# Wither multiculturalism? – an analysis of the impact on welfare practice and theory of policy responses to an increasingly multicultural society in the UK

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**Abstract.** *The UK is becoming an increasingly multicultural society, driven by a variety of demographic changes, particularly increased net migration from EU10 and the EU2 enlargement over the last 20 years.  In response to this, there have been two main policy focus, that of reducing immigration and limiting entitlement to welfare benefits for migrants.  This article will analyse the challenges that the latter of these policy changes in particular pose for practice, both in terms of its application and its theoretical implications.  In terms of practice application, the paper outlines how the limitation of entitlement to welfare benefits on the one hand amplifies already existing issues, and on the other creates new challenges for social welfare practitioners with migrant groups.  In terms of theoretical implications, the paper will outline how these policies reflects a retreat in policy away from multiculturalism towards assimilation, such as in relation to specifying the assimilation of 'Britishness' and 'British values' in daily life. Underpinning*

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*this retreat from multiculturalism is a changed citizenship, or more specifically the*

*diminution of social citizenship rights integral to being complete citizens.*

**Keywords**: multicultural, multiculturalism, assimilation, migration, social policy

**Introduction**

One of the most outstanding trends in the UK over the last 20 years or so is the

growth of the population itself in the post-war period, a growth that is higher than

the EU average and highest of the four most populous EU member states (Office

for National Statistics (ONS), 2014).  To contextualise this growth, when the UK

post-war welfare state was constructed in 1946, the population of the UK was just

under 49 million people. In the 70 or so years since, it has increased by nearly 33%,

to stand at just under 64 million people. The population is predicted to rise further

to just over 70 million by 2031, which will be a 45% increase since 1946 (ONS,

2012), as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Actual and Predicted UK Population Increase between 1946-2031**

|  | Population Millions | % increase since 1946 |
|---|---|---|
| 1946 | 48.9 | ------------- |
| 1971 | 55.9 | 14% |
| 1981 | 56.4 | 15% |
| 1991 | 57.4 | 17% |
| 2001 | 59.1 | 21% |
| 2011 | 62.6 | 28% |
| 2021 | 67 | 37% |
| 2031 | 70.9 | 45% |

Source: ONS 2012

The main components of the increasing population are a combination of natural

changes (birth minus deaths) and increased net migration (the difference between

people arriving and people leaving).  Over the last 20 years or so, it has been increased net migration which has been the main driver for this changing demographic profile, contributing 54 per cent of the increase to the UK population, although this trend has reversed slightly in more recent years (Cangiano, 2014). The most obvious consequence of this extensive net migration over the last 20 years is that the UK has become more multicultural in terms of its ethnic diversity. In response to this increased net migration, there have been two main policy responses, that of reducing immigration and limiting entitlement to benefits for migrants.  This article will analyse the challenges that the latter of these policy changes in particular pose for practice, both in terms of its application and its theoretical implications.  In terms of practice application, the paper outlines how the limitation of entitlement to welfare benefits on the one hand amplifies already existing issues, and on the other creates new challenges for social welfare practitioners with migrant groups.  In terms of theoretical implications, the paper will outline how these policies reflects a retreat in policy away from multiculturalism towards assimilation, such as in relation to specifying the assimilation of 'Britishness' and 'British values' in daily life. Underpinning this retreat from multiculturalism is a changed citizenship, or more specifically the diminution of social citizenship rights integral to being complete citizens.

**Content of article**

## How multicultural is the UK, and how has this changed over the last 20 years?

At its most basic, the concept of multiculture when applied to society, according to Bloch, Neal and Solomos (2013, p. 13) simply 'describes environments and populations made up of multiple ethnicities'.  From this definition, we can see that the UK has a long and continuous history of being multicultural, due to the waves of immigration that have occurred from other countries to live and settle there over the last 2 centuries.  Perhaps the first great wave of migration to the UK was in the 19$^{th}$ century and the Irish emigration during that country's potato famine, where approximately 1 million people migrated to the UK.  After the Second World War, there was another great wave of migration to the UK when the government actively invited immigrants from its British Empire and the Commonwealth colonies, particularly from Caribbean countries like Jamaica and Barbados, to migrate to the UK to fill labour shortages particularly in hospitals, transport and the railways.  In one sense at least, these post-war recruitment drives were successful as the migrants workers recruited tended to be better qualified than recruits from the local population (Hussein, Stevens and Manthorpe, 2011), especially those in the health sector.  This inevitably impacted in terms of increasing the ethnic diversity and thus multicultural nature of the UK.  These waves of migration lead Wetherall (2008, p. 304) to describe the UK 'as a complex and vibrant multiculture in contrast, for instance, to the much more segregated situation in the United States.'

