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## ***Editorial***

### **British Island Stories: History, Schools and Nationhood**

At the time of writing, the newspapers contain articles on a familiar theme. Prince Charles, supported by an array of well-known historians, has initiated what has become an annual intervention in the debate over the teaching of history. The Prince laments what he perceives to be a decline in historical narrative and a lack of emphasis placed in schools upon teaching the 'great landmarks' of 'the nation'. As somebody who has studied every conceivable aspect of this sort of debate for over ten years, these sentiments are very familiar. A whole host of Secretaries of State for Education, from Joseph and Baker, and more recently Blunkett and Clark, as well as the three Prime Ministers in power during that time – Thatcher, Major and Blair - have echoed similar sentiments. They raise all kinds of profoundly complex issues, from what actually constitutes 'the nation', as well as how we define 'landmarks', to fundamental questions about the purposes and aims of school history.

One wonders, here, about the history curriculum that Prince Charles and his colleagues are referring to when they mention 'school history' and 'the nation' in the same breath? To the history curriculum in Wales, with its emphasis upon 'curriculum Cymreig' and community understanding? Or to the one that exists in Northern Ireland, which emphasises mutual understanding and cross-curricular diversity? Or to the one in Scotland, which has as its core that very Scottish trait, civic awareness? In the words of a recent publication: 'Whose history is it anyway?' (see British Council/ESRC, 2003 for an outstanding discussion of this: [www.britishcouncil.org/belgium](http://www.britishcouncil.org/belgium)). The Prince of Wales needs to be reminded, of course, that by the turn of the century, school history began to reflect British re-configuration (a process which probably makes the future monarch feel rather uneasy), as each of the constituent parts of Britain developed 'devolved' history syllabuses which...are distinctive and reflective of particular cultural characteristics, political imperatives and historical legacies' (Phillips et al, 1999, p.154, original emphasis).

The collection of articles in this edition goes to the very heart of the school history/nationhood debate. The first eight were originally submitted to a major conference held at the King's Manor, University of York between 17-19 April, 2002. Ralph Samuel wrote the final paper in 1990 – it is as pertinent now as it was then. The conference was organised under the auspices of the project *British Island Stories: History, Identity and Nationhood* (BRISHIN), funded within the Economic & Social Research Council's (ESRC) programme *Devolution and Constitutional Change*\*. The reference within the project to 'island stories' is, of course, appropriated from the late Raphael Samuel who, prior to his death, dedicated much of his life to articulating ways in which historiography had placed an over-emphasis upon the centrality of English history and had marginalised the 'peripheral' historical narratives associated with the rest of the British Isles. One of Samuel's contributions was to emphasise the ways in which these alternative 'island stories' makes 'Englishness problematical and invites us to see it as one amongst a number of competing ethnicities' (Samuel, 1998, p.28). This type of historiography looks at the nation not in terms of one dominant culture but as a 'Union of Multiple Identities' (Brockliss & Eastwood, 1997).

As the ESRC's *Devolution and Constitutional Change Programme* recognises, British re-configuration will depend partly upon the influence of 'past loyalties', but much of this 're-imagining' of the nation will also ultimately depend upon the perceptions and attitudes of young people. A debate in the House of Lords (*Hansard*: 27 March, 2000) on the portrayal of national identity within contemporary school history textbooks shows that the debate is complex. Lamentations about the demise of the first person plural 'we' in

school history textbooks have symbolised the imagined 'death' of English national identity. But they have also marked the re-configuration of 'other' British identities in a variety of ways and contexts. One writer refers to this as 'imagining the New Britain' (Alibhai-Brown, 2000).

### **Sites of history and national identity**

A key question for BRISHIN is: how is British national identity being reconfigured through history, or how is history used as a resource (how is it operationalised?) in pursuit of national identities? Based upon the above, BRISHIN has selected three 'sites' of historical representation for the focus of the research:

#### **Site 1: Historiography**

The project sets out to analyse the changing nature of British historiography in the late twentieth century. It pays particular attention to the orientations within some of the major works in the (so-called) 'new' British historiography associated with historians such as Colley (1992), Davies (1999) and others. The project analyses the ways in which concepts such as 'British' and 'Britain' have been represented, historically, in these texts and how the relationship between England and the other parts of the British Isles has been portrayed. Thus, in Kearney (1989) the emphasis is upon four-nation distinctiveness; similarly, Brockliss & Eastwood (1997) stress multiple identities within the Union. On the other hand, Davies (1996) and Samuel (1998), from different ideological perspectives, emphasise the changing nature of the centre-periphery relationship, while Robbins (1998) explores the connection between changing institutional structures and nation-building. By theorising about the distinctive ways in which the major works within the so-called 'new' British historiography have conceptualised Britishness and the nation state, BRISHIN builds on earlier work (Grant & Stringer, 1995).

#### **Site 2: School history and the politics of the school history textbook**

My own *History Teaching, Nationhood and the State* (1998) demonstrated the ways in which nationhood was contested within school history. Using a combination of documentary and text analysis, as well as 'elite' interviews with key personnel such as former Secretaries of State for Education, civil servants and policy makers, the book analysed the politics of the 'great debate' over the teaching of history in schools in England. As my own 'sociology of history' centred upon the debate in England, the BRISHIN project develops elements of this thesis and applies it to the rest of Britain, for although the history curriculum in England has been described using these techniques, the rest of Britain has not been given such systematic and detailed analysis. The project is also undertaking a systematic analysis of textbooks produced since the inception of the National Curriculum to examine the ways in which 'Britain' and 'Britishness' are being represented.

#### **Site 3: The 'great history debate' & the media**

*Nelson airbrushed out of history* claimed a report in the *Daily Telegraph* describing the House of Lords debate on history textbooks on 27 March, 2000 mentioned earlier. On 17 April, the *Daily Mail* claimed the same thing under the title *You're history!* Apparently, the 'great heroes' of the British (read English) past had been dropped from history syllabuses. These are examples of how 'the cultural politics of the textbook' (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991) and the 'deixis of homeland making' (Billig, 1995) combined in the 'great history debate' via discourse in the press. Heroes from the past have been routinely invoked in the media as a means of locating and positioning present national relationships around the binary opposition of 'us' and 'them'. BRISHIN analyses the debate over school history, Britishness and identity in the press to explore ways in which

images of British history have been represented and therefore to consider their implications for national identity.

### **Past/Now: theorising history and national identity**

A major aim of BRISHIN, therefore, is to theorise, like Furedi (1992) about the relationship between history, the present – and the future. During the lifetime of the project, we want to analyse a full range of sites of historical representation to see how the past is used discursively to produce visions of national identity, to see how these interpretations differ within and across these sites and how they may be changing in response to contemporary events and issues. Using Fowler 's (1992) useful phrase, we conceptualise this process as 'past/now'.

At the heart of the BRISHIN project is a commitment to multi-disciplinarity. We are not concerned with history *per se* but as I have hinted, how history is utilised in contemporary debates about national forms in Britain. Thus, the first major conference organised by the Project at York last year attracted a wide range of scholars not only from history and education but also archaeology, heritage, literature, sociology and cultural studies. One of the main intentions of the York BRISHIN conference was to encourage collaborative theorising of the relationship between history and contemporary forms of national identity in Britain between educationalists and other academics from throughout the British Isles. The range of papers (over 100) on offer reflected not only the depth of interest in the relationship between history and national identity, but also its complexity.

A major book arising from the conference will be published shortly by Palgrave entitled *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*. The book is extensive, containing 30 chapters covering historiography, heritage and school history and with a foreword by Norman Davies. However, not all the papers offered at the conference could be included and so I am extremely grateful to Jon Nichol and the rest of the editorial board of the IJHTR for encouraging me to publish some of these papers here, all of which relate in some way to the relationship between school history and national identity. They are all concerned with what I have called 'border-crossing' in one form or another: whether theoretical, conceptual or territorial (see Phillips, 2002, Chapter 12 for a further discussion of this sort of 'border' approach).

Thus, Low-Beer problematizes the school history/nationhood relationship by raising issues about the difficulties and challenges involved in attempting to make any history curriculum 'national'. Significantly, she draws upon British but also European examples to do so. Cullingford places the school history debate within the wider context of discussions over nationalism. Drawing upon his previous scholarly work on the subject, Cullingford explores the roots of nationalism and prejudice from a philosophical perspective.

Barton, McCully and Conway report upon empirical findings of students' perceptions of identity and national history in Northern Ireland, while Wood's article stresses the importance of historical knowledge in shaping attitudes to national identity in Scotland. Morgan and Phillips explore the challenges facing the history curriculum in Wales, particularly focusing upon the relationship between Welsh history and British history.

Finally, four articles relate to the issue of 'race' and history. Sherwood argues passionately that racism in Britain today is rooted in history by examining the ways in which Britishness was constructed around white visions of identity, rooted in imperial attitudes and assumptions. Continuing the imperial theme, Yeandle gives us a fascinating insight into the representations of empire contained in elementary school history education and textbooks and assesses the impact this was intended to have had

on working class configurations of English national identity. Finally, contemplating the future, Wrenn explores some of the contradictions inherent in being labelled 'black' and 'British' by relating these tensions to the teaching of citizenship within the history curriculum now and in the future. Samuel, in his 1990 paper, addresses a number of seminal issues that relate to individual and national identity and the form and shape of a History National Curriculum that reflects our individual relationships, no matter our ethnic origins, to a collective past.

These articles, as well as Prince Charles' recent pronouncements, are a timely reminder that what I have called elsewhere 'the battle' for school history is pregnant with ideology and hegemony (Phillips, 1992). After all, the debate over school history has not been about 'the past but the present; its dynamism stemmed from the tension between contrasting discourses on the nature, aims and purposes of history teaching, linked to correspondingly different conceptions of nationhood, culture and identity. One vision of history and history teaching envisages certainty, closure and stricture; the other uncertainty, openness and fluidity' (Phillips, 1998: 129). For history teachers facing the challenges of meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse, varied and dynamic school populace, Prince Charles' annual lamentations cut little ice. It is, after all, like Major's discredited 'back to basics' crusade of the early 1990s, a call for what Stephen Ball (1993) has brilliantly coined 'the curriculum of the dead'. This is a view of education based upon an outmoded perception of what schools in Britain used to be like ('in times gone by') rather than what they are actually like in contemporary Britain at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is these realities with which history teachers in real schools and real classrooms have to wrestle.

\* The views expressed in these articles (including those in the editorial) articulate the views of the individual authors and not that of the Economic & Social Research Council.

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# ***School History, National History and the Issue of National Identity***

**Ann Low-Beer, University of Birmingham, Westhill, Birmingham**

**Abstract** *National history has an important place in school history in all countries because it is perceived as contributing to a sense of national identity. Many other things help to create a sense of identity, but if this is over emphasised school history easily becomes a matter of myth and nationalistic propaganda.*

**Keywords** School history, National history, National identity

## **Introduction**

I want to suggest that the three conceptions in the title of this article do not fit as neatly together as is often assumed. The teaching of national history in schools is a recurrent topic of academic and public discussion (Phillips, 1998). It is a sensitive issue, as the media long ago discovered, but is this because it is so often conflated with the issue of national identity? Lurid headlines in newspapers readily suggest that the national identity has altered because there has been some change in the national history selected for teaching in schools. Can these concerns be separated, and should they be distinguished, especially in relation to school history?

In recent decades a vast literature has developed on the issues of nationalism and national identities. It has also become clear that within societies there are different sorts of history: academic history, folk history, social memory, heritage history, and perhaps to these might be added identity history, and media history, i.e. popular dramatised fictions in various media and especially in film and television (Jenkins, 1991). Of course they overlap, but the genres can be recognised, and all may contribute to a sense of national identity, some more than others.

Like these others, *school history* is to some extent a distinct form, marked for instance by much more direct government control and influence, through both the curriculum and examinations. But it is also under other pressures: there is very little time for history in the English school system, which severely limits what can be done, and means that it is usually a highly selected version of the British national story which can be covered in school. There is competition from other subjects for space in the curriculum, many of which at the moment are seen as more immediately relevant and useful. Another pressure is that the pupils are young and the study of the subject compulsory, so that considerable pedagogical skills are required which in turn shape the form of the history in schools – it is not presented in the same ways as the history of historians, nor even in the forms of folk history or heritage history.

## **School history and the ‘National Story’**

School history and the teaching of national history, at least a version of ‘the national story’, have been inextricably entwined since the subject first came into the British school curriculum for all pupils in the late nineteenth century at the same time as basic elementary education became universal, and the franchise for voting was enlarged (Marsden, 1995). This has been the case not only in Britain but also in other European countries, and it is national history which is promoted in newly independent countries everywhere (Berghahn & Schissler, 1987). It is usually the case that the teaching of national history is at the centre of school history courses.

It is useful to see the British experience in a wider context. For almost 50 years the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 1986) has taken a particular interest in the

teaching of history across the continent, sponsoring many conferences and seminars for teachers. International research carried out for the Council from the late 1950s showed that national history predominated in school courses everywhere. More important but less obvious, was the fact that a national perspective influenced the choice of topics in European and world history courses too: for instance, 'the geographical discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a European phenomenon but each country gave disproportionate prominence to its own explorers' (ibid.) Projecting our current national perspectives backwards particularly distorted the teaching of medieval history, and made religious history partisan; for example, the very existence of Orthodox Christianity was totally ignored in Western school texts. Courses on European history, where they existed, were usually seen from a markedly national or regional perspective. When aspects of world history appeared in school courses they paradoxically had a Eurocentric perspective and were rarely studied in their own terms. Aspects of Chinese, Indian or African history came into courses because of European colonial or national connections, very rarely for any other reason.

And, of course, this continues: most school history is from 'our' perspective. At a recent international seminar on the teaching of the peace settlements at the end of World War 1 that I attended it became clear that the focus of teaching, and the selection of significant treaties, was filtered in each country through a national perspective. The teachers present had not been clearly aware of this until the delegates compared approaches.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this position has not greatly changed: national history still predominates and influences the basic school history curriculum everywhere. This is the conclusion of research done across 12 Western European countries in the 1990s (Stradling, 1993) and of recent reports from Council of Europe meetings covering a much wider range of countries. This does not mean that there has been no change over the last fifty years. For a time, in the 1970s, there was less emphasis on national history and there were experiments with wider world history courses, and attempts at interdisciplinary courses. By the mid-1980s however, there was a reaction against this and a reassertion of the need for national history in schools. This change began before the advent of the National Curriculum in England and Wales, and it has continued. There have been curriculum reforms in a number of Western countries, all strengthening the amount, and the coherence, of the national history taught. In other parts of Europe the fall of communism led to a re-discovery and re-assertion of national history in schools in those countries where the national perspective had been suppressed under the previous regime.

Nonetheless, courses in national history have changed in the period between the 1950s and the 1990s, although 'the national story' has remained dominant. Today the story is no longer mainly political, much more social and economic history is included, and more about the lives of all groups in society. The national history taught in schools is more selective, less authoritarian and monolithic than it used to be, partly because of changes in methods of teaching too. British schools in particular have developed source-based rather than textbook-based learning, intended to get pupils to think about the evidence for history, and to look at it from different perspectives. The overall structure of school history courses in Europe is chronological, with older pupils studying modern history, and whilst twentieth century history is less nation-centred and more world-centred it is frequently only the most powerful nations which are studied.

The conceptual complexities inherent in the idea of a collective national history are recognised and reflected in many school curricula in a number of ways. In the British Isles, as in Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and Spain, for instance, there are different regional versions of the national story (Phillips *et al*, 1999). In the early twentieth century, the nation was viewed more monolithically. Unless they move around, however,

pupils may not be aware that there are different versions of the national history, seen from different perspectives.

The framework of national history in England makes a rather clear separation between 'national' history and 'foreign' history, a reflection perhaps of a continuous history and an insular geography. In many countries national history overlaps with a broader regional history, and this is so in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. In France with a strong tradition of national history, the school curriculum specifically introduces a broader comparative framework at several points. In a number of countries, pupils learn about the development of parliamentary democracy, or constitutional monarchy, or industrialisation, by reference to Britain, but British children are rarely given a comparative framework.

In many ways, school history is a kind of official history. In most countries the content of the curriculum is eventually decided by governments, and teachers are legally required to teach topics, which always include the national history, specified in greater or lesser detail. In democracies decisions are made in a context of relatively open debate, which makes the school version of the national story the one best known to the public – although television series now have perhaps greater impact. The version which appears in school textbooks is frequently criticised as inadequate or unworthy. It is hardly ever praised. Yet despite this, some version of the national history is a ubiquitous element of the school curriculum everywhere, and it is always limited by lack of time.

### **National identity and school history**

Why is national history so emphasised? To many the answer is obvious – it is ours and it must be handed on to the new generations. It is an essential aspect of 'our identity'. The teaching of national history in schools is usually linked, in statements by governments, with the hope that it will contribute to strengthening a sense of national identity. Dr. Nicholas Tate, for example, when Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Assessment Authority, was, for a long time in the 1990s, outspoken on the link between the teaching of history in schools and the strengthening of a national sense of identity. He attempted to stimulate public discussion because 'A society which is not passionate about its past is in danger of losing its identity' (*The Guardian* 27.7.99; see also Tate, 1996). Civic purpose and national identity have been an important reason for the inclusion of history in the school curriculum from its inception.

On the other hand, as the issues surrounding the ideas of collective identity, or identities, have of late been increasingly debated, some historians have been issuing warnings. Most recently, and most trenchantly, this issue has been taken up by Eric Hobsbawm in several essays, particularly in one entitled: '*Identity History is not enough*' (Hobsbawm, 1997, p.357). Here he warns that:

all human beings, collectivities and institutions need a past, but it is only occasionally the past uncovered by historical research. The standard example of an identity culture which anchors itself to the past by means of myths dressed up as history is nationalism.

School history is singled out as one of the places where myth most easily takes over from history:

Why do all regimes make their young study some history at school? Not to understand their society and how it changes, but to approve of it, to be proud of it, or to become good citizens of the USA, or Spain or Honduras or Iraq. And the same is true of causes and movements. History as inspiration and ideology has a built-in tendency to become self-justifying myth (ibid.).

There is now a growing literature on conceptions of national identity, and general agreement that it is made of many ingredients of which past experience, even history, is only one: religion, language, symbolic rituals and monuments, celebratory days and sacred places are others. Today the influence of sport and film on television are considerable, and everything from familiar architectural forms to food and drink, may contribute to a changing national culture. It is also widely accepted that the national past, as an element in the sense of identity, is usually viewed, as Smith (1995, p.53) puts it, in 'mythic' terms, which:

contain kernels of historical fact, around which there grow up accretions of exaggeration, idealisation, distortion and allegory ... stories told, and widely believed, about the heroic past, which serve some collective need in the present and future.

These versions of the national past are:

...characteristic of most cultural communities in all ages, whereas scholarly, dispassionate history is a minority phenomenon peculiar to certain societies and civilizations (ibid.).

This suggests that the use of 'the past' to construct national identity is usually not historical. Lowenthal (1997), who has written extensively on the view of the past as heritage, suggests that it should be distinguished from history, though the two are often confused, because:

heritage is not history at all: while it borrows from and enlivens historical study, heritage is not an inquiry into the past but a celebration of it, not an effort to know what actually happened but a profession of faith (p.x).

Heritage begins to sound like a homely version of the mythic past essential to a sense of identity. And indeed this is one of his conclusions, especially in relation to school history where 'civic allegiance is still the main aim.' These distinctions are not clear-cut, but the purposes of history and heritage are different and Lowenthal concludes that much of school history is more heritage than (pp.110-111).

### **The school situation**

There has always been pressure on schools, especially by governments, but also more widely from public opinion, to see that the teaching of history contributes to the teaching of social and moral values of various kinds at different times. But in the current climate teaching history for other purposes has become perhaps the main way in which some teaching of the subject in school can be justified at all. The current pages of *Teaching History* are full of discussion of this issue, not least because the time for history is very tight. The influence of the heritage industry reaches into schools, the teaching of civics has now been introduced and history must justify itself by being socially 'useful'. In a recent issue, on the theme of *Citizens and Communities* the editor begins by saying: 'The idea that the discipline of history might be used in order to serve some other moral, social or simply curricular agenda has always made us jumpy.' She points out that the issue was debated ten years ago, and that the opinions of teachers are divided. This is reflected in recent issues in 1999 on the theme of *History, Identity and Citizenship* and in 2001 in some very thoughtful articles on experience of *Teaching about the Holocaust*. Some teachers show how in classrooms, moral and other issues inevitably come up in discussion. Others take a stand – insisting that in the end the discipline of history must have primacy.

There is little empirical evidence as to how far the history learnt in schools does actually affect a sense of national identity. A research report (Brindle, 1997) in *History Today* suggested that the national story, as conveyed in schools, has always been problematic. Patrick Brindle (1996) shows that even in the early twentieth century the traditional national story was criticised, and that what was conveyed in the classroom by inexperienced teachers might be different from what was in either the curriculum outline or the textbooks. In Scotland several articles have shown that there has been very little teaching of Scottish history in schools. Yet, despite this, a sense of Scottish national and cultural identity has grown apace.

It seems likely that if the main purpose of school history is to contribute to a sense of national identity then it will readily become not a historical, but a semi-mythic or heritage version of the past. This may be what tends to happen with younger pupils. But the teachers of older secondary school pupils were trained in history by the same university historians who are critical of school history. These teachers have repeatedly expressed considerable reservations about developing a sense of national identity in pupils as the prime aim of school history teaching. This is particularly true for older pupils studying for A Level examinations, but what about pupils doing GCSE? Or those who drop the subject before this, at 14?

### **Conclusion**

Perhaps the time has come to rescue school history from the conception that it is primarily about fostering a sense of national identity, or teaching civics, or handing on a heritage. Much of this purpose is now achieved outside school through heritage history in its many different forms. Lowenthal (1997) points out that since about 1980 much that was once thought of as history or tradition has now been absorbed into the growing activities of the heritage industry.

There are other school subjects which may contribute to a sense of national identity, literature, music, geography – but encouraging a sense of national identity is not the main reason for teaching them. It is rather to gain some understanding of these forms of knowledge and to enlarge cultural horizons. Government control of school history makes it especially vulnerable to being turned into a form of nationalistic propaganda. History in its many guises is most easily perverted in schools. The study of ‘national’ history in schools, is a universal practice but can best be defended as an introduction to the ‘history’ of the society in which pupils live and the skills through which historical understanding is achieved. A sense of identity, either personal or national, is something which in the end, pupils will forge for themselves, and it is fashioned from many sources.

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# ***Nationalism and the Origins of Prejudice***

**Cedric Cullingford, University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom**

**Abstract** *Analysis of the origins of events in mainstream historical writing before 1945 focused upon the behaviours of the political elite and the factors that influenced them. Until the post second war development of 'history from below', the mass mentalité was a relatively unexplored world. Yet Nationalism rooted in prejudice can only be understood when studied from the perspective of the myriads who give the modern national state its identity. Central to political consciousness is prejudice – the driving forces that determine both the individual and collective behaviours of citizens. Below we examine the nature of prejudice and its origins in early childhood and schooling – an analysis that informs the nature and function of Citizenship and History education.*

**Keywords** Child development, Nationalism, Nazism, Personal identity, Prejudice

## **Introduction**

### **Prejudice**

- a] preconceived judgment or opinion; especially a biased and unfavourable one informed without sufficient reason or knowledge
  - b] an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, group or race.
- (Longman, 1984)

At the beginning of one of Berthold Brecht's plays, a character confronts the audience. "Alexander conquered the East... by himself? Was no-one with him? Hannibal crossed the Alps. What about the soldiers, let alone the horses and the elephants?" (Brecht, 1963). As Brecht intimates, history tends to be understood in terms of individuals – 'great men or stark and explicit cultural movements'. Brecht challenges us to realise that all history is actually made up of many individuals and of shared beliefs and understandings by individuals whose conduct and character is, in turn, shaped by events. Whilst there is a growing recognition of the part played by seemingly insignificant people, like the famous butterfly so responsible for unforeseen cataclysms in chaos theory, there is less understanding of why certain people carry out certain actions at any particular time.

