Derek Hitchins, Professor Retd.
Systems Scientist
Thursday, 12 August 2021

England, my England— What is Happening to You?

Fings ain't wot they used to be!

Y ou often hear the older generation, wishing that we could return to the 1950s and 60s: "Everything was so much better then…" Well, of course, old folks have always hankered after former times, which they, perhaps, see through rose-tinted spectacles.

However, one thing has changed in England that cannot simply be "turned back." Then, England was for the English, a mongrel mix of mostly early Britons, Beaker People, a touch of Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, with another touch of Viking…and Norman for good measure. Now? Well, now we have become a so-called "multicultural nation," with infusions largely from former British Commonwealth nations, now independent of course, but seemingly not averse to migrating into England. Which suggests there are aspects of England that appeal to them.

However, things appear to be "less than perfik'" with our shiny, new multi-cultural Britain. The United Kingdom is facing vocal sedition from the Scots, and there are similar murmurings from some Welsh separatists. And Northern Ireland is under constant pressure from Eire, supported by the powerful Irish lobby in the USA, to be absorbed into an all Ireland island…

But the United Kingdom was never a multicultural nation. You would expect any such a nation to have one legal system, one currency, one set of national utilities, one road and rail system, etc., even one overall national identity. None of which the UK has ever had…So, people might ask: What does it mean to be Scottish, or Welsh, say; but, they would never ask: what is it like to be UK-ish?

Back in the day, the English were proud to be English. And they could tell you what it meant to be English, too: there was an English identity. A mongrel mix we may be, but we were as one.

Today? Not so clear. You might have expected the infusions of South-Asian, Afro-Caribbean, African, Sri Lankan and many other cultures into the mix to have enhanced the variety and breadth of our common 'English multi-culture.' And, in some respects it has. But there are charges of racism being constantly levelled, statues of English heroes being desecrated, English heroes, real and legendary, being denigrated. Which is not indicative of an ideal multi-cultural society—whatever that might be…

So, what would the ideal multicultural society look like? Could we achieve one in England? If so, how? And, might it look anything like the England of the 50's and 60s that our old folks tell us, with such total conviction, was so much better than today's:

> "…u*ngovernable, disgustingly frank and overly-open, sex & LGBTQ+ obsessed, misandrist, atomised, misanthropic, antisocial media driven, excessively liberal democracy-without-free-speech, monocultural, multi-ethnic mashup?"*

> "*Oh for the gift that God would gie us: to see ourselves as others see us."*
> Rabbie Burns.

Well, there are many differing views on what the ideal multicultural society/ multiethnic nation might look like.

And many might say that there is no such thing—no ideal version. Time, perhaps, for a systems-scientific approach to such a sensitive, delicate, complex subject. That way, we may be able to envisage a target solution, one to aim for, if never fully achieve… The starting point, as ever, is to adopt the *systems approach*.

So, a system is:

An open set of complementary, interacting parts, with properties, capabilities and behaviours emerging both from the parts and from their interactions to form a

complex, organized, unified whole of material and/or immaterial things.

- *Complementary: combining in such a way as to enhance or emphasise the qualities of each other*
- *Interacting: act in such a way as to have an effect on each other*
- *Complex: consisting of many different and connected parts.*
- *Organized: arranged or structured in a systematic way.*
- *Unified: united, uniform, whole*

