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'RACE' AND SILENCE

The Discourse of Reticence

by

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community cohesion project in its own right – bringing children and young people of different backgrounds together – but a piece of research which has much to say about the discourse around such things, especially how in the face of silence and the process of silencing we can hold difficult conversations about ‘race’.

My work colleagues in the Diocese of Coventry will have noticed that on occasion I would disappear into the University of Warwick Library or hold strange meetings with unfamiliar people. Some mornings I would appear tired after burning the midnight oil the night before. Thank you for bearing with me. More than this, I am extremely thankful to the Diocese for granting me time off for sabbatical study in the spring of 2005 and some generous financial support throughout. Without this support I cannot see how this thesis would ever have appeared. A special mention and thank you is due to Ruth Wagstaffe who has provided me with loyal and consistent support in the busy diocesan office. It is a real privilege to serve as a minister and Director for Social Responsibility in the Diocese of Coventry, which I know shares a commitment to build stronger and more inclusive communities with the people from many diverse cultural and faith backgrounds which now form part of a lively and vibrant city whose motto proudly declares itself a ‘city of peace and reconciliation’. Finally, and most importantly I owe everything to my family, not only my parents and extended family but especially my wife Rosie who has had to bear the brunt of my obsessions. Only her love and understanding made the journey possible at all.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

My understanding of ‘race’ and racism in Britain is that it is discussed variously. Sometimes it steals the headlines as when Stephen Lawrence was murdered (Macpherson 1999). Yet at other times there is a preference not to mention the subject at all. Public discourse on ‘race’ and racism can be reticent. Why is this? Is ‘race’ a difficult subject of conversation? The first chapter of this thesis examines the roots of ‘race’.

In Chapter Two the silence and silencing at a public level but also in everyday interaction becomes the focus. Difficult conversations are considered. The dynamic of reticence and fluency in the discourse of ‘race’ is explored and conceptualised with reference to the limited material in the literature on the silence and silencing of ‘race’ discourse. This raises the question as to who is responsible for silence; and, whose interests, if any, might be served.

Chapter Three presents a real world enquiry – the Swapping Cultures Initiative in Coventry and Warwickshire; involving over 1,000 children and young people that took place mainly between 2002 and 2004. It reveals that a significant proportion of participants (38.1%) experienced bullying, racism, or being picked on, based on their cultural background, and that these issues are difficult matters for conversation (38%). What is revealed is both the complexity of the participants’ identities and the subtle and sophisticated ways in which their cultural backgrounds are managed through conversation.

What then does silence mean when the subject is ‘race’? Certainly it is nuanced and complex. Chapter Four provides a series of concluding reflections on ‘race’ and silence, identifying the major factors when seeking to understand and address ‘race’ issues in their local context. It places centrally the ‘discourse of reticence’ as a significant, hitherto underestimated, element when considering the prevailing and pervading presence of ‘race’ and racism.

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Introduction – Discovering the ‘Discourse of Reticence’

‘Race’ has always intrigued as well as puzzled me. Growing up in the second half of the 20th century as a white person in an almost entirely white suburban town on the outskirts of Birmingham, Britain’s 2nd city, the social differences I mainly encountered in my earliest years were those of class. Like my grandparents and parents before me, I never was quite sure whether my roots were working or middle class and I belonged to one or both as it suited others or indeed myself. But this uniformly monochrome white and generally uneventful existence came abruptly to an end when I began work in the late 1960s in the increasingly culturally diverse city of Birmingham. Keen to get on, but faced with the culturally unfamiliar, I first needed to learn to get by in this strange world. It was through the encounter of new social contexts in which ‘race’ significantly featured I made the discovery of a ‘discourse of reticence’.¹ The ‘discourse of reticence’ offers a new approach to understanding the complex and nuanced discourse of ‘race’ and racism. This introduction therefore begins by briefly tracing my autobiographical and historical journey of discovery before outlining the process by which it is explored in this thesis.

In the mid 1970s I began work as a Probation Officer in the north Birmingham area of Handsworth. It was one of the city’s ‘twilight zones’ where ‘race’ was a major issue (Rex and Moore 1967: 28-29). In my day-to-day meetings with people, there were many new experiences for me to understand – ‘Ganja’

¹ The ‘discourse of reticence’ can be defined as the discourse of silence and silencing that lies within the wider discourse of ‘race’. Historically overlooked, its effect is to inform, shape and construct that wider discourse, but given the ambivalence and ambiguities surrounding silence and silencing, it needs careful interpretation. The ‘discourse of reticence’ will make frequent appearances in this thesis as it is critically explored and developed.

smoking Rastafarians, delinquent white youths who broke into cars or houses, Asian men convicted for offences of grievous bodily harm as a result of inter-family disputes, homeless Vietnamese boat people desperate for somewhere to live; bewildered Ugandan Asians; and, confused older white residents having an acute sense of the grandeur of their past community life being lost to a new social world of crime and disorder they found difficult to come to terms with. It was a situation in which I was having to learn quickly and I soon learned that individual criminality rubbed shoulders with wider social dysfunction. I well remember in the 1970s a rising star in the West Midlands' Police, an Inspector David Webb, inspired a Report on Handsworth, *Shades of Grey*, in response to increasing local disquiet (Brown 1977). Webb had been one of the first policemen in the country to pioneer 'community policing'. In the report Webb pointed beyond individual criminality to social factors, such as the high levels of unemployment that characterized the lives of young people in Handsworth. Webb, a man I thought to be ahead of his time, left the force disillusioned in 1981.

Examples of 'race' thinking and racism were commonplace. A probation officer colleague of mine, demonstrated that even apparently fair-minded Probation Officers were submitting reports to the Birmingham Courts in which black clients were more likely to be recommended for custody (Whitehouse 1986).

This offended my sense of justice but it was no easy matter to seek to correct this – black youngsters would still be more likely to go into custody for reasons beyond what any fair-minded probation officer might write. In relation to

unemployment, homelessness, family breakdown and many other factors the dice were loaded against the black person.

I was also aware that those in positions of power in the city, in statutory, business, voluntary or community bodies, were almost entirely white. My own father was a Company Director of one of the many small manufacturing firms that characterised Birmingham's nearby Jewellery Quarter and on visiting his factory I observed that those on the factory floor were entirely Asian or black, whilst those in the offices and managing the business were white. I carried a deep sense of disquiet inside that there were serious inequalities in the work place and that these reflected inequalities more generally in society.

By the early 1980s I was a Senior Probation Officer, based in Tottenham, North London. Here, too, lived many people whose recent family roots lay overseas, but things were not the same in this different social and geographic location.

There were longer established groups – for example, Poles and Jews. There were large groups from Cyprus, West Africa, and Asia as well as many other parts of the world, people whom I had not directly encountered before. I found the young men with Caribbean roots were very different to the Rastafarians of Handsworth. Indeed London was far more cosmopolitan. Following the Broadwater Farm 'riot' in 1985 I assisted the Middlesex Area Probation Service in making a response for submission to the Gifford Inquiry (1986). I found the 'riot' deeply disturbing: it involved people I knew personally. I knew the bereaved, I met the injured, I wrote court reports on the offenders, and I talked with people in the communities affected.

Every now and then, tensions in communities erupt and coincidentally I have happened to be in the vicinity when some of those have happened – in Lozells Road, Birmingham in 1981; in Broadwater Farm, 1985; and, St Paul’s, Bristol, 1986. Also, I have visited other places where there had been community disturbances – Moss Side, Toxteth, and Brixton. Through this experience I became convinced that, notwithstanding the wisdom of Scarman (1981) and Gifford (1986), the common and media discourse surrounding and following these events did not result in the real message, the sense of these ‘riots’, being heard. Consequently, I wrote a booklet, *Riot* (Hall, J. 1989) in which this concern was addressed. It begins by quoting Neil Ascherson’s observation, ‘After a great riot there is much to be cleared away: the rubble, the burned out cars, the broken glass. But then, for weeks afterwards, there is work to do clearing away the thick layer of nonsense which sifts down like ash from the stratosphere upon us all’ (Hall, J. 1989: 3). I have since become persuaded that ‘race’, even more so than ‘riot’, is prone to discourse at the surface level and that there can be both voiced ‘nonsense’ and missed meaning in ‘silence’.

In 1989 I was ordained a clergyman in the Church of England. As an ordinand I had parish placements in inner city Bristol, as a curate I served my title in Winchmore Hill, North London; and, through the greater part of the 1990s I was Vicar of a large parish of 16,000 people straddling London’s North Circular Road. In 2001 I moved diocese, from London to Coventry, taking up a new post as Director for Social Responsibility. The experience of living with diverse cultures has been personally enriching and stimulating, whilst at the same time presenting me with some challenging dilemmas around ‘race’. On more than one

occasion since I have been ordained, 'race' has been the subject of conversation and on some occasions this has been characterized either by silence or by a deliberate attempt to silence me. I find this puzzling. Why should such conversations on 'race' be so difficult and how can talking about 'race' ever be so undesirable as to warrant making it taboo? These experiences led me to undertake an MPhil as a means of exploring these issues further (Hall, J. 2005).

This subject remains my obsession and this thesis is an opportunity to engage with it in order to gain a deeper understanding of the ambiguous discourse, with its voices and silences, around 'race' and racism and the society of which I am part. I am convinced that until this deeper understanding is gained not only by myself but more widely, policies and strategies to address the divisions, conflicts and lack of cohesion can be misdirected and/or ineffective.

This thesis will, therefore, begin in Chapter One with some essential groundwork, an exploration of the roots of 'race' and racism. This will necessarily involve some historical digging. It is argued here that 'race' is without biological or scientific foundation; rather it is a social construct. Upon this social construct has been built a complex and powerful ideology with deep social and historical roots.² In no small way the foundation for such an ideology rests on a particular understanding of the dichotomy between self and other, but this cannot be looked at without also then considering the impact global

² An ideology in a Marxist sense is often seen as a kind of veil, hiding the true material relations in society. Althusser sees ideology, not as deceptive, but rather as a conceptual framework 'through which men interpret, make sense of, experience and "live" the material conditions in which they find themselves' (Hall, S. 1980, p. 33). An ideology constructs social reality. The extent to which it is determined by dominant and powerful classes and groups is much debated. Ideology will be a recurring subject for attention in this thesis.

movements of people have had upon the discourse of 'race'. The conclusion of Chapter One moves from the geographically general, to reflect on 'race' in Britain since World War II and then more locally still, the context of Coventry and Warwickshire in which the thesis research, described in Chapter Three, was conducted.

Chapter Two picks up the theme of silence and silencing in respect of 'race' discourse. Although silence has been noted in passing by academics approaching the subject of 'race' from different disciplines, it is argued here that the subject has yet to be adequately addressed in its own right. Nowhere has work been done to develop a theoretical and contextual underpinning for the social processes at work in 'race' and silence. In racialised societies a continuing discourse of 'race' serves particular purposes; and, silence and silencing (not voices alone) have a significant function in mediating the ideology of 'race'. Silence and silencing are part of the manipulative repertoire of options available to government. Yet as silence and silencing are listened to, it becomes clear that there are various, sometimes contradictory reasons why they occur. On the one hand silence can be used, for example, to avoid the difficult, the dangers of division, to keep social intercourse from fragmenting altogether; or on the other hand, it can be the means of maintaining 'othering' and avoiding tackling issues of inequality, justice and social inclusion. Sometimes it seems to be a deliberately constructed silence at other times a 'normal' even unconscious psychological response to a difficult conversation or perceived threat.

In the broader social context, what is interesting is that 'race' is but one of a number of areas of social life where prejudice and discriminatory behaviour occur. As McGhee (2005) discovered – when he reflected on his earlier study of gay and lesbian issues – hatred, intolerance, prejudice and discrimination have an inescapable connectivity across a number of social themes, which includes 'race'. The presence of silence and silencing is not uniquely found in respect of the subject of 'race' – it is observed in many other areas of life. Foucault (1998), for example, has written extensively about how talk about 'sex' has been subject to silence and silencing. The same academic attention given to 'sex' and silence has not been given to 'race' and silence, until now.

Key questions in understanding the discourse of 'race' in this social context are to ask why silence occurs, what purpose it might serve and for whose benefit.

Where indeed does it come from? Do nations and governments manipulate and regulate 'race' by the use of silence? At the level of local discourse how does silence operate in interpersonal interaction? Is silence in respect of 'race' similar to other more general silences or is it different, the product of quite distinctive forces at work?

Chapter Three describes empirical work undertaken to explore 'race' and silence in the specificity of local context. Through a multi-agency community cohesion³ project conducted between 2002-2004, involving 786 children and young people in Coventry and Warwickshire, it was possible within the wider aims and broader scope of this initiative, to target and explore the discourse of 'race' and silence.

³ A definition of 'community cohesion' as formally defined by the Local Government Association is provided on page 213.

Through the perspectives and experiences of participants the specific issues of ‘othering’, self-identity, difference, ‘race’, and cultural background are investigated; and, in addition, the ease or difficulty they found in talking about these things is revealed. This empirical work raises a number of questions: What impact does the silencing of conversations around ‘race’ have on children and young people and what are the implications of this for policymakers, teachers, leaders and parents? Does the ‘discourse of reticence’ undermine attempts to address such issues as racism and bullying, and the effectiveness of teaching ‘citizenship’?

In the light of the research undertaken, the final chapter, Chapter Four, revisits the more theoretical earlier chapters on ‘race’ and silence, and in so doing underlines what is an emerging and consistent theme: a process I call the ‘discourse of reticence’. The thesis concludes by delineating the key elements in the relationship between ‘race’ and silence: the part played by the ‘discourse of reticence’ in British society. The case is made that it is a significant discourse serving the needs of a ‘racialised’ and ‘racialising’, yet ambivalent and contradictory, society from the highest level of government and policy to the lowest level of inter-personal interaction in a local context.

Currently, government policy initiatives do not address the ‘discourse of reticence’, and this thesis, therefore, provides the opportunity for further reflection in the ongoing policy debate around the quest for community cohesion and social inclusion, whilst suggesting some new areas for further research and debate. In particular, community cohesion will be critiqued as a social construct,

for it is essentially a government, Home Office - driven, ideology introduced after the civil disturbances of 2001 with a view to containing any further outbreaks of disorder. With other associated ideologies, namely multiculturalism, (which first appeared before it) and the concept of citizenship (which has been developed since), these powerful forces work together to provide a discursive framework for 'race' in Britain today. The 'discourse of reticence', as outlined in this thesis, serves to reveal the processes at work in perpetuating the material and social inequalities, which underpin the continued existence of racialism and racism in British society. Whilst the operation of a 'discourse of reticence' can be demonstrated, it cannot be claimed that it characterizes discourse at all times or in all contexts, for 'race' related events are sometimes topics of intense speculation and interest. But even in these times it is important to ask in the clamour of voices, if there are silences. What this thesis argues is that an understanding of 'race' discourse must include silences as well as voices, and because the prevalence and significance of the silences is the more likely to be overlooked the 'discourse of reticence' is a subject deserving particular attention.

Chapter One The Roots of ‘Race’

Introduction

First, we explore the roots of ‘race’.⁴ Just as Musgrove (1968: 33) argued that ‘the adolescent was invented at the same time as the steam engine’, so it is argued here that the idea of ‘race’ did not always exist, but was invented ‘as a scientific or pseudo-scientific means of classifying the human population by physical type’ in the eighteenth century (Lively 1999: 13). ‘Race’, as a social construct of recent times, subsequently came to acquire considerable social significance. It provided the great economic, social and political movements of the past two centuries with an additional and potent ideology to draw on, with the result that racialised nations, racialised societies as well as local communities, were consequently created and sustained by it. Though most academics today acknowledge that the idea of ‘race’ no longer has any scientific or biological validity and there is but one ‘race’, the human race, it continues to be a commonly used concept in social discourse and its impact is still seen and keenly felt across the world (Blackburn 2000: Rose, S. and H. Rose 2005). As West (1994) convincingly argues, ‘race’ still matters!

Paradoxically, as the amount of literature published on ‘race’ continues to grow, and new understandings have been gained – e.g. of ‘new ethnicities’ (Hall, S.

⁴ ‘Race’ has been placed within quotation marks throughout to reflect its lack of biological or scientific basis, its contradictions, and my own reluctance to give the word undue legitimacy. It is a matter of personal preference. The emphasis was especially helpful to make when working with the Swapping Cultures Project (outlined in Chapter Three). The literature is divided on italicisation. Modood (2005: 54), for example, prefers to do away with scare quotes. He does not believe in making the distinction and on a strictly philosophical basis he is quite right, for they would surely have to be applied to a whole range of other words which also carry contradictory meanings, if I were being entirely consistent.

1996); of black feminism (Carby 1982, hooks 1992 and Mirza 1997); and, of ‘whiteness’ (Cohen 1996, 1997) – so, as Alexander and Knowles (2005: 3) argue, ‘these developments are, however, not without their losses and silences’, because they have made ‘the structures that maintain racial violence, exclusion and inequality less visible.’ It is therefore of little surprise to find racism slips in and out of the political agenda in Britain.⁵

Chapter One, therefore, begins with an exploration of the socially constructed, imagined and invented, ideology of ‘race’ and its practical expression through racism. This material charts its development following a broadly historical course. The first six sections provide a broad sweep approach to ‘race’ and ranges globally in order to develop the key theoretical issues; section 1.7 contextualises and brings the focus on to ‘Britain since World War II’. It examines some of the significant issues and moments that have shaped ‘race’ in Britain; and, it is followed by a concluding section 1.8 which sharpens the focus even more as the local context shifts to the ‘Coventry and Warwickshire’ sub-region of the West Midlands Region. In the course of this narrative the opportunity will be taken to review, albeit briefly, many of the key features and concepts of the current debate on ‘race’ and racism.

It is argued that, historically, ‘race’ has had and continues to have a significant social, economic and political influence – a significance both expressed by a voluble discourse of competing voices as well as obfuscated by a complex

⁵ Linda Bellos (2006) is a recent black woman author to make this point. In a Guardian article, ‘Don’t Wait For A Crisis’, she writes on the 25th anniversary of the Brixton riots about issues of equality being ‘ignored despite the law’. She concludes, ‘the government must use its laws to bring about justice and equality’.

though less often recognized ‘discourse of reticence’. As we shall argue, the historical discourse of ‘race’ is couched in silence and silencing. ‘Race’ and related concepts such as ‘racism’, ‘racist’, and ‘race-card’ are often not directly raised in conversation for they are hedged around with many difficulties. It is simply not the case that ‘race’, which was invented relatively recently, is ready to drop out of conversation because it is redundant; far from it, for it is well documented that the power of ‘race’ and the practice of racism live on,⁶ and so the question needs to be asked what purpose a ‘discourse of reticence’ plays. Does it serve to strengthen ‘race’ or does it weaken it?

There is not space here to chart fully the history of the term ‘race’, a task undertaken by others (Miles 1982; Fryer 1984 and Malik 1996), except to build on the summary of Ratcliffe, P. (2004: 19-22) that ‘race’ as a social construct has been largely built on the twin pillars of (a) a pervasive Social Darwinism and eugenics, and, (b) ‘definitions of otherness implicit in the ideologies surrounding slavery and colonialism’. He continues:

‘Race’ while initially conceived as a way of characterizing what were assumed to be distinct biological types, came to import other forms of determinism. The common feature of all these was a desire on the part of the superordinate groups to distinguish sharply between ‘we’ and ‘the other’. The substantive content of assumed difference then influenced the ways in which different segments of ‘the other’ were treated. In so far as ‘race’ became a floating signifier importing, for example, elements of biology, culture, religion and nation it became, ironically, ever more difficult to eradicate from the language of everyday discourse.

On the basis of ‘race’ ideology, its progeny the ideology of racism is born and sustained. The ideology of racism, like the ideology of ‘race’, is constantly changing and manifesting itself in various ways; often, for example, showing

⁶ A visit to the CRE web site at <http://www.cre.gov.uk> is instructive here.

itself in exclusionary practices. Miles and Brown (2003: 3) describe the significant place racism plays today and conclude, thus: ‘During the last fifty years or so, it has become a key idea in daily discourse as well as in sociological theory’.

As we shall see, these difficult, disputed and changing ideologies raise many questions and are the fulcrum point, the central site, for the negotiation of and realisation of the key issues of personal and communal self-identity and inclusion. Is it therefore surprising that there are vested interests and that those in superordinate positions of socio-economic power will seek to protect themselves? And is it not conceivable that one of the means they choose to do so will be through the control of discourse, whether overtly or covertly?

Discourse occurs along the frequency continuum that runs from outspoken voices to total silence along which there are many notches. At various points the reader’s attention will be drawn toward this discourse, especially the ‘discourse of reticence’, because it is so easily overlooked; and, the silences and indeed the silencing that are associated with the ideologies of ‘race’ and racism will be looked at in considerably more detail in Chapter Two. But first we examine the social construction of ‘race’.

1.1 Historical Overview

Clendinnen (2005: 3) warns that the main mistake of ‘historians’ is being culture insensitive, and that of anthropologists’ insensitivity to temporal change. Both can be insensitive to the reciprocating dynamic between action and context.

Together, however, they are formidable'. She might have added that social scientists' insensitivity lies in being so preoccupied with abstractions and theories as to be context insensitive; but, where all three disciplines combine, structure, process and context are presented not only as formidable, but as persuasive argument. So with the principle of an eclectic multi-disciplinary approach, we turn now to look at how 'race' is to be understood.

Since the beginning of human history people have belonged to social groups and it is impossible to gain a view of the social structures and processes at work in society without looking first to understand the basis for this differentiation between people on the basis of groups, whether these are based on social status, class, gender, religion, caste, skills, skin colour or a host of other possible factors. Whenever these issues are discussed, questions of equality / inequality and social inclusion / exclusion arise, and it is a moot point amongst social scientists just where to start in order to grasp the meaning of these social relations. Some prioritise by looking outwardly to see how power relations and social stratification are shaped by and shape the ideologies at work. Others take a different course, looking inwardly for socio-psychological explanations for social relations by taking a more individual centred approach. Whichever approach is taken however, the role of 'race' as a social construct mediated through discourse is shown to have concrete historical roots.

Since its emergence two or three centuries ago, racialised discourse has served both to create and to maintain the ideologies of 'race' and racism. The mass media is one realm where such discourse is socially located and its important role

in giving voice and in silencing ‘race’ will be considered later.⁷ This first section, however, will, using an historical framework, sketch out the specific contexts in which ‘race’ and racism ideologies are located. I will be eclectic in the sources of material to which I refer.

Where, then, are the roots of ‘race’ found? The dynamics of power and fear, so often at the very heart of human relations will be discussed. ‘Race’ and racism ideologies have gained much force from these dynamics (and given much to them) whether real or imagined. From these we move to consider briefly the historical expressions of ‘race’ ideologies in the slave trade, colonialism, the Holocaust and genocide. ‘Race’ becomes part of people’s beliefs and establishes itself as common sense thinking. It has, therefore, sometimes been seen as having the significance of a religion. Even if the claim of a link between ‘race’ and religion is an extravagant one to make, the relation deserves further consideration and will be examined. ‘Race’ ideology – as well as having widespread commonalities and found to be present in many societies, past and present, has always to be understood in the specific local context in which it arises. Time and again, some reflection on, and examples of, local ‘race’ discourse and ideologies will be provided.

How the ‘other’ person is perceived and represented and how identities are acquired and maintained are vital elements in understanding ‘race’ ideology. The ideologies of culture and ethnicity – so often used as formulations for giving social groups self-identity one from another – have been so closely associated

⁷ For the role of the media see p. 27 (Lemos 2005), p. 49 (Dummett 2001), p. 72, p. 85 (Huckin 2002), p. 128 (John 1981), p. 136 (Kundnani 2001), p. 145, p. 172, p. 176 (Bowers 1996).

with 'race' that sometimes they elide to the extent that there is sometimes little more than a thin sheet of paper between them. Nationalism and 'race' have also marched hand in hand. These concepts and the relation between them will therefore be briefly explored.⁸ The question which flows from this, how people come to see themselves as self – other, similar – different, from one another will also be considered. On the one hand, how do people identify where they belong socially?

Yet, on the other hand, in today's world there is a noted tendency to focus on the value of each individual's own experience and interpretation of the social world and to universalize the validity of individual experience rather than taking an approach starting with identifying commonalities linking different groups of people. Hence, there is a tendency to ask the question whether people can be seen to belong to meaningful social groups at all (Malik 1996). As a result, the present era's emphasis on individuality arguably lends itself to a silencing of debate as well as undermining the pressures for social change around 'race' and racism.

Perhaps not unrelated to the observation made in the preceding paragraph is the measurable lessening of social capital⁹ in recent decades so extensively researched in the USA by Putnam (2000). Putnam notes that people are more isolated from one another than before – and are even 'Bowling alone'. Where once bonding and bridging capital existed between people through social

⁸ Pp. 73, 133, 216.

⁹ Social Capital is a contested concept. Putnam (2000) discusses its origins (pp.19-20). He writes, 'Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.' (19) To be rich in social capital means a society has to have successfully built close links between individuals.

interaction and association, this is far less the case now. Therefore, the interpersonal contacts and frequency of dialogue have diminished, and if this is the case, then arguably as the social distance between individuals increases so conversation around 'race' and racism reduces, as people socialise and communicate with wider social groups less. Outside the USA, Putnam's observation that social capital is in decline may not be the pattern (and even within it where there are tight-knit cultural groups); but the construct of social capital remains a useful one in considering what social interaction is occurring and achieving in any given context.

Another significant indicator of silenced conversation is the observed lack of awareness amongst the superordinate group of their own complicity in the ideologies of 'race' and racism. This is seen, for example, in the question of white identity. The normality, taken-for-grantedness and invisibility of white identity surely merits further scrutiny. Why does this often observed phenomenon arise and what does it mean? It raises the question: how easy it is for an unseen and silent 'race' ideology to come into and remain in being when the superordinate group, so complicit in the forming and sustaining of it, is in this respect, colour blind? Jacques (2003) rightly observes that for many, 'racism remains the great taboo ... [for] Racism everywhere remains largely invisible and hugely under-estimated, the issue that barely speaks its name'. Both Thompson (2001) and Fenton (2003) draw attention to the invisibility of whiteness. Fenton writes (2003: 11): 'in societies such as Britain, which have only recently developed an awareness of themselves as "multi-ethnic", the ethnic majority is also the "silent majority" scarcely conscious of itself as ethnic at all'.

One of the ways in which some people feel more comfortable talking about 'race' and racism is when it is discussed using 'culture' or 'ethnicity' as a euphemism. The term 'culture' has long been associated with anthropology and describes those categories of language, custom and social convention that distinguish it. Culture refers in general terms to aspects of social life and also refers to common attitudes, beliefs and everyday social practices. It is more socially acceptable in Britain to use 'culture' in discourse than categorization by 'race'. The word 'ethnicity' is used more narrowly than culture and has frequently been prescribed by governments for identifying separate social groups on the basis of a supposed, but in reality, often ambiguously defined commonality. Thus Fenton (2003: 41) writes, 'In the UK the term 'ethnic' is a contested concept that has become the dominant one in the official discourse of the population of the UK, but the group names listed in the census are a curious mixture of race (colour) categories and national origin categories, with both the US and UK censuses treating whites as a huge undifferentiated category.' In his book *Anti-Discriminatory Practice*, Thompson (2001: 63-87), in a chapter on 'Ethnicity and Racism', draws attention in the opening paragraph to the thin dividing line between ethnicity and 'race'.