One way to look at the multi-ethnic nature of the UK now is to compare its

immigrant population with other countries, that is the proportion of the population

who migrated to it.  Graph 1 below compares the immigrant population of EU

countries.

**Graph 1. Immigrants in the Population – EU population**
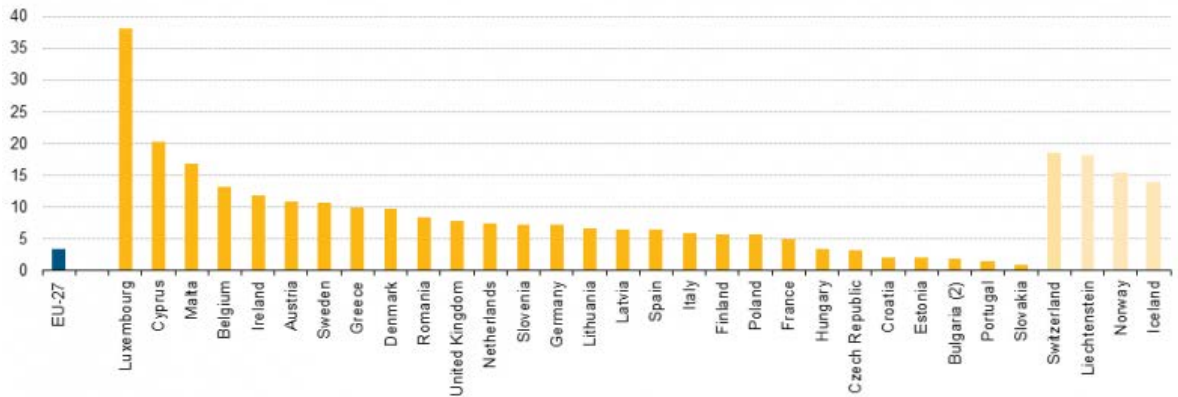


(¹) Data on the number of inhabitants refer to 1 January 2013.
(²) Provisional data.
*Source*: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_imm1ctz and migr_pop1ctz)

Source: (Eurostat, 2013)

Graph 1 shows that the immigrant population of the UK is well above that of the

EU average, and many other EU countries, notable Germany, Spain, Italy and

France.  This shows that we can define the UK as an ethnically diverse

multicultural society in comparison to other EU countries.

Another way we can look at this is to analyse the ethnic groups in the population.

The 2011 *Census of the Population* shows that that while the vast majority of the

population are of White ethnic group (86%), 14% of the population are from other

minority ethnic groups, ranging from African, Caribbean, Pakistani, Bangladeshi,

Indian, Arab, Chinese, and Mixed, according to the 2011 Census (Office for

National Statistics, 2012).  However, the key finding from the 2011 Census was

that over the last two decades, the UK has become more ethnically diverse, with the

White ethnic population decreasing from 94.1 percent in 1991 to 86 percent in

2011.  This means that conversely, the minority ethnic population increased from

5.9 percent to 14 percent, which is a more than doubling over a period of 20 years,

and is a trend that shows an increase in minority ethnic population, and

concomitantly its increasingly multicultural nature.

An important reason for this increased ethnic diversity over the last 20 years has

been a significant increase in net migration to the UK, as shown in Graph 2 below.

