



UWL REPOSITORY **repository.uwl.ac.uk**

The BBC, public intellectuals, and the making of Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain

Murji, Karim ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7490-7906> (2024) The BBC, public intellectuals, and the making of Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain. Identities.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2024.2392975>

This is a University of West London scholarly output.

Contact open.research@uwl.ac.uk if you have any queries.

Alternative formats: If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact: open.access@uwl.ac.uk

Copyright: [CC.BY.NC license]

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy: If you believe that this document breaches copyright, please contact us at open.research@uwl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



The BBC, public intellectuals, and the making of *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain*

Karim Murji

To cite this article: Karim Murji (20 Aug 2024): The BBC, public intellectuals, and the making of *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain*, *Identities*, DOI: [10.1080/1070289X.2024.2392975](https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2024.2392975)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2024.2392975>



© 2024 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 20 Aug 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 104



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



The BBC, public intellectuals, and the making of *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain*

Karim Murji 

School of Human and Social Sciences, University of West London, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This article retrieves and assesses a significant moment of public engagement on race and racism in Britain in the 1970s. Known as *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain* it linked the national broadcaster, the BBC with prominent social scientists who delivered lectures to camera. By going back to the archive films, along with interviews with the producer of the BBC series, the discussion sheds new light on the making of the programmes, connecting a piece of media history with the role of public intellectuals on racism. The idea of positioning highlights the significance of context, effects, performance and relationality, identifying the interconnections of self/other and institutional positioning. This provides a multifaceted perspective on the emergence and form of the series in the febrile political climate of the period.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 15 June 2023; Accepted 13 August 2024

KEYWORDS Racism; public engagement; impact; media; Powellism; multiculturalism

Introduction

This article has two purposes that interlink. On one hand, it brings to light a five-part BBC TV series from the 1970s that marks a significant moment of public engagement on race and racism in Britain. Hitherto, this has been known mainly (and arguably only) as a slim booklet, published in 1978 by the Commission for Race Equality (CRE). While the booklet has been well used, its origins as a series of BBC TV films have never been considered. Likewise, the BBC programmes have never been discussed as a series, nor is there any academic resource or archival document on their commissioning, their purpose or the way they were set up and delivered. This is an absence in each scholarly field this series could be relevant to – the politics of race and racism, media studies or public intellectual engagement (for instance, it is not in work on race and media such as Malik 2002). It is a surprising omission as *Five Views*

CONTACT Karim Murji  karim.murji@uwl.ac.uk  School of Human and Social Sciences, University of West London, Paragon House, London TW8 9GB, UK

© 2024 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

of *Multi-Racial Britain* (*Five Views* hereafter, for brevity) hails from an era where resources on race and racism were much more limited, and it featured four prominent academic social scientists – Stuart Hall, Allan Little, Bhikhu Parekh and John Rex. A fifth programme centred a non-academic, Trevor Huddleston.¹ At the same time, the staging of a series of talks on racism – each critical of government in some way – was, or could be seen as, controversial for the BBC as the national broadcaster, yet the series is also absent from any history of the BBC that I have been able to locate. The tale of the emergence of *Five Views* is remarkable for its origins and development, as much as the content of the talks. As the latter can be found in the booklet, this article is less about the content and more about the making of the series, excavating an important moment in race studies, in media history and of public engagement.

The second purpose is to connect this series with discussions of public engagement and public intellectuals. This is widely discussed, particularly around the reach of social science beyond the academy and there are many approaches to it, both celebratory and critical (Kurzman and Owens 2002). The role and responsibility of social scientists in intervening on race and racism specifically is evident in calls to engage publics against racism. In a recent example, Bhattacharyya, Virdee, and Winter (2020) seek deeper engagement by scholars with social movements, going beyond writing articles addressed largely to other academics, and to act as activists, or social justice scholars. A now historical resource like *Five Views* was created in a time before research impact and social media, but unlike the contemporary fragmented mediascape it was made for what was then one of only three national TV channels in Britain. This may have given it, and the speakers featured, a particular prominence, that makes its absence from analyses of the media or of racism surprising. As well as the decision of the BBC to produce it as a form of public education or a forum for debate, the lack of attention to the make-up of the speakers is notable too, especially given how prominent at least two of them (Hall and Rex) already were in the 1970s. In asking how and why these individuals came to be the public faces for a series on racism in Britain, this article adds to knowledge about the public role of important scholars in the field while also locating their performance in a distinctive scholarly mode – the lecture.

Intellectuals and positioning – connecting the institutional and personal dimensions

Scholars and intellectuals do not exist in a self-made bubble, even if they are sometimes portrayed in that way. They operate in specific times and places and in a dense field of competing voices and viewpoints; they also function in institutional contexts, whether that is the university or, as in this case, the BBC

The idea of positioning offers a way of analysing these interconnections and overlaps in a way that does not give primacy either to the individual or to the institution but stresses the relation between them. They are shaped by each other, as well as by context, neither being wholly autonomous nor fully determined. The idea of positioning emerges from social psychology, but as a way of framing public intellectual engagement it is most evident in Patrick Baert's (2015) study of Jean-Paul Sartre, where he presents it as a better way to understand the achieved status and projects of public intellectuals than either field or network approaches, both of which are seen as lacking the context and specificity that positioning aims to fill out (Baert 2015).

