

Asian

Bame and BME

Black

Coloured and Of Colour

Culture

Diversity A Critical Engagement
by Nasheed Qamar Faruqi

Ethnic and Ethnicity

Identity

Multicultural and Multiculturalism

Race and Racialisation

White

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Acknowledgments

I have a number of debts and people I wish to thank. First, the AHRC and the Clore Leadership Programme for funding this research. My supervisor, John Holden for his generous guidance. At Clore, Sue Hoyle, Sharon Armstrong-Williams, Chloe Gilgallon, Petia Tzanova and Rebecca Laschetti all helped hugely. Eve Poole, Isabel Mortimer, Anna Higgs, Robert Hewison, Hilary Carty and the late Naseem Khan provided support at different points. Robert J. C. Young, Daniel Pick, and the Hidden Persuaders Group at Birkbeck have contributed with inspiring conversations over the years. Javed Majeed and Nasreen Rehman read my draft and pointed me in useful new directions.

My mother first made me question how we talk about race when she explained why collecting the “Golli” tokens on jars of Robertson’s jam was a bad idea: thank you. Mariam Faruqi has cheered me along the way. Special thanks to Hugo Bronstein, who makes every day possible.

Last but by no means least: this research would not have been possible without my consultees; I am immensely grateful to them for their time, openness and expertise. Their names appear overleaf.

London, September 2017.

Consultees

Nelson Abbey

Pablo Bronstein

Nick Capaldi

Maurice Carlin

Felix Cross

Graham Devlin

Suzanne Gorman

Sue Hoyle

Stephen Page

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How to use this pamphlet

This pamphlet is designed as much as a reference work, to be dipped into from time to time, as something to be read from cover to cover. While I hope that it will contribute to more robust conversations around diversity, it is by no means intended to be conclusive. I see this is a beginning more than an end: a way of re-energizing and stirring up a particular debate.

You can download a copy of this pamphlet, record your own response to the ideas presented here, and take part in the debate by visiting the website:

www.diversitychallenged.com

Introduction

... [Keywords] is... the record of an inquiry into a vocabulary: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions in English... Every word which I have included has at some time, in the course of some argument, virtually forced itself on my attention because the problems of its meanings seemed to me inextricably bound up with the problems it was being used to discuss.

Raymond Williams *Keywords*, page 15.

A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language... Every colonised people - in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality - finds itself face to face with the language of the civilising nation.

Frantz Fanon *Black Skins White Masks*, page 9.

This project is intended to explore the language that people who work in the cultural sectors, cultural professionals, in Britain use to talk about cultural, racial and ethnic difference.¹ The language we actually use ranges from the sometimes difficult jargon used by policy makers or curators, to the vocabulary that artists and managers in different fields use to talk about their work and the groups they make it with. The project seeks to re-problematise terms that I have noticed being used with embarrassment, irony, passion or resignation. There are not many words in the English language which carry quite so much baggage. So I embarked on writing this to provide a useful resource for people working in the arts and culture to sense check some of the words and concepts at their disposal.

The research has been concerned only with diversity in so far as it applies to racial and ethnic cultural identity. As the idea of intersectionality allows,² it is tricky or impossible to talk about race and ethnicity in the arts and culture without talking

about social class,³ gender, sexuality and physical ability. Yet the scope of this research is to pay attention to questions of race and ethnicity alone as they relate to diversity. This is for reasons of time and capacity, and as acknowledgement of the fact that each ingrained inequality is distinct in nature, and requires a particular kind of expertise and understanding. The grouping together of so called disadvantaged groups as “diverse” or different has the concomitant problem of normalising a particular position, one which does not attract these adjectives, as neutral. I should add that there are many words, that I have been unable to include in the study due to constraints of time and space. I hope a discussion of them, and other terms, will grow on the companion website.

Discussions of cultural diversity are nothing new. Indeed these questions are not far from the anxieties that Matthew Arnold experienced in the face of cultural, ethnic and racial difference in the Nineteenth Century. In more recent times, since the late 1970s, in the wake of Naseem Khan’s seminal report, commissioned by the then Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Arts Britain Ignores* (1976) cultural leaders have overtly striven to make Britain’s arts more representative of its mixed population. The Arts Council of England (ACE) has confirmed its ongoing commitment to diversity, perhaps more energetically than ever before.⁴ It is noteworthy that in 2015 Sir Peter Bazalgette was the first chair of ACE ever to put himself personally behind an initiative of this kind. Nevertheless, recently and historically, this process has not been un-controversial. Most sides of the argument agree that there is need for action in achieving greater equality with regard to class, gender, ethnicity, race, culture, sexuality and disability⁵ across our cultural landscape. Indeed the 2010 Equality Act make this a legal requirement. Nationally Funded Organisations have to, are obliged to, adhere to the legislation. In some ways the diversity discourse sugars this pill for those who find this bitter by couching equality initiatives in a paradigm that promises better results, greater conviviality⁶ and creativity. Diversity, drawing on its roots in ecological thinking, is presented as necessarily good and natural, thus silencing many who may feel disenfranchised by the concomitant changes. Yet in spite of its centrality to cultural policy, the history and theoretical or critical implications of much of the diversity discourse is not easily available in one place. Ironically, ACE’s 2006 report, *Navigating Difference*, includes a list of “key words and their meanings”, saying that “This is not a glossary – a list of words with definitions – because most of the vocabulary used to talk about cultural diversity is woolly at best and at worst a source of contention.”⁷ ACE acknowledges and steers clear of the political minefield represented by discourses of diversity, while at the same time tacitly accepting the controversies in a spirit of *laissez faire* or diversity of opinion.

At the same time, more and more attention has been given to the question of this “woolly” concept - diversity - in the publicly funded arts. It is as if diversity has become a portmanteau idea in the arts: a grab bag of categories in which race, gender, sexuality and disability jostle alongside each other for space, air and light. In *Art Professional's* recent *Pulse Report*, one contributor refers to diversity as a confusing “umbrella” idea which lacks specificity.⁸

While the widespread discourse of diversity has emerged thanks to a largely successful and welcome bid for greater equality in our cultural lives and institutions - and ideally in our political and social lives too - many critics of diversity have quite rightly identified flaws in the strategies that implement this thinking. Robert Hewison writes: “Language itself constructs difference ... For the individuals who have been the object of the linguistic definitions and redefinitions observed here, the paradox remains unresolved. The recognition of their membership of an ethnic minority appears to disable them in their identity as artists.”⁹

At the other ends of the political spectrum, Munira Mirza and David Goodhart have also attacked the conversation around diversity. Mirza, influenced by her libertarian leanings and intellectual lineage,¹⁰ has sought to place the idea of “universalism” as a contrasting polarity against ideas of diversity or multiculturalism. Meanwhile, Goodhart was already notoriously claiming that Britain was “too diverse” in 2004, his contention being that social cohesion relies on “thick” “solidarities” between people who are recognised as belonging to one’s “own” group. The trajectory of his more recent work¹¹ sees him channel classically anti-Semitic paranoid ideas about “rootless cosmopolitans” in his reductive but catchy dualism of the “anywheres” and “somewheres”. Such critiques attack both diversity and multiculturalism as modes of thought and policy priorities. It is relevant that Mirza has argued that “race is no longer a significant disadvantage”,¹² while Goodhart has been at pains to distinguish between “white self interest” and “racism”, anxious not to fall prey to what he describes as “the liberal reflex to tar legitimate majority grievances with the brush of racism”.¹³ In this schema the diversity discourse has been embraced by those who accept that racism exists and wish to address it through an equalities agenda. Yet some of the reactionary criticism hits home because there is confusion at the heart of much diversity discourse and thinking.

So, what do we mean when we talk about diversity, and how is the language around ethnic, racial and cultural diversity actually used? Is there some kind of agreement

about what the terms of the conversation are, or are we still dealing with a minefield of best intentions, stammered apologies and hurt feelings - or worse still, lost opportunity and silenced voices?

