direct contact and dialogue, with calls for action towards more integrated schooling and housing, new schemes of contact, such as school-twinning, and the development of genuinely multi-ethnic community organisations and facilities, rather than separate ethnic-specific ones (Cantle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001).

Agency and responsibility

Within the community cohesion policy discourse at both national (Cantle, 2001; Home Office, 2005) and local level (Clarke, 2001; Ritchie, 2001), there is a clear concern with agency and individual/community responsibility in overcoming segregation. Arguably, these concerns are consistent with the broader direction of New Labour social policy after 1997 (Levitas, 2005; McGhee, 2006), and which is unlikely to disappear under the new government. Whilst individual and institutionalised racism, such as the reality of racial harassment (Modood et al., 1997) and Oldham local authority’s past policy of allocating Asian and white tenants to different housing areas, clearly were central to the creation of ethnic segregation (Kundnani, 2001), the suggestion here is that the ‘agency’ (Greener, 2002) of individuals within all communities has played a role in accepting and so deepening this segregation, as shown by their housing and schooling decisions. This is highlighted by the focus on both ‘white flight’ (Cantle, 2001) and ethnic minority ‘congregation’ (CRE, 2001). In stressing the need for individuals, communities and the organisations that represent them and work with them, to take responsibility within day-to-day decisions over work, schooling and housing choices for breaking down ‘parallel lives’ (Ritchie, 2001) and
making contact across ethnic divides, community cohesion is clearly echoing a communitarianist agenda (Etzioni, 1995; McGhee, 2003). This position is that an unintended consequence of the post-war welfare regimes in the USA and the UK has been a loss of the necessary balance between rights and responsibilities:

Communities constantly need to be pulled toward the centre course where individual rights and social responsibilities are properly balanced.

(Etzioni, 1995: x)

Communitarians extend this analysis to what they term ‘one-sided’ proponents of multiculturalism, who deny any common or shared values or positions, at the risk of creating ethnic tension. From this perspective, uncontrolled relativist pluralism (Watson, 2000) can lead to ‘Balkanization’, with the solution being an acceptance of, and adherence to, shared values, a position clearly anticipating community cohesion. Arguably, Britain’s lack of a written constitution and a clearly agreed ‘national story’ (Winder, 2004) in a post-imperial, post-industrial era adds urgency to government efforts to debate shared national values and the meaning of ‘Britishness’ that have followed on from the emergence of community cohesion. The solution offered is a re-birth of the ‘spirit of community’, or the ‘big society’ as the Prime Minister David Cameron has described it, the acceptance of wider responsibilities and obligations, with this conception of community being about the making and acceptance of moral claims on each other. This position clearly assumes that individuals can and should influence structural realities, such as ethnic segregation, a suggestion questioned by many commentators. Following this perspective, Ouseley (2001) suggested a ‘Bradfordian People Programme’ to promote understanding of and support for diversity, which he saw young people learning about and changing their attitudes and behaviour as a result. Similarly, central government community cohesion initiatives (Home Office, 2003a; LGA, 2002), discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, have focused on capacity building around mediation, conflict resolution and community contact, in order to equip communities to help themselves (McGhee, 2005).

This communitarian agenda has strong parallels with the emergence of the ‘third way’ (Giddens, 1998), an analysis of implications stemming from the profound social and economic changes underway as part of globalization and the move to an increasingly post-industrial economy in Britain (Byrne, 1999). This analysis was central to post-1997 New
Labour social policy approaches, with a clear concern around welfare dependency and sole reliance on government to create social change. Giddens argues that individuals must learn to confront risks and to anticipate that their own lives will be less secure, seeing such a cultural transformation as necessary:

We have to make our lives in a more active way than was true of previous generations, and we need more actively to accept responsibilities for the consequences of what we do and the lifestyle habits we adopt.

(Giddens, 1998: 37)

This suggests that government cannot create ‘cohesion’ on its own, and that individuals and communities have to be active ‘agents’ of contact and cohesion. Hesse (2000) sees Giddens as arguing for a cosmopolitanism which recognises the importance of national solidarity, in contrast to the ‘radical multiculturalism’ of the left that is culturally relativist and committed to pluralism at any cost. Here policies, based on a ‘rights and responsibilities’ approach, can be viewed as either a necessary programme of behaviour modification in an uncertain and fast-changing world, or a shifting of responsibility from state to the individual (Byrne, 1999).

