

INTRODUCTION

Race, racism and social work

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This book explores issues of ‘race’, racism and anti-racist social work practice – with a particular focus on modern Britain. The dominant message from the media and politicians regarding social work is that it is dominated by ‘political correctness’ and focuses disproportionately on issues of class, ‘race’ and gender. In the training of social workers there is too much emphasis on what one Conservative minister in the 1990s termed ‘isms’ and ‘ologies’ (Castle 1992).

This view of social work resurfaced towards the end of November 2012 in a range of stories, where politicians and media commentators attacked social workers for removing three children of East European origin from foster carers who were members of the anti-immigration, anti-EU UKIP party – a party who have explicit policies against ‘multiculturalism’ (see Jenkins, Chapter Seven, this volume). *The Observer* quoted the Conservative Education Secretary Michael Gove as saying that social workers had made ‘the wrong decision in the wrong way for the wrong reasons’ (McVeigh 2012). *The Sun* claimed the decision had provoked ‘fury’ (Prynne 2012); while *The Sunday Mirror* quoted the UKIP party leader as saying that ‘heads must roll’ for the decision (Moss 2012). However, the complexities of any particular case are rarely considered – and, in this instance, there was no real debate regarding the suitability of members of an anti-immigration, anti-European, anti-multiculturalism party, to foster children from a migrant East European background.

On the same day *The Mail on Sunday* ran two further stories attacking ‘politically correct’ social workers who, in the first instance, the paper alleged, had ‘tried to prevent [a foster mum] ... from adopting a black baby they placed in her care – because she was white’ (Douglas 2012), while in the second it was claimed that social workers at the voluntary sector organisation Barnardo’s had prohibited a former UKIP party election candidate and district nurse from having a role with children leaving the care system because of her party’s views on multiculturalism (Carlin et al 2012). Earlier in September 2012 social workers were attacked in the media for not addressing adequately the issue of Asian

men's role in 'grooming' and sexual abuse cases (see Orr, Chapter Ten, this volume), with *The Daily Mail* apparently incredulous that 'not a single social worker' would be sacked for their 'political correct' failings (Doyle 2012a; 2012b).

The case made in the media and by some politicians, therefore, is that there is too much focus on issues such as 'race', ethnicity and discrimination within social work. Yet, in many ways, these issues are far less prominent than they once were within social work education and research. For example, an examination of the content of a range of social work journals available for academics and students reveals the relative absence of debates regarding racism and the impact of such discrimination on the lives of black and Asian service users (with the possible exception of work with asylum seekers (see, for example, Hayes 2012). It would seem that the phrase 'anti-racist social work' has almost completely disappeared from the social work lexicon – if we were to make a judgement on the basis of titles of articles in *The British Journal of Social Work*. Similarly, there have been very few books that have focused on 'anti-racist social work' over the past 10 to 15 years (with the notable exception of Bhatti-Sinclair 2011). There is now relatively little discussion about the nature of structural racism in modern societies and its impact on minority communities, and the focus has shifted to concern about diversity, difference, equality and rights (see Singh, Chapter One, this volume).

Whatever the reasons for this (see below), there is ample evidence of the way that racism continues to blight the lives of Britain's black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, which points to a real need for social workers to understand the nature of structural discrimination.

Racism and discrimination in Britain today

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) report *How fair is Britain?* (EHRC 2011) provides immense detail of the levels of poverty and disadvantage among Britain's BME communities. The main thrust of the report examines 'fairness' and looks at a whole range of inequalities within Britain. It provides concrete evidence of inequalities in the labour market that discriminate against black and Asian populations, and outlines how these groups have unequal access to social and welfare provision. The Report also examines how aspects of policing, particularly 'stop and search', reflect increasing levels of harassment against non-white groups. As such, the Report's findings are worth discussing at some length.