Immediately, you can see the relevance to a multi-cultural society. The "parts" would be the different cultures, of course, and the rest seems to follow… Only, it's not that straightforward.
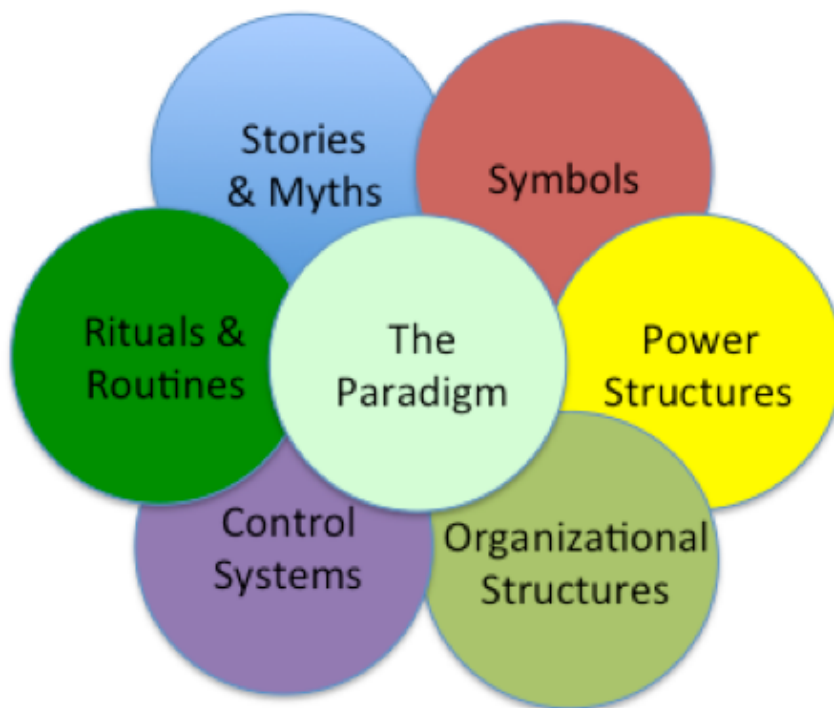
Gerry Johnson produced a model of culture (Johnson, 1992), as shown above. The Paradigm in the centre is the set of core beliefs (or, belief system) which result (emerge) from the multiplicity of conversations and which maintains the unity of the culture. The 'petals' are the manifestations of culture that result from the influence of the paradigm.

We can see how a paradigm, or more usually, 'belief system,' can help people make sense of the world, and how beliefs can spread and become dominating influences in the minds of many. The figure below shows a model of Belief Systems "in operation;" the upper loop refers to personal beliefs, the lower to the rôle of those beliefs in society, and serves as a group attractor, i.e. religious groups, ethnic groups, organizations, gangs, etc., will form around their different beliefs:

The figure suggests that a culture, formed around a belief system, is both self-reinforcing and resistant to external influence. Which is relevant to different cultures, be they based on ethnicity or religion—they will resist change. So, the "parts" in the systems definition, will tend to be fixed-yet-evolving, rather complex, quite different cultures. Although the people from these cultures may not appear to be very different, one culture from another, they may indeed be very different in their upbringing, root beliefs, feelings, experiences, attitudes, narratives, etc. And that applies equally to people from their host country.

Self-Reinforcing Belief System. (Hitchins 2007)
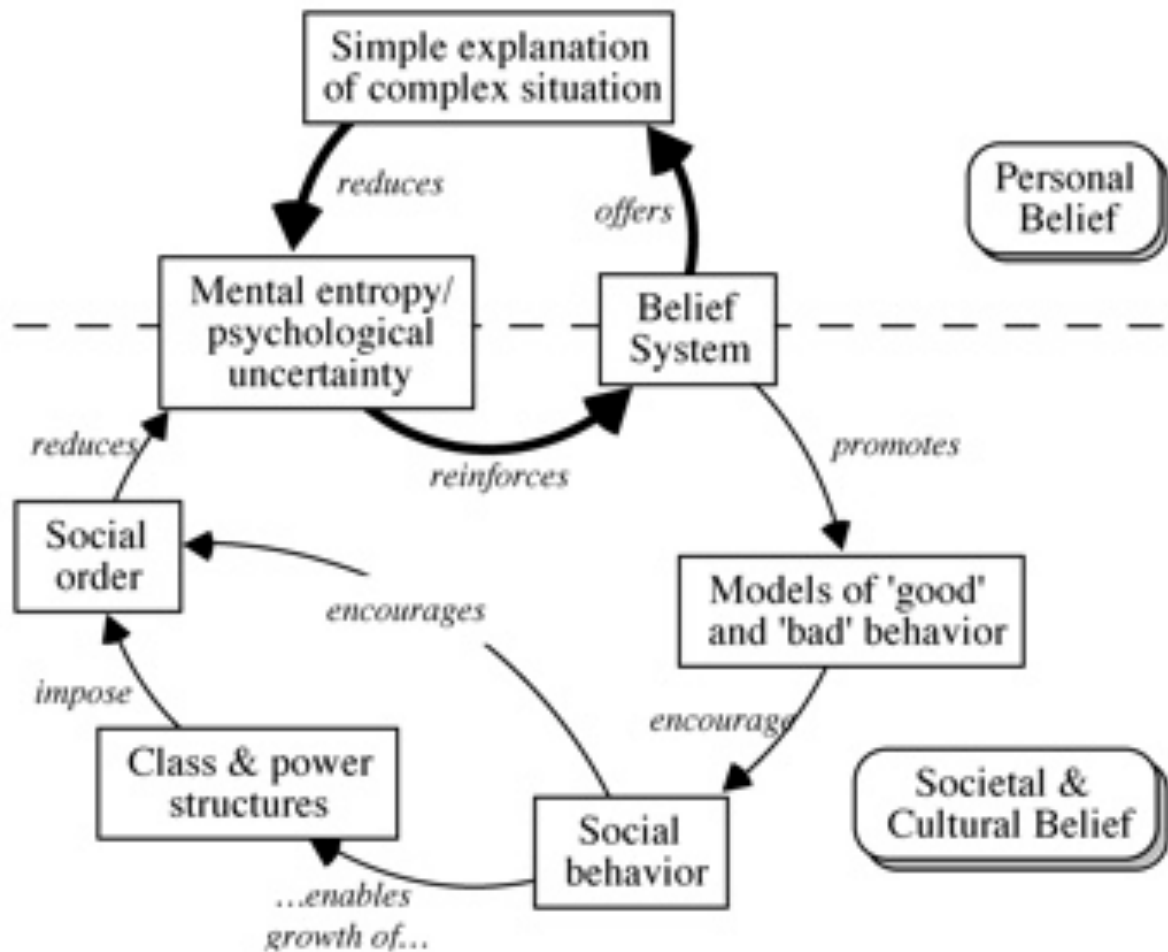
All of which means that the many and various ethnic cultures that come together to form a putative multicultural society are all pretty immovable at their core…including the host culture. So, it seems that the ideal multi-cultural society would be one in which numerous, quite different cultures, perhaps with quite differing views and beliefs, organizations, ceremonies and modes of dress, will each be able to maintain their culture, have it flourish, and yet complement communicate, and cooperate with other cultures. All in the one nation. But how? On the face of it, that would seem to be somewhere between difficult and impossible…?

