

New Labour: Trust, equality of opportunity and diversity

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Abstract

This article compares the Third Way agenda on issues of inclusion, citizenship and cohesion with the new focus in political and economic debate on issues of Well-Being and happiness. Essentially, we maintain that individualistic devices such as equal opportunities are artefacts of a political culture and a social order that runs counter to the achievement of 'trust culture' as defined by Stzompka (2002). Further, we argue that equality of opportunity is a feature of society that cannot be squared with trust, largely because it operates against a background of distrust and on the belief that society must be driven by wealth and property ownership. Our contention is that Third Way politics (the last bastion of Thatcherism) is in no position to drive British society towards a culture based on trust, and that happiness and collective Well-Being require economic relations to be subordinate to the interests of humanity rather than the other way around.

Introduction

Announcing his 'Respect Action Plan' on 10 January, 2006, Tony Blair said that his new initiative was 'about our reciprocal belonging to a society, the covenant we have with one another'.

More grandly, it is the answer to the most fundamental question of all in politics which is: how do we live together? From the theorists of the Roman state to its fullest expression in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, the central question of political theory was just this: how do we ensure order? And what are the respective roles of individuals, communities and the state?... Rights have to be paired with responsibilities. Of course the overwhelming majority of people understand this intuitively and have no trouble living side by side with their neighbours....Anti-social behaviour is not evidence of a flawed moral sensibility in the British people. On the contrary, the need to act comes from the pressing moral urgency of the people (Blair, 2006a).

Yet only six months later, the Secretary of State for Communities, Ruth Kelly, was announcing a Commission on Integration and Cohesion, speaking of understandable fears among white citizens about the transformation of their neighbourhoods by minority ethnic immigrants, and questioning the value of multi-culturalism, which could 'encourage separateness' (Kelly, 2006). As ministers took turns to raise issues of the appropriateness of faith-based headwear, of rates of immigration from Eastern Europe and further afield, and of public order, 'integration' and 'security' became the focus of government policy. Trust between members of this society was at stake, with minorities the main objects of concern.

These themes have been emerging in political debates for many years, most notably since the atrocity of 11 September, 2001, in New York. They pose questions about the links between an informal, consensual order which is a precondition for markets and democracy, and the diversity and cosmopolitanism of affluent societies in an integrated world economy. How, for instance, does the position of faith communities which are transnational fit with the goal of creating a common core of 'democratic values' in each national polity?

It is fashionable – for instance in social capital theory (Putnam, 2002) and well-being theory (Frey and Stutzer, 2002), to link trustworthiness with economic efficiency and good governance. Helliwell and Putnam (2005: 438) go as far as to suggest

Although we do not, strictly speaking, include social trust within the core definition of social capital, norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness are a nearly universal concomitant of dense social networks. For this reason, social trust – that is, the belief that others around can be trusted – is itself a strong empirical index of social capital at the aggregate level. High levels of social trust in settings of dense social networks often provide the crucial mechanism through which social capital affects aggregate outcomes... Advocates of the "social capital" lens have reported robust correlations in various countries between vibrant social networks and important social outcomes such as lower crime rates, improved child well-being, better public health, more effective government administration,... improved market performance, educational performance, etc.

These are large claims, but their basis is simple. Trust reduces transaction costs; markets and political authority both work better when there is trust among interactants, because costly surveillance and conflict can be dispensed with, and hence joint initiatives and opportunities which would otherwise have been too expensive can be undertaken, to the advantage of all parties.

The obvious problem with this analysis of the basis for the liberal democratic order is that it is either tautological or circular. Markets and governance work well when people do not cheat each other or break agreements over the rules. But *either* trust is defined in terms of not cheating or breaking the rules (a tautological definition of trustworthiness); *or* efficiency and good governance rely on trust, which in turn can only be natural for individuals if there are efficient markets and good governance (a circular argument).

The fact that this is not simply a philosophical conundrum is illustrated by most of the continent of Africa, and (more recently) by the situations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Where trust is by definition absent if the social relations of these societies

are inherently mistrustful, because of any histories of inter-ethnic or inter-faith conflict among other reasons, so it is natural to treat anyone other than close associates as trustworthy), it is too hard to see how trustful interactions can get started, until they are the common currency of social relations.

As Hume (amongst others) recognised, the obvious solution to problems of trust is to form tight groups and small circles of well-known others, who have a clear survival interest in trusting each other. But as soon as these can accumulate some resources and get a reliable system of continuity going amongst them they attract the envy and suspicion of other groups, who want to appropriate their assets, and from that they may organise to take theirs (Hume, 1739).

It was to overcome such logical problems that the Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophers invented the form of argument in which reliable social institutions are not designed but spring from unintended consequences. In this form of argument, people start certain social practices – using money as a means of exchange and store of wealth (Locke, 1690); living together as couples and bringing up children (Hume, 1739; Rousseau, 1754); trading and bartering to turn a penny (Smith, 1759) – purely for the sake of self-interest. But when these practices turn out to have beneficial effects on others who casually adopt them, and for society as a whole, then they become ‘self-enforcing’ social institutions. The fact that these wider consequences were not intended, but occur through mechanisms which are beyond the ken of the participants, actually makes their operation (via feedback loops) all the more powerful (Douglas, 1987; Jordan, 2004, Chs.1-3).

