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ACCEPT PLURALISM

United Kingdom: Challenging Diversity in Education and School Life

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WP3: National Case Studies of Challenges to Tolerance in School Life

D3.1 Final Country Reports on Concepts and Practices of Tolerance Addressing Cultural Diversity in Schools

Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)

ACCEPT PLURALISM is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLULARISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

The **Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship** is based at the University of Bristol. Its research theme recognises the importance of ethnicity to the study of contemporary societies and polities, and to prospects for social justice and social cohesion. Research focuses on two main dimensions: the politics of multiculturalism, ethno-religious identities, challenges to secularism and the nation state; and ethnicity and socio-economic structures, with a special focus on racialised exclusion.

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Executive Summary

Education in the United Kingdom has been an important site of debate about the scope of acceptance, toleration and respect for post-immigration communities and new immigrants. Geographical and political particularities have played a role in these debates and more generally in how national or local solutions to challenging situations have been developed. The distribution of minority groups is uneven across the country: while some cities, such as London or Birmingham, have adopted wide-ranging measures to respond to their urban pluralism, other parts of the country are much less diverse. Since the British educational system – increasingly so, with devolution for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – is organized with a strong emphasis on local solutions at the level of schools or Local Educational Authorities (LEAs), geographical differences mean that practices of minority accommodation vary.

Among English pupils in primary education, 26.5 per cent are of minority ethnic background; in secondary education, the figure is 22.4 per cent. In line with the social position of their parents, post-immigration children experience higher degrees of poverty and deprivation. While roughly 14% of overall pupils in English schools were eligible for Free School Meals – the key figure for relative poverty – the figure for Black Caribbeans is 34.7% in primary and 26.7% in secondary education; for Pakistanis 31.3% and 35.9% and for Bangladeshis 42.4% and 53.2%. Indians and Chinese by contrast have below-average proportions in this category.

Such disparities are also discernible in educational attainment. Generally, children of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean 'mixed heritage', perform worse than the national average. Other 'mixed' groups or children with an Indian or Chinese background exceed this average. Religious affiliation correlates for Christian and Hindu pupils with higher rates of achievement, while Muslim pupils perform worse, in particular if they are male. Although some groups suffer considerable disadvantage, there is no uniform picture of ethnic disadvantage in British education. The patterns of generational upward mobility across different post-immigration groups are varied, too: a complex mix of cultural, social, economic and spatial factors seems to account for variations between the educational attainment of these groups.

The notion of minority underachievement has also been scrutinized for how it may involve a stigmatisation in particular of Black Caribbean boys. Anti-racist education, as it was conceived in particular at the Inner London Education Authority, intends to challenge such characterisation. Multicultural education, in contrast, has been developed in response to claims for the accommodation of ethnic, religious and cultural practices. Both perspectives are not necessarily at odds: they do, however, respond to two different kinds of claims and to different understandings of 'acceptance'. On the one hand, majority representations are challenged and requests are put forward for how the mainstream should be changed to include and normalize the post-immigration presence. On the other, claims for the accommodation of ethno-religious difference are made, for religious practices to be facilitated, and for this difference to be respected. The two case studies of this report explore exemplary debates within these two domains.

The commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery

In 2007, the City of Bristol organized a range of official events and supported community initiatives to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807. Representations of the local and national past became the focus of debates. We explore the problematic commemoration of slavery in a city that is marked by public memorials for its slave-trading 'merchant venturers'. The question of how slavery should be 'commemorated', and more generally how 'Black History' should be taught and inform curricular priorities, are of interest and we discuss what toleration and acceptance may be seen to mean in how the British national (and the Bristolian local) story have been and continue to be reconsidered.

In particular three issues emerged in the course of these debates: the question how the concern with 'Black History' could be expanded to become an educational issue beyond African or African Caribbean communities; how the concerns with historical representations and local or national narratives connect to issues of educational attainment; and how the recent reform of the history curriculum relates to some of these contentious issues. Rather than pointing to clear-cut trajectories of the debate, the report shows how various positions are at play. An increasing willingness to reconsider historical narratives coincides with an indignation that is easy to mobilize among majority groups about how the pluralisation of historical narratives amounts to an attack on their sense of history.

Guidance notes on the accommodation of Muslim pupils

In 2007, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) issued guidance notes 'Towards greater understanding' that provided a collection of various best practice examples for how schools should meet the demands for religious accommodation from Muslim pupils and their parents. The guidance notes caused considerable controversy and invited objection from various quarters. We examine their reception with an interest in how toleration and respect are defined in the debate about religion in state schools.

The contestations over these notes allows us to point to various issues that are at stake in the debate on religion and education in Britain: different conceptions of the educational needs of Muslim pupils; divergences about the requirements of religion and the possibility for compromise; different conceptions of 'culture' and of the 'groupness' of British Muslims. While these issues lead to some principled disagreement, our discussion shows that it is not quite clear how they affect practices of accommodation. Built into a liberal-democratic framework is respect for choice, including choice of religious beliefs. While some propose a departure from liberal tenets, the wider debate does not seem to go in this direction.

The accommodation of ethno-religious minorities in Britain is not necessarily well understood by focusing on conflict over principles. Critics of the MCB guidance, mirroring the critique of political multiculturalism in recent years, generally fail to propose practical suggestions that would involve a significant departure from the practices of accommodation that have been enshrined in institutions and practice and that inform a variety of local compromises. Respect for the religiosity of pupils informs wide-spread practices of accommodation and continue to find public support.

Concluding remarks

The report concludes with a summary of the two debates about scope and limits of acceptance. In the first case, claims for the reconsideration of historical narratives – of the Bristolian story – are put forward and mirror the concern to arrive at more inclusive and plural understandings of British identity. Arguments that underpin these claims vary: in education, the case is made that cultural confidence for African and African Caribbean youths leads to heightened attainment. Beyond these concerns with self-representations, claims have been made for how minority understandings need to be merged with majority narratives in order to arrive at more pluralistic identity notions. Against these claims stands a palpable sense of indignation in some parts of the majority population that is open to be mobilized with the idea of identity loss. To arrive at a more pluralistic understanding of the national story, the sources of this indignation will need to be addressed.

In the second case about the accommodation of Muslim pupils in British schools we have examined contestations that are exemplary for debates over claims for the respect of religious identities. Some of the conflict in this field can be explained by entrenched animosity between representatives of organisations with different aims and membership. Principled disagreement, moreover, is palpable, such as on how to conceive of British Muslims as a social group, how to connect (or separate) religion and 'culture', and on the possibility of 'compromise' where faith-based claims are concerned. Altogether, however, it seems that principled disagreement does not necessarily lead to radically

different conceptions of the respect that is due to religious choices made by Muslim pupils and regarding more minimalist understandings of how these should be accommodated. British educational practice, as it is institutionally enshrined and continues to be practiced and developed, is consonant with this idea of respect. Suggestions that do not live up to this idea would have to break with liberal-democratic notions of respect for individual choice as well as with conventional understandings of education in Britain.

Recommendations

While the report is primarily interested to survey fields of discursive positions, to examine principled arguments and understandings of the meaning and scope of acceptance, we draw on our findings to make a number of recommendations.

- *Anti-pluralist rhetoric, but multi-cultural practices*: Despite the toxicity of some debates, it seems that it is individual or institutional choices that create outcomes, multiculturalist or otherwise. Schools that choose their pupils, like faith schools, are less ethnically mixed than where pupils are allocated places by local authorities. The expansion of faith schools and indeed the recently prominent Big Society concept in general in so far as it hands over resources and decision-making to neighbourhoods, communities, charities and organised religion could lead to more, not less, accommodation for ethno-religious and community-based claims. In their concern with education (as well as in other policy fields), decision-makers would do well to consider the effects of political choices and institutional design in order for their rhetoric to be more reflective of the reality of multicultural accommodation in Britain.

- *More than one 'difference'*: The kinds of claims for accommodation, acceptance and respect that we have surveyed operate according to distinct understandings of what toleration, respect and acceptance require. There is not just one way of being 'different' in contemporary Britain. Policy makers are thus well-advised to take seriously what respective understandings of cultural 'difference' mean and not to impose notions that may not fit. The pluralisation of historical understandings as a matter of respect for the presence of post-immigration groups, or the respect for the practices and choices of religious pupils both refer to legitimate requests but should not be misunderstood as meaning the same.

- *Countering the majoritarian backlash*: Both cases have in common that they have triggered an often-furious response from right-wing quarters, presuming to speak for the majority population and complaining about the special treatment for groups. These responses invoke an experience of dispossession and identity loss. How such sentiments are mobilized needs to be challenged, but it is important to point out that claims for multicultural accommodation do not contradict a concern for pressures faced by working-class Britons or for deprivation when it occurs in white-majority neighbourhoods.

Keywords

Education; religion; multiculturalism; ethno-religious groups; toleration; recognition; respect; accommodation; pluralism; diversity; difference; respect; equality.

Introduction

English education includes some 8.1 million pupils. 4.1 million attend state-funded primary schools, 3.3 million secondary schools, and 576,200 independent schools (Department for Education 2011). Across Britain, participation in primary and secondary education is compulsory from the ages of 5 to 16.[1] There is some variety of school types, which is partly to do with historical precedents: universal education was introduced in 1870, notably by introducing or extending state funding of denominational schools. While some Church of England schools were turned into secular 'community schools', there remains space within the state system for schools with a religious ethos, so-called voluntary-controlled and voluntary-aided schools.[2] Independent schools, also called 'public schools', account for roughly 7% of British pupils. These are privately run schools that charge fees, may have a religious ethos and are generally seen to be, though not all of them in practice are, providers of elite education. Public school pupils are highly represented among the student population of various prestigious higher education institutions, such as Oxford or Cambridge.

Elitism in British education runs deep, and while there are signs of increasing social mobility over time, various groups remain disadvantaged. Among British pupils in primary education, 26.5 per cent are of minority ethnic background; in secondary education, the figure is 22.4 per cent (Department for Education 2011).[3] In line with the social position of their parents, post-immigration children experience higher degrees of poverty and deprivation and generally lower degrees of educational attainment (DfES 2006, 38-70). The level of relative poverty among post-immigration groups is measured by their eligibility for free school meals (see Appendix Figure 1). While, in 2004, roughly 14% of overall pupils in English schools were eligible, the figure for Black Caribbeans is 34.7% in primary and 26.7% in secondary education – for Pakistanis 31.3% and 35.9% and for Bangladeshis 42.4% and 53.2%.

It is not just ethnic minority pupils, but poorer pupils generally that are under-represented at elite institutions and generally show lower rates of achievement. Underachievement correlates with the major measurement of socio-economic disadvantage, eligibility for free school meals (FSM). Ethnic minority pupils – except for Indians and Chinese – are statistically more likely to be eligible for free school meals. While those eligible are less likely to obtain high marks or to be admitted to elite institutions of Higher Education, this disadvantage is experienced less by most minority groups. Whatever the causal links that tie ethnicity to socio-economic disadvantage, and both to educational attainment, statistics show that, except for Caribbean pupils, ethnic minority pupils have higher levels of attainment than their social class peers (Dustmann, Machin and Schönberg 2010). Nevertheless, given the low levels of qualifications some groups started with, there is a problem of persistent inequality. Overall, however, there has been a significant upward trajectory for many post-immigration groups and British schools have played a role in this experience.

Persistent inequality, then, has multiple dimensions and affects different groups in different ways. The picture for post-immigration groups is varied as shown in the recent National Equality Panel Report (NEP 2010, 264-5). Generally, children of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean 'mixed heritage', perform worse than the national average. Other 'mixed' groups or

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1   This is to be raised to 18 by 2013. In 2006, 83% of 16-year olds and 70% of 17-year olds were in post-compulsory education (Department for Education 2008).

2   The difference between the two is to do with issues of funding and the degree of involvement of non-state, usually religious organisation in the management of the school. There are 2,500 voluntary-controlled and 2,100 voluntary-aided Church of England schools within the state system. With Academies and Free Schools there are two new school types that are partly or wholly state funded but not controlled by Local Educational Authorities (LEAs), which control the majority of schools.

3   The categorisation of ethnic minorities in Britain is not straightforward. While public authorities often refer to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, others also count white but non-British minorities, for example Irish or recent A8 immigrants (see Figure 1). The ethnic minorities that we consider in this report are African or African-Caribbean and South Asian post-immigration groups, See the British WP1 report for ACCEPT Pluralism for background information and additional data (Modood, Dobbernack and Meer 2011).

children of Indian or Chinese background, by contrast, exceed this average. Religious affiliation, statistically of considerable importance, correlates for Christian, Jewish and Hindu pupils with higher rates of achievement, while Muslim pupils perform worse, in particular if they are male (Burgess, Greaves and Wilson 2009). Although some groups suffer considerable disadvantage, others groups outperform their majority peers. Hence, there is no uniform picture of ethnic disadvantage in British education. The patterns of generational upward mobility across different post-immigration groups are varied, too, and a complex mix of cultural, social, economic and spatial factors seems to account for variations between the educational attainment of these groups (Modood 2011a). The two groups whose place in British education we discuss in the following two cases – African Caribbean pupils and Muslim pupils of South Asian heritage – are generally doing less well than other post-immigration groups or than their ethnic majority peers. When accommodation, tolerance and respect are debated for Muslims and African Caribbean pupils, such issues are usually linked to concerns about educational attainment and upward social mobility within these groups.

