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Emergency preparedness as public pedagogy: the absent–presence of race in ‘Preparing for Emergencies’

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Emergency preparedness can be considered to be a form of lifelong learning and public pedagogy with implications for race equality. The paper is based on an ESRC project ‘Preparedness pedagogies and race: an interdisciplinary approach’ considering the policy process around the construction of the ‘Preparing for Emergencies’ (PFE) campaign. This campaign which appeared as a leaflet (distributed to every household in the UK) and as a television campaign was a belated response to preparedness by the UK government post-9/11. The results in the paper are based on 20 interviews and two focus groups conducted in 2009–2010. Interviews were conducted with a previous home secretary, members of the cabinet office, private sector security consultants, civil servants and emergency planning committees. Using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) informed methodology we find that both for white and BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) respondents in our focus groups ‘race’ and racialised ascriptions are important to their interpretation of PFE. For white respondents PFE is seen to be most relevant in urban areas at risk of crime and terrorism whereas BME respondents considered that they were potentially pathologised by PFE as potential terrorists. In policy interviews we find that a series of signifiers around race are used to consider the need for responsibilisation within PFE. In conclusion we consider that examining preparedness through the lens of public pedagogy extends theoretical and empirical work on securitisation particularly in terms of considering the responses of various audiences. We also argue for further engagement with CRT in security, and more generally lifelong learning, research.

Introduction: securitisation, preparedness and pedagogy

Securitisation theory is one way through which public education campaigns around preparedness can be considered to be speech acts (Austin 1962) though through which security is performed (Wæver 1995). The performance of speech
acts by state actors (such as a public preparedness campaign) creates the conditions by which society is considered to be ‘threatened’. However, securitisation theory has been critiqued for its concentration on speech acts and actors (primarily state actors) rather than considering the audience for security (Taureek 2006). We address this balance through considering a public education campaign and look at its reception by audiences as well as through the ‘acts’ of the policy makers who created it. We explicitly frame the audiences for preparedness campaigns in terms of whiteness, using a conceptual framework from critical race theory and critical whiteness studies. The campaign chosen, ‘Preparing for Emergencies’ (Her Majesty’s Stationery Office 2004) was multi-modal using television, cinema advertising and a booklet delivered to every home in the UK. The campaign was designed to enable citizens to prepare for multiple emergencies including natural disasters, terrorist attacks and industrial accidents. The booklet was published not only as a response to the 9/11 attacks in the United States but also as a ‘multiple hazards’ approach to civil protection. This was a change in previous UK preparedness planning which during the period 1950–1990 had mainly focused on the cold war threat of nuclear attack and, latterly, on threats from Irish Republican terrorism. Like previous campaigns ‘Preparing for Emergencies’ can be related to individual, family and community learning. Preparedness materials:

…encourage a set of creative interpretations. These could be behavioural ‘Duck and Cover’ drills used from the early 1950s in the USA instructed children to adopt the ‘atomic clutch position’ in the event of a nuclear attack and hide under their desks...emotional...or cognitive... These preparations are more than simple public information or social guidance frequently being a provocation or actively seeking a decoding by their audience. They are ‘preparedness’ scripts which seek an enactment either in rehearsal or in actual performance. (Preston 2008: 555)

A range of materials are used in preparedness including not just leaflets and public information films but also family learning activities, community learning activities, interactive websites and audio and video materials (Committee for Higher Education in Homeland Security 2005). These are both lifelong (aimed at all ages, from young people to older citizens) and life-wide pedagogies (aimed at communities, businesses and the public sector) which can be conceived to be part of lifelong learning (being socio-culturally embedded) rather than lifelong education (Billett 2010). Public and emergency planning exercises are frequently employed (Chakrabarty 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2011a, 2011b) and the witnessing of these acts as a dramaturgical form of pedagogy (Davis 2007) but also a public pedagogy where the ‘social’ is itself a form of pedagogy (Giroux 2004a, 2004b, Mohab and Dobson 2008; Preston 2009b). ‘Airport security’ is a prime example of where the security processes are themselves pedagogical, where the visibility of others is employed to effect ‘secure’ forms of behaviour including the marking of some bodies as ‘security risks’ (Ahmed 2007: 141). Preparedness has also become a super-reflexive form whereby individuals are made more aware of their own presence in real environments as a subject of security. As a public pedagogy, preparedness is not only pedagogical, drawing increasingly on theories of learning rather than public information, but also increas-
ingly politicised. Public pedagogy recognises that ‘educative’ campaigns by the state, for example, are interventions which are aimed at ‘realizing the political’ (Giroux 2004b: 499) in terms of not only responsibilisation but also through defining the subject of security as ‘the other’.