This, of course, was Adam Smith’s account of how markets distribute resources both optimally from the standpoint of efficiency, and fairly from that of equity. But it was also the form and persuasive force of Locke’s and Hume’s accounts of how unequal private property arose in societies where the use of money allowed surpluses to be accumulated, investment to occur, and hence labour productivity and incomes to rise (Jordan, 2004).

The philosophers and economists who inspired Margaret Thatcher’s neo-liberal revolution (Hayek, von Mises and Friedman) relied heavily on similar analyses for their advocacy of individual freedom and small government. They argued for order without command; and the replacement of state regulation and allocation by individual self-responsibility and property ownership. This approach to the social order became the new orthodoxy in the USA and UK in the 1980s.

What was distinctive about Bill Clinton’s and Tony Blair’s Third Way in public policy was the recognition that the social order created by neo-liberal institutions lacked a collective ‘glue’ to hold it together. They initiated a series of measures to introduce a *collective* dimension to responsibility, organise around ‘community’, ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘civil society’. It was in this context that social capital theory with its emphasis on informal networks and trust became prominent among policy makers (Home Office, 2005).

Unlike the spontaneous self-enforcing order of markets, which still provided the basis for the mainstream order, community was based on older, more atavistic bonds of faith, blood and soil. But new government agencies were designed to promote social capital building, through partnerships between officials, commercial firms and representatives of such communities, targeted because of high rates of crime, lone parenthood, drug misuse, alcoholism, truancy, homelessness, begging, hustling and so on (Jordan with Jordan, 2000).

Especially in the UK, the ethnic basis of community has since come to be seen as particularly problematic. First, the inter-communal violence between White and

Asian youths in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in 2001, led to a new emphasis on community cohesion (Home Office, 2001; Worley, 2005) – interactions between ethnic groups and neighbourhoods, to increase trust and establish ‘bridging social capital’ (Putnam, 2000: 27-29).

Then the suicide bombing of London transport system provoked a crisis of confidence in the wider social order, and in democratic governance itself. The New Labour administration debated both more draconian criminal justice and security measures, and the very concept of multiculturalism that had underpinned its initiatives for ‘communities’. When a group of British citizens declared a holy war on their society in this way, trust in government and among democratic members of the polity was at stake.

This article reviews theories of trust in democratic governance within a diverse, cosmopolitan society, whose mainstream order is individualistic, and orientated towards property ownership. We discuss how ethnic identification and distinctiveness has come to be identified as a marker of ‘lack of integration’, and the need for a common core of ‘Britishness’ has emerged as a requirement of democratic respect, trust and citizenship. However, we ask whether the tendency for New Labour ministers to blame minorities (ethnic and sub-cultural) for troubles in the social order, including lack of trust, is more of a distraction from central problems of the mainstream order.

Sztompka (2002) argues that we invest trust in a range of people, institutions and systems. Those relevant for us here are trust in organizations and institutions and in social roles. Using this framework it is possible to see that trust in New Labour and in Tony Blair specifically exists in a constant state of tension. While it is clear that trust is really about the underlying expectations we have about people and their actions, and this reflects the desire to trust institutions and organisations like political parties, governments and parliament, there is also the problem politicians have in terms of the lack of trust in their social role (Rawnsley, 2001).

But there is also another aspect to trust which is relevant here and that is the need to be trusted. This has been a constant theme in the individualisation of British politics. Much comment and criticism has been aimed at the presidential style of Blair, and his pleas for people to trust him as a political leader (Foley, 2000). Many suspect this personality style of politics, and it has been a steep learning curve for political opponents. It appears to some degree that they have caught up, notably in the rise of David Cameron. We would argue that this derives from a reflection of a wider issue of trust; the belief in social order and of the social system, which provides people with existential security, stability and continuity. The desire to be trusted may emerge from the obvious commitment Blair has for order and stability.

The question is should Blair and New Labour be trusted on issues of equal opportunities, diversity and difference? This will depend to some degree on the grounds for trust that are required. If Sztompka is correct then political commitment to a project or vision requires a high degree of trust, not only that the principal actors will act morally and responsibly in this regard but that they will demonstrate what Barber (1983) has referred to as ‘fiduciary’ trust. This requires a degree of selflessness in putting the interests of others first but also a willingness to represent other peoples’ interests and take their welfare into account, and to do so generously and with benevolence.

Arguably, it is on this issue that the problem specifically in relation to equal opportunities and subsequently drives towards diversity in organisations rests. Sztompka (2002) maintains that two key features of a trust culture, that state of

collective existence that all societies should aspire to, is the need for accountability and transparency. And this of course is important, but as O'Neill (2002c) suggests the manner in which accountability and transparency have been pursued in modern British society actually serves to reduce trust because its target driven agenda encourages dishonesty in public servants. It may be that as equal opportunities operates as part of the culture of accountability, in the realm of target driven political activity, that there may be little reason to trust in the equal opportunities agenda.

O'Neill (2002d) with some authority further claims that it is not necessarily openness, transparency and accountability that are essential ingredients for the development of trust in society, and in politics as an activity, but a reduction in deception and dishonesty. Herein then lies the key because we would argue that the whole notion of equality of opportunity and the later concept of diversity is inherently based in deception, and a deception that has two crucial features; first the promotion of a meritocracy, where social mobility appears to have stalled (*The Guardian*, 2005) and second the acceptance of inequality on the grounds of merit. As Young (2001) pointed out in commenting on New Labour's adoption of his concept of meritocracy (1961), it was meant to be satirical largely because the outcome would be a pitiless world of inequality and poverty, where the losers would have to deal with self-hatred on top of the consequences of failure. The question then must be: is this really a good basis for developing a trust culture?