The uneven distribution of ethnic minority pupils across Britain means that while there are parts of the country with low numbers of ethnic minority pupils, other parts, for example London or conurbations in the East Midlands or Yorkshire, have high concentrations of ethnic minorities. Inner and outer London account for close to 45% of the ethnic minority population at British schools (DfES 2006, 28). Schools in these parts of the country may have large majorities of post-immigration groups in their student bodies (Burgess, Wilson and Lupton 2005).

Such concentrations of post-immigration populations have in recent years been problematized as the results of 'ethnic self-segregation' (eg., Cantle 2001, para 5.8.1.). This analysis, however, has been challenged, among other things for its reliance on the problematic assumption that British post-immigration groups are generally averse to mixing (Finney and Simpson 2009, 45-56; Husband and Alam 2011). It seems clear that ethnic minority groups in Britain frequently want to live in diverse and not in mono-cultural surroundings, and that self-segregation is a flawed diagnosis if it ignores the complex factors accounting for choice of residence and neighbourhood mix, 'white flight' among them. While schools in some parts of the country show trends towards higher rates of segregation that may be difficult to reverse, others do not and indeed point in the opposite direction (Burgess and Worth 2011). Segregation, although it is often referred to in debates about educational priorities and policy measures, is a contested diagnosis and refers to a complex social situation.

Ethnic Minority Pupils in Bristol: While much of scholarly interest and political concern has been focused on areas of high concentration of BME pupils, post-immigration groups are dispersed across the country and often represented in smaller numbers, such as the English South West where only 3.3% of the country's ethnic minority pupils are educated. Bristol, the main city in the South West, has a long-standing presence of African and African Caribbean post-immigration groups and some of its neighbourhoods, such as St. Paul's, have gained national recognition such as for its yearly Carnival—as well as for one of the first occurrences of unrest in the 1980s.The ethnic minority population in Bristol numbers 8.2% (according to the 2001 Census), more recently estimated to have increased to roughly 12% – more than 45,000 people. In 2008, 22.5% of pupils were estimated to be of ethnic minority background. In recent years it was in particular the arrival of Somalis that has changed the composition of some Black communities. While in the early 1990s their presence was marginal, with 1,749 pupils and 3.8% of the school population Somalis now constitute the single largest minority group in Bristol (Bristol City Council 2009). In a recent statement, Bristol City Council (2010, 8) noted "evidence of tension within some Bristol's schools around the intolerance of diverse family life, perceived unfairness of housing allocation, inter-racial tension, a rise in gang activity, 'Islamophobia' and anti-Somali feelings, and an increase in homophobic and disablist hate crime." For a more detailed overview of the cultural diversity challenges in British schools see the report of the Institute for Community Cohesion (iCoCo 2009).

The mixed picture of attainment and upward mobility in education has not necessarily been recognized in more general accounts of the social position of ethnic minority groups. Moreover, underachievement has often been conceived as the result of pathological culture, in particular where Black youths were perceived as culturally insecure and as 'problem children'. Following this characterization, schools were seen as having to adopt benign interventions to rescue Black children from their allegedly disorderly surroundings. Against this, *anti-racist education* proposed to consider Black educational underachievement as a construction that needed to be challenged (Troyna 1984)**.** An anti-racist programme would positively engage with those, deconstruct stereotypes and instil the kind of self-confidence that would make them succeed.

Not only for Black pupils have self-confidence and a measure of cultural certainty been identified as preconditions for educational success. The underachievement of Muslim pupils has also been connected to negative representations of their religious heritage as well as to the perceived permissiveness of the British educational environment that fails to provide for moral signposts. An Islamic ethos, by contrast, is seen to provide for these and to lead to higher standards of behaviour. Arguably, many Muslim parents find the idea of Islamic education appealing not exclusively for its religious focus but for how an educational environment that reflects these values provides for positive behaviour and leads to higher educational attainment. Hence, the following examines in both cases how cultural self-confidence is seen to impact on educational success and how this issue informs arguments about accommodation of and respect for Black and Muslim identities at state schools.

Table 1: Ethnic minority population in the UK, the South West of England and Bristol (Census 2001)

Ethnic Group	National Average	South West	Bristol
White	90.92	97.71	91.83
Mixed	1.31	0.76	2.08
Asian or Asian British	4.57	0.67	2.85
Black or Black British	2.30	0.43	2.32
Chinese and Other ethnic group	0.99	0.45	0.90

Figure 1: The ethnic minority composition of Primary and Secondary school pupils (DfES 2006, 8)
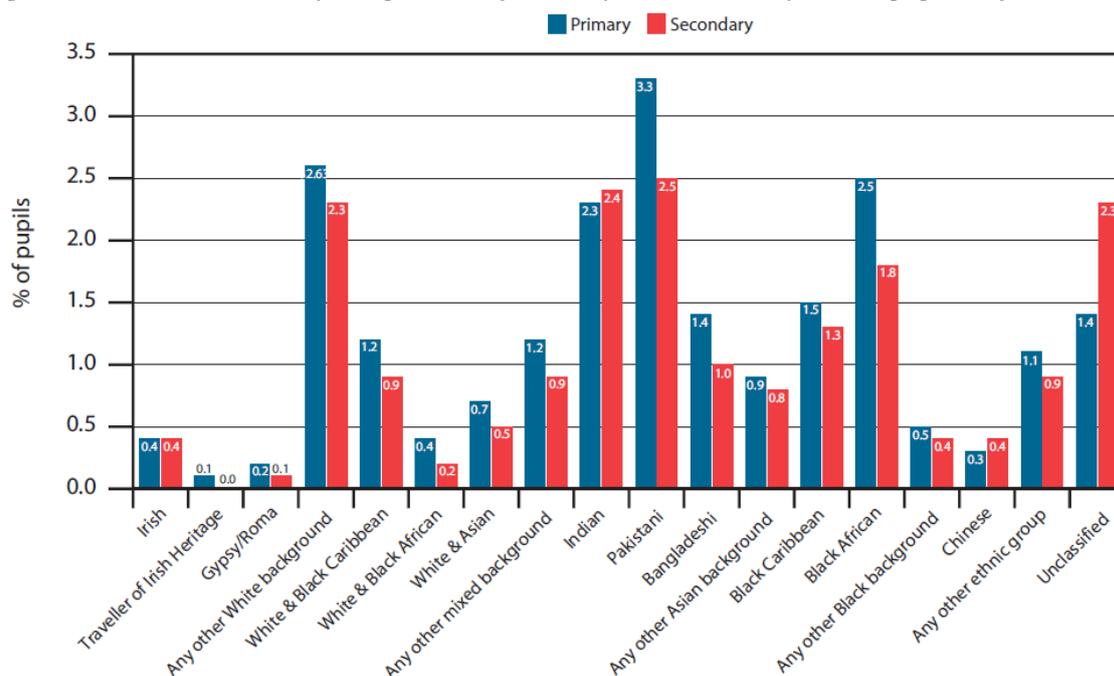
Anti-racist and multicultural priorities in education stand for two distinct, though not necessarily oppositional, impulses. The former takes on stereotypes: it challenges racism in the mainstream and its institutions with the aim of deconstructing, unsettling and ideally remaking the mainstream in a way that inscribes minority features into it. The latter is interested in the creation of spaces that allow for ethno-religious difference to be articulated, practiced without penalties and diversity to be an acknowledge part of an evolving, composite unity. While both orientations may often coincide in practice, we suggest that they can be distinguished for their accounts of accommodation. The *reconsideration of local and national narratives* and the *accommodation of religious claims* that we respectively explore in the following two cases thus correspond to two ways in which cultural diversity may be seen to pose a challenge. Those two ways stand for two domains of legitimate claims for accommodation and we need to distinguish meaning and scope of acceptance accordingly.[4] What acceptance means when it is put forward in claims for accommodation, depends on the issues at stake and the contexts of claims-making. This report examines two such contexts where representatives of different organisations challenged each other, and where the scope of acceptance and respect, were debated in the field of education.

In 2007, the City of Bristol organized a number of official events and supported community initiatives to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807. Already preceding the bicentenary, representations of the local and national past became the focus of heated debates. We explore the problematic commemoration of slavery in a city that is marked by public memorials to its slave-trading Merchant Venturers. The question of how slavery should be commemorated, and more generally how 'Black History' should be taught and inform curricular priorities, are of interest and we discuss what acceptance may be seen to mean in how the British national – and the Bristolian local – story have been contested.

Also in 2007, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) issued guidance notes, 'Towards greater understanding', that were intended to provide for a collection of various best practice examples of how schools should meet the demands for religious accommodation from Muslim pupils and their parents. The guidance notes caused considerable controversy and invited objection from various

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4   For a more detailed statement of those two domains and "two modes of difference" see Modood and Dobbernack (2010)

quarters, such as by British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD). We study this controversy with an interest in how acceptance is defined in the debate about religion in state schools.

Date and methods

This report draws on desk research and fieldwork. We have collected statistical data, policy documents, statements and brochures issued by local authorities, non-governmental organisations and schools and examined the relevant scholarly literature. We have selected our two cases studies to circumscribe debates in two relevant fields of contestation about the accommodation of ethnic minority groups in British education. However, we acknowledge that the concern with Muslim and African Caribbean groups and their claims might be seen to entail a certain bias: it involves the concern with groups whose presence, accommodation and educational attainment have been considered problematic for some time (and not with ethnic minority groups of lesser visibility in public debate). It also means that we are considering groups that have an established presence in Britain for many decades, and not more recent arrivals, such as A8 immigrants or Somalis. Nonetheless, we believe that the choice of groups and cases represents an exemplary snapshot of how difficult instances of cultural diversity are negotiated in contemporary Britain.

Fieldwork has been conducted in between March and June 2011 largely in the Bristol area, with additional interviews in London and Birmingham. We have conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with experts, including three teachers, four employees of Bristol City Council, one Police Constable, five members of non-governmental and voluntary sector organisations, and one academic educationalist. Among these informants seven were male and seven female. A discussion group was held on 7 July 2011 to present initial findings and obtain feedback. Informants for interviews and the discussion group (see the Appendix for a list) have in most cases been involved in the relevant debates, and we have approached them in the knowledge that they would have considerable expertise and potentially strong opinions. In both cases, we have tried to select respondents with different perspectives: in the first case, representatives of the official Council positions, as well as members of the voluntary sector outside of the Council; in the second, we have selected people from different organisations, MCB and BMSD, and with different perspectives on how to accommodate religious pupils in state schools.

We have paid some attention to one local school, City Academy, where he have interviewed and (as part of the discussion group) spoken to four current members of staff and its former Head of History. The City Academy is located in the Easton area of Bristol, one of the most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods of the city that also shows high levels of deprivation. City Academy to some extent showcases problems and potentials: its student population is diverse, with significant numbers of Muslim and African Caribbean students as well as a significant number of new immigrants from Somalia. At this school, the religious needs of Muslim pupils as well as the shape of historical narratives and how these acknowledge the legacy of slavery and the place of Black pupils are both issues of considerable importance.

Interviews were conducted in schools, public places such as cafés, the workplace or the home of the respondent. Most respondents were eager to contribute and there was no occasion where difficult situations proved challenging for the interviewer. All interviews were taped and transcribed. We have offered complete confidentiality to all our informants, though in no case did respondents – mostly people of some public profile – insist on this. However, we felt it unnecessary to indicate names in the majority of cases, with the exception of three expert respondents in the second case on religious guidance. The interview guide as well as a list of interviewees can be found in the appendix of the report.

We have generally been concerned to faithfully report positions and to point to interesting or exemplary strategies of argumentation. Where appropriate we have also been concerned to examine rhetoric and the discursive *topoi*, in particular in the second case on religious guidance where nuances of tone and argumentation were particularly important to consider.

The contested commemoration of 'Abolition 200'

Where its current pluralism coincides with traditional understandings of national history and its historic mission, Britain's imperial and colonial past throws up challenges. Among them is the concern with how the 'national story', the representations that inform a national self-understanding, may be made to acknowledge injustices and the place of non-white people. The beginnings of this concern date to the 1970s when, in line with what Stuart Hall (2000) considers Britain's 'multicultural drift', new attitudes and more pluralistic understandings of history and nation began to emerge. However, as in other post-colonial countries there has been considerable reluctance, if not resistance, to consider those aspects of history that contradict the image of Britain as a benign ruler, bringing progress to less fortunate parts of the world.[5]

Education is an important site for the debate of historical representations, given that the role of history at school is usually seen to be that it provides an authoritative account of the past and to reflect an acceptable mode for citizens to relate to it. Recent initiatives to change the history curriculum have been introduced as a matter of urgency as they are seen to address distortions: its alleged failure to provide for clear-cut historical narratives and the 'long arc of time' and its equally alleged emphasis on epochs and facts that do not relate to Britain's positive achievements (Gove 2010; Ferguson 2011b). These suggestions, however, have also been met by considerable scepticism, for example for how they reflect a self-congratulatory revisionism (Evans 2011).

While the British national story is an object of dispute, there often is a distinctly local flavour to such contestations. Regarding the place of African and African Caribbean citizens, the following considers a local episode – the debate about how to commemorate the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in Bristol – that points to issues of national significance.