**Graph 2. Net Migration to the UK, 1991-2013**
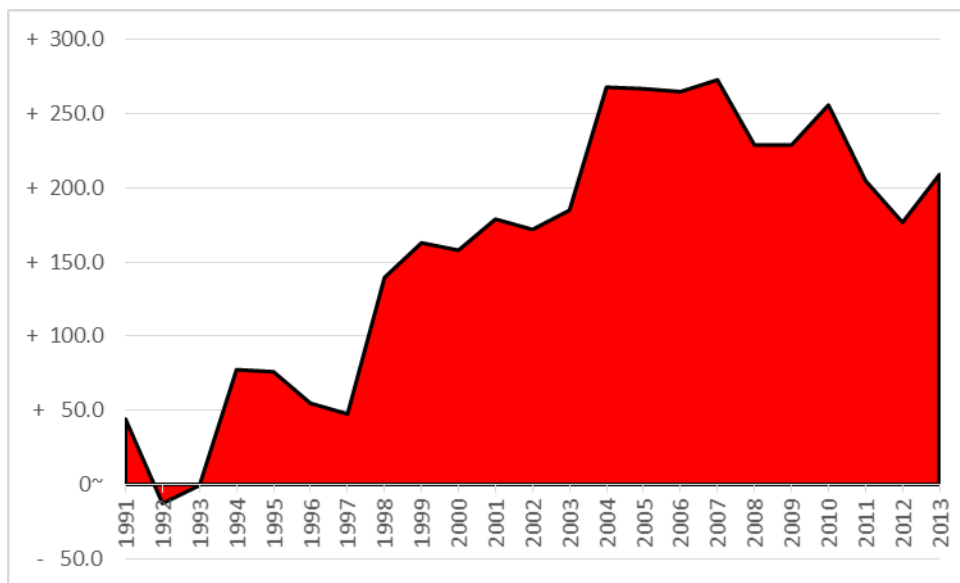
Source: ONS, 2013

As Graph 2 shows, prior to 1997, net migration was at a positive level of around

50,000 people per year. Since 1997 though, net migration has increased

significantly, never being close to the pre-1997 levels, and peaking at 273,000

people per year in 2007.  There have been a number of reasons for this growth

since 1997, including increasing migration from Commonwealth countries,

increasing migration from EU enlargement countries, less emigration from the UK

by British people, increased asylum, and economic migration.  For example,

between 2003-2013, the number of non-UK EU-born citizens in employment in the

UK more than doubled from 762,000 to 1,647,000 (Centre for Economics and

Business Research (CEBR), 2013).  The Eurozone crisis has resulted in many more

people from countries like Italy and Spain seeking a new life in the UK (Slack

2014), and the result of this is that there has been a shift in the UK immigration from predominantly Commonwealth countries to European countries, particularly those in Eastern and Central Europe (Ratcliffe, 2014).  And whereas post-1945 the waves of immigration occurred from fewer places in the world, largely from the former colonies, at present there is smaller waves of immigration from a wider range of places.

This increasing net migration has had an important effect on the multicultural nature of the UK, and has led some to outline the UK's as no longer being defined simply by diversity, but by 'super diversity', wherein the diversity of the UK has a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything it has previously experienced (Vertovec, 2007), and particularly characterised by a multi-ethnic society with high numbers of both white and non-white Britons from many different ethno-cultural backgrounds (Phillips and Webber, 2014).  For example, in one region of Birmingham, which is the second largest city in the UK, 170 countries of origin have been identified as represented among the population (Walters, 2015). Additionally, between 2003-2010, the Polish-born population of the UK increased by nearly half a million people (ONS, 2011).

## What has been the social policy response to this increased multicultural society?

These large increases in net migration in the UK over the last 20 years or so have led to extensive debates about their causes and consequences, and there have been two overarching and linked policy responses, focusing on restricting migration and restricting the benefits paid to migrants.

The focus on restricting such migration is best exemplified by the stance taken by David Cameron before becoming Prime Minister during the 2010 general election campaign, when he outlined reducing net migration to tens of thousands as part of 'contract' with a proviso that 'If we don't deliver our side of the bargain, vote us out in five years' time' (Chorley, 2015). This was repeated and reinforced in 2011 after he subsequently became Prime Minister to a 'no if', no butts' a pledge to reduce migration.  Subsequently, the 2010 Coalition government put in place a number of polices towards this pledge, including:

- Limiting the number of visas available to skilled workers with a job offer, and introducing stricter criteria to determine who is eligible to stay permanently in the UK.

- Closing the visa allowing highly skilled workers to come to the UK without a job offer, but creating some more selective visa provisions for high

skilled/'high value' migrants (such as investors, entrepreneurs and those with 'exceptional talent').

- Amending student visa conditions in order to deter abuse, including by re-introducing visa interviews and limiting international students' rights to work and bring family members to the UK, and subjecting education providers to more demanding requirements.

- Closing the post-study work visa and replacing it with more limited provisions.

- Introducing new family visa eligibility criteria, such as the £18,600 'minimum income' requirement for partner visas, in order to encourage integration and protect public funds.

