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English identity and ethnic diversity in the context of UK constitutional change

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ABSTRACT At the time of the devolution settlement in the UK, there was widespread concern that the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales would prompt a rise in English identity at the expense of British identity and, in turn, threaten polyethnic constructions of citizenship. Such presumptions typically rested on reified understandings of the category labels British and English, and conflated the construct of national identity with the constructs of territorial belonging, social inclusion and citizenship. Post-devolution survey data do not currently reveal a decline in British identity in England. Measures of attachment to Englishness vary as a function of ethnic origin of respondent, but also as a function of question wording. A qualitative interview study of young adult Pakistani-origin Muslims in Greater Manchester, north-west England, illustrates how Englishness may be understood to pertain variously to an exclusive cultural or racial category, or to an inclusive territorial entity or community of political interest. Ethnic constructions of English identity need not imply exclusive understandings of citizenship, but their meaning depends crucially on the ways in which nationality and identity are in turn understood in relation to matters of polity and civil society. Conversely, inclusive understandings of national identity do not guarantee the existence of effective ethnic integration or substantive ethnic equality.

KEYWORDS devolution ● England ● ethnicity ● multiculturalism ● national identity ● United Kingdom

INTRODUCTION

> It is astonishing to hear pundits and politicians speaking of the 'four nations' of Britain. Windrush and its aftermath is not even an afterthought in this discourse. So when Scotland has got kilted up and the English have established their homelands far from the Welsh and Irish, where do we, the black Britons go? [. . .] When ethnicities are created on the back of bold political decentralisation, and identity is tied to history and territory, the results are not always what you want. (Alibhai-Brown, 2000: 271)

The potential tension between multinational and polyethnic constructions of cultural diversity within the United Kingdom has been brought to the fore by recent changes to the British constitution (McCrone, 2002). The establishment of the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales in 1999 was widely accompanied by forecasts to the effect that these new political structures posed a threat to the construct of 'British identity'. The precise character attributed to 'British identity', and the likely consequences of its demise, tended to vary according to the provenance of the commentators concerned. Authors in Scotland were inclined to treat British identity as crucial to the legitimation of the UK as a multinational state (Curtice and Seyd, 2001; cf. Paterson, 2002). In contrast, commentators in England have been more inclined to emphasize the significance of a common sense of British identity for the promotion of social inclusion and solidarity among a polyethnic citizenry. As Kymlicka (2000: 729) has noted, concerns that devolved governance might promote ethnically exclusive notions of citizenship were often grounded on the assumption that, 'one can envisage a notion of "being British" which is multicultural, multiracial and multifaith', but that 'the idea of "being Scottish" (or Welsh, English, Irish Catholic) seems tied to myths of a shared descent, history, culture and religion'.

The present article represents part of a programme of research monitoring everyday understandings of nationhood, civil society and citizenship in England in the aftermath of UK constitutional change. In this article, we focus on the relationship between vernacular constructions of English identity and matters relating to ethnic diversity. Is there evidence that changes to the UK constitution have resulted in a rise in English identity at the expense of British identity? Is English identity understood to be ethnically exclusive? What is the relationship between claims to English identity and popular understandings of civil society and citizenship?

We develop our argument in three stages. First, we question the presumption that either British or English identity is associated with singular or fixed meanings. We then turn to consider some recent population survey evidence on national and British identities. In the third section of this article we illustrate how various meanings may currently be

associated with English identity, reporting a qualitative interview study of young adult Pakistani-origin Muslims in Greater Manchester, North West England (including outlying towns such as Oldham), in the county of Lancashire.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? THE VARYING SIGNIFICANCE OF CATEGORY LABELS

Moral panic discourses concerning the consequences of devolved governance often used rhetorical formulations in which the categories British and English were treated as if they possessed singular, undisputed connotation. This was reflected in a tendency for survey researchers to attempt to monitor public reactions to UK constitutional change by simply documenting the extent to which people describe themselves as British or English. In practice, however, the meanings of both categories may be subject to historical change and contextual variability.

British identity

The construct of Britishness, whether in its imperial or domestic guise, has long been associated with celebratory accounts of British 'unity in diversity', which was treated as morally and politically superior to the cultural or racial essentialisms understood to characterize 'Continental' forms of nationalism (Young, 1995). The legacy of this kind of representational practice can be found today in appeals to British identity in formal political rhetoric, in which cultural diversity is presented both as a post-Imperial phenomenon, and also an enduring aspect of 'our' way of life. This in turn allows both devolution and multiculturalism to be represented simultaneously as progressive historical developments and also as the political instantiations of an enduring moral order:

> [. . .] the homogeneity of British identity that some people assume to be the norm was confined to a relatively brief period. It lasted from the Victorian era of imperial expansion to the aftermath of the Second World War [. . .] The diversity of modern Britain expressed through devolution and multiculturalism is more consistent with the historical experience of our islands. (Cook (then British Foreign Secretary), 2001)

The fact that these kinds of assertions concerning the heterogeneous character of British identity can be identified in formal political rhetoric should not, however, be taken to indicate that pluralism represents a fixed property of the category. In fact, current discourses of British cultural heterogeneity and hybridity were originally derived from earlier

constructions of Englishness (Strathern, 1992; Young, 1995). Moreover, the fact that politicians may present themselves as arguing against popular stereotypes illustrates the status of British identity as an essentially contested concept.

Evidence suggests that far from possessing a singular, fixed and undisputed meaning, the relationship between the construct of British identity and values of cultural pluralism has always been subject to considerable variation and debate (Samuel, 1998). Prior to the recent changes in the UK constitution, an understanding of British identity as a postcolonial category of 'multicultural, multiracial and multi faith' citizenship was more widely held amongst the population of England than of Scotland (Condor and Faulkner, 2002; Kiely, McCrone and Bechhofer, 2005). Even within England, kith and kin versions of British identity existed alongside multicultural versions (Barker, 1981; Chambers, 1989; Gilroy, 1987; Modood, 1992; Parekh, 2000a, 2000b). Consequently, in the context of debates concerning 'ethnic minority' identities in England, we see the construct of British identity being cast variously as an externally imposed category of Empire (cf. Parekh, 2000a), of autonomous ethnic preference (cf. Banton, 2001), of political strategy (cf. Banton, 1987, Modood et al., 1994), or citizenship duty (cf. Husbands, 1994).

The tension between mono- and multicultural constructions of British identity regularly becomes apparent during the course of political debate. One example can be found in responses to David Blunkett's (then British Home Secretary) calls for an inclusive sense of British identity in the aftermath of the 2001 'race riots' (a series of civil disturbances between white and 'Asian' – mostly Pakistani and Bangladeshi-origin – young men in three towns in the north of England). On the one hand, Blunkett's appeal was opposed by those, such as Lord Tebbitt, who objected to what they took to be a culturally empty notion of British identity as 'mere' constitutional patriotism. On the other hand, objections were raised by those who interpreted this as a prescriptive injunction for people of ethnic minority backgrounds – and those of Muslim faith communities in particular – to assimilate into a dominant British way of life.[1]

Survey researchers often treat civic or ethnocultural versions of British identity as mutually exclusive stances (e.g. Tilley et al., 2004). In ordinary discursive practice, however, contradictory formulations often co-exist within accounts. By way of illustration, we may consider the current British Labour Government Chancellor, Gordon Brown's recent appeal to a culturally neutral version of British identity:

> While the United Kingdom has always been a country of different nations and thus of plural identities – a Welshman can be Welsh and British just as a Cornishman or woman is Cornish, English and British – and maybe Muslim, Pakistani or Afro Caribbean, Cornish, English and British – the issue is whether we retreat into more exclusive identities rooted in 19th century conceptions of

> blood, race and territory, or whether we are still able to celebrate a British identity which is bigger than the sum of its parts and a Union that is strong because of the values we share and because of the way these values are expressed through our history and our institutions. (Brown, 2004)

Note how Brown's appeal to national, racial and religious pluralism is undermined by allusions to 'common values' expressed through 'our' common 'history'. This becomes particularly apparent later in this speech, when Brown suggests that a characteristically British propensity to 'outward looking internationalism' might be attributed in part to 'our' missionary history, and asserts that 'the churches' constitute a traditional focus of British 'local democracy and public life'.