One way in which Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies can be applied to this analysis of preparedness as pedagogy is to reveal the normative assumptions underlying these policies. CRT reveals that racism is a structural phenomenon, ingrained in law and institutions—the norm rather than the exception. So the basis of security rather than protecting ‘people’ or ‘the population’, or defending seemingly abstract and universal concepts (for example ‘Britishness’ or ‘our way of life’) is in terms of protecting ‘whiteness’ whether this means so-called white people or (more abstractly) white interests. Recent work on UK preparedness pedagogies (Preston 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b, Chakrabarty 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011a, 2011b) and work on Hurricane Katrina (Ladson-Billings 2006, Ducre 2008) has foregrounded white interests and violence and the centrality of ‘race’ in (seemingly colour-blind) disaster situations and disaster education materials. In doing so, the ways in which ‘race’ is not just incidental, but fundamental, to the ways in which societies are structured is considered. Hurricane Katrina may be a ‘refrain’ on racism in America, but as Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests it is a perpetual refrain, a songworm, perhaps. ‘Race’ is a constitutionally derived and structurally ingrained category of privilege and oppression. Although CRT considers that racism is institutionally and legally embedded it also considers that the rigidity of legal and institutional structures is dependent on them being consummate with white racial interests. Bell’s CRT fiction ‘The Space Traders’ (Bell 1992) in which African Americans are ‘traded’ with aliens for new technology is a vivid example of how human rights to self-determination could (conceivably, even realistically) be taken from African Americans by a white majority given a perceived prerogative. Gillborn (2006) refers to this as ‘the conditional status of people of colour’ in that the protection of their rights is dependent on the interests of whites. There is some agreement between CRT theorists and their critics that racism is complex and dynamic rather than binary (Cole 2009) but CRT foregrounds whiteness, and white normativity, even within complex racialisations. Even within re-racialisations, such as those associated with the assimilation of immigrants, whiteness remains as a tacit, but privileged (due to structural racism) category (Roediger 2005).

This paper builds on our previous work on preparedness pedagogies which analysed the content of preparedness campaigns and the ethnography of emergency re-enactments, by examining both the reception and policy construction of preparedness. Through the analysis of data in the paper we arrive at two major conclusions. Firstly, that the audiences for preparedness pedagogies frame the objectives of ‘Preparing for Emergencies’ in very different ways according to their racial positioning. For the ‘white’ respondents to the PFE campaign, whilst it is not necessarily the intention of state actors to pathologise BME groups through PFE (indeed, they sometimes find it difficult to articulate the purposes of the campaign) they tacitly consider
that increasing responsibilisation is necessary. Moreover, they frame responsibilisation in racialised terms.