A young respondent described the development of her historical interest in the context of these debates:

> 2007, it was like the big bang. It was like, 'Oh my God, we've actually started talking about it'. And that kind of opened so many doors for people to say, 'Right, you know what, there is inequalities in Bristol. Yes, let's start looking at them. Slavery did happen, alright, we can identify where it happened, we can see that Bristol used to be a port for slaves, right, let's, let's investigate that a little bit more'. And that's, that's when the big bang really happened. Everyone just really started to say, 'Right', you know. And I think that's even for me when the interest kind of grew, because before I wasn't… in to history, I hated history, I was… that was like my worst subject, then throughout uni and then this big bang happening, it was just kind of like, 'Oh my gosh, I need to be a part of it, I need to see what's going on'. (Interview 8 March 2011)

Historical understandings may seem immutable, and the extent to which the legacy of colonial oppression and the presence of Black people in Bristol had been unacknowledged is an example. The rupture of such understandings, their expansion or the mere sense that history is 'up for grabs' may be experienced as a form of empowerment.

The following sketches out a brief picture of the Bristol context and then considers three areas of contestation that became particularly relevant in the area of education: the extent to which slavery should be an educational topic; how this priority relates to the endeavour to increase achievement among ethnic minority students; and how the National Curriculum should balance such concerns against other educational priorities.

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5   While such understandings have been challenged in the later 20th century, they have not disappeared. In fact, some see neo-colonial attitudes at work in current educational reform initiatives (Evans 2011). Members of the new government, notably Education Secretary Michael Gove, are accused of relying on the advice of scholars whose concern is a positive reconsideration of British colonialism (Ferguson 2011a).

The Bristol context: intolerance, toleration, respect?

In the early 18th century, Bristol was for some time one of the foremost centres of the transatlantic slave trade in Britain. As Bristol City Council (2008, 2) notes, "more than today's population of Bristol" – more than 500,000 people – were transported across the Atlantic on ships registered in the city. Bristol's Merchant Venturers, many of whom in the 18th century were trading in slaves or slave-produced commodities, accumulated considerable wealth that remains visible in the city to this day (Dresser 2001). Amelia Hill (2006) paints a vivid picture of the ubiquity of this memory in major urban landmarks. The history of the slave trade 'resonates'

> from Merchants Wharf to the Redcliffe Caves, where slaves are said to have been incarcerated, to Queen Square, the city's most serene public space, completed at the height of Bristol's involvement in the trade and where mayor Nathaniel Day petitioned against a tax on slaves. The pretty courtyard housing the Merchant Venturers' Almshouse harks back to the powerful 18th-century pro-slavery lobby, while the bells of Bristol's loveliest church, St Mary Redcliffe, were triumphantly set ringing when William Wilberforce's Bill to abolish slavery was defeated in 1791.

Today Bristol is ranked as leading charts on general happiness in the country, probably also for its considerable wealth and attractive historical cityscape.[6] As a matter of statistical fact, its black and minority ethnic populations neither participate in this wealth, nor show particular high levels of life satisfaction. Bristol has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the country, many of them with high levels of ethnic minority residents (Bristol City Council 2011, 4-5). When Bristol is portrayed as "a city of contrasts" (ibid.), these are not just the kinds of contrasts that cities today tend to refer to in order to showcase their cosmopolitan vibrancy. There are entrenched disparities of wealth and educational attainment, many of which run along ethnic lines.

Picture: Jan Dobbernack

'Hate Slavery but love the Slave Traders'? Edward Colston, 1636-1721, entrepreneur and philanthropist, acquired his wealth through slave trade and labour.

While the lines connecting past injustice and the contemporary experience of disadvantage are less than straightforward, there is a sense that contemporary inequality is amplified and exacerbated by the official representations of a city whose historical wealth is bound up with slavery. This sense has been articulated for some time, in the run-up to Abolition 200, but already previously in challenges to the ubiquity of Edward Colston, an 18th century philanthropist, politician and slave trader, in street names, schools and monuments. A 2006 campaign against the naming of a shopping district as 'Merchants Quarter' proved to be the launch pad for some of the contestations that we explore in the following. Among the achievements of this and other campaigns, a respondent suggested, was that they unsettled some of the certainties about Bristolian history: "they rattled Colston's skeleton a little bit" (Interview, 4 April 2011).

The classification of claims for the revision of historical understandings, and of responses to such claims, is not straightforward. We have suggested that historical narratives, in as much as the exclusion of post-immigration groups is enshrined and naturalised, may be experienced as disempowering. In turn, the recognition of the presence of minority residents as a historical fact, as normal or even as something to be celebrated, points in the opposite direction and towards notions of respect.

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6 As measured by the 'happiness' of its workforce (Mental Health Foundation 2010) or its award for being Britain's 'most smiley city'.

- *Intolerance* is a possibility that is illustrated by vitriolic reactions to requests for acceptance and by the possibility of a majoritarian backlash against claims for national or local histories to be revised.

- *Toleration*, conventionally understood, is concerned with allowing the co-presence of others without revisiting initial objections. In our case, an approximation may be when minority residents are granted the educational spaces within or on the margins of the state system to perpetuate their 'minority histories' – but when these spaces remain largely separated from mainstream concerns and educational priorities.

- A challenge *beyond toleration* is how minority histories may be brought into and merged with majority representations. As regards Britain's – or Bristol's – African and African Caribbean citizens, the contention would be that, more than just a matter of symbolism or of setting the historical record straight, the shape of the 'national story' has repercussions for how Britain (or Bristol) can aspire to be a place that is hospitable to the current and continued presence of Black post-immigration groups.

All three options are on the table and can be traced in positions that we examine in the following. The official impetus of Abolition 200 can be seen to go some way beyond toleration and towards the acknowledgment that majority and minority understandings of history belong together or should be fused. This is not to suggest that toleration is irrelevant or that – by virtue of more demanding positions being available – the United Kingdom is secure in its achievements. When claims for public recognition and equal respect are rejected, the fallback position may not be toleration but intolerance and an outright rejection of more minimal positions of forbearance. This could be characterised as the 'enough already' position: concessions that in the past were seen to have gone too far are said to require a muscular assertion of majority claims and – since the two are seen to be linked – the subjugation of minority perspectives.

Before offering some limited backgrounds on these kinds of claims in the Bristol context, we briefly outline three items that were particularly relevant in how the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave-trade became an issue in education and where particular understandings of acceptance or intolerance were developed.

- *Black identity*: The significance for African and African Caribbean schoolchildren to have a positive understanding of their African or Caribbean heritage is frequently underlined in educational discourse and in the debate about the legacy of slavery in Bristol. A more difficult issue seems to be the extent to which 'Black History' should be mainstreamed – should become 'everybody's history' – as there is considerable resistance and frequently a sense of 'it's not for us' in places where Black pupils are not or only marginally represented.

- *Achievement*: Both nationally and in Bristol the 'underachievement' of BME pupils is a significant concern. Where claims for public recognition or the reconstruction of historical narratives are concerned, there often appears to be some uncertainty about how these claims may heighten educational achievement. Critics suggest that the shape of historical narratives is irrelevant for this objective. The argument for how public recognition instils the kind of self-confidence that leads to heightened achievement is not always easy to make.

- *The national story*: If the point of history in the national curriculum is to give a contemporary expression of certain enduring values, to what extent is there – or should there be – space for a consideration of the experience of injustice and for minority perspectives. In the current national debate, the position that too much emphasis has been put on these is becoming increasingly popular.

Abolition 200 and the Legacy Commission

Preceding the bicentenary and in subsequent debates, these issues became relevant. Before we examine in more detail the three kinds of contestations identified above and some positions and arguments within these fields, the following provides a brief sketch of this context of the debate.

Abolition 200

In an original statement that was put forward by the team in charge of planning for 2007, the emphasis was on the 'commemoration' of abolition and the 'celebration of cultural diversity' (Bristol City Council 2006). It was stated that the events "must be strongly led and informed by the experience and views of BME communities." The statement proposed the objective of commemorating the bicentenary "in a contemporary and relevant way for the benefit of all of Bristol's residents and businesses, and the Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) community in particular". It connected this to objectives of urban development, the celebration of Bristol as a "vibrant, young and multi-cultural city, racial equality and equal opportunities.

This initial statement was met by resistance from the Consortium of Black Groups (COBG), a loose group of people coming from various sectors of Bristol's Black community whose work paralleled the criticism directed at the national commemoration of the bicentenary (Ligali 2006; Operation Truth 2007 n.d.). In a 'statement of non-compliance' with the Council proposals, COBG (2006) objected to the City Council propositions and argued that

> 2007 should be a catalyst to invigorate and give focus to an agenda for change that improves the socio-economic and political position of Afrikan/Caribbean people in Bristol. … The fight for freedom and our continued quest for social justice in the education system, housing, employment, health, and criminal justice systems, and arts, culture, and sports demonstrate that Black people's situation has not changed to any great extent. We have simply swapped one form of slavery for another.

The idea that 1807 had seen the 'end of slavery', and that this end could be attributed to the actions of white abolitionists, caused offence. The celebrations, it was suggested, "will be nothing more than public relations exercises since the Council lacks both the political will and commitment to work with the BME community to progress the agenda for change" (COBG 2006). They were seen to be the result of a self-absorbed majoritarianism, somewhat ironically summarized as a celebration of "Wilberforce day" (Ligali 2006). The idea that the workings of a "eurocentric abolitionist movement" (COBG 2006) deserved this kind of "celebration" – whereas other perspectives and experiences continued to remain unacknowledged – caused offence, and Ligali (n.d.) concluded: "We dissociate ourselves from 'slavery memorial' events which assert African history begins and ends with slavery and the abolition of slavery by Europeans".[7].

In the intervention from COBG, and in contributions by groups of a more national profile (Ligali 2006; Operation Truth 2007 n.d.), representations of the bicentenary were seen to reflect the continued subjugation of African people. For education, COBG pointed to the need to put more emphasis in the National Curriculum on the "history and legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade" and on the need for "schools in Bristol to teach about the local connections with and visible legacies of the slave trade" (COBG 2006). These visible legacies, it is suggested, are manifest in continued disadvantage and marginalisation. In Bristol these political commitments and historical representations were articulated in a situation where historical narratives had traditionally celebrated the commercial and slave-trading past. The dilemma for Bristol, then, seems to be the coincidence of different impulses and that one simply cannot "hate slavery but love the slave traders" (Bristol City Council 2008, 16).

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[7] One result of COBG's advocacy was that Nelson Mandela cancelled a planned visit to Bristol (Sengupta 2007).

The Legacy Commission

Some of the initial opposition to the official commemoration had been motivated by the concern that, as just another one-off event, the bicentenary would be little more than a public relations exercise. To alleviate such concerns, the Council showed some readiness to carry issues around Abolition 200 forward into a newly formed *Legacy Commission*. As with the bicentenary, there was little precedent for this and considerable puzzlement on the part of Council, as suggested by its Head of Cultural Services (Interview, 20 April 2011), on how to build institutions for this purpose.

The Legacy Commission, now in its fourth year, funds a variety of projects from within of for the benefit of Bristol's Black community. It supports community based initiatives in St. Paul's or Easton. In its most recent work programme for 2011/12 it supports a leadership programme and continues to fund projects in its three core areas, health, culture and education (BBC 2011). It is currently in a 'transition year' where it is explored how to transform the Commission into an external, community organisation that works in partnership with the Council.

The work of the Legacy Commission has not been undisputed. In 2009, Tory Councillor Richard Eddy (cited in Rkaina 2009) objected to its renewal and suggested that "Bristol ought to be tackling the problems of the present for the sake of all its citizens, rather than wallowing in self-indulgent hand-wringing over the past". Money spent on the Legacy Commission was wasted "subsidising politically-correct pet projects and funding jollies" and "over £1 million has been frittered away on this pointless spending spree". Similar expressions of disapproval were also evident in various letters to the editors of Bristol's *Evening Post.* One submitted that the "Legacy Commission is racist because it makes awards conditional on ethnicity." It further stated that the issues that the Commission was addressing fly "in the face of this country's noble stand to abolish global slavery and instead implies an obligation of continuing guilt on the part of white people to rectify any perceived inequality we might be accused of, based on race." In another letter, it was suggested that the Commission merely served "to raise tension and segregate communities. […] It's racist ... imagine the shouts and threats if their [sic] was a 'White English' funding project or clubs that only accept white girls."

Besides objections about the efficiency of the Legacy Commission, the main criticism is about special treatment allegedly given to minorities. Councillor Eddy, without necessarily taking sides in the debate about how to understand history, seems to point to the insignificance of such issues for contemporary concerns. Not colour racism but the disproportional attention given to BME people, it was suggested, is what amounts to intolerance and racism. These objections stand in the context of a palpable retrenchment that became discernible such as when a 2006 phone-in poll revealed a 90% majority against a civic apology for Bristol's involvement in 'the trade'(Hill 2006).

Challenges in Education

Objections to the commemoration of the bicentenary and the work of the Legacy Commission were put forward from two sides: from within the Black community, where there was considerable suspicion that the bicentenary would be an exercise in self-congratulation and inconsequence; and from within parts of the majority population where the argument that too much attention had been given to minority concerns appeared to have a considerable following. Accordingly, the Council found itself in a difficult position when it went about to develop initiatives, such as in the area of education.