English identity

In response to authors such as Kymlicka and Alibhai-Brown, who suggested that that the spectre of ethnic essentialism hangs equally over all UK national identities, McCrone (2002) speculated that, although a rise in national identity might pose a problem for the 'non-white' populations of England, this might prove less of a danger in Scotland, where hyphenated national identities (e.g. 'Pakistani-Scot') were already widely accepted (Modood et al., 1997; Saeed et al., 1999). Whether differences in self-labelling practices can necessarily be taken as direct evidence that ethnic constructions of national identity are, indeed, less prevalent or problematic in Scotland than in England is a complex question, which cannot be considered here.[2] For the time being, we will focus on evidence concerning the existence, and possible implications, of ethnically exclusive versions of English identity.

McCrone's (2002) suggestion that the development of ethnically exclusive understandings of national identity might be more likely in England than in Scotland is consistent with a prevalent view of English identity as especially susceptible to exclusionary formulation (as reflected in the clichéd expression, 'little Englander').[3] Although the advent of constitutional change has prompted a good deal of scholarly speculation concerning English identity, there still exists remarkably little direct empirical evidence concerning the ways in which Englishness is understood. By way of support for his argument that a rise in English identity might pose a 'problem' for the 'non-white' populations of England, McCrone drew on Curtice and Heath's (2000) report of the 1999 British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS). The data in question were taken from responses to the so-called Moreno question (named after the author who first introduced its use in Scotland, see Moreno, 1988). This item, which is currently widely used in survey research in the UK, requires respondents to assess comparatively the extent to which they see themselves as English or British, response options

being, 'English not British'; 'More English than British'; 'Equally English and British'; 'More British than English'; 'British not English'.

A comparison of data collected before and after devolution indicated that the proportion of people in England who selected the 'English not British' response option had risen from 7 percent in 1997 to 17 percent in 1999, a finding that Curtice and Heath interpreted as evidence for 'some undermining in the sense of Britishness in . . . England'. Further analysis suggested that preference for self-description as English tended to be statistically related to a willingness to admit to being racially prejudiced. The authors also provided a rather perfunctory account of the responses of people they described as 'members of ethnic minority groups' (2000: 168), although in practice these were people who self-identified as 'black' or 'Asian'.[4] Presumably as a consequence of the small numbers involved, the responses of the black and Asian sub-sample were reported in aggregate. Curtice and Heath noted that these respondents rarely selected the 'English not British' or 'More English than British' response options, and that more than a third selected the 'British not English' option.

Curtice and Heath were somewhat circumspect in their original conclusions, noting simply that their findings were 'only indicative' of the possibility that the 'apparently more exclusive character of English national identity is recognized by members of ethnic [*sic*] minorities' (2000: 168). McCrone (2002) however, went rather further and suggested that these findings might indicate that 'the term "English" is reserved largely for white "natives": almost an "ethnic" identity that the non-white population of England feels excluded or excludes itself from' (p. 305).

One difficulty in interpreting survey data is, of course, the problem of knowing how far it is possible to appreciate the nuances of self- and national representation from responses to a single survey item. Recent evidence suggests that social identities in general may be best conceptualized as multidimensional constructs (including such potentially distinguishable elements as self-knowledge, emotional attachment, centrality and solidarity) and consequently may not be easily captured by single-item indices (Cameron, 2004). Relatedly, there are problems in assuming that reports of self-labelling practices collected in survey contexts necessarily reflect the ways in which people actually use language in everyday life. In particular, attempts to evaluate survey data on 'non-white' respondents' reports of their self-labelling practices is restricted by the fact that little existing work has addressed the question of how people who identify themselves as members of a racial or ethnic minority actually use the category English in mundane discursive practice. A consideration of existing work on the relationship between racial and ethnic and 'British' identities does, however, indicate that in some previous accounts, the label 'British' may in fact have constituted the authors' category rather than the respondents' vernacular terminology. For example, in Modood et al.'s (1994) classic

Changing Ethnic Identities, there are several instances in which a respondents' use of the term 'English' is re-glossed as 'British' by the authors. Similarly, in her significantly named study *Blacks and Britannity*, Joly (2001) glossed strips of talk such as 'the difference between Black Americans and the English Blacks . . .', and, 'I think all of us in this room was born in England, and we've taken on English personalities', as accounts of how the respondents 'belong in Britain' (p. 123). Of course, it is possible that the respondents themselves were unconcerned about the specific category labels they were using. Nevertheless, even these few examples are sufficient to challenge simple inferences that 'the non-white population of England' necessarily or reliably 'excludes itself' from the category English.

Another difficulty associated with the interpretation of survey data relates to the tendency for survey researchers to assume that the same questions or response options necessarily mean the same thing in all contexts or to all respondents. In the present case, although suggestive, the BSAS data are not sufficiently clear as to warrant categorical claims concerning 'the' meaning of English identity for the white population. Theoretical accounts have recently begun to stress the various possible forms that English national identity might take (Bryant, 2003), and qualitative research points to instances in which white people employ cosmopolitan and territorial as well as ethnic constructions of Englishness (Edmunds and Turner, 2001).

The limitations of the survey data are also suggested by the fact that even when white people do treat English identity as a matter of culture or race, this can imply very different things depending on the wider argumentative frame of reference. A recent analysis distinguished four different ways in which white people could represent English identity in relation to matters of race and ethnicity in conversational contexts (Condor, 2005). First, English identity could be treated as a matter of place of birth or territorial attachment and, as such, effectively racially or culturally neutral. Second were racial nationalist repertoires, in which English identity was cast as a matter of blood and was also seen to constitute a legitimate basis for the ascription of rights to residence and civic inclusion. Third were cultural nationalist repertoires, commonly endorsed by people associated with right-wing political groups. In these formulations, English cultural identity was potentially detachable from race, and social inclusion and participation was seen to be contingent upon the individual's voluntary adoption of English identity and cultural practices. Fourth were liberal individualist and cosmopolitan formulations, in which English national identity was treated as a matter of ancestry, but distinguished from matters of civil society or citizenship. This relatively common repertoire presented national identity as 'just' a matter of personal biography and subjectivity, which had no legitimate bearing on social inclusion, participation or rights. Respondents who adopted this frame of reference often chose to describe themselves as

English rather than British. However, this was not coupled with an exclusionary attitude towards other UK residents. Rather, respondents could claim English identity either as a matter of negative liberty (equal rights with those who choose to call themselves Scottish, Pakistani, etc.), or as a marker of respect for the sensitivities of these others.

The fact that ethnic constructions of English identity may be employed within both nationalist and liberal cosmopolitan frames of political reference points to the limitations of research that treats the study of national identity as effectively synonymous with the study of social inclusion (cf. Kiely, Bechhofer and McCrone, 2005). The question of whether people call themselves English, and the ways in which English national identity is cast in relation to matters of race, ethnicity and/or territorial attachment, represents an interesting issue in its own right. However, in so far as nationality need not be understood as synonymous with society or polity, it follows that discourse concerning national identity need not reflect presumptions or values concerning civic or political community in any straightforward way.

REVISITING THE SURVEY EVIDENCE

It is evident that some of the issues raised in the previous section indicate the need for further qualitative research concerning the situated meanings associated with English identity attributions. However, as an initial step, we will consider how further analysis of existing survey data can illustrate the potential dangers of formulating generic claims concerning the prevalence or meanings of British or English identity on the basis of responses to a single survey item. In this section, we present a secondary analysis of the 2003 BSAS data on national and British identity.

Replicating the approach adopted by Curtice and Heath (2000), we started out by considering Moreno scale responses and by categorizing respondents in England according to a simple white versus non-white distinction.[5] Analysis indicated that responses to the Moreno scale were broadly similar in 2003 to the pattern found in the 1999 survey data, as reported by Curtice and Heath. Eighteen per cent of white respondents in 2003 described themselves as 'English not British', compared to 4.2 percent of non-white respondents. Conversely, 27.5 percent of non-white respondents selected the 'British not English' option, compared to 8.8 percent of white respondents.

