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# **To promote, or not to promote Fundamental British values? – Teachers' Standards, diversity and teacher education.**

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**Abstract**

In this article we seek to problematize the presence of the requirement within the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012), that they “should not undermine fundamental British values” in the context of initial teacher education in England. The inclusion of this statement within the Teachers’ code of conduct has made its way from the counter-terrorism strategy, Prevent and raises questions about Britishness, values and the relationship between the State and the profession more generally. We argue that the inclusion of the phrase within a statutory document that regulates the profession is de facto a politicization of the profession by the State thereby instilling the expectation that teachers are State instruments of surveillance. The absence of any wider debate around the inclusion of the statement is also problematic as is the lack of training for pre-service and inservice teachers since it means this concept of fundamental British values is unchallenged and its insidious racialising implications are unrecognized by most teachers.

**Keywords** : Britishness, fundamental British values, Teachers' Standards, identity

**Introduction**

This paper arises from critical research initiated in 2012 on the revised English Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012). In a section entitled ‘Personal and Professional Conduct’, the Standards stipulate that teachers should not undermine fundamental British values (FBV). These are delineated as ‘democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’ (DfE, 2012, 10). On the introduction of these Standards the paragraph related to fundamental British values seemed to pass by unnoticed by most professionals. There was little immediate discussion evident in the media, schools or teacher education institutions about this aspect.

In Britain, the 7/7 bombings in London prompted questions from government and the media about the nature of multicultural Britain (BBC 2011). The bombers were not foreign terrorists but so called 'home grown' terrorists.

The events unfolding in Spring 2014, in schools in Birmingham and the media coverage of the so called Trojan Horse Affair, where six schools in Birmingham were re-inspected and down-graded as a result of as yet unfounded stories that Muslim fundamentalists were influencing the governing body of the schools, brought the role of schools and teachers in the prevention of extremism and radicalisation into sharp focus. Later in 2015 the coverage of Mohammed Emwazi, so called 'Jihadi John', the executioner for Islamic State (IS) and the flight of three young Muslim women to Syria to join IS, has led to an in-depth governmental examination of the role of the schools attended by these young people and served to underscore how schools and teachers can play a part in countering the radicalization of certain members of the school population, namely young Muslim men and women. In the latter two cases the media coverage included shots of the school signs and in the case of Emwazi, the headteacher was asked to make a statement about his time at the school (Casciani, 2015). The implication being that schools and teachers appear to be accountable for, or at least, could have prevented, the actions of these young people.

The former UK Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, stated that the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012) were not merely a revision or updating but an initiative designed to be used by headteachers in performance management and induction (Gove, 2011).

The distinctive features of these Standards and their intersection with values and teacher professionalism foregrounds the research in this paper. The DfE Ofsted School

Inspection Handbook (DfE 2015) states that school leaders are now *actively* required to promote FBVs rather than 'not undermine them' as stated in the Standards (DfE 2012, 41). Similarly the DfE (2014, 4-5) publication 'Promoting Fundamental British Values in Social Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Education (SMSC) requires headteachers on the one hand to help pupils 'distinguish' the difference between 'right' and 'wrong', while on the other hand acknowledging that, 'different people may hold different views about what is 'right' and 'wrong' (DfE 2014, 4). The main thrust of DfE guidance encourages headteachers to actively promote British values, British law and discourage adherence to religious law where it conflicts with the law of the land although it appears as a totalising discourse of civic nationalism that presents itself as willing to accommodate difference and plurality.

The imposition of the term FBV within the Standards, the follow-up with the guidance on SMSC and now the inclusion of the expectation that teachers will promote FBV within the regulatory framework serves to illustrate how the role of the teacher has been conceived and imposed with respect to FBV and counter-terrorism within a vacuum devoid of professional dialogue. There is an implicit assumption that pre- and inservice teachers will know how to promote such values and indeed be able to articulate them clearly to children and young people without seeming to indoctrinate or promoting jingoism in schools and classrooms.

Teachers' work has in recent years been articulated in terms of competencies that are observable. The emphasis on values in the new Standards requires teachers to be assessed through the quality of the ideological nature of their relationships with pupils and school. The requirement 'not to undermine fundamental British values' (DfE, 2012) is based on a Home Office document that is founded on particular ethnic and religious

assumptions about national identity and religion and brings to the discourse on standards new questions about the relationship between the State, teacher education, teacher identity and performance. It is this new discourse of civic nationalism (Jerome & Clementshaw, 2012) that is the focus of this inquiry. Whilst important and salient to the debate there is insufficient space within this article to discuss issues of identity.

### **Literature Review**

In her analysis of the 2012 Teachers Standards Smith argues that they operate to maintain a status quo where homogeneity is overtly approved through an assimilationist agenda (Smith, 2012). A review of the discourses on Britishness and education, the role of the Standards and lastly issues of diversity and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) suggest the conceptualisation of Britishness as enacted through the 2012 Standards is one which problematises and stigmatises difference. This section will examine recent developments in this area and argue that current policy seeks not only to eradicate 'signs of racial and cultural difference' (Smith, 2012, 17) but undermines teachers' capacity to critically engage with this process (Sian, 2013; Bryan, 2012).

Historically notions of nationalism and Britishness have been less explicit in UK education than in many other Western nations (Kerr, 1999). This is often attributed to the belief that British identity was 'taken for granted' (Heath and Roberts, 2008) and the assumption that immigrants would assimilate into the superior dominant culture (Grosvenor, 1997). While post-war discussions on Britishness are characterised by repeated themes of loss, vulnerability (Aughey, 2007; Ware, 2007; Hayton, English and Kenny, 2009) and often reflect instability and lack of consensus about the role and nature of values in society (Wolton, 2006).

The conventional narrative of Britishness and diversity is one of a linear progression from assimilation in the 1950's , integration in the mid 1960s and multiculturalism since the 1970s (Tomlinson, 2008). It is also significant that previous discourses of Britishness did not explicitly reference the terrorist threats generated by Irish nationalists in the 70s, 80s and 90s. (Sian, 2013). However the events of 7/7 not only brought discussions about Britishness to the fore, with the realisation that the bombers were British, but also prompted a review of diversity and citizenship, especially in relation to Muslims (Sears, Davies and Reid, 2011). Current discourses of Britishness rest on a conceptualisation of difference as problematic (Shain, 2013). Underpinning the promotion of Britishness is the assumption that the shared values of Britishness are synonymous with a strong society and that society is weaker where different values exist (Kundnani, 2007; Meer and Modood, 2009). The notion of Britishness promoted within the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012) is a discourse of Britishness that associates difference with dissent and dissent with fragmentation and an absence of unity (Ware, 2007; Garner, 2012).