Methodology and method

Before discussing the detail of method there are some important considerations of methodology concerned with CRT. Primarily, there are limits to the degree to which this paper has resulted from a shared experiential knowledge of racial oppression. For the white authors (John, Barry and Casey) of the paper, we are theorising about the nature of white supremacy but from a position where we are abstracting ourselves (as white) from the object of our study. Of course, there must be psychoanalytic speculation as to the reasons for this. This is not only for our own ego protection, which is obviously important (to us), but also to spare the reader from this ‘mode of production’ of white writing. As (perhaps) working-class white people we are certainly not claiming some form of oppressive empathy in examining white supremacy. Our experience of class oppression does not help us to understand the nature of racial oppression as the two are not homologous. For example, class oppression is characterised by embodiment and pathologisation but on a different order to racial oppression (the embodiments are considered to be situational and acquired rather than permanent and quasi-biological) and race oppression is different from exploitation and the ‘objective’ nature of class oppression. However, it grounds us in understanding whiteness as a temporal and situational property. Compared to the white middle classes we are relative ‘late comers’ to whiteness due to our class, immigration histories and family histories. This does not mean that we are ‘not white’ but we are not as firmly situated within whiteness as a ‘pure’ form of middle class history. This means that we are sceptical of ‘middle class’ forms of the expression of whiteness within Critical Race Theory that foreground white guilt narratives. Instead, the methodology of this paper is one of hesitation and ambiguity as much as one grounded in a social justice framework. Methodologically, we are using a CRT lens to examine the normativity of whiteness and the contradictions between the supposed colour blindness and racist outcomes of policy. However, we cannot claim that this presents a ‘counter-story’ or ‘counter-narrative’ in opposition to white supremacist accounts of policy formation. White authors cannot write from ‘outside’ of whiteness as it is fundamental to our corporeal existence. Paradoxically, even in acts of writing as a ‘traitor’ to whiteness we reinforce it as we are assuming that we can transcend our own racial identification. Rather we make a claim to a partial, perhaps ‘fractal’, form of majoritarian story which appears to challenge white supremacy on the surface but that contains elements of counter-story and majoritarianism within it. We are trapped within the trope of the ‘unreliable narrator’ as white authors using critical race theory but even within this ‘unreliability’ will be, we expect, some elements which will be useful in the continuing struggle against racial oppression. It should be noted, particularly, that there are differences between the interpretations considered within the project team on the ‘racism’ demonstrated by the respondents. For example, the main (‘white’) author of this paper considered that the respondents were, to a greater extent, not racist in outlook or motivation. There were notable exceptions to this, however, where respondents such as Hilda (a parish emergency planning officer) was quite blatant in linking the presence of ‘ethnic minorities’ with crime:
John (interviewer): And it’s quite interesting I mean we’ve done some interviews in London and some people have talked about threat of terrorism but is it on your list of risks?

Hilda: No. We’ve got an ethnic minority, but we tend to know them you know and but having said that we have had a lot of trouble but not from thieves, not from terrorists, you know I mean they go and steal money from people with their cards at the machine down at Barclays bank and things like that, haven’t touched the one at the co-op but Barclays bank keeps getting done but they caught them. Somebody else actually grabbed hold of one and held on to him until the police got there. (Hilda, parish council emergency planning officer, North Essex)

As a white researcher John considered the covert racism in this statement to be ‘unusual’. However, a different interpretation was considered by a mixed race author of the paper, Namita, who reported experiences of racism in her data collection on emergency exercises:

I, a mixed race woman, often found myself visibly raced as Asian and a foreigner by the people I was observing, through the security check question ‘Are you a British citizen?’—the lumping of all BME people together as one big group of foreigners from the same village—‘Any relation to the newsreader?’—to the British comedy over non-British names and Asian extended families—‘It’s all in the family isn’t it?’ In many ways despite the age of Obama and Brown I felt like I had stepped backwards in time to the TV and drama of the 1970s, before the embrace of multiculturalism: I was guilty of researching whilst Asian. (Chakrabarty, 2010c: 7)

These differences in perception arise from the racialised positioning of the researchers in these cases and hence the process of data gathering, as well as analysis, itself is inflected by racial positionings themselves. This shows the ‘unreliability’ of ‘white’ narratives, even when counter-narratives, from a CRT perspective and the need to employ CRT to our own interpretations of our work as well as to wider policy and practice critique. We return to this point in our conclusion as it has implications for work in lifelong education more generally that uses CRT as a framework.

The project as a whole, from which this study arises, was multi-method involving historical reconstruction of items in the National Archives, ethnography, interviews and focus groups. The project looked at pedagogical aspects of preparedness in the UK focussing on two campaigns—‘Protect and Survive’ (not discussed in this paper) and ‘Preparing for Emergencies’ (2004) using multiple methods to consider the planning, design, implementation and reception of these materials. In the interviews, we interviewed 20 respondents in total. First, we interviewed senior politicians and (current and ex-) civil servants including a former home secretary, a current member of the cabinet office with responsibility for preparedness, the former head of the civil contingencies secretariat and
an officer in the government organisation responsible for public information. Secondly, key scientists were interviewed including three Home Office scientists with responsibility for emergency planning, a telecommunications engineer working on warning and informing the public, an expert in public radio communications in an emergency. Thirdly, we spoke to individuals with responsibility for preparedness at a local level including a head teacher with responsibility for emergency planning in her school, two heads of civil contingencies planning for local authorities and members of a local resilience group in Essex. Fourthly, we spoke to members of think tanks and private/third sector organisations in this field. Interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo and analysed using critical discourse analysis. We conducted two focus groups. The first was with a BME group in a London mosque and the second with a white group who were members of a voluntary organisation in rural Essex. Again, the transcripts from these groups were transcribed, coded using NVivo and analysed using critical discourse analysis.