Within sociology, sociologists have nonetheless seen ethnicity as a means of escape from using the more pejorative and problematic word 'race'; and, in anthropology, anthropologists have welcomed it as an escape from the word 'tribe' with its association with primitive rather than civilized social life. Hall, S. (1996), for example, uses the term 'ethnicity' ('race' could be used interchangeably here), which, he says, has predominantly been used to identify

biologically and culturally stable entities, whereas 'ethnicity' should be detached from its imperial, racist or nationalist use, and appropriated to designate identity as a constructed process rather than as a given essence. Hall sees a need to have some marker of difference, through identity (Hall 1996: 446-447). To slip from 'race' to 'ethnicity' or indeed 'culture' does not mean one avoids the fundamental question as to whether there is such a thing as a primordial group and whether such categorization can ever be justified? However to do away with the categorization of observable differences can itself lead to injustice, when, for example, in seeking to avoid essentialising 'race', no other adequate categorization is found which is acceptable for use in public discourse to bring the socio-economic deprivation of certain groups of people who live in certain inner city areas to the attention of policy makers.

Where categorizations of whatever kind are used, one might ask the question, are the groups so identified socially constructed or simply attachments between people made by individuals based on affective or instrumental relations? Or indeed are the categories a product in part of both? It is my contention that categories also need to be scrutinized for their role in the 'discourse of reticence' for if, on the one hand, the use or over-use of a particular category has something to tell the observer, so, on the other hand, the non-use and thereby silence or silencing of a category equally has something to declare.

Identities are multivalent, complex and ever changing. In his chapter on 'Culture and Identity' Modood (1997: 294-338) discusses research on how ethnic minority people think of themselves, what identities they carry about with them.

He makes the point that identities are of different sorts and are not stable, they change and not all identities are ethnic (e.g. some are based on education or employment). Using a self-description questionnaire in a quantitative survey he finds ethnicity to be of considerable importance. It was of particular interest to find that the self-ascription of 'religion' and 'skin colour' was used very differently by different ethnic groups. 'The most significant finding was the primacy of religion in self-description in personal contexts for South Asians, in contrast to skin colour which was of little more significance than height. On the other hand, skin colour was of considerable importance to the Caribbeans'. The significance of commonly used 'race'-based identity self-ascriptions suggests that their silence or silencing in wider public discourse is a matter deserving examination.

Socially prescribed / constructed and self-ascribed 'race', cultural and ethnic identities are ever changing, ever re-negotiated; and, it is interesting to reflect further on how the identity of self and other are defined in relation to one another. In a conversation between the anthropologist Mead and writer Baldwin, Mead observes that in the southern USA, 'an essential element in the identity of each race was they weren't the other.' Noting the interdependence of definitions of self and other, she continues, 'So if you change the position of the member of the other race you're threatening the other person's identity' (Baldwin 1972: 101-102).

The question of white identity, touched upon earlier, is a fascinating subject in its own right. Bonnett (2000: 2-4) writes, 'One cannot grasp the development of the

modern world ... without an appreciation of the racialized nature of modernity, and more particularly, of its association with a European identified white race.'

He continues:

the excessive idealization of whiteness characteristic of the modern European form engenders an unstable and contradictory ... crisis-prone identity. Two sets of conflicting discourses are implicated in this process: first, colonial, imperial and national rhetorics of European-heritage peoples; second, the denial or marginalization of certain European-heritage groups. (Bonnett: 2-4)

Bonnett sees whiteness as arising from a process of racial suspicion which is promoted by social exclusions based on gender, class and ethnicity.

Bonnett (2000: 139-41) concludes by describing the need for 'engaging whiteness'. He says, 'Some of the most pertinent questions for an anti-foundationalist anti-racism have remained un-discussed'. In other words there is silence here. He argues that of these questions the:

most pertinent of these is how whiteness can be made visible, presented for critical inspection, whilst at the same time exposed as a myth, a racist construction that needs to be, if not abolished, permanently caged between inverted commas. In other words, we need to ask how the enormous power of whiteness (through white institutions, power dynamics, individuals, etc.) can be acknowledged and confronted at the same time as its essentialist pretensions are denied. (Bonnett: 139-41)

Bonnett believes that there is a debate to be had here and he does not want people to see the debate as focusing on a central tension between essentialism and anti-essentialism. He does not want a dialogue focusing on an anti-essentialist approach but on a 'strategic deconstruction' of white identity and suggests one possible way forward is to view whiteness as a political category ... a project that talked to and about white people. To the points noted earlier (page 16) regarding white identity and colour blindness we may add that white people are frequently unable to see their own position of privilege (Thompson 2001: 66). A debate

based around white power and privilege, as indeed is proposed by Bonnett, would be a step toward ending silence and bringing closure on the popular but damaging misconception that there is no ‘white’ category. Such a debate however is far easier to propose than to achieve.

Coming to Bonnett’s assistance in wanting to start a debate or dialogue, there is an increasing body of literature on the subject of white identity. One contributor, Frankenberg (1993) examines the racial thinking of white women in the USA and assesses the difficulty these women have in articulating the meaning of whiteness. She discovers that “white identity” is “normative” and, thus, has an “invisible” meaning for many white Americans so that able, well-intentioned women have missed the significance of being white. She found the fear she observed around entering into discussion on the subject of ‘race’ amongst her subjects in the workplace induced silence. To overcome this, she broke from her role as silent observer writing, ‘I broke the silence on the face of the blank-faced interviewer... in order to facilitate the breaking of silence on race by a diverse range of white women’ (Frankenberg 1993: 35). She concludes that white women evade discussion and where they do speak they create narratives that make them feel good, asserting an image that is ‘innocent of racism’. She concludes, that such strategies produce a structural blindness that serves white people and their racial privilege because it ‘averts the white gaze from the harsh realities of power imbalance’ (Frankenberg 1993: 189). It is a point also made by others (e.g. Clendinnen 2005: 236-37) which clearly endorses Bonnett’s argument.

Another contributor to the white identity debate is Nayak (1999: 177) whose research amongst young people in the North East of England brings to light another, now frequently raised matter, that of white grievances, especially amongst those living in less affluent areas. His research shows ‘that while many youth agreed with the egalitarian principles of anti-racism, a majority maintained a number of white grievances which they felt could rarely be articulated’. It is not only black or brown people who are silent in the face of perceived racism, a point sometimes overlooked. Nayak therefore reminds us to look at those other groupings, such as class, which may in some contexts over-ride categories of ‘race’. Such matters also draw attention to the need for close attention to the local context to see exactly the social situation, both the structures in place and the processes at work. This leads us into the continuing debate that asks whether people are either all the same, members of one human race, or, essentially different from one another. The adequacy of the current model of multiculturalism is an issue to which we shall return (see especially pages 69-71 and 298-302).¹⁰ If it is true that people are essentially different then, one naturally asks, what kind of classification can be used to describe these differences and in what kind of society can they co-exist?

The relationship between people of different cultural backgrounds has been subject to the further dynamic of migration. What follows next is a reflection on

¹⁰ Multiculturalism is a contested term. Kenan Malik’s article, ‘Against Multiculturalism’, which first appeared in *New Humanist* in Summer 2002 argues that multiculturalism, with its roots in pluralism, is ‘both logically flawed and politically dangerous. ... Multiculturalism is the product of political defeat’. Malik links multiculturalism with the use of political correctness going so far as to argue that ‘The Thought Police are already at work’. He also notes the way in which silence and silencing play an important role. He concludes that ironically, multiculturalism in seeking to promote an equality of cultures attempts to suppress dialogue on diversity and difference in the name of ‘tolerance’ (Malik 2002).

the impact of the unparalleled movements of people in recent centuries, both between and within nations. The movement of people whether through slave trading, migration, immigration, asylum seeking or as refugees, highlights the ways in which people are constantly both subjected to and influence the social structures and processes at work. Global movement reduces social isolation of human groups and brings people into dynamic situations which have the potential for self and other to be defined and redefined continuously.

Frequently, the definitions ascribed to self / other result in unfamiliar newly-arrived people from elsewhere being referred to as strangers. Strangers often become the object of fear and can also be made to bear the negatives and ills of the new host society as its scapegoats. The responses made toward strangers who lie somewhere on the continuum between being a newcomer and an established citizen will be described below, for often these responses are focal points for 'race' thinking and thereby fuel racist behaviour. Once again there is much ambivalence as to whether people voice their thinking or succumb to what I call a 'discourse of reticence' on these matters (see page 1).

This dynamic social interaction shaped and expressed through discourse is the focus and site for struggle. Those who believe in a society based on tolerance and egalitarianism, and who seek to unite people in harmony as one people, will inevitably find themselves caught up in political debates advocating equality, social justice, and a multiculturalism with a qualified assimilation and integration.¹¹ Where different groups encounter one another there is a contested

¹¹ In a period when the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and Race Relations Act redefined

space, an experience no better described than by Clendinnen's sensitive study of the first meeting of the British First Fleet and the Australian Aborigines (Clendinnen 2005). This ongoing area of struggle, both for and against egalitarianism marks the territory occupied by the ideology of 'race'. This is where it is contested and fought over, sometimes by an army comprising few largely unseen and unheard protagonists, but at other times by outspoken and very public combatants. There are, for example, voices calling for limits to the numbers of in-migrants, whether of all groups or some of them, as well as those wanting to see such controls relaxed or even abandoned altogether. There are also those who do not feel able to speak in the debate or do not think the subject an appropriate one to be discussed. That the movement of peoples provides an important battleground on which these issues are contested is no better illustrated than by the political and pejorative debates that arise around, for example, 'immigration'. This is a theme to which we shall return in sections 2 and 3 of Chapter One. For now, we will explore further what is meant by 'race' as a social construct.

1.2 A Social Construct

In Britain the rudiments of a concept of 'race' were predominantly shaped by social contact between indigenous populations and people from overseas.

entry to Britain and laid the framework for integration, Roy Jenkins, in 1966, had defined integration as 'not the flattening process of assimilation but an equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance'. As Carby (1982: 193) says, this marked a policy shift from assimilation to cultural pluralism, a new area in which education would increasingly play a significant role. Carby goes on to argue that like assimilation before it, multiculturalism as a construct is now also discredited. Assimilation has recently reappeared in government initiatives under the guise of promoting citizenship and introducing a process for people from abroad becoming British citizens through taking a conformity test. The past ascendancy of the ideology of multiculturalism may now be giving way to that of community cohesion with citizenship. Equal opportunity and issues of racism remain largely unaddressed in an increasingly economically divided society.

Looking at this in closer historical detail, Solomos (2003: 35-47) identifies the main groups of people from overseas seeking to settle here before the Second World War who were key to the development of the ideology of 'race'. There were three groups of new arrivals – Anglo-Saxons and Celts; Jewish Migrants mainly from Eastern Europe; and, black (especially South Asian and Afro-Caribbean) immigrants. Their arrival has had a demonstrable effect on the ideology and politics of 'race' ever since. Solomos argues that 'we can best understand the more recent experience of racism in Britain if we look back at this historical background'. Indeed, what has happened in Britain over the past sixty years cannot be understood without looking back at the racialisation and politicization of the Irish, Jewish, black and other immigrants in this earlier period.

There have been a number of historians who have made significant contributions to the recent literature looking at the historical background of immigration from the eighteenth century onwards which is foundational to understanding the social construction of 'race' categories (Holmes 1988; Panayi 1999 and Walvin 1999). Additionally, Walvin (1992), who looks at slavery, and Loomba (1998), who traces the development of colonialism and colonial discourse, have outlined the 'race' effects of these economically based, socially driven and politically supported initiatives. Gilroy (1993) shows how racial attitudes were formed in the triangular trade – in the crucible of Africa, America and Europe which chained them together.

Dummett (2001) and Harding (2000) focus on the more recent movements of migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees into Britain since World War II and the incentives as well as deterrents placed in their path. It is these newly arriving people from abroad whose presence has given additional impetus to the ideologies of 'race' and racism and shaped their currently ambiguous if not negative profile in popular political and social discourse. But first, how have these ideologies come to be defined?

It is interesting to see how young people themselves define 'race' and racism in Britain today. Lemos (2005) in a piece of research conducted in 2003 looking at the effectiveness of five projects in Britain working with young people which had been seeking to influence the attitudes of young people on 'race' and racism since the 1970s. Lemos examined the views of young people (aged 11-21) and explored their attitudes toward 'racial and ethnic groups' and what young people said influenced their behaviour. The study provides valuable information.

Though dislike of other groups was a view held by a significant minority, interestingly in the light of what has been said in the preceding paragraphs, it is refugees and asylum seekers who figure prominently amongst those most disliked. Newly arrived migrant groups were singled out, for example 'Portuguese', 'Asians', 'Muslims', 'black people', 'Afghanistanis' and 'Iraqis'. Lemos identifies the source of these ideas as located with friends, family, local events and circumstances, personal experiences and media reporting of local, national and international affairs. Often, Lemos noted, perceptions were a result of a confusing mix of these sources. It is these personal perceptions and

connections that play a significant role in the social construction of 'race' and racism and ease the facilitation of racialised discourse.

As he visited the five projects, Lemos asked young people the question, 'What is racism?' Their replies indicate that young people had a clear understanding of what it was. For example, replies from a project based in Stafford show that the young people 'understood racism as being nasty to other people because of their skin colour, religion or country of origin' and 'nearly all young people understood that being nasty to people because they were different was wrong, but almost a quarter admitted to disliking certain groups.' At a project in Tower Hamlets, young people were asked, 'What is racism and how big an issue is it?' Once again, their replies indicate that they generally understood racism to be about disliking or abusing people because of different skin colour, ethnicity, or religion. A 'British/Muslim woman/17' year old, answered the question by making the link between 'race' thinking and racist behaviour when she commented that racism was 'people who believe stereotypical views of other groups and act upon them.' In the Rochdale project, young people described how they socialized at school with different groups but did not do so outside school; a picture of 'distance, segregation and an absence of shared interests' was painted.

Interestingly, Lemos describes an incident where stereotypical thinking by school teachers prevented a white pupil from joining a class to learn Urdu. The pupil said that after being offered a choice of languages to study, including German, Urdu and French, he chose Urdu, but 'they don't want you to do Urdu, because

they think you might be taking the mickey out of them'. The exclusion of this pupil from learning Urdu was a means of perpetuating separation on 'race' lines. One wonders whether this pupil was voicing something generally held to be taboo in the school, but Lemos does not comment further. Before leaving Lemos, two other findings from his research are particularly interesting.

First, he finds that although influences shaping attitudes are similar for both genders, boys are significantly more intolerant than girls; and, secondly, 'young people do not on the whole, think of racism as a system of power relations in which white people tend to hold the superior positions and people of colour hold the inferior positions; they see it as bad thoughts and worse behaviour'. This raises to my mind the question as to why this is. Is it because 'race' as a social construct is not seen, and it is therefore only recognized as occurring at the experiential interpersonal level? Indeed there is a deep silence around power relations and Lemos's young people appear not to have been made aware of the structural inequalities and the processes at work in maintaining them. Or is it that they have assessed Britain to be a totally fair and equal society where anyone of any background has an equal opportunity to access economic and social positions of wealth and power? Since the latter is patently not the case, how is it that young people talk as though they accept and believe it? How is it that young people can see racism as both attitudes and behaviour, yet when it comes to the structures and processes at work in society they only see racism as a matter concerning immediate interpersonal attitudes and behaviour (Lemos 2005: 4, 41, 50, 56)? Clearly the discourse that shapes young people's thinking and gives them a sense of what 'race' categories are and what racism is (however one-sided

and incomplete) is the product of a wider social discourse acting upon them. It is a discourse that mediates silence in critical areas. In noting that 'race' is a social construct, one is reminded to look at it from all sides and not just in one dimension, the privatized, personal and experiential one. Let us now consider this construct as an ideology.

1.3 The Roots of an Ideology

The ideology of 'race' (centred on beliefs) can be easily elided into one of racism (centred on attitudes and behaviours). Miles and Brown (2003: 83-84) describe racism in the following way. They say it:

includes within its scope relatively unstructured, incoherent and unsupported assertions, stereotypical ascriptions and symbolic representations; in short, beliefs that are consciously held but not logically structured ... However, it does not include *unconscious* attitudes and assumptions, nor, for that matter, exclusionary practices or behaviours of discrimination, segregation and violence; and, racism as an ideology, doctrine, or political programme ... It is possible to synthesise the two positions in the following way: racism is primarily an ideology, but it is articulated and manifest in a plurality of forms.

Lawrence (1982: 47) cites Stuart Hall who says: '[Ideologies] work best when we are not aware that how we formulate and construct a statement about the world is underpinned by ideological premises; when our formulations seem to be simply descriptive statements about how things are (i.e. must be), or of what we can 'take-for-granted'' (Gilroy 1982: 47). 'Race' ideology has the effect of setting the social arrangements without the participants in that society necessarily being aware of it. Consequently, as Thompson (2001: 26-7) says, 'ideology has the effect of "legitimising the status quo" and thus justifies, protects and reinforces those social arrangements and the power relationships inherent within them.' In other words, in spite of its lack of any scientific basis and chameleon-

like ambiguity, 'race' serves a potent role in shaping racism, where attitudes and behaviour occupy a key role in the formation and maintenance of social structures and processes.

The lack of awareness of an ideology of 'race' amongst young people was apparent from Lemos's work discussed in 1.2. Another example of this lack of awareness of an ideology at work is beautifully told by Stiffe in a collection of black writings (Newland 2000: 46-47). Stiffe's family had just moved from London to Amersham when 'two white women who I gauged to be in their mid-sixties' talked to the author's mother:

The women had been pleasant, welcoming, sympathetic to her recently widowed status. They had offered her advice about the local community, the church And then, the two had sought to reassure my mother by telling her that Amersham was a respectable place, and that she would be happy to know that there were not so many Black people in the area and, in consequence, there was very little crime.

There is an unconscious use of silence here when those voicing their opinions are not aware of the 'race' ideology working in and through them. Time and again lack of recognition of what is really being said will cause social embarrassment which is sometimes handled by avoiding the subject area in future conversations.

Language and conversation occupy an important role in relation to ideology.

Thompson (2001: 30-32) writes: 'As ideology involves the communication of ideas, language is a central part of this process'. He continues:

it is not simply a matter of distinguishing between "taboo" words and "OK" words, as in the sense of "political correctness" ... but, rather, an awareness of the oppressive and discriminatory potential of language ... recognizing and dealing with the power of language [and] the major point we need to recognize is that language is not simply a reflection of oppression ... but actually *constructs* such oppression. (Thompson 2001: 30-32)

‘Political correctness’ is a significant and recurring theme in this thesis. Although it is commonly understood as an over-compensation toward being fair to minority groups, it is more accurate to understand it as predominantly a political tool of the Right used to discredit attempts to address ‘race’ issues. It serves to regulate conversation, and truthfully belongs not only with the Right but also with the Left. To be labelled politically correct is to be associated with those who are portrayed as over-sensitive toward, matters of ‘race’, gender, religion and the environment. Political correctness is therefore a pejorative term and value laden. The tabloids have often used it as a means to rubbish, through ridicule, well-intentioned (even if misguided) efforts to address racism.

The concept of political correctness has its historical origins in the politics of the late 1980s when Margaret Thatcher’s right wing Government found itself at odds with anti-racists, who were often called the ‘loony left’ (Bonnett 2000: 153). It is an expression frequently used to drive ‘race’ dialogue into silence. The power of this ideology also rests on the commonly accepted view that no one wants to be seen as politically incorrect. For these reasons it therefore needs to be seen and critiqued as a socio-political construct, an ideology (predominantly from the right) that has been formed to silence, as a form of thought policing, the voices of those who oppose or may oppose, given the opportunity, the position of the dominant socio-political group.

Political correctness continues to exercise a powerful hold on ‘race’ discourse. In a chapter on ‘Sincere Fictions of the White Self’, a student’s conversation, that

occurred in a classroom in the USA, demonstrates the way in which political correctness functions:

Most white families like to say they are not prejudiced. They like to say that they don't like to discriminate, that they want true equality, that they want all these things, but if you ever put them to the test there is a lot that would back off. A lot of whites still, the majority I'd say, will say the right, politically correct things at the right times, but behind closed doors, or with their friends, their small circle of friends, will be extremely bigoted in their comments. Feagin (2001: 195)

It has been argued recently that in a UK society which is becoming increasingly fearful, political correctness may even be seen as the ideology that has assumed the place of traditional morality as the regulating instrument for human discourse (cf. Füredi: 2005: 154-160). Füredi illustrates how comprehensively society accepts the use of the construct of political correctness, and provides rich examples from campus and business life of 'instruments of regulation', which have been developed to ensure politically correct practice. Perhaps he over-states his case a little; nonetheless, much of the undoubted power of political correctness rests on its ability to generate silence arising from popular confusion over correct etiquette, both in terms of behaviour and language. It should not be simply laughed at, as it often is, (even if sometimes the laughter is a healthy critique), for laughter can deflect from thought as to its serious intent, for in reality it is an integral element and one of the most important drivers in the 'discourse of silence' around 'race'.

What is fascinating about the ideology of 'race' is that it is so often covert and hidden. In this political correctness plays its part. It is silent ideology silently at work because it lends support to a social construct about which there is much

ambivalence. To think and treat categories of people differently without an objectively justifiable reason is a difficult position to maintain in an open liberal democracy like Britain, which is why ‘race’ ideology hides itself and works silently. It is an ideology that often likes to hide itself and keep the status quo.

1.4 The Dichotomy of Self and Other

Racism is usually predicated on the basis that a person carries a positive evaluation of themselves and the ‘race’ they see themselves belonging to, and a negative evaluation of the ‘other’ and their ‘race’. This dialectic of self and other is found at the centre of all ideologies of ‘race’ and racism. It is therefore useful to explore this dialectic further. Perhaps it is appropriate to see this dichotomy as a fundamental determinant of attitudes and behaviour?

Righton (1990: 11) identifies a significant element in this to be ‘the process of “stereotyping”’. However, he introduces an important distinction between ‘typifications’ and ‘stereotypes’. A typification, he says, can be seen as a set of characteristics and expectations we link with a particular person, group or thing. In social life, a typification is a useful, benign way of simplifying the complexity of social reality and of making sense of the world. However, this normally useful process easily spills over into the much more harmful and destructive process of stereotyping. Righton describes what takes place thus:

The trouble comes when we become so emotionally attached to a particular typification that we experience any questioning of it as a threat to our self-esteem or sense of security, or as a challenge to the power we hold. We will then tend to cling desperately to that typification come what may, however strong the contradictory evidence. When this happens, the typification – now fixed and rigid – has become what we call a *stereotype*.

Stereotypes appear to be important markers, preservers and servants of self-identity and power. Conversely, it also firmly describes others. This attribution of stereotypes to others, which includes 'race', is explored by Spivak (1987) who names the process as 'othering'.

Describing self and other in terms of readily defined categories functions to protect the self and the self's group. The process closes down conversation by creating and offering a readily accessible, socially understood, standardized norm as to social categories. It takes the emotionally easy path. It is of little consequence if the stereotypes are not universally agreed or even truthful, for it is easier for would be counter-voices to be silent than to take on the more difficult task of challenging an established stereotype. In the face of a strong power, holding an alternate view to one's own, the easier course is to go silently along with it.

Literature is an important area of social discourse and a place where controversial social ideas are often explored and expressed. The Canadian writer, Findlay (1984) sees 'othering' as crucial to the western practices of colonialism and imperialism. Findlay sees these practices as underpinned by the assumption of authority, 'voice', and control of the 'word' or language in verbal and written form by the powers that be. An important element in this process is the 're-writing' of stories found in foundational texts. In his novel exploring this, he looks at the biblical story of Noah and the Great Flood which features the destruction of the many (the others) and the salvation of a few chosen ones. The

book of Genesis is seen as codifying, stereotyping this process of ‘othering’, which is then taken forward as a religious text with great social power.

Marginalization, suppression and annihilation, all flow from this; and Findlay describes the subsequent subordinate social position of women and animals as cases in point. An ideology and system for the control and surveillance of subject peoples is thus firmly put in place. Findlay’s novel *Not Wanted on the Voyage* exposes to critical gaze the processes of social exclusion and ‘othering’ – revealing that the phobias that feed the process are one and the same as those at the core of colonialism and imperialism. Interestingly, Findlay also addresses the issue of hybridity, those whose identity is ambiguous. Such ‘hybrids’ are, he argues, axiomatic to the ‘othering’ system, which relies on clear stereotypes. In Findlay’s novel, ‘hybrids’ are destroyed or marginalized. They, too, are seen as other.

One author who takes a broad look at the literature produced by people who have been on the receiving end of colonialism, people whom he estimates to number some three-quarters of all people living on the planet, is Ashcroft. He seeks to give voice to their literature and sees it as challenging the cultural hegemony that British texts, all too often acting as a touchstone of taste and value, continue to assert. Ashcroft sees the process of ‘othering’ as a result of anxiety that arises from identity ambivalence. The anxiety ‘stems from deep-seated contradictions in the processes by which the other is constructed, a basis of fundamental contradiction which opens colonial discourse to the possibility of fracture from within’ (Ashcroft 2002: 101).

The phobia and anxieties surrounding the creation of the other are frequently described even more strongly as ones based on fear. This fear, often expressed as a fear of the stranger, is an important component in understanding the dichotomy of self and other. This fear, like phobia and anxiety, is something often said to be very difficult to overcome. For example, Mead, the anthropologist says,

Now, the fear of someone who is different, especially when he is extremely different is not going to be easy to eradicate. You have to have a lot of experience. You have got to really have been loved and touched by people who look very different, if you are not going to be frightened. ... you build up stereotypes when you know only one or two. That is one reason it is so important for people to live close together and go to school together.' (Baldwin 1972: 141)

It is worth spending a few moments exploring further this fear of the stranger. At one level this fear is discussed as something positive – delineating and motivating the nature of society. A WHSmith (2004) diary contains a quote for the day which captures this positive aspect in a popular sentiment. It is attributed to Marina Warner, a 'British Author' who declares, 'fears trace a map of society's values, we need fear to know who we are and what we do not want to be.' Such statements should not however distract one from the very real impact fear has in negating interaction and inhibiting the building of social capital.

More often, strangers are seen not in terms of their potential contribution to well-being, but in a negative way. Foster, in her informative study of the profound changes in London's Docklands in the late 20th century notes a Bengali resident's comment that provides an instance of fear of the stranger: 'some people are quite unfriendly here and they don't like to see any strangers. We tried ... to introduce ourselves with the neighbours but some people will not answer me even if I say

“hello, good morning” ... First of all it was very hard for us... there was lots of racial harassment, racial abuse and racial attacks’. She observes, ‘Bengalis who didn’t speak English experienced acute isolation for, many white people did not appreciate the barriers that language and the feeling of discomfort generated by their unwelcome reception caused. Instead they often accused the Bengalis of not wanting to mix. “I don’t think they want to integrate. I think they want a separate identity”’ (Foster 1999: 265, 271). This experience of isolation – often repeated where new arrivals are seen as strangers to be feared – has a disturbing impact upon their host communities.

Fear can be closely correlated to power. The powerful as well as the powerless can instil, create fear. When an affluent, privileged minority in power see a deprived but potentially threatening new group of arrivals, fear of the stranger, the other easily arises. Mead and Baldwin discuss this very point:

MEAD: Now when you have any terrific disparity in power it produces terrible relationships.

BALDWIN: Yes. Of course, at the root of all this is power, isn’t it?

MEAD: Power and fear.

A little later they discuss their understanding of the way fear works. It is, they believe, because people are taught to hate as the following extract shows:

BALDWIN: “We’ve got to be taught to hate.”

MEAD: That’s what people said, that race feeling is all learned. Well, it isn’t true, you’ve got to be taught to *hate*, but the appreciation and fear of difference is everywhere.

BALDWIN: That’s right.

(Baldwin 1972: 30, 35)

One might add that people are rarely taught to hate in an overt way, that would upset sensibilities; but in racialised societies members are more likely to be taught to hate covertly and silently, often indeed without realising what is happening to them.

It is interesting to note that a person is defined a refugee on the basis of their ‘fear’ of what might happen to them in their country of origin. Harding (2000: 43) outlines how refugees are given protection under the Geneva Convention of 1951 (which was extended to countries beyond Europe by a protocol of 1967). Chapter One, Article 1 of the Convention defines refugee status as applying to anyone outside ‘the country of his nationality’ as a result of a ‘well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion and unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’. Fear is a significant factor at work, both in the mind of the host and in the mind of the refugee.