It is this model of Britishness, fearful of strangers, under siege and unsure of itself that informs the approach of the Prevent strategy to education and the community cohesion agenda developed under the last Labour Government (Home Office Prevent 2011). Schooling has become a major focus of debates about Britishness (Andrews and Mycock, 2006), alternatively blamed for failing to promote a robust and unashamed British identity or heralded as the mechanism by which a new and invigorated national identity can be transmitted to the next generation (Jerome and Clemitshaw, 2012). This narrative is

often played out in politicised discussions of the role of history and the development of Citizenship Education (Osler, 2009).

However more recent debates focus on the inability of schools to prevent external threats to Britishness and British values. Former Prime Minister, currently United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, called for the country to celebrate its national identity in 2006 in the context of the nation's failure to integrate different communities (BBC 2006). In the summer of 2014 in the wake of debates about Muslims attempting to promulgate Islamic values in schools in Birmingham, David Cameron, the current Prime Minister, urged people to 'stop being bashful' about Britishness and to be 'more muscular' in our Britishness (Duggan, 2014). He also explicitly attacked liberal multiculturalist agendas in education and social policy, creating a parody of multiculturalism (straw man) and then attacked it, thus underscoring the explicitly political nature of his narrative.

However the teaching of Britishness is problematic for many pupils (Maylor, 2010) and teachers (Keddie, 2014). Some teachers are uncomfortable with the political project implied in a Britishness agenda (Jerome and Clemitshaw, 2012) and others conceptualise it as an area best approached as a controversial issue (Hand and Pearce, 2009). The requirement in the 2012 Standards for Teachers to 'not undermine fundamental British values' means that teachers must engage with Britishness within a particular professional and political landscape and that the nature of the Standards themselves contextualise this landscape.

The standards discourse has always been about the nature of performance in schools ever since the Callaghan, (former prime Minister), speech in 1976. In many ways the



current standards exist on a continuum from their original form. They dictate the boundaries of teacher roles, redefining but simultaneously fragmenting their professionalism (Leaton Gray and Whitty, 2010) by reformulating the teacher as performative technician whilst diminishing autonomy (Ryan and Bourke, 2013). However the Standards for Teachers published in 2012 represent a significant shift in relation to issues of equality and Britishness. In his review of the Standards of 2007, Evans noted that they are 'lopsided' because they focus on teacher behaviour in schools rather than on attitudes (Evans, 2011). But in her analysis of the 2012 Teacher Standards Bryan argues that with their explicit reference to 'fundamental British values' the new standards require a level of moral complicity with the standards discourse (Bryan, 2012). They assume a consensus with a political model of Britishness that is rooted in values that exclude, and which identify difference as problematic (Keddie, 2014; Modood, 1992). Both sets of Standards are performative but while the 2007 version insists on behavioural compliance, the current standards, in collapsing the distinction between professional and personal morality, insist on a homogeneity not only in teacher practice but in their values as well (Bryan and Revell, 2011).

The 2012 Standards for Teachers, with their emphasis on the 'obligatory verb' with every bullet point, represent a qualitatively new conceptualisation of the relationship between race, ethnicity and teacher professionalism (Smith, 2012). The combination of a public discourse on Britishness that is belligerent, backward looking and fearful, with the introduction of standards for teachers that are explicitly assimilationist and prescriptive creates an environment where teacher opposition to the model of Britishness implied in the standards could compromise them professionally. There is no research on the extent of teacher compliance with the requirements not to undermine fundamen-

tal British values or the way that teachers understand their professional role in the context of the new standards. However, there is substantial evidence that the training of teachers in England neither prepares student teachers to engage with difference, counter racism or inequality in the classroom (Mirza and Meeto, 2012), understand their racial or ethnic positions in relation to the curriculum (Lander, 2011) or that it effectively supports the recruitment and training of teachers from BME backgrounds (Carlington et al, 1999; Basit *et al*, 2006). The training and education of teachers does not consistently provide opportunities for student teachers to problematize and explore the interplay between race, values, Britishness etc. in relation to their own professionalism and as such teachers are unable and unprepared to critically engage with these issues (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014). Keddie (2014) notes that the teacher participants in her research reflected a narrow conception of Britishness associated with symbols and their adoption as a sign of great cohesion or assimilation. The conception of Britishness associated with social cohesion establishes a racialized polarization in terms of who is and is not British enough based on how well they have assimilated with reference to British symbols, history and lifestyle. It does not provide sufficient space for the 'broadening of how Britishness is conceptualised' (Keddie 2014, 533) nor an appreciation of other ways to be British. It could be argued that the articulation of Britishness or the labelling of values as 'fundamental British values' is an attempt to retreat to the other end of the scale from the notion of multiculturalism, to reassert an assimilationist agenda and indeed to re-centre whiteness rather than to develop a collective understanding of, and belonging to the 'right kind of multiculturalism' (Keddie 2014, p. 553). In addition it seeks to 'prevent' any serious critical debate about foreign policy failures in predominantly Muslim countries (Kundnani 2007).

The broader impact of the standards and the wider Prevent agenda on teachers' roles are rooted not only in the standards themselves but in the racialised and performative context in which the Standards exist. The 2012 Teachers' Standards are unclear about what teachers must do although the link between the Standards and appraisal means that headteachers will eventually have to address the question of what actually constitutes 'undermining fundamental British values' (Bryan and Revell, 2011). Many schools now insist that teachers undertake training to develop their awareness of radicalisation but the question of training in this is problematic (O'Donnell, 2015).

Recent policy has created an environment in which teachers are now accountable for the agendas of national security and anti-terrorism and where Ofsted believes it is at liberty to police school's interpretation of what constitutes fundamental British values, often with tragic consequences for example the 'Trojan Horse' affair (Arthur, 2015). Education has become a conduit through which the intersection of counter terrorism and the Standards have resulted in the expectation that teachers will pursue and enforce a racialized security agenda (Gearon, 2015).