The EHRC Report starts by looking at levels of poverty and unemployment. In relation to poverty, the figures reveal that one in five of the black and Asian population live in households with less than 60% of median income (after housing costs), and that this rises to nearly one in three for Bangladeshi-headed households. Disturbingly, nearly three-quarters of Bangladeshi children and half of black African children are growing up in poverty. As the Report notes:

People of Indian origin are more likely to have low household income than White people, despite the fact that a low proportion of Indians earn low hourly wages and they have higher than average educational attainments. More than half of Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults live in poverty and are also much less likely than average to have a current account or home contents insurance. Just over a quarter of Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults have formal savings, compared to two-thirds of White people. Asian and Black households are also several times more likely than White British households to live in overcrowded or substandard homes. (EHRC 2011: 460)

Similarly the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) notes that:

Nearly three-quarters of 7-year-old Pakistani and Bangladeshi children and just over half of those black children of the same age are living in poverty. About one in four white 7-year-olds are classed as living in poverty. (IRR 2012)

While, in a report by Reuters into wealth and assets it is claimed that:

The UK's Department of Work and Pensions has found that 60 percent of black and Asian households have no savings at all, compared to 33 percent of white households. The UK's first Wealth and Assets Survey in 2009 reported that while the average white household had £221,000 ... in assets, Black Caribbean households had £76,000, Bangladeshi households £21,000 and Black African households £15,000. (Reuters 2011)

These figures reflect the unequal status of the black population in the labour market and the disproportionate levels of unemployment that

they experience. For example, black people in their early twenties are nearly twice as likely not to be in employment, education and training as their white counterparts, and Muslims have the lowest rate of employment of any religious group, with only 47% of men and 24% of women in employment (EHRC 2011: 401–3). As Ball et al (2012) note:

The youth unemployment rate for black people has increased at almost twice the rate for white 16- to 24-year-olds since the start of the recession in 2008. ... Unemployment among young black men has doubled in three years, rising from 28.8% in 2008 to 55.9% in the last three months of 2011.

Living in poverty also affects health, education and housing status. As the IRR note:

BME groups as a whole are more likely to report ill health, and experience ill health earlier than white British people. Some health variations are linked to poverty and wider social inequalities, although there are a range of inter-linked and overlapping factors. (IRR 2012)

There is a clear correlation between poverty, and mortality and morbidity rates. Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities have the shortest life expectancy rates in the UK (EHRC 2011: 80). Black Caribbean and Pakistani babies are twice as likely to die in the first year of life as white babies, while overall, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are more likely to report 'poor health' and disability (EHRC 2011: 81). They also find it more difficult to access and communicate with their GPs than other groups. When religion is the defining category, Muslims tend to report worse health than average.

The EHRC report also discusses rates of mental illness (2011: 271, 276–8). Here, evidence reveals that Gypsies, Travellers and asylum seekers have the highest rate of mental illness; this is not surprising considering that, as well as being vulnerable to poverty and inequality, they also face high levels of hostility and victimisation in today's society. Nearly twice as many Bangladeshi men than white men suffer mental health problems (EHRC 2011: 644). As Mind report, a disproportionate number of people admitted as inpatients in mental health services come from BME groups; in 2010, 23% of inpatient admissions were from a BME background (Mind 2011). Further, people from BME groups are more likely, than white British people, to be detained or put in seclusion. In 2010, people from BME groups were between 25% and

38% more likely, than white British people, to be compulsorily detained under mental-health legislation and up to 99% more likely to be put in seclusion (Brindle 2011).

Education is a key determinant of life chances, but within poor black communities there are glaring inequalities. Male pupils from some black groups who are eligible for free school meals are performing less well than white groups as early as age five (EHRC 2011: 645), and astonishingly the report reveals that being black and male appears to have a greater impact on levels of numeracy than being learning disabled. The worst affected group are Gypsy and Traveller children, whose performance is actually declining, with less than one in six obtaining at least five good GCSEs (EHRC 2011: 306).

Discrimination is also present when it comes to school exclusions. In 2010 there were a phenomenal 8,000 permanent exclusions and 380,000 fixed-term exclusions. These figures cover a wide range of working class pupils 'but black pupils remain three times more likely to be excluded than white ... and face stiffer sanctions' (Muir 2010).

In terms of university education, while more black students are studying for degrees, they are much less likely to attend the 'top' Russell Group institutions. Whereas a quarter of white students attend the most elite universities, less than 10% of black Britons do (EHRC 2011: 339, 344–5).

In relation to housing, poverty has an impact on access to decent housing, revealed in figures that show that Asian and black households are several times more likely than white British households to live in overcrowded conditions. The report notes that across all housing tenancies:

Just over 9% of all Asian (including Asian British) households are overcrowded ... while almost 15% of all Black (including Black British) households are overcrowded. ... In contrast, fewer than 2% of all White British households are overcrowded. (EHRC 2011: 501)

In the social rented sector the figures are worse: '4% of all White British households in the social rented sector are overcrowded, whereas 14% of all ethnic minority households are' (EHRC 2011: 502).