A mental model might see a national landscape of some host nation dotted with a number of towns, socially fortified against outsiders,, each town a different immigrant culture. i.e., 'a nation within nation.' Within such towns, people carry on with their "culture of origin" as though they were still back in their land and country of origin, wearing corresponding clothes, worshiping in the same way, and without any intrusion from the 'external' host nation.

They have their own legal system and laws, they run their own schools, teaching their own histories, repeat their own narratives in their own languages, and operate their own economies by trading–at arm's length–with the host nation and with other fortified towns of varied cultures. Adults venture out of their town to interact with other cultures for business, employment, shopping, etc., and for "tourism," i.e., to explore the host nation and its culture, and to visit other towns settled with folks from their culture of origin. But they reside in, and operate from, their socially fortified town. And the children, born in these townships, mostly remain there as they grow up, carrying on their traditions, marrying and nurturing within their culture.

This model may appeal to some in the immigrant cultures, but would present problems to the host nation, particularly in respect of the host nation's legal system and national education system. Moreover, subsequent generations would find it difficult to emerge, should they want to, from their home towns—they would be largely unqualified, and neither know how to mix, work with, converse, nor make friends with, persuade, sympathise, empathise…with either

people from the host nation or from other townships. While nominally of the nationality corresponding with their place of birth, they would have no feeling for it, nor would they fit in. They would be 'of that nationality' in name only…

In a second mental model, immigrant cultures seek to alter certain aspects of the host nation that they find unsatisfactory or even offensive. These might include the legal system, the language, the education system, the host nation's culture, heritage and history, particularly where any of these clash with their own.

{*This is not unlike the young woman who falls in love with a man and marries him, planning to change him into her ideal husband. When she eventually changes him to match her ideal, she finds he is no longer the man she respected and fell in love with, and the marriage falls apart.*}

In this second mental model, changing the host nation's culture, heritage and history to suit one immigrant culture is to change the very nature of the host country. That would be a difficult and challenging task, and would be unlikely to find favour with the other immigrant cultures, who might wish for different changes; or who may desire no changes at all, having chosen the host country because they liked it the way it was, with good opportunities for them and their children—which may well disappear with forced change. Not to

mention the reaction to be expected from conservative elements of the host country, which may well be more than just words of protest.

And the host nation will undoubtedly be proud of their long and successful history, having evolved their democratic, legal and education systems, perhaps over millennia. This would be true, for example, of any European nation; each having fought the others over many centuries; each having their own history steeped in legends, heroes and fairy stories learned as children, each having their own legal system, education system, and all hard earned.

