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Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion

Introduction

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This book reports from various front-lines of the 'cohesive community', from those engaged in developing, implementing and evaluating community cohesion policies, those researching communities and identities, and from those living in communities targeted by cohesion interventions. The concept of community cohesion has been one of the UK Labour government's most durable frameworks for thinking through issues of ethnic diversity and conflict. It is increasingly proposed as a remedy also for declining levels of political participation and civic involvement. Yet at the heart of the idea of community cohesion remain some profound puzzles about the dynamics of group identities, the tensions between common values and respect for ethnic differences and confusion over what exactly needs to cohere and what a cohesive community might achieve.

The starting point for this book and for our exploration of these questions was a roundtable held at the Royal Geographical Society in the autumn of 2005 organized by the ESRC Programme on Identities and Social Action and the Runnymede Trust. This roundtable brought together academics, policymakers and community workers to debate the connections between identity, ethnic diversity and community cohesion, in the wake of a turbulent summer dominated by the suicide bombings on London tube trains and the Iraq war. We were meeting in a climate where calls from some commentators that the UK should follow France's more assimilationist path had given way to Anglo *schadenfreude* and bemusement as the situation in France then itself deteriorated into prolonged riots and civil unrest. Early public responses to the bombings had opened out into major re-examinations of the principles of multiculturalism, leading many politicians to revive older, more assimilationist, readings of integration. And there was renewed interest, too, in British national identity as a potential super-glue for diverse and divided communities. These embryonic policy themes intensified in 2006 and form the basis for current debate.

Our aim in this book is to try and understand what is at stake in these discussions and consider the ramifications. The first part of the book presents position statements on community cohesion from four different policy standpoints. We hear from Henry Tam [Head of the Civil Renewal Unit in the Department of Communities and Local Government - checking]. Tam presents his own personal views but his account is informed by his experiences of the challenges facing governments. We hear, too, from Nick Johnson, Policy and Public Sector Director for the Commission for Racial Equality. The CRE took a controversial line in response to the events of 2005 arguing that the UK was sleep-walking into a North American-style ghetto society. Johnson contextualizes this concern and outlines the CRE viewpoint. Part One includes also a statement from Dilwar Hussain, Director of the Islamic Foundation. Hussain describes the development of local community cohesion initiatives for Muslim communities and he reflects on the broad project of community cohesion from the standpoint of a group at the heart of the current policy maelstrom. Finally, Omar Khan outlines the position

of the Runnymede Trust, a charity campaigning against social injustice and racial discrimination and committed to building bridges across communities. Khan's concern is with race equality and how community cohesion and associated identity dynamics can be mobilized to that end. These position statements come then from different sources with different interests but sum up some of the main nodes in contemporary policy thinking.

Part Two of the book then turns to the latest social science research on identity and communities. This part presents, in effect, four case-studies. Each case-study is a detailed empirical examination of one context in which issues of community cohesion and identity are particularly salient. Our aim here is not to paint a representative picture of communities in the UK but through detailed work on four contexts to indicate the knot of practical issues around identity and community cohesion which needs to be addressed. This research, funded by the ESRC Identities and Social Action Programme, includes Ben Rogaly and Rebecca Taylor's work on a group of estates in Norwich and an exploration by Coretta Phillips of ethnic relations in prisons. Miles Hewstone and colleagues report from their research in Northern Ireland examining identity, cohesion and neighbourhood segregation. While in the final chapter in Part Two, Simon Clarke, Rosie Gilmour and Steve Garner report some of the findings from a large qualitative study in the South West of England with white middle-class and working class respondents.

Part Three of the book then focuses on new directions and challenges. For the authors in this section, the preceding chapters form the springboard from which their reflections and responses can give rise to some new thinking about the way ahead. Claire Alexander picks up the tension between equality and diversity, for instance, and develops a critical and sceptical view of community cohesion as yet another in a long series of strategies attempting to manage and contain diversity. Kate Gavron, drawing on her work with white working-class communities, evaluates the challenge of social inclusion. Bhikhu Parekh, Chair of the Runnymede Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (among his many roles) argues for more clarity around what is meant by multiculturalism and explores contemporary possibilities for identity and identification. Finally, Avtar Brah, a leading scholar in research on identity, considers what kinds of understandings and definitions of identity need to inform future work. How do we need to think about identity – about similarity and difference – to make progress in this area?