The EHRC report also provides evidence of ways in which black groups are still experiencing racism within the criminal justice system. Black people are seven times more likely, than white people, to be stopped and searched, and on average, five times as many black people, than white people, are imprisoned (EHRC 2011: 134, 643). It notes that:

Black people in England experienced around 145,000 excess stop and searches in 2007/08 – Asian people, around 43,000: the disproportionality ratio was 6.5 for Black people, and 1.9 for Asian people in that year ... some Gypsies and Travellers have experienced blanket raids of their sites on the basis of unfounded allegations by local communities. (EHRC 2011: 135, 136)

For Harker (2011) racism is worse today than it was in the 1980s, with black people seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. Townsend (2010) discusses the ways in which police increasingly use Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) to harass black youngsters. Section 60 was originally introduced to deal with football ‘hooligans’ where there was a ‘threat’ of serious violence. It allows the police to search anyone in a designated area without specific grounds for suspicion. Analysis by the London School of Economics and the Open Society Justice Initiative found that there were 41 section 60 searches for every 1,000 black people, yet only 1.6 for every 1,000 white people. These are figures that provide the widest ‘race-gap’ in stop and search that have been found anywhere internationally. Ministry of Justice figures (2008/09) reveal that Asian people are also 6.3 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. Townsend cites a quote by Ben Bowling, Professor of Criminal Justice at Kings College, London, who states:

The police are making greater use of a power that was only ever meant to be used in exceptional circumstances and lacks effective safeguards. This leaves room for increased stereotyping which is likely to alienate those communities which are most affected. (Townsend 2010)

Only a small proportion of people subject to ‘stop and search’ are ever charged or imprisoned. But:

On average, five times more Black people than White people in England and Wales are imprisoned. ... This has caused the proportion of ethnic minority prisoners to rise to around 25% of the prison population (while they make up 11% of the population in England and Wales). (EHRC 2011: 171–2)

The Muslim population currently makes up 12% of the prison population in England and Wales: ‘The percentage of Muslim prisoners

in England and Wales almost tripled from 3,681 in March 1997 to 9,975 in December 2008' (EHRC 2011: 174).

In April 2012, the Metropolitan police chief was summoned to parliament to give evidence about these and related figures, and mounting claims of prejudiced behaviour, including reports of racially motivated abuse, assaults and bullying by police officers. At the time, 10 cases involving alleged racism were referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. Eight police officers were suspended and a further three were placed on restricted duties.

Incidents included a police officer who was recorded on a mobile phone allegedly racially abusing a black suspect inside a police van after the riots in the summer of 2011. In another case, a black fire-fighter, who tried to assist police officers while off duty, claimed he was targeted because of his skin colour. The fire-fighter, who also trained as a police constable, saw a young man hurl a rock at a police van and approached officers to pass the information on. However, when he did, officers behaved like "wild animals": swearing at him, dragging him from his car, subjecting him to a "violent" attack, and eventually shooting him with a stun gun' (Lewis 2012). He was then locked up for hours and prosecuted for a crime he had not committed.

Racist abuse has also been documented within the immigration services, in particular, within companies awarded government contracts to deport foreign nationals and refused asylum seekers. In October 2010, three G4S guards were arrested on suspicion of possible manslaughter when a 46-year-old Angolan deportee died while being forcibly restrained on a flight from Heathrow. Further reported examples include a 35-year-old Ugandan deportee who was repeatedly punched and kicked by guards in two separate attacks in February 2012: one assault took place as the plane was on the runway at Heathrow, and the other at the airport in Ethiopia while he was waiting for a connecting flight. In September 2011, a female Nigerian asylum seeker claims she was assaulted in front of her three young children on a plane bound for Italy. She said 'The escorts beat me on the chest and legs, pulled my hair, twisted my left hand and put their hands around my neck' (Grandjean et al 2012).

Allegations of racist abuse have also been made with regard to the treatment of asylum seekers at the main asylum application processing centre in Cardiff, Wales. A former employee has spoken publicly about racist attitudes and practices, alleging that workers used a stuffed gorilla as a 'badge of shame' whenever an employee approved an asylum application, and that one method used to determine the authenticity of an asylum seeker claiming to be from North Korea was to ask whether

the person ate chop suey. She also states that on her first day a manager said that if it was up to her asylum seekers would be shepherded outside and shot. Kate Smart, director of policy and advocacy at the Welsh Refugee Council, said it was appalling that vulnerable people, many of whom had been tortured and seen relatives killed, may have been treated so badly (Taylor and Muir 2010).