Moving beyond these observations, we then considered two further issues that have not normally been addressed in reports of BSAS data. First, we considered whether it makes sense to treat 'black and Asian' people as a singular, aggregate, category (cf. Alexander, 2002; Blokland, 2003;

Modood, 1994; Modood et al., 1997). Second, we considered the possibility that British and English identities might represent multidimensional constructs. The 2003 BSAS data do not provide a wide range of potential indices of national or British identity, and the particular measures that are included in the survey instrument are not justified on any particular theoretical or empirical grounds. However, it is possible to supplement findings from the Moreno scale with data from two other BSAS items that measure British and English identities as independent rather than as antithetical dimensions. The first item treats identity as a matter of cognition: Which words describe 'the way you think of yourself' (non-exclusive response options including, 'British'; 'English'; 'Scottish'; 'Welsh'; 'Asian' and 'African'). The second item treats identity as a matter of emotional commitment to a place and/or polity: 'How closely attached do you feel to [Britain/England/ Scotland/Wales] as a whole?'.

British identity

Table 1 reports responses to the items relating to British identity. The data have been broken down according to respondents' country of residence, and respondents in England have also been subdivided according to self-identified ethnic background. Rather than aggregate the responses of 'non-white' respondents, we report the four most commonly selected non-white categories separately.

These data confirm some trends identified previously. First, the populations of Wales and Scotland are less inclined than the population of England to report thinking of themselves as British. Second, although the numbers are small, these data suggest that people in England who identify themselves in terms of categories other than white European generally report thinking of themselves as British. In particular, in view of current moral panics concerning the Muslim population, we may note that more than 80 percent of people of Pakistani origin in England said that they think of themselves as British, a proportion comparable to that of the white population.

However, these data also point to three further considerations that have not generally been raised with respect to the BSAS data. First, there are evident differences between the groups of non-white respondents in England. The most notable difference is between people who describe themselves as black of African origin and those who identify themselves as black of Caribbean origin, but there is also a 10 percent difference between the responses of the two self-identified Asian groups.[6]

Second, these data do not confirm Curtice and Heath's claims concerning a decline in British identity in England, and suggest that the appearance of such a decline may have been contingent upon the use of a measure that effectively forced respondents to report their levels of English and British

Table 1 British identity by country of residence and self-identified racial/territorial origin

	England						*Wales*	*Scotland*
Ethnic/racial group[1]	*All*	*White European*	*Black Caribbean origin*	*Black African origin*	*Asian Indian origin*	*Asian Pakistani origin*	*White European*[2]	*White European*
Think of self as British[3]	69.8%	71.4%	80.8%	39.0%	71.9%	81.1%	52.3%	51.8%
	3742	3313	52	59	89	53	130	401
Attached to Britain[4]	81.2%	82%	76.9%	77.8%	90.2%	76%	84.75%	68.3%
	1929	1694	26	36	41	25	140	204
At least one[5]	90.94%	91.22%	93.34%	85.4%	92.6%	94.5%	89.64%	78.52%

Source: BSAS, 2003. More information on the surveys, and the organizations funding them, can be found at the UK Data Archive (www.data-archive.ac.uk). Numbers refer to sample size; percentages refer to weighted figures.

[1] Self-definition of racial category and territorial family origin. Only the most commonly selected options are included.

[2] Small numbers preclude analysis of any groups of respondents in Wales and Scotland other than those selecting the 'white European' option.

[3] Percentage of respondents saying 'yes'.

[4] Percentage of respondents selecting the 'very' or 'fairly' response options. (Note that this question was not asked in all versions of the survey.)

[5] Percentage of respondents endorsing at least one measure of British identity (respondents who answered both questions only).

identity comparatively. Measured in absolute terms, there is no evidence of a significant decline in British identity in England: the 69.8 percent of respondents in England saying that they think of themselves as British in 2003 is equivalent to the figures for 1997 (73%) and 1999 (70%), as reported by Curtice and Heath (2000).

Third, these data indicate the limitations of single-indicator measures of identification and point to the need for a rather more nuanced understanding of what is at stake when an individual claims a sense of British identity. In most cases, respondents were more likely to report being 'attached to Britain' than to report 'thinking of themselves as British', and the patterning of responses sometimes differed for the two questions. For example, white people in Wales were less inclined than those in England to say that they 'think of themselves as British', but there was no difference in the extent to which they reported feeling 'attached to Britain'. Those respondent groups in England who were least inclined to report 'thinking of themselves as British' were the most inclined to report being 'attached to Britain'. Although these data indicate the sensitivity of measures of British identity to variations in question wording, it is difficult to know what precisely is accounting for the different patterns of response to the two survey items considered here. Some measure of variation may be due to the fact that one measure used categorical (yes/no) response options and the other used a dimensional response scale. Some of this variation may be due to different ways in which 'identity' is formulated in the two questions. 'Thinking of yourself' could pertain to self-knowledge, or to the salience or centrality of the identity in question. 'Attachment', in contrast, would appear to pertain to a sense of emotional investment, and/or to a commitment to a social network. Some measure of variation may also be due to the different ways in which Britishness is framed in the two items. Thinking of oneself 'as British' could pertain to a sense of common culture or to citizenship status. Feeling attached 'to Britain' could pertain to a sense of place identity or to a sense of constitutional patriotism.

English identity

The limitations of measuring and conceptualizing social identities as monodimensional constructs becomes even more apparent when we consider the survey data relating to national (English, Scottish and Welsh) identity, as illustrated in Table 2.

Again, responses to the question concerning whether the respondent 'thinks of themselves' in national terms generally confirm results obtained in the past using the Moreno scale or other forced-choice indicators. These data indicate that the population of Scotland more frequently report thinking of themselves in national terms than do the populations of England or Wales. These data also confirm a rise in English identity: almost

Table 2 National (English, Welsh, Scottish) identity by country of residence and self-identified racial/territorial origin

	England						*Wales*	*Scotland*
Ethnic/racial group	*All*	*White European*	*Black Caribbean origin*	*Black African origin*	*Asian Indian origin*	*Asian Pakistani origin*	*White European*[1]	*White European*
Think of self as English/Scottish/ Welsh[2]	58.8% 3742	63.8% 3314	17.3% 52	10.3% 58	32.6% 89	11.1% 54	67.7% 272	88.2% 401
Attached to England/Scotland/[4] Wales[3]	84.2% 3742	85.5% 3309	75.5% 53	78% 59	85.6% 90	77.4% 41	92.9% 140	95.4% 204
At least one[4]	92%	93.17%	76.59%	91.19%	92.2%	78.39%	94.09%	99.14%
Think of self as Asian					25.6% 90	29.6% 54		
Think of self as African			26.9% 52	53.4% 58				

Source: BSAS, 2003. More information on the surveys, and the organizations funding them, can be found at the UK Data Archive (www.data-archive.ac.uk). Numbers refer to sample size; percentages refer to weighted figures.

[1] Small numbers preclude reporting data from groups of respondents in Wales and Scotland other than those selecting the 'white European' option.

[2] Percentage of respondents saying 'yes'.

[3] Percentage of respondents selecting the 'very' or 'fairly' response options. (Note that this question was not asked in all versions of the survey.)

[4] Percentage of respondents endorsing at least one measure of national identity (respondents answering both questions only).

59 percent of the England sample said that they thought of themselves as English in 2003, compared to the 57 percent in 1999 and 47 percent in 1997, as reported by Curtice and Heath (2000). People in England who self-identified as black Caribbean or African, Asian Indian or Pakistani, relatively rarely said that they thought of themselves as English, although we may again note a degree of variation between groups, with people of Indian background being three times more likely to say that they think of themselves as English than black people of African origin. It is, incidentally, interesting to note that Indian-origin Asians were more likely to report thinking of themselves as English than as Asian.