The rest of this introduction gives some background, first, on the history of community cohesion and the policy debates and, then, on the identity dynamics implicated. My aim is to summarize the 'argumentative field' evoked by community cohesion, ethnic diversity and identity and give a stronger flavour of the contribution of each of the chapters in this collection.

Community Cohesion: Concept and Policy

> *'A cohesive community is one where:*
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> - *there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;*

- *the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;*
- *those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and*
- *strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the work-place, in schools and within neighbourhoods.'*

(Local Government Association, 2006, 'Leading Cohesive Communities', p.5)

The concept of community cohesion first gained a high profile in the Cantle and Denham reports responding to the 2001 disturbances in UK towns (c.f. Home Office, 2001). These reports argued that some communities in the UK consisted of ethnic groups effectively leading 'parallel lives'. They concluded that this segregation was damaging and needed to be tackled by policies guided by an alternative, positive and indeed utopian notion of the cohesive community. The statement above (taken from current guidance to local authorities) indicates something of what was meant by this alternative. A cohesive community has a common vision and shared sense of belonging. It is based on the positive acceptance of diversity and on equality of opportunity. A cohesive community is one where there is extensive contact between groups and large amounts of what sociologists, following Robert Putnam (2000), have called 'bridging social capital' or forms of association that connect across groups rather than forms of association that strengthen ties within groups.

In the wake of the Cantle and Denham reports, community cohesion was taken up as a guiding framework by David Blunkett as Home Secretary, within the Home Office, and by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It was developed in association with several, differently inflected, but closely allied notions such as 'neighbourhood renewal', 'civil renewal', 'social exclusion' and 'sustainable communities'. Community cohesion policies became embedded as the practical theory for community workers and community development activities, and they were translated into community plans implemented by Local Strategic Partnerships. In 2006, this agenda was taken over by the newly created Department of Communities and Local Government and Ruth Kelly is the Secretary of State currently responsible for implementing policy. The government recently set up a Commission for Integration and Cohesion chaired by Darra Singh; as we write, we are awaiting this Commission's report. For a number of years now the concept of community cohesion has been a central plank in policy and it looks set to continue to dominate the political environment.

The principle of community cohesion can be seen as part of a more capacious political philosophy with older communitarian roots characteristic of the current UK Labour government. This broader philosophy seeks to revalue and remobilize civil society (McLaren, 2005). Community cohesion offers, like any policy framework, a particular diagnosis and interpretation of UK society. This is a reading, as we saw, which finds civic alienation, decreasing social interaction and a distintegrating social 'glue' and suggests as a solution the rebuilding of solidarity, the re-vitalizing of communities and measures to break down separateness. On a practical level, as Alison Gilchrist has explained, it is about community workers 'finding ways to mediate conflict, to reduce prejudice and to eliminate discrimination of all kinds' (2004: 10). Cohesion, she says, is about recognizing people's attachments, the ways in which people create 'comfort zones' but also dispelling myths about other groups outside those comfort zones. It is

about fostering those casual exchanges, pleasantries and gossip at the school-gates, in shops and pubs and the regular contacts which reinforce what for many people are the 'weak ties' of community based on neighbourhood and place. For Gilchrist, 'cohesion is not about the absence of conflict, but rather a collective ability to manage the shifting array of tensions and disagreements between diverse communities' (2004: 6).