In the guidelines for Bristol schools that were prepared by the Council's Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) (Bristol City Council 2007) ten 'must do actions' were listed, such as for schools to meet their statutory responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act to monitor BME attainment and to develop strategies to address underachievement. It was also suggested strongly not to "present the Transatlantic Slave Trade in isolation" (Bristol City Council 2007, 9), and to make sure that "*all* young people understand the achievements that people of African descent have made to society and civilisation and that the focus is not just on the past few hundred years" (ibid, emphasis added). The report pointed to the need to present 'Black role models' and to review the curriculum so

that not just their victimization but positive achievements of African people would be recognized. It was concerned to outline not just the required minimum but also – with its emphasis on mainstreaming the discussion of slavery and on a focus beyond the concern with passive suffering – in facilitating a more ambitious treatment of the past.

It is difficult to paint a coherent picture of how Bristol's school system responded to more or less ambitious requests, how various institutions took up the recommendations made in the CYPS report, or accompanied the wider debate that began in the run-up to the bicentenary. In the following we discuss the three educational challenges that we have outlined before.

Black identity

When asked about whether the events and efforts of 2007 had a lasting effect on the historical awareness of Bristol's schoolchildren, the Council's Head of Cultural Services remarked:

> if we're positive about it, you could say that the schools in inner city Bristol who take this more seriously, are gonna have a better understanding of Black History, for a largely Black… increasing Black population in the school. I'd like to think it's happened in some schools, not all. And even if it … was happening in a progressive and systematic way, it's certainly not happening in those schools which have majority populations, and that's a national thing, not just Bristol. And so you're gonna end up with a further division, aren't you, in the community. You'll get some young people who have a good or better understanding of Black History and others that have virtually none. (Interview, 12 April 2011)

This, then, seems to point to problems when the reconsideration of the 'national story' is something that happens only for or by minority pupils, and when majorities are virtually left undisturbed. There are some signs that this is the case and, moreover, that when slavery is taught and 'Black History' considered at majority white schools, of a kind of tokenism.

If the straightforward rejection of claims can be understood as a manifestation of intolerance, this latter position may be understood as the concession of tolerance that can be summarized as follows: if Black communities wish to concern themselves with the history of their presence in Britain and with the experience of injustice preceding the beginning of migration from the Caribbean after 1948, so be it. Where, however, institutional arrangements have to be made for the discussion of minority histories within the class-room, toleration may already not be the most adequate description. Clearly, however, the reconsideration of collective historical representations – the understanding that it's not 'Black History' but 'Our History' – points to more demanding positions that arguably exceed the minimalism of the former position.

To be sure, there is a sense of positive purpose even in the kind of engagement with history or culture that more minimalist understandings, those that are not targeted at the representations of majority society, represent. Where predominant problematizations of Black boys, for example, are challenged with the celebration of a positive cultural image, this may support a sense of self-confidence even where its addressees are only Black youths. As the Vice-Chair of the Legacy Commission, pointed out, this benefit of having a positive understanding of one's legacy is

> about trying to steer young people from… crime… hurting each other and, you know, trying to live respectable lives without violence. You can't do that if you don't have any respect for yourself, you don't know who you are, where you come from. (Interview, 22 March 2011)

A member of the bicentenary implementation team further emphasized how a negative, self-destructive attitude in the African Carribbean community needed to be addressed. This 'demeanour' she considers to

> be part of the legacy of the Slave Trade that demeanour of Black people and so if you continue to live your whole life like you don't belong, you don't fit, you have no contributions, you know, you got, you're always gonna be known from your ancestors about

being enchained, and being whipped and that kind of thing. (Interview 18 March 2011)

Despite this significance an inwardly-oriented revision of historical understandings, this effort may be considered insufficient for how it, firstly, leaves majority attitudes and representations undisturbed and, secondly, remains concerned with the creation of positive cultural representations rather than with political change.

There is a strong feeling that *Black History* is problematically narrow when it remains *History for Black people*. A young respondent summarized the reaction that she experienced when she questioned the lack of interest that was evident in schools with low numbers of African or African Caribbean pupils:

I'm like, 'Ok, but do you not feel as though everyone needs to know how everyone contributed to everyone else?', 'Oh, no, no, no, no, no, because why would they wanna learn that, that's not their history'. (Interview, 8 March 2011).

Similarly, the former Head of History at Bristol's City Academy repeated a response that he had experienced from reluctant public authorities (not the Bristol City Council):

'No we don't do Black History because we don't really have any Black people here.' And you say 'Hmmm, you're missing the point here about, you know, maybe that is more of a need to correct, to make people aware, but ok that's your response.'

The challenge he identified was about making local authorities and parents appreciate the multicultural history of Britain, which would in turn make them appreciate 20th century and more recent arrivals as part of this history.

You do get white parents – for want of a better phrase – white parents who feel that the curriculum is being distorted, there is too much Black history, and of course, one of my beliefs, is that Britain's history, everybody's history, is multicultural, because population movement isn't new, the state of it might of changed, and the nature of it might have changed, but they're incomers all through British history. (Interview, 4 April 2011)

However, the 'mainstreaming' of Black History, and the attempt to extend the concern with the history of the African and African Caribbean presence to majority white schools, appears to be a weak spot in the educational response to the bicentenary and more widely. Not just active, majoritarian intolerance but a pervasive lack of interest in minority perspectives may account for some of the difficulties in making progress in this area.

Achievement

The second domain of educational concerns that we have identified before is the somewhat ambiguous connection between the focus on 'achievement' and that on 'equal opportunities'. As a matter of principle, the two are usually thought to coincide: the concern with promoting equality is seen to allow for higher achievement of otherwise disadvantaged pupils. In the Swann Report, for example, "underachievement" was considered largely a " result of racial prejudice and discrimination on the part of society at large, bearing on ethnic minority home and families, and hence, *indirectly*, on children" (Swann 1985, 768) – while the rest was to be explained by the *direct* experience of discrimination and racial prejudice.

However, the interdependence of achievement and racial justice or equal opportunities is not necessarily reflected in how concerns are balanced in the classroom. In fact, it is suggested that the two may seem to be in conflict. This tension appears conspicuously when the commitment to 'equal opportunities' is thought to entail not just support for individual students regardless of their particular cultural, ethnic or religious background but measures, such as the consideration of an African heritage, that are introduced to empower students, make them feel more confident – but do not necessarily pertain in a straightforward way to performance in examinations. In particular the 'mainstreaming' of historical concerns that we have discussed previously can hardly be justified with

reference to how it increases educational attainment – at least not in a conventional understanding – of white majority pupils.

This tension was emphasized by two teachers we interviewed. The first noted that

> obviously *achievement* has to be balanced because there's many ethnic minority parents that would prefer their children to do well, than to have lip service paid to various sort of cultural issues really (Interview, 1 March 2011)

The second, when prompted on how the two priorities may come together, stressed how

> there shouldn't be tension and that's why I think we're so keen to say that if you take into account the equal opportunities agenda then that will raise the achievement of all children around. (Interview, 1 March 2011)

The teacher, however, pointed to widespread uneasiness among her colleagues on how to properly address some of the challenges that an encompassing commitment to 'equal opportunities' would pose. In particular when it was seen to require the discussion of sensitive material and continuing experience of racial discrimination,

> they're worried about it. And you know we all blunder, we all make mistakes, we're all learning, we've… what we haven't got is the confidence … to actually be able to talk about it, to make the mistakes… 'We're only gonna upset that person, that group of people, oh my god, how do I say it'. So it's easier in some ways, perhaps, for people to step back and embrace the achievement side than embrace, embrace the equal opps. (Interview, 1 March 2011)

This perception was also reinforced by the former Head of History at City Academy who was eager to point out that, rather than a matter of incompetence or principled resistance, teachers had little time to prepare and often experienced "insecurity about areas where they feel there may be a politicized reaction" (Interview, 4 April 2011). Bristol City Council (2007, 11), too, noted that "[t]eachers … often say that they do not always feel confident in talking about key race equality, cultural or faith issues for fear of using the wrong word, causing offence or exposing their lack of knowledge." When issues seem not only challenging for their sensitivity, but also not strictly part of what contributes to educational attainment, it is no surprise that a significant number of teachers may try to avoid them. A fallback position where sensitive issues are avoided, a further member of staff at City Academy suggested, was a kind of individualism that would consider children, but not their cultural background and needs (Discussion Group, 7 July 2011).

The National Story

A member of the Council's bicentenary team emphasized the significance for the concerns with Abolition 200 to be reflected in the curriculum: "by having that on the National Curriculum, it put a marker as if to say, 'We recognise this'" (Interview, 1 March 2011). As a marker of public recognition, this would be perceived as a sign of appreciation and interest. The way in which the abolition of the slave trade eventually found a place in the History Curriculum, however, appeared protracted: while earlier signals had been given that it wouldn't be included, it eventually turned out to that it would.

Rather than seeing this as an achievement, the incoming Conservative Education Secretary has used the concern with the transatlantic slave-trade as an exemplary case for alleged pathologies of history teaching at British schools. Its inadequacy, Michael Gove suggests, is illustrated by its disavowal of the teaching of names, dates and coherent narratives and the fact that the only two names that are currently included in the History Curriculum were those of William Wilberforce, the initiator of the 1807 vote, and Olaudah Equiano, a former slave and 18th century campaigner for abolition (see Loveys 2011). Rather than an attack on their historical personas, this is a critique of allegedly insufficient ways of teaching history at British school. The 'chronological understanding' of issues is

seen as underdeveloped (Ferguson 2011b) and students are not provided, Simon Schama suggests, with a sense of the "long arc of time" (cited in Rahim 2010; see also Better History Group 2011). Figures, facts and narratives, it is implied, should not just be exemplary of its more shameful aspects; the concern has to be with "the achievement of brave men and women whose attachment to liberty was sincere and deep" (Gove 2006), and "[o]ur national story can't be told without Churchill at the centre" (Gove cited in Garner 2008).

For the currently ongoing review of the curriculum, Simon Schama was appointed. At the heart of this review, however, there seems to be a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, the emphasis is on the *depoliticization* of the curriculum and Gove came out strongly to suggest that he wanted to "remove everything unnecessary from a curriculum that has been bent out of shape by the weight of material dumped there for political purposes" (Gove 2010). At the same time, there is a strong concern to refocus the subject of history to cover past achievements that, it is suggested, need to be considered for how they inform contemporary understandings of Britishness and allow for a positive sense of national identity – arguably a concern that is political in nature.

One of our respondents, a teacher trainer with profoundly negative views on the curriculum review, pointed out how the existence of multiple perspectives seemed to be increasingly ignored among the proponents of reform:

> They talk about our Island story as if there is one island story, one people, and one narrative, and actually that's all fact and, you know, there isn't anything to dispute, which is nonsense and a very poor understanding of history really. (Interview 4 April 2011)

To conclude, there remains the possibility of a majoritarian backlash, fuelled by popular outrage about 'special treatment' and 'special claims', in particular when these are seen to displace older national traditions and 'our history'. The recent debate on the history curriculum signals a declining preparedness to conceive of the 'national story' in an encompassing and inclusive way, or to allow for the presence of multiple horizons.

Conclusion

With the mainstreaming of Black History, its connection to achievement and the ongoing debate about the History Curriculum we have introduced three areas of educational concern where various positions are present and various political responses appear possible. The wholesale rejection of non-majority narratives is a fairly pervasive position and, in particular when it works through the populist appeal to how majority narratives are allegedly lost, a real possibility. Moreover, the toleration of alternative minority histories – the sense of Black History being for Black people only – seems reflected in educational practice. To be sure, many of our respondents have emphasized the importance of the cultural self-confidence that results from awareness of one's historical background and that needs to be developed in education.

The question of how to narrate the national story, to make it more encompassing and allow for the multiplicity of perspectives continues to be contested not only between social majority and minorities but also between and within various post-immigration groups. Increasing demographic differentiation means that there are more narratives to consider. In Bristol, the settlement of Somalis in recent years poses considerable challenges to Council politics but also to how the longer-established African and African-Caribbean groups conceive of their social and cultural positions.

Even without such contemporary difficulties, the concern to reconsider national narratives is bound to be contested and faces considerable obstacles. Maybe the most clear-cut achievement that has emerged from 2007 was the heightened interest and concern with historical narratives and local and national representations. It was not merely the official commemoration but the widening participation of various individuals and groups that points to how multicultural accommodation may be furthered through such contestations. Although the debate was in parts confrontational, bitter and toxic, there are signs of a movement where the concern with historical representations continues, more mature instincts prevail and Colston's skeleton is further rattled.

Towards greater understanding? The contested guidance for Muslim pupils at state schools

With this case we explore aspects of how the needs of Muslim pupils in British state schools are conceived, and how suggestions on how to address those needs are put forward and contested. This raises questions not only of toleration, acceptance or respect for religious pupils, their heritage and about the accommodation of religion at a school level. As an additional dimension, it entails decisions about what the needs are that require particular consideration. Although they are widely shared points of reference, the needs of children, as well as their interest or well-being, are understood in different ways and are seen – in particular where religion is concerned – to require different kinds of educational responses.