Positioning, for Harré (1999), is an advance on static ideas of social interaction and role theory, looking instead at how people use words to locate themselves and others. In a similarly relational approach, Phoenix (2005, 105) uses it to examine young people's recollections of being racialized by making available 'positions for themselves and others to take up, ignore or resist'. Likewise, Baert (2015, 165) says 'intellectual interventions ... always involve positioning', as they locate the speaker while simultaneously positioning others. However, beyond face-to-face interactions, Baert advances a more sociological version of positioning that stresses effects, the importance of context and relationality, and performance. Effects rather than intentions avoid the problem of identifying or attributing motives. Context emphasizes the social and political environment in which interventions are made. A relational understanding of positioning occurring within an intellectual field combines self and other positioning, linking the 'already established status' (Baert 2015, 173) of an individual with the 'length and nature of an agent's past pattern of interventions' (ibid, 174). Performativity is derived from the idea of language as doing things in the world, and Baert and Morgan (2018) extend this to writing, speaking, rhetoric, narrative and argumentation, as well as the outlets that public intellectuals utilize, from an academic article to newspapers and radio.

Context is critical to the relationality of positioning and there are two key elements for *Five Views*, one historical and political, the other institutional. The former firmly roots the making but also the content of the programmes in the 'long' 1970s. The titles of Sandbrook (2011, 2012) two volumes of political history of the decade capture a sense of the shift, from 'a sense of emergency' to 'seasons in the sun'. For Seaton (2015, 2), it was a time 'characterised by a melancholic apprehension of national decline and frozen inertia, and then a panicked disorder [as] inflation spiralled'. In the period, the series was conceived and the talks took place British political history was on the cusp of what Hall et al. (1978) saw as a radical break or conjunctural shift, from the post-war settlement of the welfare state and Keynesian demand management to supply side economics. The 1970s seem to have been formative when regarded as the dawn of neoliberal government emerging from an

'organic crisis of British capitalism' (CCCS 1982). It was more than economic change, but also profoundly cultural, yoking nationalism to a revived form of statecraft, in which the long shadow of Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968 still figured prominently in the contributions of the speakers in *Five Views* a decade later. A flagging Labour government was still in office when the series aired, but political discourse was dominated by linking race, crime and national decline as Powell had (Hirsch 2020). An emergent 'new right' combined social conservatism with economic liberalism. The racialization of immigration and of crime underpinned 'popular racism', where Black and Asian people were routinely seen as 'flooding' into and 'invading' Britain (CCCS 1982; Hall et al. 1978).

In this politically turbulent time, the other key context framing *Five Views* is the role of BBC itself. From its formation in the 1920s, and particularly during the war years of the 1940s, a common view was that the BBC had shaped the identity of the nation. It "'helped to define Britain" ... forging powerful collective experiences' (Seaton 2015, 3–4). However, its role as a national institution was under scrutiny in the 1970s. Seaton's work, covering the years 1974–87, sees it as a 'time of intense agitation within the BBC ... [in] a sharp, frequently hostile ... political climate' (ibid, 3). This came from both main political parties in Britain, with evidence that Labour considered abolition of the licence fee (often seen as the cornerstone of the BBC's independence), while Conservatives contested its legitimacy. For Seaton, 'the very existence of the Corporation was in question' (ibid, 5) in the battle to preserve its independence from government (other sources of the time confirm this – Burns 1977). While a series such as *Five Views* could be regarded as central to the 'educate' part of the Reithian idea of the BBC's public service mandate (the others being 'entertain' and 'inform'), the political context in general and for a beleaguered BBC specifically is a factor, possibly a hazardous one, in staging a series on racism. So, it seems surprising to note the absence of BBC mantras around political balance and editorial control in *Five Views*.

Performance is the other key element of positioning. Baert and Morgan (2018) draw on the idea of dramaturgy to think of intellectual work as performance, by recourse to theatrical metaphors and analogy.² They recognize the value of microsociology, such as Goffman, in uncovering forms of self-presentation and impression management that can be linked to positioning, but they see it as inclined towards psychology rather than social structures. Nonetheless, picking up on their mention of formalized performance, I think it is useful to return to Goffman. In his essay, 'The Lecture' he defines it as 'an institutionalized extended holding of the floor in which one speaker imparts his view' (Goffman 1981, 165). Considering different types of lectures and lecturers, Goffman refers to the ways a lecture can be delivered, for instance, reading from a text or speaking directly. This also connects to the distinction he makes between lecture

talk and ordinary forms of talk. While lectures recorded for television are a class of broadcast talk (Scannell 1991), they are a particular form of media communication that contains its own performative elements. The impact of those may be less evident in writing than on screen, marking a significant gap between the two forms – television programmes and printed booklet – of *Five Views*.