While the desired outcomes might be relatively tangible at the local community level (even if the means for achieving these are not so obvious), at the national level the task is much more challenging. Community cohesion has been interpreted as the need to find unifying common ground which will inspire assent across the board. It rests, as we have seen, on the idea of commonality in diversity – common principles which are shared and enacted by all sections of the community. But it is not at all clear what those common principles might be. The commonality which is emphasised might be simply the rule of the law. Commonality might be simply a shared attachment to a locality or a sense of neighbourhood and place. Alternatively, it could be an agreement to deliberate together democratically whenever a conflict of interest arises or a disagreement about future directions. Common principles could involve a particular definition of citizenship and the rights and responsibilities of citizens; they could invoke a specified set of ethical and cultural values conveyed in a shared code of 'civility' and 'decency'. This code might entail, for example, Muslim women not wearing veils to aid social interaction with others. Or, commonality could imply psychological bonds and shared emotions such as patriotism, using British national identity as the adhesive which holds diverse groups together. Commonality, in other words, could either be about form (the ways in which people should meet together) or content (the substance of a shared identity). As Omar Khan points out in his chapter, community cohesion has been interpreted quite differently by different commentators and any policy document tends to contain layers of these sometimes competing understandings.

In line with the range of ways in which commonality could be understood, community cohesion advocacy runs the gamut from 'hard' options to 'softer' ones. This flexibility is, of course, a useful political resource. Community cohesion could be interpreted as a robust call for an assimilationist version of integration based around publicly enforced allegiance to British values, fearing and rejecting the supposed disruptive power of multiculturalism. 'Hard' versions of this kind tend to heighten the emphasis on commonality and weaken the stress on diversity. Claire Alexander in her chapter in Part Three of this book argues that over time government policy and public debate have increasingly moved in this direction. 'Softer' versions of community cohesion move in the opposite direction – combining the search for overarching commonalities with more emphasis on removing material and economic inequalities, on anti-racist strategies and on the celebration of diversity.

This debate is played out in this book. Nick Johnson, in a manner reminiscent of 'harder' readings of community cohesion, places a great deal of stress on what the CRE perceives as the problem of ethnic segregation. His position statement in Part One pushes the agenda, in other words, further towards commonality and away from diversity. Omar Khan, in contrast, dismisses such trenchant 'parallel lives' analyses of British communities. He rejects what could be called the 'many individuals, many identities but one national community' argument and maintains a commitment to multiculturalism. Bhikhu Parekh in Part Three returns to this issue arguing that what

is required is a dialogical, pluralist and interactive understanding of multiculturalism rather than the static, isolationist and relativist readings which Parekh sees as inimical to the project of a 'shared life'.

The balancing act, however, is not just about commonality and diversity. It is also about the value placed on social justice and equality. Nick Johnson, for example, combines a focus on commonality with a strong call for equality. While Henry Tam, in his chapter, argues that not any solidarity is automatically good *per se*. What is required in Tam's view is a 'progressive solidarity'. This, he says, is not about simple-minded applications of social capital analyses to encourage more people to volunteer, ceasing to 'bowl alone', in Robert Putnam's (2000) terms. It is not about flag-waving, Tam suggests, but about a deep commitment to social justice and removing destructive inequalities in power and wealth. Khan similarly argues (see also Berkeley, 2005) that while the aims of community cohesion and related policies are laudable, they have to be set against a context of significant disadvantage across all sectors for minority ethnic group members and often their white working class neighbours.

Interestingly, all of these authors are sceptical about definitions of community cohesion based on 'British values'. Johnson wonders about the extent to which a uniform British national identity could be imposed. Britishness should be, he says, 'just one part of every citizen's range of identities'. He re-reads supposedly core British values in more general terms as the premises underpinning everyday citizenship. Parekh similarly argues that it is no use exhorting people to be British. Like Johnson and Khan, he prefers a focus on the demands of citizenship and equal rights rather than appeals to vague senses of 'Britishness' as a psychological state or enforced cultural identity.

For those in the policy world, then, the idea of community cohesion evokes difficult territory and complex negotiations between commonality, diversity, equality and the nation. But what does 'community' mean for ordinary people? Is community cohesion motivating? In their chapter in Part Two Simon Clarke, Rosie Gilmour and Steve Garner report on their research in Plymouth and Bristol and describe what community means for white middle-class and working class British citizens in the South West. Their material suggests that when their sample focus on and talk about the idea of community, they do find it compelling and motivating. Their voices and stories celebrate the idea of community, the importance of its perceived security and social integration and they are nostalgic for lost communities. For them, as for some policy-makers, community is a solution and an obvious good. These interviewees echo Henry Tam's analysis of the causes of the decline of community (greater mobility, more commuting and a more consumerist culture). Interestingly, there are hints too that identification with super-ordinate national identities (British and European) may well be of a different psychological order than investment in local communities – neighbourhood communities may not be inevitably reinforced by an increased focus on nationality.