Such differences are conspicuous in the controversy that we explore here. The Muslim Council of Britain's (MCB) guidance notes *Towards greater understanding. Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils at state schools* tapped into disagreements that are not merely practical or political but reflect a division about educational philosophy and the ethos of state education.[8] This perception is reinforced by differences of emphasis among our respondents. While some, such as Tahir Alam, the author of the MCB guidance, suggest that "children are going to do well because of … stability in their lifestyle, in their belief systems" (Interview, 6 April 2011), others emphasize "openness", "contact" and "communication" as important conditions of well-being (Tehmina Kazi, Interview, 30 April 2011). In its notes, the MCB underlined the "spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of Muslim children" (MCB 2007, 18). British Muslims for a Secular Democracy (BMSD 2010, 6), responding directly to the MCB, suggests that "[m]any educators have over-emphasized Muslimness at the expense of Britishness and the whole child".[9]

The following explores contestations over the accommodation of Muslim pupils in state schools by focusing on the MCB notes and competing guidance issued by BMSD. We first explore relevant aspects of the nature of the contestation over religion in British state education, as well as some ambiguities in understandings of accommodation. Secondly, we consider the claims and counter-claims in the guidance with an interest in arguments and justifications offered, though with less emphasis on the content of the measures that were proposed (see, however, Appendix Table 3). We conclude with a discussion on how to conceive of the various positions that are discernible with the conceptual toolkit of ACCEPT Pluralism (Dobbernack and Modood 2011). We suggest that, considerable disagreement over principles notwithstanding, the majority of these converge around a minimalist understanding of respect-based accommodation. While, more controversially, understandings of British education can also be seen to support requests for independent Muslim education, the denial of even basic requests – the intolerant option – appears at odds with such conventional understandings.

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[8] The MCB's guidance notes stand in a line of similar texts, some of which were published for particular LEAs with high numbers of Muslim pupils. The Birmingham LEA (n.d.) in 1988 was one of the first to issue guidance notes for the accommodation of Muslim pupils. Anticipating the title of the MCB notes, the IQRA Trust (1991) issued a document entitled 'Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils: advice for teachers and LEAs'.

[9] While disagreement may result from different understandings of the role of religion for the individual development of children or in public life generally, in this case it is reinforced by some degree of organisational animosity. The MCB aspires to be a "national representative Muslim umbrella body" and is a loose coalition of roughly 500 affiliated organisations, mosques, charities or independent Muslim schools. Its credo is 'Working for the Common Good', though it has been accused in the past – such as by BMSD and its trustees – of a conservative bias, insufficient distance to extremists, and claiming to be representative despite only speaking for a minority of British Muslims; its relationship with Government has experienced ups and downs (Vidino 2011). In turn, British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD) presents itself as a counter-organisation that unites Muslims with a different understanding of the public place of Islam. Its board of trustees was until recently led by the prominent author and journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown. The extent of its membership and support is unclear, but it is a much smaller organisation than the MCB.

Debating the principles of education

In the debates that concern us here, different emphases do not need to be understood as polar opposites. But disagreement, in as much as it arises from different conceptions of pupils' needs, means that we are moving on unstable ground in our discussion of the meaning and scope of acceptance. After all, practices that are harmful to children or adverse to their needs would usually be considered as intolerable by default. As a site of debate about principles, this means that the field of education shows a certain perfectionist bias and that the minimalism of 'gritted teeth' tolerance may be more difficult to defend than in other fields of debate. Accordingly, principled positions of intolerance and respect may appear more frequent and seem more defensible than those of compromise. However, to what extent these discursive dynamics are reflected in educational practice is a different question that we consider later in the report.

Similar to ambiguities in how children's needs are conceived, there is related disagreement over the purpose of education. While the importance of the transmission of factual knowledge may be undisputed to some extent, other objectives are more contested.[10] Education is usually seen to be concerned with the formation of individuals that can confidently participate in the life of their social environment and aspire to a measure of 'roundedness' and character development. Educational priorities are thus contested in line with diverging conceptions of, at its most fundamental, the 'good life' or what it means to be a 'good human being' (Halstead 2005, 118).[11] Mark Halstead (2004, 522), for example, sees the following dividing line between "liberal educationalists" and Islam where education "will be discussed in terms of the balanced growth of all sides of the individual's personality, including the spiritual and moral, leading to a higher level of religious understanding and commitment in all areas of life". What it means for education to be "wholesome" (BMSD 2010, 5, 9, 11) or "holistic" (BMSD 2010, 6), or to promote "greater understanding and tolerance, respect, equality and social harmony and cohesion" (MCB 2007, 19), may depend on foundational assumptions about educational objectives. There is, then, considerable space for disagreement.

Significantly, it is not just secular purposes in education that see themselves challenged by the religiosity of post-immigration groups. Vice versa, the concern among British Muslims in the education of their children is to a significant extent the result of anxiety about the loss of cultural traditions and beliefs. In graphic detail, Sahib Mustaqim Bleher (1996, 63) draws a picture of this anxiety where the "outside world is [experienced as] a raging monster waiting to eat up your children. … You send them to school and they come back as enemies who despise you and regard you as ignorant and a hindrance to ambitions that their friends and teachers have put into their heads." The experience, as it is portrayed by Bleher and others, is thus one of a rift between the aspirations and needs of Muslim pupils and the purposes of state education not only regarding spirituality but also the conditions of educational success.

When asked on how his interest in the education of British Muslim children emerged, Tahir Alam pointed to this connection between cultural self-confidence and achievement:

> [In] our first generation, actually, children, did really well… But the following generations that came through, they were, from a behaviour point of view, from an Islamic values point of view, their values were eroding… Educationally they were failing and they got into crime and so on…. They were becoming kind of, an underclass community… So I was very disturbed by this, 'What the hell is going on here? What is this? You know, why are all of the rubbish schools, all the crap schools, basically, in our areas? What are they playing at? And what's the reason for this?' (Interview 6 April 2011)

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10 Although the weight given to factual and instrumental knowledge may also be disputed. See Ameli, Azam and Merali (2005) or the position paper by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (2004).
11 The Association of Muslim Social Scientists (2004, 19) in a position paper on Muslim Education sees some proximity between Muslim educational priorities and Steiner and Montessori approaches.

For Muslim educationalists and a significant number of Muslim parents, the response to this puzzle would probably be twofold. To increase attainment, an institutional bias against Muslim children would need to be overcome and resources be made accessible. Beyond such requests, certainty of culture and religion underpins educational attainment. Culture, religion and school should work together to instil values and aspirations which steer children towards educational success and protect them from influences that undermine this. If children develop a sense of cultural self-confidence, they will behave to a higher standard.

This connection explains the frustration that Muslim parents may experience when state education is seen to be complicit in children's exposure to harmful influences and when educational institutions, rather than supporting it, are seen to undermine the ethos that allows for educational success. The suggestion, then, is that for "many Muslim parents it appears that the education in state-funded schools is imposing a set of moral, spiritual, cultural and social values, not of their choice and certainly not in consultation with them" (Khan-Cheema 1996, 87). Mark Halstead (2005, 106) points to how the state system was considered spiritually and morally inadequate and, thus, to be "at least partly responsible for the growth of drug addiction, the increasing number of Muslims in custody and the inner city riots of 2001".

It is significant, then, to understand Muslim claims vis-à-vis state schools as a spectrum of positions. Requests may be made for certain practices to be allowed, such as religious dress or for the accommodation of religious needs, such as for *halal* school meals. They may, however, also refer to how religiosity itself is conceived at school and by the school, tolerated or even reflected in its ethos. Beyond the scope of tolerance, these claims would then be concerned with how to achieve the normality of Muslim religiosity in a school environment or even with its positive reinforcement. Such claims and positions have been contested in particular for how they might lead to 'separatism' or entail a departure from principles of state neutrality.

Figure 2: Importance of religion in young person's life (DfES 2006, 23)[12]
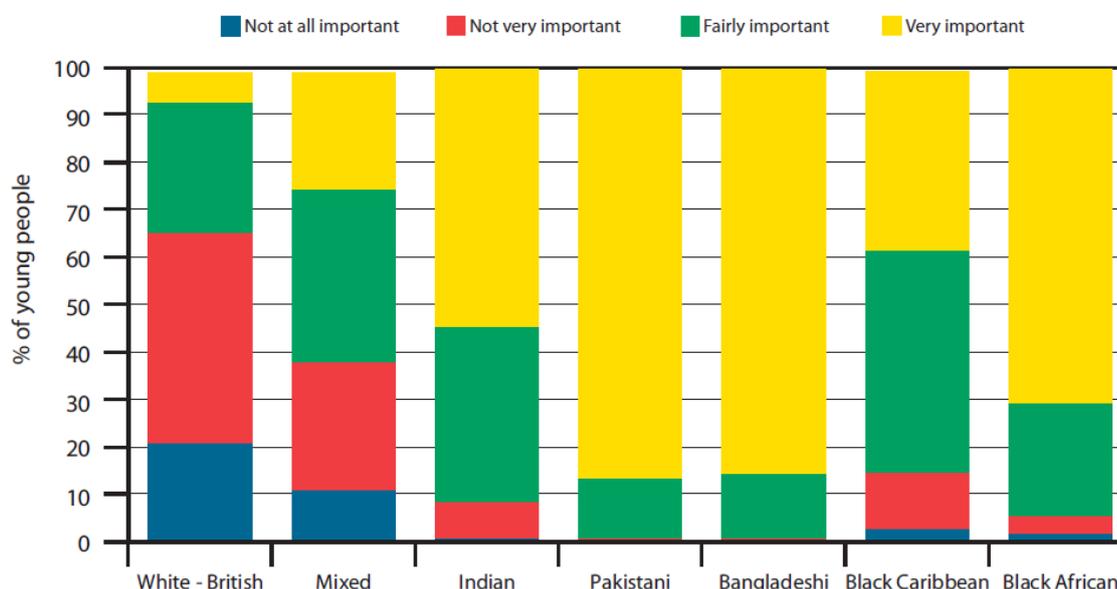
Despite considerable disagreement, there is some recognition that the significance of religion in particular for South Asian post-immigration groups is empirically given and requires a constructive response from public institutions (see Figure 2).[13] Whether such responses are borne out of pragmatic calculations, the desire to 'just get along' or principled commitments is often unclear. The localism of British education, with various arrangements in place across individual LEAs, means that a variety of

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12 Disclaimer: This table is also displayed in the MCB (2007, 18) guidance.
13 See Modood et al. (1997) on the particular significance of religion for Pakistani or Bangladeshi post-immigration groups

solutions have been developed in response to local conditions and particular challenges (Halstead 2005, 120). This allows some schools to experiment, bo be more accommodating and pioneering but this variety is not unproblematic, since the scope of accommodation in schools or LEAs often appears related to the size of their Muslim school population or may results from initiatives by individual headteachers or school governors and, thus, appear somewhat random and patchy.

Responding to such concerns, the MCB's guidance notes were intended to be a comprehensive collection, presented in an "easy-to-use format" (MCB 2007, 19). The document would point to "best practice already implemented in many schools around the country so that Muslim pupils can feel fully part of the state schools they attend" (Alam 2007). It emerged as a result of discussions at the MCB's Education Committee and, its author suggests, in response to various queries that the MCB had received over the years: it "captures much of the good practice from various schools around the country" (MCB 2007, 19).[14]

'Towards greater understanding'?

Before setting out its practical advice, the document includes a statement of principles for a 'Muslim inclusive approach'. The suggestion is that all

> children, to whatever extent possible, whatever their background, should be educated in the fullness of their being in consistency with their beliefs and the wishes of their parents, in a spirit that values their multiple identities (faith, cultural and British). This will contribute to nurturing self-esteem and self-confidence, forming the basis for understanding and appreciation for the heritage and beliefs of others. (Muslim Council of Britain 2007, 17)

Addressing such needs, the document suggests, provides for self-confidence and esteem and supports the "personal development" (ibid., 18) of children, whereas failure to do so is "likely to have an alienating effect where pupils may feel that they are not valued". Muslim pupils, it is suggested, have a claim to "see themselves reflected positively in the ethos, curriculum and life of their school" and this respect for pupils' cultural heritage is a vital precondition for their educational attainment. Tahir Alam elaborates on this link as follows:

> children who are very confident in who they are, with self-esteem, self-worth, are confident with where they're coming from. Those children are going to do well because of their stability in their lifestyle, in their belief systems… and they kind of know where they are and where they're going. And if children become confused about those kinds of issues, or they think that their background is somehow subordinate, then this actually sends a message which is very different to them. It means that they receive a message at a psychological level, at an intellectual level, that to progress in society they have to adopt the ways of mannerisms of, if you like, other people, which actually are not genuine for them. (Interview 6 April 2011)

The connection between cultural certainty, self-confidence and educational attainment is, then, conceived in a manner that runs parallel to the connections drawn in the case of Black History, though in the case of Black History *awareness* may be more emphasized than *appreciation* or *certainty*. While much of the focus of the guidance is on provisions for religious practice and for sensitivity towards religious beliefs, the positive representation of the Muslim faith is an issue of some significance. Requests to allow children to practice the requirements of their faith in the various chapters of the report are usually accompanied by suggestions on how the non-Muslim school population should be engaged and brought to understand their significance for Muslims pupils. The

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14 The MCB guidance notes cover religious dress (MCB 2007, 20-2), school meals (23-4), provisions for prayer (25-7), during Ramadan (28-32), Islamic festivals (34-35), Physical Education (36-40), Religious Education (41-3), Collective Worship (44-6), Sex and Relationship Education (47-50), language teaching (50-1), the arts (52-3), resources in the school library (54-5), educational visits (56-7) and 'further issues' (58). The BMSD guidance covers clothing (7-8); swimming (8), The Arts (8-9), forced marriages (9-10), learning about other faiths (10-1), Sex Education (11-2), Friday Prayers (12), Absences from school (12), Eid Festivals (12-3) and gender segregation (13). For a comparison of areas where both organisations have made suggestions, see Appendix Table 3.