This article relies on two sources – the archived films that are the series called *Five Views* and a couple of meetings with the producer for the BBC, John Twitchin. For the films, I used an inductive and thematic approach, viewing them twice. I tried to watch them without a preconceived plan. My initial assumption was that gaps between the visual and printed sources would be significant. However, the first viewing opened different issues about style more than content. For the second viewing, I constructed a comparative coding grid, looking at how each film started, how each speaker was introduced, the room or venue for the lecture, the picture framing, any audience details, cutaways and the stance, dress and demeanour of the speakers. There are limits to what can be assessed from the films as the predominantly static head and shoulders camera shots allow limited scope to analyse performance. Their actual words, or at least the ones that appear in the films, are printed in the CRE booklet, though each talk was longer than the 23–24 minutes each programme runs for. I met John Twitchin in two online meetings. These were initially conversational enquiries about the series and then became partially structured interviews. The quotes I attribute to him are taken from contemporaneous notes I made; he has checked a draft of this article and various comments and changes he proposed in extensive email discussions have been incorporated.

The BBC and the production of Five Views

Five Views is much better known as a CRE booklet than the TV programmes it came from, yet it matters as a piece of media history and a moment of public engagement. The only trace of it to be found in the CRE archive is their 1978 annual report, but that merely lists the publication of the booklet. In other words, the CRE provides no sense of why these talks were commissioned, how the five speakers were selected, or why. Moreover, there is little information on how to access the films in a time – before videotaping was commonplace – when re-viewing BBC programmes was not straightforward. The booklet has a Foreword and an Introduction. In the former David Lane, the Chairman of the CRE welcomes the BBC's initiative in holding the talks. Both Lane and Twitchin, who wrote the Introduction, stress the role of the speakers as experts providing 'facts and theory ... for a better informed public discussion', and

are 'among many well informed specialists' (Twitchin 1978, 5–7) about race relations in Britain.³ These words are significant as frames that position the social sciences as a resource providing 'facts' and the speakers as 'experts'. They 'pre-but' possible criticism of the programmes and perhaps the publication also.

An account of how *Five Views* emerged cannot be found in any text, so here the role of Twitchin is crucial. I think he clearly was the driving force behind the series; he also edited the talks into what he called a 'readable format' for the CRE booklet. From his viewpoint, the CRE publication was an 'early example of collaboration, with a national institution', and a means to ensure wider distribution of the talks. In the 1970s, he was a producer for the Adult Education Department (AED)⁴ of the BBC, based in Villers House, an office block above Ealing Broadway station in West London. The geography of its location is itself a positional factor, as proximity and distance, on one hand to a centre of South Asian community in London, and on the other, from the headquarters of the BBC in White City and they matter for different reasons. To the west is Southall, a well-known 'little India' district of London. In 1976, the murder of a Sikh teenager Gurdip Singh Chaggar by Neo-Nazi skinheads led to the formation of the Southall Youth Movement, which organized largely peaceful protests for justice (Ramamurthy 2013). Community campaigns against racism and racial attacks increased Twitchin's awareness that this was an issue the BBC should cover more. He says he had to 'shoehorn the BBC' into looking more at race issues at this time. Thus, even as a BBC staffer, he acted as an internal critic of news and current affairs coverage of race and racism, which he felt lacked useful explanation or social context; this, he adds, is precisely 'what I was looking for from these speakers' (of *Five Views*).

The other reason the position of the AED mattered is that it was 'at arms length' from the main BBC offices, as well as a small cog whose core activity – providing education – could be overlooked or treated as a peripheral concern. Notably, as well as *Five Views*, this was a time when seemingly 'marginal' parts of the Corporation were able to innovate critical content on racism. For instance, another fringe route into national television was the Open Door series that ran from 1973 onwards in which the BBC handed over editorial control to independent people, as part of its Community Programme Unit.⁵ In 1979, Hall was one of the two presenters of a renowned programme 'It ain't half racist mum'. While *Five Views* did not attract the same controversy as that (see Gardner and Cohen 1982; Malik 2002), it was not unnoticed either. For Twitchin, BBC colleagues viewed the AED as 'getting away with murder' in making the series; for instance, he perceives colleagues in News and current affairs as 'annoyed when they saw us putting people on air talking about racism ... which sounded scarcely impartial to them'. In his view, *Five Views* was something that 'no one else in the BBC would have done'. The AED put

racism on national television, at a time the political environment made other departments uncertain about how to cover race issues.

In an email, Twitchin explained the origins of *Five Views* like this:

In 1978 I was making a series of ten documentary films under the title 'Multiracial Britain', showing 'good anti-racist practice' initiatives by housing depts, by teachers, in public services, etc. The 'Five Views' were indeed 'piggy-back' film recordings of various presentations/lectures that I noticed the speakers had already lined up. ['Talking head' lectures direct to camera on tv were not unknown back then; notably, AJP Taylor could mesmerise an audience entirely on his own]. As a BBC producer in the TV 'continuing education and training' Dept. I could propose to the Head of Dept a topic for a series of films, backed by support notes for their 'secondary usage' as visual aids for teachers and trainers. (Our job was in effect to 'popularise' academic research findings/ideas – though in terms of audience ratings we rarely got prime time exposure.) Once the subject was agreed, I got a budget to make a series of programmes – usually in series of ten.⁶