There are other groups in Britain who are also bearing the brunt of racist attacks. Research by the IRR (2011) has revealed that East European migrant workers face significant threats of racial violence, with the highest recorded number of incidents involving Polish workers. Attacks have risen since the expansion of the European Union (2004/2007), when 12 new countries were incorporated, including Hungary, Estonia and Poland. In one incident, a Polish male was racially abused and then stabbed to death in Wrexham in 2007, and in another, a Polish worker was robbed and beaten to death in Northern Ireland in 2009. Other cases have seen individuals left fighting for their lives and/or with permanent disabilities. In one particularly violent occurrence in Hull in 2010, two Polish nationals were foraging in the bins of a fast food restaurant, when a white male drove by and told them to 'get a job', before deliberately driving his 3-tonne van into one of them, breaking his ribs and the vertebrae in his back, as well as shattering his collar bone. The driver then got out of the van and knocked the other Pole unconscious. Other research by Human Rights First documented an incident in Belfast in 2009, when around one hundred Romanians were forced to take shelter in a church after a systematic campaign of racist violence against them.

Gypsies and Travellers are also subject to high levels of racist abuse, evident in abusive media coverage and overtly racist statements from local and national politicians. In 2004, Trevor Phillips, now Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, compared the situation of Gypsies and Travellers living in Great Britain, to that of black people living in the Deep South in the 1950s. The IRR, which records all deaths with a (known or suspected) racial element, has found that since the death of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 at least 96 people have died in such attacks (IRR 2011).

Overall, the EHRC report reveals disturbing evidence of the ways in which structural inequality still blights the lives of Britain's black community, and the negative and discriminatory impact it has on lives, experiences and opportunities.

These appalling levels of racist abuse, violence and discrimination do not exist in a vacuum. They have grown and festered in a climate of economic recession and austerity where media, politicians and the

far-right have agitated against, and found a convenient scapegoat in, minority populations. The most recent evidence emphasises the extent of discrimination faced by Britain's BME communities and the impact racism has had on their lives.

Anti-racist social work

Anti-racist approaches within social work had their roots in the social movements against racism in the 1970s and early 1980s in Britain. These movements included a wide array of campaigns against racism and racist political violence (such as the campaign around the New Cross fire where 13 young party goers were killed in a fire started by racists), against the Far-right (for example, Rock Against Racism, Anti-Nazi League, Campaign Against Racism and Fascism), against police harassment and racist immigration controls. These movements were also shaped by the inner city uprisings that exploded in various parts of Britain in 1981, particularly in Bristol, Brixton (London), Chapeltown (Leeds), Handsworth (Birmingham) and Toxteth (Liverpool) (see Harman 1981; Widgery 1986; Sivanandan 1990; Gilroy 1987; LA Rose 2011; and Renton 2006).

These were all primarily movements of the streets, but they started to have a 'reflection' within parts of the social work community, a process that sped up during the 1980s as many former movement activists (from a range of campaigns) started to join and work with (or for) the Labour Party in national and local government.

In this context, anti-racist perspectives began to emerge, which went beyond a concern with individual prejudice and culture in order to expose the structural and institutional nature of racism in society. The emergence of anti-racism was informed by increasing evidence of the inferior economic status of black people in Britain, and the negative consequences for health, welfare, housing and education. Anti-racist perspectives offered a much more radical interpretation of discrimination within society and pointed to the ways in which racism was built into the structures and institutions of capitalist society. They were also critical of the supposed neutrality or independence of the state under capitalism, which was seen to reflect dominant and political interests, and to benefit from racism that divided people along racial lines.

Much of our understanding of 'race' and racism within social work theorisation at this time developed out of the work of sociologists such as Miles (1982), Sivanadan (1982), Fryer (1984), Ramdin (1987), Solomos (1988) and Hiro (1992). These writers emphasised that racism

had not always existed but became embedded within society with the development of capitalism (it was 'socially constructed' but within concrete historical circumstances); that it had gone through various phases of development (most notably Fryer's account of the ways in which modern racism developed through the racism of 'slavery', 'empire' and 'migration'); and that racism operated at different 'levels' through individual prejudice, through societies institutions and being embedded within the very structure of advanced capitalism.