Whilst we know, for example, a lot about the manifestations of nationalism - the waving of flags, the singing of the anthems, the banal definitions of statehood through sport - the reasons for their attraction and their use are less explicit. Nationalism can be seen as either a good or bad thing, not depending just on your point of view but whether it is used passively or aggressively. Nationalism can give rise to cultural movements, for example national schools of music. Conversely, it can also support and legitimize the most aggressive, genocidal forms of tribal prejudice.

Prejudice, too, whilst it is associated with dangerous antipathies, affects all and can be a necessary mark of character. Prejudices, however defined, can be for as well as against. They include the refinement of cultivated taste as well as the assertions of group loyalty that can end in violence at all levels of society and between communities. Distinctions against others, as defined by Bourdieu (1984), whatever their origins, are a necessary consequence of being a social human being. The question is how and why a developed preference for e.g. certain forms of art or literature can turn into the supercilious dismissal of others' cultural preferences, or at the extreme, into the hatred of different cultural values. If prejudice in one form or another is so deep-seated, so inevitable, then it must have its origins in the acculturation of our early years, not only in the cultural milieu of upbringing and education, but in the formation of attitudes. The

reasons for individuals in the United Kingdom defining themselves as members of national communities, be they British, English, Irish or Scots, lie not only in historical movements but also in the formation of the individual's character and identity. How the individual defines him or herself has consequences for action and is the basis of all generalisable movements and leads to behaviours that can be placed on the prejudicial-empirical spectrum.

### **Learning from Nazi Germany**

Nowhere is prejudice linked to personal identity clearer than in the rabid and exclusive forms of nationalisation. A most telling example of this remains Nazi Germany. Historians increasingly recognise that any full explanation of Nazism must take into account the attitudes and behaviours of the countless individuals involved. How they were affected by mass fervour and the very way in which the individual sense was subsumed or cajoled into a collective whole, lies at the heart of understanding the Nazi phenomenon. Individual accounts, like that of Haffner (2002), of the many who tried to resist what appeared to them as a massive atavistic nationalism (Hamerow, 1997), are perhaps the only valid explanations of what happened. In the historic sense, it is important to try to understand the motivations for the actions of the ordinary individuals who bolstered and legitimated what historians now conceive as a corrupt and homicidal regime (Goldhagen, 1996).

For modern society it is also important that history teaches why citizens act in that way in order to inform our own actions. Why did so many Germans so easily relish the opportunity Nazism afforded from 1933 to unleash their worst instincts? Why did so many other Germans instinctively and consciously recoil from what was happening? Why did some keep their views quiet while others asserted their opposition? These are the questions to address. The reason that an individual's actions and reactions have not been closely examined is partly because there are so many other ways of explaining events, historic or otherwise. Structuralist explanations are rooted in the analysis of social, economic, philosophical and cultural movements that provide the context in which events develop, rather than an intentionalist analysis that engages with the complex realities of personal motivation.

Thus we have a whole series of approaches to the rise and power of Nazism in Germany that are structuralist in nature. There are those which simply ascribe all the events to the German character (Vansittart, 1941). There are many examples of the incipient prejudices against the 'Volk' both before and after the Second World War. The 'German' character was firmly established in children's fiction - as an antidote to 'English' virtues - before the end of the nineteenth century (Cullingford, 1996). Even from within, Zuckmayer's *Captain of Köpenick* (1930) seemed to exemplify a Germanic love for order, obedience and uniforms. The structural interpretation that all Germans were irredeemably fascist still underlay and influenced what purported to be a rational debate well into the 1950s (Mandar, 1974).

More subtle structuralist explanations for Nazism are put forward in terms of philosophical movements. When Kant's categorical imperative of the ideal individual was turned by Herder into the ideal state, some see the consequences for Nazism, from Nietzsche and Wagner onwards, as inevitable. (Kedourie, 1993). Then there are the purely political explanations, from the chance of Wilhelm, with all his flaws, becoming Kaiser through the *Scramble for Africa* and the arms race to the Treaty of Versailles, with its deliberate infliction of humiliation upon the German nation. All these interpretations have been presented as plausible and different approaches to interpreting Nazism, but they leave out some of the psychological impulses that drove the movement on.



The Holocaust highlights the intentionalist argument: that the autonomous individual is responsible through his or her actions for the course of history. Curiosity about the behaviour and role of individual Germans in the Holocaust was given a great impetus by the trial of Adolf Eichmann. This was no longer just an insight into one person, or even a tribe, but a question, as Arendt (1977) made clear, for all of humanity. What makes a seemingly normal human being, a player of Mozart string quartets, carry out such atrocious acts? Arendt's answer, that people are essentially obedient, is a truth often demonstrated but it is incomplete.

Such obedience, however deeply ingrained, depends upon circumstances and particular motivations. In contrast to Nazi actions, for some years a great deal of attention has been paid to the allied bombing of Dresden in 1945. Since Kurt Vonnegut's novel (1973) all kinds of questions have been asked about why the British and Americans killed so many civilians in a city that was never a manufacturing base. Whilst the answers range from excuses, through explanations, to blame and facetiousness (Sir Anthony Eden said 'the old cities burn more easily'), one of the reasons lies in the interplay between personal and group motivation and strategy. An explanation of individuals acting collectively to undertake actions like the Dresden raid that are individually indefensible might run thus:

After the establishment of the Royal Air Force at the end of the First World War, there was an argument that the best use of air power would be in support of troops (Army Air Corps) or ships (Fleet Air Army). This would have vitiated the need for a separate air force. Accordingly, the Air Marshalls would have lost their newly acquired status and role. They, therefore, argued in order to preserve their independence. They put forward the idea that there had to be a separate wing of the armed forces because it had a separate strategic role. They described this as bombing, as the only way in which wars would be fought in the future. They dismissed as naive and old-fashioned the notion that war would be fought in any other way than through the might of air power. So, we can argue, that to save their jobs they found a strategic reason. This led to the placing of the bulk of resources for the air force into Bomber command and, in due course, led to now well-known consequences, which included the bombing of Dresden.

### **The origins of prejudice in young people**

Instincts include self-preservation. There are occasions in history when agents do anything to preserve their position, including destroying an institution, since personal status is the overriding imperative. The social instincts of individuals are atavistic but are argued out rationally. Obedience to an imposed cause is not the same as embracing it, as the collapse of the East German regime in 1989 demonstrated. Citizens are responsible for their own conduct; it is the complexity of the factors that influence them, including their early childhood and education that inform whether actions are rational or prejudiced. Thus it is impossible to support assertions of generalised aggression or dismissals of other people as irredeemable. The way in which the individual and society mix is far more complex and the interaction between them subtle. Historians cannot simply ascribe events to individuals alone or to the determinism of historical explanations grounded in cultural, philosophical, economic, social or political interpretations.

Prejudice in informing actions is clearly one of the most powerful forces in shaping human actions. Whatever the significance of power struggles over issues such as food, land and other resources, however deep in the collective memory are the origins of tribalism, it is the power of *distinction*, of the creating of a group identity based equally upon *inclusion* and *exclusion* that is the theme that dominates inter-communal relations in the centuries before the rise of nation states and nationalism. As recent history has

reminded us, it still remains as a dominant force, however clothed and packaged, in small groups or large. Prejudice is inevitably a dominant 'driver' of individual and collective actions. It can be both weak and harmless and strong and dangerous. The question remains, why do people behave so differently in similar conditions? Where do the particular and diametrically different senses of identity of those involved come from?

Many of the policies that people inflict on each other; policies affecting the law or security, policies of national or regional relationships and policies that have an impact on communities and individuals, are based on a fundamental conception – a 'misunderstanding' to empiricists, of the nature of being human. This is partly due to an ingrained mentalité in which there is no place for the rational examination and interpretation of evidence and partly due to empiricism's converse - the holding on to the familiar, to the mythical and the deification of ingrained values and beliefs. An empirical analysis of the roots of prejudice implanted in the young suggests that four fundamental characteristics shape and define their prejudicial experiences. Clearly, they overlap and there are a number of social boundaries and constraints which inform them all.

**The first fact** is that young people are innately intelligent. Developmental psychology has revealed the extent and nature of developing intelligences. Although the concept of infant and juvenile intelligence might seem obvious, the prescriptive adult world does not often seem to understand this truism. There was a powerful, generally understood myth in the mid twentieth century that young babies were severely limited in their intellectual as in their physical capacities. In intellectual development the environment and the social construction of knowledge is now seen as being paramount. Research into the development of young minds has indicated that the young mind can discriminate between categories and have a sophisticated understanding of circumstances. Theories of situated cognition have stressed the concept of knowledge as a social construct – context is all (Lave, 1988; Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Young children are, as it were, like highly intelligent strangers from an alien planet. They scrutinise all they see closely and fastidiously and seek the stimulation of comprehension. Just after birth babies demonstrate the ability to recognise a face for what it is and respond to it within seventeen seconds. In just a few weeks, as shown in some ingenious experiments, they reveal their ability to count (see examples in Cullingford, 1999a). The acquisition of language has long caused astonishment not only in the rapidity of the accumulation of vocabulary but the contextual way in which it is acquired. This sharp and curious scrutiny is pressed firmly on their experience. This intense observation is focussed particularly upon human beings. One of the most difficult and sophisticated signs of discrimination is social intercourse in the understanding of the distinction between truth and falsehood.

Even very young children understand the concept of point of view. Whilst hard to detect before the age of three, the realisation that a person might be lying or might sincerely believe in an idea that someone else dismisses as false is already well-established. Babies demonstrate emotional empathy; they can detect in a disinterested way the needs of other people (Dunn 1988). Far from being manifestations of the egotistical sublime, they realise the otherness of other human beings. They construct themselves against their understanding of other people (Harré, 1998). In fact, they have all the attributes of people studying society and the way in which people act. If they understand the concept of the point of view and the attractions of mendacity, it follows that they also have a realisation of prejudice. The most powerful element in this deep intelligence is social.

This natural capacity for insight into the world that surrounds them is largely ignored. It remains for the most part dependent upon the individual to realise their potential.

**The second significant element** in early childhood is the importance of relationships. These depend not just on emotional warmth but on the sharing of intellectual observations. The relationships that young people crave are ones which, through language, are both a personal and particular dialogue and a mutual sharing of observations about the environment, whether this is physical or human through the way in which it is described. A relationship can be purely personal and directed: 'Don't do that!' That is the closed dialogue of confrontation or absorption. What children crave is the shared language of discussion, of disagreement, of expression: 'What do you think of that?'

When young people are deprived of intellectual relationships, all kinds of consequences follow. They muddle up the distinction between people's roles and personalities. They feel psychologically excluded. Their ontological insecurity is unassuaged. The forming of criminal tendencies and the formation of groups have their origins here. (Cullingford, 1999b). We notice in the formation of particular social groupings the role of defence mechanisms, such as the protection of the peer group. Maturation in the early years establishes traits that make attractive the culture of anti-social gangs outside the constraints and conventions of adult society. One of the characteristics of the forming of relationships is that they need to be more than purely emotional. The role and nature of language used is important. Relationships need to share an intelligent and rational discourse from the perspective of the agents involved.

Add the linguistic dimension to the native capacities of young people and you see the **third major factor**. The scrutiny of the world by young children is at once dispassionate and judgemental. They learn to make sense of the world by holding on to what to them is a 'neutral' position. From that perspective they then perceive the extremes and the contrasts. Binary opposites become a way of forming understanding. It is clear that the contrasts between the rich and poor, as well as between right and wrong, make a strong impact on the young.

We must remember that the world that adults present to children is not confined to the possible narrowness of their personal and family lives and to their personal witnessing of community life in their schools and neighbourhoods with its potential threats and even memorable events. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the media constantly invade, pervade and occupy the consciousness and experience of children. Television, in particular, confronts them with its images of different people and different countries. Television creates a fantasy world that children can share – a fantasy world that contrasts the lifestyles and circumstances of its inhabitants with the mundane world of the child.

Reactions to the alternative worlds of the media, with their huge disparities of wealth and contrast of values, virtues, morals, ethics and beliefs, have a major impact. But there are different ways of responding to these influences. Neutrality might be central but one can see the potential of great concern that can trigger off extremes of anger, concern and action. As such, the media provide the young with the raw material for political awareness and involvement, rooted in a general awareness and belief in the unjustness of unfairness. Conversely, such unfairness is often viewed with indifference or with acceptance. A stark binary choice is between angry involvement or condoning indifference: we know that either extreme is dangerous and that the middle way is both complex and problematic.

In their actions, young children can maintain their neutrality, even if this leads to a sense of being disenfranchised. Their picture of the world in all its variety can be extremely clear. This variety includes images of the poor, in Ethiopia or another part of Africa and images of the rich and successful. The personal assertion through the endorsement of brand names is just one way of avoiding being branded with the unsuccessful. Into this

absorption of the contrasts of the world, creeps the realisation of their own place in it. Neutrality means a suspicion of anything more extreme than the most ordinary and the most widely shared. The clever and the demanding, the cultivated and the gifted can be as suspect as those who drop out. The middle way can become a strong attraction and a disabling one.

Given the intelligence, the observation and the thirst for relationships in young people it is no surprise that the **fourth significant experience** is their ontological insecurity. Childhood can be traumatic. Vulnerable both through their capacities and through their intense scrutiny of their surroundings, they are busy trying to make sense of it all without much help. This means that the inadvertent comment or the overheard remark can leave a deep impact. Few people set out to traumatise children and yet many of the subsequent difficulties of adulthood, the psychiatric breakdowns, the irrational fears and the inexplicable pains are all embedded in childhood. The role of the psychiatrist is nearly always to explore the traumas of childhood.

As a consequence of all this, there are certain experiences that all young children most fear and which will reverberate with recognition in anyone who can remember their own or has witnessed others', schooling. The first fear is the sense of being wrong-footed, of having to guess what is expected of you, without knowing what it is. Rules and assumptions that other people share, from the triviality of knowing how to do something that is supposed to be easy to the arcane knowledge of where one is supposed to be, are signs of the need to anticipate, to demonstrate one's uncertain instinct. The most common form is the guessing of what the teacher wants the pupil to say; it is the assumption that every question is closed and that there is only one right answer.

Guessing wrongly or unconventionally can lead to feelings of humiliation, which is the second great fear in childhood. The exposure of being silly or ugly or simply of being less capable than someone else is only lightly handled by those with far more self-confidence than that available to young children. Commensurate assertions of power and ability are a direct consequence of the moments of humiliation and embarrassment.

The third fear in childhood is that of unfairness. The realisation that it is not always the deserving that succeed and that hard work is not matched to commensurate rewards. The sense of being 'picked on' unfairly by teachers or by other children is of great significance.

These fears are well-known and continue into adult life. The depth of their experience varies greatly, even if universally shared, and marks out the difference between those who will adapt to and those who will react against, circumstances. The grounds for anomie - social alienation grounded in prejudice - are clearly laid here. As such, anomie is then the driving force for anti-social behaviour in both individual or group form. The point has already been made that many of the great failures of our time can be traced to the misunderstanding of the nature of early childhood. When one considers those three items of guessing, humiliation and unfairness, one could not find a better example of such misunderstanding than the schooling system. The school curriculum is grounded in an historically determined set of expectations, beliefs, cultural norms and patterns of behaviour that contrast sharply to youth culture as developed by and projected through the media. The school rules with their implied distinctions and explicit hierarchies and the potential for exposure are all potentially destabilizing for the alienated. Schooling is ritualized and bureaucratized in a form that humiliates and alienates those who do not succeed in a rule bound world fenced in by an examination system, constant testing and published league tables - the bureaucraticisation of humiliation.

## **The institutionalization of prejudice: home, school and the media**

The resilience of the human spirit must be invoked, as it seems as if all the institutionalising of prejudice were being deliberately created. The vulnerability of the young in the formation of character and conduct is allied to the demonstration of social habits that expose individuals to all the temptations of prejudice in the narrowest and most self-assertive sense. The majority of those who survive do so against the odds and do so because there are enough values in relationships to resist the temptations of psychologically playing truant. The vulnerability and the influence of powerful peer group pressure or a shared social norm, like unthinking nationalism, cannot be underestimated. This vulnerability to exploitation is not a matter of innate aggression or of obedience but the escape from troubling realisations into false security.

There are particular moments in the patterns of young lives that reveal the vulnerability to the influence of traumas as ways of directing the interpretation of society. These run from the experience in the home through the experiences of the neighbourhood to the experiences of school. All are shadowed by other public sources of information, especially television. This section will be confined to a few brief illustrations of the children's points of view, based upon empirical evidence derived from my previous work with young people (Cullingford, 1999b).

Even the best regulated home is a potential battleground for attention and of rivalry. Siblings, are, of course, particularly exposed to all the tensions of marking out a space for themselves as well as adapting to circumstances. Much attention has been paid to the vulnerabilities of particular siblings, whether they are first or second born, as much as has been paid to only children but the real distinctions are not so crude. They depend on the interpretation of particular circumstances, on the application of that rough intelligence on the way in which others, particularly adults react. Thus, we can see a whole series of conflicts in the following account of everyday life at home:

At home, I get all the blame all the time really. My sister just gets to play with her dolls. Sometimes she gets cuddles and hugs from my mum and dad and I don't usually get them... maybe mummy and daddy think that I'm a bit too old to have cuggles (sic) and kisses and hugs. But I like having a nice cuddle sometimes....'cos it makes.... Sometimes when I have a nice cuddle it makes me feel loved and cared for - which I am, even though I sometimes think I'm not....

...and sometimes I don't like getting told off that much but sometimes I think I deserve it so I don't always feel sorry for myself. Sometimes I do but not all the time. I'm gonna have one child because if you have two, then they might start arguing like me and Sarah do. (Girl, aged eight)

At one level, this seeking of a natural place is an emotional cry for attention. Wanting to revert to all the physical warmth she used to receive and which have been usurped by her sister, gives her not only a feeling of deprivation but also gives her a sense of responsibility. Underneath the emotional is a strong sense of rationality. She understands the distinction between what she craves and her sense of missing it, whilst acknowledging that this is only a feeling. She tells herself that the reality is more positive but the feelings are still there. She knows that she is pained by being told off. She, like so many children, has nostalgia for the past. She analyses her position and understands how easy it is to be irresponsible and cajole her way into her parents' acceptance. This is not just a question of a feeling of emotional jealousy but a rationalising of her position. The sense of her moral position of 'setting a good example' and 'deserving' things shows her ability to go beyond just the desires of the moment. Nevertheless, she also makes a clear judgement about the future and what to avoid.

The vulnerability of childhood at home lies partly in the complexity of relationships and the need to make connections, particularly with parents. The child's, often inadvertent, decisions and statements, which sound like blame, cause a sense of unfairness and exposure. This emotional life is extrapolated into the realisation that all of their peers have a variety of different experiences. They, too, have rivals, quarrels and longings for attention. The contrasts in the home circumstances of other children are symbolised in the notion of space. This is often used in the sense of a psychological space; it is a feeling of a physical answer to a spiritual need akin to a 'Volk ohne Raum' (a people without a space – the explanation Hitler used for his aggressive expansion, arguing that other nations had their empires). Children talk about the circumstances of their own homes. They dislike sharing rooms. They want their own space. The sense of ownership, of privacy and freedom in a favourite room is shared by those who have space and those who do not. This analysis of place leads them to see an ideal as a bigger space. This even symbolises the child's view of the world beyond:

It's good because there's lots of places. It's big. It's got big houses, big cars...better houses, better because most of them are bigger and they've got different styles. There's better films that you can watch. There's bigger playgrounds...lots of things to do. (Boy aged nine)

This is, of course, a typical picture of the United States. In contrast to the Oxfam picture of vulnerable Africa, the richest country in the world, with all its media manifestations, presents itself to children in ways they interpret, and in their own ways, as being desirable. The height of luxury is space and size. The daily desire for a modest increase in the room to play is translated on a global scale to all the vastness of the rich. Again, the contrasts, the potential disparities are clear.

One view is of the inner world of the home and another of the world beyond. In both are juxtapositions and a sense of being placed in a hierarchy of experience? Schooling provides some of both. There are clear social structures and many confrontations. It is an environment of groups and classes, of gangs and hierarchies. School gives an emphatic picture of the organised and formalised social relations between people. It also presents the public opportunities for all of the private relationships and tribulations:

I've got plenty of other friends. I feel a bit sorry for her 'cos sometimes when I say I like her she doesn't believe me...like, well, when everyone is being horrible to her she says "No-one likes me! I haven't got any friends." And I say 'I like you... you are my friend.' And she just walks off in a huff and says, "You're just pretending. I know you don't like me because I'm black.

People - they say that to her so maybe she feels that no-one likes her at all...because one person started it off saying she was black 'cos she's the colour of poo...'cos they just want to cause trouble and be spiteful. Some children have been through a rough patch themselves, so they take it out on other children. It makes them go through a rough patch just because they've gone through a rough patch at home. (Girl aged eight)

Interneccine conflict is rife. The school is a place where arguments and quarrels, as well as friendships, can flourish. The constant social movement of being an insider or outsider is supported by instant prejudice. In addition we see here a crucial psychological analysis of what is taking place. Bad behaviour is not just ascribed to labelling but to racism. It is due to the vulnerability, to emotional damage, to a 'rough patch'. The home is involved in this as an explanation for why they behave so badly towards others. This is not so much an excuse as an insight into the motivations that drive people to belong to, or eschew, groups. Even those things said are not believed.

The pleasure taken in spite and in unkindness is observed. Emotional revenge, taking it out on others, getting their own back because they feel vulnerable, is recognised. Here it is partly an individual matter, partly one of group mentality. It is easy to see this translated into the hysterical vulnerability of a whole nation.

The personal traumas of the playground can be interpreted as a particular means of understanding emotional relationships as if teasing and bullying, exposure and humiliation, were a necessary formative influence. Within the confines of the school, they are contained and given a particular context. The contrasts between those who are 'in' and 'out', those who are successful or admired and those who are not are sometimes interpreted as a temporary pattern of young people's lives, from which they will emerge unscathed. The patterns of success and of failure are assumed not to be translated into adult experience, but society at large is also being observed. What is witnessed in one form is the rumbling discontentment of the playground, which is also made clear in the experiences of what is seen beyond. Space might be linked with riches and symbolised in America. Vulnerability might be that of being 'picked on', as being different and made iconic in terms of failure. It is also seen as a real part of the larger world not conveyed second-hand through television but with the more significant immediacy of personal experience.

There's people on the streets. When I went to London with my mum and my mum's boyfriend and my brother, we went past some of those shops that had shut down and there were people kicking cardboard boxes and people walking around. Ragged houses with smashed windows and people sleeping in cardboard boxes. In London, a lot. They're sitting on, like, dustbins asking for money. (Boy aged eight)

The sense of personal shock is shared by all children. This is no isolated case. Some might not have seen so much of poverty or homelessness or have recalled a particular incident, but all talk about it. The realities of the world, as a whole, are never far away and join with the realities of the emotional upheavals of their personal lives. It is the juxtaposition of the two that makes them vulnerable.

The human need for intellectual security is easily undermined. The experiences of childhood, so little understood, or obscured in a superficial turf-war of those who prefer to attack straw men to show their own prejudices rather than to try to understand, lend themselves to other kinds of prejudice. People respond to pressures and manipulations from deep-seated senses of weakness - far more prevalent than generally admitted. The fact that the seemingly invulnerable have also experienced some degree of trauma perhaps explains why there is such a denial - a sign of prejudice in itself. Insecurity can find new forms of artificial or collective comfort in the forming of gangs but the real passion of nationalism tends to be against others. The definitions of groups, of groups of hooligans, are also most powerful when there are clear enemies, the more the better.