A very different picture emerges, however, when we consider responses to the question concerning attachment to England, Scotland and Wales. In every case, rates of reported attachment to country are higher than rates of thinking of oneself in national terms. There is also less evidence of 'the non-white population of England' feeling excluded or excluding itself from the nation with respect to this measure. Rates of reported attachment to England are generally fairly high, ranging from 75 percent among people identifying as black Caribbean to 85.6 percent among Indian-origin Asians.[7]

These findings clearly indicate that questions concerning English identity and its perceived relationship to matters of race and ethnicity may be rather more complex than previous survey research has acknowledged. Once again, however, it is impossible to determine what factors may account for the variations in responses to, and between, the two survey measures.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW ACCOUNTS OF ENGLISH IDENTITY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS OF PAKISTANI-ORIGIN IN GREATER MANCHESTER

In our analysis of the survey evidence on British and English identity, we were concerned to break down the aggregate categories of 'non-white' or 'black and Asian' that have generally been used when reporting BSAS data. However, even our more refined classification cannot begin to do justice to the variety of ways in which people may identify themselves in racial or ethnic terms. Moreover, the practice of reporting findings in the form of statistical aggregates obviously brackets questions concerning the diversity of understandings available within each of these groups. In this section, we focus on the different ways in which English identity may be understood even within a relatively restricted population.

Methods

Sample The accounts considered here have been taken from a corpus of conversational interview data collected between 2002 and 2004.[8]

Participants were 15 men and 20 women aged 17–34 living in the Greater Manchester Metropolitan area.[9] Respondents were recruited from an existing database of respondents who had taken part in earlier random sample surveys conducted in the area, and who had expressed a willingness to take part in further interview research.

All respondents had previously self-identified as Muslim, and of Pakistani background. All held British citizenship. Nine respondents had been born outside the UK. Twenty-one respondents lived in areas characterized by a relatively high degree of ethnic segregation and 14 were from mixed or predominantly white areas.

The primary aim of the analysis presented here is to highlight the presence of variability in the use and understanding of the construct of English identity, even within the accounts of individuals drawn from a relatively restricted population. However, in order to contextualize some of the findings, we will occasionally refer to findings from parallel interview studies with white people (see Condor and Abell, 2006, and Condor and Gibson, in press). For purposes of comparison we shall be referring to the responses of a sub-sample of these white ethnic majority respondents, selected to match the Pakistani heritage sample in terms of age, gender, location of residence, socioeconomic status and educational background.

Interviews Interviews were conducted either with individual respondents or with pairs of friends, and took place in the respondents' homes, places of work or coffee bars. Four interviewers were involved in collecting the data, two of whom were white and two of whom were from Pakistani backgrounds. Interviews were generally conducted in English, although a few respondents for whom English was a second language used a combination of English and Urdu. The interview guide covered matters relating to personal and social identity, personal networks, civil society, citizenship and UK constitutional change. The interviews were generally relatively informal and these topics tended to be introduced in a conversational style. Respondents were encouraged to lead the discussion in response to general prompts, with the interviewer picking up on topics of concern as they arose in the course of conversation.

Analytic techniques All interview transcripts were initially indexed for thematic content using ATLAS.ti software (see www.atlasti.de). Notwithstanding efforts to preserve local contextual information at the indexing stage, transcript segmentation necessarily involves a loss of information concerning narrative sequencing. Consequently, analyses of extracted

segments of talk were always treated as provisional until interpretations were checked against a reading of the extract within the context of the interview as a whole.

In contrast to many approaches to interview data on national and other forms of identity, our analysis considered not only how respondents reported using the term English, but also the way in which they actually used it in practice in the course of the interview. Microanalysis of individual extracts was informed by membership categorization analysis (Lepper, 2000) and frame analysis (Goffman, 1986[1974]). Techniques based on the grounded theory method of constant comparison, and the consideration of deviant cases (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), were used to analyse patterning of response types. Emergent hypotheses were checked using category counts and truth tables (Seale, 1999).

Analysis

In cases where the object of analysis involves potentially complex networks of ideas and discourses, it is always a somewhat arbitrary matter to extract particular themes for analytic scrutiny. Ideally, we should be able to consider the various ways in which respondents understood, elided and distinguished a range of available self-categorization devices, such as Asian, Muslim, Pakistani, Oldhamer, British, and the ways in which these categories could, in turn, be imbricated with connotations of generation, gender, westernization, social status and so forth. In practice, space constraints preclude this sort of holistic approach, and, in view of the absence of existing literature on the subject, we shall restrict our focus to those exchanges in which a respondent explicitly referred to matters relating to English identity.

Since our objective in presenting these data is largely exemplificatory, we shall not be offering exhaustive analyses of individual extracts. Reference to contextual matters relating to respondent characteristics, rhetorical context and so forth will be limited to cases in which this helps to explain observed patterns of response across the data set, or when it helps to explain idiosyncratic features of a particular exchange.

'English' and 'British' as 'just words' A consideration of the ways in which respondents oriented to the category labels English and British in the interview context suggested the need for caution before assuming that ordinary social actors are necessarily attuned to, or concerned with, matters of terminology to the same extent as social scientists and other elite commentators. It was particularly interesting to note that even those respondents who had selected the 'British not English' response option to the Moreno question in the earlier survey did not usually display any particular concern over the English–British distinction in the interview

context. Extract 1 reports a fairly typical stretch of talk involving a respondent who had some months previously described himself as 'British not English' in response to the Moreno question. Immediately before the reported exchange, the respondent had been answering the interviewer's questions concerning his 'country' using the term 'Britain'. However, when the interviewer starts to prompt him concerning the way in which he 'considers himself', the respondent does not display any commitment to the use of particular category labels:

Extract 1: 'Yes, English more or less'[10]

I: Sure, yes, yes. I mean what – when you say Britain, is it Britain rather than England or?
M3: Er England, yes.
I: England?
M3: Yes.
I: Britain? Because I was just interested because with you living in Wales or whatever –
M3: Yes.
I: Er, interested to see if you consider yourself Welsh or if not if you consider yourself particularly English or –
M3: Yes, English more or less, yes.
I: Yes? And what do you generally say to people or whatever, like filling in forms or whatever, do you put British?
M3: British, yes.
I: British?
M3: Yes.

The respondent quoted in extract 2 had also described himself as 'British not English' on the Moreno scale, and spontaneously describes his national identity as British when questioned directly in the interview. However, when the interviewer formulates the British–English distinction as an explicit topic of conversation, and thereby casts the respondent's preference for the label British as potentially accountable, the young man immediately downgrades his assessment of the distinction between the terms, 'well to me they're both the same':

Extract 2: 'To me they're both the same'

I: If someone asked your national identity, what would you say?
M11: I'd say I'm British.
I: Yes.
M11: Proud to be British.
I: Why not English, why – why British and not English?
M11: British being – is it all over, like all of this. But English just being that little bit or?
I: Yes.

M11: Erm, well to me they're both the same.

When respondents did reflect on their use of category labels, they often suggested that this was not a matter concerning which they normally gave much thought in their everyday lives:

Extract 3: 'I can't really see the difference'

F8: I don't know whether you've noticed or not but I just keep, I – sometimes I say Britain and sometimes I say England, because I – I don't really – can't really see the difference between the two.
I: Yeah. Sure.
F8: So I don't know ((laughs)).
I: No?
F8: I was just going to say 'Britain' before and then I said 'England' and then I said 'oh', I've done it before.

Even in cases where a respondent argued consistently that they preferred to describe themselves as British rather than English, they did not always cast this as a significant symbolic act. Several respondents simply treated their preference for the label British as a matter of habit or custom:

Extract 4: 'We just say it'

I: So how would you describe your national identity?
F2: I would say British.
I: British, yes. Do you ever say English, is that –
F2: No.
I: No? Why British rather than English? What's the – is there a –
F2: I don't know. We just say it –
I: No, yes.
F2: Because everyone says it.

'English' as a racial and cultural referent Those respondents who did display a measure of spontaneous concern over the distinction between the terms English and British tended to have relatively high levels of educational attainment or strong political views. Unsurprisingly, when respondents presented a rational justification for calling themselves British in preference to English they often referred to the different racial or cultural significations of the labels. Even in these cases, however, there was a measure of variation in how, precisely, this was formulated.