There is a broad consensus that awareness and engagement with issues of diversity, race and inequality are addressed effectively when they are addressed explicitly as part of a teacher's training or professional development and when teachers critically examine their own roles (Nieto, 2000; Goodwin, 2001; Asher, 2003; Pollock *et al*, 2010). The critical and reflexive voice of teachers is undermined by the 2012 standards and by a discourse on Britishness that is assimilationist and fearful of difference (Keddie 2012).

## **Research Methods**

This project originated from discussions between colleagues who attended a BERA (British Educational Research Association) day conference organised by the 'Race, Eth-

nicity and Education' and the 'Religious and Moral Education' special interest groups (SIG) on fundamental British Values. This research represents a collaboration between four English new universities one in the North-West, one in London and two in the South-East. The five researchers worked within an interpretivist paradigm (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) to investigate the perceptions of current and intending teachers, undertaking interviews with in service teachers and senior leaders in both primary and secondary schools in the vicinity of the four universities mentioned above. This paper draws predominantly on the data from an online qualitative questionnaire completed by student teachers at each of the four universities. We were interested in how participants constructed their 'own meanings' (Arthur *et al*, 2012) about fundamental British values. Ethical clearance was gained from each institution and the research team adhered to ethical principles throughout the process including questionnaire design, analysis and presentation of data with an acknowledgement of researcher biases and authentic presentation of student voice (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013, 332, Denscombe 2014).

The project took place in two stages. First we undertook interviews, lasting approximately 30 minutes, with twenty teachers including senior leaders. Selection of teachers was made by each lecturer and while not claiming to be representative, we endeavoured to include a cross section of the teaching workforce in our sample. The majority of interviewees worked in primary schools with some secondary school participants. The interviews drew on questions developed by Farid Panjwani's (2012) presentation at the BERA Race, Ethnicity and Education and the Religious and Moral Education special interest group (SIG) event in 2012. The questions focused on teachers' understanding of the relationship between the Standards, values and professionalism as well as their interpretation of Britishness and 'fundamental British values'. Data from these in-

interviews informed the creation of an online questionnaire for student teachers designed to capture their expectations of the standards and the way values would inform their role as teachers.

Around four hundred and fifty final year undergraduate and postgraduate student teachers from both primary and secondary pre-service teachers from each of the four universities were invited to complete the online questionnaire. While acknowledging the response rate was low (only eighty-eight student teachers completed the questionnaire as many were not checking e mail whilst on school placement) we did not consider this as problematic given the geographical spread of the sample. Two-thirds of the sample were primary the rest secondary pre-service teachers and 66% identified as female. Only 14% identified their course of study, and only a handful of students chose to describe their ethnicity and or religion and so we could not always make links between their views and background. Response rates varied between the universities (between 10% and 45% of the total invited to participate) and while not claiming to be a representative sample nevertheless we judged the responses to be a valuable snap shot of a range of perspectives from a small sample of intending teachers, because within the interpretivist paradigm generalisation is neither desirable nor possible (Denscombe 2014). After each respondents' comments is listed their self designated characteristics, if they chose to describe these, e.g. British White, female, undergraduate, some respondents also mentioned their religion while many did not. The data analysis consisted of 'key word analysis' and 'constant comparison' to develop themes (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013, 435-8). Questionnaire participants' qualitative answers were grouped under thematic headings by members of the research team, see figures 1 to 4 below which itemise the grouped responses.

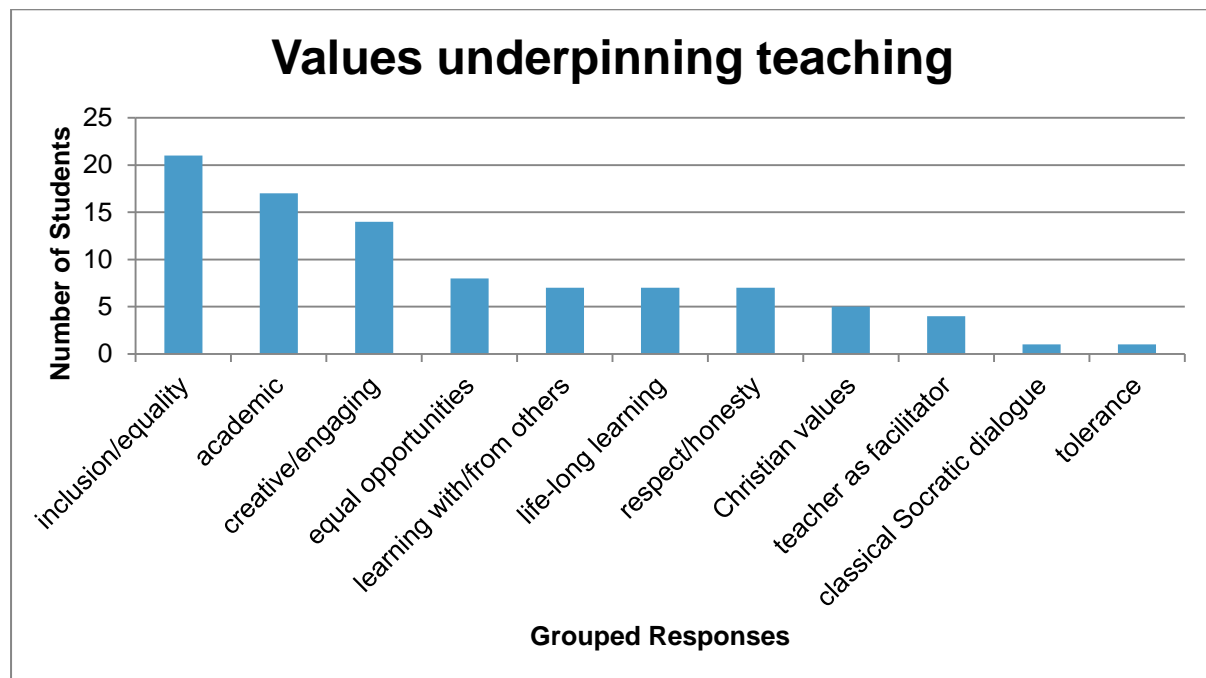
## Research findings

In this article we focus predominantly on student teachers' understanding of what constitutes Britishness and their understanding of why the FBV requirement is included in the Standards that regulate their profession. Data from the online questionnaire were categorized by the research team and key findings from the analysis of the questionnaire are presented below.