## **Conclusion**

There have been times when nationalism or patriotism has been a sign of strength or confidence, as in the romantic sense of the English (Green, 1874). Nowhere is the idea of the sanctity of being an English gentleman more apparent than in all the stories written for boys by Percy Westerman and others. They define what they think of as the characteristics of a particular race with confidence and elaboration and are, as in the *Boys Own* and *Chums*, the apogee of the ideal of what it means to be British. Perhaps one of the many reasons for the loss of confidence in the ideal type - kind, intense, unselfish, dutiful, self-controlled, - is its associations with being a 'gentleman'. It is a typical sign of insecurity to attack anything that smacks superiority. At the time that the

stories were written, however, the brand-name of the patriot was a secure distinction against all those of other nations and races, all of whom are depicted with clearly marked characteristics of their own.

A label of a nation state can seem to assert a collective belief but it can also be turned against itself. The word 'British' is used by some ethnic minority groups as a definition of their otherness, of their belonging and essentially to the place where they live. Some are told that they live in a 'Kufri' (immoral or alien) society and harbour all the contradictions of belonging and not belonging. Such uses of the concepts of self-definition, even more than the hooliganism of those who wrap themselves in the flag of St. George, reveal the vulnerability on which nationalism, in one form or another, plays. It is ironic to find that the term 'British' can be used as a weapon against belonging. Looking at the collective experiences of young children and their vulnerability to trauma explains the strength of the temptation not only to become immersed in a group but also the potential of antipathy and hate. It is this capacity, this early forming of attitudes which is the real basis of all historic movements, including nationalism.

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## ***History Education and National Identity in Northern Ireland***

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**Abstract** *This article reports findings from two studies of students' perceptions of identity and national history in Northern Ireland. These findings indicate that students identify with a wide range of historical topics and that they consider school the most important influence on their understanding of national history. Findings further indicate, however, that students' historical identifications narrow during Key Stage 3 and become increasingly focused on Protestant/Unionist or Catholic/Nationalist heritage. The article considers the implications of these findings for history education in the region.*

**Keywords** Northern Ireland, Key Stage 3, National identity, Student perspectives

### **Introduction**

This paper reports results from two studies that examined the relationship between history education at school and the ideas students develop about history outside school, particularly those relating to their sense of national identity. Clearly, history has a contemporary significance that extends far beyond school walls, as research by educators, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists over the past decade has shown (reviewed in Levstik & Barton, 2001). In Northern Ireland, academic studies are hardly needed to demonstrate that history has enduring relevance. Each of the two major cultural/political orientations has its own version of the past, and each invokes these historical narratives to justify contemporary attitudes and policy positions (McBride, 1997; Walker, 1996). For many in Northern Ireland, history forms an integral part of their sense of identity (Buckley & Kenney, 1995; Devine-Wright, 2001; Gallagher, 1989), and representations of history, particularly as depicted in visual symbols, are an inescapable feature of life there (Jarman, 1998).

Given the importance of the past in Northern Ireland society, as well as the perception that what is learned outside school may contribute to community divisions, educators have devoted careful attention to constructing a curriculum that provides students with a more balanced understanding. At the primary level, this has meant avoiding stories of national history and focusing instead on learning about historic societies, in Ireland and elsewhere, as well as learning about the nature of historical evidence and interpretation. Students begin to study national history in Key Stage 3, and each of the three required years of study features a core module focusing on a period deemed essential for understanding Irish history, but placed within the wider context of Britain and Europe; topics include the Normans, conquest and colonization, the Act of Union, and partition.

Just as in the rest of the United Kingdom, the study of history in Northern Ireland is not meant to be simply about the coverage of content. Seeking to build on foundations established at primary level, students are encouraged to take an enquiry approach, to understand events from the different perspectives of those at the time, to recognize differing interpretations, and to arrive at conclusions only after considering primary and secondary evidence. As the third year of the secondary school represents the last compulsory exposure to history, there is a tacit recognition by those who designed the curriculum that, by the completion of this stage, history—through its knowledge and skills—should contribute to greater understanding of cultural and political backgrounds amongst young people in Northern Ireland. After the compulsory study of national history

during Key Stage 3, it is hoped students will have an alternative to the sectarian historical identifications that they are exposed to outside school.

There has been little empirical evidence, however, of how this curriculum affects students' sense of identity. Psychological research on identity in Northern Ireland has focused on how people characterize themselves or others as members of groups, as well as how closely these characterizations correlate with other factors such as self-esteem or views on social and political issues, but this body of work has not addressed the role of history in conceptions of self or others (Cairns & Darby, 1998), much less the role of the school curriculum in developing such understanding. A separate tradition of research, largely historical and ethnographic in nature, has focused more specifically on the role of history in conceptions of identity (e.g., Buckley & Kenney, 1995; Jarman, 1998; McBride, 1997; Walker, 1996), but such studies have not included attention to the development of children's ideas about history and identity, whether in school or out.

To date, then, there have been no empirical investigations of how children come to construct the historical component of their identity in Northern Ireland, nor any investigations into the role of the school curriculum in the process. However, in our experience, *beliefs* about these processes are both widespread and consistent. There is a perception in Northern Ireland that children learn sectarian stories of the national past 'at their mother's knee' (Stewart, 1977, p. 16; Byrne, 1997), and that these perceptions last throughout their lives. Teachers at the secondary level often question whether they can have an impact on such deeply ingrained historical viewpoints; 'I can't compete with the lessons learnt outside the classroom' is a common complaint. Although we do not wish to discount teachers' experiences with their students, we believe that systematic studies may help educators better understand the interaction between formal and informal influences on their students' historical viewpoints, particularly as related to national identity. Toward that end, we undertook, separately, two studies that investigated the influences on children's thinking about history. Although very different in approach and methodology, the findings of these studies complement each other and help shed light on the connection between history education and national identity in Northern Ireland.

## **Methods**

### **Study 1**

The first study, conducted by Conway, focused on the following questions:

- What were students' perceptions of the most and least influential factors in helping them to develop opinions about the history of their country?
- How do these perceptions differ by region (Northern Ireland and England), cohort (1996 and 2001), and school year (grades 7-9 and 10-13)? (For consistency, English grade designations are used in reporting the results of this study; English Year 7 is the equivalent of Year 8 in Northern Ireland.)

Findings from this study are based on a survey distributed to Protestant and Catholic secondary school students in Mid-Ulster and to state and independent secondary schools in Oxford in 1996 and 2001, as part of a larger research project to gain insight into secondary school students' perceptions of history in the classroom. The current study concentrates exclusively on one aspect of students' views, their perceptions of the factors that helped them develop opinions about the history of their country. Items on the survey relevant to this paper are those that asked students how much they liked history (on a Likert-type scale ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 5), and that asked them to

evaluate the degree of eight different sources in helping them develop their opinions about the history of their country (ranging from 1, 'unimportant', to 5, 'very influential').

In 1996, ten schools in each region were contacted that fit the following criteria: in Oxford they were non-selective Middle and Upper schools in the state sector and selective and non-selective independent schools; in Mid-Ulster they were selective and non-selective, as well as Controlled (Protestant) and Maintained (Catholic) schools. (There were no integrated secondary schools in the area in 1996.) As far as possible, equal numbers of males and females and the full range of year groups were included. In both regions seven of the ten schools contacted agreed to participate. In January 2001 the same schools were asked to co-operate in circulating the same questionnaires to a similar range of students. Due to administrative changes, amalgamation of schools, and in one case a lack of response, only five schools in each region were involved in the research in 2001.

Out of the 1737 students who returned the questionnaire, 59% were females and 41% were males; 58% were members of the 1996 cohort and 42% belonged to the 2001 cohort. In Northern Ireland, 60% were recruited from Catholic schools and 40% from Protestant schools, broadly reflecting the sectarian divide in the area. The inclusion of only 43% of students in English state schools and 57% from independent schools represents an imbalance, because c. 90% of young people attend state schools. Students ranged in age from 11 to 18.

The mean scores of students' responses to each question were calculated, and a 2x2x2 between-subjects multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed on eight dependent variables associated with sources that helped students form their opinions about the history of their country (history classes, parents/relatives, television/films, history books, other school subjects, newspapers, friends, personal experience). (Adjustment was made for the extent to which students liked history.) Independent variables were country of school (England and Northern Ireland), cohort of students (1996 and 2001) and school year of students (grades 7 to 9 and grades 10 to 13).

## **Study 2**

The second study, conducted by McCully and Barton, focused on the following questions:

- How do young people in Northern Ireland conceptualize their identity in relation to national history?
- What impact does the Northern Ireland curriculum have on young people's sense of identity?

This research consisted of a cross-sectional study of students who had completed (or were nearing completion) each of the first three years of the secondary history curriculum. Data collection relied on open-ended interviews with pairs of students and was loosely based on the repertory-grid technique developed by Kelly (1955). At the beginning of each interview, students were asked to work together to arrange a set of historical pictures into groups, to explain the reasons for their groupings, and to choose the pictures they considered to have the most to do with themselves or their identity and to explain why they chose them. The set of pictures included a wide range of people and events relevant to the history of Ireland and Britain.

Participants constituted a cross-sectional population of 253 students, approximately equal numbers of whom had studied each of the first three years of the secondary

history curriculum, and included students from Controlled (Protestant), Maintained (Catholic), and Integrated schools, as well as selective, non-selective, and comprehensive schools, and schools in areas that had experienced high levels of sectarian conflict or tension in recent years and those that had not. Slightly more than half the sample (54%) were boys.

Students' response to the interview task were analyzed first by tabulating the number of times students selected each picture (or each grouping of pictures that they had created), then by categorizing these responses into broader themes (such as 'national history' or 'wars') and calculating responses in each category as a portion of total responses (and breaking these down by year group), and finally by coding students' explanations of their responses through a process of inductive analysis and again calculating responses as a portion of total responses (as well as breaking responses down by year group).

## Findings

### Study 1

On average, students reported a liking for history (mean = 3.65 on a scale of 1-5). Table 1 (see over) presents the mean scores for each group on each source of history knowledge. The extent to which students liked history was significantly correlated with the degree to which they reported several sources of history as being influential. After controlling for differences in the extent to which students liked history, mean differences between groups of students were calculated regarding the extent to which they found various sources of history influential.

**History Classes** were perceived as being significantly more influential among Irish students (mean = 4.44) than among English students (mean = 4.15). This source was also perceived as being more influential among younger students of grades 7 to 9 (mean = 4.35) compared to older students of grades 10 to 13 (mean = 4.24). Furthermore, it was a more influential source for the 2001 cohort (mean = 4.35) than for the 1996 cohort of participants (mean = 4.24). There was a significant interaction effect between country and cohort suggesting that, in English schools, students in 2001 found history classes to be more influential than students in English schools in 1996. Furthermore, there was a significant interaction effect between school grade and cohort suggesting that younger students, in grades 7 to 9, in 2001, found history classes more influential than students in the same grades but in the later cohort of 2001.

The only significant difference regarding **reading history books** was recorded among Irish students (mean = 3.68) who saw them as being more influential than English students (mean = 3.36). No significant difference regarding the role of relatives was found.

Older students in grades 10 to 13 found **television** to be a more influential source (mean = 3.36) than younger students in grades 7 to 9 (mean = 3.19). There was also a significant interaction effect between cohort and student's grade suggesting that among younger students, in 2001, television was more influential than it had been with the same age group in 1996.

Students in Irish schools (mean = 2.88) were more likely to admit that their **own experience** was an influential source than students in English schools (mean = 2.70). Also the interaction effect between cohort and school grade was significant so that older students in grades 10 to 13 in 1996 argued that their personal experience was a more influential source than older students in the later cohort of 2001.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of the influence of various sources of history (mean scores)

Sources	Oxford				Mid-Ulster				Total
	7- 9 grades		10-13 grades		7- 9 grades		10-13 grades		
	1996	2001	1996	2001	1996	2001	1996	2001	
History classes	4.01	4.35	4.08	4.14	4.46	4.56	4.42	4.33	4.30
History books	3.33	3.23	3.47	3.39	3.66	3.71	3.80	3.55	3.52
Relatives	3.34	3.21	3.38	3.46	3.22	3.31	3.31	3.36	3.32
Television	3.09	3.23	3.40	3.39	3.08	3.36	3.38	3.28	3.28
Own experience	2.61	2.77	2.87	2.55	2.94	2.86	2.99	2.72	2.79
Newspapers	2.28	2.08	2.82	2.87	2.68	2.82	3.30	3.03	2.73
School subjects	2.48	2.73	2.59	2.51	2.34	2.43	2.27	2.10	2.43
Friends	2.02	1.80	2.18	2.08	2.31	2.52	2.57	2.40	2.24

Regarding **newspapers**, there was a significant interaction effect between school grade and cohort. More specifically, students in grades 10 to 13 in 1996 said that newspapers were a more influential source compared to students of the same grades in the later cohort of 2001. In addition there was a significant three-way interaction effect between all three independent variables. Looking more closely at differences between mean scores, students in grades 10 to 13 in Irish schools in 1996, perceived newspapers to be a more influential factor in learning the history of their country than students in the same grades in Ireland in 2001.

Greater emphasis was placed on **other school subjects** by students in English schools (mean = 2.58) than by students in Irish schools (mean = 2.28). Moreover, younger students in grades 7 to 9 were more likely to report that other school subjects were an influential source (mean = 2.49) compared to older students in grades 10 to 13. A significant interaction effect between school grade and cohort showed that younger students in 2001 tended to perceive other school subjects as more influential factors in learning the history of one's country compared to younger students in 1996. However, the reverse was true of older students. The 1996 cohort tended to find other school subjects as more influential compared to the 2001 cohort.

Finally, students in Irish schools tended to believe more that their **friends** were an influential source (mean = 2.45) compared to students in English schools [mean = 2.02]. Furthermore, for older students, their friends were a more important source (mean = 2.31) than for younger students in grades 7 to 9 (mean = 2.16). The interaction effect between country, grade and cohort was also significant suggesting that in 2001 younger students in Irish schools believed that their friends were a more influential factor than students of the same age in Irish schools in the earlier cohort of 1996.

## Study 2

The most striking feature of students' responses when asked, 'Which of these pictures have the most to do with you, or who you are?' was their diversity. Only two selections (The Troubles and War) were selected by more than 10% of students, while one other came close to that level (King William). This lack of consensus is clear even within the three types of schools: Only two categories (The Troubles and Bobby Sands or Hunger) were selected by more than 10% of students at Maintained schools, three (The Troubles, War, and King William) by more than 10% at Controlled schools, and three

(The Troubles, War, and Ancient Pictures) by more than 10% at Integrated schools. Meanwhile, None was the fourth most popular response overall and was particularly common among students at Controlled schools.

However, it is possible to identify a more limited number of themes that cut across this range of identification. Most of the pictures (or groupings) selected by students fell into five broad categories (Table 2, see over). The most popular of these related to national history, religion, or culture (either Catholic/Nationalist or Protestant/Unionist). At Maintained schools, these included Bobby Sands and the more general category of Hunger, as well as pictures related to St. Patrick, Religion, Civil Rights, The Easter Rising, Nationalism or Republicanism, and Daniel O'Connell. At Controlled schools, this category included King William, The Siege of Derry, The Somme and UVF, Carson and Home Rule, Cuchulainn, as well as Ulster and Protestants, Religion and St. Patrick, and Union Jack. (At Integrated schools, it should be noted, some students responded in ways similar to their counterparts at Controlled schools, while others more closely resembled students at Maintained schools; there was no separate set of 'national history' responses at Integrated schools that transcended the Nationalist/Unionist divide.)

A second group of responses, nearly as common as the first, included pictures and groupings that focused on conflict and division in Northern Ireland but did not relate to a single religious or political community; most of these were associated with groups of murals from both communities or with groupings students explicitly described as being about The Troubles. The third most common category was associated with wars and consisted particularly of pictures related to the first or second world war. The fourth major category consisted of responses connected to Ireland, Northern Ireland, or local communities, but not explicitly related to a single community or to the religious/political conflict. These included The Titanic, The Famine (when not linked to Catholic history or Bobby Sands), 'Ancient' Pictures, Carrickfergus Castle, Northern Ireland and the Native Irish. And 5% of students, distributed evenly among the three types of schools, identified with 'leaders' (usually including King William, Queen Elizabeth I, and Nelson Mandela), while a small portion of students chose pictures or groupings (such as 'buildings') that did not fit into any of these categories.

When asked to explain their choices, students' responses closely mirrored these categories (Table 3, see over). At both Maintained and Controlled schools students most often justified their choices by explaining how the pictures related to their national or religious communities. One boy at a Maintained school, for example, grouped several pictures into a category he described as 'Republican' and explained, 'I come from a Republican background...I'm interested in Irish history.' Similarly, students who choose the Easter Rising explained, 'They tried to fight for a united Ireland,' and 'I was born in Ireland and this happened in Ireland.' At Controlled schools, one student chose a set of murals that he referred to as 'the Protestant ones' and explained, 'That's our religion, that's our background, our families' background.' Another referred to a grouping as 'the Ulster ones' and explained that he identified with them 'because if it became a United Ireland, then Ulster...nobody would listen to what they said and what their views were and all.'

The second most popular set of response were related to the Troubles and appeared more as commentary on life in Northern Ireland than as a statement of particular loyalties. One girl at an Integrated school, for example, identified with a group of pictures she had categorized as The Troubles and explained, 'That's the biggest thing in our lives, and you can't go anywhere without being reminded of that.' In the third most common explanation, students justified their choices on the extent to which an event in the past had affected life in the present. One boy at an integrated school, for example,

noted that ‘the war changed everything,’ while another suggested that if Britain had lost the second world war ‘we might have been like in a German school or something.’

TABLE 2. Choice of identification and percentage of total responses, by type of school

Category of response	Controlled	Maintained	Integrated	Total
National history, religion, culture	22 (27%)	24 (37%)	6 (18%)	52 (29%)
Troubles in Northern Ireland	25 (30%)	17 (26%)	9 (26%)	51 (28%)
Wars	12 (15%)	5 (8%)	8 (24%)	25 (15%)
Ireland, N. Ireland, local heritage	8 (10%)	13 (20%)	7 (21%)	28 (9%)
None	8 (10%)	2 (3%)	2 (6%)	12 (7%)
Leaders	3 (4%)	4 (6%)	2 (6%)	9 (5%)
Miscellaneous	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (2%)
Total number of responses	82	65	34	181

TABLE 3. Explanation of identification and percentage of total responses, by type of school

Category of Response	Maintained	Controlled	Integrated	Total
National/ religious community	22 (29%)	22 (22%)	9 (26%)	53 (25%)
Related to the Troubles	12 (16%)	20 (20%)	8 (23%)	40 (19%)
Miscellaneous	15 (20%)	14 (14%)	2 (6%)	31 (15%)
Had an effect on the present	5 (7%)	9 (9%)	9 (26%)	23 (11%)
Physical proximity	9 (12%)	4 (4%)	3 (9%)	16 (8%)
Family connections or ancestors	6 (8%)	6 (6%)	2 (6%)	14 (7%)
No strong identification	3 (4%)	10 (10%)	2 (6%)	15 (7%)
Rights, freedom, social justice	3 (4%)	13 (13%)	0 (0%)	16 (8%)
Total number of responses	75	98	35	208

Three other explanations were given by at least ten students each. First, some explained their choices on the basis of physical proximity. Several students who identified with the Mountsandel archaeological site, for example, noted that it was close to where they lived. Second, several students explained that they identified with the pictures they chose because of the involvement of family members or ancestors in the events depicted, particularly those involving the world wars. Finally, several students at Controlled schools explained their identification in terms of the importance of rights or social justice, even when not specifically linked to their own religious/political community. The remainder of students’ responses fall into two other categories: that in which students expressed no strong identification, and a large set of ‘miscellaneous’ responses, including identification with pictures because they had studied about them at school, because they had a personal interest in them, because they involved famous people or leaders, or because they represented death or suffering.

Students’ responses demonstrate important differences across grade level. Most notably, the portion of responses related to Protestant/Unionist or Catholic/Nationalist

history, religion, and culture increased dramatically from the first to third years. Less than a quarter of responses fell into this category among either first or second year students, but nearly half did so in the third year (Table 4).

TABLE 4. Choice of identification and percentage of total responses, by year

Category of response	First year	Second year	Third year
National history, religion, culture	13 (23%)	13 (20%)	27 (47%)
Troubles in Northern Ireland	11 (19%)	26 (39%)	13 (22%)
Ireland, N. Ireland, local heritage	13 (23%)	9 (14%)	6 (10%)
Wars	8 (14%)	11 (17%)	6 (10%)
None	7 (12%)	1 (2%)	4 (7%)
Leaders	4 (7%)	4 (6%)	1 (2%)
Miscellaneous	1 (2%)	2 (3%)	1 (2%)
Total number of responses	57	66	58

Students' explanations for their choices reveal a similar pattern: Among first and second year students, little more than a fifth of explanations were phrased in terms of the importance of national or religious communities, but in the final year more than a third of their explanations related to such issues (Table 5). This is accompanied by a clear decrease in the frequency with which students explained their choices in terms of physical proximity, family connections, and miscellaneous factors.

TABLE 5. Explanation of identification and percentage of total responses, by year

Category of response	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
National/ religious community	14 (21%)	15 (21%)	24 (35%)
Related to the Troubles	8 (12%)	19 (27%)	12 (17%)
Miscellaneous	16 (24%)	9 (13%)	8 (12%)
Had an effect on the present	7 (10%)	8 (11%)	8 (12%)
Physical proximity	6 (9%)	7 (10%)	3 (4%)
Family connections or ancestors	6 (9%)	5 (7%)	3 (4%)
No strong identification	8 (12%)	1 (1%)	6 (9%)
Rights, freedom, social justice	3 (4%)	7 (10%)	5 (3%)
Total responses	68	71	69

## Discussion

When taken together, these findings contribute to our understanding of how children in Northern Ireland make connections between history and their own identities. They suggest, first of all, that secondary students there do not identify primarily with the simplified set of historical themes that are often seen as typical of adult historical representations (such as those found on banners, murals, and the like.) When given the chance to identify and categorize their own identifications with history, they responded by selecting a wide range of people, events, and themes.

The most common basis for students' identification with history related to Protestant/Unionist or Catholic/Nationalist heritage, and this is hardly surprising, because such issues are a constant feature of public discourse in the region and play an important role in the division between the two communities. But students' responses contradict any simplistic generalizations about their historical identifications. Although items related to their national, religious, and cultural backgrounds were the most



common sources of historical identification for students, less than a third of students' responses involved such choices, and only a quarter of their explanations were phrased in these terms. In other words, some 80% of the responses students gave involved identification with events other than those related to Protestant/Unionist or Catholic/Nationalist history. Most notably, nearly as many responses suggested a general identification with Northern Ireland's Troubles. At all three types of schools, a large portion of students chose pictures that suggested identification with the community conflict that surrounds them rather than (or in addition to) any of the specific parties to that conflict. And nearly half of students' choices had nothing to do with the conflict but related instead to the world wars, local heritage, leaders, or other historical items; their explanations, meanwhile, indicated the importance of physical proximity, family connections and ancestors, a concern with rights and justice (beyond their own community), the effect of the past on the present, and a range of other factors. It seems clear that national, political and religious issues do not dominate the way they conceptualize their connection to history but are simply one source of identification among many.

Moreover, students in Northern Ireland explicitly look to school to provide them with an understanding of national history. They rank their history classes as far more influential than any other source of information about national history. They also rank the second most influential source—history books (which they presumably read in school, at least in part)—as far more important than any of the others. And indeed, their evaluation of the influence of these sources is significantly higher than that of their counterparts in England. Meanwhile, students in Northern Ireland rank friends as the least important influence on their knowledge of national history, and yet it is from these peers that sectarian perspectives might be assumed to derive. Of course, relatives might also be an important sources of sectarian history, but while students consider that source the third most important influence, they rank it well below history classes and history books.