The role of the AED covered topics such as language and science education that Twitchin describes as being akin to what people might do in evening classes, like 'distance learning without qualifications'. Despite the BBC's link with the Open University (OU) – conceived as a 'university of the air' – the series was not connected to the OU (Jones 2021 covers the AED more widely but does not mention this). The content of the programmes could also be of use vocationally, for example, in police training or housing departments seeking to achieve better race relations. The education banner meant that the AED was not measured or led by ratings, as was the case elsewhere in the BBC. Thus, a combination of the AED's marginal position and the personal drive of Twitchin are key reasons that *Five Views* got made at all. Twitchin's interest in race and diversity issues is reflected in his other work such as *The Black and White* media show.⁷ The production of that programme is inescapably tied to another contextual factor of the 1970s – a long-running and much criticized BBC series 'The Black and white minstrel show'. As Hendy (2022) shows, for many years, senior BBC managers seemed unaware of the offensive nature of the show. *The Black and White* media show (later turned into a resource book for teaching – Twitchin 1992) he says, 'critiqued extracts from TV broadcasts (mainly from News and Drama Depts, together with an interview on comedy with Lenny Henry, and featuring Bhikkhu (sic) [Parekh] At the time, it was an unusual piece of editorial "self-reflection" by the BBC'.

Baert (2015) notes that fields such as race and ethnic relations 'often entails a strong politico-ethical component ... due to the nature of the topic' (p. 170).⁸ He identifies two ideal types of intellectual interventions – intellectual and politico-ethical positioning. While the former relies on persuasiveness, locating the speaker in a field of scholarly debates, the latter has

a more explicitly public purpose or effect. Yet what is notable here is that the political/ethical component is at least as much due to positioning by the BBC in creating and curating a space for the interventions to occur. The public purpose is therefore institutional as well as individual. In this sense, the media history of *Five Views* provides an insight into its origins as adult education; it became a five-part series because the AED wanted to centre experts and to have more than a one-off programme. Having mainly academics speak makes it look more like 'education'. The mainly university settings for the talks affirm this.

However, while the discussion thus far suggests a highly planned set of speakers and themes/topics, to an extent it was also coincidence, stemming from Twitchin's awareness that Hall⁹ was giving a public talk for the BSA in May 1978. Having acquired permission to film it, he adds: 'When I saw in specialist press that each talk was scheduled, I got the Dept to assign 5 additional "M-R B"¹⁰ broadcast slots. The 5 speakers gave their copyright permission for BBC to broadcast these public educational talks in a BBC TV series of "personal views" with texts to be reproduced in a CRE booklet'. In other words, they were 'public events arranged independently of the BBC during 1978'. He recalls Rex as a 'famous name', but the presenters of the five perspectives who get to appear as experts or public intellectual indicate that other scholars and topics were not considered, or speaking in the right time frame for the BBC. Indeed in the booklet, Twitchin (1978) regrets that employment was not included.

While the talks were not set up or commissioned by the BBC, there were additional ways in which the academic speakers were relatively autonomous from the Corporation. Each talk was arranged by the local organizers – the BSA¹¹ for Hall and three university settings for the others. The BBC was not involved in how the talks were announced locally, or who was invited; there is no information about the actual audiences. From the setting or organizer, we can infer that Parekh is speaking at the AED at Hull University, suggesting that the audience is the general public. Hall's talk to the BSA likely means that the audience was made-up of sociologists although there is no mention of this event in the BSA official history, which implies it is not in the archives that drew on (Platt 2014). Rex is speaking at Warwick University where he was based at the time. As Little spoke at Southlands College,¹² and the film mentions his audience as including teachers, this is the only time this much information is provided. There are occasional cutaways to the audience in each film (an approximation is there are between 20 and 40 people in the audience for each) that provide a place for edits to occur to fit each talk to the time available for the BBC slot.

Yet there is one area in which the BBC's role in shaping the *Five Views* was decisive. While the four social scientists deliver talks in a lecture format, the fifth film, featuring Trevor Huddleston (1913–1998) then the

Bishop of Stepney, is noticeably different. For the former, Twitchin says 'I deployed a single film camera on each speaker (making in effect an "outside broadcast", with no cost of studio; with no fees to the contributors; and with the cost of publication of texts undertaken by CRE)'. This single camera viewpoint works best with a static speaker; hence, the form and style of the academic lecture enables this mode of capture. On the other hand, the Huddleston film intersperses extracts from a lecture he gave to the Runnymede Trust, with moving images of him at work in Africa, where he was based in the 1940–50s.¹³ This chimes with his talk, providing a 'Third World perspective' (Huddleston 1978) on race and his anti-apartheid activism. This more visual format was only possible because there was archive film of Huddleston that the BBC could access. To produce similar filmed material on the other speakers might have made the programmes livelier than a lecture but also more expensive. Thus, this different form of narration positions Huddleston as separate from academic speakers. While he might still be seen as providing an expert viewpoint, the material on him 'in the field' places him as a practitioner not a scholar.