The narratives from the South West set up such a glowing view of community life that one begins to question the extent of social disintegration hypothesized by some politicians and policymakers. Yet, these accounts also provide evidence for the shadow side of community – the negative 'bonding' capital, the possibilities for group

persecution of those who don't conform, the local xenophobias, and the racisms community workers struggle to address in everyday community cohesion activities. The participants in Ben Rogaly and Rebecca Taylor's Norwich study, as described in their chapter, make similar points. Here again is the emotional charge around the idea of community (what Avtar Brah in her chapter in Part Three calls the 'homing desire') and the negative – as one of their participants evocatively expressed it: 'like living among crabs in a bucket'.

Rogaly and Taylor's study also raises questions about precisely when community becomes a powerful motivating part of people's everyday lives. They argue that much of the time people are not 'thinking community' albeit, as Clarke et al.'s work suggests, they can 'talk community' at any time when requested. The 'community' in practice, then, sits at the boundary of fantasy and actuality, idealized life and actual social life. As Clarke et al.'s work shows, it is a very important resource for people to make sense of their situation, an ideal to frame 'state of the nation' conversations, but it can bear a confused and confusing relation to lived experiences. Where is the community, who is it and what does it translate into?

Dilwar Hussain makes this point very strongly in his statement in Part One describing the projects the Islamic Foundation is working on in Leicester. He notes that many in Muslim communities also find the idea of community cohesion inspiring and motivating and are engaged in active effort to bring, for example, members of different faiths into shared dialogue. However, he remains sceptical about the boundaries of community. Muslims in Britain, he points out, form a set of communities rather than a single community. Would it be meaningful to talk of community cohesion projects between these diverse Muslim communities? The community cohesion debate in the newspapers and in many policy circles seems very firmly premised on the concept of Muslim homogeneity – 'they' are the community which needs to be 'cohered' into white British communities.

Clearly policy plays an important role in constructing community. When communities are multiple (and Hussain describes the hybrid identities of many young British Muslims who may identify as strongly with a locality such as Birmingham as with their faith) the project of 'cohesion' becomes extremely complex. The very act of marking out and defining communities and groupings as ripe for 'cohesion' (and the simple pictures of these groups presented in the media) risks creating the very problem community cohesion policies are designed to solve. It forces people, for instance, to think 'community', think difference and, as Hussain notes, pick out from their everyday material existence with its whole gamut of identities, activities and ways of thinking about oneself just some potentially conflictual emphases and bases for action. Kate Gavron in her chapter in Part Three similarly notes that one of the dangers of national policy and a national focus is to solidify identities and intensify perceived competition between groups. She stresses the importance of local agendas and local projects beyond the abstract generalizations which dog many formulations of community cohesion.

Critics of community cohesion policies have picked up a number of other issues. First, they have questioned the tacit assumption that unity is to be desired at all costs and social conflict automatically feared (Sennett, 1998). They call for community conflict to be handled democratically in the public sphere – properly aired, debated

and negotiated rather than avoided through moralizing policy and the construction of artificial harmony. Critics have questioned too the interpretation that the social fabric of the UK is disintegrating and now needs cohering. Many contest the demographic research on which pictures of increasing ethnic segregation are based (c.f. Dorling, 2005; Simpson, 2004) concluding that, in contrast, the UK is more integrated than other European societies and, where there are sufficient numbers of ethnic minority group members in an area and thus opportunities for contact, there is evidence of extensive positive interaction. Omar Khan in his chapter argues that it is disingenuous to associate residential ethnic segregation with multiculturalism. In many cases residential segregation reflects structural disadvantage and predates multiculturalist policies. Ethnic disadvantages and inequalities are still entrenched, as Coretta Phillips points out in her chapter, despite substantial government intervention, particularly in its second term (see also Phillips, 2005). Indeed, some have questioned whether the emphasis on community cohesion risks redirecting attention away from economic and social class divisions to ethical and cultural vagaries (Levitas, 1998).