New Labour and equal opportunities

The commitment from New Labour to equality of opportunity came early in their first administration. The exchange between Roy Hattersley (1997), who called for positive discrimination for minority ethnic communities and the Chancellor Gordon Brown, underlined this commitment. The objective was not to challenge the basis of merit by reversing patterns of discrimination, the government's goal was to open up opportunity for all. However, it was clear from Blair's speech at the initial party conference shortly after the 1997 election victory that the issue of 'racial' discrimination was specifically recognised as was the need to diversify important public services (Travis and Rowan, 1997).

Using Sztompka's (2002) framework for establishing trust cultures, this position would seem to accord with the notion of normative coherence. Most people would subscribe to the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to maximise their potential. However, as will become clear later in the piece, if anything equal opportunities can be regarded as part of a system in which substitutes for trust culture are pursued. This can be detected in part by the practical means of promoting universal opportunity, in this respect policy has evolved rapidly over the past nine years.

Initially there was a focus on what has been known as 'area-based positive discrimination' (Edwards and Batley, 1978). Regeneration funding was directed at poorer areas, such as the New Deal for Communities, much as the Urban Programme had previously. There have also been more universalist attempts to equalise opportunities through developments like the Child Trust Fund.

The focus of this article however is on the concept of equal opportunities in employment, largely because work has been designated one of the central means of challenging social exclusion (Fergusson, 2004) and is also directly related to the

concept of diversity that has become so ubiquitous over the past ten or eleven years in the UK and Europe more widely (Wrench, 2005).

We will have to consider the notion of diversity in some detail later in the article, because much has been assumed in relation to its shape, nature and outcomes (Bagilhole and Stephens, 1999; Mason, 2000). As Iganski and Mason (2002) have pointed out equality of opportunity and diversity are actually incompatible to some degree; mainly because the essence of equal opportunities is to remove barriers to diversification rather than to actively seek its achievement.

Accepting this contradiction for the moment it is necessary to review the process by which policies designed to achieve diversity have evolved. In truth, evolution may be inaccurate for there was little actual theoretical direction to policy in the initial phases of New Labour's administration. In part this was probably because there was already in place an untidy patchwork of ideas contained in relevant legislation, notably the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Nevertheless evolution has occurred and needs to be charted if the problematic nature of equal opportunities and diversity are to be fully understood.

Developing the agenda of equal opportunities

The legislation detailed above was formulated around the core concept of formal equality of opportunity. This principle, referred to in the literature under various names, for example 'open competition for scarce resources' (Flew, 1981) or 'means-regarding equality of opportunity' (Forbes, 1991) operates according to the belief that discrimination is wrong and should be stopped. It was constructed on the grounds that discrimination is direct, carried out by one person or a group of persons against another person or group of persons.

Early forms of equality policies responded to this and can be characterised as part of an anti-discriminatory framework, which has been influential in a number of areas (Thompson, 1989). Even during the initial period that this model was dominant, i.e. with the passage of the Race Relations Act 1968 (where discrimination in employment was first legally challenged) its success was muted. In 1985 Brown and Gay conducted discrimination tests and revealed that a third of employers were discriminating against minority ethnic candidates, a study replicated by Esmail and Everington (1993) with hospital doctors and also around the same time in the area of disability (Graham, 1990). Significantly the results were all very similar, and when it is acknowledged that these studies only explored the application process then it is clear that what was revealed was the tip of an iceberg.

Contained within the same legislative packages, however, largely as a result of policy learning from the United States and pressure from what was then the European Economic Community (Sanders, 1998), a distinct form, and some would say an incompatible form of equality of opportunities was included in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976. This was known as positive action which is a component of liberal equality of opportunity (Forbes, 1991), the alternative aspect of this being area-based positive discrimination. Just as confusingly it also has a number of labels, most prominently 'prospect-regarding equality of opportunity' (Weale, 1991). The notion was borrowed from the United States where discrimination, certainly in the wake of the commentary by Carmichael and Hamilton (1968) was viewed as a structural, or at least, institutional problem.

As Jewson and Mason (1986) identified, this principle operates on the basis that the absence of diversity in the workforce is defined as *prima facie* evidence of discrimination in action. It might not be overt, but the patterns of disadvantage set in train in the past have prevented certain communities from competing equally. This is where it is at variance with the formal notion, because the absence of diversity is irrelevant, the only thing that matters is that everyone is treated in the same way. As long as the procedures are fair then outcomes do not matter, hence another of its soubriquets: procedural justice.

The legislation under sections 35, 37 and 38 allowed employers to engage in a number of positive measures to encourage certain groups to apply where they could be shown to be underrepresented in the workforce over the preceding twelve months. In terms of reaching out to those communities this could entail advertising in specific publications – women's magazines or the minority ethnic run media – or by holding targeted recruitment events in suitable areas. Where these groups were employed but were having problems gaining advancement, the offer of additional training was possible. Though these measures have been in place for thirty years until recently they have been virtually unused (Mason *et al*, 1999; Johns, 2005).