These findings, then, present an encouraging picture of the potential for history education in Northern Ireland to address one component of the social and political turmoil there—the use of sectarian history to form conflicting national identities. Secondary students' linkages of history and their own identity are not dominated by Unionist or Nationalist themes, and they see schools as the most important influence on their understanding of national history. But do schools make the most of this opportunity? Here, the evidence is somewhat murkier, and not nearly as encouraging.

While Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist perspectives do not dominate the historical identifications of students as a whole, they increasingly move toward such dominance over the course of the three years during which students study national history. After just one year of study, students have a wide range of historical identifications (including archeological sites, the Titanic, the world wars, and castles and other old buildings) and they explain these identifications in a variety of ways—noting personal knowledge and interest, physical proximity, and school study. After the third year of study, though, their choices and explanations have narrowed considerably, and they are much more likely to focus on pictures related to their own national, religious, and cultural backgrounds. It seems, then, that Key Stage 3—the time when the study of national history is compulsory—is precisely the period during which many students are developing a sense of identity grounded in national history.

What impact does the school curriculum have on this development? In brief, we do not yet know. The most generous interpretation is that school history stems the tide of such perspectives; without it, one might argue, the portion of students identifying with Catholic/Nationalist or Protestant/Unionist histories might be closer to 100% than to 50%. A more pessimistic interpretation, on the other hand, is that by focusing on the

contentious events of the national past, the school curriculum actually feeds into students' community identifications by providing the raw material for the construction of sectarian perspectives, without supplying any clear alternative to these. We suspect the truth lies somewhere in the middle: forces outside school encourage sectarian identifications, and in some cases the school curriculum moderates this tendency, while other times students view their history lessons (particularly in the third year) in a selective way, despite the intentions of teachers and curriculum designers. In any event, the question remains whether schools are doing *enough* to counter what students learn elsewhere. As this research shows, students in Northern Ireland consider their history classes an important influence on their understanding, and the years of Key Stage 3 are a critical time in the development of their linkage of history with identity. Educators in the region must seriously consider the issue of how best to capitalize on this opportunity.

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# ***Wales! Wales? Britain! Britain? Teaching and Learning about the History of the British Isles in Secondary Schools in Wales***

**Alun Morgan and Robert Phillips\***

**Abstract** *This article evaluates the way in which Welsh and British history is taught in schools in Wales. It considers the rise of the so-called 'new' British historiography associated with key historians in the 1980s and 1990s and its impact upon curricular texts in Wales, as well as the teaching of history in classrooms. Evidence drawn from inspection reports in Wales is utilised to suggest that there are some difficulties and challenges involved in representing British history adequately. The article considers some of the implications of these findings for young people's sense of national identity in Wales.*

**Key Words** National identity, Historiography, Border pedagogy

## **Introduction**

This paper considers the complex relationship between Wales and Britain, and Welsh history and British history, and its implications for young people's sense of national identity now and in the future. Although the evidence is patchy, indications are that most young people in Wales define themselves primarily as 'Welsh' but there is very little to suggest that they are uncomfortable with a subsidiary identity of 'British'. The situation is therefore complex and, sometimes, contradictory. As far as the future of the British nation-state is concerned, these issues are, of course, very significant and the questions arising from them are important in terms of young people positioning themselves in society and developing a clear sense of identity and citizenship. How are these issues of 'Welshness/ Britishness, Wales/Britain' reflected in the history curriculum in Wales? And how are they in turn translated into teaching and learning?

This article examines the rise of the 'new' British historiography, firstly to consider the ways in which it has influenced the history curriculum in Wales at least at a discursive/policy text level. There is now a body of literature that in various ways interrogates the relationship between school history and British national identity (Goalen, 1998, McCully, 1999, Phillips, 1998a, 1998b and Wood, 1999). Furthermore, as was indicated in the editorial to this journal, the BRISHIN project (*British Island Stories: History, Identity and Nationhood*, funded within the Economic & Social Research Council's (ESRC) programme *Devolution and Constitutional Change*) is currently analysing history textbooks to evaluate the ways in which 'Britain' and 'Britishness' are being represented historically. But very little empirical research has been undertaken on how the inter-relationship between Welsh and British history is being taught in classrooms. Secondly, therefore, our article offers a first small step in this process by referring to evidence derived from school inspectors' reports in Wales (see ESTYN, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d).

Before we proceed, we feel that the title to our article needs some explanation. It draws on Dai Smith's (1984) book entitled *Wales! Wales?* Smith's intriguing, clever title suggested two things: the exclamation mark after the first Wales suggested a clear affirmation of national identity, the question mark after the second hinted at a search for a Welsh past. Our decision to place similar marks around Britain in our title suggests that after a period of relative certainty about the historiographical identity of 'Britain', cultural, political and constitutional trends associated with British re-configuration in recent years make this history and concomitant identity far less certain.

### **For Wales – see Britain? The rise of ‘British’ history**

As Cannadine (1995) and many others have indicated, equating British history with the history of England dominated the historiography of the nineteenth century and it was a trend which held sway also for most of the twentieth century. According to Cannadine (p.14) this approach was a reflection of the political project of the ‘creation, survival and modification of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland’ between 1800 and 1922. It had the effect, of course, of elevating unity at the expense of cultural difference within the Union. As Pittock (1997, p.174) has argued ‘British identity and history, whether portrayed in history, journalism, cultural studies, social sciences or now through electronic media, has tended to present a view both of its past and present which minimalises difference to an absurd degree, promoting ignorance of the British diversity at the heart of Britain’.

One of the most persuasive statements of looking at historical Britain and British identity in a more critical light is offered by Pocock (1995, p.295), who suggests that there is a need to ‘move from the illusion, or verbal confusion, that British ‘history’ is the history of a shared identity with a shared past, to the more focused realisation that it is the history of the attempt, with its successes and failures, to create such an identity’. Of course, it was Pocock (1974) himself who first put forward the ‘plea for a new subject’, an approach to historical writing which covered not just England but also Scotland, Wales and Ireland, as well as the British colonies. Since then, a vibrant, extensive historiography has emerged which, in Samuel’s (1998) words, seeks to place traditionally ‘peripheral’ stories associated with British history at centre stage. Probably the most well known recent example of this approach is Norman Davies’ *The Isles* (1999), a massively ambitious (and highly successful) attempt to examine the complexity of the notion of ‘Britain’ and ‘Britishness’ over the last 2,000 years.

As he acknowledges in his book, Davies was building upon an extensive and rich ‘British’ historiography that had developed in the last quarter of the twentieth century since Pocock’s vital paper. It was Kearney (1989) who was one of the first to put into practice the call for a ‘four nation’ or ‘home international’ perspective, with a concomitant emphasis upon the plurality of Britain. Soon afterwards, Colley (1992) published her profoundly influential examination of the construction of ‘Britain’ and ‘Britishness’ in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This burgeoning historiography encouraged an important edited collection by Grant & Stringer (1995) which analysed ‘the making’ of British history. Soon afterwards, Davies (1999) and Samuel (1998), from different ideological perspectives, emphasised the changing nature of the centre-periphery (i.e. England/Britain) relationship, while Robbins (1998) explored the connection between changing institutional structures and nation-building in Britain. Finally, Brockliss & Eastwood’s (1997) work placed emphasis upon the ‘multiple identities’ within the Union.

It seems, then, that in Pocock’s (1995, p.292) words, ‘the tide has turned’ as far as British historiography is concerned. Yet, as the comments by Pittock above make clear, an awareness of this new approach has been slow to develop in some academic circles and beyond. Davies (2003) himself has recently recalled the amusing story of having sent a copy of *The Isles* to his college library in Oxford, only to receive a polite and grateful letter from the librarian assuring him that it would be placed in the ‘English history’ section! A string of pronouncements by the QCA Chief Executive Nick Tate (Tate, 1996) and others in the 1990s on the need to teach the narrative of English history suggest that a more extensive knowledge of this new historiographical world has yet to permeate more widely (see Phillips, 1996, 1997 and 1999 for a more detailed discussion of Tate).

Yet significantly, of course, when one analyses the Final Report of the National Curriculum History Working Group (DES, 1990), it is clear that its members were heavily influenced by this vibrant new historiography. Phillips' (1998a) detailed study of the HWG's work reveals that members of the group met with some of the leading 'new' British historians during the course of their work. A cursory reading of the Final Report reveals the impact of this influence, for it emphasises that Britain was not an 'undifferentiated mass' and that 'England's role in the history of Britain, though often dominant, has by no means been exclusive'. The HWG recognised that although what it called a 'basically **English**-orientated approach to British history' (original emphasis) could not be replaced at a stroke, the National Curriculum would 'provide a clear opportunity to take the first steps in that direction' (DES, 1990, p.17). The HWG therefore included essential elements of Welsh, Scottish and Irish history in the programmes of study. And although the reforms of 1994/95 and 2000 have slimmed down the length of the history National Curriculum in England, the original proposals of the HWG still feature in the existing structure, with the emphasis upon the need to consider English history within the wider context of Britain and to consider a range of British historical perspectives and interpretations.

The Final Report of the National Curriculum History Committee for Wales (Welsh Office, 1990) emphasised similar sentiments (see also Phillips, 1999). The HCW argued that the National Curriculum should promote a 'more genuinely British history course', which pays 'due and balanced attention to **all** the parts and peoples of Britain and their historical experiences' (original emphasis). After all, said the Report, 'too often what has been presented as British history has been no more than English history – and that has involved an overwhelmingly metropolitan and "high politics" view of English history' supplemented instead by 'some occasional episodes from the histories of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, generally introduced only when the histories of those countries and their peoples impinged on that of England'. Instead, the HCW argued for an approach to the teaching of history, which should be very different and, because of its importance for the arguments being presented in this article, it is included in full below. The HCW suggested forcefully that:

The study of British history should give pupils, wherever they live, an awareness of the richness and diversity of the histories of the peoples who have lived, and live, in Britain as a whole. It should alert pupils to the contrasting experiences and varying tempo of developments in different parts of the British Isles, and make them aware that the history of Britain is much more than the history of England writ large. It should, therefore, draw freely on the historical experience and evidence of Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England (Welsh Office, 1990: 12).

Again, the current emphasis within the current statutory orders in Wales on the need to place Welsh history within British, European and world contexts and to explore the history of Britain more widely, shows the influence of the HCW's report today. Yet, more research work needs to be done both in England and in Wales to see whether this wider British perspective is actually permeating into history classrooms consistently and in a widespread fashion. In the sections that follow, we offer a tentative outline of the current situation in Wales, based upon reflections and findings from inspectorial visits to schools (see Estyn, 2001a, 2002b, 2001c, 2001d).

### **Wales and/or Britain? Evaluating school history in Wales**

Perhaps there is less of an imperative to ask the question 'When was Wales?' as one of Wales' most colourful historians did some time ago (Williams, 1979). The distinctive history National Curriculum in Wales is now very well established and pupils in Wales are finally beginning to move away from the history which was 'mostly a jumble of Acts

of Parliament, of kings and battles largely in English history' (Jeremy, 1989, p.11) to one which puts the history of Wales firmly on the curricular map. Rather, a more pertinent question to ask at the beginning of the twenty-first century may be 'When was Wales in relation to Britain?'

The focus statement for the National Curriculum in Wales for history at key stage 3 (11-14 year olds) states that 'pupils should be taught, in chronological order, about the main political, economic, social and cultural features of selected periods from the histories of Wales and Britain during the last millennium. They should be given opportunities to place these developments in context by studying aspects of European and world history, of the historical experiences of the countries which make up the British Isles, and the history of their own locality...' (ACCAC, 2000, p.4). However, inspection reports indicate that for many reasons (pressures of time and a lack of tailor made resources being the most significant) these worthwhile intentions are rarely put into practice. The result is that the great bulk of the history studied at key stage 3 is a history either of Wales or of England, as well as the relationship between the two. The same is true of the history studied at key stage 4 (14-16 year olds) and at AS/ A Level, but in both these cases British history itself occupies a considerably smaller proportion of study than at key stage 3.

There is a great deal to admire about the quality of history teaching in secondary schools in Wales. Inspection reports in Wales over the past ten years or so have consistently rated the teaching of the subject as very good, particularly in comparison to other subjects (Estyn, 2001a). Equally, there is a great deal to commend in how well many young people achieve in the subject. Examination results have improved markedly over the last ten years, and much of the teaching is characterised by enthusiasm, imaginative planning and good subject knowledge. The teaching of history does much to develop important skills alongside historical awareness and understanding.

Yet very little of it succeeds in providing young people with a coherent understanding of how the British Isles has developed politically, economically, culturally or socially. In particular, pupils and students gain little understanding or knowledge of the relationships between the four commonly defined geographic entities of the British Isles or of elements of the history of either Scotland or Ireland. We want to suggest the following reasons for this.

Firstly, there is a failure to define England in sufficiently precise terms. This is critical, because the political direction of 'Britain' has been so dominated by England (or at least by London and the South-East) for so long. School textbooks about England - that are also used in Wales - have over-emphasised its homogeneity at the expense of its regional and cultural diversity. Put crudely, many textbooks create an impression of a nation defining itself as the 'English' having been in existence since the period before the Norman Conquest. In addition too many school text books over-generalise, implying for example that all of England used the three-field system, transferred quickly and readily to Protestantism, industrialised and urbanised uniformly or was economically down and out in the 1930s. It manifests itself in over-simplified, and ultimately confusing, treatment of events such as:

- The invasion of Harald Hadrada in 1066 and the Northern rebellion against Norman rule, which can be seen primarily as Norse responses to the possibilities of either Anglo-Saxon or Norman hegemony
- The responses of the North to the Tudors
- The Cornish Rebellions, including the often overlooked factor of the Cornish language
- The wars of 1642-50

- The extent and pace of industrialisation and urbanisation
- Economic and social developments in the inter-war years

Secondly, there is a lack of a clear coherent overview in considering Wales' relationship with England over the last one thousand years. We think there is a very strong case for assessing this as some conflict (to include here conflict of cultural and economic interests, as well as the more conventional definition), much co-operation, and, very largely, harmonious co-existence. Yet as far as pupils both in Wales and in England are concerned, the only meaningful relationship that Welsh and English people had was based around war and conquest.

Thirdly, closely connected to the above, there is a lack of a wider focus when dealing with England's relationship with Wales. This creates situations whereby pupils do not learn enough about:

- The Normans and their actions in relation to Scotland, and Ireland. The latter is particularly ironic, given that the major Norman invasion of Ireland, with a large force of Welsh mercenaries in tow, was launched from West Wales.
- Of how the subjugation of Gwynedd by Edward I is part of a bigger picture involving Ireland and Scotland
- Of how the idea of being 'Britons' was deeply engrained in the Welsh psyche (for example, in the Bardic poetic traditions and in the polemic of the Welsh forces in the conflicts between Stephen and Matilda) and how, in 1485, Henry Tudor cleverly and decisively exploited it.

In addition:

- The revolt of Owain Glyndwr is taught in isolation, and not seen as part of wider developments involving France and Scotland
- There is no focus on the responses in Ireland or Scotland to the political and religious changes of the Reformation period
- Pupils do not learn about the active engagement of France and Spain in diplomatic and military events within the British Isles, and their relationship with Scotland and rebellious elements in Ireland
- The 'British' dimension of the wars of 1642-50 is neglected. It is intriguing to consider how a series of conflicts which had one of their root causes in Scotland, involved large scale campaigns in Wales, and left an indelible historical impact on Ireland, is often referred to as the 'English' civil war.
- The teaching about Acts of Union, 1536-43, absorbing Wales into England, do not refer to the major constitutional and political developments affecting the relationships between England and Scotland and England and Ireland and the responses in all these countries to them
- There is relatively little work that looks at Ireland's political, cultural, economic and social relationship with the rest of the British Isles from the Reformation to the establishment of the Republic of Ireland.

Fourthly, pupils do not have much opportunity to learn much about some of the driving forces that helped forge a strong and widely held British identity—and how some of those same forces may have, ironically, also contributed to the subsequent weakening of that shared identity (see back to Pocock's, 1995 comments about historiography above). This applies particularly to:

- The relationships with continental Europe

- The achievement of economic and technological supremacy (the industrial developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are covered, but with a strong emphasis on social change and consequences)
- The growth and consolidation of Empire
- The military conflicts of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

### **Seeing 'Britain' differently in Wales: ways forward**

To offer some balance, inspection evidence suggests that there is a considerable amount of often good coverage of how engagement in two massive military conflicts in the twentieth century fostered and sustained a strong sense of collective unity developed around the notion of Britishness, even if it is often defined in terms of 'England' in the literature, cartoons and songs of the periods concerned. However, even in this work there is virtually nothing that looks at how one part of the British Isles, Ireland, responded differently, in some very important ways, to the rest.

The constraints of time on teachers cannot be over-emphasised. Therefore, it is not possible to address these shortcomings simply through blanket coverage of some body of designated content. The work would invariably be superficial and episodic. A more productive, manageable approach would be to ensure that a number of themes are reflected in planning work in history, to enable young people to develop clearly focused enquires. The aim of these would be for them to gain sufficient knowledge, awareness and understanding of the history of the British Isles in order for them to acquire the first principle of citizenship: what one of us has termed an 'informed awareness' of how the society and state of which they are part, came about (see Phillips, 2000). Given the track record of teaching British history throughout the UK and Ireland they would be the first generation to have acquired this understanding. These key themes for pupils to have opportunities to understand about are:

- That 'British' as an entity, and 'Britain' as a state, mean different things at different times; and that the notion of 'British' as an identity continues to evolve and change
- That the political development of Britain has been largely shaped and directed by England
- The issues, developments and forces that contributed to the political unification of the British Isles
- The issues, developments and forces that contributed to resisting the political unification of the British Isles
- The main contributory factors to creating a sense of 'British identity' among the population
- The main contributory factors that have weakened any sense of 'British identity' among the population
- That the geographic entity, most commonly termed the British Isles, has been ethnically diverse and multi-cultural for many centuries and continues to develop in this fashion

Approaches to teaching about these themes must be investigative and interpretive. The end-product is to enable young people to evaluate and analyze on the basis of historical evidence and interpretation rather than on myth and image. In this regard, we would endorse the views of Bracey (1995, p.63) who argues that history syllabuses in British schools in the late twentieth century should stress the diversity of the British past to more accurately reflect the plurality of the British present. This implies not only recognising the distinctiveness of each constituent part of the nation state but also appreciating its varied cultural and ethnic composition. Bracey therefore suggests that history syllabuses should:



- Place the history of Britain within European and world contexts
- Recognise that Britain has always been an ethnically diverse society
- Provide different interpretations of Britain's history
- Emphasise regional diversity
- Offer different versions of important past events in British history

### **Conclusion: 'Britain' past, present – and future?**

Any intellectual debate about the merits and demerits of particular curricular approaches always has to be considered alongside the cultural context within which pupils operate. If teenagers in Wales ever bothered to tune into talk radio programmes they could easily suffer from confused identity. Within the narrowest confines of one waveband they would hear Radio Wales repeat ad-infinitum 'your nation, your station' and Radio 5 proclaim one of its programmes as 'the nation's conversation'. Of course, the two stations are not talking about the same nation, one referring to Wales, the other to the UK. Similarly, if more of our young people watched proceedings from the National Assembly in Cardiff or the House of Commons they would hear politicians often refer to 'the country', but, here, again the term is not being used to describe the same entity. Furthermore, as Pittock (1997) reminded us earlier, it is not just in the media or in political dialogue that ambiguity can arise, it features in all walks of life and is both a reactive and proactive response.

We want to suggest that a better understanding of British history would enable our students to more critically appraise the changes that are currently being witnessed with regard to national identity, particularly in terms of the rejection of Britain and Britishness and the construction of new identities – and/or the re-construction of older ones. After all, these tend to often draw on images of the past that emphasise being put-upon or, alternatively, being powerful and superior—sometimes a combination of both, depending on events, circumstances and periods. These, of course, represent 'the myths we live by' (Samuel & Thompson, 1990) in the early twenty first century.

To conclude, the central argument of this article is to draw attention to the central role of historians and history educationalists in enabling the citizens of these islands to be better prepared to think critically about important issues relating to national identity and come to their own informed, historically valid judgements. We want to suggest that these, in turn, will invariably translate into political, social and cultural responses and whatever these turn out to mean for British identity and nationhood it is surely better that they are arrived at on the basis of historical perception, combined with informed contemporary reflection, rather than on prejudice and misunderstanding based on historical distortion, polemic and misrepresented imagery. One of us has referred to the need here for what has been called a border pedagogy (Phillips, 2002: chapter 12). With this in mind, it may be useful, therefore, to end with the following quotation:

Whilst recognising the challenges and difficulties involved in attempting to achieve a dispassionate sense of history (history is not value free) we feel that a commitment to the pursuit of truth, objectivity and a critical approach to historical endeavour based upon a respect for evidence should remain at the heart of history teaching in Britain. History syllabuses organised on these lines might ensure a more democratic 'imagining' of the 'British nation' – whatever precise form that may take – in the twenty-first century (Phillips et al, 1999: 167).

\* Although evidence from Estyn reports has been used in this article the views expressed here articulate those of the individual authors and not that of Estyn.

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# ***White Myths, Black Omissions: the Historical Origins of Racism in Britain***

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**Abstract** *Racism in Britain is rooted in history. This article considers the ways in which Britishness was constructed around white visions of identity, rooted in imperial attitudes and assumptions. Although the dominant view is that the black presence in Britain was not significant before large-scale immigration after the Second World War, this article sheds light on the rich and varied nature of black people's experiences in Britain in the nineteenth century. The central argument is that racism today can only be fully appreciated if we recognise the racist assumptions that dominated the period between the mid-nineteenth century and World War II.*

**Keywords** Racism, Empire, Black presence, Britain

## **Introduction**

In a previous publication (Sherwood, 2001), I argued that until the mid-nineteenth century, attitudes to black peoples were fluid, with racist ideology perhaps mainly confined to those making their fortunes in the trade in enslaved Africans and from the labour of these men, women and children on plantations in the Americas and West Indies. Yet, from the 1840s, racist ideology was deliberately promulgated in Britain. It was spread by all possible means, including popular culture, the media, the churches and missionaries, the education system and spokespeople from all walks of life, as well as by the burgeoning 'scientific' and imperialist associations (MacKenzie, 1986). This was an outcome of the wars that brought into existence a new Asiatic and African empire, by the emigration of millions of working-class British (including Scots and Irish) to colonise this new empire, and by the empire serving as a major source of employment for the ever-increasing middle-classes. Thus, the notion of 'British' had to be constructed in superior terms in relation to 'the other' in order to have the right to expropriate lands from the 'inferior' and 'uncivilised' and to press imperialist expansion under the umbrella of the 'civilising mission'. Colonial peoples were either mediated into savages, unable to rule themselves, without religion or law, perhaps even without language, and thus to be 'civilised' or seen as a dissolute, fainéant civilisation unfit to rule themselves.

I do not mean to imply that all whites in Britain were or became imbued with racism. There are always exceptions. For example, there was much support for the perceived struggle against slavery in the American Civil War among the very weavers whose livelihoods were threatened by the scarcity of cotton. Some, such as Richard Cobden (Hinde, 1987) spoke out against colonialism and, as I will show in a forthcoming book, Henry Sylvester Williams and his colleagues, in calling the very first Pan-African conference in 1900, found some white, English and Irish supporters, including the daughter of Richard Cobden. A general sea change in racist attitudes can perhaps be linked to three mid-nineteenth century developments: the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Darwinianism with its clear racist imperatives and the colonisation of the African sub-continent.

In this article, I firstly want to expand on my previous work in the context of new research by analysing the ways in which black people were omitted from the historical record from the c1840s to the c1940s. Secondly, by illuminating in a more objective manner the nature of the black presence in Britain during this period, the article provides an alternative perspective on British identity. Thirdly, in the process, the article sheds light on the origins of racism in Britain.