In terms of the initial NVivo analysis, all interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim. We used pseudonyms for all subjects to protect their anonymity. Once all transcriptions were complete the files were imported into NVivo. NVivo is a qualitative analysis tool that enables the researcher to deal with large amounts of rich and in-depth data, produce classifications and organise data into ‘nodes’ for easy access to all related information. Each interview was read thoroughly and then on the second time of reading the content was analysed and coded in NVivo. In NVivo it is possible to differentiate between an isolated theme, (referred to in NVivo as a ‘free node’) and a superordinate theme with emerging sub-themes (these are referred to in NVivo as ‘tree nodes’). The ‘free node’ identified through this particular analysis was ‘preparing for emergencies’. The data contained many references to this publication, consisting of comments regarding the construction and dissemination of PFE and co-ordinated campaigns in addition to the receptiveness of ‘preparing for emergencies’ in particular. Due to the volume and significance of these references it became essential to identify them as themes in their own right. Analysis then turned to identifying themes relating to pedagogies, initially three broad themes emerged. These were identified as super-ordinate themes and placed in ‘tree node’ sections in NVivo. The three broad themes were: emergencies, pedagogies, and race. As analysis progressed many sub-themes emerged within each of the three super-ordinate themes. When analysing the data no pre-defined themes were identified; they were allowed to emerge from the rich data as analysis progressed and this emergence of themes allows for important issues to emerge that may otherwise not have been considered. It therefore gives rise to more in-depth and quality to the research. Analysis in NVivo additionally allowed the researchers to identify which themes were more frequently discussed. Within this were a number of themes which involved talking ‘around’ race, such as discussion of ‘communities’, ‘equalities’, ‘immigration’, ‘language’ and ‘religion’ and a number of different pedagogical methods discussed.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was then employed to examine the ways in which the discursive creation of preparedness pedagogies created racial inequalities through the ‘tacit intentionalities’ (Gillborn 2005) and ‘absent–presences of race’ (Apple 1999). In this context, CDA was used, following Good (1999), to reconsider majoritarian narratives by critically considering not only the naming
of ‘race’ but also the absences and tacit omissions. We were not looking just for the direct naming of ‘race’ in the data but for constellations of meanings around ‘race’ which could be classed as signifiers of racial difference. The CDA analysis assumed that the tacit, as well as the overt, was important in uncovering racial oppression. Gillborn (2005) refers to tacit intentionality with regard to racial inequalities in educational policy making. Policy makers decide ‘…(tacitly, if not explicitly) to place race equity at the margins—thereby retaining race injustice at the centre.’ (Gillborn 2005: 499). Tacit intentionality is a form of knowing unknowingness for white people, a Gramscian ‘common sense’ view of the world. The tacit is particularly important for uncovering racism because, as discussed above, overt racism is not always visible (particularly to white researchers) therefore ‘The racist outcomes of contemporary policy may not be coldly calculated but they are far from accidental.’ (Gillborn 2005: 499). This analysis is, though, not a genealogy of preparedness (tracing back the structures of power more generally) but rather a counter-historical account (Bell 1992) focusing on race in which the absent/present of race within emergency planning is evident (Chakrabarty 2010c). This is congruent with Apple’s (1999) absent/presence of race within educational reform. ‘Race’ is nearly always absent from discussions of preparedness but always present, not always through ‘tacit intentionality’ but because an (apparent) absence of race almost always foregrounds ‘whiteness’ as the key subject of survival.

**The audience for PFE: responses from focus groups**

In our focus groups, the respondents, in the main, did not consider that PFE was ‘for them’. In the first focus group, which was held with a white, female, middle-class Women’s Institute (WI) group in North Essex, respondents did not consider that the advice was of relevance. They were aware of public information campaigns more generally around issues such as crime, fire, medication and the recent ‘swine flu’ campaign but (supposedly) because of their rural location did not consider that they were subject to the same kinds of issues that one may find in the inner city. Although they could not remember PFE they considered that the information may have been useful, but not particularly for their particular group. This was to do with the perceived focus on ‘terrorism’ in PFE:

Linda: In cases of terrorism, I think there must be the feeling that they’re not going to bother to come here because it isn’t a worthwhile target in terms of the impact that it would make.