Stephen Lawrence and diversity in policing

The change in policy emphasis from formal to liberal equality arguably emerged as a consequence of the MacPherson Report (1999) which was the result of the Stephen Lawrence enquiry. The murder investigation conducted by the Metropolitan Police Service into the killing of Stephen Lawrence (a black 18 year old student) in Eltham South London in 1993, and subsequent internal investigations were shown to be inadequate. The Report concluded that the investigation was hampered by incompetence, a lack of leadership, a suspicion of corruption and most importantly, institutional racism. This finding, contrary to the findings of previous Reports (i.e. Scarman, 1981), has been held up as the principal reason for MacPherson's seemingly seismic impact on the media (McLaughlin and Murji, 1999), the police service (Innes, 1999) and the political context of 'race' relations in Britain (Parekh, 2000).

However we evaluate these claims it is certain that the impact on the political agenda was almost immediate. Of the 70 recommendations made 56 were accepted without question by the Home Office, 7 were accepted pending further review and 7 were referred to the Audit Office. For the sake of this article, there is one key recommendation that is of importance, that the police and other public institutions were unable to respond to a diverse society due to the lack of diversity in their workforces. Interestingly Scarman had also made this claim nearly two decades previously but minority ethnic individuals had remained significantly under-represented in policing. Just 2% of operational staff compared to 7% estimated in the wider population.

While these claims have been seen as suspect by some (Lea, 2000) because of the cultural nature of MacPherson's diagnosis, that white officers exercise prejudice because they do not associate with black people as colleagues, government action followed almost instantly. The Home Office introduced a set of goals and targets for employment, which were applied across the whole department (Home Office, 1999). To reinforce this development, which is clearly about taking positive action, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 was passed to place a positive duty of the public sector to promote equal opportunities and encourage better community relations.

The results have been encouraging in some areas, with police services in less diverse parts of the country exceeding their targets well within the target of 2009. Those with larger minority ethnic populations have had much more difficulty (Eborall, 2004). The Metropolitan Police Service, faced with a target of 25%, initially tried to get around the system by defining white individuals from the Old Commonwealth and the United States as minority ethnic, but this was discovered and challenged. A system of fast tracking was introduced, which was shown to be problematic in a BBC documentary, *The Secret Policeman*. A news reporter actually joined the police undercover to explore how much has changed in terms of recruitment and training since the publication of MacPherson. Though most of the operational policing was seen to be fair and effective, there was strong evidence of racism amongst some recruits and the tacit acceptance of this by training staff (this point was not raised by the programme, Rowe, 2005).

Thus policing was revealed as an institution with still a great deal to do. With a rise in recruitment to just 7% - though a significant rise on the proportion of officers prior to the introduction of targets - it was apparent that the MPS in particular which was the specific focal point of the Report would fail to reach its 2009 goal. Coupled with the findings of the BBC documentary and the outrage this provoked things could hardly get any worse. Who after all would wish to join an institution that not only accepted the charge of institutional racism but which had seemingly failed to challenge racism at the very first stage of employment?

In desperation the MPS then focused their energies on encouraging the government to allow them to use positive discrimination. This is not to be confused with positive action, though the overlap both in theory and practice has been identified (particularly in the United States, Edmonds, 1994). Partly this is due to the fear that in trying to reach goals and targets employers will stretch too far and actually employ less qualified or even unqualified minority individuals. But it is also about the perceptions of those disadvantaged by the policy. Regardless of their abilities there is a fear that recipients of this form of justice, known as radical equality of opportunity (Forbes, 1991) will be labelled with the 'stigma of incompetence' (Heilman in Bagilhole, 1997).

Not only is positive discrimination illegal but there are a number of theoretical problems with its adoption. These include the reduction of the quality of the staff employed (though it need not imply anything about the ability of individuals or impact on service quality) and the more serious problem that innocent individuals lose out while the neediest people in the target groups receive no help at all (Johns, 2005). Positive discrimination in employment in the USA has seemingly given white middle class women a significant boost and has increased the position of the growing black middle class (Cockburn, 1995).

For whatever reason the government reiterated their opposition to positive discrimination as they did early in their administration; it appears that this will not be adopted to assist struggling police services to meet their targets. Consequently the MPS are pioneering an approach that has long been advocated in the literature, to explore the notion of the merit principle within a context of difference and diversity rather than the norm of sameness which has informed most equal opportunities thinking (Dodd, 2004).

Shifting from equality to diversity

Diversity has been a mainstream issue for some time in the academic literature. One of the earliest exhortations for the operationalisation of diversity for public policy purposes emerged from the writing of Dworkin (1981). He argued that a diverse student body would improve the standard of legal education by introducing a range of perspectives, and, by increasing the number of legal professionals able and willing to champion the rights of disadvantaged communities.

This was picked up around the same time in social theory and moral philosophy in the UK. For example, writing about gender and positive discrimination Richards (1980: 151) set out a case for using positive discrimination for recruiting more women in non-traditional areas of employment. She claimed:

...this does not offend against the principle that there should be no discrimination in the selection procedures, because we are still concerned to choose the best people for the work which needs doing. It is just that the nature of the work to be done has changed, so that different people become suitable for it.