Given the prominence of ‘third way’ and communitarian thought for policy-makers, there is clearly a revival of interest in theories of human agency within social policy (Greener, 2002), including community cohesion. Bourdieu’s key concept of ‘habitus’ is important here, with its focus on a set of dispositions that incline ‘agents’ to act and react in certain ways. For Bourdieu, habitus orientates behaviour without determining it, and the ‘fields’ within which habitus operates for individuals depends very much on the ‘capital’ to which they have access (Greener, 2002: 691/2). Bourdieu discussed how the habitus of actors may enable reflexive behaviour, or agency, but that they may lack the right type of capital, or any capital at all, to make any impact. This clearly suggests the limits on individual agency outside of economic and social structures and forces, yet New Labour’s supply-side ‘welfare-to-work’ policies focused heavily on the development of agency and human capital (Hills et al., 2002; Levitas, 2005). The community cohesion focus on direct contact and individual/community responsibility for developing shared values (Cantle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001) arguably displays a similar naivety about the power of agency, in the absence of action around structural issues, such as housing and schools. Underpinning Gidden’s position...
on approaches to modern social policy, including ethnic tension, is a belief:

That individuals hold the power within them to ‘escape’ from their present circumstances should they choose to do so.

(Greener, 2002: 693)

This highlights the ‘Catch 22’ nature of Gidden’s positions, with such reflexive agency only possible in a state where equality and empowerment for all was already a reality. Arguably, the community cohesion reports’ stress on the need for new migrants to learn English and mix more is a clear example of the ‘third way’ emphasis on self-government and the need to take individual and community responsibility (Back et al., 2002).

Problematic social capital
Alongside community cohesion’s focus on agency and responsibility is a concern with ‘social capital’ (Putnam, 2000) or community. This helps to explain the concern with segregation and the need to overcome it within the community cohesion discourse (Cantle, 2001). A distinction must be made here between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital (Putnam, 2000). ‘Bonding’ signifies the institutions, networks and practices that bind existing communities together, whilst ‘bridging’ social capital signifies the mechanisms, structures and sites that enable cross-community dialogue, understanding and networks to grow. Community cohesion offers a critique of excessive and unhelpful bonding capital (McGhee, 2003) within segregated, monocultural white and Asian communities who have few or no ‘bridging’ links that allow meaningful contact and relationship building with the ‘other’. Whilst strong communities with well-developed social capital can be very positive for both individuals and society, the dangers of excessive ‘bonding capital’ in the absence of balancing ‘bridging capital’ within individual communities have been highlighted in studies (Back, 1996; Hewitt, 2005) exposing the fierce, racist and reactionary cultures of some white (and, arguably, Asian/black) communities. In both studies, this antagonism to ‘different’ outsiders could not be explained by parental attitudes, and seemed to be growing in responses to perceptions of policy and socio-economic trends, suggesting that the nature of ‘bonding’ social capital within communities is not fixed or unchangeable.

Here, the belief is that the 2001 disturbances exposed a reality of ‘bonded’ monocultural communities who have little interest in other
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ethnic communities in a situation of minimal contact. From this perspective, there is an urgent need to develop avenues for meaningful bridging social capital which will enable dialogue and relationships across ethnic divides, so facilitating the development of shared values and priorities. In the case of the areas experiencing disturbances in 2001, the dominant textile industries (the reason why Asian communities were recruited to these locations) and the trade unions associated with those industries partially provided forms of bridging social capital in the past (Kundnani, 2001). The disappearance of these industries, and the failure as yet to develop viable, post-industrial economies locally, is clearly relevant to the lack of bridging social capital, as is the suggestion that within many of the white and Asian communities experiencing post-industrial social exclusion as ‘losers’ in a rapidly globalising economy, inward-looking and defensive forms of ‘neighbourhood nationalism’ (Back, 1996) are developing. There is also a clear belief within community cohesion (Cantle, 2001, 2005) that past policy approaches have unintentionally bolstered bonding social capital, especially in ethnic minority communities, whilst neglecting the need to develop bridging forms of social capital that would enable the promotion of good relations between ethnic groups.