Although the four academics are equal in most respects, there is a striking variance in how they are positioned by the BBC, which is only evident in the films (as it differs from the brief biographies provided in the booklet). Each film starts with a voice over, neither the voice nor the actual words are credited to anyone. Rex's talk is stated as being 'based on 15 years of sociological research in the Sparkbrook area of Birmingham', while Little is identified via his role as a former research director at ILEA.¹⁴ The introductions for the two 'minority' speakers are however distinct. The introduction for Parekh says the talk 'was given by a senior lecturer . . . Dr Bhikhu Parekh who himself came to England from India in 1959'. The one for Hall says that 'Dr Hall who came from Jamaica 20 years ago is a director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham'.¹⁵ Casting these two as migrants coming from elsewhere is a form of othering and if applied equally it would note that Rex came to Britain from South Africa. An alternative reading is possible, maybe conveying that they speak from first-hand experience, but that implies Rex and Little do not. As the latter are positioned by their social research and public policy experience, this also conveys differential kinds of expertise. When I asked Twitchin about this, he was surprised and not previously been aware of the difference.

The 'ethnic' marking of Hall in the voiceover is less than a simple othering however. *Five Views* came out in a time when public intellectuals were largely white men, often with Oxbridge connections, as symbolized by the famous historian AJP Taylor.¹⁶ Hall both does and does not share this connection. He had an Oxbridge background (Mullan 1987) but did not teach there. Unlike Taylor, Hall (and Parekh) are visible as men of

racialized heritage, something that would be apparent to an audience watching the programmes, arguably making them the earliest post-war 'minority' public intellectuals, something that this series enabled. If *Five Views* had been on radio and so not visible to an audience, their fluent speech and voice/tone would make this less evident, although Parekh's name does carry a different connotation to that of Hall.

Performance and public intellectuals

Taking public engagement to mean any of the ways in which academics seek to contribute to and inform public discourse through their scholarly expertise makes *Five Views* a clear instance of that. If it also means a dialogical process then the distinctive scholarly mode of the talks – the lecture – does not usually enable that. The films are made up of introduction and a talk; there are no questions or input from the audience. While the lecture is a particular kind of academic performance, there are differences in how it can be presented and staged (Goffman 1981). Performance is observable in the demeanour of the speaker, within a 'staged' setting and an audience being addressed. For Twitchin, Taylor was the model for what he wanted *Five Views* to be. Renowned for his ability to convey complex events to the public in a clear style, lecturing directly to camera with no visual aids or speaking notes, Taylor was a prominent broadcast public intellectual of the 1960s. Twitchin calls this 'one hour telly – if the speaker was lively enough to sustain a TV programme', and this seems to be another rationale for the selection of the five men who fronted *Five Views*. Adding performativity to positioning thus reveals other layers to public engagement.

Despite this, there was no direction from the BBC to the speakers about the way they appear in front of the camera. This produces notable positional differences, though we cannot know whether the stance of the speaker was a personal choice, or determined by the space or set up by the local organizers, bearing in mind the single camera the BBC used. Self-positioning and environment (the shape of the room, the audience numbers, the set-up of the cameras, possibly the lighting in the room) overlap to convey different styles of lecturing and performance. Both Hall and Parekh are standing but even this is in quite different ways; the latter is alone before a lectern, while Hall is behind a table with two people seated (presumably chairing the event) on either side of him. This 'frontality' makes Parekh's talk like a more static classic university lecture, while for Hall the layout of the room places the audience in front and to the side of him.

In contrast, Rex and Little are seated but also in different ways. Rex is at a desk in the middle of what may be a lecture theatre, with the audience on three sides of him. Little seems to be sitting on a table or a desk rather than a chair; he is not reading but does glance at what may be his notes

to his right; he shows some slides with data to the audience (these are the tables that appear in the booklet, Little 1978). Rex, Hall and Parekh do not use any visual aids. Rex and Parekh noticeably read from a text in front of them, while Hall does not seem to even glance at any notes, in what looks a display of his well-known fluent public speaking style when combined with his resonant voice (Scott 2017). These differences in posture make Rex and Parekh seem the most formal due to the lectern/desk in front of them which may also make their vocal tone the least varied. Hall's delivery style seems to flow more easily, while Little – unencumbered by an object in front of him and perhaps perched on a desk – looks the least formal of the four. The head and shoulders or upper body filming restricts further assessment of bodily comportment.

The four academic speakers can also be assessed in relation to one another through content as well style. The topics they chose – the state (Hall 1978), housing (Rex 1978), family (Parekh 1978) and education (Little 1978) is where they had more autonomy as authors/speakers than in the layout of the venue, or the audience, or how they would be captured on film. Twitchin did not exercise editorial control over topic or content. He says: 'They decided what to talk about and they were experts in the field'; and 'None of the "Five Views" were altered editorially by me or by higher management in any way'. His view is that Parekh was not then 'well known ... [and also] not a sociologist but a political philosopher who was interested in race relations and extrapolated from his own family'. The main direction from the BBC seems to have been 'they had to make it topical. Their content was to indicate their research findings and explain to a non-academic tv audience'. Twitchin believes the speakers were made aware of the names¹⁷ of who else would be in the series though none of them reference each other, making each programme look autonomous.