- Restricting new migrants' entitlements to certain welfare benefits, in an attempt to address some of the perceived 'pull factors' for European immigration

(Gower, 2015:1)

This last factor reflects the second overarching strand of policy responses, that of restricting the benefits paid to migrants to reduce 'pull' factors of benefit tourism to the UK.  Benefit tourism is the claim that large numbers of migrants from the poorest EU countries are attracted to the UK by the offer of more generous state

welfare benefits. It is focussed on the perceived generosity of benefits paid to such new migrants, with a belief that such generosity is an encouragement to further migration, or that migration is economically driven.   This was exemplified, according to Mayblin (2014), in the 1998 *Fairer, Faster and Firmer* White Paper which led to the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, wherein the then Labour government suggested that welfare benefits were acting as an incentive to economic migrants to use the asylum route to enter Britain.  It also suggests that the vast majority of migrants come to UK simply to claim benefits without having made any contribution to the system. Specifically, it presupposes such migrants are an economic drain to the UK welfare system, in that they are more likely to claim benefits that the native born population and so be a drain on the economic system. Benefit tourism is described as occurring especially in the NHS, but also for income maintenance benefits (such as Jobseekers Allowance, Housing Benefit and Child Benefit), and social housing.

A specific policy response to such benefit tourism has been the use of habitual residential status to restrict access to such benefits.  For example, the Localism Act 2012 allowed local authorities to use local connections as a criterion for entitlement to social housing.  This means that even when a migrant family might be more in need, such local connection means that priority can be given to those who are long term residents (Oliver, 2013).  As Jaywerra and Oliver (2013:56) observe, such notions are referenced to 'easing tensions arising from arising from public

perceptions of migrants seen as taking resources away from long standing residents who have greater entitlement.'

In December 2013, in anticipation of the lifting of transitional restrictions on A2 Romanian and Bulgaria nationals, the government introduced several measures focussed on limited the possibility of such benefit tourism.  These included:

- a 'stronger, more robust' Habitual Residence Test for those claiming means-tested benefits.

- requiring people coming to the UK to have been living in the UK for three months before they can claim income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

- EEA jobseekers or former workers having to show that they had a 'genuine prospect of finding work' to continue to get JSA after six months (and if applicable, Housing Benefit, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit).

- a new minimum earnings threshold to help determine whether an EEA national is or was in 'genuine and effective' work, and so has a 'right to reside' as a worker or self-employed person (and with it, entitlement to benefits).

- preventing new EEA  jobseekers from  accessing Housing Benefits even if they are in receipt of JSA.

- new jobseekers arriving in the UK needing to have lived in the UK for three months in order to claim Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

- EEA jobseekers not being able to claim out of work benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance when it is integrated within the new Universal Credit system.

(Kennedy, 2015:1)

It should also be noted that these policy responses have occurred within the context of increasing public anxiety about rising immigration, particularly since the ascension of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU.  For example, prior to the 2015 general election, many opinion polls highlighted immigration as either the primary or secondary concern of British voters (Ipsos MORI 2014; Ipsos Mori 2015), which is an interesting point in the context of the high level of austerity which the UK has undergone.  Moreover, these anxieties about migration focus principally on social policy issues such as low wages, lack of social housing, lack of access to healthcare, schools unprepared to accommodate so many children for whom

English is their second language and a general squeeze on provision and resources for the native population.

This public anxiety also had a significant influence of the David Cameron's pledge to hold an in/out referendum on EU membership should the Conservatives win the general election, which with their subsequent victory means that such a referendum will be held in the next 2 years.  For example, a concomitant specific manifesto pledge from the Conservatives was that EU migrants should not have the right to access in-work benefits for the first four years of being in the UK, effectively meaning that the extension of the Habitual Residence Test for in-work benefits to four years. One possible reason for this policy proposal is that the rate of claiming for tax credits, which is the main in-work benefit, is 8% for migrants from pre—2004 EU members, while it is 18% for post-2004 EU members, which includes Romania (Sumption and Allen 2015).  This policy proposal, then, might reflect the specific aim of limiting this difference in claimants for in-work benefits between older and newer EU countries.

The European migrant crises of 2015, which saw an unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in the EU through mainly Eastern European transit routes and Greece from war-torn countries like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, but also other regions like South East Asia and North Africa, has also had an impact on policy and politics.  On the one hand, it encouraged

many Western European countries to enact an open borders polices for such migrants, albeit for a short time, and even the UK agreed to take an additional amount of refugees from Syria.  On the other hand, it seemed to intensify the belief of EU migration policy as out of control, and may have directly impacted on a toughening of negotiation stance in relation to the Conservatives manifesto commitment to effectively extend the Habitual Residence Test for in-work benefits to 4 years, as way to reassure to the UK population that migrants benefits expenditure was being controlled.  Perhaps not surprisingly, it is Eastern European countries such as Romania, Poland and Bulgaria who are most strongly against this proposal (Wintour, 2015), feeling that it will disproportionately affect their citizens.

## What challenges do these policy responses pose for practice?

From a practice perspective, these policy responses on the one hand amplify already existing issues, and on the other create new challenges for social welfare practitioners with migrant groups.