There was therefore an ‘absent–presence’ of race for the white group in their responses. They did not consider that they were under threat as they conceptualised a white, rural locale as being ‘unthreatening’. This was despite the later revelation that, when probed, they did consider a number of hazards in their area such as a nearby nuclear power station, industrial plant, airport flight path and frequent flooding (the village had been completely isolated due to flooding in the last two years). However, they still considered their locale ‘safe’ in relation to the nearest city (London) which they considered to
be threatening due to the presence of crime and, possibly, terrorism. These were implicitly racialised threats whereas they found supposed security in rural, homogenous whiteness.

There was a similarity between the views of this group and the BME focus group with male respondents at a mosque in East London in that both groups considered that PFE was not ‘for them’. However, in the case of the BME group this was due to its undue focus on terrorism which was contrary to their real security concerns:

Mohammed: A couple of these pages are in reference to terrorist attacks, my initial thoughts come that it’s scaremongering amongst the masses to some extent because it doesn’t really talk about natural disasters or natural events in the UK because we are just as vulnerable to natural disasters than we are to terrorist attacks.

Namita (interviewer): You mean London is in the flood plain?
Mohammed: living in town...
Ateeb: There isn’t anything about the...
Mohammed: If you just look at the prospects of the floods happening in London then I think the first homes in East London will be under water.
Ateeb: If the Thames barrier doesn’t work.
Mohammed: It’s not talking about it, making reference to terrorist attacks and it’s going back to the issue about scaremongering amongst the public.

Both Mohammed and Ateeb considered that the real issues that they faced (in terms of flooding) were very different from the focus of PFE, which they considered to be referring mainly to terrorist attacks. They also agreed with the North Essex focus group that, because of the focus on terrorism, there was an urban emphasis in the booklet:

Ateeb: Are you really gonna target leafy Wiltshire, I mean come on. Just for the record I am not going to be planting a bomb in leafy Wiltshire, Stonehenge is lovely.

Namita (interviewer): What do you mean?
Ateeb: If you’re thinking about this logically, terrorists plant bombs where it is going to have the most impact for damage and that’s in the inner city not in the countryside, so stuff about bombs and stuff like that isn’t really relevant to somebody who lives in... .

Fudail: Yorkshire.
Ateeb: There is no harm in them knowing about this stuff but it’s not really relevant to them.
Atteeb’s comments show that there is a feeling that rurality is considered to be ‘safe’, and that the booklets had an urban emphasis. However, although there was agreement about the relevance of the information in both groups, there was an acute awareness of the racial profiling and stereotyping of PFE in the mosque focus group:

Mohammed: Highlighting the issue of terrorism and that’s understandable that they’re trying to do that—it’s also a way of pushing legislation isn’t it? If you get the public to fear, if you know the public have got something to worry about then when it comes to pushing legislation you’ve got the public behind you and you’ve got support. So this is in effect preparing the public for these sorts of cases.

Atteeb: And that said actually the biggest section is about terrorist attacks, if you count the number of pages related to it it’s a lot more than first aid I think.

Imraan: It’s another way of activating people isn’t it, so if everyone’s asleep they could send out these, put them in scare mode and get them to call up now, so now everyone knows we need to be alert and cautious.

Namita (interviewer): Page 18 goes into travelling and it says ‘Install state of the art surveillance systems at ports traffic entry—baggage and passenger screening’....

Yusuf: That’s very annoying.

Atteeb: They haven’t mentioned the very important part about travelling about racial profiling, which is another important thing.

Yusuf: This is leading to somewhere else, it’s not really preparing for emergencies is it? It’s security and intelligence really.

Adl: That’s how you get people to accept the booklet.

Shamsheer: Maybe, that’s a conspiracy theory.

Mohammed: It’s a conspiracy though it’s actually very blatant about it as well. Like you mentioned about profiling and a lot of people fit the description of an Asian have come back from a certain part of the country. I’ve been questioned at airports about times spent in other parts of the world.