### *Values underpinning teaching*

When asked about the values which embody their approach to teaching, 45 % (N=41) of student teachers included some reference to inclusive practice, equality for all, multicultural education, respect and learning from each other. The remaining students referred to their Christian faith, the role of the teacher as facilitator or Socratic dialogue as values underpinning their teaching (see ' figure 1).

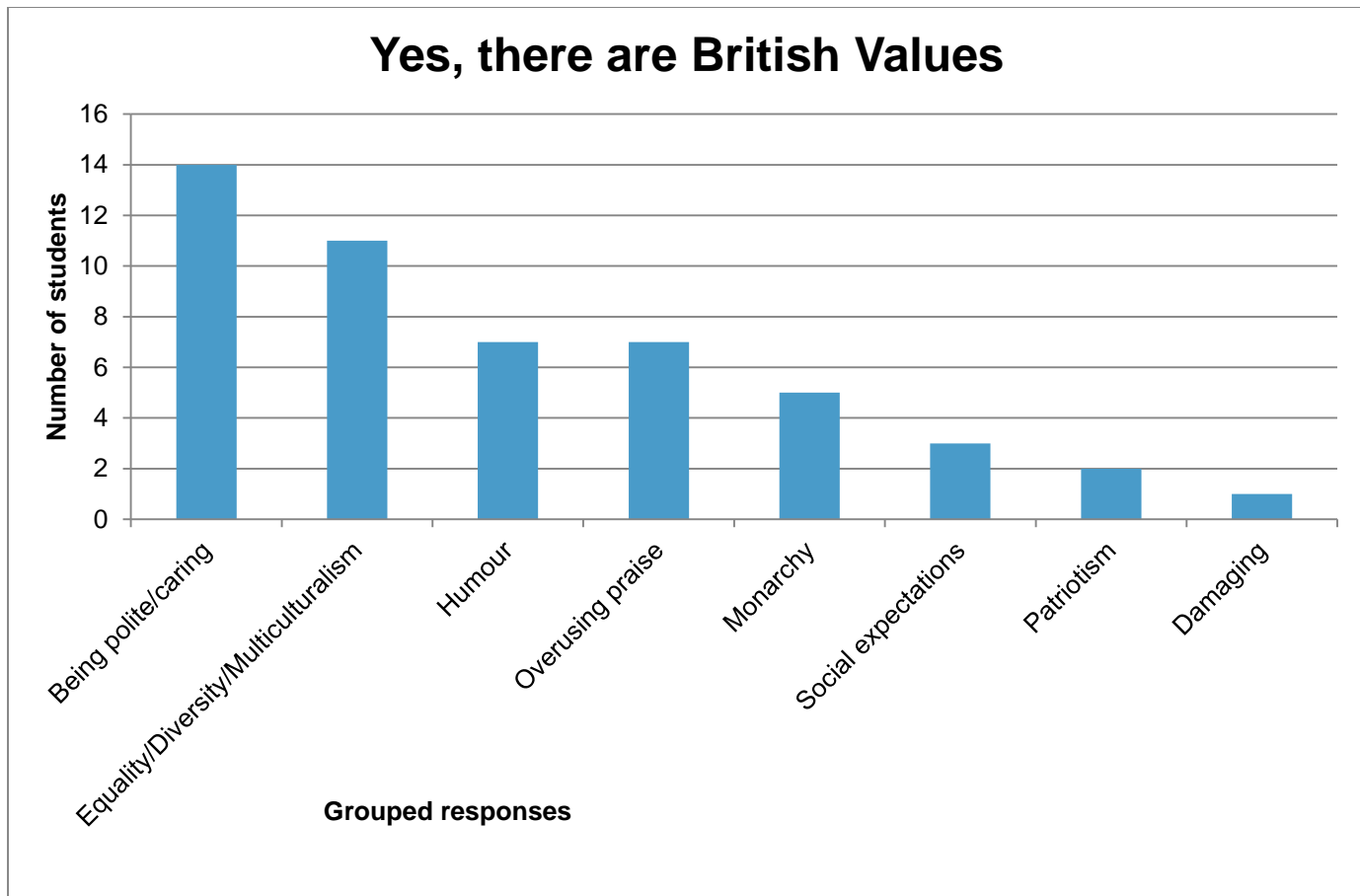
Figure 1 Values underpinning teaching



*Specifically British values*

53% (N=46) thought there were particular values associated with being British, (Figure 2), whilst 47% (N=40) did not, (Figure 3). The 47% negative answers included respondents who acknowledged in their qualitative comments that they did not know if there are values associated with being British. Many of these responses referred to what could be described as trivial, superficial, naive and 'tokenistic' values such as being polite, queuing, caring for animals, (see Figure 2). However some responses, while demonstrating a more reflective stance, were nevertheless positing a stereotypical understanding of Britishness. Over a third of the 45% of respondents who said, 'yes there are values associated with being British' (Figure 2), made comments about equality and diversity.

Figure 2 Affirmative answers - there are specific values associated with being British.



In qualifying their affirmative response the following statement was provided by one, white, female, primary student teacher, “Supporting the Royal Family and the events, the Queen’s time on the throne”. A small minority of the respondents (5 of the 88) drew on typical symbols of Britishness in a way that was unmediated. Some of these could be interpreted as symbolising patriotism, such as, “St George’s Flag, Royal Family and community” and others reflected a tone of superiority and condescension, for example, “Respecting the Monarchy i.e. Queen, Prince, Princesses etc and the religion she follows. That we live in a democratic society where everyone has an opinion. I feel this is very British. That we sing the national anthem.” (Female, primary student teacher, Anglican)

*Politeness as a British value*



One female, white respondent noted, “Being conservative and polite” was a British value. Indeed, over 25% of respondents drew on the notion of politeness being a British value, Figure 2. They noted types of behaviour and they contextualized politeness as an attitude towards different groups. These responses were on a spectrum ranging from monarchy to respect for difference. For example, “One stereotypical action associated with being British is the action of queuing, so I think that being polite may be one of them, and in most situations I try to be as polite as possible.” (Female, primary student teacher, ‘White British and an agnostic / infrequently practising Christian’)

Some of the respondents drew on a notion of politeness and fairness that was linked to tolerance whilst others talked about politeness which was linked “to ourselves and others” (female, white). However some notions of politeness drew on a nostalgic and as Gilroy (2004) terms it a postcolonial melancholia linked to a sense of Britishness.