Other critics wonder why the negative bonding social capital of privileged, wealthy white groups is rarely seen as the problem or the target of policy. As already noted, it is disadvantaged ethnic minority communities who tend to be pathologized (see Claire Alexander's chapter and Avtar Brah's analysis of how white European identities and strategies tend to be put beyond question as a taken-for-granted standard for judging others). In many parts of the UK, for example, it is white young people who tend to be less tolerant of other groups than young people from black and ethnic minorities. Many ethnic minority communities have been concerned that the striving for shared values is in danger of taking the culture out of any cultural groups who have come late to British citizenship. Claire Alexander in her chapter, points out that a focus on community cohesion not only places greater onus on citizens but also allows governments to escape some of their own responsibilities – for their inactions as well as their actions. It is notable that the idea of 'institutional racism', for instance, has difficulty finding a foothold within the community cohesion framework, meaning that governments and other institutions are less likely to be held accountable for their failures in the areas of discrimination and entrenched disadvantage. Finally, critics have also noted that the contradictions in government policies mean that potentially beneficial community cohesion initiatives on the ground are often undone by other aspects of the government's response to law and order issues, for example, foreign policies such as the Iraq war, or public sector privatization (McGhee, 2003).

What can be said in summary then? Governments face a very difficult and challenging set of problems around inter-communal violence, racism, home-grown terrorism, inequality and declining participation in public and civic life. The concept of community cohesion is both a diagnosis of this state of affairs and a rather vague and shaky solution in an area where it is unclear just what policy and governments might achieve. The broadness of the concept has some advantages but it increases the puzzles around implementation. It sets a moral compass and ideal (one which is highly attractive to many but not without its critics). It poses immensely difficult issues of balance between commonality and diversity, equality and security. And, in practice, community cohesion appears to address UK citizens unevenly turning Muslim groups, for instance, into problems while (at worst) the intolerance of white citizens can become celebrated as part of national identity.

It is clear, however, that it is difficult to think about community cohesion without also considering questions of identity. Community cohesion policies contain many explicit, and implicit, assumptions about human nature, practices of self/other definition, assumptions about the routes between identities and social actions and about group processes. The very concept of commonality *and* diversity together which is at the heart of community cohesion challenges us, as Avtar Brah notes in her chapter, 'to think about difference in ways in which it becomes the basis of affinity rather than antagonism'. In the next section, I turn to the identity issues at stake in the discussions in this volume.

Identity Dynamics

In his chapter, Parekh offers a useful formulation of what is meant by identity. 'Identity basically refers to how one identifies and defines oneself in relation to others. It is a way of announcing to the world and affirming to oneself who one is and how one positions oneself in the relevant area of life.' The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1996) argues that the question of identity comes particularly to the fore whenever people are uncertain about where they belong. Identity, he says, tells us how to go on in each other's presence. People thus have a major interest in placing themselves within the range of possible identity categories and cultural styles of behaviour found in a society. We also are concerned whether other people accept our claims to an identity as right and proper.

Clearly, the dynamics of identity are going to be relevant to community cohesion (going on in each other's presence) in a number of ways. First, as Khan notes in his chapter, identity is often seen as the problem or the illness and community cohesion as the solution or the cure. Community cohesion policy sometimes aims to move people on from what are seen as overly strong identifications with ethnic, religious and other groups which cause tensions, hatred of out-group members, the wrong kinds of solidarities and misplaced sectarian loyalties. In this formulation community cohesion is an answer to 'identity politics' and community cohesion policy works against the grain of established identities.

Yet, to be effective, community cohesion policy has to develop its own identity dynamics. It can't be about creating 'identity free' zones. Rather, community cohesion policies typically ask people to identify with super-ordinate identities such as 'the community in general', 'the whole neighbourhood' or 'the nation'. The concept of community cohesion can thus seem to have an ambivalent and doubled relationship with identity, trying to intensify some forms of identification on the one hand while loosening the power of others. How does this work in practice? Is there a necessary conflict, for instance, between strong identification with ethnic groups and identification with super-ordinate communities? Is a 'both/and' approach possible? How can community cohesion policies foster new senses of identity in practice and what identity factors are associated with positive community relations?