## **The black presence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries**

When William of Orange arrived in Exeter in 1688 to take over the anything but 'united' kingdom, in his entourage were some 20,000 troops, including between two and three hundred black men, attired in 'Imbroyder'd Caps lin'd with white Fur and Plumes of white Feathers, to attend the Horse' (Broadsheet, 1688). These blacks beg a number of questions. What was William's purpose in bringing them? What happened to these men? Did they continue to serve in the royal household? Did they marry and settle here? And are they among our black ancestors?

In subsequent years, the British army also employed blacks, mainly as musicians. Yet while these men served with honour – for example at Waterloo (Ellis, 2001a, 2001b) – by the mid nineteenth century the British used colonial regiments only in colonial wars, in contrast to the French who used them in Europe, for example, in the Crimean War. One possible reason for this is that so many black ex-soldiers had settled in Britain that fears of 'mongrelisation', evoked from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, led to the practice being confined to colonial wars.

The dominant historiographical impression, however, is that there were no black soldiers in the army at all, a perception which still has resonance today. Thus, the Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA) has challenged the Imperial War Museum and the National Army Museum about their displays for omitting information about black troops. Black troops must have been in the military, otherwise why introduce the King's Regulations imposing a colour bar in 1917, and the confirmation of this in 1941 by the Army Council Instruction 101 2 (c) which excluded all but 'British subjects of unmixed European descent'?. Research by Ellis (2001c) has shown that that not only were there blacks in the military, but that on discharge they and their often white wives settled in the UK.

This is just one example of historiographical misinterpretation about the black presence in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In particular, two impressions have been created: that all black people in Britain during the era of slavery were enslaved, and that they were all household 'servants'. However, this is far from the truth. While we do not yet know just how incorrect these assumptions were, recent research on parish, military, gaol and similar records indicates that there were many free people and that they worked in a variety of occupations.

For example, a recent paper by Evans (2002) tells the story of Nathaniel Wells, churchwarden, member of the Chepstow Hunt, Justice of the Peace, sheriff and subsequently Deputy Lieutenant of Monmouthshire in 1818. Wells was a black man, the son of a plantation owner in St. Kitts and an enslaved African woman. The son was 'recognised' by his father, sent to England to be educated and married a white woman, owned one of the grandest houses in Monmouthshire and seemingly was accepted by his peers.

These sorts of records also indicate that men and women of African origin and descent, and also from India, were domiciled all over Britain and intermarried with the local white population. While a few whites objected, most of these marriages seemingly passed unnoticed, at least by those who recorded local events. Some of the black men of differing social strata, whose lives have been researched, had white wives: Joseph Emidy the violinist (McGrady, 1991, 1999); Olaudah Equiano the anti-slavery campaigner and writer (Walvin, 1998, Carretta, 1995); George Africanus the Nottingham Freeholder and Keeper of the Register of the Office of Servants (Gray, 1997) and Francis Barber, Dr. Johnson's manservant to whose marriage the slaver Sir John

Hawkins objected (Gerzina, 1995). Two others include William Davidson, carpenter, hung for participating in the Cato Street Conspiracy, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, internationally renowned composer. That the attitudes of some British public figures was that of acceptance is demonstrated by the aid the wife of William Cuffey, the Chartist leader, received from Richard Cobden to enable her to join her husband, transported to Tasmania as a convict for his political activism (Holyoake, 1893).

Elizabeth Dido Belle of Kenwood, the niece of the Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield, is the only black Englishwoman currently on whose life some information is available. She married a Mr Davinier, believed to have been a local minister of religion (Adams, 1984). Parish records also give information on such intermarriages.

The implication, of course, is that what today we call 'ethnic relations' were relatively free and easy before the mid-nineteenth century. This could not have been ubiquitous. Those involved in the trade in enslaved Africans and the use of slave-labour in the Americas were keen to spread propaganda about Africans' savagery, and the lack of civilisation of Indians. But there was counter propaganda, not only by black people themselves, and by organisations like the Anti-Slavery Society, but also by individual white men. The poet and artist William Blake was one of these (Erdman, 1952). His great poem, espousing both gender and racial equality, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, was published in 1793. The following year he was asked to illustrate Captain J.G. Stedman's book on the *Revolted Negroes of Surinam*. Blake would have gained invaluable knowledge of slavery from reading the text. He must also have gained more first-hand information from Ottobah Cugoano, the Africa-born anti-slavery writer, who was the manservant of the artist Richard Cosway, whom Blake often visited (see Fryer, 1985 for Cugoano). While Blake's poetry is subject to ongoing debate, his inveighing against slavery is unambiguous. This is also true of his notions about the 'English' on pilgrimage to Canterbury. The 1816 engraving shows an unmistakably 'multicultural' group making its way to the shrine of Thomas Beckett. There are at least three unmistakably black men and a number of others of debateable ethnicity in the group of thirty-five.

To mention just one other person, this time fighting against prejudices at the end of the nineteenth century, and still wholly unrecognised, let me introduce Catherine Impey, a Quaker, whose family had connections with India. Propelled by her sense of injustice and the destructiveness of the caste system there she published a journal, *Anti-caste*, 'to give insight into the evils of Caste as it prevails in countries where our white race habitually ostracises those who are even partially descended from darker races; and by circulating in our pages the current writings of prominent and thoughtful persons of coloured races hope to give them fresh opportunity of presenting their case before white readers' (Impey, 1888). Learning of the not wholly dissimilar situation in the USA, she travelled there to meet Frederick Douglass and soon the journal contained articles on the situation there. Catherine Impey was probably the first owner/publisher of a journal to employ a black editor, Dominica-born Celestine Edwards.

Inevitably these intermarriages mean that many 'British' are also African and/or Indian, or the descendants of other sons and daughters of Empire living in or visiting Britain.

### **The early twentieth century - marketing the Empire**

By the time we reach the twentieth century, a vast propaganda effort had developed to reinforce a certain view of Britishness (see Mackenzie, 1985 and Yeandle's article in this edition). One such was the series of Empire Exhibitions which demonstrated the use of the colonies as producers of raw materials and as consumers of manufactured products. While the very first, called the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, was only attended by five and a half million people, the next in 1924, called the Empire Exhibition, was

visited by 27 million people – over half the population. The Royal Anthropological Society produced a leaflet for the Exhibition, which warned that ‘many primitive beliefs and customs appear repulsive to the civilised man’. Among the displays were ‘natives’ imported from the colonies and displayed to demonstrate their cultural, linguistic, intellectual and technological inferiority. This was more sophisticated than the 1810 display of The Hottentot Venus (Saartjie Baartman: see McGreal, 2002) in Piccadilly Circus or, the ever-growing exhibitions of ‘natives’ such as the groups of Zulus on show in the 1850s in St. George’s Gallery on Hyde Park Corner and at the Linwood Gallery in Leicester Square (see Graham-Stewart, 1996 and 2001). Not surprisingly, Africans in Britain protested to the Colonial Office, pointing out that such exhibits were unlikely to ‘improve or educate’ public opinion as to the actual conditions of home life’ in Africa (Public Record Office: CO554/64 #23120 and CO554/64 #24146. Copies of some of the protests found their way to the USA as I found them in the Schomburg Center: Phelps Stokes Papers, Box 24, file 1. See also *West Africa* 22/3/1924, 10, 17 and 24 May 1924 and 4/10/1924, p.1050).

Undeterred and unwilling to learn, smaller exhibitions were mounted regularly until the last pre-WWII massive effort in Glasgow, attended by twelve and a half million. It was replete with models, colonial products, panels of information and, of course, live exhibits. According to one chronicler of this event, the latter evoked ‘blatant contempt for the exotic and the unfamiliar... for the tradition that native peoples were objects of fun or distrust was deep-rooted’ (see Crampsey, 1988, p.31). This time the protests were manifold: for example, colonial organisations led by George Padmore worked with the Independent Labour Party to mount a counter-exhibition shown both in Glasgow and London; the Scottish left-wing paper *Forward* printed letters of protest (International African Opinion, 1938; Workers’ Empire Exhibition Committee, 1938; *Forward*, 1938).

The final exhibition in 1949, now again ‘Colonial’, was mounted by the post-war Labour government. It was probably the brainchild of the Colonial Office, as a recent opinion poll had found that over half those questioned could not name one colony, 75% did not know the difference between a colony and a dominion, and 3% believed ‘America was still a colony’ (The Times, 1949a). Exhibitions were mounted in a variety of venues such as various missionary society headquarters, the Royal Geographical and Anthropological Societies (see Rainger, 1978), and the Royal United Service Institute, which displayed ‘models, pictures, portraits...connected with actions in the Colonies, and personal relics of the great commanders who were responsible for the acquisition and protection of Colonies’. One can thus make an informed guess as to what message these exhibits were conveying: blacks were exotica, awaiting western civilisation, which was kindly provided by Britain, even if sometimes at the point of a gun. This hypothesis is borne out by the central feature, put together by the Central Office of Information. A ‘collection of effigies of the surprising and often alarming aboriginals of the colonies... displays showing colonial progress, for example in medicine, education and controlling pests...’ Naturally, effigies of whites dispensed all this ‘progress’ (The Times, 1949b).

But, while techniques had grown more sophisticated in that the ‘natives’ on display were presented to the King when he opened this propaganda exercise, attitudes had not changed. In his speech the King stated that the colonies needed ‘capital investment, which would be undertaken primarily for the benefit of the colonial peoples and could equally serve the economy of the Mother Country’. *The Times*’ editorial noted that ‘it is implicit in the mission of the empire that the peoples under temporary tutelage shall be enabled and encouraged to participate in the more sophisticated culture and political development of the ruling race’. It would of course take some time for the ‘primitive mind’ of the Africans to be ‘naturalised in the principles of British self-government’ (The Times, 1949c).



Milton Brown, a Nigerian residing in London, published a pamphlet of protest, *An African at the Colonial Exhibition*. In this he wrote that the much-vaunted colonial progress was 'never seen at home'. White superiority was personified by pictures and mock-ups of white advisors to the chiefs, by white doctors and nurses tending ill natives. The caption regarding medical services so kindly provided by Britain suggested that if only more Africans would come forward to be trained, there would be no need for these whites. But, he explains, Africans cannot 'pay for the education' as their wages are abysmally low. Yet the British companies which hired them saw their profits rising year on year. Propaganda was rife, but with the new 'trusteeship' vision: Brown states that to visitors it was explained that 'when the traders and slavers had come to Africa the British government was reluctantly forced to follow, to take over the administration of my country, to put a stop to bloodshed and to ensure justice, as it were, between the traders and the native peoples.' Brown found this 'strange, for to us Africans the Government has always appeared as the force behind the traders, smoothing their path with laws imposed upon the native people, and ready to back them with troops against the African when necessary. There is a great deal at this exhibition about the "reluctance" with which our British rulers came, but nothing at all about the conditions they imposed upon the people of Africa in the interests of the traders.'

What Brown did not know regarding the training of Africans for the medical profession is that while British medical schools accepted Africans if they could pay the fees, it was almost impossible for those who had passed their final examinations to gain the 'house appointments' required. Those that had qualified were employed by the Colonial medical service at lower rates of pay than whites who had qualified in the same medical schools. Some colonies did not employ black medical men at all. Those wanting to train as nurses were confronted with the same colour bar: Dr Harold Moody, the founder of the League of Coloured Peoples had raised the issue with the government in 1937; in 1938 the Overseas Nursing Association enquired from 18 hospitals in the UK if they would take 'coloured' probationers: none would (Sherwood, 2002).

The Empire Marketing Board (EMB) had a shorter life than the Exhibitions. It was an explicit propaganda venture by Leo Amery, arch-imperialist and Conservative MP, who went on to become Colonial Secretary in 1924. The EMB emphasised the 'complimentary' role of the Mother Country and her colonial empire: the colonies produced raw materials and purchased the manufactured products of the UK. Manufacturing was prohibited in the colonies. The Board used posters to elucidate and circulate this notion nation-wide. The posters stereotyped colonials as often scantily clad (if women) labourers and promoted the image of the 'strong silent bush officer'. The EMB recognised that colonials were not homogeneous, differentiating between, for example Malta and 'at the other end, the vast backward regions of Africa inhabited by primitive peoples whom we are only beginning to lift up from the more elementary barbarism, and among whom such a thing as national sentiment is, of course, an entirely inconceivable idea' (see Meredith, 1986 and 1987). Thus the EMB's message was explicitly racist – and also deliberately misinforming at another level, as the National Council of British West Africa, with nationalist representatives from Britain's West Africans colonies espousing a 'national sentiment', had first met in 1920.

It is hardly surprising with this kind of propaganda, that as soon as WWII ended, workers brought here from the colonies to aid the war effort were immediately asked when they were going home. Or that those who had returned to the Caribbean and found themselves jobless, were not welcome when they returned to try their luck in the Mother Country.

## **Colour bar Britain**

Given the propaganda efforts of the government, the racism espoused in popular culture and in the schools, it is hardly surprising that post-war black immigrants were seen as intruders into a homogeneous and civilised white society. Black people and their centuries of presence here had been carefully written out of English history, and even the histories of the world wars. We should therefore not be surprised that racism in many forms, including direct 'colour bars' were prevalent. This was linked to anti-Irish sentiment, reflected in signs such as 'no Irish, no blacks and no dogs'. The government set up a Royal Commission on Population, which reported in 1949 that immigrants to Britain should be 'of good human stock and not prevented by their religion or race from intermarrying with the host population and becoming merged in it' (Royal Commission on Population, 1949).

As ever, some must have believed that there might be some contradiction between being 'civilised' and operating a colour bar. The question of introducing legislation against the colour bar was first raised in the Colonial Office (CO) by Lord Moyne in June 1941 (see Sherwood, 1985). The issue was raised again in 1948 when the CO asked the Attorney General not to 'close the door' on legislation being discussed with the Home Office as there had been 'innumerable instances of discrimination in the past twelve months'. The Attorney General was less than enthusiastic, finding that even legislation regarding the colour bar being applied against those blacks seeking accommodation would be 'an unwarrantable interference in the freedom of contract'. Some inter-departmental meetings were held: Ivor Cummings, a black official in the CO's Welfare Department recorded that 'it is clear that neither the Home Office nor Health want to have anything to do with this' (Correspondence in Public Record Office: CO537/2588 (11035/B)).

The following year there was yet more discussion in the CO, this time with the new Commonwealth Relations Office, which supported the idea of legislation. Lord Faringdon had hoped that the Colonial Affairs group in the Parliamentary Labour Party would be lucky in the draw for a private member's bill, but it was not. Unable to raise the question of legislation in the House of Commons, Lord Faringdon suggested proposing legislation in the House of Lords, but was advised against it by Lord Listowel presumably because the Lord Chancellor was firmly against any anti-colour bar proposals. He had even rejected a plea by Phil Piratin MP in the House of Commons for a law against 'restrictive covenants' in tenancy leases (Correspondence in PRO: CO537/4273 (11035/B)).

The issue went on and on, though the CO was merged into the Dominions Office and the officials of the crusading Welfare Department were retired. Fenner Brockway proposed bills annually in the early 1960s. Yet nothing was done until the passing of the Race Relations Act in 1976, which was given some powers to investigate allegations of certain forms of racism, but had no powers to prosecute until the Act was amended in 2002.

Given the above, it is of little surprise that ignorance and racism was manifest in the education system. The issue of ignorance regarding 'overseas dominions' was raised as early as 1913 (See e.g. Multicultural Teaching, 1988). This was repeated in 1939 in a letter to The Times (8/7/1939, p.8) by a retired director of education who had served in two colonies. The Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire at its 1939 congress discussed the issue. At the same time an official of the CO noted that interest in the Empire was so low that at the last debate in the House of Commons only about one hundred MPs were present. So the CO decided to approach the Board of Education. The 1941 discussions on legislation against the colour bar, mentioned above,

which involved many government departments, reveals some aspects of the Board's attitudes. Its official stated that this was a 'thorny topic...in certain districts, for example the large ports, parents may very justifiably hold very strong feelings on the idea of the mingling together socially of coloured peoples and our own people' (Correspondence in PRO: CO859/80/7 & 8. On the situation and experience of Black workers in Britain during WWII, see also Sherwood (1985)).

The following year the Board of Education maintained that 'colour prejudice does not arise through teaching or impressions gained by young children in schools' without giving any research source for this assertion. It was parents, and 'outside sources' that were responsible, but the Board official agreed that 'many teachers [were] indifferent and ignorant of colonial matters' (PRO: 859/80/11: internal minute of meeting between Keith and Charles, 27/1/1942). The idea that teachers were just as ignorant of the history of black peoples in Britain did not cross the minds of these officials.

The issue of colour prejudice was raised with the CO by sociologist Kenneth Little (Little, 1947: the first sociological treatise on black peoples in Britain) in August 1942. He wrote that such attitudes were based on 'notions of inferiority and unintelligence....passed on by every cultural medium.' Little suggested a revision of textbooks and pressure on the media and missionaries to stop propagating negative images. Similarly, the League of Coloured Peoples, the major black campaigning organisation of the 1930s and '40s, had long been concerned with education issues and published a booklet which reported on a survey of text books in current use that:

it can be stated positively that the subject of Coloured Peoples is virtually disregarded in most of the History books...in non-European countries of the Empire the light is entirely on the roles of European administrators...there is virtually no reference or comment to coloured people as personalities... the unsophisticated reader would scarcely imagine that the wide continent of Australia had any inhabitants at all before the arrival of the English convicts... Equally astounding is the virtual absence of any discussion of race relations (League of Coloured Peoples, 1944, p.10)

In his portentous essay 'Some aspects of the "colour bar" in Britain', included in the booklet, Kenneth Little stated that popular culture, and 'popular knowledge' are:

pseudo-anthropological, and concern the 'mental inferiority' of Coloured People; the biological 'ill-effects' of racial crossing and a variety of other superstitions... It is in this cultural 'atmosphere' that most children in English society grow up. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of them absorb prejudicial ideas and notions concerning Coloured People. (ibid, p.51)

## **Conclusion**

The legacy of imperial/racist ideologies, of course, was long lasting and framed discussions and policies relating to 'race' and 'race relations' in the post-war period. Blacks and Asians that entered Britain in large numbers from the 1950s onwards suffered the social, cultural, political and economic effects of this racism, which had their origins in the mid nineteenth century onwards.

On the one hand, attitudes to 'race' have changed markedly since the 1940s but sadly, in some respects, it could be argued that Little's comments above are as relevant today as they were 60 years ago. Having steeped our pupils in notions of British superiority and kept them in ignorance of the histories and achievements of black peoples in Britain and in their countries of origin, it seems to me that the current history curricula in Britain do little to redress the balance. There is little recognition of the black population of Britain

before the arrival of the *Windrush* in 1948. I recently looked through six books on Victorian Britain; depressingly, there was not a black face in sight. It confirms my view that the concept of 'Britishness' has been manufactured by those with power in the past. The effect of this has been to create the myth that the British were - and are - 'white', when in fact, as this article has tried to show, this was not the case. It is a message that needs far more articulation in the history classrooms of twenty-first century Britain.

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# ***Empire, Englishness and Elementary School History Education, c.1880-1914***

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**Abstract** *This article investigates representations of empire in elementary school history education and assesses the impact this was intended to have had on working class configurations of English national identity. It concentrates predominantly on the ways in which classroom history explained the rise of Britain as an imperial power and how school texts explained this as the logical continuation of the English national past. I identify attempts to promote an imperial-national sense of identity in texts used to teach literacy ('readers'). These were more likely to have been deployed in the elementary school classroom than were those expensive subject specific textbooks that have formed the bases of many previous histories of history teaching.*

**Keywords** National identity, National past, Education, History, History teaching, Empire

## **History teaching and national identity: the context**

Recent researches into the relationship between the politics of history teaching and the politics of national identity have highlighted how politically contentious was and is the idea of a centrally controlled and centrally administered national curriculum for history (Phillips, 1998a, 1998b; Gardiner, 1990; McKiernan, 1993; Crawford, 1995; Jenkins and Brickley, 1991). So contested was the debate that one group of researchers described the struggle as 'nothing less than a public and vibrant debate about the national soul' (Phillips, Goalen, McCully & Wood, 1999, p.153). Debate about the nature and the content of history teaching and historical knowledge was also highlighted in the public eye by (often-misguided and ill-informed) media responses to the report of the Runnymede Trust on the Future of Multiethnic Britain (Runnymede, 2000). Borrowing from Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an 'imagined community', the Report stressed that the 'island story' was racially exclusive and that Britain, 'as an imagined community ... urgently need[ed] to reimagine itself' (Para 2.5, p.15; Anderson, 1991). Richard Littlejohn's response in the *Sun*, sadly, was not untypical: if the recommendations of the Report were to be implemented, he claimed, 'children will be told stories and lies about their history and encouraged to feel ashamed of their country' (cited in Richardson, 2000).

This article is informed by these debates about the politics of history teaching. History teaching is clearly politically contentious because it is seen as a conduit of a state prescribed national identity. Rather than concentrate specifically on the *politics* of history teaching, this article is concerned with the social and political history of history teaching. It examines the period of 1880-1914 wherein history first became a subject of mass educational consumption – that is, as a topic of instruction in elementary schools for those who would, prior to the implementation of Education Acts for compulsory and then free education, have not attended school. Between 1890 and 1903 the number of elementary school departments offering specific lessons in history rose from a meagre 414 to somewhere in the region of 23,000, largely because history had been made statutory curriculum fare in 1902 (Steele, 1974, p.187). Specific lessons in history prior to 1902 were very few and far between (Heathorn, 2000, provides some statistics, pp.7-9 and see relevant endnotes). Despite this, historical learning had been rife. The article demonstrates some of the ways in which a certain historical diet was fed to elementary school scholars in the hope that it would both help to augment a class-transcending sense of national belonging and help to deliver lessons in morality and citizenship. It is thus, within the socio-historical context of pre-war elementary education, that the *intention* of historical learning is analysed here. It is the form and idea of an imperial

national self-image, and projected place within it for the elementary school child, that concerns this article.

If the legacy of history teaching has suggested connotations of racial superiority and legitimated a racially *exclusive* telling of British national identity, then it is exactly this period wherein that legacy would have been sown that requires analysis. \*

### **Historians and the history of history teaching**

The history of history teaching in this period has been widely documented (Ahier, 1988; Chancellor, 1970; Horn, 1988; Howat, 1965; Marsden, 1995). Part of the argument below is that it has largely been documented in a false context. History lessons and historical learning were not the same. Most previous accounts have concentrated on history lessons as reconstructed by research into subject specific history textbooks. Here, I follow the recent research of Stephen Heathorn and concentrate specifically on historical learning – that is, the use and role of history in elementary school reading lessons in which subject specific textbooks did not play a part (Heathorn, 1995, 2000).

Those concerned with recent debates about the politics of the taught past and national identity have often offered brief overviews of what history was like prior to the progressivist impetus of the 1960s (Baldwin, 1996; Phillips, 1998, pp.12-15, and 1999; Aldrich and Dean, 1991; Sylvester 1994). Former History Chief Subject Inspector John Slater, for instance, parodied the ‘traditional’:

Content was largely British, or rather Southern English; Celts looked in to starve, emigrate or rebel; the North to invent looms or work in mills; abroad was of interest once it was part of the Empire; foreigners were either, sensibly, allies, or rightly, defeated (Slater, 1989, p.1).

The idea that the evolution of history teaching had produced an anglocentric narrative grounded in Protestantism, in praise of parliamentary democracy and purporting that Britain was racially superior is not necessarily misleading. Research of the previous two decades by historians concerned with assessing the downwards filtration of imperial propaganda and imperial-nationalist values have identified education in general and history teaching in particular as a key site for such inculcation. Following John MacKenzie’s highly influential, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion* (1984), a number of historians have demonstrated both the presence and persuasiveness of imperial ideologies in history teaching (Castle, 1996; Horn, 1988; Lieven, 2000). Indeed, this was often endorsed by texts that spoke of the civilising mission associated with the Empire project. Two examples from textbooks are illustrative:

G.T. Warner was not untypical of textbook authors in his comment that:

When we look at a map of the world, and we see how wide is the red that marks the British Empire, we may feel proud ... Our race possesses the colonial spirit which French, Spaniards and Germans do not possess: the daring that takes men into distant lands, the doggedness that keeps them steadfast in want and difficulties, the masterful spirit that gives them power of Eastern races, the sense of justice that abuses them from abusing this power. (Warner, 1899, pp.248-9).