In particular, Phillimore (2011) defines such actions as the use of welfare as a tool of welfare 'restrictionalism', and identifies a whole range of different measures that have been enacted which exemplify such welfare restrictionalism.  These include:

- the reduction of subsidised English language course for non-native speakers

- the extension of the No Recourse to Public Funds policy from 2 years to 5 years in 2012, which restricts access to many income related, housing and homelessness support for migrants joining families in the UK;

- the enactment of the habitual residence tests;

- the exclusion of unsuccessful asylum seekers from some secondary health care and HIV treatment;

- exclusion of Accession country migrants from some benefits unless they have worked in the UK continuously for twelve months;

- the deliberate complexity of regulations and eligibility to services leading to those unable to prove their status being excluded from services

The key point about such welfare restrictionalism is that it *de facto* sanctifies poor welfare outcomes for migrants and immigrants, through the experiences of high levels of unemployment, poor housing conditions, low levels of educational attainment and poor health outcomes that occurs from such policies (Phillimore, 2011:11).  For example, the policy of limiting subsidised English language courses for non-native speaker's also works against their integration, as the evidence from other countries suggest that this is the most fruitful for integration' (Oliver, 2013a). This is because limiting language skills has a major impact on migrants' ability to speak English and therefore access basic welfare provision such as healthcare, and also to help their children with school work (Oliver, 2013).

Asylum seekers in particular have been one group who have experienced such state sanctioned exclusion of the basic rights that define them as citizens. For example, asylum seekers are not eligible for mainstream welfare benefits whilst waiting for a decision on their asylum application. Instead, the benefits asylum seekers receive are not aligned with mainstream benefits levels for the majority population. As an example, the levels of income maintenance cash benefits provided to some asylum seeker groups is almost half that provided to the native population, despite the fact that such benefits for the latter is provided on the basis that it is the minimum required for a basic standard of living (Kennedy, 2013). This means that those in receipt of such benefits are living well below the poverty line. Additionally, such asylum support rates have not increased since 2011, meaning that their living standard has been falling even further (Gower, 2015). Asylum seekers are also not normally allowed to work unless explicit permission is provided, and their accommodation is limited to that provided by private providers contracted to provide the services on behalf of the Home Office, on a no-choice basis, generally in areas outside of London and the south-east, from a policy of 'dispersal' (Gower, 2015). Here, we can see how such strenuous efforts to minimize social welfare benefits for migrants as something which exacerbates their marginalization.

One specific consequence of this is that when such migrants do work, because they are doing so illegally, they are often subject to experiences of labour market exploitation, such as in relation to low wages, poor conditions and precarious

employment.  Furthermore, such evident marginalized status can and often does lead to exploitation in further areas, such as the sexual exploitation of undocumented women migrant workers (Wilkinson, 2012).  An example of this is the tied visa system introduced by the coalition government in 2012, from which such tied workers are not allowed to leave their employer, or if they do they have to leave the country.  According to Mantouvalou (2015:5), 'the effect of this has been conditions close to 'slavery' for worker, wherein 'the effect of the visa appears to be the creation of an extremely vulnerable workforce that stays in the UK undocumented and fearful, trapped in ongoing cycles of exploitation.'  What this highlights is that the 2010 Coalition government's focus has been on tackling illegal immigrants, not migrant worker exploitation, such as worker rights (Wilkinson, 2012).  This emphasis has been reinforced by the newly elected 2015 Conservative government with the proposal for create an illegal offence of illegal working, and enabling the wages to be seized as the proceeds of crime.

As Boccagni (2015) argues, social welfare practice for a superdiverse population requires an approach imbued with organizational and professional resources. However, one specific consequence of this has been that it has made it harder for welfare professionals and organisation to justify working with such migrant groups. For example, as Walters (2015:9) observes in relation to social housing:

Migration has been brought into the public understanding of the

'problem' of social housing, with Rutter and Latorre (2009)

finding that media reporting of issues around migration and social

housing is setting an unhelpful public agenda. Anti-migration

messages are more prevalent than pro-migration messages and

appeal to a mass media conception of 'common sense' – for

example, that migrants (and by extension, superdiverse

neighbourhoods) put pressure on social housing; that migrants

receive preference in the allocation of social housing; that

migrants commit tenancy fraud by 'borrowing' children from

compatriots.

As Walters further observes, such problematizing, particularly in the context of

austerity, can and has become the basis for community tensions within super

diverse neighbourhoods, particularly from the perception that such migrants are

displacing UK born citizens from provision.  This means that those delivering

services have increasingly had to actively and publically challenge such

misperceptions, in order to justify the services they provide to such groups.