Harding (2000: 98) argues persuasively that when it comes to taking on migrant labour, Britain’s experience was that ‘the scale and numbers of primary immigration in response to recruitment by employers caused a fear in itself and was stopped’. He adds, ‘the other fear that seeped into Europe as it prepared to close down primary immigration was social division along ethnic lines: fear of the ghetto, racial segregation, a resurgence of xenophobia. In the dark days of the *Gastarbeiter*,¹² full citizenship in Germany was conferred by genealogy. Blood circulates, immigrants rotate.’ Fear can lead to the categorization of the other

¹² *Gastarbeiter* is a German word that literally means ‘guest worker’. It refers to people who have moved to Germany, many from Turkey and Italy, for jobs since the end of World War II. They were expected to work in Germany for a limited period of time.

into feared groups. Often strangers are not referred to on an individual basis but only by 'race' group; and, as a group, they are thought to be powerful and this induces greater fear. This, in turn, produces a controlling and negative response toward the other by the powerful. Sometimes, this results in segregation, apartheid, even genocide.

Addressing recent European experience in his 2004 lecture celebrating the 10th anniversary of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, Bauman says, 'Fear is everywhere. The problem with existential anxiety is, I repeat again, that it is diffuse, scattered, many-faced, un-centred. Such fear is unendurable. People need to condense, to pinpoint their apprehensions and attach them to a tangible target.' He then addresses how fear becomes attached to the other, the stranger, the new arrival from abroad. He says, 'Why refugees, why asylum seekers, why immigrants? For a number of reasons: First of all they have *symbolic* significance. They stand for the same 'far away' very powerful, intractable yet impenetrable and incomprehensible global forces which are under nobody's control Secondly, immigrants are likely to be resented for social reasons. There is some sort of a "Wahlverwandtschaft" an elective kinship between the position of stranger in your country and the peculiarities of reasons for which you yourself suffer' (Bauman 2004).

'Race' conflict when it arises is often presented as irrational or incomprehensible and this raises deeply-rooted anxieties. In the USA such fears were, in the inter-war years, often predicated on the anticipation of racial revenge, when those hitherto oppressed seek to 'even the score'. Based on meticulous and dedicated

field research, Dollard's classic study, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, first published in 1937, offers one of the most vivid explorations of this fear, and highlights the all-pervasive character of the white fear of black people (Dollard 1957).

Dollard writes, 'white people fear Negroes. They fear them, of course, in a special context, that is, when the Negro attempts to claim any of the white prerogatives or gains'. He explained these fears by (1) The fairly obvious fact that 'America' encouraged the advancement of blacks, and (2) the less obvious fact about white anxieties, that 'white people seem to be much more afraid of Negroes than there is any real reason to be'. According to Dollard, this fear, in reality is completely 'disproportionate to the threat from the Negro's side', and was often based on 'the fear of retaliation for the gains aggressively acquired by the white caste at the expense of the Negro'. What is particularly interesting from the perspective of this thesis examining 'race' and silence, is that Dollard found anxieties and fears around 'race' were seldom expressed openly. Racial fears were suppressed, and even in the relatively racist South, many things were said to be understood as to be best left unsaid (Dollard 1957: 319).

Füredi (1998), in his recent re-appraisal of Dollard's pioneering work sees it 'as the most interesting pioneering study of white reaction to race consciousness.' It can be read as an 'anthology of race anxieties'. Dollard's 'most relevant insight' was to note the projection that 'white southerners unconsciously attributed their own racial motives to those they feared'. Füredi says 'Dollard sought to uncover the passions that seethed under the surface and which helped to create such a

racially charged atmosphere there.’ He quotes Dollard (1957: 288) where he describes how a racialised society seeks to maintain the status quo: ‘it is very convincing to experience in one’s own person the unshakeable conviction of the white caste that danger lurks in the Negro quarter. Only constant watchfulness, it is believed, and a solid white front against potential Negro attack maintain the status quo’. Füredi concludes, ‘What Dollard is describing was a silent race war, which required vigilance because a way of life was at stake [and] what distinguished Dollard was the open manner with which he addressed the silent race fears of southern white people’. However, as Füredi rightly observes, Dollard only went so far, for ‘he was no less certain that race consciousness had to be contained than those who were far more guarded about engaging the issues.’

The racial revenge theme is central in Dollard’s discussion of power relations; yet, here again, he rather hopefully and over-optimistically concludes that, relying on the passivity of the oppressed, southern whites would in time come to terms with their irrational fears. There is a singular lack of practical suggestions by Dollard as to what might be done to facilitate or aid this process (Füredi 1998: 125-27). In a similar mood of over-optimism, the Preface to the 1957 edition of Dollard’s book ‘expressed profound anxieties about the global aspects of the subject’, adding, ‘we shall go about solving the color problem ourselves, cost what it may, or it will be solved for us not to our liking.’ He does little more than appeal to the self-interest of Americans in the USA as to the route toward a resolution of the inequalities and fears he records (Dollard 1957: xii). This appeal to self-interest is important, but insufficient on its own.

Before moving on from Dollard, who deservedly commands attention here, five more of his observations are significant enough to specifically mention, albeit briefly. Firstly, he discusses one particular fear further; the taboo on sexual relations between black and white, which he concludes must be ‘deeply supported emotionally’ in white history. The only analogy to describe this is ‘the incest taboo’.

Secondly, on the subject of racial prejudice, he observes the ‘hostility’ that accompanies the frustrations in black/white relations, and that one of the responses to these frustrations is that they are ‘systematically discouraged and suppressed’. ‘One of the methods of discouragement is to pretend that such hostility does not exist’. In other words, these frustrations are silenced.

Thirdly, on the question of white power, so widespread and ‘deeply internalized’ he was ‘amazed at how many people of color want to be White’. This raises the interesting matter of fluidity between identities and the extent to which stereotypes can be undermined when this occurs.

Fourthly, Dollard describes racism morally and summarises the position thus: ‘Racism is particularly alive and well in America. It is America’s original sin and it is institutionalized at all levels of society. It is its most persistent and intractable evil.’ He therefore raises questions of philosophy, politics, values and religion, foundational questions as to the value of each person and the groups to which they belong.

Finally, and especially important to this thesis, he notes the silence around ‘race’ and racism, believing that ‘before we can get Whites to confront racism, we need

to know why they avoid it This is a complex and difficult question because the reasons vary among different groups in different parts of the country. There are probably as many reasons as there are people. I will advance my perspective on this issue and invite Whites and people of color to participate with me in an exploration of White silence on racism.’ But that is only so far as he goes, and, arguably, it is only the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s which brings ‘race’ into the limelight. (Dollard 1957: 141-4, 438-9)

In looking at the dichotomy of self and the other some significant material has been presented to indicate that it plays a foundational role both in the social construction of ‘race’ and its contribution to an ideology of ‘race’. Anxiety and fear are powerful drivers of ‘race’ and help give it form and shape; and they also form a significant element in ‘race’ discourse which, as has been noted, contains taboos, silences and silencing. Füredi (2002, 2005) helpfully explores these fears in contemporary western society. People in general in Western societies have ‘never had it so good’, yet paradoxically, fear is an ever more influential phenomenon in cultural and political life. Fears, as we have noted, can lead to terrible consequences in what is often a silently fought ‘race’ war.

Yet even though the dichotomy of self and the other is a fruitful ground to explore the basis of ‘race’ and silence, to move on without first reflecting on the contribution made by the large scale historic movement of peoples would be to overlook an important source of material that helps explains ‘otherness’ and the discourse of reticence surrounding ‘race’. It is to this we now turn.

1.5 The Movement of People

Colonialism resulted in both the movement and the subjection of millions of people around the globe. Driven by trade in a quest for wealth and power, colonialism made a profound impact and left a postcolonial legacy that still shapes social, economic and political life today. Loomba in her book examining the ideology of colonialism, particularly through the perspective of literary criticism and discourse, sees the dichotomy of self and the other as foundational to colonialism. In a book which I consider to be the best exposition on the subject, she writes, 'European states created normative as well as 'abnormal' subjects in order to police both'. Recalling Foucault's assertion, Loomba adds, 'the need to objectify and distance "the Other" in the form of the madman or the leper was less urgent in a situation in which every colonial person was in some sense, already 'Other'' (Loomba 1998: 52).

Taking the reader to the roots of 'othering', Loomba argues 'The 'othering' of vast numbers of people, and their construction as backward or inferior depended upon what Abdul JanMohamed calls the 'Manichean allegory', in which a binary and implacable discursive opposition between races is produced (1985: 60). Such oppositions ... are crucial not only for creating images of the outsider but equally essential for constructing the insider, the (usually white European male) "self"' (Loomba: 104). Referring to Miles (1989: 27) she develops and qualifies her understanding of the relationship between 'othering' and economic exploitation:

I have been suggesting that representations of the 'other' vary according to the exigencies of colonial rule. But such an explanation is somewhat functional in that it posits racial ideologies as simply *reflecting* economic and material factors ... such functionalism is inadequate because even before the actual enslavement and colonial plunder of Africans began, racist stereotypes which were obsessed with colour and nakedness were

well in place. In fact in several colonial situations these stereotypes provided an ideological justification for different kinds of exploitation. Therefore the relationship between racial ideologies and exploitation is better understood as dialectical, with racial assumptions both arising out of and structuring economic exploitation. (Loomba: 113)

Switching to a psycho-analytic approach, Loomba refers to Memmi's work on the 'mark of the plural', so often applied to the 'other'. Memmi tells us this is a 'sign of the colonised's depersonalization. ... The colonised is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity ("They are this", "They are all the same")' (Memmi 1967: 88, q.v., page 34).

Loomba goes on to describe how the individual European believes they face the alien hordes, and if they identify with them, if they transgress the boundary between 'self' and the 'other', they regress into primitive behaviour, into madness. She notes, 'One of the most striking contradictions about colonialism is that it both needs to 'civilize' its 'others', and to fix them into perpetual 'otherness' ... colonial empires both fear and engender biological as well as intellectual hybridities.'

One of the most significant contributors to the understanding of colonisation, upon both the colonised and the coloniser, is Fanon (1963, 1967). His two influential statements show how the ideology of race, as seen in colonialism, negates psychological health and alienates the individual from their own self. In his later book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon sees no answer to the binary system of self and other, black and white, other than through a course of total revolution and 'absolute violence'. According to his view the dichotomy of self

and the other is so profound in society nothing else will change things but this (Fanon 1963: 37).

Deeply ingrained, in substantial part as a result of colonialism, is a sense of white superiority. This is seen in the kind of self description the English attribute to themselves, as found for example, in a book published between the wars intended for amusement:

The English know a good bit about themselves. They are not analytical, but certain facts keep obtruding themselves on anyone's notice. They do not think they are especially fine or noble or splendid in any way, they've got a great many faults, they're the first to admit it, but it does just happen they are much the best nation. One can't help seeing it sticks out a mile. And the funny thing is that really the foreigners see it too, though sometimes, and it's quite natural, they pretend not to. But one does realise that this deep-seated unshakeable conviction that the English hold is absolutely un-escapable. (Benson 1936: 137)

The effect of the colonial and subsequent movements of peoples on 'race' and racism raises the matter of what one understands boundaries and borders between people to mean. The process of making nations with borders has the effect of firming up difference and categorization. Bauman addressed this very point in his 2004 European lecture. He asked:

What are these mysterious forces which replenish the arsenal of xenophobia. I will start by reminding you of what one of the greatest anthropologists of our time, Frederik Barth, working and living in Oslo, Norway, said. He pointed out that it is not true that borders are drawn because there are differences which people find unendurable. It is the other way round. Differences are considered to be unendurable because borders have been drawn and because borders have to be fortified. So first comes border, and only later comes the spotting and assigning the importance of differences between people on the two sides of the border, 'categorical' differences. Look around – at two individuals aside you, compare them: you'll see that they are made of differences only. Each one of us is individual. There are no two human individuals who are exactly like each other among the six billion people who inhabit earth. But only very few of those differences insinuate themselves into human attention as being of a 'categorical' importance, making life together, a

peaceful life together, friendly life together, impossible. Frederik Barth suggests, and I endorse his view, that people tend to select the differences which best fit the kind of boundary which they currently draw, and it is such features that suddenly become important, primarily in shaping social interactions between people.

The social construction of nations, has a long and incestuous close relation with the social construction of 'race'. Bauman, like Fanon before him, concludes his lecture on combating racism and intolerance in Europe with a strong plea that politicians need to address people's fears. He believes 'those fears and anxieties will go on being targeted on the stranger, on the alien, on the foreigner, on the refugee, on the immigrant, on the asylum seeker. People clearly, obviously, visibly of a different origin than the local people'. However, other than pointing this out, Bauman does not say how the issues of national borders, power, inequality and white superiority might be practically addressed. On these crucial matters he is silent (Bauman 2004).

In the present postcolonial era, the focus has shifted away from colonialism to migration, immigration, refugees and asylum seekers, (leaving aside for the moment tourism and visiting, which are less problematic). These represent a huge and ever continuing movement of people beyond national borders. They produce the strangers, the others, those who stay or might stay. Harding (2000: 36) writes, 'In millions of cases to be an asylum seeker is to be a stranger on trial. He is accused of nothing more palpable than his intentions, but these are assumed to be bad and the burden of proof rests with the defence.' Harding endorses Arendt's 1930s study when she writes about the capacity of nation-states to project their prejudices on to such people. Arendt observes, 'Those

whom persecution has called un-desirable, became the *indésirables* of Europe.’

Such powerfully held feelings can even lead to genocide.

Dummett (2001: 14-21) presents a convincing exposé of the popular fear of being ‘swamped’ by immigrants and refugees, a concept of submergence so often invoked by media and politicians. Yes, he acknowledges, there is a right for the host community not to be ‘submerged’ (a less emotive term than ‘swamped’, but the reality is, he argues, even countries like Israel or Pakistan, founded as a refuge for certain groups, ‘must not make membership of that people or adherence to that faith a part of what it means to belong to the nation. It is the destiny of such a nation to provide a haven ... but it is also the destiny of that nation to create a unity from the disparate inhabitants entitled to live in that country and be its citizens, a unity founded upon common ideals of justice.’ Here again one can see how the desire to set borders and boundaries can so easily disenfranchise would-be new arrivals from ever belonging.

It is often the ‘bogus’ asylum seeker or ‘economic migrant’ who attracts most public vilification, but as Dummett notes, rarely are the economic facts, the harsh realities of the differences between rich and poor, reflecting a world in which huge affluence and abject poverty co-exist, brought into public discourse. He writes, ‘Until this gross disparity is redressed, the flow of immigrants from poor countries to the rich First World will continue It would remain a foul injustice for Western nations to continue to say to them ‘Keep out! Starve if you have to, but do not threaten our prosperity’ (Dummett: 68).

Dummett says, 'the most squalid of all devices to discourage refugees is to incite prejudice against them. This is very widely practised.' He cites the use by government of words and phrases like 'bogus', 'economic migrants', 'abusing the system' as revealing this prejudice and pandering to it. He expresses the controversial view, that the decision people in hardship make to move across national boundaries for economic reasons can be justified and is as worthy of sympathy and help as flight from political persecution. Once this is understood, then one cannot but conclude that 'the principal actual motivation for exclusionist immigration policies is, of course, racial prejudice, or sometimes more general prejudice against foreigners' (Dummett: 58).

Dummett argues that immigration policy in Britain reflects this prejudice and because it is a shameful thing, 'race is nowadays never offered as an explicit ground for excluding would-be immigrants. The result is that many reasons are offered which are not the true motive.' There is a silence. All this, he adds, is in the context of a general popular discourse where there is a 'standard litany of complaints against foreigners ... unless they are manifestly wealthy: they are dirty, they are noisy, they steal, they will not work but just want to live on welfare, they fill up the hospitals, they crowd out the schools ... the government does more for them than it does for us' but, 'these are not observations of reality: simply expressions of unthinking resentment' (Dummett: 62, 68).

What follows are two final thoughts before moving on to consider 'race' as a site of struggle. Beside colonialism and the postcolonial movements of people, the wider picture of international relations and the phenomenon of genocide must be

mentioned. First, we consider international relations. As Füredi (1998) says, 'race' has been a central theme in international relations. He notes how studies in the 20th century were 'colour blind' and treated 'race' as marginal, though in the previous century the powerful elites in the era of white supremacy used the ideology of 'race' with confidence. This change came as a result of the gradual scientific discrediting of 'race'. He charts the evolutionary process of what he calls the 'racial imagination' (what might better be called an ideology of 'race'), from a period beginning with white supremacy, through discredit of 'race' and resistance from those subjected to it, through a time of anxieties and fears, to a point where 'race' and racism became eliminated altogether from international discussion – in sum, 'a shift from racial confidence to racial fear'.

This latest era of race tension saw any raising of 'race' issues as potentially inflammatory and a dangerous threat to western interests. When 'race relations' was developed, Füredi says, this was done with the aim of 'minimizing the danger of racial conflict ... and the main policy outcome of this discussion was the need to curb open manifestations of white racism in order to contain reactions to it'. (For 'curb open' read 'silence'.) He adds, 'it expressed fears about racial conflict and demanded a pragmatism that amounted to a kind of self-censorship. ... those who believed that race relations constituted a major problem in international relations also felt reluctant to tackle it openly' (Füredi: 2).

Füredi offers some helpful insights from his study of imperialism and international relations. Space only permits a few points to be included here. Incidentally, he intends another book to take his readers beyond the 1950s where

The Silent War ends. Füredi observes that ‘racial thinking is not merely an expression of the impulse to dominate and oppress. At times it expresses a *defensive* response; a manifestation of the fear of losing power’. He notes how ‘race’ is a difficult subject for conversation, even amongst political leaders, for ‘one of the important paradoxes of our time is that although racial thinking has become an important part of the political culture of the West, the ruling elite have rarely felt comfortable with it: certainly not in the twentieth century’.

Perhaps one wonders whether this is because political leaders are aware of the slippery slopes from ‘race’ to genocide and from peaceful coexistence to civil unrest, dangers all too readily demonstrated over the past century (Füredi: 25).

He notes how, ‘despite their prevalence during the first three decades of the twentieth century, racial fears have rarely been the subject of serious social analysis’ and suggests one reason for this was that ‘the strident and extreme form of racism has obscured the anxieties that inspired the fear’. He also notes that ‘racial fears after the First World War led to the emergence of a new genre of alarmist literature on the subject of racial decline’. He concludes that after the First World War, ‘the more that racial matters were seen to work against those who were originally inspired by it, the more it became an embarrassing subject to be avoided in public discussions’ (Füredi: 25-6, 39, 41).

The lesson one might learn from Füredi’s work is that it is not only in the arena of day-to-day domestic political and social life ‘race’ and racism are swathed in a ‘discourse of reticence’, but reticence also extends globally into the realm of international relations.

Secondly, and linked in a way to international relations, we must consider the phenomenon of genocide, which reached its nemesis in Nazi Germany during World War II, but has also since occurred in many places around the globe.

Genocide is a violent expression of 'race' thinking that results in the annihilation of those perceived to be other. Much has been written about it, but what is noteworthy here are the added silences and silencing around the subject. In his biography of Hitler, Kershaw (2000: 521-23, 146) considers the handling of the 'Final Solution' by the Nazi leadership. Himmler was 'aware of the taboo in Hitler's entourage on explicit reference to the mass killing of the Jews and he had his report on the subject prepared in 'camouflage language'. The fiction had to be maintained. Himmler ordered the use of the term "Special Treatment" ... in the report sent to Hitler.' His statistician referred to the 'transport of the Jews'. Others referred to Jews being 'sluiced through' unnamed camps. In Hitler's circle there was talk of 'evacuation' and Jews being 'resettled'. Goebbels, too, knew what all this meant as an explicit entry in his diary indicates, but it was not permitted to speak or write openly of the genocide taking place.

Kershaw thinks Hitler strictly applied this silence, not only for fear of a foreign propaganda coup but also to quell the possibility of unrest both in Nazi-occupied Europe and amongst the Germans themselves who were considered not ready for this knowledge. Further attempts to hide the matter from public discourse are provided by Himmler's action, deliberately and explicitly, to avoid providing a legal definition of a 'Jew' to keep cases out of the courts. Yet, even where there was some awareness of what was happening, Kershaw says there was silence, even 'the leaders of the Christian Churches, among whose precepts was 'love thy

neighbour as thyself', kept quiet. Neither major denomination, Protestant or Catholic, raised an official protest or even backing for those courageous individual pastors and priests who did speak out' Kershaw (521-23, 146). Following World War II, as people began to try and understand the Nazi genocide, new silences around this extreme form of racism came to light, and even those born to new generations of Jewish survivor families lived in a world where things were not admitted or said (Langer 1995 and Wajnryb 2001).

1.6 A Site of Struggle

Relations between people are always a matter of negotiation, and where these are contested, of struggle. The history of 'race' is marked by struggle and in this section the basis of this struggle is explored. Struggle is commonly experienced and seen in seeking dominance. In his novel about the history of the Kelly gang in Australia, Carey describes one such instance, which could be repeated a million times over, 'Yes damn them said Jem we was raised to think the blacks the lowest of the low but they had boots not us and we damned and double damned them as we run' (Carey, 2000: 13). In 'they had boots not us' we see economic inequality as a driver of either social superiority or inferiority. One way of looking at such economic relations is through the idea of class. As Thompson (2001: 80, 82) says, 'Class and race articulate together; that is, they are inter-related ... [and] the dynamic interplay of class, race and gender is indeed complex and multifaceted.' Thompson quotes Williams J. (2000: 215) who captures the point well:

race is defined not as a 'natural' or biological attribute but as a socially and historically constructed concept by which members of society endow skin colour variations, which have no intrinsic meanings, with meanings that reinforce a hierarchy of privilege and power in society. Class is

defined as a system of stratification in which unequal allocation of resources and opportunity for social advancement is supported by cultural myths that naturalize inequality. Although these concepts are conceptually distinct they are related in interesting and complicated ways ... [C]lass issues are often concealed in racially coded language and meanings. Racial stereotypes are frequently used to reinforce a system of class inequality while class stereotypes are used to reinforce a racial hierarchy.

The Kelly gang quote reflects the sense of resentment, conflict and contest between social groups, whether these are based on 'race', class or both of these.

In saying 'we damned and double damned them as we run', Jem expresses a seething resentment that those adjudged inferior were on this occasion superior for they had boots. The 'normal' state of inequality, however unjust in reality, has been violated, and this provokes his envy, resentment and this particular angry outburst. The inequalities and injustices of life as they are experienced feed struggle and the struggle looks different depending on where one stands, it is complex and it is contextual.

Another example of the interplay between race and class is seen in the following poem 'The Way We Were' by Maureen Roberts (Newland 2000: 154-55):

Took piano lessons from an elderly
Smooth-cheeked English lady ...

She always knew what I could do
Taught me new ways to look at life.
But, I realised when she gave my sister and me
A lift home one day
She checked out our house
The size, the type, the street.

This saddened me
Because I knew then
That even if you beat race
That still leaves class.

For Olsen (1980 :146), who writes about the silence surrounding the struggle for literary expression made by black women, the effect of belonging to more than one problematic social categories creates silence. She writes, 'being black, a woman or in a lower class silenced writers'. Incidentally, in her opinion it was the category of class that remains least explored. There is a danger in struggling with one issue, whether it is the inequalities of class or the unequal treatment of women as opposed to men in society, for this can lead to 'race' being forgotten about. King (1993: 61), for example, warns of the risk that feminism, in focusing on the common oppression of women, is in real danger of disregarding other significant differences between women, particularly in terms of 'race'. She says: 'Many white feminist activists have often assumed that their antisexism stance abolished all racial prejudice or discriminatory behaviours ... At best, this presumption is naïve and reflects a serious ignorance of the pervasiveness of racism in this society.'

Roberts' poem poignantly tells of the struggle to overcome 'race' as seen through an inter-personal incident, a struggle she feels is all the harder to overcome because it is underpinned by class. She takes one's gaze from seeing 'race' as only seen in the narrow focus of the realm of the personal and brings the reader to see the struggle to 'beat' the power of 'race' has to be fought in the realm of socio-economic systems, structures and processes. As Wink writes, 'All of us deal with the powers that be', and, being more than just people, the powers are 'the systems themselves, the institutions and structures that weave society into an intricate fabric of power and relationships.' Though necessary, useful, and essential, these powers, he says, are 'also the source of unmitigated evils' (Wink

1998: 1). The powers have enormous resources at their disposal to protect themselves and can seem inviolable and untouchable to those without power and resources. They can silence the voices of opposition. Observing this factor at work in parts of Britain where people face oppression and discrimination, Rowan Williams (Archbishop of Canterbury) spoke on BBC radio saying, ‘Some people have the right to shout about this and they are silenced.’ (Williams 2003).

In his tribute to Edward Said, Tom Paulin summarises Said’s work as one of bringing the life of the mind and high culture to the struggle for justice and recognition, a ‘struggle pitched against powerful forces – vested interests, embedded ideologies, racism, and those so-called intellectuals whom, quoting Gramsci, Said characterises as “experts in legitimisation” – the paid scribes of power who are silent about its excesses.’ In *Orientalism* Said (1978) explores how a liberal, progressive confidence in civilisation sought to denigrate the achievements of other civilisations. Said’s ‘prose is pitched against what he calls “the academic flaccidity” of English Studies, the determination of its practitioners to show themselves “to be silent, perhaps incompetent” about the social and historical world’. Once again the struggle to address ‘race’ can be seen as never far from silence, whether it is the silence of those in political power or in academia.

The struggle to combat the ideology of ‘race’ and racism waxes and wanes over time. Those holding social, economic and political power, often linked together, endeavour to exercise their superiority and advantage either overtly or covertly and will use ‘race’ to strengthen their hand. Kovel (1984: lii, liv, lv-lvi) cogently

writes, 'to the victor in the world struggle for power go the spoils of racism.' He laments the fact that the vibrant struggle of the 1960s to address the injustices brought about by the prevailing ideology of 'race' in the USA have since waned; and as 'Racism is no longer a hot topic. As it becomes metaracist, racism tends toward invisibility in late capitalist society.' Acknowledging the way the ruling elite consistently played the race card in the past, Kovel concludes that it is an unpleasant fact, but 'racism served a stabilizing function in American culture for many generations.' What is true in the USA may be equally true in other places. 'Race' and racism are off the political agenda when invisible, even though even a cursory look at US society since the watershed of the 1960's Civil Rights Movement, shows there is still an 'American Apartheid', a continuing segregation which is the cause of American poverty where the only people left behind are the black and poor, trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty (Massey 1998). (He might well have included the poor whites whose socio-economic grievances often get overlooked).

There are indeed times when the plight of the victims of racism can pass by unnoticed and become hidden-lives lived under ground. As the Asian writer Sandhu (2004: 277) notes from his historical review of black and Asian literature on life in London:

Many of the books I have examined show how the dark-skinned newcomer – under-educated, insecurely employed, and living in dingy accommodation in poor neighbourhoods – often has only the most tenuous contact with other Londoners. In *Moses Ascending*, Sam Selvon's narrator asks: "What is that heavy footfall on the cold damp pavement before the rest of the world is awake? What is that freezing figure fumbling through the fog, feeling its way to the bus stop, or clattering down the steps of the sleepy underground at this unearthly hour?" [Selvon 1975: 12] The answer, of course, is 'the black man', and

it's this economic and social invisibility that accounts for the ubiquity of the 'underground' motif in literature written by black writers.

The discourse of 'race' as a site of struggle is, as has already been noted, one struggle amongst a number of struggles. These include class and gender, for example. There is no united campaign in the UK behind the struggle to combat 'race' and racism, it is fragmentary and piecemeal and the aspiration to create a more cohesive and more equal society¹³ is addressed with different enthusiasms at different times and in different contexts. A narrow rather than comprehensive approach is often adopted. Though in Britain community cohesion and social integration might be stated political policy aims, as Ratcliffe, P. (2004: 6) rightly notes, 'the social integrationist discourse ... as a fundamentally colour and gender blind approach ... is largely silent on broader inequalities grounded in aspects of difference'. This is a significant point, for what lies behind the silence is a government-led community cohesion ideology, whose primary purpose is the construction of programmes and projects designed to hold together a racialised society without the necessity of seriously addressing the sites of inequality.