An immigrant culture seeking to alter this would undoubtedly meet substantial resistance. And besides, like the young woman seeking to change her new husband, if they manage to change their host nation, who's to say they would like the result…it would certainly no longer be the nation they, or their parents, deemed "the right place" to move to and raise their families.

So, our two mental models have suggested what would *not* work. By looking at their converse, however, we may glimpse what *should* work:

• No socially fortified towns, no 'no-go' areas, devoted to any one immigrant culture: instead, the incomers spread themselves among the host nation: not isolated, but in family groups so that they may sustain their culture, attend their own places of worship, etc. And

they should teach their children about their culture of origin, the good and the bad, the lovable and the un-lovable. And they should have festivals, hold parades, have feast-days, etc., in commemoration. And invite other cultures to join in…and learn. There should also be annual national multi-cultural festivals and holidays, involving the whole country in celebration…

- Their children should attend host nation schools and study the host nation curriculum (sic). In particular, they should learn about the host nation's history and heritage, about its legends & fairy tales, and heroes, battles and defeats, and about its culture, music, poetry, art, literature, even pantomimes: because these are now theirs. In other words, for country X, they should learn what it means to be X-ish. Why? Because that is what they now are: X-ish. And they should feel proud to be X-ish…But with an indelible core of their own culture of origin…and a narrative that, hopefully, did not propose disruption or domination of their host nation.

- There should be one legal system for all, with everyone equal in the eyes of the law. Nominally that should be the legal system of the host nation, but there may be occasion to modify the law to accommodate different cultural practices:
    - and that would include the acceptance of some immigrant cultural practices as right and proper for all to observe, thereby amending the law in favour of the immigrant culture and in restriction of the host nation's culture, where deemed reasonable and sensible.

- Similarly one national curriculum. But there is every reason for that curriculum to include theology, geography, world history, etc., to include–but not be limited to–immigrant places of origin:
  - without the firebrands of political agitators bent on insurrection, or pseudo-historical researchers presenting biased, anachronistic, partial histories out of context.

So, given the bare bones of a hypothetically "ideal multicultural society," (MCS) how does England, my England, stand up to comparison? Well, first and foremost, and unlike, say, Singapore, England's MCS was not planned and 'designed,' with limits put on how many people of one ethnicity can live in any area. On the contrary, England's MCS, like Topsy, "just growed." Politicians opened the door and invited folks in. Which didn't please other politicians: there was talk of: "Rivers of blood." Which, from the very start, did not auger well for a happy outcome…

However, some immigrants from the Commonwealth chose to accept the open door invitation, came and settled wherever they wished. Some in the big cities, making Birmingham the most ethnically diverse, cosmopolitan city in England, with London not far behind. Others chose to live in smaller towns and cities in the Midlands and the North of England. Sometimes in family groups, sometimes in larger communities, beginning to rival the indigenous English.

While England at large has some 3% Black people, London has 13% of Black people, over 1 million altogether. As of 2012, while

White British formed the majority ethnic group in London, it had the lowest percentage of White British across England and Wales at 44.9%. The West Midlands had a higher than average percentage of minority ethnic groups: Pakistani at 4.1%, Indian at 3.9% and Caribbean at 1.5%

The north east of England has the highest percentage of white peoples at over 93%, with Northumbria at over 98%. So, we can reasonable deduce that the Black population is mainly focused in London, while the South Asian population is rather more spread out, but with 'clumps:' Bradford, in W.Yorkshire, for instance is about 2/3rd indigenous English/white, and about 1/3rd South Asian. Which would at least offer the *potential* for socially-fortified sectors within the town.

Given this potential for ethnic 'strongholds' throughout England's land and in cities, social friction was to be expected. Indeed, a society of any kind without some occasional outbursts of exuberant disorder would be a dead society.

Disorder occurs as irregular 'avalanches,' with some trigger event leading to several copycat incidents, and a more widespread expansion. Avalanches, such as the 2011 England riots, and the more recent 2021 Bristol riots, have been more readily promoted through antisocial media.