In the words of Arthur Mee, author of *Little Treasure Island: Her Story and her Glory*, the national past was the story of how Britain was ‘the Island in the Middle of World’; it told how hers was ‘the central glory of the earth ... whose power had been the most precious thing’. But more than this, associated explicitly with the ‘story’ of the development of the nation, was the perceived existence of a bond between patriotism and a sense of



national mission. To continue with Mee, the British role abroad was to crush 'the oppressor, releas[e] the captive, uplift the fallen, and bring new strength and hope to the millions of mankind' (Mee, 1920, preface).

Such accounts have been reproduced in histories of history teaching to demonstrate that children were taught simply that Britain was a force for world good. These textbooks told the story of the national past, which, fitting seamlessly with the Whig idea of historical progress so prevalent in the period, dictated that the imperial possession was the telos of the British achievement. In short – it has been said that the purpose of school history was to sow an imperial-patriotism that indicated to children that Britain's glorious Empire and her industrial strength had been ordained because of her religious and democratic traditions. National identity was to be grounded in national pride and reverence for those that undertook and succeeded in the national mission.

### **Textbooks as limited source**

Although such jingoistic messages were endemic in the majority of textbooks, educators often castigated both the textbook and its content. Fletcher and Kipling's *A School History of England* was roundly rebuked in the *Educational Times* for being too bloodthirsty and militaristic (Chancellor, 1970, p.114). Likewise A.H. Garlick, in his teaching manual, informed future and existing teachers that historical learning in the elementary school should not encourage jingoistic sentiments, but should 'help to break away national *prejudice* by giving us some knowledge of other countries' (Garlick's emphasis). He continued: 'Bias against, and hatred and contempt for other nations, are often the results of ignorance' (Garlick, 1904, p.259).

James Welton's teaching manual underlines that in addition to being in poor taste, the history produced in textbooks was considered largely *unhistorical*.

A good textbook should be one written by an **author who is competent at once as a scholar and a teacher**. Too many of those in common use are mere pieces of hackwork, the study of which engenders prejudice and false notions even when it does not lead to disgust with the whole subject (Welton's emphasis) (Welton, 1906, p.267).

Like any historical source, the value of textbooks needs to be realised in the context of their proposed audience. Textbooks are limited in the information they can offer the researcher because they were very rarely used in elementary classrooms. Pamela Horn's chapter 'Elementary Education and the Growth of Imperial Ideal' is but one example where an historian has failed to note that the intended audience of textbooks was not the elementary school, but the Private School and the fee-paying Secondaries (Horn, 1988). Textbooks may have influenced some teachers – there is evidence to suggest that teachers may have derived subject knowledge from specific textbooks (to the admonishment of many teacher educators) – but we can be certain that they were not frequent, everyday, classroom resources.

### **Learning about the national past in the elementary school**

Those sources that were available, historical 'readers', are much better exemplars of the messages given to the majority of the school-age populace. The content of these – in relation to themes of gender, class, national identity and pre-war notions of citizenship and national belonging – have recently been meticulously researched by Stephen Heathorn (Heathorn, 1995, 2000).

Reading books were everywhere about elementary schools. Literacy was the educational buzzword of the times and schools dedicated large timetable portions to

lessons in reading, writing and comprehension (Vincent, 1989). An adjustment to the educational Code in 1883, as the preface of one of these readers indicates, 'require[d] that in each standard above the Second, three Reading Books shall be used, and that one of these shall relate to English History' (*Royal Story Book of English History*, 1884, preface). Harry Withers, in his appraisal of history teaching in London's elementary schools, confirms that history was to feature prominently in the materials used to teach children how to read:

It has no doubt been the case in many schools, in which History has not been presented as a class subject, that nevertheless, lessons in history have been given. And in every school without exception the rule had held good that out of the three reading books in every class above the Second Standard one has been a "History reader" (Withers, 1901, p.169).

The Code further stipulated that schools should have 'sets' of readers – a 'set' denoting that there should be enough so that each child could have access to the text. Sales figures for readers far surpassed those for the subject specific textbooks, outnumbering textbooks by a ratio of 10-to-1. This reflects the demographic balance of school attendees. 90% or so of the population would have been educated in the elementary schools. Longman, for instance, sold 115,000 of its *Ship Historical Readers* between 1891 and 1902, which far surpassed Oman's renowned textbook, *The History of England*, that only sold 6,000 between 1897 and 1902 (Heathorn, 2000, p.13). With demand for these readers thus initiated by the state, and a purchasing market in place, publishing houses increasingly sought to out-do competitors by employing authors that were academically qualified. It is not surprising, given that universities were now producing graduates in history, that Heathorn finds a new middle class cadre of male authors in this period (pp.37-55). It may be more surprising, however, to discover that some authors were renowned scholars in the universities. Oscar Browning, Mandell Creighton, Samuel Rolson Gardiner, and Frederick York Powell (amongst others) earned good money by turning their pens (or what may well have been the pens of their students) to elementary school readers as well as textbooks and academic publications. The ingredients feeding this resource production were thus similar for both readers and textbooks, but the end result was quite different.

It needs noting that the textbook assumes the ability to read, which in turn leads me to reiterate that readers were pedagogically designed to assist learning *how* to read. This is more than evident in the readers themselves. The texts are written in an accessible language, most containing long lists of new words at either the end or the beginning of each chapter/story. Highlighted in the text are sentences that can be used to practice pronunciation (a highly relevant favourite appears to be Nelson's call-to-arms, 'England Expects Every Man To Do His Duty'). Most contain, for the purposes of oral discussion, brief summaries and comprehension exercises. The first history readers, for Standard III, were, by recommendation, to be Simple Stories from English History, thus combining what was presumed to be the child's love for myths and fairy-tales with 'useful' information.

The national past becomes the national story, though this is not to say that children were to interpret what they read as fictitious. Quite the opposite. By learning about the past at the same time as learning to read, history was conferred an authenticity. As Welton explains in his teaching manual:

If the term 'reading book' be confined to those books which are used mainly for oral reading, then we see that the contents should be of value as literature rather than as information. The attempt to combine the two, like most endeavours to kill two birds with one stone, usually hinders the attainment of the result which should

be sought from each. The chief exception is the history reader, which, if well chosen, is at once literature and the medium of conveying definite information (Welton, 1906, p.136).

This sense of historical authenticity was reinforced by techniques deployed to make the history both exciting and therefore interesting and a stimulant to the imagination. Frequent inclusion of historical words such as 'hewn', 'strewn', 'lest', 'thee', 'exalteth', phrases like 'the children in those days...' (Holborn Series, c.1900, p.99) and stories about the childhood antics of historical heroes all added to a feel that this history was both a lived past, and crucially, a relevant past.

Ultimately, it was intended that these readers would confer a sense of the national past to which scholars felt they belonged. Readers, to some extent, were invitations into middle class perceptions of national identity. The working classes had previously little reason to feel themselves part of the Empire project. Now – in order to promote a sense of national belonging and national pride concomitant with selling the values and legitimacy of imperialism – the common man (and to a much lesser extent woman) was to be written into national narrative. It was the intention that working class schoolchildren would, in identifying with the national past, identify with the nation in its present, and be prepared to serve the national wellbeing in the future.

This intent to promote a sense of national *imperial* belonging can be identified by analysing a number of themes. Here, I will concentrate specifically on the ideas of historical continuity and racial connotations of nation belonging.

### **Continuous and inclusive national history: extending the Empire and imperial history backwards**

As one would expect – especially given their authorship - these readers drew on the dominant Whig idea of historical progress. Keeping with the impact of Whig thinking, the love of 'freedom' was represented as an innate quality of the English that could be traced back to Anglo-Saxon forefathers. *Chambers Historical Reading Books* (1892) explained: 'All Englishmen are *now* agreed that *we* greatly owe the freedom *we now* enjoy to *our* forefathers, who resolved to bleed and die on the battlefield rather than submit to the arbitrary will of misguided kings' (my emphasis, cf. Heathorn, 1995, p.404). But as recent discussion of education for citizenship reminds us, the concept of freedom is tied inexorably to obligations and responsibilities. This is similar in the period under discussion here. The widening of the franchise, and the perception of domestic moral decay, made it essential that working class children be made aware of their duties as citizens who could enjoy this hard-won and highly cherished 'freedom'. The most consistently employed method to articulate these duties and responsibilities was by the representation of these qualities in the guise of role models. Indeed, this was requested in the Board of Education schemes of work, and later in the government's *Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers and Others Involved in Elementary Education* (1905). Authors followed this through. John Finnemore, for instance, informs his readers in his Standard IV reader, *Men of Renown: King Alfred to Lord Roberts* (1902) that '[t]he boys and girls who will read this book are the children of a great and famous Empire [need to know] who laid its foundations and built up its world-wide sway' (p.1). Role models transcended the chronological confines of these texts – ranging (usually) from Boadicea through to the most recently acclaimed General or Queen Victoria herself. They tended to fall within three categories: military, explorer/missionary and statesman. Finnemore outlined specifically why children needed to know about these role models and why learning about them should be of relevance and importance:

Now it is quite true that very few people have such gifts as to become great, but everyone can strive his utmost to become a worthy member of a great people, and that is no mean thing. More, it has much to do with the making of the great man himself. Of what use is it for a great statesman to make wise laws, if the people will not obey them? Of what use is it for a great general to lay the most skilful plans, if his soldiers are faint-hearted? Of what use is it for the great sailor to turn his prow to sea, if there are cowards in the crew? We read in our history time and time again of battles such as Agincourt and Crecy, where a small band of English faced overwhelming numbers of a powerful enemy. Their case seemed utterly hopeless, but they won the day, and the name of their leader became great and famous. Yet where would be his glory but for the dauntless English hearts whose names we do not know? (pp.2-3)

Role models were the literary monument of the qualities of the English national character. They displayed qualities that all children were encouraged to emulate. Nelson, Wolfe, Gordon and many others had committed the ultimate act of self-sacrifice. In their duty, faith, and living demonstrations of what were deemed *national* qualities, they gave their lives for the good of the nation. Crucially, the texts also tied the common man into the success of the famous individuals, thus conferring the sense of historical belonging whilst informing children of those duties and behaviours they needed to try and replicate if England were to remain great.

Elizabethan explorers such as Raleigh and Drake were demonstrated to have had the same qualities and characteristics as the military heroes. Their successes were similarly indebted to the role of the common people.

It was these sailors that gave England the proud title of Mistress of the Seas. Our hearts still beat faster as we read of their exploits. No enterprise was too bold or too dangerous for them. Under such men as Drake and Hawkins, they carried the English flag into seas never seen before, fought and won against the greatest odds, and made their [captains'] names a terror through all the colonies of Spain (Chamber's *Alternative History Readers* (1898), cf. Heathorn, p.412).

The representation of history as continuous allowed a linkage to be drawn between the military and seafaring heroes. It was explained that seafaring and exploration were a characteristic of 'the race' – a positive legacy of the 'restlessness' felt by what were commonly labelled 'our' Anglo-Saxon forefathers. It was this restlessness, of course, which explained the English propensity and natural ability to colonise new territories and act as a force for good. The continuity between the Anglo-Saxons and the Navy was explicitly drawn and is illustrated by reference to the *Patriotic Historical Reader*. Having discussed Alfred's battle with the Danes, his imprisonment and his decision to construct a navy, the author notes:

The King never used his ships to attack his neighbours. He only wanted them to protect our own shores, so he stationed them round the coast, ready to drive off any enemies who might try to land.

'Since Alfred's time', the text continued, the English 'have always kept up *their* love for the sea, and many of the most famous British victories have been won by *our* navy' (Book III, 1898, pp.37-9). Bisecting the text is a photograph of a modern battleship (p.38), thus rendering this imperial continuity explicit in the child's eye and the child's mind.

The history told then was both class-inclusive and race-exclusive. The English were expected to identify with the national past and this was encouraged by consistently

reiterating to children to that they were of Anglo-Saxon stock. This section has emphasised the use of the words 'we', 'our', 'their' and 'they'. There is a clear sense in these texts of an historical procession – in which the scholar is expected to feel a part – of an innate genealogical relationship between those past and those present. This served the purpose, as these two lengthy extracts demonstrate, of both emphasising to children *why* they should identify with the nation, and why they should do their utmost to defend its integrity. The first is from an introduction and the second derives from a concluding chapter.

The reason why we like to read English history is because it tells the story of our own ancestors. You all know of your fathers and grandfathers, and you must remember that each of these had grandfathers and grandfathers before them, and so on backwards as far as we can go; so that forefathers of every English child who reads this book must have been living at every time in the history of the English People. English History, therefore, is the history of our families as well that of our nation (Cassell's Historical Course for Schools, 1884, p.9).

We have now read the story of the English people during their life in England. We have seen them land on our shores, a race of rude, savage warriors. We have seen them grow in strength and in knowledge until they have become a leading nation of the world. And let us remember that we, too, are English. In our hands lies the future of our great race. Let us resolve to do all we can to uphold the fame of our country, so that fresh honours may yet be added to the story of the English People (*Black's Story of the English People*, 1905, p.154).

### **National origins and 'English' national identity**

The concept of race and racial belonging is clearly used in these texts. But what is the English race? Who are the English race? Why do they have a British Empire? The frequent use of possessives (we, our, they, etc) indicates the attempt to promote national sameness based in a shared history. This was no accident. As FJC Hearnshaw, an Oxford Historian and textbook author, noted in an address to the Historical Association in 1913, the 'race':

has no natural memory, and in order that it may not lose the vast accumulated wealth of the experiences of the past, a memory has to be created for it. **That race-memory is History** (my emphasis, Hearnshaw, 1913, p.39).

It was an attempt to construct race-memory that was predicated on the Victorian obsession with the Anglo-Saxon. Accounts of the Anglo-Saxons themselves in these readers helps one to understand a little better the message in these readers about Englishness at the turn of the twentieth century.

It has already been identified how children were informed that the English love for freedom and mastery of the seas was owing to Anglo-Saxon heritage. It is also worth noting, albeit briefly, that some authors additionally attempted to tie the concept of parliamentary democracy to the Saxons. W. Beach Thomas, for instance, claimed that the liberties and organisation of Parliament corresponded 'very nearly to the old meetings and councils that arranged local affairs a thousand years ago' (*The Citizen Books*, Book III, cf. Heathorn, 2000, p.106). Lady Katie Magnus extended this debt to the Anglo-Saxons even further: 'the seeds of our national character are sought in the lives and heroes of early England, from whom we trace the beginnings of our best habits and institutions' (cited in Barczewski, 2000, p.12). The significant indicators of what idea of Englishness children were expected to accrue are evident in the Anglo-Saxons' dealing with other 'races' – especially those other 'races' within the island territory.

Reflecting that this was an era where discussion of social Darwinism was at the fore, these readers told a story of the 'race' coming together, growing stronger together, absorbing the best and rejecting the worst of those 'races' that it came into contact with. 'The conquest of Britain was indeed partly wrought out after two centuries of bitter warfare', *The Young Student's English History Reader* (1881) informed.

At its close, Britain had become England, a land that is, not of Britons, but of Englishmen ... [t]he Britons, abandoned to themselves, were destined to be driven out, or extinguished, or absorbed, according to that apparently inevitable law of nature by which the weaker race disappears before the stronger. We are of that stronger race ... (cf. Heathorn, p.402)

In similar vein, the Norman Conquest was rationalised as a good thing. Even though the Normans were able to win the battle of Hastings, in the longer-term battle of the 'races', there was likely to only ever be one winner. Ultimately, the Normans became anglicised:

The Normans soon mixed with the English, and the two races became one nation. It was easy for them to mix, for English and Norman were really brothers in blood. The Norman was a Northman, just as Saxons and Danes were. When the races were joined, a very mighty nation was the result. The spirit and charm of the Norman, together with the solid strength of the Saxon, have formed the English speaking world of today, the people who rule so much of the earth, and whose language is spreading so widely (Black's Story of the English People, cf. Heathorn, p.405).

Josiah Turner was more explicit. 'These changes in laws and customs', he argued, 'did not make the Norman Conquest a turning point. It is true that the strict enforcement of the Feudal System made England, for the first time in its history, a united nation' (Turner, 1913, p.32).

By the Hundred Years War there was racial unity. Again the stress is placed on the role of the common man in consolidating racial greatness. The following extract from *Raleigh History Reader* is wholly indicative:

The battle of Crécy is very important in one respect. It showed that the bravest and boldest knights of France were powerless against the sturdy English yeoman, with their bows and arrows. The men, who had left their ploughs and their spades at Edward's call, put to rout the finest nobility of France. The people won the day ... (Raleigh History Reader, Book IV, 1898, cf. Heathorn, 1995, p.407).

We have seen many times over then that history was able to provide an inclusive narrative of the nation's past. By stressing duties and values as core to the national character, and therefore the success of the nation's present, it was hoped that this would lead to social cohesion and would ensure a generation of citizens conscious of their national-imperial identities and willing to defend the nation.

### **The British Empire and English national identity**

Although Empire and Industry were to remain British, and explicitly so, the historical explanation for the acquisition and safe maintenance of the Empire was predicated, in these readers, in the language of Englishness. The exalted national-imperial present was validated, infused and enthused as the logical culmination of the English past. The successful accumulation and maintenance of a **British** Empire was explained to these children as based on the historically evolved qualities of the **English** national character. It was thus that Meiklejohn, albeit in a geography textbook, was able to state decisively that 'the story of the growth of the British Empire is the story of the expansion of the

Anglo-Saxon race' (cf. Heathorn, 1995, p.408). History readers mirrored this. The *Britannia History Readers* (Book I, c.1902) renders this lucidly – and makes some comment about England's relationship with Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the dominions:

England is only part of the island called Great Britain, the other parts of which are Scotland and Wales. To the west of Great Britain is another island, called Ireland. The two together are known as the British Isles. From the first, Englishmen have had much to do with the inhabitants of the other parts of the British Isles, that it is impossible to write about them quite separately. And they are all now under one sovereign, and form the kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The British Isles are only a small part of the dominions of the British Sovereign, to whom new lands belong all over the world. It is said that upon the British Empire the Sun never sets ... **English history has to tell, among other things, how it is that we have come to possess such a large part of the world** (my emphasis) (pp.9-10).

A text of 1896 claimed that 'no race could have built up this Empire unless it possessed the qualities of honesty, courage and endurance' (*Warwick History Readers*, Book VII, cf. Heathorn, 1995, p.408). Another noted that it was because of Anglo-Saxon qualities that the Englishman had 'the energy and perseverance' that enabled him to 'face the difficulties of opening up a new country', as well as the 'independence of character [that] drives him to new lands' (*King Edward History Readers*, Book 5, cf. Heathorn, 1995, pp.408-9). The imperial possession was thus represented as being ordained: children were to receive the impression that Empire was the logical future for their forefathers.

As with the defeat of the Romans, and the Anglicisation of the Normans, what is implicitly suggested in these texts, is that it was part of the glory of England that it could become Britain, but retain its own version of Englishness. This may suggest why role models included the Anglo-Irish Wellington who was able to take his place amongst the pantheon of great Englishmen. This may help to explain why Presbyterian missionaries from Scotland were welcomed into Englishness, since their mission was one historically defined as English. It may explain how industrialists and entrepreneurs from and of the periphery were to take their place in a specifically English historical narrative. And so on. It helped to underline representations of Britishness as a process of what Keith Robbins has called 'blending', so long as those that wanted to 'blend', accepted the dominance of the English narrative and English ideal as centre (Robbins, 1993).

This process of absorption into Englishness is important. It is nowhere more evident than in the immortalisation of the monarch. In the mid-century, Victoria, a monarch of dubious Anglo-Saxon racial heritage, had largely been lauded for her domestic family values. In 1895, however, the *Raleigh History Readers* (Book IV) stated categorically that she was:

The descendant of the Saxon chiefs who settled in Wessex more than fourteen centuries ago [...] She represents the growth of our people from very small beginnings to its present world wide power: and all who know the history of our country feel a thrill of pride and joy when they think of its wonderful past and its prosperous present, with all of which our royal family has been so closely associated. When we sing "God Save the Queen", we think not only of the Queen, but of the people whose past and present life she represents. For [...] we remember that, after all, we are one nation, closely related in blood and community of interest (cf. Heathorn, 2000, p.41).

And here is the aim of this process of invention. Children were to forget their differences, were to remember they were part of one nation, to remember they were closely related in blood and, like the British Empire itself, the product of the English national past. This was to be the basis for a collective and inclusive nationhood.

Although justified on the grounds of the English national character, this nationhood was to underline, in an age of Empire and an age that stressed the vitality of imperial values, the strength and ties of a Greater Britain of which all the nation's children were intended to become imperial citizens.

With this explanation of the existence of the British Empire firmly lodged in the English national past, I turned my research to those readers written for older children that were likely to be more detailed in their historical stories. It was not surprising to find a supplementary pamphlet to the Patriotic History Book VI for Standards VI-VII entitled *The Patriotic History of the British Empire*. Expecting this to be different from other readers, perhaps dealing in more depth with the logistics, trade and legal issues, as well as the processes of settling and colonisation, what do I find, but exactly the same formula as in other texts. In purporting to explain the growth of the British Empire by beginning its story with the Roman occupation of Britain - and denoting the starting point of the English Empire with the moment the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes decided to set sail for 'England' - this text indicates that it was common belief that the acquisition of the Empire was the rational end-result of the national story. Pride in the British Empire was a key component of this national identity - but even more crucial it would appear - is the association of this Empire with the historically evolved 'English' race.

## **Conclusions**

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis. Most importantly, it must be seen that these reading books articulated a message about nationhood and belonging that was intended to serve a purpose. Given the history textbooks and academic histories that would have formed the historical knowledge of reader authors, it can be argued that this evident attempt to imbibe middle class values of duty and sacrifice to the working classes was akin to representations in textbooks of the mission to 'civilise' the 'native', the 'heathen' and the 'barbarian'. Indeed, in contrast to the explicit denigration of racial 'others' that so characterised textbooks (Marsden, 1990), impressions of national belonging were conferred to elementary schoolchildren via a telling of the story of the national 'self'. Why children should identify themselves with the nation was articulated in readers more thoroughly by describing to children the past and present qualities of 'us' - of national 'sameness'. This was in contrast to textbooks that highlighted Britain's racial superiority by demonstrating national 'difference' when this 'us' - it was perhaps taken for granted that the audience for textbooks knew what it was to be British because of their class positioning - interacted with 'them'.

## **Afterthought**

Fred Clarke, in his polemic of 1929 against dry, irrelevant and pedagogically naïve history teaching, concluded (N.B. Clarke, like Callcott (1859) before him, uses the name 'Arthur' to denote the average scholar):

England and English life must form the centre and main substance of Arthur's teaching. But it is the setting that is all-important. The whole national history must be seen in its place as one field of operation, one centre of functioning, for the common effort. To that effect Arthur's country has contributed much. Sometimes it has failed and hindered. Where it has done so, Arthur must be frankly told [...] [t]hen the much-abused 'My Country Right or Wrong' may come to have its proper meaning which should be, 'My Country Most when She is Wrong', for then She needs me most (Clarke, 1929).

This sentiment - that children can be 'frankly told' about negative aspects of Britain's past whilst maintaining that sense of patriotic belonging - is one that would perhaps



serve Mr Littlejohn and other supporters of outmoded and irrelevant national imaginings well.

\* Further research into *how* children were likely to have negotiated and mediated their identities in the context of what they were taught and *how* they were taught is forthcoming. Current research, building likewise on the socially differentiated nature of historical learning, compares the different representations of nationhood and national belonging in history and geography textbooks and historical and cross-curricular readers.