And is this just a question of semantics? Why should language matter so much? Why make such a big deal out of seemingly small things? After all, we live “post-race”,¹⁴ post ethnicity and post identity. Identity politics is so 90s. Perhaps not. This project was conceived in the winter of 2015/2016, when the possibility of Brexit seemed a mere Faragian fantasy, and the likelihood of a “birther” being elected president of the United States equally unlikely. Since then, both improbabilities have moved into the ante-room of possibility, and from there into the realm of lived reality. In the process, our conversations about cultural identity, authenticity, ethnicity and race have been transformed and reignited with political anxiety - indeed with violent potential.

Vocabulary in particular is related to our beliefs about, and behaviour in, the world. Reacting against claims that incorrect grammar is a cause of social decay, the distinguished linguist David Crystal has argued:

... [T]here is no simple relationship between grammar and behaviour... There is a relationship between language and behaviour in the use of vocabulary - the use of insulting words (such as racist names), gender biased terms, antagonistic obscenities and other such denigrating lexical choices is clearly related to a person’s temperament and beliefs. But even here, there is no simple link between linguistic cause and social effect. Racist words do not cause racist beliefs. It is the other way round.¹⁵

As such, Language - and specifically vocabulary - remains political. Grammar and vocabulary both define and reflect the relationships within the community in which they are used. And what we say is shaped by where we speak from in terms of time, geography and power relations as well as our values and aspirations as a community. In the words of Norbert Elias, “A people’s language is itself a symbolic representation of the world as members of that society have learnt to experience it during the sequence of their changing fortunes. At the same time a people’s language affects their perceptions and thus also their fortunes.”¹⁶ In this light, it is a particularly urgent moment to reconsider the assumptions and beliefs we espouse when we talk about diversity and cultural difference, or indeed what we mean when we talk about “ethnicity”.

If there was ever a time when such a study as this could have been a-political, that time is behind us. When we have political leaders ever more bent on fixing and narrowing our cultural visions it is more pressing than ever for storytellers and cultural professionals to question, challenge and expand beliefs about identity and belonging. This means a renewed engagement with the power structures and inequalities, as well as the opportunities and risks, which lie underneath conversations about and around diversity. In turn this means re-politicising a conversation which has in recent years disavowed its politics, in part for good reason: to avoid the slur of social engineering or “political correctness gone mad”. What equality does not need is a return to political correctness or ignorant relativism; what it might benefit from is a renewed frank engagement with the history and current reality of power and cultural supremacy as they are played out in our lives and cultural practices.

This project is firmly grounded in the United Kingdom, and has sought to consult with leaders across the country. Yet the English as spoken here is by no means a metaphorical island. For one thing English is an international language, used across the internet and influenced by bilingualism as well as links with other languages. Contemporary Britain is a multilingual society, where Welsh, Scots, Polish, Urdu and Swahili co-exist with English in the lives of many citizens. Meanwhile, English is spoken and written across the globe, from Lahore, Sydney and Calcutta to Berkley, California. Cultural professionals, across the spectrum of commercial and subsidised arts, will have contact with these other Englishes and with debates across the world that touch upon their conversations about diversity. The terms “multiculturalism” and “intersectional”, North American coinages, are both cases which demonstrate how our own conversations around diversity are influenced by their global context. Equally, Britain’s contact with Europe is an ongoing influence both formally and informally. So while my focus is decidedly British, it has been a real priority not to make this a parochial study.

My intellectual persuasions and influences in working on this project have been deliberately eclectic and inter-disciplinary. You will encounter post-colonialism, psychoanalysis, post-structural thinking and a fair bit of historical contextualising and etymology. These perspectives are layered in with real life consultations because speakers at the coal face can reflect on language, practice and understanding in a way that is more alive and current than any book.

The reader will notice that I have used the metaphor of conversation throughout, as a way of expressing the dynamic process by which shared meaning and understanding

comes into the world. I call it a metaphor because I am not just referring to a literal conversation held between individuals in a room (in a home, a rehearsal room, or artist's studio), but also to a larger conversation that happens on a group, social and cultural level through various mediums of communication (print; Twitter; TV; other modes of cultural expression).¹⁷ At its best, conversation can be an open and equal exchange of ideas, but it can also be equally exclusive and partial; after all, not everyone is welcome or equal in every conversation. I am also aware that there is a risk of overusing it as a comfortably vague, and deceptively everyday term and am wary that it should not come to stand as a cipher for social processes that can't be explained.

What I have found in the course of my study is a discourse that is full of slippage, overlap and contestation. When ACE admits that it would rather avoid laying down contentious definitions, it is understandable. Besides, it is certainly preferable that we do not receive top-down definitions of how we should think about race and cultural difference. Still, the discourse of diversity shows that we inhabit a tacit and naturalised territory which makes assumptions about the nature (and existence) of racialised cultural and ethnic subjects. This territory reflects historical power relations as much as it seeks to renegotiate them. The official aversion to dispute or fix the conversation may be well intentioned but it facilitates a conversation that can continue to patronise those who have been defined as being outside the cultural norm. By not being more specific and open in our choice of language we collude in a reality where it is still acceptable to reify the racial, cultural and ethnic "other" and exclude them from discussions of cultural excellence or quality. At the same time we struggle to create change if we cannot name difference.

This pamphlet is not calling for more rigorous policing of how we speak¹⁸ but instead seeks to initiate a more knowing consideration of the racialising terms available to us. Well before 9/11, experts in the field of race relations acknowledged the wide range of thinking around race and ethnicity. Some of the foremost thinkers in the field leave the reader more rather than less confused:

... different authors use such terms as race, ethnicity, racism and ethnic minorities in somewhat different ways. We have not sought to impose uniform usage, not only because it would have been arbitrary but more importantly because it would have obscured the very different ways in which writers conceptualise the situation.¹⁹

It must be concluded that there is no agreement about what many of these terms mean and how they relate to each other. Yet because they have such a direct impact on people's lives and realities it is important to press further. At bottom, when we talk about diversity, we talk about what it means to belong in a group and what the limits of that group might be. Can a group, community or indeed nation be constituted of difference and nevertheless work towards a unified and shared vision of cultural lives? Or do we require of our groups identification at a more "tribal" level?²⁰ This conversation is by its nature political, that is it is fundamentally related to what it means to be part of public life. It is about how we define the group that we call British society, and more specifically here, British cultural life and the arts.

Diversity in the subsidised arts and cultural sectors matters precisely because art and culture inhabit a space where the private meets the political. As John Holden writes in *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy*:

Professionals have a role as educators and arbiters, but also as guardians. It is their job to ensure intergenerational equity and maintenance of the cultural ecology - a job that on the surface can conflict with the short-term public will as expressed by the media. Professionals also have a legitimate role in shaping public opinion and encouraging and validating public debate.²¹

He reminds us that as people who contribute to cultural life, whether we are artists or poets, publishers or policy makers, and whether we like it or not, we are deeply embedded in the political reality and futures of our societies.

Cultural practitioners are ideally placed to re-open this conversation because, as Holden makes clear, they can shape and colour our notions of what culture is and can be in the first place. Indeed, at the heart of this talk about diversity is the question of who has the privilege of defining culture. To paraphrase the historian Daniel Pick,²² this conversation needs to ask: in the pursuit of whose desire or interests, and in response to what historical contingencies does our contemporary discourse of diversity seek to de-politicise itself by appealing to unyielding notions of culture, ethnicity and race? It is worth recalling Roland Barthes' frustration at the elision of History and Nature; his formulation that sees how ideology renders historical and political contingency "natural" is still sobering. In this spirit we must remain suspicious or sceptical about categories and ideas that come to seem sacrosanct or naturalised: we do so in the hope of maintaining an open and enquiring public space. This does not mean inventing a new vocabulary altogether

but it does require a posture of awareness when we think about the context and cost of our vocabularies.