BMSD guidance, by contrast, can be understood as suggestions for how Muslim pupils can be made to feel part of a multi-faceted but shared British culture.

Three issues: 'Muslims', 'should' and 'compromise'

Already the notion of certainty of culture or belief points to issues that seem not entirely straightforward. After all, while certainty may be a value for some, others may either experience or even relish uncertainty as their preferred modality of identity. There are three further ambiguities in the document that have been singled out by some of its critics.

1) The designator 'Muslim', which is used in the document to introduce expectations of Muslim pupils and their parents, may be understood as either referring to the reality of actual claims coming from Muslims as a social group or by reference to faith-based demands. It seems that the intention of the author of the notes was the latter: although there may be a certain assumption among the MCB that Muslims should be practicing and thus can be expected to put forward particular claims for the accommodation of religious practices, there is an acknowledgment that this is not the case for every British Muslim. Tahir Alam remarks that "if a Muslim does not consider it necessary to wear the *hijab* or does not object to swimming in a mixed-gender environment or communal naked showering, then this is not [an] issue for the school and no advice is required" (Interview, 6 April 2011). However, in objections to the document, this distinction may have been lost and it was alleged that the MCB presumed to speak for the entirety of British Muslims, despite the diversity of understandings within this group, and furthermore to impose a religious-cultural model (Interview, 16 June 2011). Dean Godson (2007) of Policy Exchange perceived in the document the intention to 'Arabize' British Muslims.

2) A certain disjuncture between requirements derived from faith, as embodied in scripture or historical practice, and the actual practices of a social group is probably inevitable, and certainly not exclusive to Islam and British Muslims. Moreover, a similar distinction also seemed to underpin different understandings of the nature of requests in the guidance notes – to the references to *should*. The right-wing think tank *Policy Exchange*, for example, noted disapprovingly that in the guidance the "word 'should' is used over ninety times, mostly in demands for concessions" (Bald et al. 2010, 29). It further remarked that the report gave "the impression that the onus is on schools to adapt to Muslims, rather than the other way round … it encourages Muslim parents to make maximal use of their legal rights" (ibid., 30). This critique is mirrored in the responses from BMSD representatives who suggested that the document "was pandering excessively, it didn't sort of allow any space for compromise, or resolution: the whole thrust of the document was about make such-and-such demand and … it'll be granted" (Interview, 30 March 2011).

When questioned on this line of critique, Tahir Alam made the following distinction to explain the nature of the requests. The world '*should*'.

> relates to the, to the obligation upon the Muslim to do that or not. That relates to 'should'. So for example, if I have to pray five times a day, that's gonna appear as a 'should'. Because that's, that's not necessarily what you can do, it's not dependent upon what you can do. It's dependent upon what the Muslim has to do, and therefore we are saying that you *should* do your best to make such an accommodation. And that 'should' is traced back to the obligation. So where, for example, it is purely optional, in other words it's a luxury, in other words it's not a religious obligation, we've not said anything. (Interview 6 April 2011)

The subject position of 'Muslim' is conceived religiously, not sociologically. It is conceived with reference to Islamic faith positions, and neither with the social practices of British Muslims in mind nor with the diversity of more or less devout orientations that can be found in this social group.

3) Such differences may, finally, also explain disagreement over the possibility to *compromise*. The criticism from *Policy Exchange* – that Muslims were encouraged to make "maximal use of their rights" – seems to be based on the assumption that such rights were largely or entirely optional,

similar maybe to various lifestyle choices that one can make depending on inclinations and taste. From the MCB's perspective, however, what is demanded is basic respect for religious pupils, and the request to 'compromise' would, in turn, be understood as the request to compromise on one's faith. The rejection of such requests is experienced as particularly onerous since, on the spectrum of possible claims, the requests in the guidance notes are not seen to be particularly far-ranging. They are predicated on a minimalist notion of respect for Muslim pupils and the kind of respect that is due to them as individuals extends to their religious identities.

This kind of respect for religiosity, not necessarily for religion, is contrasted with other, more wide-ranging requests. In Muslim majority neighbourhoods, but also basically wherever the according initiatives may find sufficient support, these may not just be for accommodation and allowances within the state sector but for the introduction of 'Muslim schools'. Tahir Alam suggests that the notes were

> just saying practically what schools should do to make a Muslim child feel comfortable, … it is not asking to make the school into a Muslim school, you know? It's not asking for that, although I could ask for that, of course, on the basis of the other principle, that we are right to educate our children according to the wishes of their parents, not according to the wishes of some guy who's never seen the child and never seen the parent either, if you know what I mean? … But I'm not really talking about that, I'm saying that if schools are, you know, serving the Muslim community, they should make, you know, every effort to accommodate them, in a way that respects them, values them, and so on. That's the basic principle of respect. That's all the document is saying, very basic things. (Interview, 6 April 2011)

The requests that are summarized in the notes are, thus, presented as "very practical, very mild" and contrasted with other legitimate requests, such as the introduction of Muslim schools. The issues to what extent independent schools would be desirable to provide for education according to Islamic principles is somewhat disputed. However, acquiescence to state education is not infrequently presented as the result of pragmatic, not principled, choices. The compromise, then, is this acquiescence to public education and this compromise will be perceived as more problematic where 'basic respect' isn't forthcoming. These request do not appear particularly far-fetched as conventional understandings of education in Britain, the role envisaged for civil society and the focus on neighbourhood provision resonate with Islamic priorities. Mark Halstead (2004, 526) suggests that in Islam "education was not an activity separated from other aspects of society; it was rooted in the community it served, responding to its needs and aspirations and preserving its values and beliefs."[15] The number of independent Muslim schools has grown in recent years and there has also been a slow increase of Muslim schools within the state system.

Reactions and critique

In the rejection of the guidance, various lines usually mingle and are not always easy to separate for what is the result of principled disagreement or based on expressions of indignation, knee-jerk or otherwise. Often, a certain alarmism is palpable, which at its most populist extreme – for example in an article in the Washington Times (2007) – sees a direct connection between acquiescence to demands in the guidance notes and the erection of a "Shariah state". Dean Godson, Research Director at the think tank *Policy Exchange*. Godson (2007) stated in *The Times* that the document was a

> charter for segregation of the sexes – and urges strict controls on how dance, drama and sports are organised. More Arabic lessons all round, too – in line with the traditional Islamist aim of 'Arabising' Britain's predominantly South Asian Muslims.

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15 This local orientation has recently been reinforced in a new drive towards Academies and Free Schools. Regarding these, right-wring commentators have expressed considerable uneasiness about how this drive might lead to the extension of the 'faith school' sector and to an increasing number of Muslim schools (MacEoin 2009; Bald, Harber et al. 2010)

A prominent actors involved in the drafting of the competing BMSD guidance notes warned of "tribal customs coming from Saudia Arabia" and how these amounted to "cultural perversions that have nothing to do with Islam" (Interview, 16 June 2011). Parts of the national tabloid media equally commented on the guidance and occasionally misconstrued the MCB's position, probably intentionally so such as when the *Daily Express* summarized the notes as follows: "Muslims: 'Ban Un-Islamic Schools'" (Milland 2007).[16]

Among the more principled positions that seem to underpin objections to the guidance, issues of state neutrality and an anxiety about ethnic or religious separatism in education rank highly. The MCB, suggested that its document should be understood as an "an agenda for promoting greater integration. … not a demand list as some detractors want people to believe" (Alam 2007). By contrast, Shaaz Mahboob for British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD 2007) commented that the

> recommendations, should they be implemented by schools, would not only serve to increase the segregation of Muslim pupils from their non-Muslim peers, who may grow up viewing Muslim pupils as those unduly awarded concessions and treated somewhat differently, thereby creating a wider gulf between the communities in the years to come.

In the critique of 'separatism' it is emphasised how acquiescence to requests might fuel resentment on the part of non-Muslim pupils. Mahboob suggested that the guidance was not only "impractical and divisive" but posed a threat for how conservative notions of religious observance would be generalized and schools "forced into acceptance and implementation by undue pressure being put on them by hard-line organisations such as the MCB".

> Muslim parents and pupils who are otherwise liberal minded and flexible in their approach towards practising their religion would also come under social and peer pressure to conform to the general notion that all Muslims (parents and pupils) wish to see these recommendations implemented within the schools. (BMSD 2007)

Conspicuously, it seems it is not the illegitimacy of the principles that are reflected in the MCB guidance that is at the core of these objections – not the MCB's reference to "basic principles of respect" – but various practical and organisational issues as well as the intended or unintended effects of the guidance if it was implemented. Moreover there are differences between respective understandings of religious identities, whether these are worthy of respect, and what this respect entails, such as regarding the possibility for compromise and interaction with others who have no or different religious identities.

The rejection of the guidance, however, is primarily justified with reference to its allegedly 'divisive' effects, to its impracticality or for how its adoption would be experienced as an imposition of uniformly conservative practices on populations of Muslim pupils that are diverse. These concerns are clearly significant. Respect for religious pupils is supported by the same principles that would point to respect for the freedom to practices, for example, a non-religious identity and double standards of respect, where they exist, may be legitimately criticized. However, it is not clear how this would amount to a compelling response to claims for accommodation based on respect for Muslim pupils.

BMSD's alternative guidance and the pitfalls of culture

In light of this uncertainty the 2010 guidance that BMSD issued in response to the MCB's earlier document elucidates some sources of a more principled disagreement. While the guidance was envisaged as an alternative to the MCB document, the rejection of the MCB positions that BMSD (2007) had issued previously is muted in the document (and there is generally a sense in which BMSD varies between more strident and muted expressions of its objections to the MCB's positions). Its emphasis is on 'reasonable' requests and 'compromise'. Tehmina Kazi, BMSD's director, suggested as a primary motivation for the drafting of the competing guidance, that the MCB notes "didn't strike

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16 The MCB had claimed no such thing and subsequently submitted a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) regarding distortions in the Daily Express story (www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/lettertoPCC.doc).

a good balance between the interests of the teacher, the student, and the parent" (Interview 30 March 2011).

The issue of compromise, of course, is complicated where faith-based demands are concerned. However, there is an explication in the guidance on why 'compromise' should be a possibility. Conspicuously (in capital letters), BMSD (2010, 6) alleges that

> [p]ractices and beliefs that define groups and individuals are precious, but they cannot become the sole basis for policies and politics. CULTURE IS DYNAMIC, not static and set in stone forever.

This exhortation about culture is linked to the encouragement of British Muslims to overcome "disengagement" and develop a "sense of national belonging" – which had previously been lacking "partly because of racism, partly because of self exclusion and myths of return" (ibid.). The position of cultural self-confidence that the MCB considers a precondition for educational attainment, but also a good in itself, is rejected. For BMSD, it seems this does not provide sufficient grounds for making requests.

Positions within BMSD on these issues may differ, but explications by one of the authors regarding the need to *deculturalise* Islam are instructive:

> As long as you project Islam as culture, Muslims are going to have problems integrating into Western societies. That is the issue. That should be a major recommendation of your project. As long as they are seeing culture as religion Muslim will never be fully integrated, never. (Interview, 16 June 2011).

This interviewee considers conservative religious dress, such as the *niqab*, as expression of "tribal customs coming from Saudia Arabia" and "cultural perversions that have nothing to do with Islam". His objection, which he forcefully supports with reference to general equality, is part of a wholesale rejection of cultural practices that he considers a distortion of – and alien to – the religious core. He also has considerable misgivings about a variety of further types of dress, such as *shalwar kameez*, or practices, including facial hair, in as much as they are understood as expressions of Islam. His notion of the way ahead for British Muslims is that "Islam should not be a culturally based… I want to see British Muslims, in other words: a British culture with Islam as religion" (Interview, 16 June 2011).

A problem for this position, of course, is that a significant number of British Muslims, the majority some would suggest, do not share this deculturalised conception of Islam. They aim to a varying extent either for the preservation of some cultural practice or, more frequently, for some kind of adaptation that allows for some ethno-religious customs to be actualised in the diaspora. The distinction between the religious and the cultural may not be shared in the way envisaged by BMSD and may point to religious practices that seem rather alien to a significant number of British Muslims. For some, clearly, the idea of deculturalised Islam may appear unproblematic or appealing, but a majority of British Muslims would need to be 'reformed' to comply with this conception. Some coercion would be necessary for them to conform in their religious practice to exhortations that are, though only in elements, included in the BMSD guidance notes and reiterated – much more strongly – by one of its authors.