While there is no overt intra-positioning, they can be located in other ways, that may not be less obvious to the public, such as disciplinary orientation. Rex and Hall provide the most obviously sociological analyses, while Little's is a mixture of educational sociology and social policy. Parekh's talk is quasi-anthropological and bears little relation to the political theory he mainly worked on in his academic career. Theoretically, Rex's approach is rooted in the Weberian analysis he was known for (Rex 1986) while Hall's could be regarded as a Marxist perspective. However, neither of them even mentions Weber or Marx, so this is at odds with Baert's (2015) view that intellectuals use flags to establish their position. The use of such signals clearly can be effective in scholarly fields, but in public engagement they are less evident than academic labels. Nevertheless, signals matter because positioning is an ongoing accomplishment, fortified by peer and external recognition, requiring maintenance over time and a degree of consistency in the message or the analytical method (Baert 2015).

Performance includes a combination of voice and appearance, underscoring the ways in which a speaker's 'aura, authority ... [and] rhetorical skills' (Baert 2015, 170) are inter-linked. Narrative is one effective rhetorical device that Baert sees as 'relatively coherent stories' enabling successful positioning. While each of the *Five Views* is like essays that seek to make a persuasive argument, there is a tension between the academic realm and public engagement. Judged as narrative the speakers deploy different positions to their audience(s). Parekh's tale of Asian families and Asian youth has a more compelling, or at least first-hand quality, than Hall's sharp but drier analysis of race and the state. On the other hand, Hall's use of allusion and irony – this may be the first time he talked of the British 'sweet tooth', and 'cuppa' (tea) – is memorable. Also notable is that Hall uses the first person 'I' more than the other speakers, giving his talk a less formal 'academic' style. In this light, Rex and Little are positioned in between these two poles, as both deal with government policy but link it to housing and education. There is no way of assessing if these were more 'everyday' or recognizable topics to an audience. Reading across the four social science talks, despite the distinct theoretical and disciplinary concerns there is a clear 'critical' consensus. Each of them re-locates what might be seen as the problem of minority communities as an issue of racism. They treat racism not as a matter of individual antipathy or prejudice but rather as historical and structural, influencing attitudes from political elites to the everyday. They adopt a critical stance towards government policy and prevailing ideologies, especially Powellism, as central in shaping the public discourse in race. In a lesser way, all of them at least gesture to a colonial context that frames race and racism in Britain. Hence, speaking on racism in the 1970s political context, they are committed rather than 'neutral' intellectuals.

Appearance is a further performative dimensions in self-presentation – their choice of dress and address to camera. The former must be taken to be personal choice, shaped by prevailing codes about academic and masculine appearance in the late 1970s.¹⁸ Hall, Rex and Parekh each wear a tie. While only the upper part of their body is visible, each of them wears a shirt and jacket. Little is again the least formal, in a light blue safari style jacket or suit and an open necked shirt and this relative informality – of dress, posture and text – makes him least like a 'talking head' in the Taylor model of public intellectual. Using visual aids, even in a basic format, he arguably appears more 'modern' and televisual. As the camera shots are mainly from a middle distance, there are few close-ups of the speakers. None of them appear to be speaking directly into the camera (of the four academics Rex comes closest to looking directly into the camera), reaffirming the sense that these are academic talks that happen to be filmed, rather than the direct to cameras style Taylor was known for.

The wider sense of effects rather than intentions in positioning is useful because it includes, but goes beyond, whether ‘ideas are taken up by others and, if successful, how they are adopted’ (Baert 2015, 16). As there is no overt audience reaction – the cutaways generally feature people looking attentive – or audience data,¹⁹ other impacts can be suggested. The most direct policy connection is in Little. His focus on ethnic minority educational attainment and disadvantage underpinned the 1985 Swann report on educational underachievement, as Troyna (1983) shows.²⁰ For the others, there is a less clear link. In 1981, Rex became the first head of the Social Science Research Council Research unit in ethnic relations, a role that led him to write an important piece on the relationship between sociology and government (Rex 1981). Hall and Parekh became prominent public figures in different ways, the former in regular demand as a commentator/analyst. His public activities underline his lifelong commitment to extra academic roles and engagement make him a more obviously ‘public’ intellectual than the others, indeed various ‘policy’ engagements throughout his life indicate that he was more than the theorist he is commonly seen as (Murji 2020, 2022). Parekh has had narrower public exposure, his main public and media prominence was at the time of the publication of the Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, which he chaired (Parekh 2000).²¹

Another contextual effect of the public profile of Hall and Rex is interesting. Twitchin saw the talks as sociology, and at this time the discipline had a public reputation for being left-wing.²² In 1977, the year before *Five Views* aired, Julius Gould accused sociology of left-wing bias, highlighting two courses at the OU he regarded as containing Marxist bias. The so-called Gould affair gained attention in the press and led to internal reviews at the OU and the BSA (Platt 2014). Gould complained about an OU course, Education and Capitalism, that included a review unit by Hall. In that Hall suggests that the view of Marxism taken earlier in the course is simplistic (Hammersley 2016). But in his attack on sociology, Gould names Rex as one of the biased sociologists, not Hall.²³ This is odd as Rex is usually seen as less radical than Hall but found himself positioned as a biased/left-wing sociologist. This was not the only difficulty Rex encountered in this decade. The Race group of the British Sociological Association sought to prevent Rex from being a speaker at an event (Platt 2014). And Rex was also a key target of criticism in the influential *The Empire Strikes Back* (CCCS 1982) where his Weberian sociology was seen as a governmental tool to manage race as a social problem. Thus it is unsurprising that he felt that ‘The study of race relations ... seems beset with feuds and conflicts of a quite theological intensity’ (Rex 1986, 64).