In his 1995 Nobel address Seamus Heaney said:

Even if we have learned to be rightly and deeply fearful of elevating the cultural forms and conservatisms of any nation into normative and exclusivist systems, even if we have terrible proof that pride in the ethnic and religious heritage can quickly degrade into the fascistic, our vigilance on that score should not displace our love and trust in the good of the indigenous per se. On the contrary, a trust in the staying power and travel worthiness of such good should encourage us to credit the possibility of a world where respect for the validity of every tradition will issue in the creation and maintenance of a salubrious political space.²³

Heaney recognised and took on, in the most inspiring possible way, the political reality of his time and place. He knew the freight - and violent potential - carried by words such as “tradition” “heritage” and “indigenous”. He recognised what is at stake when we talk about “diversity” or indeed “multiculturalism”. And he knew the cost of our failure to reach an understanding across religious and ethnic groupings.

An exploration, understanding and history of language and usage needs to remain at the centre of how we understand our social realities. Language matters not just in and for itself, but because it is a mirror and medium of life. Heaney credits poetry for its “truth to life” and it is this truth to life - life in all its paradox and variety - that we need to recapture in our conversations about diversity. Certainly in relation to race and cultural difference it is worthwhile to reconsider how our conversations about difference can better reflect the realities of individual subjects within our lived and imagined cultural communities.

The Words

Asian

Asian has a surprisingly complex history. In the 1930s it began to replace the term Asiatic to describe people and customs from the continent of Asia. As the OED makes clear, the word asiatic was seen as derogatory by the people it described. Curiously, while Asian appears in the online OED, the word Asia does not (although its cognate Europe does).

For a word which many take for granted, Asian presents us with further complexity when we look at it in every day usage, especially in the context of censuses, surveys and monitoring. In the United States, Asian generally refers to someone with ancestry in China or Japan, Laos or Vietnam. In the U.K. many people limit their usage of the term “British Asian” to people with South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan) ancestry. The contrast is telling because it is conditioned by colonial or military histories. The term Asian, which seems so categorical and definitive a descriptor, is in fact relative, and relatively recent as a coinage.

There is further complexity when we consider that the idea of Asia is also contested. Writing in an essay about the idea of Asia, Chinese thinker Wang Hui observes that,

The accounts of Asia discussed here demonstrate not so much Asia’s autonomy as the ambiguities and contradictions in the idea of Asia itself: the idea is at once colonialist and anticolonialist, conservative and revolutionary, nationalist and internationalist, originating in Europe and, alternatively, shaping Europe’s image of itself. It is closely related to issues of both nation-state and empire, a notion of a civilization seen as the opposite of the European, and a geographic

category established through geopolitics. I believe that as we examine the political, economic, and cultural autonomy of Asia, we must take seriously the derivativeness, ambiguity, and inconsistency that were intertwined with the history of its advent - these are products of specific historical relationships, and it is only from these relationships that they can be transcended or overcome.

Hui goes on to explore how ideas of Europe and Asia developed symbiotically, making each other possible. Thus in many senses, as Said points out elsewhere, occidental notions of civilisation develop in contradistinction to ideas of the Oriental - in this case the Asian.

Fourth, the category of an Asian totality was established in contradistinction to Europe, and it encompasses heterogeneous cultures, religions, and other social elements. Whether from the perspective of historical traditions or contemporary institutions, Asia lacks the conditions for creating a European Union-style superstate. Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Daoism, and Confucianism all originated on this continent we call Asia, which represents three-fifths of the world's landmass and contains more than half of the world's population; thus, any attempt to characterize Asia as a unitary culture is not plausible.²⁴

Hui's argument alone should alert cultural professionals to the rich and complex history and politics and heterogeneity that lies behind this deceptively simple word.

Black

This is a word with a great and complex history, used in everyday language as distinct from its racial and cultural meanings as an adjective to denote objects that are chromatically black. In racial and cultural senses, the term could not be more varied in its usages and meanings. To be black in Britain is not a monolithic experience. As Lola Okolosie has observed, "My blackness is informed by whether or not I am Nigerian or Jamaican or half-white, poor or middle-class. Blackness is not one thing and it is not experienced as such."²⁵ Consultees have both acknowledged the rich cultural heritage that is encompassed in the word and also expressed their ambivalence about the term as a way of describing themselves.

It was only in the sixteenth century that the English word black started being applied as a racial term to describe people from beyond the Mediterranean. Until the age of exploration, calling someone black in England, generally meant they had black or brown hair and eyes. This changed as Europeans began to travel and gain colonies by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The complexity of Renaissance usage alone is well demonstrated in Shakespeare's play *Othello* where blackness is not just a physical trait but a moral quality as is demonstrated by the slippage in the following lines:

Othello: My name that was as fresh
As Dians Visage, is now begrim'd and blacke
As mine owne face.²⁶

Thus Othello laments the loss of his reputation, honour and character. Yet in the play, he himself only uses the word black twice (it appears eleven times in the play, and Iago is the character who uses it most frequently). Notably, on the other occasion Othello describes himself as black, it also denotes in him a lack or shortcoming. Recent scholarship has suggested that Shakespeare may have based the figure of Othello on the Moorish Ambassador to the English court, Abd-el Messouad ben Mohammed Anoun, who was in London in 1600-1601.²⁷ Given that he looked like what we would now think of as an Arab, this further complicates our notions of historical blackness. It suggests that for Renaissance Londoners, to be black was to be non-European. The subsequent history of blackness - and associated racial terms (which were frequently used as terms of abuse) - as a reification of human individuals and systematic tool of enslavement and exploitation is well documented.

Fortunately, generations of thinkers, artists and activists - from W.E.B. Du Bois to bell hooks, Fanon, to Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, have forged varied notions of political and cultural blackness. These ideas alongside movements of resistance and equality are a source of pride, which has also attracted interest from groups which may not traditionally have identified as black. This is related to the kind of post-colonial solidarity brought forth in the Tricontinental movement and Bandung conferences; for many Asians who have embraced the idea of political blackness it has become a kind of proud subalterneity.²⁸

For practitioners who might previously have been designated "Afro-Caribbean" the term black is generally felt to be more open, direct and self-determined. Yet there are thinkers, like Farhad Dalal, who insist that in English the associations of the

term black are inescapably linked with negativity, while the opposite is true of so-called whiteness. As the discussion of race goes on to explore, just as no person is literally black, nobody is literally white - the important concomitant realisation being that these racial polarities are constructs.²⁹

BAME and BME

These two acronyms stand for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Black and Minority Ethnic respectively. While the term BAME is included in the OED's 2014 draft revisions, the term BME is absent from its pages. The first recorded usage of the term BAME, according to the dictionary, was in *The Guardian* in 2002. So it is a relatively new usage, although none of the words within it are actually new.

Two years ago, Trevor Phillips, former head of the Commission for Racial Equality, in his speech launching the Demos Integration Hub, announced that it was time to abandon the terms BAME and BME on two grounds. Firstly because they sound unwieldy and clunky, and secondly because by grouping different "ethnic minorities into the same category, important differences will be lost".³⁰ His suggestion that the term BAME might be replaced by the American phrase "People of Colour" fell quite flat, largely because it only perpetuates the misnomer that white is not a colour, and that white people have no race. Many people agree that while BAME is a mouthful, and a somewhat blunt instrument, as a concept it allows for certain disadvantages to be measured and monitored.

Coloured and Of Colour

In 2015, Benedict Cumberbatch fell into the unenviable trap of referring to "coloured" (by which he meant black) actors.³¹ The unfortunate part of the story is that the controversy around his language detracted from the important point he was making about the lack of opportunities available to his black colleagues. It is

notable that he had the self-awareness to apologise promptly. Of course the term coloured gives offence precisely because it was co-opted in Apartheid, for example, to exclude mainly black but also other non-white groups from full engagement in society. Contemporary stories like that of a landlord who has a policy of having “no coloured tenants because of the smell of curry”³² underscore just why the term touches a raw nerve for people who have been its object.

It is therefore surprising that Trevor Phillips should be keen to embrace the term “Of Colour” or “People of Colour” as somehow being more respectful. While some cultural leaders find it convenient to use the phrases “of colour” and “people of colour” as ways of acknowledging the shared experience of people who are part of non-white (as opposed to white) minorities, others are less comfortable about this language. The problem is that by referring to non-white people as being of colour one is only reinstating the neutrality of white people. As Richard Dyer writes in his remarkable study of whiteness, “As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are racially not seen or named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people.”³³ It is for this reason that for many people, being called “of colour” or “a person of colour” is not much better than being called “coloured”, even though the latter term is generally more vitriolic than the former more anodyne usages.