Although for most people the concept of institutional racism is linked to the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry as outlined in the MacPherson Report (1999), it was during the 1980s, and in the field of social work education and training, that the approach was first acknowledged and taken seriously within a state institution. Pressure was put on the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) to tackle institutional racism, and to incorporate anti-racist learning requirements into the Diploma in Social Work. The impetus for this development was an increasing recognition and concern that the black population were under-represented as professionals and service users in social work agencies (Cheetham 1987; also both Williams, Chapter Three, and Singh, Chapter One, in this volume), and that the needs and demands of black service users were being ignored in social service agencies.

CCETSW's anti-racist initiative was influenced by discussions that took place among black and white social work academics and professionals who were concerned about racism in the field of social work. The concerns they raised in workshops and at conferences put pressure on CCETSW, and in 1989 they introduced the Rules and Regulations for the Diploma in Social Work (Paper 30), which made it a compulsory requirement for social work students to address issues of 'race' and racism, and to demonstrate competence in anti-racist practice. As a result, university courses and social work agencies were required to facilitate anti-racist education and training, with the aim that eventually social workers in the field would be conscious of the structural and institutional nature of racism in Britain and would be able to support service users affected by discrimination.

In many ways this was a remarkable initiative, which represented a radical step forward in the field. It emanated from a government agency and contained within its remit a recognition that institutional racism was a feature of British society, and that social work education and training should be structured by anti-racist concerns and principles. This was reflected in CCETSW's anti-racist policy, which was formally adopted in 1988 and that stated:

CCETSW believes that racism is endemic in the values, attitudes and structures of British society, including that of social services and social work education. CCETSW recognises that the effects of racism on black people are incompatible with the values of social work and therefore seeks to combat racist practices in all areas of its responsibilities. (CCETSW 1991: 6)

The Diploma in Social Work further stipulated learning requirements in relation to anti-racist social work, which included:

Recognising the implications of political, economic, racial, social and cultural factors upon service delivery, financing services and resources delivery.

Developing an awareness of the inter-relationships of the processes of structural oppression, race, class and gender. (CCETSW 1991: 6)

Those providing courses, such as universities, were also expected to implement and monitor anti-racist policies and practices.

So, how can we explain the demise of anti-racism in the field of social work in the context of these profound and wide-ranging commitments from CCETSW during the late 1980s and early 1990s? This requires an understanding of how the successful implementation of the anti-racist initiative was seriously impaired by a political and professional backlash, which denied the structural and institutional nature of racism, and accused CCETSW of being taken over by groups of obsessed zealots whose major concern was to express rigid 'politically correct' values. This view was articulated by Professor Robert Pinker, who was particularly vociferous in his condemnation of the development. He was critical of radical elements taking over CCETSW and of social workers being 'brainwashed'. Those involved in developing anti-racist approaches were accused of believing that 'oppression and discrimination are everywhere to be found in British society, even when they seemed "invisible"' (Pinker 1999: 18–19).

Such internal criticism was matched by politicians who, throughout the 1990s, decried social work's focus on the 'isms', when what was required, according to John Major in the aftermath of the James Bulger murder, was the 'needs to condemn a little more and understand a little less' (MacIntyre 1993).

The attack on social work – from within the profession and from politicians and media outside – led to moves to undermine the relevance

and importance of anti-racist recommendations, reinforced by the views of the then chair of CCETSW, Jeffrey Greenwood, who, in Autumn 1993, publicly committed himself to 'rooting out politically correct nonsense' (*The Independent*, 28 August 1993). He ordered a review of anti-discriminatory policies, and as a result, the Diploma in Social Work was published with the formal commitment to anti-racism dropped.

Postmodern turn

Under such pressure a commitment to anti-racist social work was watered down. However, this process was also justified in intellectual terms by the belated 'postmodern turn' within social work. Postmodern ideas swept through the academy in the late 1980s and gradually gained some hold within social work. Postmodernism rails against 'metanarratives' and any attempt to try and understand the world as a 'totality'. It denies that there are any 'truths' but instead emphasises the partial nature of human knowledge and fluidity of social categories (Rojek et al 1989).

Callinicos (1989) has argued that postmodern ideas particularly took hold among a layer of former activists, who had moved into academia and witnessed their hopes for a different world disappear as the movements of the 1960s went into decline. The harsh political atmosphere of Britain in the 1980s was a further fillip to ideas that suggested that both history and progress were (to misquote Henry Ford) 'bunk'. And, of course, the People's Revolutions of 1989 were also used to 'prove' that we had reached the 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1992) or that talk of revolution and a systemic alternative to capitalism was a dangerous myth.