In fact what she was really advocating was not the use of positive discrimination at all, but the redefinition of the merit principle. This was then taken up in the work of Edwards (1995) in relation to 'race' issues. His book, *When Race Counts*, made pretty much the same arguments. There were times when 'race' and gender ought to be considered relevant to the performance of certain roles and tasks.

In some ways there was already recognition of this in both the Race Relations and Sex Discrimination legislation. Under all circumstances 'race' and gender were held to be irrelevant for employment and the provision of goods and services, except where they constituted a Genuine Occupational Qualification. It was maintained that for the sake of authenticity or for personal reasons it might be necessary to target specific groups and communities. For instance, a favourite illustration of this has been the employment of Indian waiters for an authentic Indian restaurant.

However, the revision necessary to the merit principle inherent in the writings of Richards and Edwards was much greater. It required some acknowledgement of identity in almost every case. Whereas Young (1961) had previously defined merit as ability plus effort, the new prescription read something like this: ability plus effort plus identity equals merit (Johns and Jordan, 2005).

Where diversity made an impact on policy, in new developments from the United States, there had been some understanding of this. The proponents of what is loosely termed managing diversity in the UK Kandola and colleagues (Kandola *et al*, 1995; Kandola and Fullerton, 1998) did outline this formula in trying to sell managing diversity, but only as an indirect benefit of diversity policies. Their concern was to largely undermine equal opportunities efforts on the grounds that they had failed and were divisive. However, not only is the plan they present as an alternative confused, many of the policy instruments are actually borrowed from equal opportunities frameworks, but there is a real danger that all identity related oppression will be sidelined. As Wrench (2005) has argued the progress of forty years could be lost if managing diversity were to be taken up to the exclusion of all else. Johns (2006) has supported this and shown that although managing diversity has been influential in the NHS, it is poorly understood and not fully implemented. This is probably due to the government preference for positive action measures.

Where diversity as a challenge to traditional notions of merit is being taken up it is the MPS that have seized the nettle. This may be due to the work of Fielding (1999) who in the wake of the MacPherson Report underlined the importance of diversity and set out a strategy like that of Richards and Edwards for its achievement. The MPS are now adopting policies that take into account different language skills and 'cultural knowledge' (*The Independent*, 2003). This could be allied to the business and quality cases for diversity detailed by the Commission for Racial Equality in the mid 1990s (1995a, 1995b).

A diverse workforce has been valued for a number of reasons. Partly it is about greater trust as people appear to trust institutions that reflect their locality or community. This is something that we wish to return to later in the article because it seems that trust is the central issue for so-called 'race' relations in the twenty first century. It has also been linked with reduced division and discrimination and this was one of the key benefits predicted by the MacPherson Report; though evidence about the reality of this is unclear (Cook, 1978). Another benefit was that through trust and representation diversity would be self-propelling, once communities see themselves reflected in public institutions and progressing they will want to join. But most importantly it was about improving the quality of service – minority ethnic individuals would understand the needs of 'their' communities and be politically motivated to pursue those interests.

Problems with diversity as a strategy for change

These arguments have been very persuasive and have seemingly carried the day, at least where policies such as those adopted by the MPS are concerned. It is also likely that their success will be monitored and copied if appropriate by other organisations, whatever the sector (public, private or voluntary). However, there is a real issue here about trust and how the trust of communities and society itself might be assumed and ultimately dismissed. It would appear possible if not probable that much of this is about expedience or functional realities rather than actually tackling poor service and institutionalised forms of discrimination (Lea, 2000).

The main problem is that notions of diversity in practice have been inadequately explored. Johns (2006) in research conducted in the NHS studied this issue inductively through the understandings of a range of actors involved in health provision in a reasonably diverse part of the south west of England. The conclusion was that in order to be effective minority ethnic individuals would have to work together at all levels of every organisation to challenge discrimination and plan, implement and review sensitive policies. Essentially the only way that people could operationalise ethnic diversity was to see individuals becoming active representatives of their communities – even those who were keen to present themselves as supporters of managing diversity.

The experience of diversity in action has been exactly this and it has produced mixed and mostly disappointing results. In the States Walker *et al* (1996) reviewed the evidence where minority ethnic police officers had been employed and set to work in 'their' own communities and the results were clear. On almost every measure they were as repressive and unjust as their white counterparts. In a deposition to the MacPherson Inquiry one minority ethnic officer explained that it was very difficult for black officers to work outside the dominant occupational culture:

Interestingly I say we because there is no marked difference between black and white in the force essentially. We are all consumed by this occupational culture. Some of us may think we rise above it on some occasions, but, generally speaking, we tend to conform to the norms of this occupational culture, which we say is all powerful in shaping our views and perceptions of a particular community (MacPherson, 1999: 6.28).

Similarly Cashmore's research (2001, 2002) has underlined the same concerns amongst minority ethnic police officers. There is little optimism that greater diversity will in and of itself achieve a better standard of public service for Britain's diverse society. When we look across at social work we can see the same result in evaluating the experience of section 11 workers under the Local government Act 1966 (Penketh and Ali, 1998).

Fielding (1999) is quite uncritical of the developments from the United States and fails to consider the evidence presented by Walker *et al* (1996) which is after all a review of relevant research. This is partly because issues of representation and even segregation do not worry him. As long as the result is a better service would segregation really matter? Moreover he has another suggestion which is designed to get around the marginalisation and repression inherent in segregation. What is needed is not simply reflection but over-representation. Public services need to over recruit minority ethnic individuals, to ensure that they have a power base and can work together to achieve radical social change. It is almost impossible to challenge this as there are few examples of overrepresentation in Britain. Where research has been carried out in a comparable area (Esmail and Everington, 1992) evidence of discrimination has been apparent.