For Mohammed, the purpose of PFE is clear:

Mohammed: It’s the connotations that are attached to it. That you think terrorism and you think about the recent incidents that happened. It goes back to what’s in the public mind and what they think about me
here. I mean then we go back to profiling, who are we, who are the ones stopped and searched. If you look at stats and all that so it can be questionable, had they used other terms instead of terrorism maybe, things may change.

For the BME focus group, then, ‘race’ and racism were present in PFE and they saw the booklet as pathologising them, and other BME people in their community. This results in real implications for them such as an increase in policy powers to stop and search under suspicion of terrorism (EHRC 2010). Although the above focus groups cannot, in any way, be considered to be representative of ‘white’ or BME people, they do illustrate how different meanings can be read into public pedagogies on securitisation by different audiences. For the white focus group there was an emphasis on their (homogenously white) locale as providing security and that, despite the numerous hazards that they faced, threats were largely metropolitan and involved terrorism and crime. For the BME focus group the reading was that PFE also ignored their concerns but pathologised them as a threat in terms of implicit references to terrorism. These findings point towards a more nuanced understanding of securitisation and public pedagogy in terms of its differential reception by different audiences. These disparate responses can be understood in terms of the ways in which ‘whiteness’, although absent, is constructed as ‘normative’ in discourses of security.

Creating the PFE campaign

If the audiences of PFE which we interviewed were unclear concerning its aims (but relatively unambiguous concerning the covert purposes of the booklet in terms of an emphasis on ‘terrorist threat’ with connected racialisations) surprisingly there was also some cynicism around the production of PFE. Senior civil servants, who were closely associated with the production of PFE did not necessarily believe that the booklet had a clear purpose and that the playing down of the topic of ‘terrorism’ may have disguised its true purpose:

...you end up with this little booklet coming through the door that everybody knows has been spurred by terrorism, which doesn’t mention terrorism till about page eighteen or something and the big question is well why did you bother? (David, former head of civil contingencies)

David’s comment (above) concerning PFE shows the ambiguity of policy makers in terms of vacillating between whether terrorism was the true purpose of the campaign or not. Policy makers did not have a strong grip on the learning objectives of PFE in opposition to other theorisations that stress their agency (Arnold 2007). There is, though, an awareness that ‘everybody knows’ that the booklet has been spurred by terrorism. This illustrates an awareness of the tacit intentionality involved in policy in that although the booklet plays down terrorism there was a common understanding that this was the purpose. Despite some ambiguity over the purpose of PFE there was a desire by policy makers to
emphasise the importance both of responsibilisation and the local community in preparedness. Whatever the failings of PFE (and most policy makers remarked that the campaign did not work as intended) as a metaphor for preparedness the concept of individual and community responsibility was thought to be a positive one. Some of the comments on this were tacitly racialised. For example, a former home secretary invoked New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina as a site in which ‘looting’ and ‘unacceptable behaviour’ took place which are implicitly racialised (and incorrect) statements (Ducre 2008) and counterposed social capital as what was requied:

Steven: I think what happened in Louisiana demonstrated a failure of the glue of civil society as well as a failure of administrative machinery so it was a two way failure. Not just the unacceptable behaviour that took place and the way in which people went looting and the rest of it but actually the failure of a kind of civic glue to come into place...

(Steven, former home secretary)

The emphasis on the local, and what that means, was reinforced by a number of statements made by government representatives at a national and local level that created PFE who invoked conceptions of ‘Britishness’ and the ‘Dunkirk spirit’ and quintessentially white, suburban organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch:

Jane: (community)...is one of the areas that we are looking at in a lot more depth than we’ve looked at before and that is community resilience and that’s something that is actually actively being worked on at the moment it’s looking at the difference that people can make in their own communities and actually it’s about helping people to help themselves rather than you know hand outs. I think the other thing that’s quite interesting and you know part of this might be down to you know the British psyche...a bit Dunkirk spirit. (Jane, Cabinet Office)

Bill: We’re doing that (plan for resilience) at the moment with some neighbourhood watch groups, because we looked at the city and thought where does the city get together. (Bill, South West emergency planning officer)