Conclusion

Five Views is both a moment in time (the TV programmes) as well as an ongoing resource because it was published by the CRE. The latter gives it a life beyond a single intervention that, as Baert notes, is not likely to bring about effective positioning in itself. Viewed many years later, it is significant for its production, for the staging a series of talks on racism, for its choice of speakers and presenting styles. It is also notable for its content, where much of what the contributors discuss still has echoes in the present day, although the focus here is more emergence and performance. The idea of positioning works across both parts and they co-constitute each other. It offers a multi-perspectival viewpoint, combining performativity, self and other positioning, and institutional and contextual positioning. There are intersecting processes involved in which the speakers are both shaping their own presentation or position, while also being shaped in various ways, indicating that public engagement is made up of many sides.

How the series came about was a choice by the BBC in the political context of the time, led by one individual. Located as adult education, it avoided the problems of balance as it could be seen as experts talking from an academic perspective; the settings reinforce that. However, who came to be the experts featured in the series was to an extent a matter of who was already known to the BBC (mainly Hall and Rex), and who they were aware of as speaking in the months the series was filmed, on varied aspects of race and racism. While the content was largely a matter of self-presentation without BBC editorial oversight, the ways the speakers present indicate dynamic interrelations between self and other positioning, suggesting limits to individual choice and strategy. The setting and audience, the position of the camera, as well personal style, such as dress and stance, all play a part. They connect the mode of address (using visual aids or not) and environment (the shape of the room, the position of the audience), making positioning an interacting process of many elements. The series was constructed in a way that now seems anachronistic, with all-male panel and the lecture as mode of address is now less common on television. While the effects of *Five Views* cannot be gauged in terms of audience response, as public engagement it is notable that the speakers are not detached intellectuals: each offers a critique of British society and the state of race relations in the 1970s in a context that was still in the shadow of Powellism and saw the emergence of a new right politics.

Notes

1. All the speakers were men; as the producer notes, a series like this would not now be made with an all-male line up, so the programmes 'are of their time'.

2. See Zelinsky (2023) for another illustration of performance and positioning.
3. Though only Little, and Rex to a lesser extent, provide facts if that means official data and statistics on education and housing.
4. Hendy (2022) and Jones (2021) provide background on adult education in the BBC, with Jones saying it did not sit comfortably within the aims of the BBC. Neither mentions *Five Views*.
5. A 2023 exhibition publication on this includes an essay on 'It ain't half racist mum'. See: <https://ravenrow.org/exhibitions/people-make-television>. I thank Ben Pitcher for bringing this to my attention.
6. The full series included: "Anglo-Saxon Attitudes", "Children without prejudice" "Teacher, examine yourself", "Community languages" (all addressed to teacher-training), "All in the mind" (re mental health provision), "A house over our heads" (Social housing provision), and "Crosstalk" (intro to intercultural communication skills for advice centres) . . . Each had a support manual for training usage'. (Twitchin, pers. comm.).
7. This did get a prime-time slot with Parts 1 and 2 shown on BBC1 in 1985/86, in the 'Panorama' slot – an important current affairs programme in the BBC schedule.
8. Susen and Baert (2017) are critical of positioning theory for its lack of attention to diversity, by which I think he means people, while Baert seems to refer to race studies as a topic.
9. He was aware of Hall 'as a regular' commentator on the BBC on race and riots/protests, whose analyses were 'mesmerizing' and always 'fresh and new'.
10. Multi-Racial Britain.
11. At the time, the BSA was based at LSE in London. The precise location of this talk is unknown.
12. A college of Roehampton Institute.
13. A biography of his life and work is in McGrandle (2005).
14. Inner London Education Authority.
15. By 1978, Hall had been in Britain for closer to 30 than 20 years.
16. For instance, of more than 40 BBC Reith lecturers from 1948 to 1990 only two were women and only one obviously not white.
17. Mullan's (1987) chapter on Rex traces some connection between him and Hall in the 1960s.
18. Age is a limited factor here as the four academics were born within a decade of each other, with Rex the oldest and Little the youngest. In 1978, only Rex was in his 50s, the others in their 40s.
19. In any case, for Baert effect is not seen as narrowly concerned with audience reach.
20. Moreover, a 1987 LRB letter mentions Little 'as one of the instigators of the Swann enquiry' – <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-article/v09/n22/letters>.
21. He was ennobled as a Member of the House of Lords in 2000. Hall was the deputy chair of the Commission.
22. Reinforced in public by Malcolm Bradbury's 1975 novel (and subsequent BBC TV series) *The History Man*.
23. Platt provides the BSA perspective on this; the OU side is in its archive – <http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/History-of-the-OU/?%20p=46>.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to John Twitchin for his time and all the information he provided. I also thank the BFI archive staff for helping me to access the original films, and the three reviewers of this article for their constructive feedback.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Karim Murji  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7490-7906>