Some models of identity would suggest that community cohesion will always be an impossible project – for cohesion, commonality and solidarity to arise on one level, discord, difference and conflict must exist on another. This model suggests that the 'psycho-logic' of identity works against and will always be toxic for community cohesion. Avtar Brah in her chapter notes that many philosophers of identity, for example, have pointed to the profound dependence of identity on 'otherness'. Logically, we discover who we by defining who we are not. This seems to suggest

that the only way a community divided by ethnicity and other identity groupings can achieve common identification and solidarity is through a discovering a common enemy – some third group who can be the 'other' for the whole community. Cohesion interventions, then, risk creating cascades of 'otherness' until - one could speculate – the nation as a whole finally pulls together only as it goes to war with another nation.

Although it is certainly the case that evoking a common threatening enemy is usually an effective way of creating cohesion, none of the authors in this volume would support such a cataclysmic reading of the identity dynamics involved in community cohesion. None suggests that the dynamics of identity and patterns of identification automatically scupper social inclusion or positive cross-group relations. Rather they suggest that identification is multiple, shifting and complex with very little that is inevitable about it. Research on identity and community cohesion suggests a more mundane picture. Various contingent factors increase solidarity, inclusion and positive relations in uneven ways.

In her chapter in Part Three, Avtar Brah argues that identity pulls together conscious, strategic, political and social acts and, more difficult to articulate, unconscious and embedded ways of life.

> Conscious agency and unconscious subjective forces are enmeshed in everyday rituals such as those surrounding eating, shopping, watching football or tennis on television, listening to music, attending political meetings or other social activity. These rituals provide the site on which a sense of belonging, a sense of 'identity', may be forged in the process of articulating its difference from other people's ways of doing things. I have called this desire to belong a 'homing desire'…

As Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor point out in their chapter, community cohesion policies operate on people's deeply ingrained 'habitus' (to use the sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu's, 1977, term), or taken-for-granted senses of the ways 'people like us do things'. These practices are often a background part of everyday life but may involve moments when 'community' becomes self-conscious. Self-conscious community identities may arise through an act of categorization or intervention from an external agency or through strategic and functional mobilization from inside to achieve a goal such as the building of a community centre, or protest around the closing of a local school. Identities are shifting, multiple and at times deeply saturated with emotion. This is the fugitive, volatile and shifting territory community cohesion policies needs to address.

These accounts note that the multiplicity of identity is likely to be a particularly key factor in understanding community cohesion. People may indeed identify as white English, for example, but they also have many other potential identities based, for instance, on gender, generation, parental status, sexuality, musical tastes, and so on. Alliances of shorter and longer duration can form and dissolve around all the possible bases on which people might be united and divided. Perhaps one aim of community cohesion policy should be to develop the conditions which allow identities and alliances to shift and flow in these ways rather than become stuck on one or two dimensions. In support of this, Hewstone et al. in their chapter note early findings from their ongoing research in Northern Ireland which suggest that the more complex and multiple people's overall senses of identity then the less likely it is that they will

be prejudiced against any particular group. This suggests that a both/and approach is possible. In her chapter in Part Three Kate Gavron points out that for some deprived communities this might mean, paradoxically, strengthening what is called bonding social capital or strong within group ties and senses of identity before interventions to strengthen bridging capital and super-ordinate identities across social groups can be effective. Gavron argues that hopelessness and a feeling of defeat in a group, such as the white working classes in some areas of the UK, create particularly troubled dynamics and that strong and positive group identities can be a precondition for strong and positive whole communities.