The struggle to combat 'race' has to be fought on many fronts. Thompson (2001: 74) warns against those who only seek to address the need for better cultural understanding and warns that in pursuing anti-discriminatory practice one should not lose sight of emotional factors by giving undue attention to structural factors such as class and race. His comment raises the question whether or not structural factors determine, or if not determine have any significant effect on, emotional patterns. On the basis of what we know about how material conditions affect

¹³ Cohesion and equality are not one and the same for cohesion concerns stability, order and harmony whereas equality is about justice, fairness and inclusion. Since 2001 the Labour Government in Britain has more strongly pursued the former.

development, health, even mental health, one might assume there is a relationship between the structural and the emotional. Unfortunately, this is not something Thompson seeks to address, but see, for example, Black (1988) and Wilkinson (2005) on health. The struggle around 'race' is multi-faceted and multi-located; voiced and silent; and, it goes hand in hand with other struggles as well as going it alone. The struggle has roots in the economic/social movements which gave rise to the present structures as well as the inter-personal dichotomy of self and the other. But where then can the grounds for justifying or opposing 'race' be found? For this, one needs to turn to the disciplines of philosophy, political science or religion.

Since earliest times people have argued and fought over governance. There is not the space to explore this subject in depth, but it is worth reflecting, albeit briefly on this. The dichotomy of equality and inequality lies at the heart of much debate. First, who has social and economic power and, secondly, through what structures and using what processes is it expressed? Every context will be different and the inter-relationships between the power brokers complex. One cannot then look at 'race' without looking at this dichotomy, for the ideology of 'race' is firmly embedded at most, if not all, points along the continuum between entire equality and unmitigated inequality. It may be a stronger feature at certain points and even appear absent at other points. It will be guarded by key ideas – political, philosophical and religious. It is interesting for the purposes of this thesis to consider in particular their dual effect, both upon policy as set by those in political power; and, upon individual people in their relations with others. For example, there will be policies on asylum seekers and legislation reflecting that

policy, but there will also be attitudes held and behaviour expressed by individuals about themselves in relations to asylum seekers – the dichotomy of self and the other.

Forrester (2001: 43, 30-31, 12) in his book *On Human Worth* says, ‘the key issue ... is this: both social equality and the recognition of difference are about the worth of human beings, and how this equal worth can be implemented. ...

Equality as such is incompatible with racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, apartheid and other systems that celebrate and enforce human inequality.’ He argues, ‘Human beings are entitled to be treated with respect because they are of equal worth, independently of their ability, contribution, success, work or desert. That is the bottom line, the essential affirmation if we are to have an adequate information justification and motive for generous and respectful treatment of people with severe disabilities, of the senile, and of the unemployable.’ Forrester, with a certain Christian religious zeal argues, ‘it is easier to love the stranger who is like oneself than the stranger who is different. But we are all called to love the stranger and celebrate difference and diversity.’ Questions of human rights are never far away here, and it would be a partial look at ‘race’ if human rights were omitted. Dummett (2001: 34) writes:

Human rights ... can be denied only by the comfortably situated and heartless. People denied the minimal conditions for a life free from terror and allowing them a basic dignity are entitled to call on others to grant them such conditions. To deny this is to hold that we have at most only negative duties towards strangers: that, for example, we may not kill them, but have no duty to protect them from being killed.

Forrester (2001: 42) recognizes that though the basis of ‘race’ rests on a certain categorization of difference, to do away with difference altogether would not be

helpful. There is a need to recognise both distinctiveness and commonality.

Shakespeare's Shylock speaks of both human difference and similarity when he says, 'I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?' Recognition of difference is so important because, 'Nonrecognition or misrecognition ... can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone else in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a serious wound, saddling people with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy, but a vital human need.' Taylor (1997: 25).

In sum, philosophy, political science and religion continuously contest and negotiate 'race' through public discourse. There are many voices, silences and silencing too. Even if equality is enshrined in political or religious statement that does not mean to say it is found in practice, as the American Declaration of Independence bears witness. Forrester (2001: 55) cites it to make this very point: 'The American Declaration of Independence is a classic example – "we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness"'. Forrester (2001: 56) adds that they did only mean men, and 'white, free males', and 'It did not seem to have occurred to them that what they were drafting might have a bearing on the place of women, or be incompatible with slavery any more than the ancient Greeks saw nothing strange in excluding women, slaves and aliens – the large majority of the population – from the rights of equal citizenship.'

The basic foundational assumption underlying this thesis is that, in accord with

the present basis for recognising human rights, all people are of equal value and that ultimately this belief in equality comes from religious convictions.

(Forrester, especially in Chapter 5, helpfully outlines a much more comprehensive scrutiny of what equality means than can be pursued here.) Tutu (2004: 20) sums up this position as: 'In God's family there are no outsiders. All are insiders. Black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Jew and Arab, Palestinian and Israeli, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Serb and Albanian, Hutu and Tutsi, Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, Pakistani and Indian – all belong.' Dummett (2001: 23-25) puts the issue another way. Using economic terms he says, 'Egalitarianism is the belief that within a just society every individual must be accorded absolutely equal treatment.' And on the 'grotesque disparities of wealth and power' he says, 'Almost all societies are disfigured by such inequities: only hardness of heart or ideological dogma can blind an observer to all their flagrant injustice. Equality is the default position: deviation from it requires justification.'

Since ancient times when Plato and Aristotle taught differences in rationality and intelligence justified inequality, there have been opposing views; and, people like Eysenck have more recently argued that biology, for example, sets limits on the egalitarian agenda (a controversy explored by Green (1981)). One finds that equality and 'race' have always been a site of struggle as people have contested with one another as to both their theoretical meaning and practical outworking. Volf (1996: 9) illustrates the site of struggle personally as one who lived through the 1990's 'ethnic cleansing' in the Balkans, when he himself was asked the difficult question as to how he would relate, now the war had ended, to his

former bitter enemy. 'But can you embrace a četnic?' he is asked. He answers, 'No'; but I 'should'. Volf's book *Exclusion and Embrace* is about this struggle. For Volf the task is to 'embrace' the alien other; for Clendinnen (2005) sensitively to learn how to interact and dance with strangers; for me, it is both and much more. It is learning to listen and hold difficult conversations in the midst of silence and silencing. In this thesis, the debate must at this point become more focused, as we turn briefly to consider how 'race' has been a part of life in Britain since World War II.

1.7 Britain Since World War II

Has Britain since World War II changed that much? The Venerable Bede (AD 730) described London as, 'A market for many peoples coming by land and sea'; it still is (Newland 2000: 161). Reflecting on the arrival of Protestants in Tudor times, Winder (2004: 51) tells of the many new arrivals who came to make up the population of Britain and points out that 'history favours prominent people'; but of those who did not make the headlines, there are records that testify to their presence and the reception they received. He says, 'their names sit on church rolls and in the legal records. And one fact can be readily inferred from a certain pointed silence in the historical record. There are plenty of accounts of trouble caused by angry natives; but not one affray seems to have been started by the immigrants themselves.' Bede and Winder provide reminders of historical continuities that the discourse of 'race' often seems to be silent about, and it is important to recall that the long process of Britain receiving new arrivals is nothing new when thinking of the more recent post-war era.

Another significant point to recall is the lasting impact of slavery upon Britain. A huge number of African slaves, in fact more than 11 million were transported to the Americas between the reigns of Elizabeth I and Victoria. 'No other slave system forcibly removed so many people and scattered them across such vast distances' (Walvin 1992: cover, ix). Indeed there was never anything quite like the slave trade in world history, a system regulated and determined by 'race'. The colonialism, imperialism and slavery that were produced by Britain left a lasting legacy; and, it should be no surprise to find that after World War II this legacy came to figure significantly in the life of the heart of Empire, in Britain itself.

The thinking that made the slave trade possible for so long prior to abolition still permeated the very heart of the establishment long after it had formally disappeared. Walvin records, for example, the continuity of 'race' thinking in the education of Britain's ruling elite, and how public schools in England were especially influential in propagating ideas of British racial superiority and their racial view of the world. He writes, 'The Head of Marlborough claimed in 1861: "the savage races are without a past and without a future, doomed as races infinitely nobler have been before them, to a rapid and entire and perhaps for the highest destinies of mankind, an enviable extinction"'. Says Walvin, 'The language of race became a fundamental feature of British life'. In post World War II Britain occasional outspoken voices could still be heard which expressed similar views and racist attacks remain a feature of British life. Often though, with the changing times and the Nazi genocide still fresh in people's mind, these have been obscured by a 'discourse of reticence'.

Later, by the time of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, the enthusiasm of the slave trade abolitionists and their commitment to equality had disappeared.

Walvin asks:

What had happened to the remarkable national commitment to equality which lay at the heart of the anti-slavery movement up to 1838? The abolitionists' motto had been 'Am I not a man and a brother?' The view that black and white were equal was, obviously, an effective political ploy, but there is no reason to doubt that many genuinely believed what they said. In the last phase of British abolitionism, between 1828 and 1838, there is an abundance of evidence which testifies to a fierce attachment to black equality. (Walvin 1992: 332)

However, says Walvin, within only a couple of generations these liberal egalitarian ideals were not being heard and 'Black Africans and West Indians who entered Britain in the fifty years after black freedom found precious little evidence of that brotherly identity which lay at the heart of abolitionist ideology' Walvin (1992: 334).

In the twentieth century Britain has seen an irrational fear of being 'swamped' by new arrivals from overseas. Though this may be thought of as something recent, back in the 1920's Mathews (1924: 50) was writing 'What can stop the swamping of the minority of whites by the tidal waves of Asia's millions'. (For further discussion on the irrational basis for a fear of swamping see page 49.)

Mathews (1924: 129) also discusses 'white superiority' commenting, 'One does not so much state it, as take it for granted as almost to forget that it can ever be challenged'. The normalcy and invisibility of white identity and white racism remain a key feature of post World War II Britain.

Winder (2004) gives as good account as any of the key moments concerning the

movement of peoples to Britain following World War II. West Indian migrants began to arrive in 1947-48. Levy's (2004) novel, *Small Island* provides a good insight into the experience of these new arrivals, based as it is in part upon her parents' experiences and the racism they encountered. Popular discourse increasingly became a row between the pragmatists who saw the advantage of the new cheap labour and those who resented their coming. Initially, however, the majority of the British people were generally placid about the Caribbean migrants. Winder (2004: 268) notes, that in this period the government did not provide anything resembling political leadership, 'As E. R. Braithwaite put it: "There seemed to be no clear positive policy relating to their entry, no planned dispersal to anticipate and avoid local saturation, and no orientation scheme to ease the confrontation between the host community and the newcomers."'"

Perhaps one wonders, whether the issue was even then perceived to be a difficult one, and to have raised it was thought to be a risk too far – better to stay silent and let sleeping dogs lie. There is evidence that there were conversations and debates both prior to and after the war about ethnicity, 'race' and religion, but it was only when the concentrations of new black and brown arrivals in particular localities erupted in civil disorder, matters came to the forefront of popular discourse and political decision making. As Solomos (2003: 49, 51) points out, not much attention was paid to the early Caribbean arrivals for 'most of the migrants arriving in Britain were from other European countries' and therefore white. Solomos adds, 'Privately the government was considering the most desirable method of discouraging or preventing the arrival of 'coloured' British citizens from the colonies'.

Things did not however stay as quiet as the government might have wished.

There were 'race riots' in 1958 in Nottingham and Notting Hill. In the spring of 1959, Kelso Cochrane, a young Antiguan, was killed in Notting Hill, resulting in West Indians becoming a defiant and angry community. Winder (2004: 282) says, 'What was crystallising – in the bitter shouts of 'Who killed Kelso Cochrane?' at public meetings – was a polarising world of 'us' and 'them'. The fear of new arrivals, the polarising of communities and occasional outbreaks of civil disturbance were to become a feature of the latter part of the 20th century.

Some scholars cite the period from the 1940s to the 1960s as an 'age of innocence', but this is dismissed by Solomos (2003: 52) who points out that far from a lack of concern about immigration, 'Throughout the period an increasingly racialised debate took place, focussing on the supposed social problems of having too many black immigrants and the question how they could be stopped'. Does Solomos however go far enough and ask whether the debate was as full or open as it might have been? Probably not. Why, for example, does the discourse narrowly centre on immigration controls (the legislative basis for which was set down in the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1962 and 1968), which have dominated discourse to this day? (For a more comprehensive account than can be provided here, of the 'Politics of Race and Immigration since 1945', see Solomos (2003) Chapter Three.)

In general terms, there were two big waves of post-war immigration into Britain. First, came those from the Commonwealth, the West Indies and Asia in the 1950s and 60s; then second, the asylum seekers and refugees from Eastern

Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The arrivals of Asian and East African Asian background (1968-69) were accompanied by a bitter debate which defined the future political agenda. The 'rivers of blood' speech by Enoch Powell in Smethwick is often seen as a key moment. Gilroy (1982: 11) in the eye-catching titled collection, *The Empire Strikes Back* explores the ways 'race' and racism have developed in Britain, and importantly the book restores a debate that had become detached from its materialist framework. Gilroy writes: 'Racism as it exists and functions today cannot be treated simply from a sociological perspective. It has to be located historically and in terms of the wider structures and relations of British society.'

In the 1980s there were public debates on the educational system, in which people asked what kind of religious instruction should take place in a time of cultural change and increasing diversity?

Did we aspire to be a nation of sharply defined groups? Or did we want to be blended? A melting pot? Or a salad? Naturally, some blending was inevitable; and in Britain's case it really could be called desirable: the rate of intermarriage was the highest in Europe; and the 2001 census recorded 238,000 children in the cumbersome bracket 'mixed race'. The question remained: should this process be applauded, resisted or (on the grounds that it was none of our business) ignored? (Winder: 212-13).

There was much ambivalence and no clear political leadership.

By 1988 Winder concludes:

Conversations about immigrants had by now become as good as meaningless. Immigration itself was steady, so when people expressed a view about 'migrant culture' or 'migrant behaviour', they were really only seeking euphemisms for coloured people. But since a growing number of Britain's non-whites were actually British-born and raised a new term was needed. (In 1985 it was estimated that there were one million children of immigrants living in Britain.) They began to be known as 'ethnic minorities'. (Winder: 310-11)

In part this direction was pushed by egalitarians who wanted recognition for a relational multicultural society rather than a mixed one. But, in locating people in groups, was there not a suggestion that racial destiny was both ‘limiting and inescapable’? (Winder: 311). Multiculturalism and assimilation, often polarised as incompatible opposites, were new concepts, which are still very much part of the current domestic discourse around ‘race’. Integration and maintaining a separate identity do not have to be seen as mutually exclusive and a denial of difference.

The assertion of culture as the ‘problem’ is, according to some commentators, part of a ‘new racism’. The old racism put forward solutions to the problem of white hostility to black new arrivals that meant black people becoming or passing as ‘white’ in all but skin colour. In this can be seen an implicit concept of white superiority. Here, the best a black person can do is to become almost white! Such integrationist approaches subscribe to the notion of white supremacy.

Multiculturalism however places the emphasis not on minimizing the differences but on celebrating their diversity to enrich the life of all. This can be seen as an improvement on assimilationism, for it avoids hiding ethnic differences from view. But multiculturalism has its problems. A significant point made by Glazer (1997) is that class plays no part in multiculturalism. Class has dropped from view – this is a significant silence, for it diverts attention away from the material, equality and justice issues, and places the focus firmly upon a person’s cultural appearance, ignoring class. Though race and gender often provide a focus point and lever for seeking change, there is hardly ever an occasion when class provides this. Also, there are other possible dangers in multiculturalism, for is

multiculturalism not becoming a means of introducing ideas of essential 'race' difference through the back door?

Paxman (1998: 76) observes that 'What they [the British] resent most of all is that some things have become unsayable and doubt about multi-culturalism is one of them, left to be muttered in corners or grunted by thugs in tattoos and big leather boots.' The point is, multiculturalism has been too long idealized and critical discussion has, certainly until very recently been airbrushed out and silenced so far as the contradictions and racial essentialism integral to it are concerned.¹⁴ This is an important debate to which we shall return.

As the century drew to a close, there were increasing efforts to raise public consciousness of the worst aspects of racism and of the less obvious racial undertones in the media, in children's books, in everyday phrases and all other discriminatory aspects of cultural life. However this was often presented in some media and political discourse as hollow and self-serving 'political correctness', and earned scorn as the colour of refuse bags and the removal of popular children's books from the shelves of public libraries irritated and alienated those whom it ostensibly sought to win to the 'antiracist' cause. It is important to note that many critiques of so-called political correctness may be understood as operating as an ideology of the right seeking to discredit and silence those who wish to address anti-racism, inequalities, and other minority group concerns. The construct of political correctness as an ideology has been discussed earlier on

¹⁴ Trevor Phillips, the Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality (*Sunday Times* 2005) spoke out critically to warn of the dangers multiculturalism left unaddressed and sparked critical discussion. See page 112 for further discussion.

pages 30-31 and is further discussed on pages 101-107 and 295-297.

Courses on 'Race Relations' were held, often made obligatory by well-meaning employers, which relied heavily on imported course material from the USA. These were often crudely constructed, and expected confessions from white participants of white guilt for past slavery and present racism; and these, not surprisingly, alienated many white people, and arguably led to white silence later around 'race' issues as people resisted revisiting the subject area. But on the positive side these initiatives did alert people to the casual offence that lay embedded in everyday transactions and there were some gains; people stopped, for example, saying 'Nigger' (a case where silencing might be a positive thing building social capital). However, the material framework and foundational issues – the social construction of 'race' and the ideology of 'race' remained largely unaddressed.

In Chapter Two, 'Fortress Britain', Winder brings his readers up to date and one could say he accurately predicts the tone of the 2005 General Election campaign in which the Conservatives profiled immigration as a major issue. Winder outlines the sustained political and press vilification of asylum seekers 'designed to promote feelings of fear and fury'. He writes:

The result of this wholehearted opinion-mongering was predictable. The British public was badly misled. There cannot, indeed, have been many matters of national importance on which it was more deluded ... All of this meant that the debate was unusually rancid and polarised. Both sides wrote and spoke as if they were in the minority. Little English columnists poured scorn on the lily-livered pinkos who wanted to turn the whole country into a refugee camp, while the lily-livered pinkos themselves posed as brave moralists surrounded by a nation of thugs and morons. Anti-immigration spokesmen posed as truth-tellers willing to say the unsayable, and complained bitterly if they were ever smeared as 'racist';

their opponents insisted that there were indeed racist undertones, if not overtones; in such arguments. The airwaves hummed with what sarcastic observers called bogus attention seekers. In all of this heckling of opponents, it was almost impossible to find a calm reckoning of what was happening and where it was leading. This was partly because there were no authoritative statistics. (Winder: 337-38)

Never far away in this turbulent debate is the dichotomy of self and other and the question of self-identity. Winder explores this in looking at Englishness. (He is not alone in exploring this national anxiety around what it is to be British or English, as the large number of recent publications bear testimony: Paxman 1998, Kumar 2003 and Ackroyd 2004). Winder (2004) perceptively observes the difficulties in defining oneself English:

One could even say that 'Englishness' is by definition a foreign idea – a silhouette visible only from afar ... In Britain itself, meanwhile, men and women continue to define themselves more boldly by what they are not than by what they are. Englishness, tiptoeing between rival nationalisms, sometimes feels like nothing so much as an absence, meaning little more to most people than 'not foreign'. National identity is often a statement of opposition to outside forces; a form, more or less, of protest. Englishness, then (which ought to be less nebulous than its aging relative Britishness); is Janus-faced. To a foreigner, it appears as a caricature; to a native, it is a defence mechanism; to both, it suggests some indefinable yet vital essence of this soil, this history, this climate, this topography. (Winder: 353)

The movement of peoples to and from Britain currently focusses on immigration and reveals the traditional sense of national identity as uncertain, even a mirage.

Winder summarises Britain's current malaise:

It leaves us with so few credible national archetypes, no single banner beneath which all the varieties of modern Briton can rally. In its place, in the absence of a common flagpole on which we can all hoist our colours, we have an identity parade. Recent culture has supported a crescendo of identity politics along sexual, religious and many other lines. What we are – what we feel – often seems more significant than what we do or think. And no social signifier is as powerful as ethnic identity. (Winder: 356)

What is often lost sight of in public discourse is that ‘Britishness, as much as Englishness, has systematic, largely unspoken racial connotations. Whiteness nowhere features as an explicit condition of being British; but it is widely understood that Englishness, and therefore by extension Britishness, are racially encoded’ (Parekh 2000: 38). There is much public discourse yet to be had on this agenda, whether or not the public is able or willing to engage in it is another matter.

Perhaps one of the most apt replies to the question of English identity is provided in the collection of black writings by Newland (2000: 16). In her poem, ‘Tottenham’, Merle Collins writes:

Today when people ask, you like England?
I cyaan answer quick
Which England?

At the beginning of the 21st century Britain is a country of many identities. This is something which makes it at once stimulating, exciting and dynamic; but, at the same time, leaves some individuals and groups feeling exposed, fearful, insecure and reticent.

Over the past two decades, various reports, often written in the aftermath of social incident, have made a significant contribution to public debate. From Scarman (1982) on the disturbances in Brixton in 1981 to Macpherson (1999) following the death of Stephen Lawrence, the ‘race’ tensions and the policing of them have been explored. It was Macpherson (1999) whose report opened the gates to a wide ranging examination of all public bodies in the quest to eliminate what it called institutional racism, a concept defined by the report as:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantaged minority ethnic people. (Macpherson 1999: 6. 4)

Such racism, so ingrained in British society, both alerted and alarmed people. The Macpherson Report was sometimes met with opposition, some vocal, some silent. So where does this leave 'race' and racism in Britain today? Certainly the position is very complex and contextual. Unsurprisingly, at a time when fear of the stranger, the asylum seeker and other new arrivals in public discourse has never had a higher profile, the actual opportunity for a genuine asylum seeker to enter Britain legally has never been more difficult. In sum, 'It is only since the 1980s, when Europe embarked with a new zeal on its project of seclusion, that they have become so all-encompassing. ... Little by little the routes asylum seekers once took to safety have been choked off.' Harding (2000: 22).

For those new arrivals, and those who are second or later generations of former new arrivals, life can appear very different in different contexts. Take for example the particular position of African women in Britain, which Rosaline Nwagboso describes thus: 'African women seem to be torn between two cultures which oppress them equally but in different ways, the prominent features being male dominance and institutional racism' (Newland 2000: 66). Cattle (2001: 10, 60), reporting after the 2001 'northern cities race riots', describes how struck his team were on 'the depth of polarisation in our towns and cities. ... communities operate on the basis of series of parallel lives. These lives do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges.' This

polarisation into different groups is observed in Rochdale by Gosling (1980: 211), strangely so, despite all the similar resonances between the old and new communities which might, in other circumstances have helped bring them closer together. He writes:

I thought the immigrants would bring calypso bands and colour and freedom and life to our drab industrial town. It hasn't happened like that in Rochdale. As the native English Nonconformist has faded away, these new arrivals have come along and, particularly the Muslim immigrants, have brought it all back. The spirit of my father. The spirit of hard work, abstemiousness and self-sufficiency. Don't drink. Don't smoke. Don't kiss in the street. Don't marry unless your father approves. (Sandhu 2004: 226-27)

It remains to be seen how enthusiastic the government will be in pursuing the concept of community cohesion, although guidelines have been produced and local projects initiated. The Cattle team listened to local points of view and the Report's Executive Summary (Chapter Two) is a litany of significant concerns (see especially 2.3 which warns, 'little wonder that the ignorance about each others' communities can easily grow into fear; especially where this is exploited by extremist groups determined to undermine community harmony and foster divisions' and 5.1.16 which goes back to fundamental issues, expressed in religious terms:

It is unfashionable to speak of loving one's neighbour, but unless our society can move at least to a position where we can respect our neighbours as fellow human beings, we shall fail in our attempts to create a harmonious society in which conditions have changed so radically in the last 40 years. Such respect depends, in part at least, on being open with one another about differences of belief, tradition and culture. In our anxiety to eliminate the forms of insulting behaviour and language, we have created a situation in which most people are now unwilling to open any subject which might lead to uncomfortable differences of opinion. In this lies a big danger. If neighbours are unable to discuss differences, they have no hope of understanding them. Those who wish to cause trouble then have a fruitful field in which to operate. The recommendations in our report seek to create conditions in which all of us can engage in open

debate on issues which affect us all and when, as is inevitable, disagreements become plain there will then be a real chance they can be accepted with mutual respect.

Cantle calls for an open debate: yet the question that comes to mind is, how can these matters be discussed? Cantle calls for the conditions to be created for a debate to take place, but says little as to how this might be achieved. These are matters central to this thesis and to which we shall return later, but now we turn to consider these matters in relation to a specific locality in the West Midlands region, because it is here the empirical work of this thesis, outlined later in Chapter Three was undertaken.

1.8 Coventry and Warwickshire

Coventry and Warwickshire are very different from one another. Coventry, surrounded by leafy Warwickshire, is a large industrial city with a population of 300,848.¹⁵ Warwickshire has a larger population of 505,860 which is scattered across a much wider area of market towns and villages. Both look toward nearby Birmingham, Britain's 2nd city just to the west, and are found on the eastern edge of the West Midlands Region. The 1991 and 2001 National Censuses were respectively the first to enquire into ethnic and religious origins, the data for 2001 showing Coventry and Warwickshire to be pre-dominantly 'White British' and 'Christian' with only a relatively small number of wards where the composition was dramatically different. (Foleshill Ward, for example, in the north Coventry area is the least 'White British' with less than half the ward population in this category, 'Asians' making up the larger half, with a very small number of other ethnic groups also present. Warwickshire has 4.4% of its

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics, 2001 census figures.

population from minority ethnic groups.) Coventry and Warwickshire are socio-economically diverse, the more affluent south Warwickshire offering residents a life a world away from the urban deprivation in north and east Coventry where a small number of wards fall within the most deprived 10% in the country.

Deprivation in north Warwickshire centres on wards in Nuneaton. Coventry is considerably more culturally diverse than Warwickshire, with asylum seekers and refugees adding to the city's diversity. (Selected National Census statistics are to be found in Appendix 1).

If the West Midlands sneezes, Coventry and Warwickshire stand to catch a cold. For example, Coventry watched events in Smethwick and listened to Enoch Powell in the 1960s with alarm, as Solomos (2003: 60) reports: 'In the West Midlands in particular the events in Smethwick caused both major parties to emphasise their support for strict control of black immigration.' The disturbances faced by some of the northern cities in 2001 which also affected nearby Stoke on Trent, illustrate a dramatic breakdown of relations in multi-ethnic communities. Fortunately, these did not occur in Coventry and Warwickshire.

They did nonetheless send shock waves through the corridors of Coventry Council House and Warwickshire's Shire Hall. In Coventry, the Chairman of the Coventry Racial Equality Council saw these events as a wake up call for the 'local authority and other major stakeholders in the City to ensure that we learn the lessons of what went wrong elsewhere and what we can be helped to go well in Coventry. We must not fall into the trap of complacency and must be vigilant in combating racial tension and discrimination in the City' (Coventry Racial

Equality Council 2001/2002). Their annual report reveals a significant number of cases of racial discrimination and racial harassment in 2001: 60 and 553 respectively. A demand for services described by the Chairman as ‘immense and continuously growing’. The events of 2001 galvanised statutory and voluntary leaders into calling for meetings and initiatives to address ‘race’ tension in an urgent quest to avert potential conflict in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Historically, there have been racial tensions throughout Coventry’s long history as new arrivals, from Europe, Ireland, Asia and many other parts of the world came and settled here. The latest arrivals, mainly asylum seekers, have provided a focus for renewed tension. The Coventry Refugee Centre, founded to meet their needs, works with various statutory, voluntary and faith-based organisations to improve their situation and provide a welcome. The local authority itself has invested effort in producing a strategy to generate a welcoming climate and to address practical problems of housing and social provision. Local newspapers regularly provide accounts of racially motivated attacks on persons and property under headlines like, ‘Racist attacks on revamped centre’ and ‘Pair hurt in racist attack’ (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 26 March 2001 and 6 August 2001).