Culture

John Holden in *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy* writes, “No one would suggest that defining culture is easy... and government certainly struggles”.³⁴ Indeed despite government reticence to define culture in any overt way “in practice definitions are used by policy-makers at national, regional and local levels. The definitions flow from administrative convenience, and do not match people’s everyday understanding and experience of culture”.³⁵ Quite. So the government’s recent *Culture White Paper* slides in the following gloss for culture in its opening pages,

Culture no longer simply means being familiar with a select list of works of art and architecture, but the accumulated influence of creativity, the arts,

museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage upon all our lives. When we talk about our ‘cultural sectors’, we are referring to an extraordinary network of individuals and organisations, that together preserve, reflect and promote who we are as a nation, in all our rich diversity.

There will always be an aesthetic aspect to culture in its many forms; and the government will always champion cultural excellence. But each community has its own culture – its own history, museums and traditions. In this global, interconnected economy, what is local and unique has a special value and should be supported and encouraged. We should no more dictate a community’s culture than we should tell people what to create or how to create it. The role of government is to enable great culture and creativity to flourish – and to ensure that everyone can have access to it.³⁶

The *White Paper* goes on to talk about some of the instrumental values added by what it refers to as the “cultural sectors” or “networks” of individuals and organisations whose work has an aesthetic element. The sheer inadequacy of this description is revealed by asking whether nail art and hair removal are included in this category of “aesthetic” endeavour, and whether Dadaism would have somehow slipped itself out of the net?

Furthermore, while saying that we should not “dictate a community’s culture” the paper is woven through with assumptions about what constitutes “our nation’s” culture. Shakespeare is cited, no invoked, at least three times in the opening pages. So we can definitely be sure that Shakespeare is “Culture”. There’s an uncomfortable accommodation between a need to offer up some examples of national culture with a welcome aversion to being prescriptive. In this discomfort, Shakespeare becomes the one “constant good” in Larkin’s phrase.

Another unsatisfactory description of culture is attempted in Mirza’s 2008 contribution about what she views to be the politicisation of culture through arts policy since the Blair years in particular. She looks back at a cultural policy that once, in what appears to have been a golden age, “adhered, at least in its presentation, to the Enlightenment view of culture as something that should be allowed to exist freely [sic.] of social pressure and need. It indicated a belief in the need to defend culture’s autonomy. The criteria by which it was judged would not be the arbitrary tastes of individuals, private institutions, or politicians, but of experts who had transparent authority and could ensure standards of excellence.”³⁷ The problem is

partly that the Enlightenment never had a simple view of culture “as something that existed freely [sic.] of social pressure and need”; one only need to look at what happened to the philosophes in the hands of the French Revolution to see that the Romantic-Enlightenment polarity is overplayed (they overlap in meaningful ways). Furthermore, the Enlightenment in general (Mirza doesn’t give us a historical definition) could be prescriptive and instrumental about the politics and uses of culture and the arts: from Robespierrean pageantry outside the Pantheon³⁸ to the popularity and cultivation of dry operas that promoted republican virtues like Cherubini’s *Lodoiska*, the Enlightenment ethic does not necessarily produce (that anachronism) “art for arts sake”.

The status of the expert and the idea of inherent cultural value - and who decides what is culture - are crucial to Mirza. When she says of the Rich Mix arts centre in the East End of London that “the choice of culture was based on what engaged the end user, not on any inherent notion of cultural value itself. Indeed, the rhetoric of diversity is self-avowedly against ‘traditional’ models of cultural policy”³⁹ she is advocating for a notion of cultural value that only allows for two sides of what John Holden has usefully described as a triangulation of values agreed between professionals, politicians and people. Mirza bridles at the thought of people being able to engage in definitions of cultural value.

Mirza is astute when she critiques what she terms the “anthropological” definition of culture insofar as it re-inscribes the racist and patronising stereotype that the “non-white” are somehow beyond the pale of “real” cultural discourse. However her critique of this usage - of culture as “...social habit, traditions and values”⁴⁰ - is a simplified adoption of the discussion of culture found in John Holden’s 2006 paper *Crisis of Legitimacy*. The problem is that her definition of universalism⁴¹ does nothing to tackle the problem that, in her own study, the “universal” is synonymous with the white, the male, with the hegemonic. Yes, she seeks to deconstruct essentialist reifications of race, ethnicity and community but she does not go far enough.

What is crucially missing from Mirza’s account of culture is any meaningful engagement with postcolonial thinking. And what is missed in the process of denying or resisting the complexity of imperialist power structures and their cultural legacy is crucial if we are going to make any real advances in this area. The history of European expansion and colonialism is inseparably woven into contemporary notions of European cultures and non-European cultures. Parts of the colonial project relied on a denigration of the cultures encountered in the colonies. At the

same time, it was accompanied by an anxiety about European or British cultures in the face of difference. Thus, Macaulay in 1835 famously felt the need to say:

And I certainly never met with any orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.⁴²

Admittedly even at the time, Macaulay's view was contested and it is now argued that his role has been somewhat exaggerated, yet it is fair to say that this kind of attitude did characterise aspects of the colonial enterprise.⁴³

As Dalal states in his discussion of Frantz Fanon "To have a history is to have a past as a self-reflective being. In other words it is to be human, and what is being said is that the colonised is not human, and having no history or culture is part of nature."⁴⁴ Contemporary debates around the "cultures" of formerly colonised peoples sometimes focus on the most obscurantist, narrow and easily patronised elements of those cultures. The argument that "we don't tell a community what it's Culture is" (as expressed in the 2016 *Culture White Paper*) emerges as an overdetermined gesture. It means more than one thing. On the one hand it becomes a guilty disavowal of colonial attitudes of cultural supremacy. On the other hand it can also use the guise of liberal openness to disguise a deeply held ignorance and patronage towards non-European and so-called minority ethnic cultures. The powerful have the privilege of ignorance. They do not need to inform themselves about the culture of the disempowered. Thus 'communities' define what they want their culture to be and reconfirm stereotypes. It is in this regard that Mirza's argument for 'universalism' is perhaps compelling: apply the same standards to 'minority' arts and demand the same levels of expertise and quality as we see in mainstream arts. Of course, this would require cohorts of cultural leaders who are better informed about a greater variety of cultural traditions, languages and forms.⁴⁵

Regardless of how uncomfortable it is for everyone involved, we cannot discuss culture in historical vacuums. To persist in doing so is akin to trying to parse

out the idea of European culture without addressing the repeated trope of anti-semitism over centuries that culminated in the Shoah. Simply put, we define ourselves as a group with a shared culture by that which “we” exclude; the “denigrated other is made to carry unwanted aspects of the self”.⁴⁶ Central to any conversation about how we define culture today is an open conversation and genuine encounter with the ways that the non-European has always had and maintains a role in European and British cultures.

There is every reason to urge a real and radical equalisation of what we mean when we talk about ethnic and “*minority*” cultures. When talking about the South Asian communities in the UK why not talk about Bapsi Sidhwa, Zehra Nigah and Ghalib as well as bhangra, samosas or “Bollywood”? In talking about or giving a platform to the most popular or dumbed down products, by in other words using populism and community “outreach” as a fig leaf for ignorance, patronage and mediocrity, white supremacy is re-inscribed: the Asian and the African can again be condemned for not having a culture that equals Keats, Shakespeare or Goethe. This lack of nuance is captured by respondents to *Art Professional’s* recent *Pulse Report*. One respondent points out that Indian Classical Dance is rarely seen as a heritage form like ballet, nor is it given comparative support. Indeed there is little distinction between Indian classical and modern dance forms in the U.K.⁴⁷

Often, rather than calling for an equal exchange between heterogenous cultures, we call for uni-directional “integration” where the inscrutable or inadequate native or ethnic other (as when people talk about shallow pools or lack of talent) is required to fit in with “British Culture” which becomes synonymous with an un-contested canon that is safe from challenge because of its ‘excellence’, a term often abused as a synonym for “what I think is good”. Thus the absence of BAME audiences in concert halls, theatres, Opera Houses and museums is met with the wringing of hands. How many white British audience members are there for Indian Classical Music?