However, in contrast, over a third of the affirmative answers, referred to values related to equality, diversity or multiculturalism, they alluded to the multicultural nature of Britain; they saw the uniqueness of a British multiculturalism.

While agreeing that there were specific British values, a female, primary student who defined herself as “not at all religious” considered such values as possibly damaging and not worthy of promoting “...drinking tea and complaining. Although I would say that they are not something that need to be specifically taught to children as they might not be good things”.

Some responses alluded to a bifurcated notion of Britishness, for example through the repeated use of the word ‘our’ in relation to British values could be interpreted as encapsulating a bounded and essentialised understanding of Britishness: “ The fact that people who live here should love Britain and promote **our** key ethics, such as freedom.

Any person living in our great country, whatever race or creed, should love the country and live by **our** laws.” (Primary male, declined to identify course or religion)

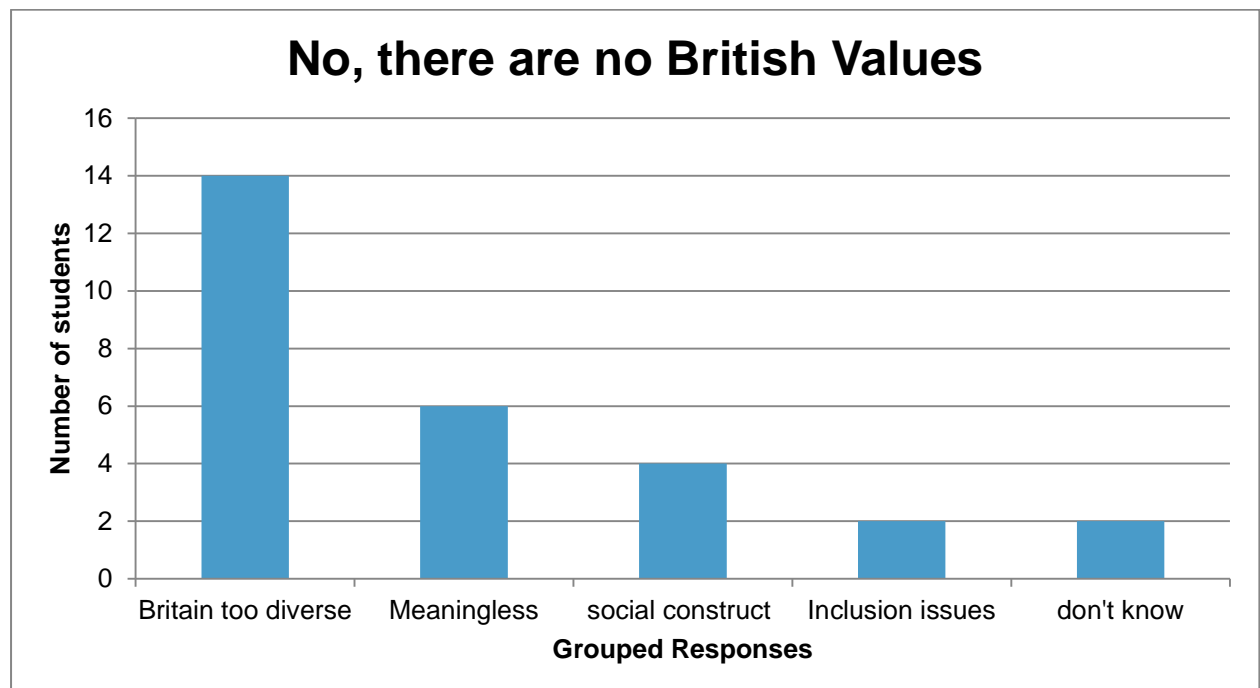
Other students alluded to the multicultural nature of Britain. They saw the uniqueness of a British multiculturalism. Very few respondents who stated there are no British values had a vision of multiculturalism that was fully pluralistic as the following quotation demonstrates, “Historically their (sic) may have been values that were British (sic), but now with more developing countries I believe we all long to have the same values”.

(Secondary postgraduate, White British).

### *There are no British values*

Of the 47% (N=40) who said there were no British values thirty students provided qualitative explanations as exemplified in figure 3.

Figure 3 Negative answers – there are no values which are specifically British and don’t know



These 30 responses from student teachers who questioned whether there were particular British values, include the following: “I see values as a personal belief and being British does not come into it”. (Female, White, primary PGCE); “It brings the question forwards of what is British? With such a diverse culture, there is no particular value associated with being British that I can see.” (Female White, secondary PGCE). “Britain is a truly diverse society and I fear that diversity is not reflected in Government policy. What we need in this country is a debate about British values in which everyone is involved so we can decide ourselves rather than being told what they are by the elite and the Church”. (Female, White, primary, undergraduate).

There was a difference in the tone of some responses depending on the institution the respondents were from. Eight students from one of the institutions seemed markedly more aware of the underlying political message inherent in the Standards and some of these students said they had attended the BERA (British Education Research Association) SIGs’ conference which, “discussed this very matter so I am aware that the addition of ‘fundamental British values’ in the new teaching standards was a result of the Home Office Prevent strategy for counter terrorism” (Female, primary). Students from the same university referred to a lead lecture which unpacked issues of diversity and fundamental British values and they claimed that it is meaningless and not helpful to try and identify British values, “I don’t personally believe it is possible to identify British people as having specific values, as ‘British’ is an umbrella term for many different classes, communities and sub-cultures that reside within Britain. Each will hold their own values, but I doubt they are formed BECAUSE a person is ‘British’, more likely they are formed because of the location, community, opportunities and experiences that have been available to a British person’s lifestyle”. (Female, White, primary undergraduate)

We would argue that the views of students who had either attended the BERA SIG conference or had opportunities to debate issues contrasted starkly with some others who seemed ignorant of why their view might be exclusionary or problematic and these students could be described as the unreflexive subjects of neoliberal education policy. Of the respondents who said they had experienced professional development most did not agree that there are particular values associated with being British, (Figure 3), one student described the term to be a 'social construct' differing from person to person,

“The phrase ‘promote British values’ is ridiculous!.... Britain is constantly changing and evolving.....even generally accepted values change to incorporate the changing landscape/mix of people/political agenda of a particular time. If you asked someone what were ‘British’ values, their response would be different to the next person. If you asked the same person in 20 years’ time, their answer would most likely be different again” (Female, White primary, undergraduate).