Extract 5 represents an exemplary instance in which the label 'English' is treated as a racial signifier, and 'British' as a reference to citizenship status:

Extract 5: 'to me English means being white'

F19: Okay. The reason I wouldn't describe myself as being English is because, to me, English means being white
I: Right.
F19: Caucasian, and being, of the, like, (.) you know, the, er, original er, being er a native of, of England, is what I see as being English. So I would never describe myself as being English, but I would describe myself as being British, because I see that more as meaning that I was born in this country, but if I say English, I always also feel that then, if I say to somebody 'I'm, I'm English', they may say, 'Well, hang on, you're not white, how can you be English'

Although in extract 5 the speaker is treating 'English' as a racial referent ('being white . . . Caucasian'), she later went on to treat it as a reference to majority ('Christian') culture. In some cases, however, the term English could be treated as a cultural as opposed to a racial referent. In extract 6, for example, respondent F20 uses English identity ('thinking of' oneself as English) as a basis for differentiating 'the Pakistanis and Indians' from 'the black people and the white people'.

Extract 6: English identity as majority culture

F18: We don't see the English people much. We just get on with our lives. It's like, they do their things, and the Pakistanis and the Indians, it's different.
I: How's it different?
F18: We listen to our Asian radio and we read our papers, and they read the English ones. We don't have any problem. It's a very close er, community and we got everything in it. Shops, park, everything. We are very lucky.
F20: And English people have their own shops and park and their parts. The black people and the white people. Because the black people they are English, they think they are English, they act English and they speak English, but the Indian and the Pakistani people don't.

In the last two extracts, the label 'English' is used to refer to an ethnically defined other. However, in neither case is it evident that the speakers are casting this position as a simple 'response' to, or 'recognition' of, white discourse (cf. Curtice and Heath, 2000). In addition, none of these speakers suggested that they would ideally like to, or ought to, call themselves English, but felt 'excluded' from the category (cf. McCrone, 2000, see above). On the contrary, all three speakers went on to cast the English-versus-Asian distinction as a reflection of autonomous ethnic preference. In the stretch of talk immediately following the exchange reported in extract 5, the respondent makes clear that the 'someone' who might question her claim to English identity refers to another member of her own ethnic community. The two cousins quoted in extract 6 cast their 'close community' as essentially self-defining.

Ethnic Englishness and imagined community The women quoted in extract 6 had moved to the UK a few years earlier, and as this stretch of talk suggests, they had little personal contact with people outside of their own ethnic community. However, the use of the term English as a self-exclusive ethnic referent did not map onto everyday experiences of segregation in any straightforward way. The woman quoted in extract 5, who also used the term English to refer to a racial and cultural outgroup, was a third-generation resident, a university lecturer who worked and socialized in a predominantly white environment and who was living with her white partner in a predominantly white area of the city.

The kinds of experiences of mundane segregation referred to in extract 6 were, of course, precisely the type subjected to criticism in the Cantle report produced in response to the 'race riots' in 2001 (Cantle, 2002). Many of the younger respondents living in the more segregated areas of Greater Manchester, including Oldham, the scene of one of the 'race riots', articulated accounts that clearly reflected the influence of discourses of 'community cohesion' being promoted through local schools, youth clubs and Mosques. In such cases, the category 'English' was commonly used to refer to the members and culture of the 'white community'. At the same time, however, respondents oriented to norms promoting interpersonal contact and 'mixing' between individual members of different ethnic communities in the interests of the 'community as a whole'. This kind of construction of the local, the national and (when respondents attended to 'September 11') the international spheres, as 'communities of communities' was in turn associated with a normative injunction against external attribution of responsibility and displays of concern over the particular responsibility of members of their own community to 'make the first move'.

Normative discourses of inter-community cohesion did not advocate the adoption of English identity. On the contrary, these discourses commonly relied on a distinction between identity (understood to be a matter of culture) and action, which in turn mapped onto a distinction between the private and public spheres,[11] reflected in moral injunctions concerning the need 'keep your culture at home'. It was particularly common for younger men to cast a personal capacity to accommodate temporally to English culture, and to establish personal networks including English people, as a form of civic virtue:

Extract 7: 'It depends who you're with'

M10: It's like half and half isn't it? It depends who you're with, basically. My characteristics are multiple. When I'm with a group of Asians I'm going to act Asian. And if I'm chilling out with my white friends I – I act English.

I: Right, right, yes.

M10: It's just like that because you need to fit in with both societies.
I: Yes, yes.
M10: You can't be different which is why racism – I think racism starts because of this reason. But you see, you see Asians wearing their traditional clothings on the streets and you see these women wearing the whole black outfits covered just – just to see their eyes. But I – the way I think about it is if you – if you're going to live in this country, yes, religion is fine. No-one's saying forget about your religion but keep it in your house.

In accounts like these, respondents treated inter-ethnic community contact as important for the individual ('you need to fit in with both societies') but also as a matter of active citizenship, of accepting personal responsibility for the quality of life in the local area as a whole and for ethnic relations both nationally and globally.

Respondents living in less segregated areas tended to invoke images of cosmopolitan diversity and values of cultural hybridity rather than the 'two society' model of local and national community. Once again, representations of the public sphere as a polyethnic community of communities, and of civic action as a form of participatory democracy, meant that a speaker's denial of a personal sense of English ethnic identity did not necessarily imply a sense of social exclusion:

Extract 8: 'You all come together'

F6: For me being a Muslim, British Muslim is quite important to me, this is a multicultural country there's a lot of different cultures, in here, you know, so I belong to the Muslim community and then you've got the Sikh and you've got the Jewish and you've got all sorts, the English too of course, which is good, we've all got our own bit er but we're all together too. And that's good, because it's not like just stay with your own culture because you all come together and can all work together and learn from each other – that's better for everyone.

'English' as a territorial referent Up to this point, we have been considering stretches of talk in which an interview respondent treats the term 'English' as a cultural and/or racial referent. Not surprisingly, respondents could also use the term as a geographical referent. In the stretch of talk reported in extract 9, the interviewer asks the respondent 'how would you describe yourself in national terms?'. The respondent replies that she calls herself British and (after prompting by the interviewer) that she does not call herself English. However, in this case the respondent's explanation for her choice of self-labelling is rather different to that offered by the respondent quoted in extract 5 above. In extract 9, the speaker starts out by suggesting that she prefers the label British because of its greater territorial inclusiveness, but then switches tack, and refers back to the interviewer's

use of the term *national*. She casts the term *national* as a reference to citizenship (and hence as properly pertaining to the category British). The term English, in contrast, is treated as a reference to place (a *country*) rather than to polity, and as such is cast as relatively socially inconsequential.

Extract 9: 'England's . . . my country, but it's not my nationality'

I: How would you say describe yourself in national terms?
F9: British Asian maybe or just British (.) it depends how I was feeling that day ((laughter)) But one or other of those.
I: Not Pakistani?
F9: No. Not Pakistani. Never.
I: Not English?
F9: No. That wouldn't occur to me I don't think. Why not? That's interesting. I s'pose it's maybe like Britain's not so specific, and a (.) the word 'national' it makes you think of something bigger, the whole lot, y'know, it's your citizenship like your passport and that rather than just a (.) I dunno like a region like if someone said, 'what's your nationality?' you wouldn't go like, 'Oldham, Lancashire', would you? Cos that doesn't mean nothing. England's the place where I live, it's my country, but it's not my nationality.

In other cases, respondents could treat both *English* and *British* as territorial referents and, when this was the case, preference for self-labelling as British was much reduced. In extract 10 the respondent effectively elides England with locality (Bury, Lancashire), casting both as specific places.

Extract 10: 'We're all British, but England's my little bit'

M8: Britain it's just too big innit? You know what I mean? Like Scotland and Wales like that, I've never been there. This is where I live. Bury. Lancashire. England.
I: Would you not call yourself British?
M8: Well, yeah. British citizenship and that. I'm Muslim, British Muslim, cos we're all British innit, but England's like my little bit. If someone says to me, 'where's your home?' I don't think Britain. I think like it's Norbury Road, Bury, England,

Again, this extract illustrates the nuanced nature of identity claims that may become obscured by survey methodology that reduces identity to the simple question of self-labelling preference. Here, British citizenship is treated as a form of ontological status compatible with a Muslim identity, and England is presented as an object of place attachment. Respondents were generally inclined to regard personal 'identity' as grounded in a proximal, concrete, community. Consequently, as a territorial referent, the category English could be regarded as more self-relevant than British precisely in so far as it was perceived to be more closely associated with the domain of the local.