For centuries, the colonial enterprise gave the British ruling elite the privilege of remaining ignorant of “native” (and indeed working class) cultures. It remains the case that attitudes towards “racialised” and minority programming still envisage cultural diversity as a risk and challenge to quality, even though multiculturalism and diversity have dominated policy agendas for more than three decades. I have personally encountered a major museum director who finds Indian and Chinese Classical music a-tonal and a source of embarrassed giggling: that a man who has

the sophistication to see the art in a cleverly placed urinal (no offence intended to Duchamp) fails to understand or appreciate whole musical canons is an indictment of our education system and indeed, our very notions of ‘culture’. A “minority ethnic” arts professional with corresponding prejudices would be unthinkable. They would certainly never be described as “cultured”.⁴⁸

Conversations about separate cultural traditions necessarily facilitate related terms such as intercultural and multicultural. Ideas that are rendered fatuous if you consider that culture is by its nature polymorphous and live rather than fixed or singular. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie vividly captures how the realities of cultures are in flux, when she says “Culture does not make people, people make culture.”⁴⁹ Yet well-meaning institutions and policy makers persist, and inadvertently entrench essentialist accounts of particular cultures.

Diversity

The BFI diversity standards leaflet says “Our definition of diversity is to recognise the quality and value of difference.” In a bid to dodge accusations of sanctimonious political correctness, the preceding paragraph is careful to point out that “diversity is not just about doing what’s right: it is good for creativity, supports economic growth, taps into under-served audiences and makes good business sense.” For them, the argument for diversity is anything but political. It could be - and indeed it is - about so much other than racial and ethnic exclusion. The pamphlet small print goes on more soberly later to explain that “The Standards focus on disability, gender, race and sexual orientation (as they pertain to the Equality Act 2010)”⁵⁰

In a similar vein, ACE’s Creative Case for Diversity⁵¹ is an energetic, persuasive and well meaning endeavour to make instrumental and practical arguments for diversity. One supposes that its reasoning is that no one can reasonably argue against the economic and creative case for promoting diversity. This seems like a practical strategy in many ways; why would someone who is constitutionally opposed to including people who don’t look like them be persuaded by arguments like virtue or justice? The pragmatic approach seems so much more appealing. And the whole idea of diversity is after all a powerful metaphor for life itself and healthy ecologies more generally, borrowed from Darwin’s own observations: the word diversity appears twenty times in *On the Origin of Species* (twenty-six times in *The Descent*

of Man); once with the qualifying adjective beautiful, as in beautiful diversity, and once as wonderful diversity.⁵²

Yet criticism of diversity as a cultural policy too has been steeped in the language and thinking of evolutionary biology. Goodhart, who uses diversity in its primarily racial and ethnic sense, in a 2004 essay, criticised diversity on the following grounds, pitting it against the centripetal forces of social belonging, community and “solidarity”.

On the other hand, the logic of solidarity, with its tendency to draw boundaries, and the logic of diversity, with its tendency to cross them, do at times pull apart. Thanks to the erosion of collective norms and identities, in particular of class and nation, and the recent surge of immigration into Europe, this may be such a time.⁵³

He identified diversity as a threat to social cohesion, in so far as it provoked in him an anxiety around the “erosion of collective norms and identities” and seemed counter to evolutionary self-interest.

The problem is perhaps that diversity confuses people, for meaning too many things to too many people. It has, in current usage, become an umbrella term with varying emphasis depending on the user and their context. So for some, diversity means disability; for others, class; race; gender; sexuality. But in all these cases what emerges is the reification of difference. These groups are defined against the supposed norm - that of the white, able-bodied, middle class, heterosexual man. And both sides of the divide - for it is in many ways a divide - feel alienated and misunderstood.

Some practitioners don't accept the umbrella usage for the word diversity. For Madani Younis there's an uncomfortable awareness that “Okay, diversity is a euphemism for the word ‘black’.”⁵⁴ His use of the term euphemism is indicative of the perceived shame and lack of sincerity in the conversation. It also points towards the slippery understanding of diversity reflected in the “Pulse Report”, which showed professionals using the term to talk about whichever protected characteristic seemed most relevant to their work; very few had an overview which brought an awareness of different types of diversity. Interestingly no one suggested that straight white British men might be considered diverse in any context. If they were considered at all, it was with hostility, and this too is part of the problem.

Certain usages expose this problem more than others. For example, a number of comments in the *Pulse Survey* use the phrase “more diverse” which seems particularly odd and illogical if one considers that difference is an absolute (you are either different from something or the same as it - how can we objectively measure degrees of difference)? Then there is the hidden referent inherent in the idea of difference, which celebratory narratives of ecological diversity dodge by focusing on the idea of infinite variation. Here it is not the idea of diversity per se that is the problem – it is the fact that the idea is layered upon the entrenched subject positions of a system that privileges a particular perspective or position. The “I” which measures or discerns difference is invariably white, male, economically secure, able bodied and heterosexual. And it is from his position of power that he discerns difference, and defines that which does not look like him as diversity. Thus diversity becomes a narrative that continues to pigeon hole and limit people who do not speak from this normative position.

You are diverse. You are different. You need special measures to help you achieve our standards, we are not sure you are good enough, but we are going to help you join us at the high table because we are good people and that’s what good people in good societies do. And this narrative of superiority is woven into several diversity initiatives which seek out and patronise “diverse” talent. Thus ACE’s Change Makers Programme aims “to provide opportunities for Black, minority ethnic and disabled leaders to gain the skills, knowledge and experience required to compete on merit when future senior leadership positions become available.”⁵⁵ As if they did not already compete on merit. The problem of underrepresentation is parked firmly at the feet of the “diverse” who have up until now lacked the “skills, knowledge and experience” to be senior leaders. Unconscious bias and institutional prejudice has no part in this account of their exclusion.

While critics like Mirza claim that the diversity discourse aimed to dismantle establishment cultural policies,⁵⁶ other thinkers and professionals argue that diversity has been co-opted by the establishment. In his work, psychoanalyst and Group Analyst Farhad Dalal makes the argument that diversity has become a disingenuous box ticking exercise that does nothing to tackle institutionalised systems of prejudice and inequality. Instead, he argues that the differences enshrined by the idea of diversity reify the cultural and racial other and facilitate further exclusion while pretending to create more equal conditions.⁵⁷

Dalal confronts the questions around quality and excellence head on, by advocating for greater not less discrimination. He critiques a system of thinking that alienates subjects from their deeply held values in order to accommodate an ‘other’ who seems not to measure up to their standards. He argues that in the long run, such a system can only breed resentment and anger. If accommodating you means disavowing the very heart of who I am, I can never be at peace. To apply this idea to cultural organisations: if an organisation values quality and excellence it can’t be asked to compromise these. Racism lies beneath the failure to imagine that excellence won’t exclude people who aren’t white, but the obligations of diversity monitoring rarely allow for this.

In all these discussions, diversity features as a noun and a verb that encapsulates an endeavour and a desired state of being. It is both the process and the goal. We want diversity, and to get it, we will embrace or ‘do’ diversity. But the confusion arises when anyone considers what doing diversity really means.

Ethnic and Ethnicity

The usage of ethnic and ethnicity is perhaps more slippery and politically charged than even the term culture. Famously, the English word ethnic is derived from the Greek ἔθνικός which means foreign, and the later post-Classical Latin, where Tertullian used the term ethnicus to denote pagan or heathen groups - those who were neither Christian nor Jewish. Early Christian authors used ethnic as a translation of the Hebrew term “goy” or “goyim”. It is a word historically aligned with the idea of the outsider.