References

- Baert, P. 2015. *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*. London: John Wiley.
- Baert, P., and M. Morgan. 2018. "A Performative Framework for the Study of Intellectuals." *European Journal of Social Theory* 21 (3): 322–339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431017690737>.
- Bhattacharyya, G., S. Virdee, and A. Winter. 2020. "Revisiting Histories of Anti-Racist Thought and Activism." *Identities* 27 (1): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2019.1647686>.
- Burns, T. 1977. *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*. London: Macmillan.
- CCCS. 1982. *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*. London: Hutchinson.
- Gardner, C., and P. Cohen, eds. 1982. *It Ain't Half Racist, Mum: Fighting Racism in the Media*. London: Comedia Pub. Group/Campaign against Racism in the Media.
- Goffman, E. 1981. *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hall, S. 1978. "Racism and Reaction." *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain, BBC TV and CRE*: 23–35.
- Hall, S., C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke, and B. Roberts. 1978. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan (revised edition 2013).
- Hammersley, M. 2016. "An Ideological Dispute: Accusations of Marxist Bias in the Sociology of Education During the 1970s." *Contemporary British History* 30 (2): 242–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2015.1112275>.
- Harré, R. 1999. "The Rediscovery of the Human Mind: The Discursive Approach." *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2 (1): 43–62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-839X.00025>.
- Hendy, D. 2022. *The BBC: A People's History*. London: Profile Books.
- Hirsch, S. 2020. *In the Shadow of Enoch Powell: Race, Locality and Resistance*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Huddleston, T. 1978. "Third World Perspective." *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain, BBC TV and CRE* 66–75.
- Jones, A. 2021. "The Rises and Falls of Adult Education on the BBC Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique." *French Journal of British Studies* 26 (XXVI–1). <https://journals.openedition.org/fcb/7377#tocto1n7>.

- Kurzman, C., and L. Owens. 2002. "The Sociology of Intellectuals." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (1): 63–90. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.140745>.
- Little, A. 1978. "Schools and Race." *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain, BBC TV and CRE* 56–65.
- Malik, S. 2002. *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television*. London: SAGE.
- McGrandle, P. 2005. *Trevor Huddleston*. Edinburgh: A&C Black.
- Mullan, B. 1987. *Sociologists on Sociology*. London: Croom Helm.
- Murji, K. 2020. "Stuart Hall as a Criminological Theorist-Activist." *Theoretical Criminology* 24 (3): 447–460. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480619889106>.
- Murji, K. 2022. "An Interventionist Sociologist: Stuart Hall, Public Engagement and Racism." *The Sociological Review* 70 (5): 901–915. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261221108584>.
- Parekh, B. 1978. "Asians in Britain: Problem or Opportunity?" *Five Views of Multiracial Britain, BBC TV and CRE* 36–55.
- Parekh, B. 2000. *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*. London: Profile Books.
- Phoenix, A. 2005. "Remembered Racialisation." In *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice*, edited by K. Murji and J. Solomos, 103–122. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Platt, J. 2014. *A Sociological History of the British Sociological Association*. Durham: Sociologypress.
- Ramamurthy, A. 2013. *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements*. London: Pluto Press.
- Rex, J. 1978. "Race and the Inner City." *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain, BBC TV and CRE* 9–22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511557828>.
- Rex, J. 1981. "A Working Paradigm for Race Relations Research." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4 (1): 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1981.9993321>.
- Rex, J. 1986. "The Role of Class Analysis in the Study of Race Relations – A Weberian Perspective." In *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, edited by J. Rex and D. Mason, 64–83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sandbrook, D. 2011. *State of Emergency: The Way We Were: Britain, 1970-1974*. London: Penguin.
- Sandbrook, D. 2012. *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979*. London: Penguin.
- Scannell, P., ed. 1991. *Broadcast Talk*. London: Sage Publications.
- Scott, D. 2017. *Stuart Hall's Voice: Intimations of an Ethics of Receptive Generosity*. Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press.
- Seaton, J. 2015. *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation, 1974–1987*. London: Profile Books.
- Susen, S., and P. Baert. 2017. *The Sociology of Intellectuals: After 'The Existentialist Moment'*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Troyna, B. 1983. "Multiracial Education: Just Another Brick in the Wall?" *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 10 (3): 424–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1983.9975789>.
- Twitchin, J. 1978. "Introduction." *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain, BBC and CRE*: 5–7.
- Twitchin, J. 1992. *The Black and White Media Book. Handbook for the Study of Racism and Television*. Stoke: Trentham Books.
- Zelinsky, D. 2023. "How Intellectuals Perform: Meaning Making and Community in the Czechoslovak Philosophical Underground." *Sociology* 57 (4): 715–732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385221112233>.