Racial tension is only one of many potential root causes of such antisocial outbursts. The 2011 riots appear to be associated with racial tension, class tension, economic decline, and the unemployment that

decline had brought. The Bristol riots were ostensibly about a proposed new police and crime bill: the protests started out peacefully, but then turned to severe violence—just the sort of thing that the proposed bill aimed to curb, suggesting perhaps anarchist involvement…

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests started of course, in the USA but were imported, copycat/avalanche style around the world including the UK, notably Bristol, where a violent group of *white* thugs tore down the statue of Edward Colston (2 November 1636 – 11 October 1721), an English merchant, philanthropist and Tory Member of Parliament who was involved in the Atlantic Slave Trade.

The incident smacked of establishment collusion, gave Edward Colston a degree of world-wide prominence he had not had in 400 years, and suggested to the world at large that England is a law-breaking, racist country. Which it is not. It also served as a trigger event for another avalanche of disfigurement to other statues of English heroes. Not, perhaps, the ideal stuff of multicultural harmony… especially as Bristol, disappointingly, turned its face against its historic, sixteenth century benefactor, expunging his name from theatres, schools, etc., thereby thoughtlessly promoting antipathy towards the BLM movement within the indigenous English. Not too bright…(It's Newton's Third Law, really—against every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.)

Interestingly, there has been no move by the civic authorities to restore the Colston statue to its proper place. Which, since its tearing down was a flagrant, criminal act, should properly be the case. One

wonders, *why not? Is the rule of law no longer relevant in these PC-ridden times?*

S o, given that we have a less-than-ideal multicultural England, what's to be done to improve matters? Well, government has already made things intolerably worse by enacting Political Correctness (PC) legislation.

PC: *conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated.*

It really could not be more open to misinterpretation if it tried!

- "…conforming to a belief…that language and practices… should be eliminated" i.e. a belief in all out censorship…
- Who in their right mind could 'believe in censorship?'
  - We thought we had an unwritten constitution which guaranteed individual freedom of speech—apparently not!
    - Wasn't that freedom guaranteed in Magna Carta?
- "…which *could* offend 'political sensibilities' (as in matters of sex or race)…"
  - Political: *relating to government or public affairs of a country.* And…
  - Sensibilities: *a quality of <u>delicate sensitivity</u> that makes one liable to be offended or shocked.*

Which seems to add up to:

"censoring/eliminating anything that might conceivably be construed as offensive by those of such a delicate disposition that they may be offended by just about anything…to do with sex or race…"

"Or, in simpler terms…censoring anything and everything."

And, as we are all only too painfully aware, the censorship edict has been carried out most assiduously by every self-appointed bigot in the country. Which has, over a number of years, altered and suppressed English culture, national humour, vivacity & *sangfroid*, even everyday speech–which now contains four-letter words never before heard in public, and use of which *was* against the Public Order Act. Comedians no longer tell jokes. "An Englishman, a Scotsman and an Irishman went into a pub…" *Not any more, they don't.* English t.v. satirical comedies - banned…and they were the funniest and most satirically anti-racist!

*S*hameful. *Absolutely shameful,* in a supposedly free country. The intentional suppression of English culture. Turning England into a place where many immigrants, if they knew, would not want to go…and with open vulgar swearing in public and on t.v., guaranteed to make grandmothers turn blue! (The contemporary trend towards public swearing is a predictable reaction against censorship—Newton's Third Law, again.)

Moreover, *suppression of the indigenous culture* **is just what should NOT be done in pursuit of an ideal MCS—quite the wrong thing to do!! Instead, the indigenous culture should be** *complemented* **by additions from immigrant cultures, and vice versa, i.e. the much vaunted "complementary interaction" between the cultures, a synthesis such that all benefit, none lose… and without which** *there will be no emergence* **of a new, richer, more diverse English Culture**

However, our politicians have driven us into a blind alley, with PC effectively denying all prospects of a successful multi-cultural England. So, what's to be done? While PC rules? Regrettably, very little. It seems likely that removal of the PC yoke is a necessary precursor to the Peace-building exercise which must surely follow. Meanwhile so-called racist behaviour will be exacerbated—it is a natural, predictable conservative reaction against the yoke. And, while PC rules, English culture, evolved over centuries, and the envy of the world, will continue to be suppressed until there is, eventually, very little of it on show.

Even if the PC yoke were lifted tomorrow, it would take time, several years, for English culture to recover. Of course, it is still alive and well 'underground,' but the comedians and sketch writers, the poets and playwrights, have either gone out of business, or been so brain-washed that they will need time to recover.