By the late eighteenth century the terms ethnic and ethnicity came to be used in the senses that we now often associate with them, namely to denote nationality or origin. The late nineteenth century saw the United States introduce the use of the terms to refer to non-black minorities who were considered to have a common descent, national or cultural heritage. As recently as 1961 the *Times Literary Supplement* carries the following reference to: “The former ‘ethnics’, a polite term for Jews, Italians, and other lesser breeds just inside the law.”⁵⁸ However, ethnic and ethnicity have in recent years lost much of their sting, although they are still largely associated with cultural outsiders or others, especially when used in the term

“ethnic minority” - a term which is used much less frequently nowadays, though still tucked away in the acronyms BAME and BME.

Diversity monitoring forms, like the census, do little to acknowledge vagaries in the discourse of ethnicity. While monitoring is crucial in understanding the reality of entrenched disadvantage, it is still beholden on us to persist in questioning and revising categories which we take for granted. Faced with only one box to choose from on an equality and monitoring form, the theorist Robert Young observes “Officially therefore, ‘White British’ describes your ethnicity if you are ... white British. Yet who, in Britain, thinks of Britishness as an ethnicity? Being ‘British’ is not an ethnicity, it describes citizenship of the United Kingdom, a term cooked up in 1603 by the Scottish King James I, after he had ascended to the English throne on the death of Elizabeth I as a way of pulling together the parts of his new kingdom of South and North Britain.”⁵⁹

This expresses some of the slippage that goes on when we use the term ethnicity - are we talking about national origin, racial features, or cultural origin? There is little consensus, although there seems to be some agreement that ethnicity and citizenship are distinct. Historically, this ambiguity is not new and it extends to the related concepts of nationality and race. As Young notes “Within this discourse of the nineteenth century our modern distinction between ethnicity and race did not exist. For much of the nineteenth century the words ‘race’ and ‘nation’ were also used virtually interchangeably.”⁶⁰ The separation of our ideas of race, nationality and ethnicity are relatively recent, and judging from contemporary elision, ongoing. Young underscores the confusion around ideas of ethnicity and belonging when he writes, “In today’s terms, Englishness may not be an ethnicity, but English was certainly once used to describe a race, and a top one at that by all accounts that you read of ‘this island race.’”⁶¹

In his influential essay, ‘What is an ethnic group?’ Max Weber placed ethnicity alongside class, status and party as a social force. He defined ethnic groups as

those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs, or both, or because of memories of colonization. This belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.⁶²

Importantly, in Weber's definition, an ethnic group is self identifying. Moran has pointed out how ethnicity has become a greater focus of scholarship since the Second World War; the reality of ethnic conflict and migration has demonstrated that people do not simply give up their sense of ethnic identity when challenged by migration or political violence.⁶³

Identity

To talk about destabilised and multifarious or fractured identities became the clichéd preserve of academic campuses across (but not limited to) the Anglosphere in the 1990s. To rehearse such arguments here in 2017 is worn out and unproductive. A workshop that John Tusa led for Clore Fellows in 2016, in which he asked each of us to speak briefly about our sense of cultural identity, revealed again to me just how complex and layered every individual's sense of cultural identity is. People spoke of geography, history, family lives, of class, of art and of trauma as constituting their senses of cultural selfhood. What emerged was a complex and varied approach to the question, which highlighted how delicate the notion of identity is. Yet, in the context of globalisation and its backlash, simple group identities are more fractious and appealing than ever, as is evidenced by the seductive simplicity of arguments that assume "most of us prefer our own kind."⁶⁴

For cultural professionals, the answer to the question posed by *the Routledge Handbook to Identity Studies* - "Postmodernism was all about porous and deconstructed selves. Has increasing polarisation both political and religious since the beginning of the millennium meant a shift in the way we discuss who we are?" - is both yes and no. No because many cultural professionals work every day to defy simple accounts of human identity; their stories complicate grand narratives of self and nation. Yes, because for many people in our society, narratives of civilisational clash and British cultural exceptionalism are more appealing than ever.

In contrast to simplifying notions of the self and identity, psychoanalytic and psycho-social thinking can make valuable contributions to this conversation. The work of thinkers ranging from Freud to Kristeva⁶⁵ continues to unpack and complicate triumphalist notions of the self and cultural belonging in a gesture that promises to do as much for equality as any number of policy initiatives. For as

much as policy, we need attitudinal change, and more complex, nuanced ways of thinking if the representation sought by diversity initiatives is to be achieved. Of course complexity doesn't go down well in a sound bite.

As Stephen Frosh, the theorist of race, racialisation and anti-semitism puts it:

...[psychoanalysis] can then offer back to the field its own peculiar expertise: that of a discipline that knows about unsettledness, that has marginality and diaspora as part of its own source... and that is always reminding its acolytes that nothing can be taken for granted, that no self-definition or affective state is ever quite what it seems.⁶⁶

Unsettledness as a characteristic of psychoanalytic thinking is also brought up by Edward Said when he writes about Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* in 2003. In this essay, Said underlines just how radical and creative the psychoanalytic account of identity can be.⁶⁷

Beyond psychoanalytic thinking, many writers are rethinking ideas about identity in the context of contemporary experiences of migration and hybridity. In particular, Nobel laureate and economist Amartya Sen has contributed to the argument, energetically deconstructing simple accounts of identity in his forceful book *Identity and Violence*.⁶⁸ The philosopher Kwameh Anthony Appiah⁶⁹ has written and spoken passionately about the complexity of cultural identity, positing "cosmopolitanism" as both a solution and a reality that we live with; yet to some, his arguments can ring a little too optimistic. Paul Gilroy⁷⁰ has highlighted the limitations of the term and idea of identity, suggesting that it has proved something of a blind alley in cultural studies; like Sen and Appiah, he celebrates the hybrid reality typified by today's metropolises, positing "conviviality" (quite literally living together and side by side) as a way of sidestepping the doldrums of identity politics.

All this talk of hybridity and fractured identities, however, can start to seem like the rarefied territory of metropolitan elites who function in mobile and privileged contexts. Arguments that focus on urban experience are open to criticism from a writer such as Goodhart⁷¹ whose work explores the alienation of those who feel unexcited by the prospect of conviviality and cosmopolitanism, people who have supposedly lost the lottery of globalisation. There are robust arguments, and realities, that show how hybridity is not just the preserve of the privileged few, yet in political discourse, the damage has in many ways already been done.

Multi-cultural and Multiculturalism

Multicultural is a Twentieth Century term originally coined in Canada to denote the phenomenon of people from a range of backgrounds and cultures living side by side, and respecting each other's differences. From the 1980s when it became more apparent that more needed to be done to support and facilitate cultural activity across the whole spectrum of the UK's population, multiculturalism is one of the ideas that was adopted by policy makers to frame thinking about the place of cultural products that were thought to be outside of an indigenous British (or sometimes European) tradition. Unlike diversity, multiculturalism never addressed the full equalities agenda. It did not pursue representation on the basis of gender, sexuality, ability or economic inequality; it only addressed race, faith, language and ethnicity.

One of the challenges of multiculturalism as an idea is that it tacitly encourages people to think of cultures as discrete and clearly defined entities that - even when they mix - remain somehow identifiably separate. On one level, for multiculturalism to work, you need to believe that there is such a thing as "British Culture", "Black Culture" or "Asian Culture" per se. The problem is that each of these cultures is in itself a multi-culture, rather than a monologic narrative or homogenous set of products.

Over the years, the policies of multiculturalism were viewed with suspicion. Some feel that the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent polarisation of cultural discourse sealed the fate of multiculturalism which was aligned with social division and a kind of relativism that fostered ghetto like pockets where extremism could flourish.

It is notable that "multiculturalism" and "multicultural" are now almost absent from policy discussions of culture, except where they are criticised or used as synonyms for diversity (often the two things happen at the same time).

Race & Racialisation

Thinking about race is complex and evolving; it brings together work in the natural sciences with cultural theory and history. A 2004 edition of *Nature* magazine, dedicated to the latest research on race observes;

Race remains an inflammatory issue, both socially and scientifically. Fortunately, modern human genetics can deliver the salutary message that human populations share most of their genetic variation and that there is no scientific support for the concept that human populations are discrete, nonoverlapping entities. Furthermore, by offering the means to assess disease-related variation at the individual level, new genetic technologies may eventually render race largely irrelevant in the clinical setting. Thus, genetics can and should be an important tool in helping to both illuminate and defuse the race issue.⁷²

Based on information presented here, there seems to be consensus that ‘race’, whether imposed or self-identified, is a weak surrogate for various genetic and nongenetic factors in correlations with health status. We are at the beginning of a new era in molecular medicine.⁷³

Nevertheless,

Because traditional concepts of race are in turn correlated with geography, it is inaccurate to state that race is “biologically meaningless.” On the other hand, because they have been only partially isolated, human populations are seldom demarcated by precise genetic boundaries.

