

championed him. During the later stages of his term in office, Trump presented CRT and its theorists as the new ‘anti-American’ bogeyman which needed to be denounced, resulting in Conservative politicians in at least 20 American states campaigning for a legal ban on the teaching of CRT in schools. The Presidency actions of Donald Trump and the UK’s Brexit vote (discussed below) are held up as illustrations of ‘white working class revolts’, but as Mondon and Winter (2019: 512) note, the campaigns were formed on the basis of a racialised nationalism: ‘While the populist character of the campaigns and their portrayal in the mainstream media pitted a constructed “people” made up of workers against an out-of-touch or contemptuous elite who fails to represent them, its nativist/racist/xenophobic basis pitted whites against classless immigrants, refugees and representatives of multiculturalism and diversity who threaten jobs, resources and nation’. A powerful means through which such dog-whistle (white) racial nationalism is transmitted is through online platforms and social media. Take, for instance, the online support for far-right views, and specifically for fascist and neo-Nazi groups, such as Germany’s *Autonome Nationalisten*, Norway’s *BootsBoys*, Italy’s *Veneto Fronte Skinheads*, France’s *Nomad 88* and America’s *Aryan Nations*. The internet has provided these groups with a powerful tool for gathering strength and support for their ideology (Åkerlund, 2021; Bhat and Klein, 2020) and mobilising on-street campaigns, as we saw with sections of the pro-Trump supporters’ storming of Washington’s Capitol Hill in January 2021 (Roose and Winston, 2018).

Activity

Is nationalism a vulgar sentiment or indicative of an all-inclusive patriotic identity?

Case study

Brexit and the Britishness of ‘Taking Back Control’

This chapter has discussed the significance of space in the development of racialised identity/ies, considering also how race and ethnicity emerge as important in decisions made about national identity, belonging and citizenship. The interconnectedness of race and nation, and the role this plays in society, is illustrated with the case of Brexit. This refers to the 2016 Referendum vote in which 51.9% voted to leave the EU. In response to the anti-immigrant political climate and pressure from Eurosceptics, then British Prime Minister David Cameron, under a Conservative government, announced that there would be a UK referendum in June 2016 to decide on continued EU membership. The vote result to Leave was somewhat unexpected, but held up by Leave campaigners as a momentous historical period which would bring many sovereign benefits to the United Kingdom, and on 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom left the EU (previously known as the ‘European Community’) after some 47 years of having been a member state.

There are a number of interesting points about Brexit, but one that is pertinent to the focus of this chapter is the way in which the Leave campaign relied heavily on a racialised psyche and notion of British sovereignty, which presented a particular type of (immigrant) group as a threat to the relatively privileged status of the British (read: white ethnic) majority population. In

encouraging voters to 'take back control', the Leave campaign invoked nostalgia for Empire and stoked fears of ethnic minorities. Brexit campaigning saw debates that were embedded within racialised frameworks, for instance, immigration was a central concern of the Leave campaign. The referendum not only supercharged the link between race and im/migration in popular and political narratives, but research has shown that these themes also featured strongly in Leave voter motivations (Patel and Connolly, 2019; Virdee and McGeever, 2018). The Leave campaign's anti-migrant message in particular was core to its claims about sovereignty, financial prosperity and the securitisation of its geographical borders, and it drew heavily on already present notions of the 'dangerous black other' to present EU migrants from Central and Eastern Europe living and working in the United Kingdom as detrimental to the working opportunities of British(born) citizens. Consider for instance the 'Breaking Point' campaign, which arrived in the form of a poster with an image showing thousands of refugees crossing the Croatia–Slovenia border the previous year. The words 'BREAKING POINT' were emblazoned across the picture, with a line that read: 'We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders'. Nigel Farage, the leader of the far-right UK Independence Party (UKIP), who produced the poster, used emotive language and imagery to present in voters' minds a direct link between the refugee crisis in mainland Europe and immigration.