PC has created *a reign of fear:* that they will say, do, write or even think of something that will touch someone's hyper-sensitive sensibilities. And that fear has left them with very little indeed to work with. Hence, today's so-called comedians do not tell jokes—someone, somewhere, is bound to be offended by any joke on any subject. So, instead, they talk inanely about their personal affairs and present slapstick…so, not funny; generally, not even mildly interesting…but what else are they left with?

However, Peace-Building. Some time back, international Conflict Management became an "-ology." It was seen as occurring in 3-phases: Peace-Making; Peace-Keeping; and Peace-Building. Peace-Making involved physically suppressing insurgents, to enforce an uneasy Peace. Peace-Keeping was anticipating any uprisings, allowing the indigenous civil authority to restore its control of the country, returned to the rule of law, repair damage, restore freedoms to the people, etc. Peace-Building was the process of rebuilding and re-establishing the "social capital:"

Social capital is "the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively". It involves the effective functioning of social groups through interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity. Social capital is a measure of the value of resources, both tangible (e.g., public spaces, private property) and intangible (e.g., actors, human capital, people), and the impact that these relationships have on the resources involved in each relationship, and on larger groups. It is generally seen as a form of capital that produces public goods for a common purpose. *Wikipedia*.

It would be possible, in principle, to apply Conflict Management, and in particular, Peace-Building, to our currently fragmented, clumped, disconnected multicultural mashup. However, there are phrases in the statement above which require consideration, e.g. "…a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity."

That shared view is likely to come about only if the parties all feel that they are English, if they have had broadly the same background education, if they are all steeped in the culture of the host country, if they know of its legends, heroes and villains, etc. So, would they know of Boadicea, King Arthur and his Knights, The Vikings, the Anglo-Saxons, King Alfred and the burnt cakes, 1066AD, Richard Coeur de Lion, Robin Hood and the dastardly Sheriff of Nottingham, King John - Magna Carta - Runnymede, Sir Francis Drake (el Draco) and the Spanish Armada, Sir Walter Raleigh and his Cape, Wellington at Waterloo, the Charge of the Light Brigade, Florence Nightingale and her Lamp, etc., etc? Would they recognize:

> "This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle, This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, This other Eden, demi-paradise, This fortress built by Nature for herself Against infection and the hand of war, This happy breed of men, this little world, This precious stone set in the silver sea, Which serves it in the office of a wall Or as a moat defensive to a house, Against the envy of less happier lands,--This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."
>
> *Shakespeare, Richard II*

The thing is–any Englishman should and would…and you'd be surprised how often references, direct and subtle, to these shared cultural backgrounds occur in speeches, writings, newspapers, and everyday conversation without our realizing it…which is why the whole nation, immigrants and indigenous folks alike, should attend national schools, learn from the national curriculum. And that curriculum, in the fullness of time, should include legendary heroes from other cultures, too. We already have William Tell from Switzerland, of course…and Mowgli, Kaa, Baloo and Shere Khan from the Jungle Book, that most Englishmen will either have read as children, or encountered in the Wolf Cubs, along with *dib dib dib, dob dob dob*. But we would need others from the various immigrant cultures, too.

Little Black Sambo was one such from my childhood, about a very small Indian boy who ventured into the jungle where he met with, and outsmarted, a fierce tiger, who he tricked into turning into *ghi* (Hindi for butter, I learned.) So, not racist, but on the contrary designed to breakdown cultural barriers in the very young. Which it did. *Bigots take note.*

Returning to the definition of Social Capital above, it appears that we also need to enhance human capital as part of social capital. This suggests, not only the provision of good housing, satisfying jobs, but education and training, and the promotion of family, with its implicit network of shared values, its stabilising influence, indeed - as we were obliged to

relearn during the Pandemic - its fundamental importance to the stability and integrity of any society.

Which is interesting, as recent English cultural changes have significantly downgraded the importance of family over recent decades, while at the same time family is seen to be of great importance within many immigrant cultures.

Here then, is an important opportunity to rescind some of our recent legislation and practice which has downplayed the importance of family, and especially of marriage, with which it is very strongly associated in nearly all cultures. Is this the opportunity to turn back our future to the 1950s and 60s? It may be, indeed. But how would we go about it?