Flexibility in use of the label 'English' In the first section of this article we questioned the tendency on the part of survey researchers to suppose that individual social actors will hold either civic or ethnic understandings of British identity. By the same token, it may be problematic to presume that people will understand national categories as either cultural *or* as territorial *or* as political constructs (cf. Cohen, 1996; Kiely, Bechhofer and McCrone, 2005). Lest the effective polyvalence of the label English in ordinary talk be dismissed as evidence of 'fuzzy' thinking, let us start out by considering an illustrative example taken from a piece of academic writing:

> the black and Asian communities that now account for about 7 per cent of the English population [. . .] do not have European roots and are in many respects deeply concerned about England's turn to Europe. (Kumar, 2003: 17)

In this case, the meaning of the terms 'England' and 'English' transform as the reader parses a single sentence. Initially, the category of 'black and Asian communities' is constructed as part of 'the English population'. However, with the next stroke of the keyboard, members of the 'black and Asian communities' are not only effectively excluded from the category 'English population', but are presented as 'concerned' by 'England'. The phrase 'England's turn to Europe' involves a euphemistic reference to the European Union (EU), and by extension implies that the 'England' with which 'Europe' is juxtaposed should be read as an institutional referent. Thus, initially cast as a place inhabited by a multiracial and polyethnic population, by an act of synecdoche, 'England' is recast as an institution, which is in turn elided with the singular will of the (by inference, singular and homogenous) white ethnic majority, defined precisely in opposition to the 'black and Asian communities'.

In the interview accounts, this kind of referent flexibility was often reflected in a disparity between the way in which a speaker reported describing themselves in principle (for example, in response to a direct question) and their use of mundane linguistic deixis (cf. Johnson, 1994). It was relatively common for a speaker who claimed not to call themselves English as a matter of principle to adopt an English national 'we' or 'us' in the course of conversation. One reason for this shift in orientation was that the speakers were often interpreting the referent of the term English in different ways in the two contexts.

Extract 11(a) starts at a point where the interviewer is introducing the option of English identity after the respondent had said that she saw herself as 'British Asian'. In this context, the respondent interprets the interviewer as offering the category 'English' as an alternative to 'Asian', and she consequently proceeds to treat the term as a self-exclusive cultural referent:

Extract 11(a): 'Us' versus 'the English'

I: What about English? Do you see yourself as English?
F6: No I see myself as Asian, British Asian. Cos we have our own way of life and it's different. So (.)
I: But you were born in England
F6: Yes, I'm British. A British citizen. But I wouldn't say English
I: So what's what's the difference?
F6: Like for one thing, we don't drink. So, it's like the English they go to pubs and clubs and drink and that, but that's not part of our culture.

In this stretch of talk, the respondent pursues a consistent line of argument, maintaining her use of the term 'English' as a cultural referent even after the interviewer offers her an alternative, territorial, frame. The conversation reported in extract 11(b) occurred about a quarter of an hour afterwards, during a discussion of the Scottish parliament. Within this frame of reference, the same individual banally adopts the footing of a generic English territorial and political *we*:

Extract 11(b): 'We', 'the English'

I: Do you think it will make any difference to English people?
F6: I can't see why it should, because it doesn't really affect us, does it? And Scotland's a different country and it can take care of itself. How can the English really understand what is going on there? We can't, just like they can't understand us and what are our problems and things like.

As these extracts illustrate, the ability of a speaker to shift seamlessly between frames of reference demonstrates the limitations of approaches that presume that individuals or communities will tend to endorse *either* cultural, racial, civic or territorial understandings of English identity, and consequently that their use of (for example) an ethnic formulation in one context somehow effectively precludes their using civic or territorial formulations in others.

In terms of research practice, this kind of referent flexibility adds greatly to the complexity of the task of interpreting the self-attribution of category labels, not only in survey contexts, but in more open-ended interviews. If we return to consider extract 1, for example, we can appreciate how the respondent's shift between the terms 'English' and 'British' may reflect the fact that he does not perceive any essential difference between the referents, or at least does not regard this as a potentially interesting topic of conversation. However, his behaviour might also reflect the fact that he is interpreting the terms 'British' and 'English' as pertaining to different referents at each point that the interviewer uses them. Specifically, the respondent agrees to the label 'English' when this is defined in contradiction to 'Welsh', but shifts to the category 'British' when this is presented as a bureaucratic matter ('filling in forms').

Self-labelling presented as strategic action Up to this point, we have noted how attention to the ways in which respondents use and interpret references to English identity in an interview context exemplifies difficulties inherent in survey research, which neglects the ways in which the terms 'English', 'national' and 'identity' may all pertain to a variety of different referents, and which consequently neglects the possibility of variability within as well as between the stances adopted by particular individuals. In addition, survey researchers often presuppose that respondents' self-descriptions represent straightforward reports of their subjective experience. Interestingly, in his own discussion of this issue, McCrone (2002) asserted the need to consider national identity claims as strategic speech acts as a matter of principle (p. 306), but then proceeded to discuss acts of national self-labelling solely as a matter of the expression and recognition of an individual's authentic subjective experience.

In the present interview accounts, respondents could cast the act of claiming or disclaiming English identity as a form of strategic behaviour in two different ways. First, self-labelling could be cast as an explicitly political act, a contribution to what, following Banton (1987), we might term the 'battle of the name'. It was interesting to note that these young adult respondents of Pakistani heritage living in Greater Manchester at the start of the twenty-first century did not generally report, or display, any difficulties in self-defining as British (cf. Modood, 1992), and were not inclined to treat British identity avowals as a form of symbolic political action. However, some respondents – all of them living in areas with a visible British National Party (BNP) presence – reported strategically describing themselves as 'English' precisely in order to counter the use of the term in the ethnonationalist rhetoric of the far right. The most explicit statement was made by a young man who had recently won a seat on Oldham council:

Extract 12: 'British by birth, English by the grace of God'

M1: I'm British. English.
I: English? Which one would you use kind of more? British, English?
M1: I consider myself to be, English. Yes, English, yes.
I: Yes? Why that more than British?
M1: British is the combined thing but I was born in England. England is my homeland. British by – by birth, English by the grace of God, you know!
I: Yes, sure!
M1: It's like all, you know, that's the way – you know, I used to have a big belt buckle saying that. Yes, a very big – you know I was – I was well into my belt buckles at a very young age. And when I had stuff like that, you know, some of my Asian friends used to say 'what the hell are you doing that for?' And I would say 'look, I'm not playing into the hands of the National Front'. Yes?

Again we may note the various ways in which the respondent casts category membership as a matter of identity. In this case, he is casting British citizenship as a form of given ontological status, in contrast to English identity, which is instantiated in a sense of emotional attachment to a more localized sense of place. Again we may note how the respondent's concerns relating to the reception of his identity claims are focused less on the white majority population in general than on the far right and on other members of his Asian community. In this case, the speaker is clearly presenting himself as having responded to white racist formulations of English national identity, but not in the manner of passive deference suggested by McCrone or by Curtice and Heath. Rather, he presents his 'response' as involving the active appropriation not only of the label 'English', but also of the distinctive rhetorical formulations of the far right: the specific term 'homeland', and the slogan 'British by birth, English by the grace of God' are both recognizable features of the far right political lexicon.

Second, respondents could use claims to, or denials of, English identity as a strategic means by which to position themselves in relation to other members of their ethnic in-group. This normally involved using a denial of English identity as a marker of commitment to a distinctive faith or ethnic community and extended kinship network. However, it was interesting to note that some of the younger men, particularly those of third-generation British citizenship status, reported using claims to English identity to symbolize generation and westernization in much the same way as their parents had used claims to British identity (cf. Anwar, 1998):

Extract 13: 'My mates and me we're English'

M15: My Granddad he's like, he's like the older generation and well he's British he's got British nationality like but y'know that's not his identity, he'd say his identity's still Pakistani. My Dad and Mum and people like that age, they say, 'yeah, I'm British, I'm not Pakistani cos I was born here'. But me I'm English cos I'm like I don't like cricket, I like football. So say, yeah 'Ingerland'. My mates and me, we're English. But my Dad says like 'No, you're British Asian' and my Gran's like, 'you're Pakistani' ((laughter)) And I'm like, 'well, I've never even *been* to Pakistan'.