Blaming past policy approaches

Underpinning all these key themes of community cohesion discussed above is the belief that government’s multiculturalist policy approaches to race relations over the past 30 years have, whilst achieving notable progress in tackling racial inequality (Modood et al., 1997), had unintended and negative consequences. In particular, these policies have deepened and solidified the divides between different ethnic communities. As a result, within this community cohesion analysis of segregation and the importance of agency lies a critique of the impact and unintended consequences of past race relations policy approaches, particularly those prioritised since the last watershed moment of 1981 (Solomos, 2003). This analysis sees those policies which flowed from the widespread urban disturbances of 1981, and popularly understood as approaches of ‘equal opportunities’ or ‘anti-racism’, as having privileged esentialised, separate ethnic communities, and their ‘community leaders’, through funding for ethnic-specific facilities and organisations. Such policy approaches have rightly been characterised as a neo-colonialist approach to managing unrest within ethnic minority communities (Kundnani, 2007), but the agency of some ethnic minority community groups and their ‘leaders’ in agitating for such community
management roles and the funds to enable them cannot be overlooked (Sivanandan, 2004, 2005). Alongside this came an enhanced focus on equality for each separate ethnic group, and the importance of ethnic data with which to measure progress towards that equality. This encompassed the inclusion of an ethnicity question for the first time in the 1991 Census, and the use of such ethnic data to identify areas of the economy and society where non-white ethnic minorities were under-represented, or doing less well than average, with the clear implication that this ‘ethnic penalty’ was due to individual and institutional white racism (Modood et al., 1997; Solomos, 2003). Such data, and assumptions based on it, continues to be central to social policy questions, as shown by controversy over the role of ethnicity in educational underachievement (Gilborn, 2009).

Arguably, this approach meant that ensuring ‘equality’ in terms of educational and employment outcomes, and in community facilities, for each separate ethnic group took priority over common needs and identities, including over multiracial movements against racism (Sivanandan, 2005). Whilst this policy approach of political multiculturalism (or ‘anti-racism’ as it was popularly understood) became increasingly dominant after 1981 through action by left-wing Local Authorities and gradual adoption by central government, the seeds of this approach could be seen from the late 1960s, following the new direction set by Roy Jenkins. This saw the gradual development of pluralist political structures of consultation that accepted ethnic difference, and which attempted to accommodate diversity around religion, custom and dress within the public domain of schools, welfare services and the workplace. It was particularly recognised in the establishment of the CRE in 1976, alongside the passing of the 1976 Race Relations Act. Whilst representing a welcome strengthening of anti-discriminatory measures, these developments saw the downplaying of what had originally been a parallel policy track, the importance of ‘promoting good relations’ between different racial groups (Cantle, 2005). Although the post-1981 focus on equal opportunities and anti-racism overtly criticised what it characterised as weak and apolitical ‘multiculturalism’ (Chauhan, 1990), these policies actually represented a significant ramping up of a one-sided multiculturalist focus on difference and separate needs, an approach that represented continuity in that it continued to work with rather fixed and essentialised understanding of ethnic identity and experience (Bhavnani, 2001) at a time when the currency of social class identity was being increasingly downplayed.
Conclusion

This perspective suggests that the post-1981 phase of ‘race relations’ policy approaches (Solomos, 2003) involving the development of anti-racism and equal opportunities strategies, which whilst important and needed in many ways (Chauhan, 1990; Gilroy, 2002; Williams, 1988), contained serious drawbacks that have become more pronounced during the rapid economic and social changes of the past 20 years. Law (1996) portrays this phase of policy development as being one of ‘strategic essentialism’ hobbled by an increasingly dominant and divisive ‘ethnic managerialism’. Here, community cohesion can be seen as a necessary and overdue correction to the successes and associated problems of past policy approaches, with a focus on commonality, rather than on difference (Cantle, 2001, 2005). The explicit criticism of ‘multiculturalism’ for perpetuating, or even partially causing, ethnic segregation suggests that it be sidelined as a policy approach. This explains the overt attacks on multiculturalism per se from equality campaigners (Phillips, 2005) as prolonging and even fuelling ethnic segregation and tension that have opened the door for a blaming of multiculturalism for a wider range of policy problems, including a growing domestic terrorism threat (Prins and Salisbury, 2008). This is arguably both wrong and misleading, with the book’s position being that community cohesion represents a re-thinking specifically of the continued helpfulness and relevance of the post-1981 phase of multiculturalism popularly understood as anti-racism, rather than a rejection of multiculturalism itself, and it uses the empirical evidence presented in Chapter 4 to support that contention. Nevertheless, there are concerns that community cohesion does represent the ‘death of multiculturalism’ (Kundnani, 2002), with this perspective and associated debates on how we might understand what multiculturalism can or does mean for Britain discussed in Chapter 3. Firstly, however, this new British policy development of community cohesion, its concerns and assumptions, is contextualised by discussion in Chapter 2 of recent developments around identity and multiculturalism in two other multi-ethnic Western European states, France and the Netherlands.
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