We found that in our interviews with policy makers and practitioners, a number of similar themes emerged particularly in terms of ‘community’ and ‘family’ resilience and learning, with initiatives such as the use of Neighbourhood Watch or Women’s Institutes, telephone trees (where one member of the ‘tree’ calls two others and so on until messages are widely dispersed) and family preparedness plans mentioned. These were orientated around ideas of localism that romanticised communities as sharing a collective (British) ‘spirit’ of survival and counterposed the metropolitan as anonymized and unsafe, with frequent references to New Orleans as representing a ‘failure’ of social capital. Whilst race was never referenced directly in these statements, they were implicitly racialised. Race was therefore ‘absent’ in not being directly made, but always ‘present’ in terms of the racial associations which fetishised Britishness and stereotypically white, rural/suburban forms of social capital.
Conclusion: racism in emergency preparedness and the need for CRT analysis

In this paper we have considered that ‘Preparing for Emergencies’, a security information campaign for citizens, could be considered to be a form of public pedagogy. More broadly, public education campaigns on ‘preparedness’ are forms of lifelong learning and bringing them within the sphere of education and pedagogy (rather than being associated with public information or marketing) allows us to consider their functions beyond the provision of facts or state propaganda. These campaigns act both to politicise and ‘pedagogise’ citizens through calls for responsibilisation and active, community learning. We consider that the whole area of preparedness is a fertile one for theorists of lifelong learning and that this can lead to new insights on what are sometimes seen as ephemeral materials. Through the analysis of our focus groups we have shown that different audiences of community learners read ‘Preparing for Emergencies’ in different, contextualised, ways and this has implications for the mobilisation of public pedagogies. Discourses of race, terrorism, fear and urbanity are ‘in play’ even when (according to the former head of civil contingencies) the true purposes of ‘Preparing for Emergencies’ were thoroughly obscured. In terms of securitisation theory, and public pedagogy, this points towards a need to engage more thoroughly with ‘audiences’ or ‘learners’ rather than to focus on pedagogical materials in terms of their supposed intent. In this analysis the racialised positioning of different audiences leads to markedly different interpretations. In addition, in applying CRT to the area of preparedness and pedagogy, as we have done here, there are few reference points within lifelong learning as a discipline. Unlike formal, initial schooling (Gillborn 2005, 2006) or continuing education there have been few attempts to situate CRT in adult learning spheres (Closson 2010). The analysis therefore falls at the periphery of areas of public pedagogy (in terms of preparedness materials) and CRT (in terms of lifelong learning) that have not been fully mapped theoretically or empirically. Whilst not a full theorisation of public pedagogy in this domain, the analysis here points towards ways in which securitisation can be understood both pedagogically and politically. We note that, aside from this work, the links between learning, security and conflict have been of recent interest in lifelong learning (Mojab and Johnson 2008).

With regard to race equality and preparedness learning we did not find that there were simple binaries at play. There were no references to ‘whiteness’ or ‘blackness’ but there was a (barely) submerged racial discourse at play, albeit inflected with other aspects of intersectionality (ethnicity, locality, faith). A range of metaphors were used to suggest security and the types of social organisation necessary for security such as ‘the rural’, Britishness, ‘Dunkirk spirit’, community (Neighbourhood Watch, Women’s Institutes) and to pathologise ‘the other’ in terms of crime, terrorism, urbanity and disorder in times of crisis (invoking a stereotypical view of ‘Hurricane Katrina’). This tacitly, if not explicitly, appeals to a white, suburban/rural and middle-class audience for preparedness. In addition, there was no mention of mobilising urban ethnic community groups, or faith groups (such as the use of Mosques) in these discussions. From the perspective of race equality these were (implicitly) racialised terms and assumptions. However, the use of CRT in our analysis pushes this contention further, and we would argue for a strong positionality in terms of BME experi-
ence to ‘name’ racism, or racial microaggressions (subtle manifestations of racism by whites, Rollock 2011). There is evidence from the BME focus group that there was pathologisation of them through association with terrorism. Furthermore, as discussed in the methodology section of the paper we noted differences between the research team, due to their differential racial positioning, in terms of whether racism was covert or overt. CRT would therefore not only point towards a different ‘naming’ of the racism in this analysis (in terms of structural relationships that benefit ‘whiteness’) but also differential racial experience and perspectives. This might make us reconsider some of the perceived ‘subtleties’ and ‘ambiguities’ of racism in the article, and in other research on lifelong learning, as being contingent on authorial perspective. The strengths of a CRT analysis in this area are in terms of questioning not only assumptions of racial neutrality but also the racial positioning of researchers and interviewees.

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