So genetic variation has more to do with geography than with socially constructed ideas we have of distinct races. As a way of conceptualising human variation this edition of *Nature* is clear that:

‘Race’ is ‘socially constructed’ when the word is incorrectly used as the covering term for social or demographic groups. Broadly designated groups, such as ‘Hispanic’ or ‘European American’ do not meet the classical or phylogenetic criteria for subspecies or the criterion for a breeding population. Furthermore, some of the ‘racial’ taxa of earlier European science used by law and politics were converted into social identities.² For example, the self-defined identities of

enslaved Africans were replaced with the singular 'Negro' or 'black', and Europeans became 'Caucasian', thus creating identities based on physical traits rather than on history and cultural tradition. Another example of social construction is seen in the laws of various countries that assigned 'race' (actually social group or position) based on the proportion of particular ancestries held by an individual. The entities resulting from these political machinations have nothing to do with the substructuring of the species by evolutionary mechanisms.⁷⁴

Robert Young makes a similar point, and underscores the vagueness typical of discussions about race when writing about race and ethnicity within Nineteenth Century discourses around race:

When people used the term 'race', occasionally they meant something close to what we now think of as ethnicity, occasionally they meant something more like biological race, but most usually they used the term without it being anchored in any precise meaning at all. It is frequently impossible to tell what exactly a particular writer may have meant by race, not only because the word is never defined (the writer of course assumes that it needs no definition), but also because it can be used in very contradictory ways. The discourse of race, like many successful ideologies is itself paradoxical, which is why it is possible to find people making contradictory assertions about it...⁷⁵

Young identifies race not just as a discourse, but specifically refers to it as an ideology, a system of beliefs that orders the world in a particular way. Equally, the historian Daniel Pick puts it pithily when he writes that "Evolutionary theory and racial anthropology were imbricated with an imperialistic insistence on the racial superiority of the world's colonisers over the colonised, but they also reflected back on European society in deeply unsettling ways."⁷⁶

So while race doesn't exist as an absolute, it has been used ideologically to maintain particular power structures. Because the biological or genetic basis for the idea is contested, it emerges as a cultural and historically conditioned artefact. And yet of course the reality of racialised life and groupings is indisputable. Try telling a young black man who has been stopped and searched six times or who is pulled aside for driving his own BMW - or an Asian actor who's been cast as a terrorist again - that race does not exist.

This is where the idea of racialisation is particularly useful. Racialisation is the process by which we become part of and identify with or against particular racial groups. Both Farhad Dalal and Steven Frosh have written extensively about the complex “psycho-social” dynamics, and the historical contingencies, which feed this phenomenon. Frosh, in his searing work, is informed by sociology, clinical practice and a wealth of psychoanalytic thinking. He has written of how “certain groups become repositories for the paranoid, destructive and sexually exciting fantasies of others.”⁷⁷ Drawing on Frosh and earlier psychoanalytic thinkers, Dalal brings insights from his own clinical practice with individuals and groups, together with a rigorous attack on the discourses of race. Racialisation, in both their accounts, relies on the construction and maintenance of ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups, coupled with the repression and projection of fears and fantasies on individual and group levels.⁷⁸ The idea of racialisation accepts that we become members of particular racial groups - or are given/give ourselves racial identities - as part of a larger process that involves both our own psychic processes and the (psycho)social processes in which we are embedded. To paraphrase Simone de Beauvoir — you aren’t born white, you become white.

White

In discussing this project, certain of my interlocutors - when I mentioned this entry - felt it was unnecessary, that “whiteness” needs no explaining or description. As Richard Dyer argues in his study of whiteness as a racial position, such assumed neutrality is a reflection of power structures and cultural biases which see whiteness and humanity as the same thing.⁷⁹ They are “natural facts” that need no explanation. Yet in today’s world, the experience and fact of being white is far from simple.

For one thing, there are degrees and hierarchies of whiteness, which see certain white groups as less white than others. For example, the place of Southern Europeans, the Irish and Jews in the schema has long been a source of anxiety, while Northern Europeans are often perceived as “ur-white”. There is then the question of whether being white somehow overlaps with Christian culture. Neither of these questions has simple answers and the matter is further complicated when we consider how the reality of both “white privilege” and “white guilt” complicate the culture and experience of being white today.

Conclusion

While it might be tempting to criticise the vocabulary explored in this study, and urge a revolution in the terms by which we understand and express racial, cultural and linguistic difference, the truth is that the history of these contested, embarrassing, overused, misunderstood, and much maligned terms charts the development of greater awareness of the need for equality in the cultural sectors. It would not be particularly helpful to jettison “diversity” - in the way that “multiculturalism” was jettisoned - simply because it has become too broad a concept. And while there is some discomfort with the language explored here, there is also no doubt that it has on many occasions allowed conversations to take place that have not taken place by other terms. The conversations have not always been equitable, but it takes more than language to change power structures and social hierarchies.

The very fact that policy makers and funders have sought to describe the vicissitudes of difference and inequality is a testament to the courage and tenacity of individuals who have set in place structures, initiatives and ways of thinking that seek to challenge the status quo. Initiatives such as Creative Access⁸⁰ or policy structures such as ACE’s *Creative Case for Diversity* do succeed in creating change at individual and institutional levels. Paradoxically, in order to create change, they have drawn upon an inherited language (only one of the terms discussed here is a recent neologism). Naturally, this has been a language that bears the stigmata of history, of slavery, racialised power structures, and colonialism. This goes some way to explain our discomfort with a great deal of this discourse; it is as if alongside our freshest utterances and aspirations the skeletons of our past were hanging out to dry, haunting and taunting every attempt to change. Our language today emerges from its past, and will inevitably carry with it that baggage. As Gillian Beer puts it *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter*, “Working with, and within, language is to work with a medium inevitably imbued with the communal past, drenched with

what has been. In language others are always implicit, others who have used the same terms in different conditions.”⁸¹

It is worth remembering that the English language is notably mobile and sponge-like, ungoverned by any authority like the French Academy. The ultimate rule has always been that of usage. With time, words move and shift their meanings to reflect our social conditions. We are lucky that no one can really control or fix the language, because as speakers, and leaders, we all have it within our power to condition the way language allows us to think about and construct race, culture, ethnicity and difference. Ultimately the language can only be as good - as limiting or liberating - as the society within which it flows.

The process of creating a more representative cultural sector relies on a number of continued processes which are not limited to a rigorous awareness our language. History has been crucial in forming not only our languages but also our power structures, and it is through a renewed and deliberate remembering of history that this conversation can really develop. It is deeply unfashionable if not contentious to advocate for an engagement with Britain’s repressed histories of colonialism and racialisation. Indeed some critics feel we do this too much. Yet if this study has surprised me in one particular way, it is in how crucial a historical perspective has been in opening up the words explored here. As cultural leaders we could do more to encourage openness and awareness of the economic, political and cultural processes that have made the equalities movement necessary. Doing so should not mean abjection, humiliation and guilt for the white population - most of whom have been historically exploited themselves thanks to entrenched class inequality.⁸² Instead, this process might involve encountering the history of colonialism, slavery, nationalism and identity from a more differentiated perspective. While uncomfortable, this process could be deeply liberating for all involved. Paul Gilroy has made this point passionately in the concluding pages of *After Empire*, when he writes that “we must be prepared to step back audaciously into the past.”⁸³

Making the cultural sectors, both publicly funded and commercial, more representative of our society requires continued commitment from leaders in organisations of all sizes. Commitment needs to be expressed in the form of new structures, organisational change and focused initiatives which rely on rigorous self-awareness on the part of individuals and institutions. People working at every level of cultural organisations need to be encouraged and empowered to have a “settled and intelligent” view of these issues, which in turn requires them to have

time to inform themselves and reflect. Change relies upon a continued critical engagement with both the language and lived experiences of inequality. Thus reporting and statistical data will continue to be important as tools for describing and understanding where we are. Change will also depend on open dialogue, with artists, practitioners, audiences and participants feeding into the evolving terms of debate and policy.