The principal problem with diversity in the wake of MacPherson is that it carries with it the potential to destroy any trust in the good will of British white males and their desire to challenge institutional forms of discrimination. The flip side of this is that minority ethnic communities are being asked to deal with racism. Victims are rarely able to have a major impact on the means of their victimisation, if genuine political will is absent to underwrite their efforts.

Political will and political aims: overt and covert

The absence of political will to genuinely challenge social injustices can be identified at the macro and micro levels of political activity. From the point of view of the MPs, there was a strong repudiation of the claims in MacPherson until it became clear that the definition of institutional racism being offered would have little or no impact on individual officers. It really has been an inversion of the coat of paint theory of racism proposed by Gilroy (1992). Racist individuals have been able to hide behind the edifice of the service and escape any punishment. Furthermore, strenuous efforts were made to undermine the community involvement in reforms to the MPS and the targets themselves were seen as obstacles rather than opportunities; hence the attempts to get around them by using individuals from the Old Commonwealth to boost the figures.

Likewise the government has set out a fairly radical series of reforms to achieve greater equality of opportunity, through revising the Race Relations Act to imposing targets for recruitment, to emphasising the value of mainstreaming equality. It has also taken a stand on the issue of forced marriage. Yet it still cannot resist the old law and order agenda on anti-social behaviour much of which is directed at

minority ethnic communities, it allows misleading representations of crime to go unchallenged – note the phenomena of ‘black on black’ crime and their relationship to guns and gangs – and the issues of asylum, immigration and terrorism are not-so-subtly racialized.

Arguably the reason for this is that the desire to achieve greater equality of opportunity, whether through the vehicle of diversity or otherwise, is misconceived. Though the government appear to be confused on this issue (why else would they consult Cavanagh (2002) whose work has been framed in opposition to everything they are striving to achieve?) they are absolutely clear about their aims.

They wish to maintain the status quo based on inequalities, and this is why equality of opportunity is their favoured approach. It is conservative, presenting the appearance of radical change without ever straying too near. In truth this is why equal opportunities, diversity and those who seek to pursue them are not worthy of our trust. They are driven by the need to divide society into smaller units in order to compete for limited resources, whilst the ‘truth’ that resources are scarce remains unchallenged. They are scarce arguably because certain elites monopolise them at the expense of the rest of humanity.

Trust can only ever be attained where truths are told (O’Neill, 2002d). If inequality is really the only way to organise society then it is vital we have this debate openly and honestly. Using identity to create tensions and divisions, providing the illusion of social mobility (which is becoming ever more limited, *The Guardian*, 2005) does nothing to promote trust. The real goal must be to uncover the truth about these fictions and help to lay the foundations for a system which can command our trust and deserve our loyalty. Ultimately, equal opportunities and diversity are a central component of a system which prevents the establishment of a trust culture.

Substitutes for trust culture: the place of equal opportunities

If trust culture is the ultimate aim of collective action expressed through political activity, then it would appear, not only as a result of opinion polls and electoral attendance, which are poor measures of trust in themselves (O’Neill, 2002a), that Britain has not attained those heights. This would explain why, to use Sztompka’s framework, so many citizens seek substitutes for that culture. One means of doing so might be through the certainties provided by racist parties of the extreme right such as the British National Party, which has enjoyed unprecedented electoral success in recent times (Worley, 2005).

Ironically, it is also possible to locate the current primacy of equal opportunities and diversity theory and practice in the context of a wider search for substitutes for trust culture. Though it might be stretching the point to some degree, there are a number of factors identified by Sztompka (2002) that can be used to explain the desire to promote equal opportunities and diversity as key political goals from this perspective.

In the absence of trust culture there is the tendency to look for answers in paternalism, that trust can be invested in strong individuals or cults. We increasingly find ourselves living in an age where popular culture is defined by gaining expert life coaching with programmes like *You are What You Eat* and *Honey We’re Killing the Kids*. People seek comfort from new age remedies where arcane knowledge creates a sense of mystery and trust is placed as a matter of blind faith (Blackler, 1999).

Similarly, equal opportunities and diversity can be seen as policy equivalents to cults, with their own language, norms and commitment. Kandola *et al* (1995) see the reliance on experts, in the form of human resources and personnel professionals as highly problematic where equal opportunities is concerned, though they seem less willing to acknowledge their own status as gurus of diversity thinking. Even supporters of equal opportunities can see its cult-like qualities (Sheridan-Rabideau, 2001).

Another harbour that people seek in times of low trust is the law. For example, though business deals have long been based in contractual obligations, now society is seeing more contracts in less appropriate contexts. Pre-nuptial agreements look set to grow in number due to a court case in which a wife was awarded £5 million even though the marriage lasted less than four years (Hawkins, 2006). Just as the law should perhaps not intervene in personal relationships in this way, maybe it ought not to define relations between people in matters of equality and justice. As Kandola *et al* (1995) have pointed out one of the problems with equal opportunities is that it relies on the law. Not only is this often ineffective because it operates on the basis of individual action (Duster, 1970), but it also encourages a defensive mentality to issues of equality and justice.