It seems clear that the conditions in which groups encounter each other are crucial and different kinds of contact will bring about different solidarities. Here Coretta Phillips' chapter in Part Two is informative. Phillips looks at ethnic relations in prisons, and this proves to be a fascinating case study for understanding community cohesion in the broader UK community. She notes a very interesting finding from recent surveys conducted by NACRO and MORI: that whereas 87% of prisoners held a positive view of relations between ethnic groups, only 59% of the British population held a similarly positive view. This and other work suggests that the very diverse and mixed environments of prisons, surprisingly, lead to more cohesive ethnic relations among prisoners. In part, this effect is likely to be due to the 'common enemy' factor noted earlier. A new super-ordinate identity of prisoner has been created versus the prison officer although the pattern is complicated by different and changing institutional frameworks in prisons. But some of this effect, too, is likely to be the result of increased contact under difficult but shared circumstances – much more intensive contact with members of other ethnic groups than may be occurring outside the prison.

Miles Hewstone and colleagues in their chapter point out that contact between groups with strongly held identities can either lead to increased prejudice and competition due to uncertainty and the anxiety associated with that, or contact can lead to the diametrically opposite result with contact increasing positive attitudes and lessening conflict. The power relationship between groups is clearly important for the outcome. For contact to lead to decreased anxiety and sense of threat groups need to be positioned as equals. There needs to be a cooperative task at stake and common goals in an environment where cooperation rather than competition for scarce resources is encouraged. Contact needs, too, to be legitimated through institutional support. Interestingly, Hewstone et al. argue that although the 'common enemy' approach and the creation of super-ordinate identities does work, these are often unstable solutions to community conflict. They suggest a dual identity model is more effective than the simple re-categorising of identity (we are all British) and thus they reinforce the view that it is possible to have *both* strong group identities *and* strong whole community identities.

Finally, there is one further aspect to the identity dynamics implicated in community cohesion policies and that is the kind of 'imagined identities' or the identity possibilities and narratives that policy itself sets up and offers to people. I noted in the previous section that community cohesion policy constructs notions of community while in the process of trying to work with communities, and the same is true for identity. But policy is reflexive – it changes the world as it attempts to act on it. The identity narratives that community cohesion and linked policies offer to citizens tend to construct an image of the community-minded, active, engaged, participating,

responsible, rather bustling citizen who is both immersed in and beyond culture. As a colleague of mine once commented – 'New Labour likes its citizens to be busy'. We need more empirical work on who is grabbed by these new identity possibilities, in what contexts and with what effects. As McGhee (2003) suggests, community cohesion policies both try to manipulate and re-channel existing identity practices in what are seen as more positive directions and demand a re-education of many people's unarticulated forms of habitus. Yet the point about habitus is that it is in many ways beyond self-conscious and strategic choice, reflecting patterns of socialization with long trajectories, suggesting the difficulties (and presumption) of basing social change on ways of life.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the paradox of unity in difference, Henry Tam has argued (cf. Tam, 2005) that although unity and diversity look allegedly incompatible they can be made to work together. Tam is concerned with political incompatibilities – liberals are suspicious of unity and conservatives are suspicious of diversity. He concludes:

> But whether diversity is embraced to produce a richer form of community life, or is frowned upon and thus breeds mistrust, is down to a combination of the disposition of those involved and the social policies of their civic leaders. (2005: 29)

This volume, in trying to move this debate along, focuses on and attempts to unpick this question of 'disposition' and analyse current social policies. It explores the new policy agenda emerging around ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict. What emerges is a sense of the complexity of the issue. Recognition of sameness and otherness can provoke all kinds of responses from conflict and xenophobia, to curiosity and interest, to appreciation and desire, claustrophobia and a sense of security in troubled times, and so on. We are beginning to understand better the nature of the contexts of contact and the situations where the discovery of otherness proves troublesome and where it proves constructive – as for example when it promotes a renewed commitment to fairness.

Community cohesion policymakers and community workers are in a situation where a great deal of work is required to translate the big utopian communitarian stories, which guide policy at the national level, into local area policies and then into practices on the ground. These translation processes are uneasy and the paths are uncertain. Much remains uncharted but we know about a number of unpredictable, flexible, sometimes weak, sometimes strong, tools and chains of associations and connections which link identity, community and ethnic diversity contingently together. Our hope is that the collection of research findings, reflections and position statements in this book will help cast more light on the patterns and dilemmas involved and the importance of eschewing the glib in favour of the informed.

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