Various forms of race populism was used to garner support from voters, for instance, the discourse of the 'left behind' was used in powerful ways to appeal to (white) working-class population, often under the radar of class-centric narratives that appealed to those who had experienced cultural and economic impoverishment (see: Hobolt, 2016; McKenzie, 2017; Swales, 2016). However, the 'left behind' narrative does not explain the full demographics of Leave voters. Dorling (2014), for example, argues that the middle classes voted to Leave the EU in far greater numbers than the working classes, suggesting that the Brexit vote was more than the marking out of working-class anxieties. Rather it was an event underpinned by a broader class-transcending racialised narrative. Therefore, to fully understand Brexit and motivations of a significant population of Leave voters, we must consider post-race racism, nationalism and post-colonialism (Bhambra, 2017; Patel and Connolly, 2019; Virdee and McGeever, 2018).

The idea that Leave voters were motivated to vote for Brexit because they felt 'left behind' has been a popular one (see Goodwin and Heath, 2016). Here Leave voters are commonly understood as being more likely to come from poorer households; have little or no qualifications; be in 'low skilled' or manual occupations and live in areas of high unemployment (Becker et al., 2017; Goodwin and Heath, 2016). Ford and Goodwin (2017: 19) suggest that this idea of being 'left behind' is coupled with 'growing value divides over national identity, diversity and multiculturalism, and social liberalism more generally'. Thus, for this population of Leave voters, order and stability are seen as far more important than freedom and diversity, and accordingly they support policies which 'favor not only harsh responses to criminals and terrorists who threaten social order, but also tough restrictions on immigration, as they do not want a more diverse and rapidly changing Britain' (Ford and Goodwin, 2017: 19–20). Some studies though have reported Leave voters' resentment as being presented as having voted in racially motivated ways. For instance, Leave voters in McKenzie's (2017: 205) study said they were 'confused and hurt' by their portrayal as bigots and racists in the mainstream media as well as on social media. McKenzie argues that the motivations for voting Leave 'did not circulate around race or migration' but rather, around economic hardship, feeling marginalised from mainstream politics and abandoned by the State. However, other analyses

(Continued)

have found that negative attitudes towards immigration were highlighted as a key driver of the Leave vote (Arnorsson and Zoega, 2018; Meleady et al., 2017; Portes, 2016).

It is argued that these racialised fears and colonial sentiments were harnessed by the Leave campaign, which encouraged the electorate to vote Leave as a way of regaining control of British borders. The Leave campaign simultaneously drew on and stoked existing fears around shortages in employment opportunities, housing, overcrowded classrooms, over-burdened health care and an exploited system of welfare provision, and rooted these aspects of their campaign within nationalistic (Empire) loaded notions of a (white) British identity, in other words – a nostalgic yearning for times of the British Empire: the Leave vote thus symbolised and promised a regaining of sovereignty and a ‘taking back’ of control (Gietel-Basten, 2016; Hobolt, 2016).

Activity

It is often suggested that Brexit voters were racially motivated and are often presented as racists with anti-immigrant sentiments and pro-white desires. Is this a fair claim to make?

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has discussed the embedding of race in notions of identity, space and citizenship. There has been a consideration of how group formation is influenced by race and/or ethnicity, which is also used to determine idealistic and practical access to citizenship status and its associated rights. The social construction of a national identity has also been examined, with a consideration of racial populism and (white) racial nationalism. The case of Brexit and the racialised psyche underpinning attempts to ‘take back control’ has been used as a case study to illustrate how racialised tools are used to regulate and control the movements of racialised populations in legal and socially palatable ways. The chapter has invited a consideration of questions about how we are able to negotiate identity within spaces and contexts that are marked out as racially and/or ethnically significant.

Summary

- Any individual's claim to having a single and essential racial identity can be suitably challenged when applying a social constructionist perspective.
 - A range of forced and non-forced population movements have contributed to a diversification of society.
 - Racial and/or ethnic identification and related debates about national identity, belonging and citizenship rights are politicised.
 - There has been an abundance of instances which demonstrate that the notion of collective citizenship, via managed migration, shared culture and a unified common national identity, is used to mask a racialised and/or ethnically determined system of order.
-