Ghettoisation also provides a substitute for trust culture. People seek certainty and security in 'their' own communities when society is generally lacking in trust. Trevor Phillips, the head of the Commission for Racial Equality, in the wake of the riots across France in 2005 stated that Britain is in danger of 'sleep-walking into segregation' (Phillips, 2006). To some degree, though the problems he identified were related to exclusion, poverty and 'race', equal opportunities and diversity form part of the context that makes ghettoisation possible. As Jacoby (2002) notes it marks a movement away from attempts to challenge material inequality, to a concern for identity politics that see people increasingly withdraw into 'their' communities in order to mobilise in competing for resources and other social goods (see also Sivanandan, 1990). This also occurs within organisations (Penketh and Ali, 1998) and is a feature of diversity policies in exactly the same way (Johns, 2006).

Finally, there is externalisation, people look outside their national boundaries for remedies to domestic problems. During the Cold War many left-leaning individuals identified the USSR as a superior form of political organisation. Again we might be stretching the point here but it is worth acknowledging that many of the initial movements towards equal opportunities based on group characteristics were enacted in the United States (Blakemore and Drake, 1996). In the past ten years Managing Diversity has been drafted in as a replacement which allows employers more scope for flexibility in terms of discrimination and interpreting merit (Johns, 2006; Wrench, 2005). It is surely no coincidence that the US has the most developed equality measures in the world and also the highest levels of material inequality.

It would be wrong to suggest that equal opportunities and diversity in themselves constitute effective substitutes for trust culture, but it is possible to argue that they form part of a political landscape that is a substitute. Applying Sztompka's framework in a different way, we can see that on several of the indices he employs equal opportunities and diversity policies are relevant in this context. Therefore, we can argue that in an individualistic culture based on inequality and that tolerates the existence of poverty alongside extreme wealth, equality of opportunity plays its part.

The nature of trust in multi-ethnic societies

The issue of trust is a far more general one than is captured by any of the examples given by Locke, Hume, Rousseau and Smith. As Tony Blair pointed out in his speech on respect, Hobbes (1651) had argued that the whole social order runs on fear of the sovereign power, and liberal democratic theory can be read as an extended attempt to rebut Hobbes's tight and coherent case for this view. If liberal democracy is to be founded on individual freedom, rather than collective power, then trust must be one key element in this order.

Families, markets, property and government by consent are very different social institutions; they are not necessarily found together via the same places. For example, the rising superpower, China, is becoming the most dynamic market economy in the world, but it is in no sense a liberal democracy. Trust in commercial interactions has not (yet) led to trust by government in citizens (or *vice versa*).

So there can be no *general* argument of the form pioneered by Locke, Hume, Rousseau and Smith, to the effect that particular social practices lead to generalised trust among interactants. At best, this form of argument explains how particular practices give rise to enduring specific institutions, which are themselves trusted, partly because they are efficient ways of accomplishing individual and collective purposes. These may to some extent run on trust, and in turn increase trust, between participants.

Indeed, Third Way politicians do not pretend that community, cohesion, respect and security are the unintended consequences of interactions in markets and democratic political systems. They represent them more as feats of social engineering, led by the government in top-down ways, through participation between commercial, official and informal (local) representatives in the 'invited spaces' of 'partnership' institutions (Garenta, 2004). This is most clearly the case in initiatives for community cohesion, which rely on the efforts of Home Office teams and the elders of Muslim mosques, for attempts to override the efforts of segregated 'parallel lives' (Home Office, 2001). The same mechanisms apply in the Peace Process in Northern Ireland (Leonard, 2004), where the inclusion of Catholic districts in mainstream commercial and political life involves substituting firms and state agencies for informal commercial systems, based on ethno-religious loyalties, and enforced by conflict-orientated paramilitary groups.

So – in complex, cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic societies – trust has to be created and political leadership has to utilise rhetorical and material resources to accomplish this, finding balances and trade-offs between bonds of ethnicity and faith, and the cooler, thinner, liberal 'bridges' between such groupings.

Conclusion

The idea that minority ethnic individuals should 'integrate' into British society through availing themselves of 'equal opportunities' to be educated, trained, find work, accumulate property and get access to health care is open to scepticism, or even mistrust. Good citizenship is defined, in Third Way thinking, in terms of 'independence' – self-responsibility, self-reliance and family-based mutuality – all derived from earnings, savings, private insurance and pensions, and home ownership (Department of Social Security, 1998: 80). The 'New Social Contract' between the state and individuals demands that they be autonomous and mobile, shifting and

switching between options, in markets and in a public sector, redesigned to allow such choices among suppliers (Jordan, 2006: Ch.7).

The counterbalance to this individualistic version of collective membership, community, has been constantly redefined under New Labour, from inclusion through work, to cohesion through inter-communal communication, to integration through the adoption of common symbols and language. Ethnicity and faith have been first promoted as providing bonds for mutual support, and glue for cultural identity, and then denounced, as creating barriers and divisions. The Blair government has given neither a substantive content to the mainstream 'Britishness' with which minorities should join, nor reliable means of access to the choices and resources enjoyed by that mainstream.