Again we may note the nuances of self-identification that become lost in survey research, which operationalizes 'identity' as a matter of simple self-labelling. In this case, we may note the subtle differences between casting self-identification as a matter of ontological status, of subjective emotional attachment, and as public self-description (cf. Verkuyten and de Wolf, 2002).

Constitutional change We noted at the start of this article how elite commentators have expressed concerns over the possibility that the nationalization of the political landscape in the UK might threaten multicultural

constructions of citizenship. Throughout their interviews, the respondents in the present study demonstrated a clear investment in the fact and value of multiculturalism. In addition, they often referred to various threats to the multicultural status quo. At no stage, however, did any of the respondents orient to concerns that devolution might fuel ethnonationalist constructions of civil society and polity in England. Threats to multiculturalism were generally perceived to come from the BNP or from public reactions to 'September 11'. The major political threat to multiculturalism was seen to come from the EU, an institution that respondents were inclined to treat as a homogenizing force.

When questioned directly, about a quarter of the respondents displayed no prior awareness of changes to the UK constitution. Just under half dismissed devolution as an irrelevance, either because British constitutional issues were too far removed from the domain of the local to have any personal significance, or because these represented minor issues in a global context. Ten respondents (28% of the interview sample) expressed strong opposition to the devolution settlement, a level of antipathy that was greater than that displayed by white people of the same age, geographical location, social class and educational backgrounds.

There was also an interesting difference between the ways in which the white ethnic majority respondents and those from Pakistani backgrounds understood devolution in relation to values of nationalism, constitutional patriotism and multiculturalism. Those white respondents who expressed opposition to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament tended to cast this as part of a general critique of nationalism. In contrast, respondents from Pakistani backgrounds were more inclined to present their opposition to devolution as grounded in a sense of constitutional patriotism: a positive defence of English national and British state interests. They voiced concerns over breaking with history, weakening of England's control over the rest of the UK, threats to national security, and diminution of Anglo British global power. In the conversation immediately preceding extract 14, the interviewer had been questioning the respondent concerning his attitudes towards a proposed Regional Assembly for the North West of England. In formulating his answer, the respondent himself spontaneously raises the issue of the National Assembly for Wales and the Scottish Parliament, and the effect that they might have on the security and power of what, significantly, he refers to as, 'my own country':

Extract 14: '. . . it's like when the empire crumbled at the end'

M11: I think, I – I don't even think the regional, you know, the assemblies in Wales and Scotland should have been – You know, developed. Because, the thing is that, sooner or later, England will lose control of Scotland and Wales and everything basically and then we'll be just left as England.

I: Yes, yes.

M11: As a unified British Isles we are very strong. Very well respected. And then at the end of the day you know, it's like when the empire crumbled at the end. I don't want to see that happening with my own country. You know what I mean, there's only a few, you know, countries left with us. I don't think there will ever be a split, God forbid.

Although white respondents seldom voiced strongly negative attitudes concerning devolution, neither were they particularly inclined to positively support the recent changes to the British constitution. To adopt the terminology of liberal political philosophy, they tended to treat devolved governance as a matter of 'the right' rather than 'the good'. White respondents generally did not treat devolution as a positive end in itself. Rather, they treated constitutional change as a matter of minority rights and multicultural respect, arguing that it was not their place to object to Scottish or Welsh self-governance if that was what the people themselves wanted.

In contrast, respondents from Pakistani ethnic backgrounds were less inclined to accept the moral argument that cultural identity entails entitlement to claims for self-governance. In extract 15, for example, the respondent (who is talking to a white interviewer) presents multiculturalism as 'the good', a utopian objective that can only be achieved by the maintenance of a distinction between cultural identity and polity:

Extract 15: 'To my mind that's wrong'

F11: I don't know why they wanted it [the Scottish parliament]. If it's they want it because like they say they've got a different culture, and a different identity, then I'd say, no that's wrong, I think that doesn't matter. There's a – if you follow your own national culture, I follow my own culture, I've got my own Asian identity, you respect my culture, I respect your English culture and your identity. And there is no problem. We live together. It's wrong to say, 'we've got our own culture so we can't be part of the same big thing one big society'.

I: You can say why –

F11: Yeah. Because there's the basic things, there's everything. It is a good for everybodies. No culture, no religion, no identity, nothing leads you badly. If you respect each other's values then it's a no problem. Where there's a problem is when you say we just want to look after our own selves because we've got our own national identity. To my mind that's just wrong.

Note that this respondent is not treating devolved governance as an immediate threat to herself as an individual or to her ethnic community. Rather, her views are voiced as a matter of abstract principle, a moral opposition to the idea that cultural distinctiveness, and the sense of 'national identity' with which it is associated, should ever serve as a legitimate basis for the designation of units of governance.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

English identity and ethnic nationalism

Before the advent of constitutional change, people in England often employed progressive historical narratives depicting their country as having transformed from an original condition of ethnic nationalism to a more inclusive, civic form of community (Condor, in press). In this context, the labels 'British' and 'English' could be treated as mutual comparison terms, 'British' standing for the extant and progressive condition of poly-ethnic civic nationhood, and 'English' for the transcended state of ethnic nationalism. Subsequent moral panic discourses concerning the consequences of devolved governance have often deployed reified formulations in which civic nationalism is treated as a fixed property of the category British and ethnic nationalism a fixed property of the category English. Such formulations necessarily elide the strategic, purposeful nature of language use, the essentially contested character of both category labels, and the possibility for historical change in the meanings associated with either of them.

Survey research monitoring public reactions to UK constitutional change typically involves further acts of reification. In these studies, it is common for Britishness and Englishness to be cast as alternative forms of psychological 'identity', instantiated in preferences for self-labelling. This elides both the variety of ways in which nationhood may be construed as a matter of identity (Condor and Abell, 2006) and also the essential polyvalence of the terms 'English' and 'British'.

In the study reported in this article, young adults of Pakistani ethnic heritage in Greater Manchester were inclined to identify with England as a place and, potentially, as an imagined community of political interest. Nevertheless, they often treated the category English as a reference to a cultural and/or racial outgroup. Even when respondents reported strategically identifying as English, as was the case, for example, in extracts 12 and 13, they did so in a manner that acknowledged the subversive status of this act. To return to the issues raised at the start of this article, we might ask whether, and how, such ethnic constructions of English identity constitute a 'problem'? Were it the case that the members of the white population generally identified personally with an ethnic sense of Englishness and used this as a basis for determining the boundaries of civil society or citizenship, there would evidently be a problem. However, there is little evidence to suggest that this is generally the case (Back, 1996; Condor and Abell, 2006). The respondents who took part in the interview study did not generally suggest that they resented their 'exclusion' from English identity, or that they saw this as curtailing their civil, political or social rights. In fact, rather than regarding an exclusive sense of English identity as a marker of white

racism, they were more inclined to treat injunctions to the effect that 'everyone should call themselves English' as a form of cultural racism.

Problematizing the national identity problematic

By way of conclusion, we shall briefly consider some potential limitations to political rhetoric and research that address matters of social inclusion as an issue of 'national identity', understood as a psychological matter of ordinary social actors' self-understanding or self-description, and reflected in the common rhetorical questions, 'who do we think we are?' or 'who do we say we are?'.

One evident problem with the national identity problematic is that it tends to assume the universal relevance of communitarian models of social life, in which civic membership, entitlement and responsibilities are understood to pertain to a 'people like us'. Whilst these kinds of formulations arguably square relatively well with elite and everyday discourse in Scotland, their applicability in England is less evident (Condor and Abell, 2006; Condor and Faulkner, 2002; Paterson, 1994).