Additionally, due to the complexity of rules and their constantly changing nature,

most time is spent on learning and interpreting such rules, rather than frontline

services delivery (Oliver, 2013a).  It is also relevant to note that this mirrors an

observed wider 'hostile' shift to 'responsibilities rather than rights' for the general

population, not just migrants (Oliver, 2013a). This suggests that the notion that

migration is the cause of the limiting of welfare to the native population is misleading and erroneous.

## What are the theoretical implications of these policy changes?

Until recently, underpinning the multicultural nature of the UK has been a policy of 'state multiculturalism', which emphasised the plurality and complementarity of different cultures, and wherein 'multiculturalism was primarily developed as a policy approach in which one or two different cultures associated with migration were seen as needing to be recognised and understood alongside the majority culture' (Bloch et al, 2013:13). Such multiculturalism emerged from the abandonment in the 1960s of the 'morally repugnant' practices of the policy of assimilation, which created and reinforced hierarchical citizenship in society (Uberoi and Madmood, 2013:130), and 'aimed to manage diversity and produce integrated British citizens' (Ali, 2014:69). Consequently, 'multiculturalism emerged as the dominant approach favoured in the delivery of social policy' (Phillimore, 2011:9).  Examples of policies underpinned by multiculturalism included:

- The allowing of dual or multiple citizenship for those living in the UK.
- The implementation of the 1976 Race Relations Act, which permitted affirmative action for disadvantaged racial groups

- The adoption of equal opportunities and diversity,  policies such as in relation to, race and ethnicity

- Legal protection provided for minority religious practices, such as Sikhs and Jews

- Financial support for ethnic minority organisations and groups, such as the setting up of the Commission for Racial Equality in 1976 (now defunct and replaced with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission)

- The incorporation of multiculturalism in in education curriculum, such as the teaching of faiths rather than religion

- The recognition and observance of non-Christian religions and holidays, food, and dress.

- The explicit adoption of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice frameworks, especially in social work practice.

Kymlica (2012) argues that such multiculturalism had at its heart the development of new models of democratic citizenship, concerned with overcoming deeply entrenched inequalities.  In particular, Kymlica argues that on the one hand, such multiculturalism required the dominant white population to renunciation its claims of superiority and exclusivity which stigmatized and excluded minorities. For example, Somalia-born Mo Farah's victory for Great Britain during the 2012 London Olympics was celebrated a shining example of the possibilities that multiculturalism Britain provided for minorities.  On the other hand, such

multiculturalism was also transformative for marginalized groups in enabling them to 'contest inherited hierarchies', but in a way that both challenged any illiberal exclusion and imposed a duty on them to be inclusive.   An example of this was the emphasis placed on anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory ways of working in social work practice (Boccagni, 2015), and also the public censure and legal proscription of what were previously described as cultural practices, such as specific legislation against female gender mutilation, forced marriage and honour based-killings.

However, such a reading of UK multiculturalism policy has been criticised for its simplistic reading of the aim of multiculturalism as the celebration of static differences.  Firstly, in contrast to the formal declarations in countries such Canada and Australia, in the UK the policy of multiculturalism was  'tacit' rather than explicit, and it tended to focus on living with ethnic and cultural otherness such as the use of multiple language formats and interpreters for services (Bloch et al, 2013).  This also highlights that the notion of multiculturalism has, as Herbert, Datta, Evans, May McIlwaine and Wills (2006) outline, 'divergent discourses', which encapsulates 'weak' to 'strong' forms.  Herbert et al (2006:3) argue that the UK emphasis in policy was on a weak form of multiculturalism which 'failed to go beyond a celebration of diversity, neglecting to tackle the origins of ethnic discrimination and social justice', resulting in, as Ginsburg (2014:404) observes, 'a long and continuing struggle to establish the social rights of the 'new' minority

ethnic groups in the face of direct and institutionalised racism'. An example of this is the marginalisation and discrimination that many migrants experienced, as evidenced in the 1960s from the' Rivers of Blood' speech by Enoch Powell in which he criticised Commonwealth immigration, Norman Tebbits' infamous 'cricket test in the 1980s, and the fact that for many migrants, the creation of ethnic ghettos was a reality (Wetherall, 2008), leading to riots related to race in numerous cities in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.  This mirrors a general critique of multiculturalism as a policy and philosophy that essentialises culture, reifies cultural difference, mask social inequalities among groups, particularly economic inequalities, and toleration of cultural practices which undermine rights (Howarth and Andreouli, 2012).  In this context, the result of polices within this form of multiculturalism was largely superficial, in that engendering systemic change in the living circumstances of those who it sought to affect was not its primary intention, or outcome (Triandafyllidou, 2012).