Principles and practices

Where BMSD conceives of identities as dynamic, the MCB puts emphasis on certainty and self-confidence. There seems to be some principled disagreement, then, that is informed by different conceptions of pupils' needs, of how to understand culture, and its role in the religious practice of British Muslims. Generally, however, it seems that this disagreement does neither underpin radically different conceptions of the respect that is due to religious choices made by Muslim pupils nor of important objectives in the education of Muslims. Both guidance notes claim that their perspectives would most suitably lead to heightened achievement among Muslim pupils. Different from the

emphasis of the MCB notes, the BMSD highlights the need for "understanding both ways" where, previously, "[t]oo often the traffic has been one way" (BMSD 2010, 5). Parents could be expected to "compromise for the greater good" (ibid.) and thus to withdraw their requests for special consideration if these turned out to be too burdensome for schools. Where the MCB document focuses on the kinds of claims that schools should be prepared to encounter and accommodate, BMSD is concerned with questioning these claims where they are portrayed as 'unreasonable' or 'conservative' (ibid., 9, 13) and with providing headmasters with argumentative resources to refuse demands that are portrayed as excessive or harmful.

These are significant issues that, in particular where the 'protection' of non-religious pupils is concerned, can be defended in strong principled terms. Surprisingly, however, deep conflict over principles is does not translate in equal measure into disagreement over the practicalities of accommodation. Suggestions made by both organisations show considerable convergence on some issues, a certain differences of tone and emphasis and a few – not many – suggestions that point to genuine disagreement. BMSD, too, lists various requests that religious Muslims could legitimately expect to be accommodated by schools and gives practical advice on how schools may respond to such requests (see Appendix Table 3).

Regarding religious dress, BMSD (2010, 8) suggests that it is "perfectly legitimate for a school to refuse to compromise on the jilbab and the niqab, both for health and safety and integration reasons". The MCB (2007, 20) suggests that "[i]n public boys should always be covered between the navel and knee and girls should be covered except for their hands and faces, a concept known as 'hijab'" and adds, in a footnote, that for "some Muslims fulfilling this requirement may mean the wearing of the jilbab". The *jilbab* has been contentious: while it is accommodated in the uniform code of some schools, others – even those run by Muslim headmistresses – refused to accommodate the *jilbab* and have been found right to do so (House of Lords 2006). Beyond this controversy, it is maybe most conspicuous that the *hijab* is uncontested, and some basic requirements for the accommodation of religious dress are acknowledged – though not encouraged – by BMSD, too. The same logic – an emphasis on extreme cases, and a certain lack of enthusiasm for, though the implied acceptance of 'normal' claims – runs through the BMSD document. The MCB, by contrast, highlights the normality of its claims and fails to mention situations where exaggerated or outrageous requests should not be accommodated.[17]

There is neither the indication that claims for accommodation based on respect are radically challenged by BMSD, nor that the MCB goes substantially beyond these ideas of accommodation. Both organisations in their respective guidance, as can be seen in Appendix 3, gravitate towards a respect-based minimum of acceptance. This minimum is not spelt out by BMSD and is not the exclusive focus of the MCB, which at least hints at more far-ranging requests, including for educational self-determination and for what Juila Ipgrave (2010) has coined "epistemology-based inclusion".

The disjuncture between violent disagreement over principles and relative proximity on practices also highlights a puzzling feature of the recent multiculturalism debate. David Cameron (2011) announced the need to have "less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism" and renounced the "doctrine of state multiculturalism". Similar to the principled disagreement between MCB and BMSD, Cameron's emphatic rhetoric may have little policy content. Many people worry about residential segregation, inward looking communities and how this is reflected in British schools. But these are not the result of policies and a different population distribution could only be achieved, to coin a phrase, by muscular illiberalism (Modood 2011b).

Regarding the minimalist, respect-based accommodation of Muslim religiosity in state education, this illiberalism is not on the table. Principled disagreement over the place of religion in public life does

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17 Tahir Alam acknowledges the existence of "unreasonable requests" and that the guidance may be beneficial for headteachers to deal with these (Interview, 6 April 2011). It is not clear why this purpose of the guidance is not acknowledged in the document itself.

not lead to radically different conceptions – at least not in the mainstream – of the respect that is due to religious choices made by Muslim pupils and how these should be accommodated. Suggestions that fall behind such understandings would have to break with enshrined notions of liberal respect for individual choice as well as with conventional understandings of practice and ethos of British education. Although requests for such a break have been made (Godson 2007; MacEoin 2009; Hargey 2011), they would need to overcome considerable obstacles before they could hope to inform educational practice.

Conclusion

In this second case we have examined contestations that are exemplary for the debate over the accommodation of religious identities and practices in British public life. Some of the conflict in this field can be explained by entrenched animosity between representatives of organisations with different aims and membership. Principled disagreement, moreover, is evident, such as on how to conceive of British Muslims as a social and faith group, on the connections between 'religion' and 'culture', and on the possibility of compromise where faith-based claims are concerned. Generally, however, it seems that principled disagreement does not necessarily lead to radically different conceptions of the respect that is due to religious choices made by Muslim pupils. A minimalist understanding of respect for their identities and informs both guidance notes that we have examined here, although this understanding is often only implied.

British educational practice, as it is institutionally enshrined and continues to be developed, is consonant with this idea of respect. Suggestions that do not live up to this have to break with liberal notions of respect for individual choice as well as with conventional understandings of education in Britain. Even the main driver 'beyond' the respect-based accommodation of Muslims within the state system – the request for independent Muslim schools – is conceivable without implying a break with conventional understandings, though it is more controversial.[18] By contrast, requests to disallow for example religious dress may be made on a level of abstract generality, for example when the claim is that Islam needs to be 'deculturalised'. It is unlikely that such requests will be successful or appealing if considered for the coercive measures they would require in practice. Immigration minister Damian Green, referring to France's 'burka ban', recently remarked that "[t]elling people what they can and can't wear, if they're just walking down the street, is a rather un-British thing to do" (BBC 2010). Although the burka is not what is at stake in the contestation over the two different guidance documents, Green's proposition arguably captures a prevailing spirit as far as religion and British public life are concerned.

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18 Although the recent drive towards 'free schools' and 'academies' promises to increase the space for Muslim faith schools, in the past their introduction frequently failed due to practical and financial constraints. It remains to be seen how many Muslim 'free schools' and 'Academies' will be established.

Concluding remarks

The kind of acceptance that requires a reconsideration of national stories and the one that requires respectful treatment of religious pupils are different from one another and we have brought out some aspects of this difference. In both cases, however, issues are at stake that are insufficiently understood with tolerance. Tolerance, as a morally minimalist position of forbearance or grudging acceptance, does not adequately characterize claims towards multicultural accommodation in state schools, nor does it reflect the remaking of the national story explored in the second case. Among the multiplicity of claims and positions, toleration may adequately characterise some, though even the creation of educational spaces exclusively within majority Black schools may not be usefully understood as toleration or forbearance.

We have labelled the respect for religious identities that underpins the accommodation of Muslim pupils in state education 'minimalist', though by this we mean that this position is widely shared and distinct from other claims, such as from those for changes to the ethos of state education or for independent Muslim schools. This respect-based accommodation is a position that exceeds the forbearance of tolerance – even if we follow 'respect conceptions' of toleration, such as Forst's (2003) – for how it has a tendency to value not just the act of choosing, but the content of choice, such as by showing respect for religion (Modood 2010).

An interesting convergence between the two cases is their respective concern with identity and attainment. A lack of cultural certainty and a negative appreciation of one's heritage are seen to result in a lack of self-confidence, in the loosening of behavioural standards and in educational failure. In the case of African Caribbean pupils the impact of a positive appreciation of the positive aspects of Black History are emphasized. The MCB suggests that Islam provides moral signposts and cultural self-confidence that leads to higher aspirations.

Both conceptions have been challenged and may need to be critically amended. As long as majority stereotypes are left intact, the concern with Black culture and identity may seem apolitical and inconsequential. Education for British Muslims, some suggest, has to avoid the kind of ethno-religious navel-gazing that makes an adaptation of faith requirements, or their actualisation in mixed environments, impossible. Whatever the merits of these objections, which may be made in a variety of ways, they point to challenges that arise when the self-referential concern with group identities recognizes its limitations and begins to look towards the mainstream. The re-making of this mainstream – for example of the national story, or the normalization of the Muslim presence in Britain – points to negotiations that may be challenging for majority and minorities.

Such challenges and the debates that we have examined in this report take place while obituaries to British multiculturalism continue to be written. Historically, political multiculturalism flourished as Labour came to accept ethno-religious communitarianism as it had previously accepted other assertive identity movements. Muslim faith schools, religious discrimination legislation, incitement to religious hatred, bringing Muslims into the networks of governance, including a religion question in the Census – all of these have happened well after the original 'death of multiculturalism'. Indeed, some of them after 9/11 and 7/7, two other events that were meant to have killed off multiculturalism. One of the very last acts of New Labour was the passing of the Equality Act, which for the first time put the claims of the religion and belief strand on the same level as race. Initially having religious equality legislation because of an EU directive, Labour left office with legislation that went well beyond anything found in Europe (on race as well as a religion).

One of the reasons that multiculturalism does not seem to die despite having its last rites continually read out, is that there are very few policies at stake. The new coalition government between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats is not exempt, and education is a case in point. Clearly, the renunciation of state multiculturalism is neither seen to imply the exclusion of religious practices within the state system, nor a departure from a system where religious schools have a place (in fact,

Coalition policies might lead to an expansion of this sector). The relative narrowing of historical understandings and a certain nostalgic spree among Conservatives might lead to less pluralistic understandings of British history, but this contraction does not seem to be primarily connected to the 'death of multiculturalism'.

More problematic than these declarations of death is how a sense of white working class dispossession is mobilized point to the illegitimacy of minority requests. Steve Fenton critically remarks that public recognition and cultural inclusion for minority identities cannot be kept separate from "wider problems of social integration applicable to the whole population":

> Ethnic majoritarians would ask: what can the 'ethnic majority' expect to gain from rethinking the national story? Who gains from multiculturalism? For 'rethinking the nation' to be successful it must have a big message for the ethnic majority. For the present, at least, it is not clear what that message is. (Fenton 2011, 15)

Others, of course, have proposed notions of multicultural nationhood that respond to this dilemma, and not just for minorities (CMEB 2000; Modood 2007). It is clear from the two cases that we have considered in this report that a significant challenge to minority accommodation comes from mobilized majority resentment and from the notion that the accommodation of post-immigration groups, following the rules of a zero-sum game, means majority dispossession. The recent economic downturn, protracted debates about the economic benefits of immigration, and long-term structural change in the British economy do not make it any easier to challenge such conceptions.

This also means that toleration remains relevant and that – though more demanding positions are available and have been achieved to some extent – the United Kingdom is not entirely secure in its achievements of equality, respect and acceptance. When claims for public recognition and equal respect are rejected, the fallback position may not be toleration but intolerance and an outright rejection of more minimal positions of forbearance. This is a possibility that is illustrated by the vitriolic reaction to the MCB's guidance notes (Godson 2007; Milland 2007); it is equally palpable in the possibility of a majoritarian backlash against the consideration of non-white people in the British national story.

While the report has been primarily concerned to survey discursive positions and to examine arguments over and understandings of acceptance, tolerance and respect, we can draw on our findings to recommendations that will be of interest to British policy-makers in particular.

- *Anti-pluralist rhetoric but multi-cultural practice*: As in other European countries, in Britain the demise of multiculturalism is frequently pronounced, though it is often unclear what this entails. The expansion of faith schools and indeed the recently prominent Big Society concept in so far as it hands over resources and decision-making to neighbourhoods, communities, charities and organised religion could lead to more, not less, accommodation for ethno-religious and community-based claims. In their concern with education as well as in other policy fields, decision-makers would do well to consider the effects of political choices and institutional design in order for their rhetoric to be more reflective of the reality of multicultural accommodation in Britain.

  Policy-makers should consider ethnic minority accommodation not as an anomaly or an act of grace but as the logical and necessary consequence of the commitment to democracy and equality. Publicly funded community-controlled schools are consistent with a policy of empowering minority communities on a basis of equity. But there are real risks of increasing segregation, especially in relation to faith schools. The government should consider a requirement that all publicly funded faith-schools should set aside, say, 25% of its places for pupils of other faiths.

- *More than one 'difference'*: The kinds of claims for accommodation, acceptance and respect that we have surveyed in this report operate according to distinct understandings of what toleration, respect and acceptance require. There is not just one way of being 'different' in

contemporary Britain. Hence, policy makers are well-advised to take seriously what respective understandings of cultural 'difference' mean to minority groups and individuals and not to impose notions that may not fit. The requests surveyed in this report for the pluralisation of historical understandings as a matter of respect and for respect for the practices and choices of religious pupils both refer to legitimate – but not to the same – requests.

Minority claims for accommodation are not uniform. As a consequence of increasing demographic differentiation, a diversity of claims requires communication and a democratic framework for the resolution of disagreements where these occur. The idea of community-oriented education in Britain has the potential to support the kind of exchange that is necessary to arrive at mutual understanding, compromise and respect.

A 'grand narrative' approach to the teaching of history (how the country became what it is) has to recognize that there are different ways of being British. It has to include a consideration of the historical roots of the diversity that is now an integral part of Britain – 'we are over here because you were over there'.