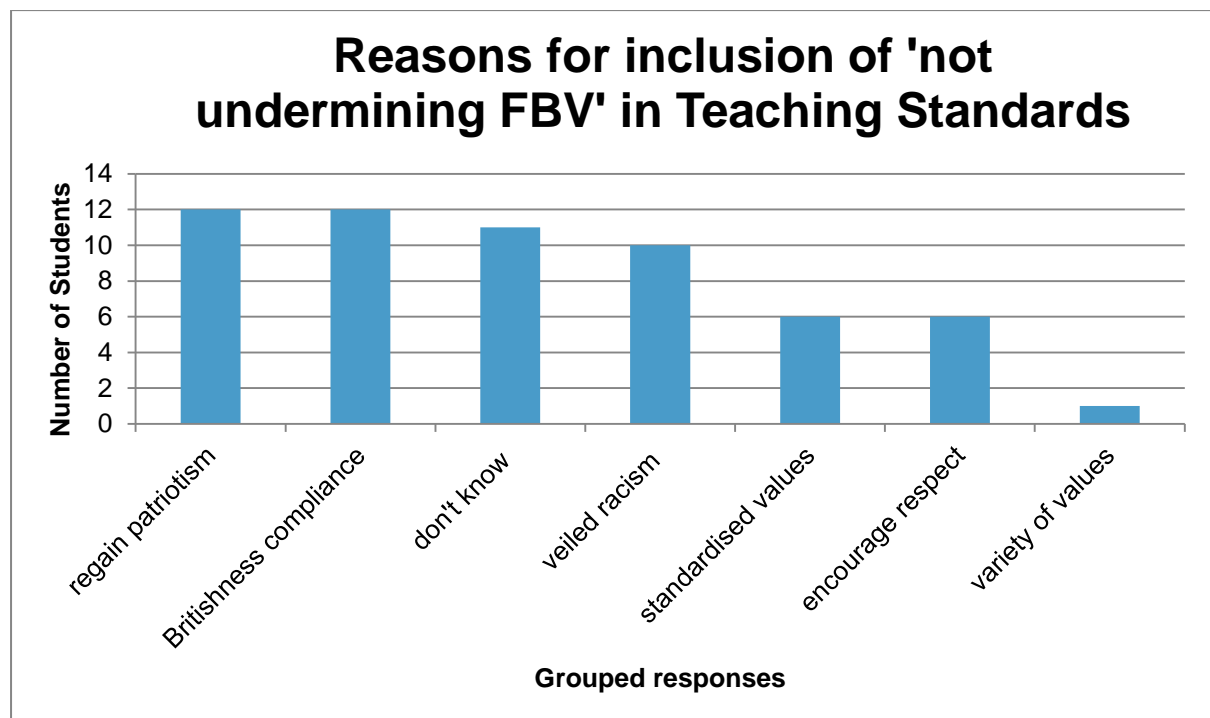
However another student who also described British values as a social construct, answered in the affirmative – that British values do exist, as a social construct, but such values could be rejected because they could be seen as damaging, “British values are a social construct and can vary from person to person. Particular groups may have similar thoughts about what they consider British values to be. Some may choose to reject British values which may lead to people feeling confused about their own identity” (Female, White, primary, undergraduate).

A few students confessed bewilderment that in order “to qualify as a teacher I must show I respect British Values, however what these values are is not explained” (Female primary, Muslim). It could be argued that this student, positioned on the outside of the fundamental British values dialogue, is able to problematize the debate.

### Student teachers' explanations for the inclusion of fundamental British Values in the Teaching Standards.

Answers to the question 'why do you think the requirements to , 'not undermine British values has been included in the teaching standards', provided equally polarized views as identified in Figure 4. 66% ( N=51 ) of those who answered this question were aware of the requirement to not undermine Fundamental British Values, while 34% (N=26) were unaware.

Figure 4 student responses to 'why do you think the requirements to 'not undermine British values has been included in the teaching standards?'



#### *Regaining patriotism*

Reasons for inclusion of the phrase fell into two distinct areas. Firstly that, 'not undermining British values' had been included as a means to regain or re-establish patriotism

as if this may have been perceived as a lost element of British society as it became more ethnically diverse. Secondly it was described as 'veiled racism'.

Some students bemoaned a loss of patriotism and thereby a loss of identity, "Britain has become so culturally diverse there is a worry that it is losing its original identity and people are concerned about this loss". (Female, White British, Christian, primary). Others also displayed a nostalgic melancholia about the loss of Britishness, "Some schools have become to [sic] occupied with covering other cultures [sic] values and not those of the country they live in" (Female, White British, primary). Almost 25% of students echoed assimilationist language, "We are English and this is the UK so everyone in the education system should be taught and know British values in order to fit in" (Female, primary). Some students set inclusion against Britishness, "The government wants to ensure that, 'British' parents feel their existence is not 'undermined' by the growing multiculturalism of schools" (Female, primary, no religion). All these responses reflect the need to preserve an identity which some feel has been eroded or undermined by the presence of cultures and people who are not part of the indigenous majority. There is a sense of dilution or loss which emerges from these responses rather than one of gain or enrichment.

#### *Not undermining British values – veiled racism*

At the opposite end of the spectrum to those views expressed above ten students claimed the reason for requiring teachers to not undermine British values' was nothing more than 'veiled racism'. Such comments emanated from the students who had attended the BERA SIG conference: "Honestly I think it's a horrendous knee jerk reaction to all the propaganda currently surrounding immigration. I think it's a right-wing govern-

ment pandering to the people who read 'The Daily Mail' or 'The Sun' without engaging in an intelligent debate about the reality of immigration. They constantly claim there is an 'erosion' of British values but as I said earlier, I believe values are largely individual and certainly constantly shifting, and they feel the need to be seen to address this 'erosion'. I think it's ridiculous, what makes their values superior and what exactly are these elusive 'British' values? I also think it's loaded with a veiled racism, suggesting British values are superior," (Female, White British, not strongly religious, primary undergraduate).

