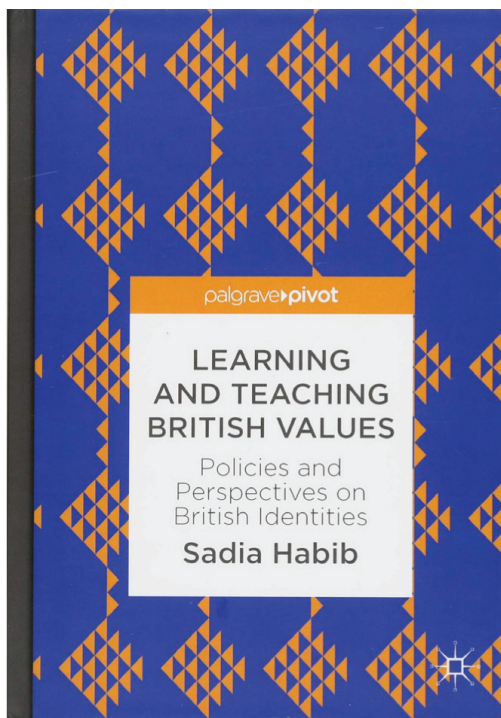# Book review

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Learning and Teaching British Values: Policies and perspectives on British identities, by Sadia Habib

Sadia Habib's book *Learning and Teaching British Values: Policies and perspectives on British identities* is an insightful nosedive into how art education has the capacity to challenge the hegemonic and exclusionary identities that might be promoted under schools' duty to uphold British values. With the introduction of Prevent in schools – the duty to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' (DfE, 2015: 4) – teaching British values is now mandated. Research thus far has been critical of this move towards 'fundamental British values' and Habib's book contributes to this burgeoning field. She offers a critique of teaching British values in schools, while examining how critical pedagogies are adopted to co-create knowledge between teacher and student, to unpick the 'British' element of values teaching.

Habib lays out the aim of the book in the opening chapter, claiming to make strange hegemonic identities by problematizing them (Weedon, 2004). She adopts a critical race theory lens, at times drawing upon the academics who pioneered the field in the USA, such as Ladson-Billings (1995) and Solórzano (2002). She rightly talks to the questionable beginnings of British values in schools – having derived from Home

Office documents on extremism – and speaks to the fluid, changing and contested definitions of nation, nationalism and national identity. This is nuanced further on in the book when she brings in the complex issues of local versus national identities as well (Chapter 7) – some pupils in her case study school saw themselves as south Londoners before Britons. With intricate mappings of how we think about identity in the face of value teachings, she asks us to 'take racism seriously' and exemplifies how racism 'tie[s] in with notions of national belonging' (p.12).

The book seems to take on two areas of analysis: pupils' artwork derived from an identity project taught using critical pedagogies (Freire, 2000), and teacher conceptions of British values teaching. Chapter 4 is dedicated to analysing the interviews of trainee teachers with regard to their duty of teaching British values, and elsewhere in the book teachers' voices break through. While the pupils' responses to their project were a fascinating insight into how critical pedagogies were used to enable them to challenge being 'British', teacher responses highlighted the complexity of this policy as we see it playing out on the ground. Ultimately, teachers' voices in this book demonstrate what other works in the field are seeing (Busher *et al.*, 2017). Teachers are very mixed in their feelings about teaching British values and are not necessarily as critical as some research is suggesting. For example, Panjwani's research (2016) found that Islamic teachers did not view British values teaching as incompatible with their own identities.

This book would be useful for researchers in art education who wish to see how critical pedagogies have been adopted when embedding British values teaching into the art curriculum. Additionally, its use of critical race tools makes it an important read for anyone who wishes to explore claims that British values teaching upholds white British values. However, the title does lead one to presume that the text would not be based so heavily in arts education; a look at a whole-school approach to British values teaching was expected.

Habib makes recommendations at the end of the book which are persuasive and useful for arts educators. Unfortunately, applying the same call for critical pedagogies and spaces for identity exploration might not be possible in other curricula. Given the intensification of the curriculum in 2015, I wonder whether an English or history department would have the curricular space to design a project so explicitly linked to unravelling students' perceptions of British values. Moreover, the art curriculum lends itself to creative, open and critical projects that reflect on subjectivities in ways that maybe other curriculum areas cannot. Given the nationalistic turn the curriculum has taken, it would be interesting to see where other subject areas are being inventive with British values teaching.

In her chapter on trainee teachers, Habib notes how some teachers feel that British values teaching would be welcomed if it dropped 'British' from its tagline. This gets to the heart of the issue that Habib is unpicking: we want pupils to critically examine belonging, community and diversity – our values. Yet, co-opted as something uniquely British, one opens the door to teaching these values by overemphasizing the 'British' part – flags, Big Ben and the Queen. Habib warns of the dangers of allowing this nationalism to creep in, which at best draws upon Londoncentric and stereotypical images and, at worst, can exclude many of our pupils.

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