Asylum seekers have been the focus of tension, increased at times by the activities of the British National Party (BNP) delivering provocative leaflets in the most sensitive areas (e.g. in Foleshill, Hillfields and Wood End).

There have been other voices than the BNP. To offer an alternative voice is not for the faint hearted. When in 2001, Coventry City Councillor, Phil Townshend decided to speak out on the subject of racism and asylum seekers at the annual

meeting of the Trades' Union Congress in Coventry it attracted a lot of hostility. The title of his speech was 'Speak out Against Racism: Defend Asylum Seekers'. Attempts were made to silence him by letter and threat before he could deliver it (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 10 March 2001). In the event he delivered his speech; but the incident highlights the tensions just beneath the surface and the desire by some people to silence the agenda. At a more recent private meeting of Coventry and Warwickshire MPs in 2004, at which I was present, it became clear that some of those present were not prepared to speak up for destitute asylum seekers in their constituencies for fear of adverse reaction from the wider electorate at the forthcoming general election, which was widely thought to be in the offing.

In a Coventry Secondary School, reports of significant and hostile 'race' stereotyping amongst pupils are not hard to find. A confidential report to the author reports the use of the phrase 'kill all Pakis', and in respect of asylum seekers, the phrases 'they're all Kosovans aren't they'; 'they rape our women'; 'scrounge on the state'; 'are terrorists'; and, 'shouldn't be here' were all voiced by pupils in the space of one school visit in 2004. The respondent was shocked and concluded her report saying 'all the comments were negative'. Such views cannot be considered to belong uniquely to one Coventry school alone.

New asylum seeker arrivals in Coventry (the government NASS dispersal policy means all are dispersed to Coventry, whilst none are dispersed to more affluent Warwickshire) do not have it easy. An Iraqi Kurd asylum seeker dispersed to Coventry tells his story:

The first time I tried to get an appointment with solicitors in Coventry they told me that there was a waiting list, I couldn't get an appointment until two months after the deadline for my form. When I arrived, they gave me no ID ... I've never had my refusal translated to me. (Bradstock 2003: 26-27)

Coventry and Warwickshire has many people of goodwill, past and present, some have worked tirelessly for a more equal society. Coventry City Council has taken the Cathedral's international ministry logo for itself, to present the city as one of 'peace and reconciliation.' A former vicar in one of the most cultural diverse and deprived parishes in Coventry, David Thomas, of St Barnabas Church, Foleshill, addressed the city's racism saying, 'Racism can only be combated by treating all races as equals' (Lewis 1988: 126). There are many other people, not only Christians, who share that sentiment, for example Coventry Peace House, but the problem for them sometimes is to be courageous enough to voice their views in the face of widely held, though not always openly expressed, hostility. Coventry and Warwickshire provides the location for the empirical work outlined in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Conclusion

In this Chapter One the roots of 'race' have been explored. The latches of selected historical windows have been released, the windows opened, to provide illustrative scenes which strongly inform and resonate with the experiences of 'race' and racism in Britain today. The windows of slavery, colonialism and migration reveal powerful forces set to work as the concept of 'race' was invented and developed, forces whose strong currents reach forward even to the present time. The encounters between different peoples have brought about

compromises and accommodation, yes, but also resistance, challenge and conflict in the face of continual pressure upon social boundaries and individual identities of self and other resulting in constant redefinitions being made. Looking out through the window upon Britain today, and especially in this thesis upon Coventry and Warwickshire in the heart of the West Midlands Region, these same forces can be observed shaping and maintaining social structures and processes. The global has become local here too.

If one listens to what is happening outside the window of today, not all is noise. There are familiar voices picking up the conversation of ‘race’ and difference, some consensual, others conflictual; but these voices are punctuated by pauses and silences which also need to be recognised and understood alongside the voices. Silence is as much a part of this site of struggle as voices. It is this ‘discourse of reticence’, so often missed or passed quickly over, which especially concerns us here.

Fundamentally, individual identity in the face of the other, the stranger, may be moved by a variety of possible states from curiosity and interest to anxiety and fear, and it is these emotions which both voices and silence capture and give expression to.¹⁶ Sometimes the person looking from their window cannot see or simply forgets that they themselves are part of the picture before them. They do not see or want to see they are interacting, they are part of it, even though so

¹⁶ Frank Furedi (2005) has written about the prevailing politics of fear in present day Britain. Although his book is very much a knee-jerk reaction to events following the 7th July terrorist attacks in London, he helpfully highlights the way fear is used in political and social life to make people feel fatalistic, powerless and vulnerable. However, he is not pessimistic for the future, for he reminds his readers of human agency, the ability people have to make choices and take control.

often it is said this is not an issue that concerns us here. Whites in Britain, the materially super-ordinate group, appear more likely to believe themselves culturally invisible, the taken for granted norm against which everything else appears different. Inequalities are, therefore, not seen either, or made explicit: silence serving to avoid difficult conversations, maintain the status quo and preserve privilege and oppression.

Before taking our introduction to Coventry and Warwickshire further as the context for an empirical study, it is at this point necessary to pause to explore silence and silencing further, and it is to this subject Chapter Two now turns.

Introduction

Given the all-pervading presence of ‘race’ in society much has been written about it. However, rather less has been written about the communication of the ideology of ‘race’ and, in particular, the silences which punctuate its discourse – what I have called the ‘discourse of reticence’. This is both surprising and significant.

Yes, ‘race’ is addressed as an issue as and when it arises in particular contexts, for example, where ‘race’ and associated subjects are taught in the classroom. Beverley Daniels Tatum (1997) (who focuses on talking and learning about ‘race’ on the student campus in the USA) is one exception to the general rule of silence, who actually makes silence her theme. However, Tatum’s experience is narrowly based, and in the USA not in Britain. There is a real gap in the literature in this respect, not only in relation to the field of education, but also in Britain more generally. Individual examples where ‘race’ and silence have been part of the subtext (usually a very passing part) in a larger text are not hard to find, but any systematic academic study of the subject is a rarity indeed, and so it is necessary to turn to people like Tatum for a place to start.

Typically texts on ‘race’ or racism per se offer little or nothing in the area of ‘race’ and silence. A recently published standard text for scholars and students in sociology, Cashmore and James’ (2001) *Racism: Essential Readings*, contains 38 contributions on racism, with only one addressing this neglected area, written by

Tatum (2001). The relatively small number of texts directly addressing the subject of 'race' and silence means that the texts which are referred to below in this section will be ones for the most part based on experience abroad, notably the USA and Australia. There is, nonetheless, some useful material to be found in this eclectic literature from across the globe: but it does mean that care will need to be exercised in interpreting it and in using it in different social contexts. No-one has yet, to the author's knowledge, produced a single comprehensive schema for looking at this field generally, so what is being embarked upon here is exploratory, innovative and unique.

One cannot investigate 'race' and silence without first locating it within the broader field of communication in which silence belongs. As when communication on any topic is considered, there will usually be both voices and silences. A typical conversation over a meal or in a seminar, for example, contains both. Similarly communication in a newspaper can ostensibly be seen as continuous from front page to back page, but the discerning reader will consider what might go unreported, and ask where the silences are and what they might mean (For further discussion of silences in media texts – see, for example, Huckin (2002: 109).)

Communication can sometimes be easy: the message sent flowing freely and being fully received by the recipient; or, it can be problematic, because the nature of the message or the means or the sender or the recipient interrupting the process. It is important to note that both verbal and non-verbal factors are involved.

Increasingly, effective communication is treated as a subject in its own right, often with the aspiration that it will help people become more socially skilled in this essential activity. The consensus in the literature is that a person is a skilled communicator according to:

the extent to which he or she can communicate with others, in a manner that fulfils one's rights, requirements, satisfactions, or obligations to a reasonable degree without damaging the other person's similar rights, requirements, satisfactions, or obligations, and hopefully shares these rights, etc. with others in free and open exchange. (Phillips 1978: 13, in Hargie 1994: 1-2)

The contribution of voice and silence to the overall communication, both in terms of time and meaning will vary depending on the subject, the context of the conversation, the receptivity of the listener, etc. For many persons, the subject matter and occasions do not lend themselves to a 'free and open exchange' and once one starts looking at the inequalities between people, the area of 'rights, requirements, satisfactions and obligations' presents as a communication minefield. There is evidence to suggest that 'race' is, as Tatum's work suggests, one of those minefield areas. Why 'race' is a difficult area for conversation and so hedged around with silence will be the topic considered in the first section of this chapter. What these silences are about will be explored, whilst recognizing the fact that 'race' has clearly not been entirely silenced. This raises questions as to where the silence comes from and who or what, if anyone or anything, is responsible for it. Then, if silence is deliberately facilitated, there is the question as to what purpose is served and for whose benefit. Is it government's interests that are served, does it help inter-personal relationships in the local context or does silence serve both?

The second section of this chapter will look at some of the many possible sites where 'race' and silence are processed through a 'discourse of reticence'. For example, in the writing and telling of history there is a constant struggle between those who want to ensure that the truth of what actually happened in respect of 'race' should be told and those who want to silence it. Another site is international relations, another national politics, and here too 'race' is often associated with silence. Moving from the global, to the national and then to an example of the 'discourse of reticence' at work within the institutions and processes of higher education: academia has been chosen as another site. It is included here along with still other examples of reticence indicating the wide reach of this discourse.

Having considered the nature of communication itself and the sites of communication, the groundwork prior to the task of conceptualizing 'race' and silence and silencing will have been done. In the third section some possible frameworks for providing explanations for the phenomenon will be offered. In particular some answers to the question as to who perpetrates the silence and whose interests are served by silence and silencing will be further considered.

When it is the received wisdom of the age that it is good to talk, the question arises as to whether, when it comes to 'race', it is indeed always good to talk. Is it? In an age of therapy, when 'having your say' and 'getting matters off your chest' are advocated as the palliative to all problems, it begs the question: Is this the case when 'race' is considered, or might a 'discourse of reticence' serve a useful and beneficial purpose as well as a less socially constructive one? Are

there matters about which one should be silent? The answer suggested here in 2.4 is that it may depend heavily on the local context. The next question then is this: Is the reticence because of the difficulties lying in the subject matter of ‘race’ itself, or, is it because the tools available to make the communication / conversation work are currently not up to the task?

The following section, 2.5, addresses some preliminaries for the empirical work that follows in Chapter Three. If ‘race’ and silence is to be tested empirically, then how and with whom? This section briefly introduces and explains how an opportunity to place a piece of research within a broader community cohesion project run in Coventry and Warwickshire presented itself. A brief conclusion then follows in which the key points emerging from Chapter Two are summarized.

2.1 Difficult Conversations

Why, one might ask, does silence matter? Surely it means nothing at all? If there is a silence in the conversation it is merely a pause for breath or reflection before it resumes once again. Conversation is constantly punctuated by silences. When a more serious conversation is taking place, perhaps when a politician is facing questions, if someone does not answer the question put to them it means they either do not know the answer or do not want to give it – it is as simple as that. In all things, it is what is said that matters, not silence. When conversations address more socially sensitive matters, people are naturally more careful, sometimes even hesitant in what they say. Ostensibly silence does not normally appear to mean very much, or does it? Perhaps its very nature leads to it being overlooked

and its significance missed.

When the subject is ‘race’, and silence appears, perhaps it suits the subjects that it is avoided and overlooked. Could it be that silence is created by government and the socio-economically powerful elites, promoted through the ideologies espoused, mediated through discourse, with the purpose of protecting self-interest? It is interesting to reflect how often, when the subject of racism is raised as a political issue, a deep silence emerges because the socially powerful ensure this happens. Many will, for example, remember Martin Luther King Junior’s speech ‘I have a Dream’ but few will have heard of his arguably ‘more important’ oration, ‘A Time to break Silence’. The well known ‘I have a Dream’ speech captured the non-violent mood of the American Civil Rights Movement and gave it a ringing endorsement, but as Reed (1999) asks, ‘where are the politics or the programs to achieve black equality?’ or indeed where are the calls for legislative enactments or enforcement of the existing civil rights legislation – in reality they are simply not there. They were to come only later as King’s thinking developed.

The ‘A Time to break Silence’ speech made just five years later in 1968 is more important because it had moved from the visionary solutions of the earlier speech to attack the Vietnam War as American colonialism and linked it with American ‘violence in the ghettos’ back at home. ‘A time comes when silence is betrayal’ he said, ‘that time has come in relation to Vietnam’. He proposed specific steps to end the War and a call to orient the USA to face the ‘giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism’ (Reed 1999: 160). It was King’s last major address,

showing the development in his thinking, yet no American daily printed the speech and ‘most editors resorted to a conspiracy of silence concerning the speech’s contents.’ Why was this? According to Reed (1999), this apparent anomaly is because the earlier ‘I have a Dream’ speech satisfied American desires for its black citizens, as it did not call for action to ensure it became a reality: the earlier ‘speech, magnificent though it is, is devoid of politics, programs, or prophecy.’ Ironically King on ‘Silence’ was met with silence! A speech on silence, as in this case, can communicate a great deal and sometimes this communication is less than welcome and is therefore itself silenced. What now follows are three examples of silence from literature which in turn, illustrate the character, nuances and complexities of silence whose significance can so easily be missed.

In Thomas Hardy’s novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, one of the characters, Geoffrey Day, is described as follows: ‘Close? Ah he is close! He can hold his tongue well. That man’s dumbness is wonderful to listen to. There’s so much sense in it. Every moment of it is brimmed over with sound understanding.’ (Hardy 1964: 95). Hardy, like other great novelists, knew the measure of silence, the control of communication it represented; and, that it can communicate meaning without words. Silence can be an appreciated attribute of character. Not that its meaning, should there be any, can be easily ascertained, for silence is often ambiguous and leaves those waiting guessing. Hardy presents Day with his personal take on silence as part of accepted Wessex life.

A more recent novel, Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* set in London’s East End, reveals

a gulf between a group of young Muslim militants who want to challenge racial and social injustices through public meetings and radical action and those who are older like the character Chanu. Chanu wants nothing to do with such militancy and says, 'We always keep quiet, the young ones don't want to keep quiet anymore.' (Ali 2004: 258). Different groups of people in a community will keep quiet, in this case, perhaps, because older people are more cautious and less prepared to take social risks. Different groups of people will opt for silence. Like Hardy, Ali points to the need to interpret silence in the local context.

Another recent novel, cleverly set in the twin contexts of Second World War Germany and present day small town USA, Jenna Blum's *Those Who Save Us*, tells how Anna, a surviving German mother from the days of the Nazi Holocaust keeps, for fifty years, a total silence about her traumatic past from her daughter Trudy. Though Trudy really wants to explore her earliest memories and uncover the truth about her past, her mother prevents any inquiry. Blum explains, 'Anna has taken the burden of silence on herself. It is her decision not to speak of the things she has done, valiant or otherwise. It is in fact her prerogative as a hero. And in another way, whether she is a hero or not is immaterial, each person has the choice to make about how to live with the past, this dignity, this inviolable right.' (Blum 2005: 474). Here silence is an act of deliberate will, a choice made to carry the burden of painful knowledge about bad things people do to one another so that those one loves, including one's own self, are spared the pain of revisiting these matters. One can argue about the rights and wrongs of Anna's silence, but the point is, people will sometimes keep silence because the subject matter is too painful, too difficult and too potentially damaging to raise.

In fact one learns from literature as from life that silence is as much part of interpersonal relations and communication as talk. It is very much the everyday experience for those who are deaf or dumb, but it is also a common social experience for almost everyone. Things are taken as understood without words and there are non-verbal social conventions mediating communication. Silence therefore matters a great deal and is there to be understood. In these three sample novels, one can see it portrayed in very different ways: as an aspect of someone's character, there to be respected; as a quality of older people when compared with young people – indeed some people will be more voluble than others; and, as a way of heroically protecting one's family and oneself from painful knowledge and memories, a silence entered into with heroic controlled purpose. What is already evident from literature is that silence is multi-faceted and has to be interpreted in the context in which it arises. Why would one not seek to interpret silences around 'race' with the same consideration?

Leslie Kane (1984) has made a comprehensive study of silence in one particular area of literature, that of drama, and from his summary of the many different forms of silence used in drama he provides what he calls a taxonomy of silence. As a visual expression, drama consciously uses words, silences and other constructs to convey meaning. The following taxonomy is a reminder of the many meanings silence offers and the need for its careful interpretation:

The dumb silence of apathy,
The sober silence of solemnity,
The fertile silence of awareness,
The active silence of perception,
The baffled silence of confusion,
The uneasy silence of impasse,
The muzzled silence of outrage,
The expectant silence of waiting,

The reproachful silence of censure,
The tacit silence of approval,
The vituperative silence of accusation,
The eloquent silence of awe,
The unnerving silence of approval,
The peaceful silence of communion,
And the irrevocable silence of death illustrated by their unspoken
response in speech that experiences exist for which we lack the word.
Kane (1984: 14-15)

Comprehensive as the above may appear, it is best to view Kane's list as incomplete. There is, for example, the amazed silence of those seeing a spectacular event and the disabling silence of mental shock or physical trauma. Neither are mentioned by Kane.

We turn now to look, not at literature or drama (though this is nonetheless instructive and could be pursued further if space permitted), but at the lives of real people and their experience of silence in the context of 'race'. Here again it can be seen that a similar pattern emerges: silence carries with it a broad range of meaning. Examples are given in what follows of what contemporary British people say. It is little more than a straw poll of collected snapshots of life, 'race' and silence: and it begins in Coventry.

Echoing the silence of Blum's character Anna, the silence protecting the self from a painful past is also found in the autobiographical words of Katerina, a Coventry school pupil who is an asylum seeker from Moscow. On being asked to write about the change in her life on coming to England, she writes: 'I find this is a hard question because it is not something I think about' (Barrs Hill School 2001: 16). For many of the youngsters who took part in a school initiative to get the many pupils from abroad to write about their past, Katerina's experience of

loss and the pain at what happened in her past make this something she does not want to think about or voice.

Dilkhwaz, a refugee from Iraq (whose young brother was killed by Saddam Hussein) writes a poem in which she says, 'I don't want to remember my country' (Coventry Refugee Centre 2002: 17). Stefan, an asylum seeker in Coventry from one of the countries of the former Soviet Union asked the author, 'Why is it that the English people don't like people like us?' He felt he was being cold-shouldered and people did not want to talk to him. Stefan would like to be sociable and get on with his new neighbours in Coventry but his experience is that he not welcome here. Chra, a Kurdish young person in Coventry writes, 'When you go to any European country you do get support and you're treated well by the government of the country you are in. But you are also treated like a stranger. ... they just tease you and ask why you don't go back to your own country' (Barrs Hill School 2001: 22). Anna, Katerina and Dilkhwaz share in common the wish to silence a painful past. Stefan and Chra face the cold silencing of rebuff and rejection given to the unwelcome stranger. Racism along with experiences of trauma and loss are subjects around which there are many unpleasant and painful associations and experiences; would it not therefore be strange if silence did not figure, if not all of the time then some of it?

Moving from inter-personal silence to consider more general patterns of silence in social behaviour, Mead and Baldwin are very conscious of social processes and conventions. They discuss at one point their experience of silence in the USA when there was a time when it was the accepted convention to be silent

about 'race'. Mead and Baldwin say it was a way of 'ignoring' 'race' differences and the issues it raised. The convention, however unnatural and even rude it may seem today, helped people avoid entering into potentially difficult conversations about the unpleasant, unjust and painful aspects of US life. Mead and Baldwin's dialogue speaks for itself:

MEAD: ... I was speaking in those days about three things we had to do: appreciate cultural differences, respect political and religious difference and ignore race. Absolutely ignore race.

BALDWIN: Ignore race. That certainly seemed perfectly sound and true.

MEAD: Yes, but it isn't anymore. You see it really isn't true. This was wrong, because—

BALDWIN: Because race cannot be ignored.

MEAD: Skin colour can't be ignored. It is real. When we said ignore race... and I was so proud—you know, we were all proud whenever we forgot it.

BALDWIN: Yes.

And,

MEAD: ... the offer well intentioned white people made is: "If you will be like us —

BALDWIN: "You could join our clubs and come to our houses —"

MEAD: "And we'll pretend you're just like us."

BALDWIN: Yeah.

MEAD: We'll deny your hair, we'll deny your skin, we'll deny your eyes. We deny you. We deny you when we accept you; we deny the ways in which you are not exactly like us, by ignoring them.

(Baldwin 1972: 14, 18)

These two extracts of their dialogue show how what had become an accepted social process of silence on 'race' managed and perpetuated a system of inequality. It is quite alarming, if Mead and Baldwin are right, to see that such a social convention could be so widely accepted and that people should feel 'proud' in observing it, presumably for being 'good' citizens in conforming. In sum, at that time, to ignore 'race' was perceived as a means of keeping a dangerous topic 'safe' and within accepted patterns of social convention.

The US social system, where white superiority was the order of the day, illustrates a time when white people, being compromised by or possibly blind to these realities, are described as 'well intentioned'. If, indeed, they were 'well intentioned' then surely one might hope that at some point they would be enlightened and choose not to go along with the convention of silence, and break it. One wonders what other reasons than conformity there might be for maintaining this fiction – protection of self-interest and privilege; fear of the 'racialised' other; or, a lack of confidence in being able to handle such a conversation? It could be any one of, or a combination of, these things. The bottom line, that this is a racialised society and the status quo is maintained by silence about 'race' difference, is made quite clear in the dialogue. What is also interesting is what triggers observation of the conversational convention to ignore race is a total reliance on visual 'race' appearance cues of hair, skin and eye colour. The visual cue is enough to bring into play a social convention strong enough to overcome any obligation to pay heed to, to notice and share any awareness of the preposterous racial basis upon which it is based and to avoid addressing the wider 'race' issue of white people building relationships with black people.

There is the question to be addressed as to whom and by what process is such a social convention brought into being? Are there controlling forces at work in high places protecting the interests of the rich and powerful using techniques of mass persuasion to exercise social control? Or has the mass of the populace set the agenda, recognising that their own best interests are best served by observing such a convention? Or indeed, do both the rich and powerful and the mass of

people share a common desire for their own purposes to keep quiet? These are big questions to which we shall return. Make no mistake, whoever, and by whatever process a pattern of 'race' and silence is brought into being, this is no inconsequential matter, for its effect can be powerful for both individuals and societies alike. 'Race'-based inequalities are part of such racialised societies. The challenge here is to make explicit what the silence and the process of silencing make hidden. Understanding the 'discourse of reticence' is the first step in planning how best to address how to make a more equal society.

Time and again, the author – in the course of his employment has observed a desire to ignore or otherwise avoid conversations on 'race'. At other times, communication is marked by an observable ambivalence. This reticence to engage in potentially difficult conversations on 'race' was made very clear, for example, by a speaker at a major multi-agency seminar organised by the Birmingham Race Action Partnership in 2004. The speaker said, 'There is a real fear among non-BME communities in engaging to say, [to hold conversations on racism] for fear of being called racist, etc. ...' The way conversation is edited and steered into 'safer' channels to make it easier is illustrated by another comment at the same seminar, 'We don't like to talk about nasty words like "racism", but nice words like "diversity"' (b:RAP 2004). These comments indicate that fears, pejorative words as well as silence contribute to the 'discourse of reticence'.

On yet another occasion, Coombey, the officer responsible for a 'Rural Racism' project in Herefordshire describes getting a conversation going on racism as 'so

course on racism. One member said, “Racism does not exist at St Aldhelm’s, it is not an issue”. This did not close the debate. A long-standing PCC [Parochial Church Council] member then said, “It causes more trouble and stirs up more problems than are really there, people should be allowed to be friendly in their own way”. Next, a black woman spoke, saying, “Words, deeds and actions are still in the colonial vocabulary.” Tensions rose.

In the days following the meeting the organist sent a written ultimatum to me as Chair of the Church Council copying in all the members. He wrote:

I am writing to you in response to the events which took place at the previous meeting of the council, a meeting which saw us on the brink of a potentially destructive division of our church.

Any discussion of racism risks the danger of divisive and hurtful argument; an ill informed debate on such an issue is frankly foolish. Yet at the last meeting of the PCC, this is exactly what was embarked upon. Predictably nothing but bad feeling was achieved

From what I have heard of the paper produced by the diocese on racism, it is a clumsy and awkward attempt to deal with the complex issue of race relations. The PCC should not be on a witch hunt to seek out racism. ... The council meetings are not the place for recrimination, destructive discourse, and trouble-making. Yes, genuine racism should be tackled, but it must be done with skill, understanding, and behind closed doors. This is not hiding it under the table, it is dealing with it in a sensible and personal way, which develops education, understanding and communication; the lack of which are the prime causes of racial tension.

A second letter from one of the Churchwardens was also circulated to all council members. He wrote expressing his “disappointment and distress”, adding:

It is my opinion that such a wide ranging subject has no place for discussion at an open meeting of the size and structure of our PCC – it being misguided, counter-productive and self-defeating.

We are all aware of racist problems in society generally but as Christians we all do our bit in our own way to create a fair and just society for all. This does not require general discussion.

I feel last Monday’s meeting may have done more harm than good and before irreparable long term damage is done I would like to put a personal proposal to the PCC that general discussions on racism should not be brought before any meeting and that any intention to follow up last Monday’s introduction should be abandoned ...

If anyone agrees with me and would like to second my proposal it could be put to the next PCC meeting.

For this church at this time a discussion of ‘race’ and racism was too difficult to handle. The subject was silenced. If asked, these upright, decent citizens would say that the silence was to preserve friendship, to keep the peace and to avoid having to revisit past hurts (Hall, J. 1999).¹⁷

To return to the work of Tatum with which Chapter Two began, it is readily apparent that the three events from the author’s own experience (the examples from Birmingham, Herefordshire and North London, which could have been added to many times over by other examples) resonate strongly with Tatum’s classroom encounters. When Tatum asks his University Classes on ‘The Psychology of Racism’, to ‘Raise your hand if you’ve ever had a difficult, distressing, ultimately unproductive discussion about race’, then, ‘A roomful of hands usually shoots up’. Describing this as ‘our silence’ he adds, ‘I’ve seen how hard it can be and how frightened many people are to begin a conversation about race.’

This recurrent issue, arising with each successive class encouraged Tatum to seek to understand and address it. He says, ‘I’ve learned that a dialogue about racism can be a powerful catalyst for change.’ Tatum is aware that those who choose to remain silent have their personal reasons, but ‘we pay a price for our silence’. He gloomily predicts that ‘unchallenged personal, cultural and institutional racism results in the loss of human potential, lowered productivity, and a rising tide of

¹⁷ This situation was explored in the MPhil thesis *Beyond Silence* (Hall, J. 2005).

fear and violence' (Tatum 1997). This indicates that Tatum sees silence as having negative outcomes, does not accept uncontested silence, and sees silence as a problem to be overcome.

It is easy to agree with this, but a moment's reflection suggests that the question whether to combat and seek to overcome silence or not deserves further consideration. This is a view, with which one might come to agree, but the case needs to be made and the question of whether a response is called for will be reconsidered later. At this point of the thesis, the task is simply to elucidate the common human experience of silence in communication which in the context of 'race', frequently, and in many contexts, 'normally' emerges as a difficult subject to talk about.