From the comments above it would seem that some students have their own strongly held values which enable them to assess and evaluate the fundamental British values statement as a government instrument designed to 'control' a particular section of society and impose an assimilationist view of Britishness. This is in opposition to an inclusive conception of Britishness which allows individuals and groups different expressions of what it means to be British beyond that of being a passport-holder, or the civic/state boundary (Vadher and Barrett 2009, 450).

## **Discussion**

Our findings substantiate studies which suggest teachers are unable and unprepared to critically engage with issues of Britishness (Bhopal and Rhamie, 2014 ) and the current Teachers' Standards 2012 encourage teacher educators to adopt a discourse on Britishness that is both assimilationist and fearful of difference (Keddie, 2012).

The notion of Britishness appears to be uncritically accepted by some of the respondents whilst others demonstrated insightful and nuanced understandings. It is troubling that respondents with limited conceptions of Britishness are now newly qualified

teachers in schools. There were many issues arising from the findings here we focus on two key aspects which warrant further discussion. These are:

1. The naïve and unsophisticated notions of Britishness;
2. The notion of insider/outsider Britishness where the outsider is cast as the deficient, racialised ‘Other’ who is not quite British enough in an attempt to centre whiteness.

The discussion of the findings draws on the concepts discussed above and engages with the concept of whiteness (Gillborn, 2008) which was evident in the responses of some of the respondents. This can also be applied to an analysis of the policy direction which led to the requirement not to undermine fundamental British values within the Teachers' Standards. Whiteness as a construct enables the analysis of the structures which maintain the power of the majority. It is defined as a social, political and cultural construct; a racialized discourse designed to maintain the privilege of those racialized as white (Garner, 2010). The notion of fundamental British values and indeed Britishness could be considered an exercise to reinforce the privilege and status of whiteness as demonstrated by some of the responses in this study.

#### *Stereotypes: Polite and naïve*

It is interesting to note that what could be termed as national stereotypical dispositions or characteristics were sometimes interpreted as values by students. This highlights the need for educators to teach about the concept of values before one can appreciate the nature of a set of national values which should not be undermined. It also suggests a need for a critical interpretation of what could be categorized as naïve conceptualisations of Britishness.

The notions of Britishness that drew on a lost past of imperial rule and glory and many of the phrases used by some of the student teachers were reminiscent of British coloni-



al past, one in particular employed the repeated use of the word 'our' in relation to British values.

“ The fact that people who live here should love Britain and promote **our** key ethics, such as freedom. Any person living in our great country, whatever race or creed, should love the country and live by **our** laws.”

(Male, primary student teacher, declined to identify course or religion)

This could be interpreted as encapsulating a boundaried, and essentialised understanding of Britishness asserting a seemingly superior, presumably white hegemonic perspective which underscores the 'us and them' binary which in this case could be considered British and 'Other'.

The respondents have illustrated that inadvertently the phrase FBVs conjures up racialized stereotypes of who is an insider and who is not; it has, to some degree, silenced notions of multicultural Britain except when it is convenient to draw on that for sporting purposes such as in the Olympics in 2012. In essence the inclusion of FBV within the Standards has promoted a certain racially boundaried image of who is British and within teacher education this has led to a lack of interest in engaging with racial, religious and social issues on teacher education programmes, and so a blinkered, racialized hegemonic stance appears to be maintained. Smith (2012) understands, these latest Standards, as leading teachers to equate values with hidden, uncontested norms of whiteness and being middle-class, and unconsciously stigmatising pupils who do not fit this position. The lack of time on teacher education programmes to critique racialized conceptions of Britishness (Sian 2013) leads us to question how teachers will develop a sense of Britishness in classrooms where the pupil population is becoming more racially diverse. If teachers and the pupils they teach adopt a flag-waving, Royals supporting stereotypical notion of Britishness will this lead to BME pupils becoming more accepted as

British even if they wear the hijab, go to the mosque, speak Urdu at home and do not adopt a lifestyle that is associated with being British? We would contend that no amount of superficial flag-waving will enable BME pupils to be more British because the notion is implicitly racialized and perceived as so by some student teachers in this research through the use of the personal pronoun 'our', for example "live by our laws" and by teachers in Keddie's (2014) research. This reinforces the boundary of who is British and implicitly indicates that true Britishness is a concept associated with being White and that British citizenship conferred by a passport is somehow lower in the racialized hierarchy of who is British.

### *Confusion about Britishness*

One dilemma for intending teachers lies in the confusion many respondents expressed about the nature of British values. For although the values are delineated in the Prevent Strategy (Home Office 2011) and the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012) as 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs', such values could be considered universal. Several respondents claimed no national specificity to them which means that, 'Britishness' is open to interpretations which draw on stereotypical characteristics of being British and the call on imperial bygone days which in itself implicitly conjures up the image of being British as someone who is White. Research by Barton and Schamroth (2004); Roberts-Holmes (2004) and Elton-Chalcraft (2009) illustrates how children's notions of who is, and is not British is based on skin colour; which is also reflected in Maylor's (2010, 244) research where "one pupil opined that only White people born in Britain could be British".

Although just over half (53%) of the student teachers thought there were values that were exclusively associated with being British, when we examined these values more closely they were naïve notions of Britishness that drew on symbols of nationhood such as the monarchy, caring for animals or stereotypical characteristics of Britishness such as queuing, humour or being polite. These uncritical and naïve notions of Britishness may be just that, but on the other hand, they may be ‘safe’ expressions of Britishness which do not require the student teachers to tread into unknown, unsafe and difficult territory of engaging on a deeper level with what it means to be British because by venturing into this domain they may have to engage with ‘difficult’ topics such as faith, culture, ‘race’ and ethnicity, racism and Muslims/Islamophobia. The safer space of promoting benign, uncontroversial and incontestable notions of Britishness, such as, learning facts about history, the monarchy and geography of Britain, or learning to sing the national anthem enable the student teachers to meet their professional duty and to tick the “not undermining British values” box is more easily negotiated. The promotion of the symbols of Britishness through teachers’ own naïve conceptions will perpetuate a historically and culturally bounded notion of Britishness (Vadher and Barrett 2008) which in turn will serve to reinforce the mythology of the exclusive Island Story as conceived by the hegemonic majority, to valorise White neo-imperialism and serve the drive for assimilation. The findings show that some student teachers held uncritical, what can only be termed stereotypical notions about what is meant by the term ‘fundamental British values’. This is unsurprising because they have not been given sufficient opportunities to examine and critically analyse who is British, how they become British and how the nature of our society has changed and how there may be multiple ways of being British which are equally valid. The failure of initial teacher education to provide the space to critically discuss the implication of the Standards for new teachers, the cur-