Academics have regularly noted differences between the ways in which social and political community may be understood in Scotland and England, and have often treated this as a reflection of a tendency on the part of the population of England to equate nation and state (e.g. McCrone, 1997; McCrone and Kiely, 2000). This idea in turn has underpinned suggestions that constitutional change would force 'the English' to 'wake up' and recognize their distinctive national identity and consequently begin to pursue collective English political interests (e.g. Curtice and Heath, 2000; cf. Condor, in press). These kinds of arguments have tended to overlook the possibility that pre-devolution national discourse in England might also have reflected a majority political culture of liberal individualism and cosmopolitanism (Preston, 1994), which resisted both nationalist and identity politics as a matter of abstract moral principle, if not always as a matter of practice (cf. Billig, 1995). Post-devolution research suggests that although white people may be increasingly willing to call themselves English, they may at the same time actively resist casting this as a collective identity (a 'people like us') or as a basis for particularistic political solidarity. The belief that polity should ideally coincide with national identity still tends to be confined to the far right (Condor, 2005; Condor and Abell, 2006).

The respondents from Pakistani ethnic backgrounds whose accounts were reported in this article tended to orient to a rather different set of values and presumptions concerning national identity and imagined community. Rather than adopting a national communitarian or a liberal individualist frame of reference, they tended to regard personal identity as defined through community and culture, but also endorsed images of the

public sphere as a multicultural 'community of communities'. Within this frame of reference, ethnic constructions of English identity served as a means by which to name white majority culture. Respondents did not generally perceive formal or substantive ethnic equality to be dependent upon being, becoming, feeling, calling oneself, or being recognized by others as, English. Rather, social inclusion and opportunity were seen to be dependent on freedom from racist harassment, the ability and will to accommodate when necessary to the majority culture, and the opportunity and inclination to engage in meaningful interpersonal contact with people from a variety of different backgrounds.

Bearing these observations in mind, we may note a curious disparity between current theoretical approaches to nationhood and empirical approaches to the study of national identity. It is now common for theorists to distinguish the constructs of nation and nationality from the constructs of state and civil society (e.g. Calhoun, 1999; Connor, 1978; McCrone, 1997; McCrone and Kiely, 2000; Thomas, 2002; Walby, 2003). At the same time, researchers often unproblematically elide the study of national identity (ordinary social actors' claims or beliefs concerning 'who they are' in national terms) with questions concerning belonging, social inclusion and citizenship rights (cf. Reicher and Hopkins, 2001).

There are a number of reasons why an analytic focus on the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of national identity ('who do we think we are?') may not substitute for the study of ethnic discrimination or inequality. In the first place, evidence relating to the ways in which categories such as British or English are defined or understood in principle may not tell us much about how they may be used in rhetorical practice. As we have seen, ethnically exclusive understandings of English identity can be used both as a vehicle for racist discrimination and as a marker of multicultural respect. Conversely, ethnically inclusive versions of British identity may discriminate, for example, against UK residents without British citizenship status (Kundnani, 2001).

More generally, analysis of everyday understandings of national identity or the perceived boundaries of social and political community – whether imagined as a culturally heterogeneous collection of unencumbered individuals or a multiethnic community of communities – may effectively displace questions concerning social integration, structural inequality, discrimination or oppression.

For example, the respondents in our interview study often represented the public sphere as a form of participatory democracy involving free exchange between members of a multicultural community of communities. However, most of the white respondents in our parallel interview studies had no close social contact with people from other ethnic (or, for that matter, class) backgrounds. In many cases, the local civic societies and the neighbourhood groups in the areas where this research was conducted had

no members from ethnic minority backgrounds. Observational research conducted around the same time as these interviews documented a high degree of ethnic segregation among students at Manchester University (Clack et al., 2005).

Similarly, the young adults whose accounts we considered earlier generally claimed a strong sense of inclusive British identity, a claim that was inclined to be accepted by white people living in the same areas. However, the existence of an inclusive sense of British identity did not reflect a condition of substantive ethnic equality. The population of Pakistani-heritage respondents from which our own interview sample was originally drawn was significantly more inclined to live in areas of extremely poor-quality housing, to have few or no educational qualifications, and to be employed in unskilled occupations paid at or below the minimum wage than the general population of Greater Manchester.

Clearly, the question of how people understand themselves and others in national terms and (in so far as it is different) how they understand themselves and others as the subjects and objects of democratic governance, are important questions in their own right. However, it is also important to recognize that ethnically inclusive constructions of national identity – whether English, Scottish, Welsh or British – by themselves guarantee neither the absence of racist discrimination nor the existence of effective social integration or substantive ethnic equality.

Notes

1 Accounts of these debates were widely reported in the media. See for example, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2248319.stm.

2 The use of hyphenated national identity labels (e.g. 'Pakistani-Scot') does not in itself prove that categories of race, culture and nation are not subject to elision (cf. Hussain and Miller, 2004). If the category 'Scottish' were free of connotations of race or ethnicity, then white Scots also would represent their identity in hyphenated terms (cf. Banton, 1983). There is also evidence that members of ethnic minority groups can use the category 'Scottish' to refer to the white majority (see Qureshi and Moores, 1999 for an example). More generally, we may note how arguments to the effect that ethnic nationalism represents a distinctively English problem often rely on asymmetric accounting procedures, whereby cultural constructions of nationhood are treated as indicative of 'ethnic nationalism' when used in England, but of 'civic nationalism' when used in Scotland (cf. Cohen, 1996; Thomas, 2002).

3 For an example of the use of this stereotype during the devolution debates, see John Barnes's report to the House of Commons Select Committee on Scottish Affairs (Barnes, 1998).

4 One difficulty in establishing dialogue between scholars in England and Scotland over matters of nationhood, culture and race may be traced to a tendency for authors in England to use the term 'ethnic' in part as a reference

to culture (as we do in this article), whereas authors from Scotland tend to use the term 'ethnic' as a simple synonym for 'race' (as Curtice and Heath do here).

5 These data exclude people identifying themselves as being from 'mixed' backgrounds, or as 'white' of 'non-European' origin.

6 Some of this variation may be due to citizenship status. Although insufficient data are available in the BSAS corpus to check this, amalgamated data from the UK Labour Force Survey for 2002 to 2004, based on approximately one-third of a million adult respondents, suggests that in England self-classification as 'British' may indeed be heavily determined by citizenship. Of those with British citizenship, 81 percent of Indians, 82 percent of Pakistanis, 89 percent of Bangladeshis, 75 percent of Black Africans and 79 percent of Black Caribbeans describe themselves as 'British'. Of those without British citizenship, only 12 percent describe themselves as 'British', ranging from 11 percent of Black Africans to 29 percent of Black Caribbeans (John MacInnes, personal communication).

7 The influence of question framing is also illustrated by the fact that almost three quarters of those who identified themselves as 'Asian' in response to one question, denied 'thinking of themselves' as Asian in response to another.

8 Interviews conducted for the projects: 'Migrants and Nationals', funded within the Leverhulme Trust *Constitutional Change and Identity* programme (Grant number: 35113), conducted jointly with David McCrone, Frank Bechhofer and Richard Kiely, Edinburgh University, and 'Orientations of Young Men and Women to Citizenship and European identity' (EC: project no. SERD-2000–00), coordinated by Lynn Jamieson, Edinburgh University.

9 The Greater Manchester Metropolitan County was established in 1974 and includes the cities of Manchester and Salford together with the Metropolitan Boroughs of Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. The administrative region of Greater Manchester crosses the previous county borders of Lancashire and Cheshire, and local residents of Bolton, Bury, Oldham and Rochdale still often prefer to describe themselves as 'Lancastrian'.

10 For purposes of anonymity, all respondents are referred to by number, with gender indicated by the prefix 'M' or 'F'. The interview extracts presented here have been transcribed for content, with basic delivery features indicated as follows:

'inverted commas': intonation of quotation
'?': rising inflection
underline: emphasis on word or phrase
((double brackets)): transcription note
dash –: abrupt cut-off in talk
(.): audible pause

11 The presumption that the expression of national identity should properly be confined to the private sphere in the interests of civility and common citizenship also commonly figures in liberal white discourse in England (Condor and Abell, 2006).

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