One of the few other academics who have written about 'race' and silence is Day (2001). Again this is from the USA, but this time from the perspective of a Christian Lutheran Seminary. What she writes is very similar to the foregoing. Echoing Tatum's work, though the two never refer to one another, Day writes:

A first year student in the seminary culture would soon learn, "We don't talk about controversial issues here!"... In seminary life, students had learned to tiptoe around the issues that might be controversial, painful or unresolved. This behaviour went far beyond "political correctness" to a noticeable avoidance of conflict and risk. Passions were buried'.
(Day 2001: 2, 10)

This demonstrates how the ideology of political correctness can silence voices on 'race'.

The controversial conversations described are broader than 'race', but 'race' is a major component specifically mentioned in her book. Day is absolutely right to

point out the commonalities there are between difficult conversations on ‘race’ and difficult conversations around other subjects such as ‘abortion’, for example. It is important to note that the silence around ‘race’ is but one of many silences around other subjects in social life, and that not infrequently these silences are related. For example, silences around ‘gender’, ‘sex’ and ‘religion’ have been observed and are referred to elsewhere (see pages 112-17, 149, 166, 175-76).

Day believes that in the student setting in which she works, it is more difficult to hold a conversation on ‘race’ today than it was in the past when she herself was a student. She says this is for two reasons. First, voices once heard in public debate, addressing and pushing for change on a range of social issues – slavery, civil rights and the Vietnam War – are now silent. Today the new ‘stridency of the religious right, particularly in relation to abortion, has effectively silenced others from articulating alternative positions or even entering into dialogue’ (Day: 3).

For her second reason to explain why conversation is more difficult today, Day turns to Putnam (2000). Citing him, she concurs that in the USA, ‘Silently, without warning ... we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century’ (Putnam 2000: 1). People now refrain from entering into public dialogue. Society is busy divesting itself of social capital, the opportunities and the skills for discussion are now more limited. Day’s response is to launch a new college course in a ‘safe’ place and with an open agenda to discuss difficult things. In her desire to combat silence her response is similar to Tatum. Silence is assumed to be a bad thing! Her

programme therefore spills over into setting up projects to facilitate conversations, in her case through local churches; and her book, consequently, outlines these efforts in some detail.

Day does not however, examine her initial observation of difficult conversations in terms of any broader social narrative. She simply believes that it is a matter of integrity to seek to hold conversations on difficult issues and offers practical guidance for doing so. She makes no critical analysis of its meaning in her college or more widely in contemporary USA society. Even so, she offers some useful observations and stimulating practical ideas to initiate thinking in this area. She observes how, for example, only the ‘exceptional few thrive on conflict’ – the Martin Luther’s of this world, who say, ‘I can do no other’. Such outspoken people, Day says, are commonly ‘perceived as “troublemakers,” “pot stirrers,” “agitators.”’, not roles most people would wish to assume. She concludes, ‘We want to avoid those dangerous conversations that might challenge and, worse, *change* us. And we devise strategies for making sure these discussions don’t take place’ (Day: 20). There appears to be a basic contradiction in Day’s approach: normal people are not able to break silences and yet she wants ordinary people to do so. How can she possibly succeed? Silencing to avoid important issues that ‘challenge’ and seek to ‘change us’ is a recurrent theme in this thesis, one to which we shall return.

One of the features of the difficult conversation on ‘race’ is that it is encompassed by political correctness (discussed earlier on pages 31-33 and 71-72), which has the effect of leaving people tongue-tied. People are quietened by

this recently named social convention. In rapidly changing western societies where roles and words change meaning quickly, political correctness, operates powerfully to offer guidance as to what may and may not be said without causing offence. There is ambivalence, ignorance and controversy surrounding political correctness, which prescribes which words and forms of words are ‘correct’ regarding issues such as ‘race’ and gender. Often having uncertain social authority, politically correct words leave people finding themselves uncertain as to what they can legitimately say about ‘race’ and so they opt for silence being unsure whether what they might have said would cause offence.

Again, to illustrate the point from the 1970s, (which suggests the phenomenon is not so new) where better to turn than a conversation between Mead and Baldwin:

MEAD: And this attempt to change the scene by changing words, which we try so much in the United States –

BALDWIN: It doesn’t work, does it? ...

MEAD: So what’s happening is making people more tongue-tied, because they are not quite sure what they should say to this group or that group when things change so rapidly, ...

BALDWIN: I hate people – hippies – for example – who pick up various black phrases and use them to death and don’t know what they are talking about. I never want to be caught in that bag myself. So I have become tongue-tied, too. I don’t know what to say. I don’t know what that means. (Baldwin 1972: 138-39)

Besides creating a predisposition toward a ‘discourse of reticence’, political correctness leads to the creation of a host of euphemisms which can control and limit public conversation. The use of such euphemisms adds to the sense of general social uncertainty, for not everyone will know the conventions or the words, and not everyone will be happy to use them. One example of a euphemism in current use will serve to illustrate what is happening. Writing of

his observation of how the controversial issue of immigration is handled in Britain, an issue which in reality is a touchstone for much ‘race’ discourse, Dummett says:

As the word “immigration” was a code, so “immigration control” was a code. It said, “We do not want these people here: we are doing everything we can to keep them out.” It was intended to mean that: it was understood as meaning that. It was unnecessary to specify why it was important to reduce “immigration”. Everyone knew why it was important: it was better not to spell it out. (Dummett 2001: 96-7)

This kind of use of language as a controlling social convention also extends into humour. The question of what now constitutes a political correct, a socially acceptable joke, is the focus for much current discussion on either side of the Atlantic. Where the line is crossed, whether inadvertently or deliberately, there is an outburst of public opprobrium. Again Mead and Baldwin discuss this:

MEAD: In World War II everybody stopped telling ethnic jokes in the United States. They were particularly afraid –

BALDWIN: Well, not everybody.

MEAD: Well, we changed them to moron jokes. All the Irish jokes: all the Negro jokes: all the jokes were about morons. ...

BALDWIN: But they were the same stories.

MEAD: The same stories, exactly; they were just transmuted. And I think that has some kind of lesson in it, too.

BALDWIN: It does, yes. What it comes to, in a way – doesn’t it? – is that what we call racism would seem to be endemic to human nature. When one is complaining about racism and fighting it, what you are really complaining about is power. (Baldwin 1972: 139-40)

Baldwin’s perceptive last response points to a possible bigger narrative behind the silence, the issues of jokes being a vehicle for managing the dichotomy of self and other; and, jokes being revelatory in showing where power in society is located – it is with those who are delivering or on the receiving end of the joke! Political correctness in respect of jokes is a contested and confusing social issue.

Some argue it is naïve and ill-considered to attempt to censor and regulate humour, whilst paradoxically others support the politically correct approach saying such humour reinforces ‘race’ stereotypes and helps maintain a racialised and racialising society.

In the nineteenth century tradition of the minstrel show, originating in America but later brought to Britain, is seen a form of racial parody, often based on crude stereotyping and ritualized insult. It is here, Lively (1999: 17) argues, ‘we find the origins of the modern ethnic joke’. Lively understands the use of such racial humour ‘demonstrates the potency of the anxieties and fears’ around ‘race’ in a racialised society. He continues, ‘as with all jokes about sex, death and race, the amount of laughter is proportional to the strength of the taboo, the blockage to expression, that is being broken. Jokes are a serious matter’. In other words what Lively is saying here is that when the subject of ‘race’ has been silenced by the prevailing ideology, which more recently might be described as silencing through political correctness, the ethnic joke serves as a kind of underground release through which silenced and repressed fears and anxieties about the racialised other are released through a ritualized ‘safe’ process and usually ‘safe’ place. However, the ethnic joke does not generally serve to liberate the minority ethnic community, but by the placing of the racialised other into their inferior social place, simply affirms and underlines their inferior position and the racialised order of society.

Baldwin, for his part is quite clear on this point, namely that white power and black weakness is the issue and to complain about un-politically correct jokes is

to contest white power. The question of power in society and its relation to ‘race’ and silence is a recurrent theme in this thesis and one that will be further developed later. Baldwin makes the valid point that what we call political correctness is an ideology created to serve dominant (white) power interests. (The way in which political correctness functions as an ideology has already been highlighted (pages 31-33, 72-73, 103-04.)

Stone (1999) and others in their book *Learning Conversations* acknowledge that race is one of those subjects difficult to air in conversation. In the book’s introduction, they write, ‘Sexuality, race, gender, politics and religion come quickly to mind as difficult topics to discuss, and for many of us they are. ... We all have conversations that we dread and find unpleasant, that we avoid or face up to like bad medicine’ (Stone 1999: xv). Coming out of the Harvard Business School, Stone seeks to encourage his readers in commerce and business to engage in ‘learning conversations’ where there is open and honest ‘dialogue’ and through which they are helped to ‘tackle even the most challenging conversations’. The material is all couched within a conservative-liberal and mediation-compromise approach offering a technique aimed at solving disputes at work and home. Given its provenance, Stone does not offer a programme for addressing wider social issues, rather what is offered is essentially a local and therapeutic conversational management tool for handling ‘race’ and gender issues.

In Britain, Lawrence (1982) notes that even where conversation on a difficult subject is attempted, the reflective person will find many words and phrases that

were once 'plain common sense' in everyday parlance have now become embarrassing and difficult to use, because they carry with them the prevailing culture's racist ideology. For example, Lawrence examines the phrases in popular cultural use in Britain relating to the black family, to show how negative images of black people are perpetuated, even without people realising it. He writes, racist 'ideas combine with a common-sense racist imagery which encompasses all blacks. ... Blacks are pathologized once via their association with the "cultures of deprivation" of the decaying "inner cities" and again as the bearers of specifically black cultures.' There is then in every 'race' conversation a potentially explosive political tension between those who freely use their 'common-sense understanding' and those who see it as a vehicle of oppression which expresses and perpetuates the continuing struggle against domination and oppression (Lawrence 1982: 56). These are deep and difficult areas with much scope for the unwary, and even the wary, to make a mistake and receive criticism or something stronger! Little wonder people opt for silence.

Conversations can also become difficult when self-identity is rendered uncertain. In a recent British TV documentary, the sociologist and social commentator Darcus Howe goes looking for the 'White Tribe' in England and finds white people unsure of themselves and their identity. He explores what the adjectives 'British' and 'English' mean in contemporary culture, wondering whether they signify any perceptible identity at all. When a white woman in a London street appears on the documentary saying, 'I mustn't say I'm white and English, because that makes me racist right away,' she presents a paradox, for if whites are the powerful dominant culture, why this loss of confidence? What can it

mean? And if white English people are really less confident in themselves, does not this reflect a loss of personal and cultural identity in a changing society? Perhaps there is a cultural insecurity around identity and this itself contributes to make conversation difficult.

The central question asked in Howe's documentary series is, 'Why do English people feel their culture is so vulnerable?' (Howe 2000). The answer the programme presents is, because they no longer know how to describe who they are. Howe picks up the usual litany of 'race' based resentments on the street, focuses on the colourful dichotomy of self and other in multi-cultural Britain, and helpfully illustrates how contextually determined 'race' issues and perceptions are in different places; but, he misses a number of significant points, for he never explores the wider narrative, the questions of class, of a racialised society or of the deep roots of 'race' ideology at work in Britain's social structures and processes.

Another reason why conversations on 'race' can be difficult is that they can threaten certain groups of people who will use silence and silencing to protect their position. (This was briefly discussed in Chapter One, pages 13, 31-34, 56-57.) This is a social reality. For example, Sir William Macpherson (author of the Macpherson Report following the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence) reveals that serious attempts were made to silence him after the publication of his report. He says, 'I get awful letters from people who say they are going to come and murder me, and that Enoch Powell was right, and that I

ought to have said they all ought to be sent back.’ (Macpherson 2001). In some criminal circles, to silence is a euphemism for to murder.

Sir Bill Morris, of the Trades Union Congress, also describes, in a radio interview, the attempts to stop discussion of the Macpherson Report. An enthusiastic advocate of the report he acknowledges that in his experience there is no racial equality in the work place, adding specifically, ‘There’s a silent conspiracy in the Police Federation ... to stop Macpherson being debated.’

Vested interests will use silence to protect their position in a racialised society (Morris 2001). Here again, issues of silence in relation to the power and privilege of some social groups over others are apparent.

Let us summarise where we have got to. Clearly ‘race’ makes a difficult subject for conversation. Rather surprisingly, this is something about which relatively little has been written. ‘Race’ is characterised by silence and silencing: a ‘discourse of reticence’. Appreciated as a significant issue by Tatum and Day in the context of student life in the USA, it has otherwise been rarely attended to as an issue of other than passing interest. Their response to what they observed (in, paradoxically, the ostensibly safe environment of a further education classroom where open and robust discussion might be expected) led them to devise means of overcoming silence to enable dialogue to take place. Taking a step back, and in seeking to better understand silence in communication, this section has given examples of silence in literature as in life, where it is shown to be an ambivalent context-shaped phenomenon: sometimes present to protect people from pain and keep relationships ‘safe’ to handle, whilst at other times serving as a controlling

device to mask, protect and safeguard the interests of a racialised society. There are broad macro-silencing forces at work, emanating from government and socially powerful groups, as well as local micro-silencing forces, which may in part be an outworking of the political ideologies being promoted. As we seek to develop an understanding of these forces, in the following section various sites where ‘race’ and silence occur will be presented and critically reflected upon before proceeding to return to the problematic task of measuring, interpreting and conceptualizing the relationship between ‘race’ and silence.

2.2 Sites of Silence and Silencing

At this point in the chapter there will be a shift in focus toward gathering material relevant to Britain because this is where the empirical study described in Chapter Three took place; though, on occasion, there will still be good reason to refer to other sources from further afield. It will also be necessary to focus on just a few rather than many of the possible sites of silence and silencing which could be visited, a selection made partly on the basis of convenience in relation to my role as Director for Social Responsibility in the Diocese of Coventry. The choice of material has once again been selective, identifying sites of particular relevance and resonance to the project work undertaken with children and young people. There are three sub-sections – first, an Introduction, secondly, a focus on Britain, and thirdly, Some Other Sites.

2.2.1 Introduction

It is interesting to note that in defining racism, Katz who is best known for his definition of (white) racism as ‘prejudice plus power’ (Katz 1978: 10) also, and

perceptively, includes reference to silences. He says racism refers to, 'all actions, inactions, sentiments and silences that sustain 'black' subordination' (Katz 1978: 47). Though his sweeping definitions do a certain injustice to the nuances and complexities of 'race' and racism, for example, he ignores class and other groups, such as gender, in the white population, he nonetheless points to the roles of 'silence' and 'inaction' that might otherwise be overlooked.

It is reassuring to find that the danger of silence on 'race' has not been entirely lost in the literature. Here and there it gains a mention. For example, in an interesting reflection, Toni Morrison ponders what ten steps might be needed to so disparage members of a minority that the point when a 'final solution' is proposed actually happens. She lists the process; after the initial steps to create an internal enemy, to pathologize and criminalise it, the tenth step is this, to 'maintain, at all costs, silence'. She is convinced silence supports racism as well as racialised societies and this can take, as in the case of genocide, very brutal social forms (Morrison 1995: 384).

It is useful to think about words as well as silence: how words evolve and emerge, for words and silence work together. Gee (2002), in her novel, *The White Family*, based on the fictitious life of a north London family, has one of her characters, Thomas, teaching in a school. A pupil asks a question:

'Please, Sir.'

'Yes.' It was a tall black boy, who had been listening carefully, chewing a pink pencil.

'where do words come from?'

Thomas was silenced. That was the mystery, where language came from. It was part of us. Born in us.' (Gee 2002: 382-83)

It is a dialogue that reminds how words and for that matter voices that are taken so much for granted arise from somewhere beyond the individual, from a social context. They are constructed in a complex social milieu. Rarely does an individual create a word, individuals learn and use words they have been taught by those around them. Words therefore have long histories and contextual geographies and biographies. They are part of communication more generally and belong with silences; and, both words and silences in their evolutionary context need to be listened to, attended to, if they are to be understood.

Something of the task required here is captured by Illich (1973). He understands silence requires a certain attentiveness for he writes, 'It is thus not so much the other man's words as his silences which we have to learn in order to understand him ... Among men in time, rhythm is a law through which our conversation becomes a *yang-yin* of silence and sound', and 'It takes more time and effort and delicacy to learn the silence of a people than to learn its sounds' (Illich 1973: 41). Silence demands a special kind of listening if what it is seeking to communicate is to be appreciated.

In an interesting article calling for 'rhetorical listening', Krista Ratcliffe (1999) exposes the bias toward voices and written words, and what gets missed without such listening. She begins by noting how, in US culture (and what she says has much resonance for British culture) speaking is generally gendered masculine whilst listening is gendered feminine. She adds 'Thus gendered, listening subordinates not only women to men but also listening to speaking' (Ratcliffe, K. 1999: 200). She then argues that ethnicity is another crucial factor because, for

white people, listening is not as necessary as for people of colour. She further notes, that in certain fields like theology, psychology and communication (and one might add literature and the arts) listening to silence is more developed than in others. This leaves many other fields where listening is less developed and its significance is missed. The message she sends is a powerful one: that it is only by attentive proactive listening, to both word and silence, that the social relations of power (dominant – subordinate), gender (male – female) and ‘race’ (black – white) can be appreciated. She says, ‘rhetorical listening enables us to hear textual strategies associated with a h(ear)ing metaphor, such as voice and silence; relatedly but more encompassingly, it enables us to hear what Toni Morrison (1988: 261) calls “the sound that [breaks] the back of words.”’ (Ratcliffe, K. 1999: 204).

Ratcliffe advocates gaining understanding (by literally standing under) the words of others and listening to the discourses of others. She applies ‘rhetorical listening’ to see if she can *hear* the way whiteness works. She says she had received nothing through her own earlier education to help her *see* how it works. Thus, in response, she initiated a university classroom discussion on whiteness, where she put forward the proposition, ‘whites don’t have to think about race’. What followed was ‘the longest silence followed by the most lively debate I have ever encountered’. Through carefully listening to the exchanges in this debate, Ratcliffe is able to identify different themes – there is a young man, for example, who ‘seemed to think he was expected to keep quiet about such ideas’. She adds, ‘I hear the voice of a white America that imagined itself racially unmarked; I hear the silence of the classroom, of students not knowing whether and/or how to

speak. I also hear my teacherly tone' (Ratcliffe, K. 1999: 211).

Ratcliffe's work, with clear parallels to the university class experiences of Tatum (1997, 2001) and Day (2001) referred to earlier, suggests that the particular social setting provided by a relatively safe and liberal system of education lends itself to the safe exploration of these issues with pupils. However, one wonders whether, given the difficulties in this setting, it is at all possible to have such reflective conversations in other less conducive walks of life. From the imbalance of literature found covering the subject one assumes this imbalanced state of affairs to be the case. To link Ratcliffe's method of 'rhetorical listening' to the 'discourse of silence' for use in the various social contexts in which it arises suggests a new and powerful conceptual tool.

Thomas Huckin (2002) is an American Professor of English who teaches courses in critical discourse analysis and who has a particular interest in the rhetoric and politics of textual silence. He cites Aldous Huxley's foreword to *Brave New World*: 'The greatest triumphs of propaganda have been accomplished, not by doing something, but by refraining from doing. Great is truth, but greater still from a practical standpoint, is silence about truth. By simply not mentioning certain subjects, ... propagandists have influenced opinion much more effectively than they could have done by the most eloquent denunciations, the most compelling of logical rebuttals.' In the light of this, Huckin believes that silence carries great power and his chosen method to disclose it is through the systematic search for examples of silence and silencing by making a careful and attentive reading of a large number of journal and newspaper articles on a

specified subject area. On reading 163 articles on homelessness, for example, he concludes that five forms of 'silence' can be perceived in these texts. They are:

1. Speech-act silences
2. Presuppositional silences
3. Discreet silences
4. Genre-based silences
5. Manipulative silences

The point to note is that silences are many and varied, and indeed may also arise in combinations of the above. Huckin gives most attention to the 'manipulative silences'. Unlike the other types, manipulative silences are intended to conceal certain information from the reader. They are more common than we might suppose. Advertisements and political statements are examples one might readily accept as communications economical with the truth. Their success rests on being able to conceal information without alerting the reader to what is omitted.¹⁸

As with K. Ratcliffe's work what is encouraged here is a hermeneutic of suspicion, an enquiry seeking after meanings which may be concealed by silence, either deliberately or unconsciously.

The populist author, broadcaster and social commentator, Jeremy Paxman, observes the difficulty in either talking openly about 'race' issues or expressing the 'unsayable' doubts about multiculturalism. The point Paxman makes is that 'race' is in some sense 'unsayable', because of social convention, barely discussed, except behind the backs of hands by 'thugs in tattoos and big leather boots', but rarely talked about in public (Paxman 1988: 76). In this context, it would be quite in order to see 'multiculturalism' as a convenient euphemism for

¹⁸ Huckin (2002) alerts his readers to the way powerful groups exercise hegemony over less powerful groups, what he calls 'macro-silencing'. Feminist authors such as Olsen (1978) and Clair (1998) have described the way in which patriarchal societies force women into silence.

the wider topic of 'race' itself though by 2005 the use of the concept of 'multiculturalism' was itself being seriously questioned by such figures as Trevor Philips, the Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality (*Sunday Times* 2005).

Nothing illustrates the point better than to refer to that touch-paper of the explosive conversational issue, the asylum seeker. To try and talk publicly about asylum is, as Spencer (2004: 1) puts it, 'rather like walking on ice. The subject is lethally slippery, the ground beneath your feet of uncertain strength and the writer never quite sure that a single, misplaced phrase will not send him crashing into the freezing waters of public opprobrium'. Little wonder that only the brave or foolhardy might venture forth! Spencer recalls Seamus Heaney's words, which, when they were penned, referred to the sectarian troubles of Northern Ireland in the 1970s. Heaney wrote:

The times are out of joint ...
... to be saved you must only save face
And whatever you say, you say nothing. (Heaney 1975)

The reason in part is because 'No discussion of immigration can begin without acknowledging the spectre of racism that casts its long shadow across the whole debate' and 'our eagerness to eradicate racism is in danger of ... inducing paranoia and a spate of accusations and confessions, and making any more balanced and nuanced analysis very difficult. Any conversation attempted is booby trapped with trip wires. Words are loaded grenades. Great vigilance is needed, says Spencer, to be able to steer away from 'the many 'trigger' terms that cross the debate like trip wire – 'Flooded', 'soft touch', 'bogus', 'scrounger',

'refugee magnet', and 'racist'. Even then, 'there is a bigger obstacle to constructive debate. The facts themselves are nothing like as self-evident as we sometimes think'. There is a great deal of public 'misunderstanding and misinformation'. Nonetheless Spencer believes it is possible, through taking the kind of care and following the strategies he provides to say something and enter into a conversation. He concludes, that 'Trying to say something' requires 'Recognising the sensitivity of the debates that surround asylum and immigration and our difficulty in talking about the issues involved, without descending into paranoid anxiety or ill-tempered polemic, and that by locating and helping us to understand the various mines which litter the landscape; it enables us to avoid them and, hopefully, therefore, to make a constructive contribution to the debate.' The strategies he advocates however require aspects of saintly character (e.g. humility) and high quality presentation skills (e.g. 'maintaining a tone of sensitivity, respect and humanity') that are not commonly possessed (Spencer 2004: 2, 4, 9-10, 13). Many in society may feel uncomfortable talking about a group who are much vilified but whom they fear, distrust and resent.

Perhaps the necessary skills and guidance might be found in academia? Turning to Miles and Brown (2003: frontispiece), who are leading figures in writing about 'Racism', they open their standard text on the subject with an intriguing quote, which suggests that silence will be explored in the later text:

'When I was a boy, I used to wonder where my mother came from, how she got on this earth. When I asked her where she was from, she would say, 'God made me', and change the subject. When I asked her if she was white, she'd say, 'No. I'm light skinned', and change the subject again. Answering questions did not jibe with Mommy's view of parenting twelve curious, wild, brown-skinned children.' (McBride 1988: 15)

Clearly the message given by 'Mommy' to her children is that skin colour, like where babies come from, is not talked about! It's taboo! What surprises the reader is that the question of 'race' being taboo-ed, so graphically illustrated, is totally omitted from any mention by Miles and Brown, too.

Omissions are a form of silence and they occur in related fields. Whether people have been oppressed by 'race' class, gender or religion there will be silences.

In her two papers read to women students in Cambridge in 1928, Woolf (1977) wondered why women were largely absent from the history books, unless they were queens, mothers or mistresses. And if a woman was to be a writer of fiction, she had to have money and 'a room of her own'. It often seems to be the voice of those who are oppressed who have the measure of silence and silencing. Woolf certainly conveys this when she says, 'What is meant by reality? It ... makes the silent world more real than the world of speech' (Woolf 1977: 104). Her work suggests that to understand silence implies a willingness to approach the subject from below, to hear the voices of the silent.

Evans (1985: xvii, 12) writes of the historical struggle black women writers have had to overcome noting that, 'there did not exist in 1979 ... a single definitive volume of criticism ... of the works of a representative and significant segment of skilful Black women writers.' For the individual women whose stories she recounts in her own work, silence emerges – the silence of fear as well as the silence of oppression. Maya Angelou, for example, describes growing up in the American Deep South in the first quarter of the twentieth century as one of 'hardship and brutality', which led to certain survival tactics; one of which was,

as Angelou points out: ‘The less you say to white folks ... the better’. Another writer, Gayl Jones, describes her work as one of writing the things about which one is supposed to be silent:

Sometimes politics or political strategies, like any other kind of strategy or system, can be useful in the organization and structuring of one’s work, the selecting of character, of event, the choosing of ideas, but it can also tell you what you cannot do, tell you what you must avoid, tell you that there’s a certain territory politics won’t allow you to enter; certain questions politics won’t allow you to ask – in order to be “politically correct.” I think sometimes you just have to be “wrong”; in order to enter. I’m not sure one can be a creative writer and a politician – not a “good” politician.

What happens when you narrow your definition to what is convenient, or what is fashionable, or what is expected, is dishonesty by silence. Now when you have a literary community oppressed by silence from the outside, as Black writers are in America, and you have this kind of tacit insistence upon some unilateral definition of what “Blackness” is or requires, then you are painfully and effectively silencing women of our most dynamic and creative talent, for all change and progress from within comes about from the recognition and use of difference between ourselves. I consider myself to have been a victim of this silencing. (Evans 1985: 234, 262-263)

Often, as has been noted earlier, there are none so silenced as those who find themselves belonging to more than one oppressed group. To be black and a woman was to be in double jeopardy. Evans’ work allows individual black women to express, powerfully from below, their own experience being on the receiving end of silence and silencing.

2.2.2 Sites in Britain

Back (1996) writing in Britain, sees limitations in the post 1970s gathering consensus around ‘black’. He observed a forced new consensus, lumping individuals and groups together. In the 1990s, he says, ‘The unintended consequence of this movement was a tendency to homogenize cultural, class and

sexual differences within blackness' (Back's important observation of homogenization goes hand in hand with the other tendency – to essentialise and polarise conversations around 'race' into binaries). The effect is to make it harder to see where and how the 'discourse of silence' is at work.

The significance of Back's work is that he gets behind the stereotypes and the homogenization, for what he writes is based largely upon looking closely at 'race' in the local context, in the social reality of young people's lives in a grounded, empirical study, in London. His book engages with the vernacular culture 'to examine how the formation of identity, racism and multi-culture is manifest in everyday life'. 'The central argument of his book is that multi-inflected forms of social identity are being expressed within cities such as London but these are equally being met by multi-accented forms of popular racism that sometimes operate inside urban multiculturalism and at other times prey on these fragile forms of dialogue from outside.' (Back 1996: 7).

Back uses the concept of 'community discourse' in looking at the youth culture on the 'Riverview Estate' – at how self and identity are formed, and notes how it is not all black youth, but also the Vietnamese youth who are 'silenced' and excluded from local dialogue. He also observes how 'Young people are not the passive recipients of these ideologies, but neither can they escape their effect' – 'the result is a muting of the expression of particular racisms while others flourish.' (Back 1996: 4, 6-7, 72). This powerful material supports the case for looking at and understanding the complex and nuanced ways in which 'race' and the 'discourse of silence' must be understood in a local context.