riculum and schools could be considered neglectful. But with the pressure of Ofsted inspections influencing the recruitment numbers, and thus the income of universities, the critical space of the university seminar is reduced to one of adherence and compliance where some teacher educators themselves are unsure of how to engage with fundamental British values. So, therefore, the whole system of teacher education is subservient to the performative requirements of the Teachers' Standards. In this climate of regulation and fear some may consider the exploitation of the Teachers' Standards to embed assimilationist approaches (arising from political ideology as well as a need to counter terrorism) to Britishness as an accident whilst others may view it as a conspiracy (Gillborn 2008). But whether it is by accident or design the use of policy to embed an assimilationist perspective advances whiteness and reinforces its supremacy.

#### *Assimilation and racism*

The responses of participants who indicated they saw the question of Britishness and values through an assimilationist lens raises questions about how these teachers would deploy these thoughts in a multicultural classroom, particularly those who articulated assimilationist tendencies. We cannot blame these students for holding such views which may be gained through the media discourses which surround immigration and asylum seekers. Indeed within teacher education there is insufficient time and expertise to assist student teachers to read beyond the media discourse, analyse different perspectives on multiculturalism, or even how to develop an inclusive notion of Britishness let alone provide time and opportunities for these potential professionals to analyse their own position as deliverers of government imposed conceptions of who teaches and what they teach. The erosion and morphing of teacher education into teacher training has been recorded and analysed by many researchers and the training mode in which we all engage as teacher educators has led to the benign acceptance of Teachers'

Standards that have also instrumentalised the conception of how to belong and be British which has an unarticulated racial boundary (Vadher and Barrett 2009, 450).

*Fundamental British Values and Teacher Education*

The reconceptualization of teaching as a craft, the erosion of time spent by student teachers in universities and the introduction of the Teachers' Standards 2012 by Michael Gove in his term of office as Secretary of State for Education has served to position teachers as instruments of the State. The wording of the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012), the change in the guidance on SMSC (DfE 2014) and the Ofsted framework for inspection (DfE 2015) continues and increases the emphasis on national identity, explicitly and unequivocally aligned with a pedagogy of values in education. Smith (2012, 443) identifies that this leads to an entrenched prejudiced outlook among teachers:

If teachers are instructed not to undermine fundamental British values in their teaching, then they may feel justified in their quest for the development of Britishness in pupils, and in assuming that some are deficit for not embodying Britishness enough.

This is also noted by Keddie (2014). The notion of an innate deficit among BME pupils, their families and communities, some of whom could be conceived as the deficient radicalised 'Other' may pervade the thinking of White student teachers, as shown by our study and a wealth of research (Bhopal et al 2009; Maylor 2010; Lander, 2011; Warner & Elton-Chalcraft, 2014). Indeed the requirement within the Teachers' Standards 2012 not to undermine fundamental British values and the origins of the phrase 'fundamental British Values' within the counter-terrorism strategy Prevent further underscores the discourse of deficit associated with certain groups in our society and implies the need for corrective measures to be in place upstream in schools and with teachers

as the instruments of remediation to correct such deficits. The need to develop a sense of Britishness and a counter terrorism strategy to monitor and eliminate so-called home-grown terrorists from a particular community and the continued anti-Muslim news coverage serves to reinforce the notion of the deficit 'Other' amongst our midst thereby funnelling teachers and pre-service teachers to inadvertently adopt an assimilationist perspective on the British-citizen-'Others' in our classrooms. The discourse of deficit will continue as long as we continue to deprive teachers and student teachers from critically analysing a number of theoretical concepts associated with the discourse related to Britishness. The insider-outsider notions of who is British articulated by the respondents in this research is alarming when one considers that this may unconsciously pervade a teacher's thinking and one can only guess as to whether this unconscious bias may inform their actions. The inclusion of promoting fundamental British values within the teachers standards has effectively re-centred white privilege, reinforced notions of other/deficient/insufficient outsiders that need to be surveilled and assimilated on terms dictated by the majority.

## **Conclusion**

The implications for teacher education are far reaching, particularly so since the publication of the White paper Education Excellence Everywhere (DfE, 2016) which advocates the wholesale system of school-led teacher training effectively removing universities from the process of teacher education and thereby delimiting the critical space available for critical academic debate that could inform preservice teachers' understanding of the term 'fundamental British values' and provide them with different/alternative conceptions of Britishness. If teacher educators, in universities and in

schools adopt an uncritical stance on the notion of Britishness, and if they also fear the consequences of negative Ofsted inspection comments related to how schools promote fundamental British values, then the transformed preservice teacher training sited in schools may well play safe in preparing new teachers not to undermine fundamental British values. Without the opportunity to critique what it is to be British within the context of equality and diversity in twenty-first century Britain it is likely that the majority of student teachers will struggle to develop a sense of belonging amongst some BME pupils which engenders feelings of pride and loyalty in being, say a British Muslim, a British Sikh, or a British Hindu. Indeed, the opportunity to develop social cohesion through shared values may be missed since some children and young people may be left with the feeling that some are more British than others. We need to educate student teachers and teachers to develop, with all children, a sense of pride in who they are with respect to their ethnicity and nationality. This can only be achieved if we create critical spaces and identify experts with whom student teachers and teachers can critique the imposition of the specific Standard to, 'not undermining fundamental British values' within their code of 'Personal and Professional Conduct (DfE 2012) which seeks to control and police the development of future teachers and citizens of multicultural Britain. It is in our diverse classrooms with teachers who can lead and develop conversations about belonging and being British that we will begin to overturn the racialized nostalgia-filled stereotypical conception of what it means to be British to develop citizens with BME heritages who unequivocally identify, and are confident in feeling British.

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