Perhaps more significantly, whereas the emphasis in policy on multiculturalism was tacit, the problematizing of multiculturalism has been explicit and sustained. For example, in the aftermath of the 9/11 in the USA and 7/7 terrorist attacks, the Prime Minister David Cameron in a speech in 2011 specifically blamed such acts on state multiculturalism for the minority ethnic few who failed to become properly British and so feel a need to commit such acts (Ali, 2014).  The speech declared state multiculturalism as 'a wrong-headed doctrine that has had disastrous results'

such as fostering division by allowing different cultures to live separate lives

(BBC, 2011).  Consequently, 'failed' multiculturalism stands accused of causing

socioeconomic failure, residential segregation and the production of home-grown

terrorists (Lewis and Craig: 2014:22).  Subsequently, there have been a number of

policy pronouncements rejecting state multiculturalism, 'leaving many of those

strongly supporting multiculturalist policy frameworks feeling profoundly under

siege' (Craig, 2014:381).  As a consequence, it is somewhat ironic that just as the

UK has become so much more multicultural, so the policy of multiculturalism has

come to be seen as the cause of major problems in the UK (Uberi and Modmood,

2013).

The most evident example of this is the claim that state multiculturalism is dead,

and that assimilation should now be the policy focus (Ali, 2014).  In contrast to

multiculturalism, assimilation refers to where migrants are expected to abandon

their ethnic identity to adopt a new national identity (Kymlica, 2012).  The

ascription of the existence of such values exists at both the surface level, such as in

terms of going to the pub, or more deeply, as espoused by Prime Minister David

Cameron (2014), in terms of the belief of freedom, tolerance of others, accepting

personal and social responsibility and respecting and upholding the rule of law.

This means that, as Sunak and Rajeswaran (2014:33) observe, 'the idea of

'Britishness' and ethnic minority groups' identification with it has often been used

as a way in which we can assess the success of integration of ethnic minorities into

UK society.'  This means that the imprecise, unstable and blurred cultural boundaries of multiculturalism have become the precise, stable and clear cultural markers of assimilation, as defined by the state (Berkeley, 2014).  It terms of citizenship, it means that the question of what it means to be a citizen privileges integration above diversity, and posits such integration as the solution to the potential threats to social and community cohesion (Cheong et al, 2007).  Thus the failure of assimilation rests with the individual, not with the government, as the notion of individual failure is a key idea which continues to be reflected within much government policy (Walters, 2015).  An oft cited example of this is in relation to social housing, where the claim exists that in some areas, large numbers of mono-ethnic individuals and families have displaced UK-born social housing tenants, to create mono-ethnic cultural enclaves which serve to increase both the insularity of ethnic groups and ethnic division and community tensions with the displaced native population (Walters, 2015).

This highlights that within this emphasis on integration in policy is typically focussed on self-segregation by groups or individuals, an operationalization which clearly locates the onus for assimilation, or lack of it, on the individual.  This is perhaps not surprising when you consider that, as Olssen (2004:179) outlines, 'The neoliberal conception, like the classical liberal parent, conceives citizenship as promoting a self-regarding individual who promotes their own interests in their own way without infringing (i.e. harming) the rights or interests of others… which

would be limited to protecting the individual from the intrusions of the state or from others'. In particular, following Nyland (2006: 29), this reflects an assimilationist model of cultural diversity, which reinforces the 'hegemony of whiteness' as the 'invisible norm by which other ethnicities are judged'. An exemplar policy of this type has been the requirement to pass a 'Life in the UK' citizenship test and undergo citizenship ceremonies for those migrants wishing to become naturalised British citizens. However, the fact that a significant majority of British people fail the 'Life in the UK' citizenship test itself (Channel 4, 2012) highlights that reliance on such a tool as a marker of citizenship eligibility is very precarious, and 'unfit for purpose (Brooks, 2015). More significantly, there has been very limited focus on anti-discrimination law as a policy response to ensuring greater levels of integration (Malik, 2014). Instead, the exhortation to assimilate to such 'British values' comes with the inherent implication that not only do many, if not all, new migrants not hold such values, and so need to be incalculated with them, which is not necessarily the case (Sunak and Rajeswaran, 2014), but also that existing minority communities are not integrated enough, and are equated with 'trouble (Berkeley, 2014), despite the fact that as Sunak and Rajeswaran (2014:34) observe, '…minorities express strong British identities – stronger in fact than the White majority, and that these increase across generations'.