The complexities of 'race' and silence take many forms as has been shown. One of the silences, as already noted in respect of the Vietnamese youth in Back's study, is the area of racism outside the dominant white-black binary. In a *Sunday Times* article Appleyard and White (2004) write about black on black racism, a subject which tends to be even more overlooked and about which there is much silence. They write that people 'are too afraid of appearing racist to admit there is any problem other than white oppression and racism'.

The danger, the authors say, in writing articles about problems within the black community is that they give added voice to racists, and what they themselves write ends up being posted on the British National Party (BNP) website. For the very reason that 'people use what you say against you, there is a reluctance among the black community to talk openly,' says Tony Sewell, non-executive Director of the Learning Trust in Hackney (Appleyard and White 2004).

'In England racism is discreet now, and in a way that makes it harder; you're punching cotton wool', says Yvonne Brewster, Theatre Director in the same article. The authors say that holding a rational conversation becomes really difficult when raising the subject of the 'catastrophic familial situation among Caribbean blacks'. (Half of all their families are single-parent units; and, in the poor areas of Liverpool and London, they visited, the figure was close to 100%.) Even when they ask Trevor Phillips, head of the Commission for Racial Equality, why this has happened, he simply became angry and passionate saying, 'That is just wrong, and I don't care what the reason is'. The authors' explanation is that, 'White liberalism has made addressing this problem more difficult. There is a

fear both of condemning any black social practices and of suggesting there could be anything wrong with single-parent families.’ Reticence has many roots and difficult and potentially socially or personally undermining issues are one.

Another issue black leaders find difficult to air ‘are uncomfortable home truths within black communities’ such as, ‘For every Caribbean-descended black at university here, there are two in prison’. Thus the situation surrounding black family life, black over-imprisonment / black educational under-achievement ‘are being silenced by political correctness. Who says so? Black leaders themselves’ (Channel 4: 2004). This difficult subject of black on black racism was aired in a television documentary debate, ‘Who are you Calling Nigger?’ (Channel 4: 2004). This documentary which shows how ‘race’ discourse is not only silenced in the mainstream, in academia, but also within the minority ethnic groups themselves where it has become unacceptable to say that major issues and inequalities exist. In the programme Darcus Howe explores inter-racial conflict and prejudices in youth culture, between young Asians and Africans, and between young Africans and people with an African-Caribbean background. Howe shows the divisions in British society to be deeper and more complex than simply an issue of black and white. Howe says the divisions are the ‘downside of multiculturalism. Get a mix of different cultures with everyone holding on to their own and no common sense of identity, no mixing, there are going to be clashes.’

Some of the programme was filmed in the West Midlands where young Asians from Walsall talk about joining together against the common enemies; white youths and black youths. Howe pedals his familiar line, that ‘to truly understand

a nation, a culture, or its people, it helps to know what they take for granted', i.e. the things that are not discussed because they are taken as normative. He continues, 'After all, sometimes the things that go unspoken are more powerful than the spoken word, if for no other reason than the tendency of unspoken assumptions to reinforce core ways of thinking, feeling and acting, without ever having to be verbalised, and thus subject to challenge at all'. This is surely one of the strengths of sociology to enable the normal and taken for granted to be seen and objectively understood.

Such things are reminders of what Beckford (2004), a black academic theologian and broadcaster from Birmingham, writes about; he is critical both of his university colleagues, claiming, 'More academic books are being written in Britain on being nice to animals (animal theology) than on dealing with racial discrimination'; and, of black churches who, for far too long 'have hidden behind a narrow Christian exclusivity that has limited their ability to be in dialogue with poor whites or Asian members of the community who worship in mosques, temples and gurdwaras' (Beckford 2004: 18, 21)¹⁹ In effect, he criticizes silence on two fronts – silence of (the mainly white) theologians and the black churches.

He is keen that there should be no misunderstanding as to the prevalent social situation, that of oppression, which is still the experience of the black community. Beckford endorses an observation by Sivanandan (1982), a distinguished social analyst, who once described the circumstances faced by African and Asian people in Britain as a 'domestic neocolonial situation'

¹⁹ Also repeated by Beckford in Ford 2005.

(Beckford 2004: 41). Beckford adds his own observation that, ‘the most enduring feature of colonial power and practice is how race continues to be a salient feature of urban life in Britain today’ backing up what he says with reference to how ‘many second and third generation British people such as myself identify today’s disproportionate unemployment rates and the high incidence of under-employment amongst African Caribbean men and women in Britain as the present manifestation of a long, almost seamless history of economic exploitation.’

In the neo-colonial context of contemporary Britain, Beckford writes, ‘faced with continued negative discourse on black inferiority structured around notions of blacks being more physical (for example, sports), dangerous (criminal) and only viable as entertainers (comedians), many believe that colonial images and values are encoded in discussions on race, identity, immigration and asylum.’ ‘The colonial legacy of exoticising and demonizing the black “other” is therefore still played out on many cultural fronts.’ Addressing the particular concern of black on black gun crime in Birmingham, Beckford concludes, ‘Those involved in gun crime and gang violence are on one level internalising and living post colonial oppression. From this perspective black youth holding and using a gun is not an expression of power or an outlaw mentality but an example of a post colonial system winning the battle to control black people’ (Beckford 2004: 42-50). In this oppressive climate Beckford wants to see resistance strategies put in place and ‘race’ brought on to the agenda.

This is a challenge not least, in Beckford’s social setting, because the ‘colonial

church never addresses racism and sees itself as colour blind despite the facts of the last 400 years.’ He cites the difficulty with the invisibility of whiteness noted here earlier: ‘Because whiteness is unmarked racially, some white people tend not to see it in operation in everyday life. For example, and I ask my predominantly white under-graduate students to tell me 5 things about being white, they freeze and have no answers’ (Beckford 2004: 50, 75). Beckford’s Birmingham experience is that, notwithstanding the difficulties within the theological circles and the black churches in which he moves, the topic of whiteness itself is enough to ‘freeze’ a conversation, to silence dialogue when introduced by a black person. There is a wider social dynamic at work here.

Beckford concludes: ‘Whiteness is a complex concept to describe and define.’ ‘Neither will every white person become comfortable with whiteness being talked about.’ (Note that he is implying that there will also be some white people who will be happy to do so.) But, he states, ‘there can be no meaningful discussion of urban issues that concern race and ethnicity if the only white contributions are from those who have redeemed their whiteness’ – those whom cultural theorist Les Back describes who are ‘Stepping out of Whiteness’. The biggest challenge is to get the great mass of white people to move into a position of conversation on these issues (Beckford 2004: 79). Beckford helpfully reminds us how ‘race’ discourse and for that matter the ‘discourse of reticence’ is shaped by past colonial and present post-colonial factors. Voices mentioning racism and oppression are raising highly contested, even fearful and pejorative issues – seen by some, yet invisible to others.

Turning from Beckford's world of higher education, let us consider what white people in ordinary employment say. Are they silent about 'race'? It is not difficult to find examples where this is the case. On the BBC1 (2004) 6pm News the main news story on the 11 November was about the changing pattern of recruitment to the Prison Service including recruitment of members from ethnic minorities. The BBC commentator said that tackling institutional racism was very important today. Then the shot switched to the white female prison officer at Belmarsh Prison who was training the new interns. For her the impact of race awareness meant that 'we're frightened to speak in case we offend them', a significant remark that, surprisingly, received no further comment. This is exactly the kind of silent person Beckford would like to have talking freely about 'race'. Yet even he does not seem to have recognised the measure of the powerful sway held by the 'discourse of reticence', which is so clearly at work in prison officers, like the one at Belmarsh.

Carby (1982) looks at the way black children have been treated by the education system in Britain. Black children, she says, have been seen as 'problems' for the system; and, since the 1960s the black pupil's 'failure' has been constructed around British society's 'common-sense racist assumptions' (Carby 1982, 183).²⁰ Black pupils are identified as 'failures' because of their 'inadequate grasp of language', 'identity crises', 'negative self-images' and 'culture shock'. Carby examines the effect of the multiculturalist approach that grew out of a pluralistic model of society. This assumes (quite incorrectly) that equality can be achieved through celebrating cultural diversity; thus, taking Carby's point a stage further –

²⁰ British Society's 'Common-sense racist assumptions' are more fully described in Chapter Two of Gilroy, P. (ed.) (1982).

this has the effect of removing the problematic issues, silencing them by relegating them to the realm of politics because it can be said they are being addressed within education. Removing cultural ignorance and valuing all cultures was seen as the panacea for establishing a harmonious multicultural Britain of the future.

This did not stop calls being made by some black people for a politicized black consciousness. However, some of the strength of that call was diverted through the provision of a new teaching of black history and culture. She adds, 'Just as the sociology of race relations was to ignore the implications of increasingly militant black political consciousness, so educational theory advocated avoidance, at all costs, of "black power" politics' (Carby 1982: 192). Carby's concluding assessment, endorsed by Little and Willey (1981), is that the introduction of the multicultural curricula was 'irrelevant to the black struggle in Britain' and has had very little impact on schools. This should come as no surprise says Carby, for 'it had been conceived and applied as a method of social control over black children' (Carby 1982: 195).

Carby also sees 'community relations' as the 'soft-centred' form of social control used to replace notions of integration. She quotes Gus John's comprehensive assessment:

The state, the police, the media and race relations experts ascribe to young blacks certain objective qualities, e.g. alienated, vicious little criminals, muggers, disenchanted unemployed, unmarried mothers, truants, classroom wreckers, etc. The youth workers, community workers, counsellors (teachers) and the rest start with these objective qualities as given, and intervene on the basis that through their operations they could render young blacks subjectively different, and make them people to whom these objective qualities could no longer be applied. When this is

done in collaboration with control agents themselves, as in police-community liaison schemes, or instances in which professional blacks collaborate with schools in blaming black kids for their 'failure', it is interpreted as progress towards 'good community relations'. (John 1981: 155)

Whereas both Beckford and Howe see various disparate sites of silence (including silence at the heart of whiteness) and the inadequacies in such debates as arise, Carby focuses entirely on 'Schooling in Babylon', seeing the education system as a means of, and subject to, social control in a deeply racialised society. For her, present education thinking and practice, based on a certain kind of multiculturalism, only serves to deepen the silence around 'race' which lies in the heart of political discourse. As Carby reports, it is extraordinary to think that even as recently as 1981, a major education report whose terms of reference included looking at the 'educational needs and attainments of ethnic minority groups ... evades the fundamental reasons for their disabilities – which are the racialists attitudes and the racist practices in the larger society and in the educational system itself' (Carby 1982: 206).²¹ Since then the inclusion of teaching about racism along with bullying within the school PSHE and citizenship curriculum has been encouraged, though only so far, a subject which will be considered further in Chapter Three. (See page 214-15.)

Carby is not alone in identifying 'race' as a contested area of struggle. At this juncture it is perhaps worth reflecting on silence as an act of resistance used both by those oppressed as well as the oppressor. On the one hand, silence is used

²¹ *The Rampton Report – The Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups* (1981) had racism excluded from its terms of reference. All the more surprising when in the report appears the following: 'many West Indians insisted to us that the major reason for the underachievement of their children in school was racism (racial prejudice and discrimination), and its effects both in schools and society generally' (Carby 1982: 206).

from above as a means of social control. The familiar saying, referring to ‘being sent to Coventry’ actually arises from the treatment of Royalist prisoners in Coventry in the English Civil War when silence was used by the victors to humiliate the vanquished. A penalty was imposed on ordinary citizens who broke the silence by speaking to prisoners. Nation states have often used explicit powers of censorship and covert methods of silencing to quell dissent. On the other hand, at different times in history, oppressed people have used silence from below as part of their armoury to gain liberation, a means by which they have empowered themselves and taken some social control back.

2.2.3 Some Other Sites

The oppressed will use silence as their own creative space in which they dream dreams and make plans. Jacques Debû-Bridal (1970) writes, ‘When man can no longer love and work singing their joy of life, they slave away silently, ferociously at terrible deeds that, one day, will liberate them. Great revolutions are elaborated in silence and rich thoughts and works germinate, far from all the noise and chatter’. He goes on to describe the significance of silence, as on the one hand, having ‘its own eloquence by signifying refusal’; yet on the other hand, ‘silence is also an avowal of impotence, of defeat, but at the same time a safeguard and refuge for the vanquished’. Together they signify to the oppressor that there is a limit to their victory, and that silence is more than a symbol – it is an act (Debû-Bridal 1970: 39).

On similar lines, Brown and Stokes (1991: 30) write in their preface to the classic French wartime novella about silent resistance in the face of Nazi

occupation that, 'silence is ground zero, the void from which the word, the Logos, surges forth. It is that state of emptiness from which the text itself is generated.' The novella by 'Vercors'²² to which they refer reveals the creative power of silence as an act of deliberate resistance taken by those oppressed.

Brown and Stokes describe 'Vercors'' qualities of silence as follows:

A silence that hides something, a silence charged with an undisclosed intensity; an energy in reserve, awaiting release, wanting to surface. Silence has many facets, perhaps an infinite number of facets, for being the domain of the unsaid, the nonarticulated, it is a semantic slot, a space waiting to be filled with meaning. Writers more than anyone else are aware of the creative powers of silence, the wellspring of the word, and Vercors more than any of his fellow resistance authors has exploited the awesome potential of a silence used to communicate. Paradoxical as it may appear, communication is precisely what silence aims at, and it is no coincidence that writers during the early war years used silence to transmit messages of various sorts – Resistance, naturally, but also moral, philosophical and ideological ones – to their compatriots as well as to the Nazis. (Brown and Stokes 1991: 26-27)

There are, just occasionally, voices raised addressing the silence around 'race' in public life. None more loudly – though almost a lone voice – is that of the American theologian James Cone (2004). In his article, 'Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy', he outlines why he thinks the white majority US churches have not engaged with the issue of 'race'. The four main reasons he believes contribute to create silence and why whites do not talk about racism are:

1. They do not have to talk about it.
2. Talk about white supremacy arouses deep feelings of guilt.
3. They do not want to engage black rage.
4. They are not prepared for a radical redistribution of wealth and power.

(Cone 2004: 144-50)

²² 'Vercors' was the pseudonym adopted by Jean Bruller at the time to hide his identity.

These are important insights. He adds that it is important to look at the local social context, for 'Before we can get Whites to confront racism, we need to know why they avoid it.... This is a complex and difficult question because the reasons vary among different groups in different parts of the country. There are probably as many reasons as there are people' (Cone 2004: 144). Rallying his faithful he cites two churchmen who did not stay silent, though it cost them all, namely Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King. Their words, though conveying very similar thoughts, are worth repeating here. Bonhoeffer (1998: 3) said, 'Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act'; and, Martin Luther King (1986: 296) 'We will have to repent... not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people' (Cone 2004: 139). If nothing else, Cone's lone voice recognises some major factors keeping silence in place, each of which will need to be addressed if silence is to be broken. Exceptional outspoken people like Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King are uncommon people (as Day reminds, see page 103). Courage to speak out in the face of major challenges is not found in everyone.

In Britain, the obstacles can seem larger. There are traits of national character that militate against voicing difficult matters. The anthropologist, Fox (2004) in her chapter on 'Defining Englishness' says:

The central core of Englishness ... is our lack of ease, discomfort and incompetence in the field (minefield) of social interaction; our embarrassment; insularity, awkwardness and perverse obliqueness, emotional constipation, fear of intimacy and general inability to engage in a normal and straightforward fashion with other human beings.
(Fox 2004: 401)

She is not alone in her assessment. Fenton (2003: 11) writes, 'In societies such as Britain, which have only recently developed an awareness of themselves as multi-ethnic, the ethnic majority is also the 'silent majority' scarcely conscious of itself as ethnic at all.' If Fenton is right, what possibility then can there be that such a large silent group might be confident enough of its identity or identities that it will be ready to enter a discourse around 'race'? Undoubtedly speaking about these things can be a difficult process.

Stuart Hall (1978: 30) examines the way the black presence in Britain is identified as an "enemy within", a signifier of crisis'; but for such an ideology to become something rather more, to become a real and historic living force, Hall argues it has to have a direct impact on the lived experiences of 'the silent majorities'. There has to be some kind of general awareness, a cathartic release of discussion and action arising from a recognition that a crisis has occurred or is looming. Hall is yet another person whose writing strongly hints at the powerful forces at work in the 'discourse of reticence'.

Silence has long been described as a national trait of the English, it goes hand in hand with having little sense of national identity. Kumar (2003: 196) writes, 'The English people were, as far as nationalism went, one of Carlyle's 'silent people'. Along with the Romans and Russians, there was no epic of English nationalism. There was no celebration of the English race, or the English way.' However, when their god-given sense of mission to the world to civilize and bring it progress failed from the end of the nineteenth century, then says Kumar, 'did they turn inwards toward themselves and begin to ask who they were'. Perhaps a

national identity crisis (the sense of lost English identity) or a national trauma (as in South Africa under apartheid) is enough to stimulate conversation. Discussion of such things does not easily arise.

There are times when nations have held nationally-led campaigns and put in place major initiatives to overcome deep seated silences arising from divisions between different groups. In South Africa, ‘The Truth and Reconciliation Commission held hearings throughout the country under slogans such as ... “The Truth Hurts, But Silence Kills,” inviting people to tell the truth and hear the truth of others, for the healing of memories, for the redress of offences, for the overcoming of animosities and the lies that hostility engenders, and above all, quite consciously for reconciliation’ (Forrester 2004: 6). In Northern Ireland, significant social investment has been made in attempts to end the sectarian divide. Commenting on sectarianism, Leichty and Clegg (2001: 152) make the link with racism, arguing that sectarianism and racism are both ‘destructive ways of dealing with differences’.

In the absence of any such initiative to stir the mass of the English, or indeed the British people, the silent majority deals with ‘race’ silently. This is perceptively observed in a novel by Gee (2002). Beliefs, thoughts, attitudes and behaviour are repressed. Three snapshots illustrate how this happens; each tell how the white working class experience the serious shortcomings of official ‘race’ relations initiatives. There are the thoughts of a white youth, first, as to how a white corner shop proprietor determined not to sell out to ‘Pakis’ should behave; secondly, on the local government policy of silencing the concerns of the long-standing

population for fear of upsetting ethnic minorities; and thirdly, on the impact of political correctness in the local library:

‘The Pakis will never get this shop. They try it on and he just says “No”. He doesn’t even like them coming in to buy papers. When they did he talked about them under his breath. Swearing until even I got embarrassed. Now I’d never do that, personally. Doesn’t make sense. You want their money, so shut up about them until they’re out of earshot.’

‘The new idea is all *softly softly*. “For fear of upsetting people,” they say. For fear of upsetting the coloured people. That’s who they mean; call a spade a spade ... The bloody coloureds, that’s all they care about down at the town hall these days. ... The old days. The good old days. There weren’t any coloureds when I was a kid. It was just a normal part of London. We were all the same. We were all one.’

‘At the library, you know, it’s all sorts – West Indian, Asian, Irish, a Swede – and nearly half the staff are black. But we all get on. It’s just not *an issue*. Apparently the only time we didn’t was the eighties, when the council got terribly p.c. and sent two race relations advisers in. Then everybody started to hate each other. Meanwhile these advisers ruined the stock, chucking out books that had the quotes, *wrong message* and spending the earth on, I don’t know, huge glossy books on Portuguese slavery that cost forty quid and never went out ... Hundreds of books on racism. But the public doesn’t care about things like that. People aren’t interested, is the bottom line.’ (Gee 2002: 111, 222, 277-278)

A recurring message in public discourse of the past decade has been the drive to get rid of ‘institutional racism’ in public institutions such as the police and armed services. The ripples have been felt far and wide in society, in spite of the kind of resistances of the kind Gee’s fictional characters illustrate. Yet it often goes unnoticed and unsaid that the most significant characteristic about ‘institutional racism’ is that it is hidden. It is where ‘racist discourse becomes silent’. This is where exclusionary practices remain in place, perhaps in relation to the recruitment of new staff or the promotion of existing staff, but where the explicit racist discourse that gave rise to them is no longer voiced. This is often supported by the use of politically correct language and euphemisms. So, ‘in order to

determine the presence or otherwise of institutional racism, one assesses not, the consequences of actions but the history of discourse and its manner and moment of institutionalisation in order to demonstrate that prior to the silence (or transformation), a racist discourse was articulated' (Miles and Brown 2003: 109-110).

One site of silence that illustrates this racist discourse at work is immigration, either as it affects migrant workers or asylum seekers. Several authors have looked at this area, q.v. Dummett (2001), Spencer (2004), Miles and Brown (2003); but it is Kundnani (2001) who perhaps most keenly observes how rules are made and imposed; and, how local people in the South of England, in places like Reigate and Croydon, respond to these new arrivals. He helpfully makes explicit the silent process of 'othering' and racism at work, noting from the outset how 'this hostility to new arrivals has gone largely unchallenged, either intellectually or politically.' It has been silently accepted (Kundnani 2001: 43).

State racism across Europe complements local racist discourse to create a 'new common sense'. Voices of dissent are rarely heard because it is common sense to see asylum seekers as 'bogus' and 'abusing the system'. In Britain, 'suspicion and deterrence' are the two principal weapons used to generate and uphold popular racism. As new arrivals are settled, a geography of fear in the media unsettles local populations, and Kundnani mentions a racist attack in Coventry which resulted directly from this to illustrate his point (47). A principal player in promoting racist discourse is the tabloid press: 'The fact that refugees find it difficult to speak for themselves, not least because of the fear that it will affect

their asylum claims, means that they become a screen on to which all manner of evils can be projected, without fear of contradiction' (48).

The passage from state to populist racism called 'common sense' begins to speak the language of 'kith and kin' racism, whose aim is to defend 'our people' and 'our way of life'; as columnist Simon Heffer (1998) claims in the *Daily Mail*: 'We have to stick up for our own people' (Kundnani 2001: 50). This spills over, argues Kundnani, to affect not just the management of 'new arrivals' but the lives and rights of settled black communities, whose existing vulnerability to racism is made worse.

One wonders whether an awareness of the life stories of the new arrivals would change negative public discourse. Though there have been acclaimed works of fiction depicting such life stories of asylum seekers, immigrants, migrant workers and those on the margins of mainstream society, the potential impact of such novels does not reach the major part of the white population, least of all those who feel most under threat by new arrivals.²³

Kundnani helpfully delineates the crucial difference between xenophobia and racism. Racism tends to refer to a difference of skin colour or cultural difference, whereas xenophobia suggests a natural spontaneous psychological reaction of hostility against 'strangers', one 'born of misunderstanding and unfamiliarity'.

Reinforced by kith and kin thinking, xenophobia provides a ready excuse for

²³ Amongst some of those recently published are Phillips, C. (2004) *A Distant Shore*, London: Vintage; Levy, A. (2004) *Small Island*, London: Headline; Ali, M. (2004) *Brick Lane*, London: Black Swan; North, S. (2004) *The Unnumbered*, London: Simon and Schuster; Hosseini, K. (2003) *The Kite Runner*, London: Bloomsbury; and, Rankin, I. (2004) *Fleshmarket Close*, London: Orion.

racism. Asylum seekers, as with other strangers are ‘not one of us’, a ‘threat to our way of life’. He sums this up:

in the present climate, a combination of colour, cultural and kith and kin racisms can all co-exist, mutually reinforcing each other, and potentially putting at risk anyone who either appears to be outside the norms of Britishness or Englishness or who refuses to be integrated into them. (Kundnani 2001: 50-53)

Significantly for the argument here, Kundnani says, all this is met with silence by the ‘intellectual left’ (the political wing where some sympathy might be expected). It is as if they either don’t know what to say or cannot think how it should be expressed. Either way, they are silent:

whereas the emergence of scientific and cultural racisms was, from the 1960s to 1980s, challenged both intellectually and politically the new popular racisms being spawned today are barely even noticed by the intellectual left. (53)

This kind of popular racism and xenophobia gives rise to inequity in the way society handles the transmission of news, teaching information and material. It is evident from research done on the way news items are edited for the BBC that stories are prioritised on the basis of skin colour and cultural proximity, and ‘that ethnocentrism continues to determine popular culture, and is reinforced by an insular National Curriculum for schools’. The result of this can be seen in how new refugee arrivals are treated in the press. They are met with a ‘culture of indifference’; neither the troubles from which they come nor are their personal stories told. ‘The culture of indifference leads to scapegoating, pinning the failures of the welfare state on the new immigrants, even though the cost of the asylum system is only 0.17 per cent of total government spending’. Driven by the major tabloids, ‘The *Sun* and the *Mail* have, on a daily basis, advocated a New Right politics of ‘preference for one’s own kith and kin’ of the same kind as

those instigated by the right wing parties of Le Pen and Haider in France and Austria. They act as a ‘surrogate nationalist party and, precisely because they have advanced a national preference politics without entering elections, they have been able to do so without the threat of democratic challenge’ (Kundnani 2001: 53-55). There is currently no effective challenge made to their power, and an alternate view is largely silent.

Kundnani (2001) and Füredi (2005) note the way in which the host white community is increasingly portrayed as ‘victim’. The host is seen as the ‘soft touch’ and the place where white children are no longer taught about their own national identity but are obliged to learn about ‘foreign cultures’. However the changes in education in the past two decades seek to replace an earlier overtly white biased system. The author heard a black woman describe her experience of such schooling in Coventry in this period as ‘silent oppression... that took years to get over’.²⁴ Even today, one might ask what understanding children acquire of the slave trade, colonialism, imperialism and equality of opportunity, by the time they leave secondary education. Reflecting on the Coventry black woman’s comment, it is perhaps helpful to see the victim card as one that can be carried by different groups at different times. The point is however, to ask whether each claim of victim-hood is based on fact or is it in reality disingenuous? A careful checking of the facts often paves the way for the necessary myth busting.²⁵

²⁴ Said at a meeting of Coventry Anti-Poverty Forum 29 June 2001.

²⁵ See Dench, G. and Gavron, K. (2006) *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict*, London: Profile Books, where, through the use of 1,000 interviews with local people, the authors are able to explain how post-war expectations, attachment to locality and broken-pledge housing policies helped mould the white working-class hostility and racism toward the new Bangladeshi residents. They argue that the white working-class’ post-war optimism, so soon dashed, can be seen as just a blip on a longer term continuing path of inequality, exclusion and victim-hood.

The tabloids can affirm a sense of victimization, through their message that whites are foreigners in their own land, a land which is being 'swamped' by people from overseas. In such a climate, where might other voices come from to break the silence? Kundnani suggests that, 'We need the trade unions to show solidarity with those who cannot easily speak for themselves. We need to campaign to challenge the tabloid lies' (Kundnani 2001: 59). Quite how realistic such a view is in a period of trade union decline and change is another matter! Perhaps leadership and spokes-persons need to be found in other places – in politics, in education, in broadsheets and in local community and religious leadership. The present reality seems to be that the authority of traditional political and moral leadership has been eroded, to be replaced by a much more diffuse, unaccountable, individualised era which makes it difficult for credible voices to be raised and heard, a situation Kundnani's work makes abundantly clear.

In academia there is much silence on the matter (and this has been touched on already in respect of English Studies and Theology for example (see pages 57, 124). Miles and Brown (2003: 10-11) rightly say that racism is a moral question, for 'it distorts human beings and social relations, brutalises and dehumanises its object, and in so doing also brutalises and dehumanises those who articulate it'. But they also add, 'Surprisingly, the moral question of racism is not often discussed in academic literature.' As reflects the wider mood in society, the present-day culture of university life would not generally appear to throw up outspoken radical popular leadership, people such as Bhiku Parekh being the exception rather than the rule. Silence or silencing within academia can take

other more selective forms too. Basu (2001: 18) for example, notes that 'academia can selectively silence, sanction and marginalize those who are black, and spurn the sociological insights they bring to the analysis of race'.