- *Countering the majoritarian backlash*: The two diversity challenges examined in this report have in common that they have triggered an often-furious response from right-wing quarters, presuming to speak for majority populations and complaining about special treatment allegedly afforded to minority groups. These responses invoke an experience of dispossession and identity loss. The mobilization of these sentiments needs to be challenged, but the concern for multicultural accommodation does not contradict or invalidate a serious concern for pressures faced by 'white working-class' Britons.

A commitment to equality and decency regarding requests from ethnic minority communities does not imply complacency vis-à-vis disadvantages faced by majority groups. Despite claims to the contrary, it is not evident that the consideration of minority demands for respect and equality at state schools disadvantages ethnic majority pupils. Moreover, aspirations towards social improvement through education are evident among minority and disadvantaged majority groups and point to a shared agenda.

While the collection of attainment and other school data by ethnicity and religious affiliation is essential to identify disadvantaged groups and introduce remedial action, sometimes the disadvantage will be shared by the white majority. Where disadvantage results from socio-economic factors it has to be remedied by focusing on how these are shared across ethnic groups.

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Appendix

Table 1: GCSE achievement - Percentage of pupils who achieved 5 or more A*-C grades (DfES 2009)

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Gender				
Boys	52.6	55.5	60.1	65.8
Girls	62.2	64.5	68.8	73.9
All pupils	57.3	59.9	64.4	69.8
Ethnicity				
White	57.6	60.1	64.4	69.6
White British	57.5	60.1	64.5	69.8
Irish	61.3	63.8	69.5	73.1
Traveller Of Irish Heritage	19.0	16.6	18.3	24.4
Gypsy / Romany	10.4	14.0	16.4	19.8
Any Other White Background	60.1	59.6	61.6	66.9
Mixed	56.1	58.4	63.7	69.7
White and Black Caribbean	47.3	49.5	56.2	63.3
White and Black African	56.8	58.2	64.3	70.2
White and Asian	68.9	70.1	72.6	77.0
Any Other Mixed Background	58.7	61.9	66.8	72.2
Asian	61.0	63.4	67.5	72.8
Indian	71.7	74.9	79.2	82.2
Pakistani	51.4	53.9	59.1	66.4
Bangladeshi	56.7	59.1	63.0	69.7
Any Other Asian Background	64.6	64.7	67.0	72.1
Black	48.1	53.5	58.9	67.0
Black Caribbean	44.9	50.1	55.4	63.2
Black African	51.0	56.7	61.6	70.0
Any Other Black Background	47.1	50.6	57.5	64.3
Chinese	80.0	83.9	84.9	87.5
Any Other Ethnic Group	56.3	57.9	61.4	68.0
Unclassified	52.1	53.1	58.6	67.2
All pupils	57.3	59.9	64.4	69.8

Figure 1: Percentage of pupils in maintained schools eligible for Free School Meals by ethnic group (DfES 2006, 16)
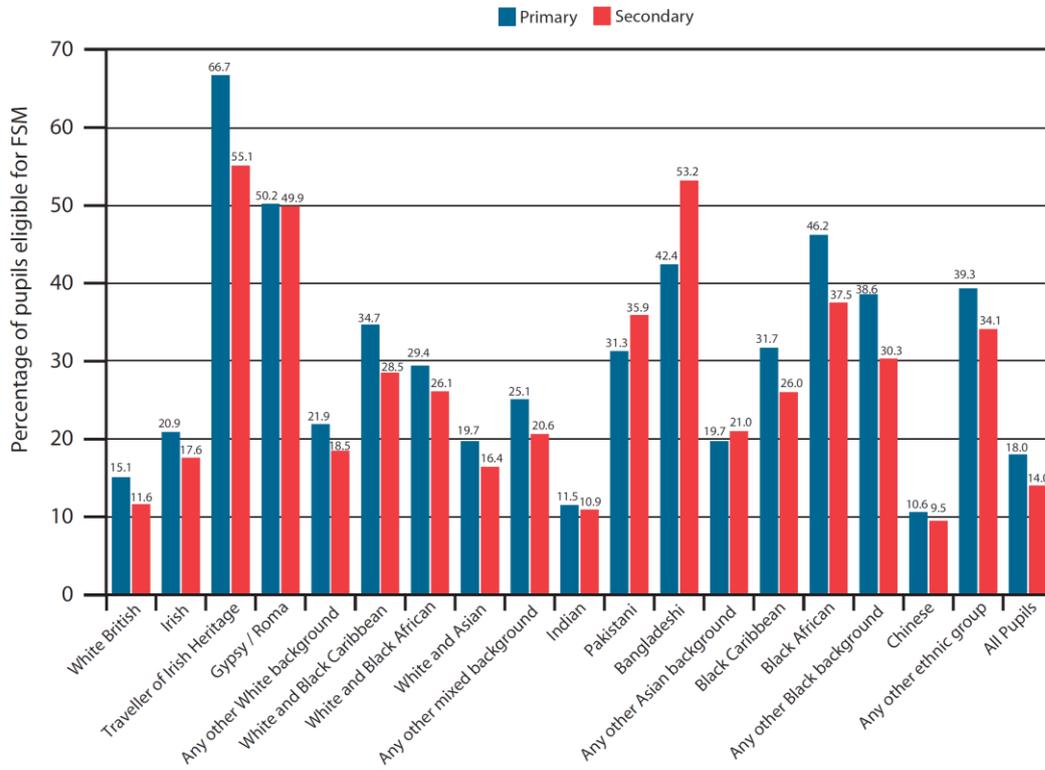
Table 2: Abolition 200 and Religious Guidance – Claims and Responses

Type of claim	Type of acceptance	Examples: Case 1	Arguments for granting	Arguments for withholding
		Examples: Case 2		
Allowing distinctive practices	Tolerance	Not applicable	Cultural self-confidence; achievement	Strain on school resources; divisiveness
		religious dress; facilities for prayer		
Ethos of behaviour and learning		Historical awareness; positive understanding of Black History and culture	Leads to attainment	Induction into mainstream and acculturation as a condition of educational success
		Moral signposts; cultural certainty through positive understanding of Islamic heritage		
Familiarisation with one's culture, heritage or religion	Tolerance or minimalist respect for ethnic or religious identities	Concern with the history of slavery or Black History for Black pupils or at Black majority schools	Forbearance, justified by minimal respect for minority identity choice	Fragmentation of school populations; 'culturalism'
		Religious instruction for Muslims within		
Learning of faith and views of others; normalization or fusion of horizons	Respect	'Black History as Everybody's History'	Revision of the mainstream; mutual and dialogical change	Uninteresting for majority pupils; need to focus on mainstream narratives and features
		Shared understanding of various religious identities		

Table 3: MCB and BMSD guidance notes

	Muslim Council of Britain (2007): Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools	British Muslims for Secular Democracy (2010): Advice for schools. Brief guidance for handling Muslim parental concern
Religious dress	In public boys should always be covered between the navel and knee and girls should be covered except for their hands and faces, a concept known as 'hijab'. (20)	It is perfectly legitimate for a school to refuse to compromise on the jilbab and the niqab, both for health and safety and integration reasons. (8)
Swimming	One practical solution in a school environment would be the installation of individual shower cubicles. … Given the choice between mixed or single-sex swimming, Muslim parents would always opt for a wholly single-sex environment for swimming. … If schools are unable to make arrangements for a single-sex environment for swimming, then Muslim pupils should have the option to be excused from swimming on religious grounds." (37-8)	Most often the concerns are that of modesty and this can be overcome by offering parents the option for their daughters to wear the modern Islamic swimming costume that has come onto the market recently for those Muslims who wish for their daughters to be covered. … Since some parents may be offended by mixed shower and bathroom facilities, every effort should be made to ensure that there such provisions remain single-sex to encourage Muslim girls to take up swimming. (8)
Arts	"Where there is goodwill and understanding on all sides such issues are almost always resolved. … The school avoids studying forms of music and drama that may raise religious or moral concerns for Muslim pupils and parents. (52-3)	Creativity in a person, be they child or adult is considered to be a divine blessing in Islam. … "Every child has a right to discover and explore such freedom of artistic expression and individual creativity. There may be some difficult situations – for example visits to art galleries where nudes are on display. There is no reason at all to capitulate to parents who may demand that their child be excused these on ground of morality. …Islam forbids all forms of immoral acts. So schools should not propagate such acts or actions. (9)
Sex Education	Sex and relationship education (SRE) is taught in single-sex groups, by a teacher of the same gender. … School takes account of Muslim sensitivities and sensibilities with respect to sexual morality and includes Islamic moral perspectives when teaching SRE to Muslim pupils. (49)	It is far better and more wholesome for children to receive sex education from a reliable source so that they can come to terms with their own bodies and understand about life and the transition from child to adulthood. Teachers can agree to separate boys and girls for these sessions but an opt out would not be in et (sic) best interests of the child. (11)

Friday Prayers	School makes arrangements for their Muslim pupils who wish to perform daily prayers in school. … School makes arrangements to allow Muslim children who wish to perform their Friday congregational prayer on school site, led by an older pupil, teacher or external visitor. (27)	We recommend that Muslim pupils be allowed to pray together if they express a collective wish to do during their regular lunch break so as not to interfere with the normal school programme. Since such prayers and sermon will be conducted in a school environment, they can be truncated to less than half a hour thereby not unduly affecting the school's routine. (12)
Festivals	Schools can recognise and celebrate the Eid festivals by highlighting the importance of the message of Eid through collective worship and assemblies. …Schools are advised to liaise with their local mosque or other Muslim organisations for more information. Schools should allow at least one day off for each of the Eid celebrations as obligatory religious observance. Eid holidays should be marked as authorised absences. (34-5)	The ten day leave policy as described in the question above would accommodate the demands of parents wishing to recognise Eid, the twice a year religious festivity. as a special Muslim holiday. While these two days for religious celebration present no problem for schools, there is persistent uncertainty in the British Muslim community as to when Eid is celebrated. Some Muslim groups will determine that Eid takes place a day earlier, while others declare that it is a day later. The best policy is for schools to seek relevant information from the families and to make sure that there is some recognition and celebration that is shared by all the other children. (12-13)

List of interviewees

No. 1, Teacher at the City Academy Bristol, interviewed on 1 March 2011

No. 2, Teacher at the City Academy Bristol, interviewed on 1 March 2011

No. 3, Leader of Bristol City Council's 'Abolition 200' team, interviewed on 7 March 2011

No. 4, Author of the Muslim Council Guidance Notes 'Towards Greater Understanding', interviewed on 6 April 2011

No 5, Director of British Muslims for Secular Democracy, interviewed on 30 March 2011

No. 6, Vice-chair, Bristol Legacy Commission, interviewed on 22 March 2011

No. 7, Member, Bristol City Council's 'Abolition 200' team, interviewed on 18 March 2011

No. 8, Member, Bristol Legacy Commission, interviewed on 8 March 2011

No. 9, Project coordinator, Bristol Legacy Commission, interviewed on 8 March 2011

No. 10, Chair, Building the Bridge Bristol, interviewed on 21 March 2011

No. 11, Teacher trainer, former Head of History at the City Academy, interviewed on 4 April 2011

No. 12, Manager of Shalom Salaam Media, interviewed on 9 March 2011

No. 13, Bristol City Council, Head of Cultural Affairs, interviewed on 20 April 2011

No. 14, Author of BMSD Guidance Notes, Director of Muslim Educational Centre of Oxford, interviewed on 16 June 2011

Discussion Group held on 7 July 2011. Participants:

No. 1, Community Development Worker, Bristol City Council

No. 2, Strategic Manager, The City Academy

No. 3, Learning Project Manager, The City Academy

No. 4, Community Engagement Manager. 'Abolition 200' Team Leader, Bristol City Council

No. 5, Community Engagement Officer, 'Abolition 200' team member, Bristol City Coucil

No. 6, Chair, Building the Bridge Bristol

Interview guides:

Part I - The contested commemoration of 'Abolition 200'

1. Contestations around 'Abolition 200': what was the issue at stake? What is the relevance of the bicentenary education?

2. What is your perspective on the national/local initiatives for commemorating the abolition? What do you think about the initiatives adopted at schools/your school/in relation to young people/pupils?

3. What are the tensions, problems that stand in the way of a productive consideration of black history/the history of the slave trade at schools?

4. What are in your view the values or principles that inform the teaching of black history (generally/as it is practiced in Bristol/at your school)?

5. Is this a matter of tolerance, of respect, recognition, equality?

6. What do you make of the argument that other people have put forward? (provide examples)

7. Given the variety of backgrounds/of post-immigration groups, how can we bring the different positions together? Are there any conflicts/misunderstandings between the accommodation of black history and issues of ethno-religious equality?

8. How do you think will the policies of the new government impact the teaching of black history?

Part II – 'Towards Greater Understanding'?

1. What was the reason you decided to write or to implement the guidance notes?

2. How did you experience their reception by schools/at your school?

3. What are the tensions, problems that stand in the way of their adoption? Do they persist/have they been resolved?

4. What are the values underpinning the guidance?

5. Is this a matter of tolerance, of respect, recognition, equality?

6. What do you make of the argument that other people have put forward? (provide examples)

7. Given the variety of backgrounds/of post-immigration groups, how can we bring the different positions together? Are there any conflicts/misunderstandings between the accommodation of black history and issues of ethno-religious equality?

8. How do you think will the policies of the new government impact on the approach that you advocate?