Moreover, its implicit focus on self-segregation ignores the contradictory barriers that exist in, for instance, the labour market, which work against the integration of both new and long established migrants (Herbert et al, 2006). For example, as

Anderson and Ruhs (2012) observe, a significant factor in the increase in migrant labour force is the demand from employers for cheap labour, as reflected in employers' common claims that migrants have a superior 'work ethic' and 'attitude', especially when comparing relatively new arrivals to native foreign-born people more generally.  This is a factor which works against not only the integration of the existing migrant population through the low wages that it provides, but also against the integration of established migrants through their effective exclusion from the labour market.  This suggests that rather than self-segregation, it is exclusion by others which works against the integration of established migrants.

An example of this is the use of residential status as a defining criterion for accessing welfare provision, particularly for income maintenance benefits, as this has limited migrants' 'right to share in the full heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society' (Olssen, 2004:179), as the restriction of access to welfare benefits paid to migrants demarcates no such privileges, as these are reserved for those deemed to be full citizens.  Rather, it means that state sanctioned welfare status diminution, and therefore status diminution to that of second class, of those legally entitled to be residing in the country.  Following Ginsburg (2014:408), we can define this as institutional racism, in the sense that people of distinct ethnic differences are treated adversely by the state compared to the native population, which has the

impact of making such ethic groups feel permanently insecure and of second class status. In the classic Marshallian sense of citizenship, we can define those subject to such policy as incomplete citizens, as they lack the social rights integral to them being complete citizens. The irony should not be lost that here is an example of policy developed from the claim that state sanctioned multiculturalism has been a cause of minority ethnic people failing to properly integrate into British life is actually leading to state sanctioned exclusion of the basic rights that define people as citizens.

**Conclusions**

This paper has analysed the impact on welfare practice and theory of policy responses to an increasingly multicultural society in the UK. It has outlined the increasingly multicultural nature of UK society, principally as a result of increased net migration. The two main policy responses to this increased net migration have been reducing immigration and limiting entitlement to welfare benefits for migrants. It is the latter of these that has been the focus of this article, as restricting the benefits paid to migrants to reduce 'pull' factors of benefit tourism to the UK has been an overarching theme of policy, especially in response to the lifting of transitional restrictions on A2 Romanian and Bulgaria nationals, and the government introduced several measures focussed on limited the possibility of such benefit tourism.

The paper has shown that from a practice perspective, such policy responses on the one hand have amplified already existing issues, and on the other have created new challenges for social welfare practitioners with migrant groups.  For example, the policy of limiting subsidised English language courses for non-native speaker's works against their integration, by restricting their ability to speak English and therefore access basic welfare provision such as healthcare, and also to help their children with school work.  This means that such policy *de facto* sanctifies poor welfare outcomes for migrants and immigrants.  Similarly, the 2010 Coalition government's focus on tackling illegal immigrants and not migrant worker exploitation means that when such migrants do work, because they are doing so illegally, they are often subject to experiences of labour market exploitation, such as in relation to low wages, poor conditions and precarious employment.  Policy has also made it harder for welfare professionals and organisation to justify working with such migrant groups, and such problematizing, particularly in the context of austerity, can and has become the basis for community tensions within super diverse neighbourhoods, particularly from the perception that such migrants are displacing UK born citizens from social welfare provision.

From a theoretical perspective, there has been the deliberate withering of implicit multiculturalism, notwithstanding its attendant limitations, towards explicit assimilation.  This is evident in a number of policy pronouncements rejecting state multiculturalism, meaning that it is somewhat ironic that just as the UK has

become so much more multicultural, so the policy of multiculturalism has come to

be seen as the cause of major problems in the UK.  Furthermore, it means that the

question of what it means to be a citizen privileges integration above diversity, and

any failure of assimilation rests with the individual.  An exemplar policy of this

type has been the requirement to pass a 'Life in the UK' citizenship test and

undergo citizenship ceremonies for those migrants wishing to become naturalised

British citizens.  However, this implicit focus on self-segregation ignores the

contradictory barriers that exist in, for instance, the labour market, which work

against the integration of both new and long established migrants.  The irony

should not be lost that here is an example of policy developed from the claim that

state sanctioned multiculturalism has been a cause of minority ethnic people failing

to properly integrate into British life is actually leading to state sanctioned

exclusion of the basic rights that define people as citizens.

**Notes**

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