Postmodernism came to social work, not in its 'pure form' but often in an inconsistent way (Ferguson and Lavalette 1999) that attempted to marry a politics of difference and diversity, with notions of economic globalisation and welfare restructuring (Leonard 1997). In these terms postmodernism was promoted as a set of ideas that broke free of ideological monoliths, and instead promoted a diverse politics of engagement, a focus on individual rights, a democratic promotion of service-user voice, and in place of a concern on structural inequalities based on class, race or gender, an emphasis on service-user diversity.

However, these trends have led us to a place where social work focuses on a range of differences, with little emphasis on inter-sectionality and the structural impediments that form the terrain upon which so many service users live their lives.

One immediate consequence of this is that social work theorisation has not kept up with the fast-shifting ‘politics’ of race and racism in Britain and Europe, where much racism is coded in terms of supposed ‘cultural incompatibility’ (Fekete, Chapter Two, this volume).

As *The Guardian* journalist Gary Younge argues, the last decade has witnessed a sharp regression, as ‘the shift in emphasis from race to religion and from colour to creed and culture’ has grafted ‘old views on to new scapegoats’ (Younge 2009b). The roots of this shift towards culture were traced by Barker and Beezer (1983) and had their historic roots in the speeches of Enoch Powell and the infamous ‘swamping speech’ of Margaret Thatcher in 1978. However, there has been an important and notable ‘quickenings’ in the transformations of racist discourse and targets in recent years. Racism now increasingly focuses on creed and culture and on nationality and citizenship – concepts that do not neatly correspond to older ideas of race concerned with biology and skin colour. The targets of anti-immigrant hostility are not necessarily black, and those engaged in racism towards Muslims are not automatically hostile to all black Britons. Many of those vilifying Muslims – like the English Defence League – will earnestly explain that they hold no brief for racists, and that they only intend to defend human rights or ‘British values’ from a culture that violates them.

The ‘war on terror’ is a proximate cause of much of this racism. However, the temptation to reduce the question of Islamophobia to a sub-narrative of the ‘war on terror’ is one that must be avoided. Racism towards Muslims pre-dates 9/11 and is not necessarily tied to pro-war opinion. It has far more to do with domestic social processes than a singular focus on the ‘war on terror’ would allow.

Nor does cultural chauvinism towards Muslims stop at the boundaries of Islam. The emergence of Islamophobia – the demonisation of Muslim communities – has allowed older forms of racism to once again emerge in mainstream culture. Segments of liberal opinion have adopted the New Right’s agenda on race relations, often swallowing wholesale the culturalist arguments on immigration and citizenship that were crafted in opposition to multiculturalism. This has all too often led to a prosecutorial attitude to Muslims, the rationale being that ‘Britishness’ includes respect for feminism, human rights and ‘Enlightenment values’, all of which are supposedly at odds with Islam, or at least with immoderate manifestations of it.

Within social work there has been a clear concern with diversity and this has led to the promotion of ‘cultural competencies’ as a means of working with minority communities (see Harrison and Burke, Chapter Four, this volume). However, there has been less focus on the

ways that culture has been used as a cover to justify racist policies and procedures. There has been little discussion, within social work journals, of the impact of this 'new racism' on minority communities – and specifically, its impact on Muslim communities, as Islamophobia has become the most vicious and pernicious form of racism across much of the West since the 1990s (Barker and Beezer 1983; see also Singh (Chapter One), Jenkins (Chapter Seven), Penketh (Chapter Eight) and Lavalette (Chapter Nine) in this volume).

At present, social work education in Britain is being redrawn in line with the new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The PCF has established nine overlapping domains, each with nine levels that reflect the increasing complexity of understanding and practice that would be expected of more experienced and strategic staff. Domains two, three and four require social workers to be aware of appropriate social work values and ethics, aware of the diverse communities and groups they will work with, and be concerned with appropriate rights and concepts of justice in their work. In each of these domains anti-racist understandings and practices are central. However, equally importantly, domains six (knowledge) and eight (contexts and organisations) emphasise that 'social contexts and social constructs' are important. Working in this domain requires recognition that we live in a socio-political world where debates and issues take different forms and issues appear in different ways at different times and periods. This is of particular relevance because of the shifting language of policy formation and the coded language of 'race'. Let's give three examples to emphasise the meaning.