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## ***Black and British? History, Identity and Citizenship***

**Andrew Wrenn**

**Abstract** *This paper will explore some of the tensions and contradictions in being labelled 'black' and 'British' within the United Kingdom, set against the discourses about the historic development of British and other identities as well as strands of post-modern thinking. It will relate these tensions and contradictions to emerging practice in citizenship and history curricula in England at Key Stage 3 level.*

'The English' by Jeremy Paxman (1998) has been a recent best seller in British bookshops. Paxman quotes the late, black, labour MP Bernie Grant as saying that he would rather be introduced as 'Black British' than English. This hybrid label 'Black British' is appropriate 'because it includes other oppressed people like the Welsh or the Scots. It would stick in my throat to call myself English.' His statement deserves closer examination. Grant appears to imply that the 'English', 'Welsh' and 'Scots' are 'peoples' while the 'British' are not, at least not in the same way. A particular view of the past is also taken as read. The 'English' are cast as historic oppressors while the term 'British' becomes a more neutral label to which the term 'black' can be safely linked. Grant sees himself as belonging to a dual identity, 'black', by implication founded on skin colour and 'British' founded on a looser identity, closer perhaps to legal citizenship of the British state. This citizenship is shared by the English, Scots, Welsh and black people but not on an equal basis, for Grant defines black, British identity against one of these peoples, the English. The shared legacy of past oppression unites Scots, Welsh and blacks as historic victims of another people, the English. In shifting the term 'British' away from a more traditional notion of nationhood, Grant was actually taking part in a much wider discourse about how the concepts of 'nation' and 'Britishness' are 'imagined' in the future. (McKiernan, 1993).

The role of history is crucial in helping to shape how these concepts are 'reimagined'. There is an influential strand of historiography that seeks to redefine what constitutes 'British history' and by implication what we understand as British identity. Colley (1994) asserted that 'Britishness' emerged as a concept in the eighteenth century after the Act of Union (1707) between England & Scotland. It was founded on a common loyalty to protestant values (among other things) and allowed Scots, and to an extent the other peoples of the then United Kingdom a stake in both imperial and economic expansion. Other historians (Davies, 2000) have asserted that 'British history' has come to mean 'English history'. The other peoples, the Scots, the Welsh and Irish need to reassert their distinct histories so that 'British history' is rewritten to be more representative of all constituent parts of the United Kingdom, not just England. Davies goes out of his way to deconstruct what he views as an anglicising domination of the historic record. He insists that the term 'British' cannot be anachronistically applied to events prior to 1707 since the only substantial use of the label 'British' before this was derived from the Roman province of Britannia. A label that only ever referred to the southern half of the island of Great Britain. When speaking to a conference in Dublin, capital of the long independent Irish Republic it occurred to Davies that referring to the term 'British Isles' in this setting was inappropriate. Thus his book is referred to as just 'The Isles'.

While Davies is claiming to be rewriting 'British' history from a more 'accurate' perspective, the wholesale process of revisionism can be justified even further by reference to strands of post-modern thinking. In 1978 White wrote that historians should be forced "to abandon the attempt to portray one particular portion of life right side up and in the true perspective....and to recognise that there is no such thing as a correct view'. The very concepts of truth and objectivity can be viewed as elements of a modernist paradigm of history deriving from the imperialist west. Paula Rothenberg,

(1992) claimed: 'the traditionalist curriculum teaches us to see the world through the eyes of the privileged, white European males and to adopt their interests and perspectives as our own ...effectively defines this point of view as reality rather than a point of view itself, and then assures us that it alone is 'neutral' and 'objective'.'

Zinn (1994) supports this view: 'all history is subjective, all history represents a point of view... and since its not possible to be objective, you should be honest about that.' It is a small step to then espouse that within whatever rules historians can articulate, all interpretations are equally valid. Were such a view to prevail with regard to the historical interpretations of Davies (the professional historian) and Grant (the professional politician), the past would merely become a quarry for the endless restructuring of politics and identity in the present. It would be possible to argue against their points of view but only up to a point since 'all interpretations are equally valid'. If Grant and other blacks choose to define themselves as 'Black and British' and not 'Black and English' by reference to a particular view of the past, that is their choice.

Of course this kind of relativism frequently draws heavy fire from the Right. Kerridge (1998) attacks the very idea of black history from a more modernist perspective: 'Do we need to rewrite the curriculum.... in order to make blacks visible in the books, as they are visible in the streets of modern Britain.... If so what should be changed? Which bits of history must be censored out, which newly included and which rewritten, so as to change the emphasis or even change the facts? They (ed: those questions) lie at the heart of a new intellectual endeavour to produce a black - centred curriculum and to overthrow the cultural hegemony of 'racist Britain'.'

Writing in The Guardian of October 9<sup>th</sup> 1997, Norman Tebbit raised the spectre of disintegration and anarchy flowing from pluralistic alternative histories breaking down commonly accepted concepts of British history. 'Youngsters of all races born here should be taught that British history is their history or they will forever be foreigners holding British passports and this kingdom will become a Yugoslavia.' As Phillips has noted (1998), in the struggles for control of the prescribed content of the National Curriculum for history in all its versions (DES 1991, Dfe 1995, Dfee/QCA 1999), to call for the inclusion of a whole raft of voices and viewpoints in historical narratives of the nation is to court controversy.

If black identities in the United Kingdom, as well as others, are being continually reforged in such ideological cauldrons, how does this impact on a child in a Key Stage 3 (11-14) history classroom. How do children from ethnic minority backgrounds and even more, those with more complex patterns of ancestry see themselves? How do they relate to a history curriculum that in its prescribed content preserves much of a conservative, 'our island story', framework of the past? Is it possible to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable? Is there a way through?

The new government emphasis on Citizenship gives a potentially valuable opportunity to find a structure for teaching about aspects of identity. The concept of multiple identity - that is, simultaneously belonging to a number of different communities at once - can be a way of formalising the reality that many children and adults live with from day to day.

We may identify ourselves through our family upbringing in particular local communities which may possess religious, ethnic or class differences to that of the locality in which they are set. A Muslim girl from an Asian background in Bradford, might assert her religious identity at school by contrast with her many white classmates while stressing her Britishness at home, as a form of adolescent independence in a traditional Asian family. Living in Scotland, a child might choose to call themselves Scottish before being called British. They might prefer to be called European instead of British. An Ulster

Protestant might claim to be simultaneously British and Irish but never English. The concept of identity is wrapped up with notions of citizenship. Heater's (1998) model of multiple or layered citizenship used as a pedagogical model would allow any number of varied combinations of identity to be found among the school population of the United Kingdom to be accepted.

With regard to the history curriculum, such a degree of pluralism has already been incorporated into the National Curriculum of history. One of the required key elements for Key Stage 3 History states that pupils should be taught:

- a) to describe and analyse the relationships between the characteristic features of the periods and societies studied including the experiences and range of ideas, beliefs and attitudes of men, women and children in the past.
- b) about the social cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the societies studied, both in Britain and the wider world.

So the complexities of layered citizenship in the present should already be bolstered by the expectations of the way history is taught in class. Although at first sight the areas of study for the National Curriculum for England at Key Stage 3 outline a traditional framework of British history from 1066 onwards, there is a requirement to incorporate potentially diverse narratives within and across the various periods. This allows teachers to make selections of content from the breadth of study that can readily reflect black history and other narratives reflecting varying emphasis.

It is quite common to find secondary history departments teaching the black peoples of the Americas - a Key Stage 3 area of study that embraces the Atlantic slave trade and its abolition. Yet the resources departments use for teaching this topic (by which I mean textbooks, worksheets and the like) sometimes tend to portray blacks either as helpless victims or in a heroic mode. The resources themselves have emerged out of an old discourse within the historiography of the slave trade and its abolition. This discourse polarises between two extremes. One is a traditionally Euro-centric tribute to white abolitionists, where blacks appear mostly as passive victims and recipients of freedom. Much contemporary documentary material supports this view as it was produced by white abolitionists themselves. Alternatively a more radical, Afro-centric view, stresses the heroism of blacks and the role they played in their own liberation. A recent film from Stephen Spielberg called 'Amistad' dramatises this kind of interpretation as did the 1970's television series 'Roots'. This series in itself reflects the change of black American identification from 'coloured' to 'Afro-American', 'the term adopted since the 1960's by black consciousness movements of all kinds, highlights the tremendous preoccupation with historical roots' (Samuel, 1994).

Bernie Grant would probably have supported an Afro-centric interpretation of the slave trade and its abolition. He might even have dubbed the traditional Euro-centric view as 'racist', with some justification. A post-modern view of history would readily allow any such competing narrative, claiming to overturn a traditional 'white' one (such a view might have the additional virtue of deriving from an oppressed minority itself).

So how can secondary history departments teach this period in some kind of coherent way? In my own view, to accept the ultimate conclusion of postmodernism that 'all interpretations are equally valid' would be disastrous. At the heart of the National Curriculum for history the current strand of skills, knowledge and understanding 'Historical Interpretations' has been evolving in history teaching for over ten years. Macaleavy (1998) defined an interpretation as any 'conscious reflection on the past', made up of a mixture of 'fact and fiction, imagination and point of view.... dependent for

its historical worth on, among other things, purpose and intended audience.' This implies that any interpretation of the past, from whatever viewpoint can be rigorously tested for its historical validity to the same standard. Yet this same rigour of analysis is sometimes not applied to minority narratives for fear of causing offence. As Downes (1993) claimed: 'the politics of identity.... rests on a disturbing epistemological ground. Only those who share the group's identity and have lived its experiences can know what it means to be black, a woman.... in an America constructed as white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant.' This kind of reasoning can be used to attack an opposing view of history when supported by an historian who does not come from that particular group.

As Evans (1997) points out, if the study of history is driven by primarily political or moral aims 'the scholarship suffers'. 'Facts are mined to prove a case, evidence is twisted to suit a political purpose, inconvenient documents are ignored, sources deliberately misconstrued or misinterpreted.' It is right and proper that black history, long neglected and ignored, should be an object of study in schools history. Grant's identification of British blacks with the Irish, Scots and Welsh can be defended as an historical interpretation but it can also be challenged. For just as there is no single 'white history', there are also diverse black histories. To be 'black and British' for a teenager from an ethnic minority background, may well be important to reinforcing that child's identity in the present. But if Britishness itself ultimately disappears and with it, Grant's particular view of the past, where does that leave the teenager as an adult? Probably confused. How much better to teach about the past, but also equip children with the cultural awareness to deconstruct any interpretation for themselves. Within the scope of school history teaching, there is every reason to present varying historical interpretations, not as though they were equally valid but as subject to the same analytical framework as rival historical points of view. Hennessy et al commented in 1991: 'History is a contested subject...I have a daughter who teaches in a big comprehensive in North London....lots of Irish children, lots of Afro-Caribbean children, and lots of children from the sub-continent. And it is contested, and it is discussed and so it should be.' As Evans says 'black history deserves to be treated with scholarly rigour and care as much as white history does.' Children in history lessons deserve no less.

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# ***The School History Curriculum in Scotland & Issues of National Identity***

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**Abstract** *This article stresses the importance of historical knowledge in shaping attitudes to national identity. The background to the current situation for history in Scottish schools is outlined. Evidence of pupils' historical ignorance, and the absence of vital aspects of the past in the curriculum, are indicated. Concern is expressed for the focus on an oppositional identity and for the lack of a clear rationale for the selection of historical content.*

## **Introduction**

Politicians seek to shape the school curriculum to satisfy a number of purposes. The future employability of pupils provides one obvious purpose: the development of attitudes, seen as appropriate for a stable and harmonious democracy, furnishes a second. A common response to a perceived social ill is to require some sort of educational input - thus sex and drugs education and citizenship now feature in school courses. The diversity of peoples who inhabit the United Kingdom has stimulated debate about the nature of national identity in a changing society; within this debate the coming of devolution has increased interest in the nature of the identities of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom. The teaching of history forms a key element in the discussion about the formation of the attitudes of future adult citizens.

The development of a national curriculum for history stirred vigorous argument in both England and Wales, about the nature of national identity (Phillips, 1996). But the distinctive Scottish system has stayed detached, apparently at ease with its circumstances. Schooling in Scotland remained largely unaffected by the union of 1707, proud of its distinctive parish schools and its universities. Nineteenth century upheavals led to the 1872 act that created the board schools and the London-based Scotch Education Department to oversee Scottish education. The 1918 Education Act produced a key feature of the system - state funding for Roman Catholic schools with guarantees for their religious character (Anderson, 1997). Though the administration shifted to Edinburgh in 1939, the direction in which policy moved was shaped until 1997 by the outcome of British elections. Thus, during the Thatcher years, when Scottish politics resolutely refused to move to the right, the school system was shaped by a succession of Conservative Secretaries of State. The devolution vote of 1997, therefore, marks a considerable change. It is the party dominant in Scotland that now controls educational policy making; there is little sign that this party is likely to be Conservative in the foreseeable future.

## **National identity in Scotland**

With national identity issues more to the fore than ever before one might have expected an impact to have been evident on as crucial an area as the school history curriculum. Yet, so far, this has not been the case. Scots, it is often asserted, have a clear sense of their identity. It is the English who have problems. Certainly Scots have always been very aware of the two distinct dimensions of being both Scottish and British and have been irritated by the English habit of using 'English' and 'British' interchangeably. One wonders what went through the mind of the Scot from Lewis who was required to haul aloft Nelson's pre-Trafalgar signal of 'England expects every man to do his duty'. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Convention of Scottish Burghs (1905) complained of the existence of school books in which:

Great Britain is called England, the British throne is called the English throne ... David Livingstone is called an Englishman, James Watt and Adam Smith are called English.

Research among 9 to 11 year olds in an Edinburgh school revealed pupils' determination to distinguish between being Scottish and British and, from many children (Carrington & Short, 1996) an emphasis on their Scottish identity. Evidence from polls and investigations (such as the British Social Attitudes Survey, 2001) all point to Scots' preference for asserting their Scottish rather than their British identity. Yet what does this Scottish identity consist of? The Glasgow journalist, Cliff Hanley (Hanley, 1980) has offered a parody of how Scots are portrayed:

The Scots are tall, rugged people who live in the mountain fastness of their native land, on a diet of oatmeal porridge and whisky. They wear kilts of a tartan weave, play a deafening musical instrument called the bagpipes, are immediately hospitable, but cautious with money ... They are sparing with words, but when they speak they speak the truth. They have a hard and Spartan religious faith and regard virtually any activity on a Sunday as a grave sin. When they leave their native land, they immediately rise to the top in other peoples' industries and professions.

Children's perceptions are shaped by forces other than the school curriculum. Representations in film of the Scottish male so alarmed the Scottish journalist Jan Moir that, writing in *The Observer* (29 October 1995) she felt it wise to warn English girls of a gulf between image and reality:

Scotland, my dears, is not full of rippling hunks with biceps like footballs, men who are romantically prepared to die for their country and who will ride their horses right into your bedrooms because they cannot wait one second more to be in your arms ... Scotland, in fact, is full of wee guys in anoraks wondering what's for their tea tonight. Scotland is full of men with chapped knees and freckles eating deep fried pies and moaning that there's nothing good on telly.

Nor is the activity of watching such films simply external to the classroom - indeed colourful videos are welcomed by teachers eager to hold adolescent attention and keen for history, to triumph in the competition for older pupils' subject choice.

The heritage industry, too, is exploited by school trips as well as by informal family outings. Yet heritage sites provide all sorts of messages. At the *Archaeolink* centre near Aberdeen, for example, a powerful introductory video portrays Pictish peoples being assaulted by Agricola's Roman Legions. The Picts speak in Scottish accents; the Romans in accents derived from the English public school system. Heritage sites seeking tourist business may well provide an uneven, even unbalanced, portrayal of the past. Conflict, Wallace, Bruce, Mary Stuart, Bonnie Prince Charlie provide topics likely to be popular. Identity that is essentially oppositional and anti-English pervades both the media and many heritage sites.

This oppositional identity is further reinforced through sport, a context in which England is commonly called 'the auld enemy'. Recent trouble between Glasgow Rangers and Aberdeen football supporters, for example, was promptly attributed by the Scottish press to the presence of English agitators (e.g. Press and Journal, 2002). In fact no evidence of this emerged. The press had pounced on English-shirt-wearing Rangers fans.

## The development of history as a school subject in Scotland

History became a school subject in 1886. Early Scottish history was covered in Standard III but attracted gloomy comments from the inspectorate as a 'ghastly line of battles, feuds and deaths ... one must question the value of a school history that lands a child in the midst of loose laws and looser passions and unquestionably helps ... to maintain the sentimental scotch antipathy to England' (quoted in Anderson, 1995, p.214).

Autobiographies, too, bear witness to the past ability of history teachers to stir up anti-English feelings, for example:

School in Aberdeen meant, primarily, the establishment of my identity as a Scotsman ... To this day my knowledge of Scottish history is nothing more than a vague chauvinistic haze permeated by hostility to England (Hay, 1997).

In the years after 1945, history struggled to survive and often existed as a facet of school English departments. Graduates who emerged to teach history came from universities where Scottish history seemed to lack serious status. During the 1970s changes affected both primary and secondary schools, changes that directed attention away from concern about the rationale for selecting certain aspects of the past and concentrated, instead, on processes. In primary schools history was sucked into integrated *Environmental Studies*; pupils explored themes like *Homes, Transport and Water*. The distinctive attributes of subject structures were neglected. In secondary schools the Schools Council's skills-based approach, though English-based, seeped into Scotland too and placed the stress on historical topics as vehicles for skill development.

By the 1990s sufficient unease at the consequence of these developments produced changes, yet Scottish authorities shrank from the detailed strategy exemplified by the English national curriculum and produced, instead, guidelines for pupils aged 5-14. History found itself within *Environmental Studies* guidelines, separately described as *People in the Past* (SOED, 1993). These guidelines listed the attributes of the subjects that were to be developed through the topics studied but offered brief and vague guidance on what was to be taught. Pupils were expected to study 'people, events and societies of significance in the past'; what this actually meant was not explained. Pupils aged between 5-14 were expected to give attention to local, Scottish, British, European and world dimensions, and to do so through studies located in different periods of time.

At the time of writing, this system still operates. Pupils remain in primary schools for seven years, working with teachers who have the whole curriculum to implement and cannot be expected to be historical experts. The result is a history curriculum that consists of widely scattered episodes. Once pupils have emerged from their first three (early stages) years they might for example, study *The Vikings* in Primary 4, *Medieval Life* in Primary 5, *The Victorians* in Primary 6 and the *Second World War* in Primary 7. Inevitably, teachers are likely to choose topics that are well resourced with material appropriate to their pupils' ages and abilities. Much of this will have been produced in England.

It is not easy for secondary school history teachers to provide a coherent study of Scotland's past, as the amount of time available for the subject has diminished; an hour or less a week is a common allocation and aspects of the past other than Scottish history press for attention. Yet these two years are crucial, for history then becomes an option; nearly two thirds of pupils abandon it as they enter the years that are still shaped by a twenty five year old report (Munn, 1977) in which the third and fourth years of the secondary curriculum are organised into 'modes', each of which pupils are required to

study. History falls into the *Social Subjects* mode along with Geography and Modern Studies.

Those who remain to study history up to the age of 16 follow a course whose rationale focuses on the value of the activity of studying the past rather than consideration of the importance of certain areas of knowledge. The course required the study of Scottish history, offering a choice of periods all of which are post-Union and deal primarily with changing social, economic and political conditions within Scotland (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 1997).

The post-16 structure is complex; opportunities to study Scottish history exist in the form of widely separated episodes from the past at the lower 'Intermediate' level. At the more challenging Higher level students must explore Scotland's past in either medieval, early or later modern times. But numbers here are small - around 8,000 attempted Higher history in 2002, for example.

In an attempt to stir teachers' thinking about Scottish history the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum produced recommendations urging that it be studied in a more sustained and coherent manner. The report recognised the great upsurge in university research and publication in this area and urged the need to find ways of bridging the gap between the growing academic understanding of Scotland's past and what was happening in the classroom. But the report carried no force, its authors possessed no powers of compulsion. Those who chose to ignore it were free to do so.

### **Scottish suffering/English dominance?**

Given the patchy and inconsistent nature of the structure outlined above, it is hardly surprising that the Scottish history currently experienced by pupils tends to consist of the study of episodes whose hallmark is Scottish suffering. Having seen Agricola's Roman legions assault north Britain, win the battle of Mons Graupius and build forts and walls, pupils are likely to jump to an exploration of Viking onslaughts. Assaults by Anglo-Norman monarchs allow the deeds of Wallace and Bruce to be celebrated, yet soon the Tutors are battering at Scotland's lowlands, King William rules (and the massacre of Glencoe takes place) and gallant Jacobites are crushed. The tale is rounded off with Highland suffering amid the Clearances.

No clear rationale underpins this curious curriculum. It neglects numerous major dimensions of Scotland's past and leaves a residue of resentment and simplistic understanding. Scots are commonly referred to today as a Celtic people. This label, which ignores the substantial Anglo-Saxon settlement of the south-east, and the later Scandinavian arrivals, implies a distinct Celtic people's arrival. Yet Armit (2001) suggests that what mattered was the spread of Celtic language rather than the arrival of a new people –

there is nothing in the archaeological record to suggest any significant infusion of new ethnic groups into Scotland ... during the thousand or so years before the Roman incursion (p.14).

In addition:

Far from the coherence implied by calling Scots a Celtic people, historians have observed 'There is no common ancestral or genetic heritage which links the people of Scotland (ibid, xvi).

The current curriculum is very inward looking, yet few peoples have migrated from their own country more than the Scots. Medieval and early modern trade with and settlement in northern Europe was substantial. The post-1707 opportunity to participate in imperial expansion was grasped enthusiastically by enterprising Scots. A recent historian's study of this dimension notes:

Nobody could sensibly claim that Scotland had been other than transformed beyond recognition by Empire ... we must regard it, with Reformation, Union and Enlightenment as one of the great formative experiences of a nation now facing a fresh future (Fry, 2001).

Not only does imperial history not feature in most school curricula, nor do the other aspects identified above loom large. The development of a British identity (readily accepted by most Scots by the late eighteenth century) is an area of intense interest to historians yet neglected by school history. The astonishing achievements of the age of Robert Adam, David Hume, etc. are rarely considered. Scotland has suffered attacks, but Scots too have been aggressors. Inhabitants of northern England had good reason to fear brutal onslaughts from the north (not least by Wallace and Bruce). Even the disaster of Flodden was triggered by James IV's needless march over the border, forcing the elderly Earl of Surrey to trudge wearily north to give battle. Scots settlers in the empire were as ready to sweep away native inhabitants as any other British emigrants.

## **Conclusion**

It is hardly surprising that empirical research conducted on pupils' knowledge of and attitudes towards Scottish history has shown the impact of this rather patchy historical education. A study of 3,000 16 year-old pupils revealed the consequences of the education they received (Wood and Payne, 1999). Pupils conveyed little sense that they felt that Scottish history really mattered, whilst their ignorance of events, people and circumstances in Scotland's past was profound. Of particular interest was what shaped pupils' selection from a range of possible explanations for a past event. When offered reasons as to why Scotland became part of the United Kingdom, for example, 37% selected 'because English forces conquered it' and 28% 'as the result of a referendum'. Only 24% opted for 'the Scots Parliament voted for it'. The Battle of Culloden was seen as a conflict between 'wholly Scottish and wholly English armies' by 41%; just 25% opted for 'many Scots fought against Prince Charles'. A sense of conflict with England seems to shape the responses of the ignorant. The research which focused upon 16 year-olds' knowledge of Scottish history pointed to ignorance even of the role of Scots inventors and engineers in the industrial revolution. Only 8% of the 3000 respondents connected James Watt with steam power; 26% thought he'd something to do with electricity!). The Reformation and the upheavals of the seventeenth century tend to be neglected as too complex.