Endnotes

1. I have not included religious difference in this list. Contrary to what much contemporary practice assumes, the differences which emerge from faith and religious orientation are within the ambit of what we might term more broadly “cultural” difference. While practitioners increasingly need to negotiate what they describe as religiously inflected cultural difference, the fetishisation of religious differences in the public sphere is often divisive.
2. The term intersectional was coined by Crenshaw, K. in “*Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity and Violence against Women of Color*” (Stanford, CA: *Stanford Law Review*, 1991: Vol. 43: 1241).
3. As others have pointed out, class inequality in the UK is currently at levels last seen in the 1850s, and participation in the creative industries - whether as workforce or audience - remains the preserve of the privileged. See Holden, J. *Class and Culture* (London: Counterpoint, 2010). Available from: <http://www.bluedrum.ie/documents/CultureAndClassStandard.pdf> and The Warwick Commission *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (Coventry: The University of Warwick, 2015). Available from: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/>
4. See Arts Council of England *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case, A Data Report 2012-2015* (Arts Council of England: London, 2015) http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/Equality_Diversity_and_the_Creative_Case_A_data_report_2012-2015.pdf.
5. See The Warwick Commission *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (Coventry: The University of Warwick, 2015) pages 30-42.
6. For a discussion of conviviality see Paul Gilroy’s writing in *After Empire*, where he presents the idea of “conviviality” as “the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multicultural an ordinary feature of Britain’s urban

areas...” He argues that the term “[I]ntroduces a measure of distance from the pivotal term ‘identity’ which has proved to be such an ambiguous resource in the analysis of race, ethnicity and politics. The radical openness that brings conviviality alive makes a nonsense of closed, fixed and reified identity and turns attention to the always-unpredictable mechanisms of identification.” Gilroy, P. *After Empire* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004) page xi.

7. Edbury, R. Harrison, A. Torreggiani and I. Wadeson *Navigating Difference, Cultural Diversity and Audience Development* (Arts Council of England: London, 2006) page. 220
8. Arts Professional *Arts Professional Pulse Survey: Diversity in the Arts* (London: Arts Professional, 2016). Available from: https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/sites/artsprofessional.co.uk/files/pulse_-_diversity_in_the_arts_workforce.pdf
9. Hewison, R. *Cultural Capital, The Rise and Fall of Creative Britain* (London: Verso, 2014) page 88.
10. Mirza’s PhD thesis was supervised by sociologist Frank Furedi who is vocal about his opposition to the basic terms of diversity. Furedi’s own website www.frankfuredi.com provides an insight into his perspectives.
11. See Goodhart, D. *The Road to Somewhere* (London: Hurst, 2017).
12. See Mirza, M. “Rethinking Race” in *Prospect Magazine* October 2010 Issue, September 22, 2017 <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/munira-mirza-multiculturalism-racism>
13. Goodhart, D. “White Self Interest is not the same thing as racism” in *The Financial Times*, March 2, 2017 <https://www.ft.com/content/220090e0-efc1-11e6-ba01-119a44939bb6?mhq5j=e3>
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15. Crystal, D. *The Stories of English* (London: Penguin, 2004) page 526.
16. Elias, N. quoted by Dalal, F. in *Race, Colour and the Processes of Racialisation* page 128.
17. Thus borrowing something from the Foucauldian idea of discourse without taking on its methodological baggage.

18. For a lively discussion of just how destructive such policing can be, see Dalal, F. "The difference that dare not speak its name: the lexicon police" in *Thought Paralysis: The Virtues of Discrimination* (London: Karnac, 2012) pages 155-184.
19. Blackstone, Parekh, Sanders Ed. *Race Relations in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1998) page xii.
20. Holden, J. *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy* (London: Demos, 2006) page 40.
21. Pick writes "In the pursuit of whose desire or interests and in response to what historical contingencies, did the nineteenth century discourse of degeneration seek to de-politicise itself altogether, through the signification of a stern and unyielding nature[?]" in *Faces of Degeneracy* page viii.
22. Heaney, S. "Nobel Address 1995" reprinted in *Opened Ground* (London: Faber, 1998) page 460.
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25. See *The Tragedy of Othello, Moor of Venice*, Act III, Scene iii, lines 427-429, page 2125 in Shakespeare, W. *The Complete Works* Bate, Rasmussen & Orgel Eds. (Basingstoke: The Royal Shakespeare Company/Macmillan: 2007).
26. *Ibid.* page 65.
27. For an interesting discussion of subalterneity, postcolonialism and tri-continental solidarity see Young, R.J.C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2003) pages 16-17.
28. See Dalal, F. *Thought Paralysis, The Virtues of Discrimination* (London: Karnac, 2012).
29. See Norrie, R. "What's in an acronym? A BAME by Any Other Name" (London: DEMOS, June 25, 2015). Available from: <https://www.integrationhub.net/whats-in-an-acronym-a-bame-by-any-other-name/>
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32. See Dyer, R. *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (Routledge: London, 1997) page 1.
33. Holden, J. *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy* (London: Demos, 2006) page 11. Available from: <https://www.demos.co.uk/files/Culturalvalueweb.pdf>
34. *Ibid.* page 11.
35. Department for Culture Media and Sport *The Culture White Paper* (London: HMSO, March 2016) page 13. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510798/DCMS_The_Culture_White_Paper__3_.pdf
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37. See Simon Schama *Citizens* (London: Penguin, 1989; 2004) pages 704-706.
38. Mirza, M. *The Politics of Culture: A Case for Universalism* page 91.
39. Holden, J. *Capturing Cultural Value* (London: Demos, 2004) page 102. Available from: <https://www.demos.co.uk/files/CapturingCulturalValue.pdf>
40. Mirza, Munira *The Politics of Culture: A Case for Universalism* page 20.
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42. For a critical discussion on Macaulay's role in colonial cultural and education policies in India see Majeed, J. "Review: British Colonialism in India as a Pedagogical Enterprise: Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India by Sanjay Seth" in *History and Theory* Vol. 48, No.3 October 2009, pages 276-282. Available from: Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy2.londonlibrary.co.uk/stable/25621421>

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44. Interestingly, the sheer internationalism and diversity and quality of writing published in English (and sometimes translated), suggests that literature may be freer of this parochialism than other forms.
45. Frosh, S. "The Other" in *American Imago* 59, 2002; page 389. Available from: <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/106/1/frosh3.pdf>
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55. Mirza writes “Above all, the rhetoric of diversity – even when invoked in slightly different ways – was against ‘traditional’ models of cultural policy which were seen as exclusionary, old-fashioned, and out of touch with the needs of people – especially young ethnic minorities – in the area.” in *The Politics of Culture: A Case for Universalism*, page 93.
56. See Dalal, F. *Race, colour and the Processes of Racialization: New Perspectives from Group Analysis, Psychoanalysis, and Sociology* (Hove: Brunner-Routledge 2002) and Dalal, F. *Thought Paralysis, The Virtues of Discrimination* (London: Karnac, 2012).
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59. Ibid page 43
60. Ibid page 12
61. Quoted in Moran, A. “Identity, Race and Ethnicity” in *The Routledge Handbook of Identity Studies* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011) page 172.
62. Ibid. pages 170-171
63. Goodhart, D. “Too Diverse?” in *Prospect magazine*, February 2004. Available from: <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/too-diverse-david-goodhart-multiculturalism-britain-immigration-globalisation>
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66. Frosh discusses later accounts (specifically from Levinas, Kristeva and Laplanche) of how Freud de-centres subjectivity, and performed “a Copernican Revolution” in Western thinking about identity in Frosh, S. “The Other” in *American Imago* 59, 2002; pages 389-407. Available from: <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/106/1/frosh3.pdf>

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