Over the last 20 years there has been a tendency for 'reform' language to be colonised by advocates of the New Right. Thus concepts such as 'empowerment' and 'resilience' have shifted their meaning. 'Empowerment' was initially a word that was derived from the service-user movements and meant a collective assertion of service-user rights. However, now it is increasingly reduced to mean 'to be empowered as a consumer' within the care market. 'Resilience', as those forced to attend benefit assessments attest, is something that is now 'expected' and 'enforced' upon vulnerable people by government agencies and their representatives. Thus policy-language changes in different contexts.

A second example comes from the linguistic demonisation of sections of the poor in modern Britain. The media have trivialised and castigated 'chavs' (Jones 2011), while politicians have sought to draw a distinction between supposed 'strivers' and 'skivers' or 'workers' and 'shirkers'. Behind these phrases lurks a vicious policy-turn that cuts benefits,

threatens mass evictions of families from social rented accommodation and pits people against each other.

Our third example relates directly to the coded language of ‘race’. Political and media debate is rarely framed in explicitly racist terms about any problematic black or Asian presence. However, debate about our ‘soft touch’ benefit system, about ‘swarms’ of asylum seekers attempting to enter Britain, about Britain being ‘swamped’ by alternative cultures, about the ‘failings of multiculturalism’ and the ‘incompatibility’ of Western and non-Western cultures are relatively common.

These examples emphasise that social workers – through each of the nine levels of the PCF – need to adopt a critical gaze towards the shifting political debates that shape our world. They need to reject simplistic, superficial and commonsense explanations that blame minority and marginalised groups and instead dig beneath the surface to uncover the real relationships that are shaping our unequal social world. This requires engaging constantly with political and social debates about a range of issues that create and recreate the world within which social work operates, and that creates the ‘public causes’ of so much of the ‘private pain’ that affects the lives of social work service users.

In the chapters that follow we present a range of voices from academics, practitioners and activists who are concerned about the impact of racism on the lives of minority communities within Britain, how this affects service delivery and how it is posing questions for workers in the field.

There are three broad types of essays in the book. Chapters One to Six focus on issues of race, racism and anti-racist social work theory. This includes discussion and debate over the present nature of racism today and its impact on social work (Fekete, Singh); over the ‘problem’ of black leadership (Williams); over the competing claims of ‘cultural competency’ and antiracist social work (Harrison and Burke); and two chapters that address issues that have not featured as much as they should have within anti-racist social work debates: anti-Roma racism (Urh) and antisemitism (Levine).

Chapters Seven to Ten look broadly at aspects of Islamophobia. As has been noted the PCF requires social work students and practitioners to be aware of the shifting contexts within which policy and practice takes place. These debates are important as they impact on commonsense understandings of issues and social problems amplifying and targeting particular groups within the community. Chapter Seven (Jenkins) looks at the recent attacks on multiculturalism by various national political figures – and, in particular, unpicks the argument that suggests that the

present 'crisis of immigration' is a result of post-war multiculturalism that failed to 'assimilate' minority communities into supposed British cultural values. Chapter Eight (Penketh) presents findings of research undertaken with second and third generation Muslim women and its implications for work with Muslim communities. Chapter Nine (Lavalette) looks at the 'Prevent Agenda', first brought in by New Labour and tied to issues of social inclusion, but more recently clearly set out as a counter-terror mechanism for dealing with 'Muslim extremism'. While in Chapter Ten (Orr) looks at the way in which the recent scandal of child grooming was racialised within the media and portrayed as a crime associated with men of Pakistani origin; a recent example of what social work academic/criminologist Stan Cohen called a 'moral panic'.

Finally Chapters Eleven to Thirteen look at some practice-related issues. Chapter Eleven (Stamp) looks at how austerity cuts are targeting services for minority communities and asks what social workers should do when faced with such issues. Chapter Twelve (Moran and Gillett) looks at debates over the age assessment of asylum-seeking children and once again poses the question: what should practitioners do when faced with this new form of eugenics? Chapter Thirteen looks at the social care workforce and the use of poorly paid, migrant workers in this growing sector within the privatised care market.

The aim of these chapters collectively is to promote thinking, and stimulate debate on these important topics. Together we hope that the volume resparks debate and research in the various ways that racism blights the lives of service users and workers within social services in Britain, and re-opens debate about the necessity for a social work practice that is fully committed to the principles of anti-racism.