Back in the 1950s, there was an air of innocence that has since been lost—to our detriment. Things tended to be black and white, not so many shades of grey. England was getting back on its feet— rationing was ending, t.v. came in only two channels, both BBC, humour was rife - well, it had never stopped, it's what helped us through the war - there was zero swearing - well, not in front of ladies, at least. There was no commercial t.v., no interminable betting adverts, no adverts for condoms, sanitary products at mealtimes, no encouragement to sue over an accident, no comparing male genitals, no watershed, etc.

Everyone went to school, schools were good; if you passed the 11-plus you went to grammar school, if not then the Secondary Modern Schools were excellent too, and much more practical. Oh!

and they had just introduced the General Certificate of Education. No grades, just pass or fail by subject.

Only merchant seamen had tattoos, which were considered *infra dig*. Saturday night, young people might go dancing. And dances were the place to meet girls. Well, some girls. Many girls stayed home Saturday nights, which was frustrating to the boys who had seen them looking "interesting" while out with their parents shopping during the day. But parental authority was still in vogue at that time, "good girls" knew how to behave; and most did. The age of majority was 21, not 18 as now.

You would take only nice girls home to meet your parents. And your parents taught you about most social things. Mothers taught their daughters how to cook, about balanced diets, how to make and look after a home, how to nurse a baby, how to do their hair, how to make dresses, to sew and knit, perhaps how to sing and play the piano. Fathers taught their sons how to grow vegetables in the garden, how to replace broken windows, how to do carpentry and vehicle maintenance, even perhaps how to play cards: bridge; whist; canasta… And fathers would help with homework.

Young girls played with dolls, young boys played with toy cars and aeroplanes, both played cowboys and indians, happy families, and make believe. All believed in Father Christmas. Girls bikes had no crossbar, since girls invariably wore skirts. And, to some, a first kiss was tantamount to proposal. Parents were responsible for their children's behaviour, and took it as their duty to teach their children how to behave in public, so that in their later teens and early twenties

they could move seamlessly into society. There was, in practice, no such thing as a teenager. You transitioned from childhood to adulthood age 21, or in your mind when you finally got into long trousers. As a boy, of course.

There was no such thing as sexuality, and gender related to French and German nouns. Although it existed, albeit in very much smaller numbers than today, there was no acknowledgement of homosexuality. None. Gay meant: "light-hearted, sportive, mirthful, showy, brilliant, or was a euphemism for dissolute." *1942 Pocket Oxford Dictionary.* Which, of course, meant that people neither knew nor cared about anyone else's sexuality, or lack of. Some people would draw attention to themselves by wearing flamboyant hats and smoking through long cigarette holders…but they were regarded as eccentric…And the English were noted for their eccentricity.

Sex before marriage was seriously frowned upon, babies only happened once your were married, married women did not go to work unless they wanted to, and once they had their first child they stayed home to nurture and raise the infant. Living together was scandalous and largely unheard of.

And, for many of our immigrant cultures, that state of affairs is quite close to their current norm. We may be unaware of so-called honour killings in the UK at present among immigrant communities. Nationally there are approximately 12-15 reported honour killings per year in the United Kingdom.

While never condoning such clearly illegal practices, they are an indication of the yawning divide between our various cultures. A return for all to something nearer our 1950s state of social innocence would greatly ease the cultural shock that will inevitably occur when immigrant cultures are encouraged to mutually interact and complement each other. Which has yet to happen…

To put it simply: our present society could really do with a clean up, big time! It's not our old folk who are out of tune. It's our libertarians who have gone far too far, far too fast, leaving our old folk scandalised and bewildered…and then we call them racist, to cover our own embarrassment at what we have allowed or encouraged to happen.

As for our English Multi-Cultural Society—well, England, my England, you have made a bit of a hash of things, and are currently making things worse, not better. You think not? I've just seen on t.v., the court case against three young men from London, who saw a fourth, educated and respectable young man enter their gang area, so they chased and killed him. They were all young black men.

Drug gangs, Yardies, turf wars, no-go areas, black-on-black killing after killing? Time to 'Clean the Augean Stables:' for Peace-Making, before we can even think about Peace Keeping and then on to Peace Building. We have along way to go… A very long way. And we know what is standing in the way…Political Correctness and Antisocial Media.

Get rid of them—both of them. Now!

References:

Hitchins, Derek (2007) *Systems Engineering: A 21st Century Systems Methodology*., pp.45-46

Johnson, Gerry (1992) *"Managing Strategic Change—Strategy, Culture and Action"*. Long Range Planning Vol 25 No 1 pp 28-36.