In two classics of the 1970s, A.O. Hirschman both traced the origins of liberal democratic individualism, and explained its limitations. In *The Passions and the Interests* (1977), he showed how Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophers sought to replace faith and military glory as the bases of property ownership with the 'gentler passions' of greed and acquisitiveness. Just as Hobbes has identified conflict between faith-based militias and glory-seeking nobles as the causes of poverty, war and pestilence, so his successors sought a more stable order in markets and economic growth.

In *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), Hirschman argued that market-like mechanisms, relying on switching suppliers, were not a proper basis for social relations of any kind unless balanced by participation, negotiation and solidarity among members of social units. As early as this, he foresaw the pluralisation of societies along ethnic and income lines, the emergence of ghettos of crime and poverty, and the high costs of all this, in terms of the breakdown of trust between citizens (Hirschman, 1981: 252).

In the UK some minorities have prospered in such an environment; citizens of Indian extraction do better on average in education and the labour market than white citizens. But others have not achieved as well. Muslim citizens now face stigma, suspicion and hostility, as well as material disadvantage.

We would argue that the issues have been wrongly defined. What a democratic political system requires is a culture in which all can value each other, and challenge each other, within a set of institutions to which all subscribe, and in which all have a stake. This must, as Hirschman recognised, be a *balance* of freedom and mobility on the one hand, and participation, engagement and solidarity on the other (Jordan, 2006: Part IV).

Tony Blair's speeches in 2006 increasingly defined the order of markets, choice and mobility between options as stable and universally beneficial, and blamed minorities and deviants for all social ills. His rhetoric on crime and extremism became more and more strident, with ASBOs for infants and parenting orders for toddlers emerging as 'positive' new initiatives (Blair, 2006b).

But another view is now entering the political debate. From strict Thatcherite orthodoxy, David Cameron is transforming himself into a born-again environmentalist, with a strong social streak, can it really be the leader of the Iron Lady's party who argued in May that there is more to life than money; that we should seek to increase General Well-Being, not the Gross National product; that the really important issues are the beauty of our surroundings and (above all) the strength of our relationships; that that 'there comes a time when we have to stop choosing, and commit?' (Cameron, 2006).

Undoubtedly this reflects the evidence of his party's assiduous consultation with focus groups, but these in turn reflect a possible culture shift. There is now massive evidence that the close links between growth in *per capita* income and subjective Well-Being (overall satisfaction with life), on which Locke, Hume and Smith ultimately relied for their liberal prescriptions, have been broken, under conditions of affluence (Kahneman *et al.*, 1999; Diener and Sah, 2000; Frey and Stutzer, 2002; Helliwell, 2003). Economists are questioning the basic assumptions of their science, under which individual decisions are, by definition, welfare-enhancing, since utility measured by price, is the only reliable connection between subjective needs and material resources. Suddenly there is renewed attention to such concepts as 'happiness', 'quality of life', 'public value' and 'empathy' (Layard, 2005; Offer, 2006; Bruni and Porta, 2005; Huppert *et al.*, 2005).

All this makes the debate about multi-ethnic societies and citizenship a far more complex one than New Labour's terms for it allow. What the Well-Being theorists are seeking are cultural resources and social institutions which can reduce the stress of hyper-consumption (Bauman, 2004); 'luxury fever' (Frank, 1999), excessive rivalry (Layard, 2005), insecurity (Pusey, 2003) and loss of faith in liberal democratic politics (Lane, 2000). These features of collective life will not be found through individual opportunities or mobility options (Jordan, 2004, 2006).

Above all, community, faith and ethnicity have emerged as the terrain of political struggle, in which the battle between the Third Way (the last outpost of Thatcherism) and a new, more sustainable and relationship-orientated political culture will be fought out under a neo-liberal order, where all political institutions enable individual switching and shifting, issues of cultural resources and the reproduction of social institutions become a zero-sum game, as ethnic and faith groups fight to control the agenda. We have argued for an approach which makes consumer interests a more realistic part of a society in which our shared quality of life is more recognisable.

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the issue of trust through the approach of New Labour to equal opportunities and diversity. While the former had stalled at the hurdle of formal equality for nearly thirty years, with the stimulus provided by the MacPherson Report (1999), the government has pushed things forward, particularly in relation to 'race' and ethnicity using positive action policies. Developments have also occurred on a parallel basis in the form of diversity policies, whether formalised in the shape of Managing Diversity (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998) or in the improvised methods adopted by the MPS (*The Independent*, 2003).

While these shifts cannot be dismissed they would appear to form a part of the false accountability and transparency agenda identified by O'Neill (2002c). As she sets out the real challenge is, through active citizenship, to foster a political culture which does not tolerate deception. Equal opportunities and diversity policies are promoted as part of a conservative agenda that seeks to justify inequalities and presents the image of a society striving towards a meritocracy. As Young (2001) outlined this is a dangerous deception which creates casualties and then blames them for their 'failure'.

In the final analysis we would argue that while equal opportunities and diversity are not substitutes for trust culture in their own right they are an important feature in a system which is very far removed from that ideal. Not only do they borrow heavily from the United States, but they have all the hallmarks of a cult, with their own language, norms and experts, and, they operate to ghettoise various groups and communities within society. Furthermore, they work, at least equal opportunities measures do, only as part of the law and then only with mild success due to the

individualised nature of this enterprise. If British society is ever to move towards a trust culture, it must do so challenging the bases of inequalities and poverty, not by pretending that opportunity can really be available to all or that inclusion is possible in Western liberal democracies driven by capitalist priorities.

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