The permissive curriculum of 5-14 and the narrowly conceived Standard Grade courses provide contexts which lack rigorous concern for what it is appropriate for pupils to know. In a paper presented in 1985 an American researcher reviewed all the available relevant data to attempt to identify the rationale(s) behind the teaching of American history in secondary schools (Chilcoat, 1998). He set out a list of ten possible rationales and tested teachers' work against them. His conclusion was that teachers had no clear idea of what they were trying to achieve. The same seems to be true in Scotland. Official justifications for history focus on the skills developed through the subject and on the value of history as a leisure interest. Detailed consideration of the reasons for content selection is sadly lacking. Do we want to offer pupils an heroic view of Scotland's past? Should we focus on widely held myths and critically examine them? If citizenship today shapes the curriculum then the multi-cultural origins of the country, the imperial past,

Irish migration in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the reasons for the arrival of more recent migrants should be studied. Scots life is partly shaped, today, through membership of the European Union. Yet Europe is seen almost wholly negatively, primarily through studies of the two world wars and by repeated examination of Nazi Germany.

With so much to study, and so little time, the current permissive curriculum needs to be re-considered and the lack of a rationale addressed. Meanwhile the media, myth and prejudice will fill the void left by insufficient concern for history in schools.

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## ***A Case for National History***

**Raphael Samuel**

**Abstract** *The late and much lamented historian Raphael Samuel wrote this paper during the debate on the role of History as a national curriculum subject in England in the late 1980s. The Conservative government, under the lead of Kenneth Baker, the Minister for Education, introduced legislation for a National Curriculum that laid out in detail what was to be taught in English schools. History was one of the subjects in the magic circle; it turned out to be the most controversial, leading to an impassioned, adversarial debate reflecting the entrenched values and beliefs of the protagonists. Ralph Samuel, from a liberal perspective, in 1990 places this debate in its historical context, and uses it to suggest an alternative approach to a history curriculum that has 'nationalism' at its heart. Ralph's paper has a freshness, vitality and urgency that is as pertinent today as when it was written. In square brackets we have added explanatory notes.*

**Keywords** British history, Conservative Party, Cultural identity, Ethnicity, History curriculum, History from below, Labour Party, National curriculum, National identity, Nationalism, Racism, World history

If there is a single issue which has made history into a front-line subject, and propelled it into the arena of public debate, it is the question of what it means, in the present day, to be British. Is it a political status, a cultural identity or a birthright? Is it measured by territorial location or, as the Immigration Act of 1971 seemed to suggest, 'patriot' lines of descent? If the former, where are the boundaries to be set, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong or the White Cliffs of Dover? If the latter, how does it cope with the growing phenomenon of ex-pats (the Conservative government [of Britain] has recently empowered them with the vote)? Should it become, as many supporters of Charter 88 seem to wish, a regional identity with a supreme court assembly at Strasbourg? Even if it is interpreted in a purely insular sense, does it cover the people of three kingdoms – and four nations – or one?

In recent decades the nationality question has emerged, or re-emerged, as a storm-centre of British politics, most obviously in relationship to New Commonwealth immigration and settlement, and Britain's membership of the EEC. The civil war in Ulster, now in its twenty-second year, and the recrudescence of Celtic separatism has put Home Rule, and the break-up of Britain on the agenda of practical politics. It is not surprising that education has felt these tremors, and the urgency with which the idea of a national curriculum has been pursued, and the support it has won from politicians of all stripes, surely owes something to the fear that, left to itself, the country is falling apart. The rights and wrongs of Standard English – and the difficulties of making it hegemonic – are at the centre of the Kingdon and Cox reports, [two influential reports on the teaching of English, another contentious subject!] while the demand for a more national history – voiced now by three successive Ministers of Education – is a cause which the Prime Minister herself [Margaret Thatcher] has taken up.

Behind the demand for the restoration of history to the school curriculum is an appeal to the unspoken community of the British. For some the definition is narrow and restricted, involving an almost tribal sense of belonging in which the English, if not the British, are conceived of as a hereditary race. For others, like Robert Skidelsky, the reference is rather to a 'common culture' in which newcomers are to be initiated. History, on this view, will restore a sense of oneness in national life, and give children a greater sense of common identity. As the Lewes Priory teachers put it [a ginger group of teachers who advocated a 'traditional' national history syllabus taught in time-honoured ways], in the model syllabus which Skidelsky and his fellow-professors recommended to the attention of the Minister, 'school history should be centrally concerned with 'socialisation', with the

transmission of a heritage' (press statement, May 1989). The HMI document, 'History from 5 to 16', uses a similar formulation, referring to the 'heritage' which it is the job of history to transmit, and the shared values which it is to impart: 'history enables schools to affirm our society's own values and attitudes' (HMI, 1988).

For Conservatives [supporters of the Conservative Party in Britain that formed the government at the time], nation is primordial, a transcendent unity of time and space which connects the living and the dead with the yet unborn. It is bound up with the authority – and ideally the majesty – of the British state; with 'continuity' in national life; and with the existence of those 'shared values' which, according to successive Ministers of Education, it is the duty of school history to impart. Much of the animus directed against the 'New' history seems to have more to do with its multi-culturalism than with the pedagogic issues ostensibly at stake – 'empathy' skills versus knowledge, chronology and dates. It is charged with denying British children access to their own past; with denigrating national institutions; and with giving a privileged space to what Professor Elton has witheringly called 'that extra-terrestrial space', the Third World (Elton, 1984). Mr Baker, the then Minister of Education, gave voice to these sentiments when recommending his Great Education Reform Bill to the Conservative Party conference (Baker, 1988):

... I want our children to know about the main events in our history, because it is these events which have shaped us as we are today: the creation of the Church of England under the Tudors; the development of Parliament under the Stuarts; the transformation of the world through the industrial revolution; the extension of the franchise to women and young people; the spread of Britain's influence for good throughout the Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. All these things are matters in which we should take pride. A power of language and a sense of history are essential to the well-being of any nation. For too long some people have written off our past and have tried to make us feel ashamed of our history. Britain has given a great many things to the world. That's been our civilising mission. Our pride in our past gives us the confidence to stand tall in the world today.

On the other side of the political divide, **not** to teach national history is for many progressive teachers, it seems, an article of faith. Labour, as the anti-war party in British politics – the position which it inherited when it became the official Opposition in 1918 – has always been committed to some species of 'one-worldism' (even Ernest Bevin was a lifelong supporter of the ideas of World Government); and in the spirit of Gladstonian Liberalism, as well of socialism, it is instinctively suspicious of patriotic flag-waving. When, therefore, Jack Straw, [In 2003 the British Foreign Minister with an interesting, and perhaps contradictory, line on Britain's participation in the second Gulf War] Labour's spokesman on education [the Labour Party was the main opposition party in 1989-90], condemned as 'jingoist' the proposal in the History Working Party report that 50% of the new syllabus should be devoted to British history, one might charitably suggest that he was voicing ancestral fears, speaking in some sort to the Labour Party unconscious, and voicing that opposition to 'drum-and-trumpet history' which, ever since J.R. Green's short 'History of the English People' (1874) has been a mobilising cry for an alternative 'people's history'.

To the Left, anyway that substantial section of it which, in its teaching profession as elsewhere, has adopted 'anti-racism' as its special vocation, the whole discourse of nation is diseased, at once excluding to ethnic minorities and outsiders and corrupting to those within. In the British case it is fatally associated with imperialism and has been constructed, historically speaking, against the blacks. National history on this view is the record of white supremacy and any attempt to return to it would flatter both national and

racial conceits. Paul Gilroy, the most eloquent writer in this vein, and an influential one, argues that, even in its radical version as 'peoples history', it is saturated with racial connotations and leaves neither imaginative nor conceptual space for the experience of the excluded and the oppressed (Gilroy, 1987).

The attack on what was already, in 1964, being called 'anglocentric' history (Lister, 1964), and the championing of a 'world studies' alternative was originally a liberal and progressive rather than a specifically Labour or socialist cause. Its remote origins might be traced to the League of Nations idealism of the 1920s in which a whole generation of schoolteachers were caught up, as well as such influential historians as Eileen Power (H.G. Wells' 'Short History of the World' is the best-remembered literary memorial of this moment). More immediately pertinent, so far as the current shape of history teaching in schools is concerned, would be the UNESCO learning projects of the early 1950s, designed, in the spirit of that organisation, to promote international understanding. In higher research, *Past and Present*, funded in 1952, was a seminal influence, especially in its early years when it pioneered a 'world systems' approach to the 'general crisis' of the seventeenth century, and took up such global themes as 'War and Society' [*Past and Present* was the leading 'alternative' left-wing academic history journal of the twentieth century. Perhaps ironically a group portrait of its founding fathers hangs in Britain's National Portrait Gallery in London]. The journal, in singular contrast to *The English Historical Review* and *The Economic History Review*, was transnational in its subject matter; the first editorial board included the Czech historian Plisensky, and Geoffrey Barraclough, whose 'History in a Changing World' (1955) was an influential plea for the comparative study of societies and civilisation.

The original spirit of 'world studies' was liberal, benevolent and hopeful, seeing in the 'expanding horizons' of the contemporary world a more generous measure for the study of the past. One element, exemplified in the 1956 'Family of Man' exhibition (Anderson, 1957; Barthes, 1957) and emanating from New Deal America, was a kind of secular humanism (the exhibition, a stunning montage and display of photographs taken from the four corners of the globe and the illustrating moments of birth, love and death, came from the United States and was shown in London in July 1956). A more modernist influence was the 'global village' idea of the 1960s, according to which national boundaries were being made redundant by the progress of the electronic media. The 'expanding horizons' of E.H. Carr's 'What is History' (Carr, 1962) and Geoffrey Barraclough's 'An Introduction to Contemporary History' (Barraclough, 1964) were those of the colonial liberation movements and the emergence of the Third World countries on the stage of international politics.

In the schools the most influential advocate of a 'world studies' approach was E.H. Dance, the veteran head of History at Wolverhampton Grammar School and for a number of years Chairman of the Historical Association's Propaganda (Development) Committee (Dance, 1971). 'Twentieth century World History' was from the start the most popular option in the new CSE examination, and the Schools Council History Project – progenitor of the 'New' history – followed suit, transcending national boundaries in its 'Modern World History' syllabus and ignoring them in its 'Medicine and Society'. World Studies were officially endorsed in 1967 by the Department of Education and Science when, in the pamphlet 'Toward World History' the HMI argued that:

The rising generation should be more internationally minded; more tolerant; more appreciative of the special qualities and attributes of different people and race.  
(HMI, 1967)

A similar spirit animated the ILEA [Inner London Education Authority] 'World History Curriculum Project', worked in association with the School of African and Oriental

Studies, and adopted in 1970 for 'teacher enrichment' courses. Teaching world history would encourage children 'to gain an understanding and respect for different peoples, cultures and values, and an unprejudiced attitude towards all races, colours and creeds' (Maddox, 1981). In the teaching of Third World History there were to be 'positive images' of the African past. When, under the influence of New Commonwealth settlement – and as a way of combating race hatred – a multi-cultural approach was extended from 'world studies' to the national past, the UNESCO-like terminology was unchanged, 'the contribution made to English society by the Vikings (!), the Normans, the Jews...the...Irish... and the Asians' being ecumenically added to that of the native Britons.

In the schools, during the 1970s, 'world studies' seems to have become increasingly caught up in the altogether more domestic and more explosive question of race relations in Britain, and the early history of black settlers in Britain became as pertinent a contribution to it as the record of the colonised in other lands (File and Power, 1981: this work of two history teachers at Tulse Hill Comprehensive School, South London, was a pioneering publication in this genre, which came directly out of the experience of the classroom). A more rancorous strain was introduced into this mix with the introduction of 'racial awareness training' and the adoption of 'anti-racism' as an object of the school curriculum. Promoted under the influence of the Brixton and Toxteth risings of 1981 – 'black uprisings' as they were somewhat extravagantly termed, on the analogy of the US ghetto riots of the 1960s – taken up with evangelical zeal by left-wing councils and educational authorities (most famously the Greater London Council and the Inner London Education Authority); backed up by the 'Race Relations' advisors appointed under section 111 of the Race Relations Act of 1976; and tactically endorsed by the Rampton (1981) and Swann (1986) reports (an exhaustive inquiry into the school experience of discrimination and prejudice), 'anti racism' put teachers in the front line of the black and white divide. They were asked to 'challenge' racism wherever it raised its head – not only at the chalk-face or in the classroom but also in the school corridors and playground; in the textbooks (vetted for negative stereotypes of blacks or triumphalist ones of whites); in the design of the school curriculum; and not least in their own language and behaviour (one of the purposes of Racial Awareness Training was to make teachers conscious of their own unacknowledged prejudice).

'Anti-racism' has the merit of addressing hard realities, and not relying, like 'multiculturalism' on soft words and benevolent thoughts to smooth them away. It treats race inequalities as structured and systematic rather than as the results of 'ignorance' or 'prejudice'; and it looks both to the colonial past and the institutional present, to practices as well as to perceptions, to explain the virulence of racial stereotyping. But as a classroom practice it seems to produce the opposite of its intended effects, heightening race awareness without offering any common ground where black and white can meet (the Burnage Report, 'Murder in the Playground', is a devastating account of the disasters that can result from a mechanical application of its precepts (Macdonald, 1989)). By stigmatising non-black children as 'whites', and therefore by definition the bearers of prejudice, it has undermined the whole basis of 'child-centred' education – the flagship of progressive teaching in the 1960s and the early days of the comprehensive school; while by making the teachers themselves guiltily aware of their status as 'white liberals' it is arguably not the least of those influences which in recent years have undermined their sense of worth.

'Anti-racism', like 'anti-sexism', has the merit of undermining consensus views of the past, and putting into question history's unified totalities – not only the 'nation' and the 'nation-state' of the traditional textbooks but also, as Paul Gilroy argues in 'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack' (Gilroy, 1987), the alternative terms favoured in the lexicon of 'history from below' – 'class', 'community', 'the people'. It not only allows conceptual

space for but positively requires a central attention to relations of inequality, exclusion and oppression, and also to the competition for privileges and space. Above all, it problematises the word 'nation' from the word go, and if it were used in an analytic rather than an accusatory sense would drive us back to very much earlier pasts – e.g. the antique divisions between Anglo-Saxons and Celts, and remind us of half-forgotten xenophobias, e.g. hatred of the French, or fear of the gypsies, Jews and outsiders (Flora Thompson's 'Lark Rise to Candleford' trilogy, with its riveting memoir of childhood fears of being kidnapped by the gypsies (Thompson, 1939, 1941, 1943) takes us as close to the tap-roots of British racism as accounts of the African slave trade).

But the discourse of 'race' can be quite as excluding as that of 'nation' or for that matter 'class' and 'anti-racism', whatever its claims as a politics (they are not self-evident: as Paul Gilroy points out in his book, black mobilisation and black community typically takes place on quite other bases – e.g. music, religion, mutual aid). It may be disastrous when adopted as a pedagogy, when the inculcation of 'correct' attitudes is usually self-defeating and hardly compatible with the educational ideal of teaching children to think for themselves.

The terminology of 'anti-racism', as currently employed, allows only two protagonists in the historical drama, 'blacks' and 'whites' who occupy the space of 'rich' and 'poor' or 'exploiters' and 'exploited' in earlier two-camp theories of history. Each of these terms is quite as vulnerable to deconstruction, or disaggregation, as history's other unifying totalities. Moreover to use 'whites' as a term of opprobrium in a country where it is the skin-colour of some 85 per cent of the population, and by treating it as a defining characteristic, leaves no space for the majority except as the appropriators of discrimination. Racism itself, an even more totalising concept – and an even cloudier one becomes in some sort British society's original sin, leaving the indigenous population and the descendants with no other relationship to the past than that of expiating the collective guilt of their forbears (prince or paupers, patricians or plebeians). History is the record of white supremacy. As in some early versions of feminism – or for that matter socialism – it is a Calvary of the oppressed.

Many teachers and scholars, especially perhaps those engaged, like History Workshop, in 'history from the bottom up', have attempted to sidestep the issue of 'nation', advancing the claims of local and regional studies, or culture and community – 'lived experience' – against the record of high politics and statecraft. 'New' history, too, seems to have wanted to by-pass national history – i.e. the history of the nation as a whole and the components of national culture – on the one hand by promoting 'World Studies', the study of 'other cultures', on the other, in project work, giving a privileged place to the local, the domestic and the familiar – phenomena which could be expected to come within the imaginative grasp of a particular age-group.

The History Working Group too, though made up of people devoted to the study of the national past, and, in their final report, bending to the Ministers' requirement that the time-table hours devoted to British history should be increased from 40 to 50 per cent, seem shy of making a case for British history; they are understandably more concerned to resist pressure to insularity, and, in the spirit of multi-culturalism, to stand by a pluralist view of the past (DES, 1990) [The government set up a working group to draw up the National Curriculum for History].

Yet history, whether we like it or not, is a national question and it has always occupied a national space. Even in teaching of local history it remains, or ought to remain, an inescapable point of reference. Nor can the history of minorities escape it, since it is in relations of opposition to majorities that minorities are defined. In any event it is a peculiar double-standard to advocate a history that starts from the known and familiar,

as teachers do in the classroom and scholars in the archives, promoting local studies, and yet to jibe when the nation is in question and advocate instead a 'global' view. Moreover, even if 'nation' is expelled from the classroom, it will still carry on an underground existence in the corridors and playground and an altogether more uninhibited one on television and the football terraces. If historians refuse to teach it, there will be plenty of others who will.

If British history is restored to the school curriculum, it should be for pedagogic reasons – because it is the country they know best (they are not obliged to love it), whose language (even if they are bi-lingual) they speak, whose literature they read, whose famous events are dramatised on TV or burlesqued by the stand-up comic.

There is no reason why a British history need be inward looking. The earliest printed histories of this country began with Four Ages of man, and, as in the Albion Legend, they were much concerned with establishing a European pedigree for national existence. Fox's 'Book of Martyrs', that great monument of Elizabethan scholarship and for more than a century the principal means by which a knowledge of national history was diffused, was written originally in Latin, starting its account in Apostolic times, and detailing in some hundreds of pages the trials of the early Christians and the persecution of the continental reformers before coming to the Fires of Smithfield.

A contemporary history, if it were to take account of Britain's changed position in the world, would need to be even more universalist, not only when treating of origins but also when mapping outcomes. It might make a point of highlighting developments whose epicentre lay elsewhere – the reformation, say, in the 1530s and 1540s; the rise of socialism in the 1880s. It could work laterally as well as longitudinally when addressing, say, the 1930s rise of economic nationalism and 'protection', or the spread of the cult of planning (a movement for which there were analogies in Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany and New Deal America). It might emphasise the internationality of phenomena which on the face of it can be given a purely indigenous explanation – e.g. in the liberal hour of the 1960s, the abolition of capital punishment.

Instead of (or as well as) considering the development of Britain as a 'world power', as Mr Baker, the Education Minister, recommended to the History Working Party, it might have been more profitable to consider this country as part of a larger whole – an off-shore island, say, in medieval Europe, which is how it appears in Hereford Cathedral's Mappa Mundi. English foreign policy, in the aftermath of the revolution of 1688, was subordinated to that of the Dutch (the only reason, it seems, why William of Orange bothered to come here), and indeed throughout the eighteenth century England participated in continental wars as a matter of course. Ninth and tenth century Britain was part of a Viking world whose centre was in the Baltic. The heart of the Angevin Empire was Anjou, not England; the largest single source of royal income of the Plantagenets was the Bordeaux wine trade. The medieval wool had its Staple at Calais.

The American connection would be as pertinent as the European. British Protestantism, from the sailing of the Pilgrim Fathers, and the colonising activities of the early Puritans down to the 200 black churches in Britain today, many of the Caribbean, could usefully be considered as a transatlantic phenomenon, and the comparison and contrast between, say, the 'Great Awakening' of 1739 and the Wesleyan Revival, or of the impact of Moody and Sankey on Britain and the United States, might tell us a great deal about the sources of its evangelical and missionary energies. Eighteenth century Lancashire, as historians have recently been insisting, can illuminatingly be studied as part of the Atlantic economy. The American Revolution has as good a claim as the Wilkes affair to be the founding moment in the history of British radicalism, sharing, in earlier years, common legends and beliefs. Likewise 'Americanization' might be studied as a major

theme in the making of twentieth-century 'British' working-class culture, with Hollywood films as a more pertinent focus for fantasy and romance than the productions of Elstree, Pinewood or Ealing Studios.

Another way of internationalising the study of British history would be to link it more organically to the history of Empire. Taking a cue from the dramatic impact of New Commonwealth immigration, such a history might consider Empire in terms of its 'domestic' effects – i.e. its repercussions on the native British. Such a history would require a new chronology and a different periodisation. For one thing it would need to be a story without an end, since Asian and Afro-Caribbean settlement in Britain is a continuing process. The high point in the story might be not 'the grab for Africa' – the place traditionally allotted to 'imperialism' in school textbooks – but rather the inter-war years, when investment in Empire reached an all-time peak, when Empire trade accounted (in 1937) for some 70 per cent of Britain's imports; and when the two-way traffic in people and ideas was, from the point of view of the indigenous British, particularly the Southern middle class, at its most intense.

British politics was dominated for nearly a hundred years by what used to be called 'the social question'. The 'discovery' of the slum (a term which entered general usage in 1881-2) and of 'unemployment' (a term which also, Clapham tells us, entered into general usage in this decade), the rise of Socialism and the Salvation Army, and perhaps too, as historians are now arguing, race fears, helped to give it an imaginative centrality. Historical teaching and scholarship bears the mark of this, and indeed the invention of the term 'industrial' revolution, and the crystallisation of economic history, as an alternative to the study of Kingship, Statecraft or the Constitution belongs to the same decade as the discovery of 'unemployment' and the 'slum'.

The 'social' question has profoundly democratised the study of the past, but social and economic history has typically been more inward looking than the 'drum-and-trumpet' narrative it challenged. It stopped short of any cultural or popular account of international relations – a field in which it sometimes seems that the only people who count are foreign ministers. It usually ignored the history of the British Empire, or even, except where Home Rule was at stake, Ireland. It often had nothing to say about Scotland or (before the General Strike of 1926) South Wales. It was in short 'Little England' in its biases.

If it enlarged the subject matter of history in many directions, it narrowed them in others, and offered a foreshortened time-span. For some the 'social' question, and with it a relevant British history, only begins with the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, for others with the Levellers and Diggers of the 1640s, for yet others with the industrial revolution.

If the 'national' question was made a unifying thread of the history syllabus, it could be at least as illuminating as the 'social' question, and it would reach out to components of the national culture – and elements of politics – which economic and social history have passed by. Problematizing ideas of nation instead of taking it for granted, would require us to join the archaeologists in considering the original conditions of settlement, and the geographers in charting the grand ecological pertinences of national life. Concerned with North-South divisions, it might give as much space to the Pilgrimage of Grace, the Rising of the Earls, or what John Morrill [a distinguished academic historian] calls for the 1640s 'the revolt of the provinces', as to events at Westminster. It would need to give a much more systematic attention to the built environment, which barely surfaces in economic and social history until the 1830s (or the 1880s) when the 'housing question' suddenly appears. It would need to consider, with the critics, whether there were national traditions in music and art, and to consider culture in its international relations as well as in its local moments. It would need to treat the British Empire, as integral to

'our island story'. With the gathering movement for secession in Scotland, and with a big question over the powers of parliament, and its sovereignty, it could take nothing for granted.

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**Ralph Samuel** was one of Britain's leading social historians until his untimely death in 1996. He was fired with a commitment to recover and value the history of ordinary people. He was an inspiration to generations of students whom he taught at Ruskin College, Oxford and to fellow historians through the History Workshop movement and journal, which he helped to establish. His Marxism ensured that he was keenly aware of the issues involved in an understanding of national identity and the role of education. It was therefore no surprise that he took an active part in the debate on the shape of the History National Curriculum. For a tribute to Raphael Samuel by Carolyn Steedman, visit [www.radicalphilosophy.com](http://www.radicalphilosophy.com).