Ratcliffe, P. (2001) concludes that social scientists have been markedly out of touch with the everyday experiences of minority communities. Thus, Blauner (1971) in the US and Bourne (1980) in the UK argue that while theorists of the 1950s and 1960s were writing about 'the melting pot' and growing evidence of assimilation, urban streets were ablaze. They were silent about the realities. By the 1990s things were still unsatisfactory; the decade saw over-keenness with postmodernism and thus an abiding preoccupation with difference. Even black sociologists such as Gilroy and S. Hall found themselves working more to satisfy the need for cultural studies in a multicultural society, and much less on combating racism. In the light of these silences, P. Ratcliffe argues that for the future, social science research needs to do more 'historical/theoretical work on the reconstruction of 'black history and culture', untainted by the Eurocentrism of many accounts. This, he says, should also have the effect of 'continuing to render women visible in the sense of reflecting their role in the struggles against colonial domination and oppression' (Ratcliffe, P. 2001: 133-4).

These are important issues to which we shall return, suffice it to say for the present, that the social science academia have held a shifting and partial gaze toward 'race' and racism, swayed by a preoccupation with in-vogue theories and popular discourse. Though the mainstream may point one way, there have been some countering voices and P. Ratcliffe, for example, has identified a number of

academics who have recently been ‘speaking to the silence and marginalization of black gay men and women, and black feminists’ (2001: 24).

Anthropology has a long and close association with sociology, indeed it predates it. It once gave ‘race’ a central place, and now uses ethnicity as a category of inter-group difference, but, as Harrison observes (1995), this has left unaddressed by anthropology the persistent presence of ‘race’. She writes, ‘For the most part ethnicity euphemized if not denied race by not specifying the conditions under which those social categories and groups historically subordinated as “racially” distinct emerge and persist’. Harrison argues that the need for anthropology to redress their silence on ‘race’ is as ‘Balibar and Wallerstein (1991) and Gilroy (1991) observe, despite its ontological and epistemic emptiness, race’s vitality and volatility have intensified’. Gilroy says, ‘race’ no longer proceeds ‘through readily apparent notions of superiority and inferiority, t[he] order of racial power relations has become more subtle and elusive’ (Harrison 1995: 48-49). Pointing to work done recently, Harrison concludes optimistically that ‘today a number of anthropologists are coming to terms with the silences and subjugations that influence the discipline’s development’. With this, we leave the world of social science and anthropology, both marked by an identifiable ‘discourse of reticence’ when it comes to ‘race’, and turn now to the role of official statistics.

No reference has been made in this thesis yet to the specific sites of oppression that are indicated by official statistics. A helpful source of material on this is Mason (2000) who looks at ‘ethnic differences’. Mason suggests that the increasing diversity of experience among different ethnic groups is a key to

understanding continuing and emerging tensions and conflicts. He looks at, for example, comparison statistics for different ethnic groups in Education, Health, Employment, Housing and Crime. At the same time he helpfully alerts his reader to some of the dangers in such an exercise. When looking at crude statistics that group together many people under the heading 'Asian' the detail revealing the parlous state of Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups was lost. 'The important characteristic of this group is that they are Muslims', he says. He cites Tariq Modood (1992) who concludes, that 'by most socio-economic measures there is a major divide between Sunni Muslims on the one hand and the other Asians [who are also Muslims] and that this divide is as great as between Asian [sic] and whites, or between Asians and blacks' (Mason 2000: 140-41). Official statistics whether devised for census or other use need to be interrogated as much for what they do not 'say' as for they do say.

When individuals or groups do not see their situation reflected in the statistics they feel they do not have a voice.²⁶ There is a strong case for more detailed statistical analysis to be undertaken, for example, of the kind of longitudinal study such as that on the life chances of Britain's different ethnic groups undertaken by Platt (2005).

²⁶ Tariq Modood (2005) continues to present the argument that the dualist black-white approach to 'race' relations in Britain overlooks the double dose of racism suffered by Asians whose physical appearance and religion is a focus for the most oppressive and prevalent forms of present-day cultural racism. The effect, he says, is that 'cultural racism builds on biological racism a further discourse that evokes cultural differences from an alleged British and civilized norm' (p. 29). Because antiracism so long centred around the black-white dualism which ignored the complexities of South Asian culture and identities, 'This meant there was no language in which to debate cultural difference, ... no language in which to give expression to ethnicity, ... no form of words to express loyalty to one's own minority community within a public discourse of equality and civic integration' (p. 32).

Another important site of silence is literature. Sandhu (2004) has provided an impressive review of the contribution of black and Asian writers in respect of London.²⁷ Space only permits the briefest of outline of the silence that has been both noted by the authors Sandhu includes, as well as by Sandhu himself. One of the most interesting black writers was Selvon (1956: 24) who watched as black people tried to speak at that favourite meeting place, Speakers' Corner. He describes a black man called Galahad who was persuaded to step up to the soap box only to find his attempt to speak on behalf of his people's injustices makes him afraid: 'He feels foolish, his articulacy wanes ... The Audience begins to laugh.' Selvon writes, 'Sometimes the words freeze and you have to melt it to hear the talk.' Selvon, was 'fascinated by the power of words – whether written or spoken – to allow low caste peoples to find some purpose in their lives, to break free of their social and psychological shackles'. Sandhu notes, 'The Speakers' Corner incident reinforces one of Selvon's key contentions about the extent to which black people were ignored or overlooked in the capital. Few Londoners, it seems, were prepared to hear, or "melt", the words of the migrant' (Sandhu 2004: 172).

To hear the voices of these writers makes a change from earlier times. As Sandhu (2004: 15-16) notes, 'After the Abolitionist movement ... Black men and women were cast as heroic leviathans, their teeth of finest ivory, their brows set most nobly, their souls full of pride and vigour. Yet despite such epic stature, they rarely spoke.' An important moment in the literature was in 1981. Following the fire at 439 New Cross Road, London on 17th January, when thirteen black

²⁷ It is a pity that in his attempt to be historically comprehensive, there is a huge gap in his work in the absence of women writers. Their voices are silent.

people died, the media gave the news very little coverage. They were silent, 'The minimal media coverage granted to the deaths seemed to imply that suffering and tragedy had become racially inflected, that black people's lives were less valuable than white ones.'

The result of this silence was that black people organised their own media organisations (interestingly one of the publications to emerge at the time was the newspaper with the name *Voice*). Another result was that black people turned to re-discover and write about the black people who had been part of London's past (Sandhu 2004: 280-82). The hard lives of present day black and Asian migrants are featured in the writing of D'Aguiar who since the 1980s has written poetry, through which he 'sought to "cure" these arrivants by allowing them to speak, by rescuing them from the margins and placing them centre-stage'.²⁸ A final word must be granted to Sandhu who observes that 'A key feature of black dissenting literature is the self-conscious desire to be regarded as an author who says the unsayable' (Sandhu 2004: 331-32, 354). To understand the discourse in literature is an important element in understanding the discourse of 'race' in wider society and the 'discourse of reticence' which shapes and is shaped by it.

To close this section on Sites of Silence, reference is now made to the useful research of Anoop Nayak (1999). His work points helpfully toward the direction of the Coventry and Warwickshire based empirical study which will be detailed in Chapter Three. Nayak's study, focused on the North East of England, is based

²⁸ D'Aguiar's poem 'Sweet Thames' featured in a 1992 BBC2 series called 'Words on Film'. The Commission for Racial Equality made it a joint winner of their Race in the Media – Current Affairs / Documentary Award.

on research undertaken in local social contexts with young people. He reveals important information about whiteness and the part it plays in discourse. Further, he finds that ‘while many youth agreed with the egalitarian principles of anti-racism, a majority maintained a number of white grievances which they felt could be rarely articulated’. This may seem strange, even inconceivable to black or Asian people. How can it be that the majority ethnic group feel so powerless?

When whiteness and white grievances have been so long overlooked,²⁹ Nayak’s work, published as recently as 1999, seeks to redress this gap. Alerting his readers to this he writes, ‘we now seem to know far less about the racialised identities of the ethnic majority (notably English whites), and who they are in the present post-colonial era’.

For these reasons, Nayak writes, ‘this article seeks to address how whiteness, Englishness and ethnicity are experienced by white youth in school-based cultures ... I aim to expose the varied, ambivalent connections to race and nationhood undertaken by the dominant ethnic majority.’ He also wants to move from what Giroux (1997: 302) describes as the ‘jaundiced view of whiteness as simply a trope of domination’ in order to reconceptualise whiteness’. Nayak notes the failure of poststructuralist analyses to show how an oppressive style of whiteness can be ‘challenged, resisted or transformed’ – this is his challenge

²⁹ Nayak refers to the Burnage Report which was published after a study into the fatal stabbing of an Asian youth, Ahmed Iqbal Ullah, by a white youth, Darren Coulburn in 1986. (MacDonald 1989). The Report pointed out that anti-racist initiatives did not take account of the perspectives and issues facing the white, mainly working class youth. Indeed this omission was so serious that ‘many of the students, especially those in the “English” category had little or no notion of their own ethnicity and were agitated and made insecure by their confusion or else showed anger and resentment’ (MacDonald 1989: 392).

which he bases around geographically specific research in two Tyneside Schools (Nayak 1999: 177-78).

As Nayak looks at the ethnic majority pupils' perspective on 'race', racism and anti-racism he made some interesting findings. Though pupils felt at one school that the school's Anti-racist Policy should be scrapped, they were 'scathing of the current institutional structure that viewed them as inherently privileged' (Nayak 1999: 186). For example, pupils cited special Indian cooking sessions for Asian pupils, whilst they had no equivalent.

Such material endorses Sleeter (1993: 166-77) who found that multiculturalism all too often fails to engage with whiteness. Teachers would point to the multicultural lessons or wall boards, but the 'multidimensional representations of whiteness throughout the school were treated as a neutral background not requiring comment'. The normative, blank canvas of experience is what Bonnett (1993: 175-76) has called 'the Other of ethnicity'. It is these significant details, so often overlooked, that fall into the 'discourse of reticence' and need to inform an understanding of the discourse of 'race'.

Being part of a majority white group raises problems for pupils. For example, some express a sense of being at a distinct disadvantage in inter-racial verbal conflict as the following conversation conveys:

James: It's not fair reely cos they can call us like, 'milk-bottles' and that, but we can't call them.

Sam: The thing is in this school, is like if you're racist you get expelled or something but they [blacks] can call us names and the teachers don't tek any notice of it.

James: They tek no notice.' (Nayak 1999: 187)

It is little surprise to find that white pupils adapt to their situation with a response of resentful silence, either because that way they choose to avoid trouble or because it was normalised behaviour to keep quiet. However, as Nayak (1999: 187) notes, these things cause deep resentment and an abiding sense of injustice. For white young people, there was only one voice being heard and it was not theirs – it was not fair.³⁰ Though Nayak's work shows the silence and silencing effect on white school pupils, the 'discourse of reticence' is not to be perceived as being located within any one group of people; it operates across cultural groups and amongst the parties to the discourse in different ways in different contexts.

Other research by Nayak, on this occasion in the West Midlands, shows the white majority, far from feeling superior, as they are often thought to do, actually feeling victimized:

white students made it clear to me that black males were often the most feared, respected and visible youth group within inner-city schools, encouraging white peers to state, 'How can they be victims?' At its most extreme, a disillusioned white student (16 years) in a large, urban, multiracial school in Birmingham responded to my question about whether he thought the school was racist by claiming 'Yeah, it is-this school's racist against its own kind!' (Nayak 1999: 187)

Gillborn (1996) describes a similar situation in London: 'The assertion that whiteness ultimately defines them as powerful oppressors simply does not accord with the lived experience of many working-class white students' (Nayak 1999: 170). Nayak is able to point to other ways that white youths feel disempowered,

³⁰ Examples of a feeling of 'Not fair', of white defensiveness, were also picked up by Hewitt (1996) as well as MacDonald (1989).

as for example when minority pupils have access to another language, something which could seriously affect communication between the groups. Troyna and Hatcher (1992) found assertions of black identity were perceived by white children as an attempt at dominance. All these factors go against the traditional view, says Nayak, whereby white youth were seen to be the powerful and enfranchised.

Nayak looks closely at the power relations between pupils. Rather than being straightforwardly hierarchical he finds these are confused. Nayak notes, for example, the pupils' 'confusion' arising from the use of racist epithets. The ones applied to whites, 'whitey' and 'milk-bottle' or 'milky way' are not construed as racist name-calling. However the black epithets are 'saturated with racist power' (Nayak 1999: 188). Words themselves contain covert messages beyond themselves, silent to some ears, but overtly loud and clear to other ears. Indeed racism itself is shown to be unevenly distributed and it is therefore most important to look carefully at the local context in each case.

Nayak notes the way 'race' is used in the classroom to signal polarities, but is strangely silent on all those in-between and contradictory positions on 'race' in which pupils actually find themselves. In reality, says Nayak, blacks and whites occupy 'multiple positions' and 'these subjective locations are nuanced by class, gender, sexuality and generation'. Indeed, 'An engagement with whiteness beyond racial polarities may allude to a complex understanding of racism that may invoke aspects of nationhood or religion as further points of discrimination' (Nayak 1999: 190-91).

In sum, Nayak's research reveals that a number of silent and 'unspoken' white grievances could simultaneously be harboured beneath the surface. He advocates that anti-racist practitioners should 'engage with the salience of whiteness, or otherwise, in young people's cultures and discuss the social meaning of these terms with students'; and he points to the need for interventionist strategies to be 'more sensitive to the varied cultures of young people.' (Nayak 1999: 192).

He also finds that pupils were unexpectedly aware of past tabloid and political discourse on 'race' and had acquired the notion that particular 'literature is "banned" and seemingly innocent tasks such as ordering a cup of coffee are open to an imagined scrutiny. It was even thought that legislation existed which censored white behaviour.' Hence Nayak found 'Students continually referring to items that have been "banned", symbols that you have "gotta have" and things you are "not allowed" to say or do. In essence, antiracism and multiculturalism are reproduced as part of a "discourse of derision" within the social peer groups of white youth' a discourse marked by silence and silencing whether or not the grounds for it are real or imagined (Nayak 1999: 193). What Nayak's work reveals, though he never takes his reader this far, is that sarcasm, ridicule and derision all contribute to and are integral elements in a 'discourse of reticence' on 'race'.

These, then, are some of the many and varied sites of silence explored through a review, which has focused largely on Britain and on the educational setting – important contextual preliminaries before the empirical study that follows next. What this review has shown is that silence is a key part of discourse whether it is

overt as in the ‘banning’ of certain words or covert as in the silence surrounding the fact ‘race’ is multi-dimensional. (Multi-dimensional rather than, as it is so often portrayed, a binary polarity between black and white or as a three legged stool of Black, White and Asian Muslim.) In the light of the many sites of silence examined in this section, the next section moves on to look at how these silences might be conceptualized.

2.3 Conceptualising Silence and Silencing

Silence belongs with communication, and as an old Yiddish proverb says, ‘The one who is silent means something just the same’.³¹ Silence is often associated with difficult conversations and these were explored in section 2.1. Hedged about with political correctness and euphemisms, which serve to perpetuate a racialised society, having an open and honest enough conversation about ‘race’ that challenges the prevailing ideology has arguably never been more difficult; and, the way in which silence and silencing are used, therefore, requires careful interpretation.

To take silence at its face value is enticingly easy, and one can quickly make the mistake of producing a uni-dimensional perspective on what in reality is much more complex. Silences are not simply, as Katz (1978: 47) says, in place to ‘sustain black subordination’, for there are often many other things going on. Clearly the relationship between ‘race’ and silence cannot be simply read off as one in which the politically and economically powerful, i.e. the ruling group, silence dissenting voices as part of the normal social process in a racialised and

³¹ The proverb was posted on the Etherhouse, *Yiddish Proverbs*, website on 19 December 2004, http://www.etherhouse.com/etherhouse/archives/yiddish_proverbs/, accessed 18 April 2006.

racialising society. It is not, for example, simply a case of government or politically, economically or socially dominant groups exercising control. What is quite clear already is that the discourse on ‘race’ is accompanied by and cannot be adequately understood without reference to the integral, yet so easily overlooked, ‘discourse of reticence’. It is also clear that silence has an ambivalent and contradictory quality, belonging with no single group – taking different forms in different situations, and probably best understood in the local context in which it appears.

Whilst the previous section 2.2 illustrates the way silence has a broad reach and is a recurring theme in many areas of social life, (for example, in education, in literature, in academia); and that silence takes many forms and is indeed a constant companion of ‘race’, in this present section, the challenging task of interpretation and conceptualisation is attempted – the ‘discourse of silence’, which masks as well as makes known ‘race’ and racism, is further explored. The key questions arising in this section are: what is the nature and what are the limits of silence’s support of ‘race’ and racism, and just how effectively does silence defend the ideology of ‘race’ and practice of racism in society? But first, how might we understand the general process of a ‘discourse of reticence’ relating to the subject of ‘race’? Looking at how sex has been similarly subjected to silence and conceptualised is an illuminating place to begin.

Michel Foucault (1998) studied and theorized on the nature of human discourse, in particular the discourse of sexuality. When it comes to discourse, what is true of sex is in many ways also true of ‘race’. He notes the way the subject of sex

was freely discussed in past eras; but by Victorian times ‘silence became the rule ... a general and studied silence was imposed ... repression operated ... as an injunction to silence’ (Foucault 1998: 3-4). He posits what he calls the ‘Repressive Hypothesis’ and describes the new regime of sex discourse as one where:

Silence itself – the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within overall strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (Foucault 1998: 27)

Foucault describes at length the structures, processes and powers at work in society to maintain the way in which sex was discussed and not discussed. In an instructive case study he asks: ‘Why then is sex so secret? What is this force that so long reduced it to silence and has only recently reduced its hold somewhat,’ and what is the cause of this ‘unremitting fear’? (Foucault 1998: 78-79). His analysis of the way power is exercised to set within limits the discourse of sex reveals that though it operates by saying ‘no’, in reality this is a limited power aimed simply at generating social obedience and the limitation of freedom, which in reality the human agent can, if so motivated, choose to ignore.

Can what Foucault says about the discourse of sex and the way silence works equally be said of ‘race’? He powerfully demonstrates that silence is present in society and meaningfully shapes discourse on everything. He particularly shows

how powerful vested interest groups, like scientists and the religious, work to define, regulate and control a discourse for their own ends.

In a parallel though distant geographical context, Loomba (1998: 231-245) looks at the position of people subject to colonial rule and asks the question, 'Can the subaltern speak?' This is a question about the power and dynamics behind 'race' and silence. What she exposes is not a uni-dimensional answer, 'no they can't', but a complex relationship between 'race' and silence which she then interprets. For Loomba this is not simply a question about the colonial situation in India, for example, it is something that touches people everywhere. Much as Foucault suggests, Loomba's assessment of silencing is that it is a limited and not entirely effective strategy, though it is used by the mainly white ruling colonial elite it is not in reality fully complied with. There have been many 'black' and 'brown' amongst the colonised who spoke, wrote and resisted colonial rule in spite of the social constraints. Loomba assesses the complex colonial / post-colonial relationship like this:

To what extent did colonial power succeed in silencing the colonised? Are they 'victims, incapable of answering back? On the other hand, if we suggest that the colonial subjects can 'speak' and question colonial authority, are we romanticising such resistant subjects and underplaying colonial violence? In what voices do the colonised speak – their own, or in accents borrowed from their masters?... such questions are not unique to the study of colonialism but are also crucial for any scholarship concerned with recovering the histories and perspectives of marginalized people – be they women, non-whites, non-European, the lower classes and oppressed castes – and for any consideration of how ideologies work and are transformed. (Loomba 1998: 231)

Here she points out the importance of recovering local stories from specific contexts and the ways in which silence around one group, can be linked with silences and the oppression of other groups, such as the oppression of women,

lower castes, non-whites, non Europeans, and lower classes. Loomba is also clear that the silence is not accidental or an aspect of inter-personal relationship, it is driven by ideologies that lie behind and shape these processes and practices. Loomba's work shows that the relationship between the powerful coloniser and the powerless colonised does not simply result in the ideology of the powerful – which includes a 'discourse of reticence' on 'race' – either being effectively imposed from above or fully complied with from below. The relationship is complex and nuanced. Memmi (1974) already referred to for his psychological understanding of the relationship between colonised and colonial (see page 44ff), sees economic inequality in the relationship between the two as *necessarily* leading to the colonial seeing the colonised as an inferior 'other'. Memmi argues that the hegemonic ideology holding this in place requires at least an implicit acceptance of the ideology by the colonized. It is an ideology the colonial sees with a blind eye or hears in a 'discourse of reticence'.

To turn briefly from the recent past to a much earlier historical era: before the Enlightenment the concept of 'race' as it is known today did not exist (see page 10). It might appear to be a very easy thing to believe that such a situation – where 'race' was non-existent, ought to be within grasp once again, the more so since 'race', as some would overconfidently assert from their liberal and establishment position, is now so easily discredited in 'respectable' sections of society (Rose, and Rose 2005). However, the quality of obstinate persistence has been attached firmly to 'race', as various people persuasively argue (Bell 1992). The thesis of Bell's book 'is that racism in this century is permanent and intractable' (Anderson 1997: 422). So perhaps it is naïvely over-optimistic to

think 'race' can be readily combated and defeated today, for it is proving to be an obdurate and enduring ideology.

Yet what existed prior to the Enlightenment was a world where different identities and social groups were nonetheless recognized and categorized; and, perhaps this earlier age was not entirely free of the trappings of what later was to be called 'race'. The division of history into a pre-'race' and 'race' eras is stretching a point too far. What has consistently existed in societies down the ages is the basic system of categorising difference, which can be called 'othering', aspects of which might rightly be considered precursors of more recent 'race' ideologies. Foundational elements of an ideology of 'race' can be found in 'othering'. A brief look at the nature of social relationships in Feudal England, a system introduced after the Norman Conquest of 1066, reveals a society with clearly differentiated social groups.

In Feudalism one sees an English society in which each person had their settled place within an ordered social hierarchy under the rule of a foreign king and his foreign aristocracy. For administrative purposes the country was divided into shires, hundreds and wapentakes with severe rules and penalties introduced to enforce social order. This was an inegalitarian society, in which each person had a clear sense of who they were and where they belonged. Political and economic power rested with the ruling elite. Naturally enough as time moved on the distinctiveness between the ruling Normans and other groups began to break down; but whilst Feudal England lasted the subject people had a clear sense of who was one of 'us' and who one of 'them'. Feudal England could not be called

a racialised society, because social distinctions were not made on the basis of skin colour; though other criteria - culture, family background, language, religion, whether from Normandy or not, etc. – could be construed and loosely interpreted from the perspective of today as having a cultural ‘race’ element.³²

Centuries later, the slave trade, the Enlightenment, colonialism, post-colonialism, imperialism and the great economic and social upheavals following the industrial revolution made for great changes throughout British society. The period since the invention of ‘race’ has also been characterised by the growth of the modern nation state and the two can be seen as developing hand in hand. ‘Race’ and ‘nation’ are frequently and accurately perceived as handmaidens belonging together. As Balibar and Wallerstein (1991: 37) remind: ‘the discourses of race and nation are never very far apart’ (Loomba 1999: 207). Miles aptly summarises the socially constructed nature of this link when he says:

Like ‘nations’, ‘races’ too are imagined, in the dual sense that they have no real biological foundation and that all those included by the signification can never know each other, and are imagined as communities in the sense of common feeling of fellowship. Moreover, they are also imagined as limited in the sense that a boundary is perceived beyond which lie other ‘races’. (Miles (1987: 26-27) in q.v., Miles and Brown 2003: 122)³³

Since World War II, Britain’s past empire has quickly become a residual folk memory, but one with many symbols and reminders of its powerful legacy never far away. In fact the political, economic and social patterns of the past – of dominance and exploitation, on the one hand, and subordination and poverty, on the other – prove noticeably resistant to change. Though Britain has in reality

³² For further information on Feudal England, see Stenton 1947: 672-74.

³³ Earlier reference has been made to ‘race’ and borders, see pages 23ff, 44-49.

always been populated by arrivals from overseas at some time or other, the fresh arrivals in the past half century – migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers, seen as people with different skin colours and cultures – all have found themselves caught up in these patterns of economic and social life, whose discriminatory practices the law might overtly be thought to be busy seeking to consign formally to history, yet in reality there remain resistant residual patterns of past thinking and practices still actively at work at the level of prejudicial and discriminatory social discourse.

Today the government's preferred approach for regulating and ordering multi-ethnic Britain is through the liberal and pluralist concept of a system of social relationships called multiculturalism. Multiculturalism offers a way of seeing society as a gathering of different cultural groupings, each grouping with its own diverse characteristics, each to be equally celebrated. In the current policy climate, seeking to provide social / community cohesion, what the ideology of multiculturalism fails to do is to recognise and deal adequately with the differences between groups. In an age when the ordered hegemony built upon traditional moral absolutes and respect for authority has been largely eroded: what now replaces these is a new hegemonic ideology which perpetuates 'race' and racism in an ostensibly more individual-centred system of social order, one which relies predominantly upon individuals handling and negotiating their identities and discourse, subject to the guidance of an ideology of political correctness. The latter directs conversations and euphemisms around 'race' guiding individuals in what they can as well as cannot say or do.

What is evident is that this regulatory system is only partially effective as a means of keeping social harmony, as many of the sites of silence mentioned in the previous section illustrate. Consensus built around multiculturalism frequently dissolves in conflict in a continuous uneasy discourse between competing distinctive identities.

In a chapter on Rethinking Multiculturalism, Modood (2005) offers, in the light of the challenge presented by the Muslim presence in Britain, a helpful critique of multiculturalism on philosophical and empirical grounds. Modood sees a plurality of racisms embedded in multiculturalism with particular groups displaying distinctive features and vulnerabilities. Multiculturalism is defined by equal respect and a certain tolerance, but the fact that the multi are far more diverse and mixed than one might first imagine presses Britain toward fragmentation and segregation rather than integration and cohesion. In conceptualising the relation between ‘race’ and silence, it is in this space between the formal pursuit of a developing but not foolproof system of delivering social cohesion through multiculturalism, that the ‘discourse of reticence’ might be understood to be occupying a little recognised but highly significant and regulatory function.

In multicultural Britain, silence through the ‘discourse of reticence’ serves as a signpost pointing toward some serious issues and offer ways to safely manage them. It is evident that far from a harmonious multiculturalism, what is actually present in various community contexts is a racialised and racist society fragmented and marked by ‘othering’, where often it is Islamophobia that steals

the limelight, with Muslims starring as the most despised ‘other’, especially since the events of 9/11 and 7/7. The picture is complex and Islamophobia is, for example, not found everywhere, and in reality neither Asian Muslims nor the white majority form single homogenous groups.

The white majority group is in places clearly struggling with its own questions of self-identity – what it means to be white, what it means to be British, English, etc. The ideological ‘story’ this group has been ‘told’, as outlined in the previous section, is that it is they who are the dominant, economically and politically superior group, but for some this does not always tally with their lived experience. Instead feelings of injustice, unfairness, subordination and victimisation arise, feelings that are counter-culture and not easy to say or express in a socially acceptable way. In the tensions and potential conflicts, inter-group and intra-group, a ‘discourse of reticence’ functions in part to regulate and prevent emotions boiling over and social disharmony being triggered.³⁴

Unlike in the past, being part of early twenty-first century, liberal, pluralist British society, which is where most of the white majority would locate themselves today, is characterised by the dominant group in society not holding any universal meta-narratives around Empire, class, nation or religion which, in various combinations, once bound them closely together. There is now a loss of a clear and stable identity within the majority ethnic group (c.f. Darcus Howe

³⁴ For example, Dench, and Gavron (2006) reveal how the hostility and racism of traditional East Enders toward Bangladeshis has its roots in the material expectations and disappointments, unfair housing policies, and the failure of successive governments to hear the former’s legitimate grievances. The book implicitly reveals how issues of class and ‘race’ have both been subject to a ‘discourse of reticence’, which may in part explain why they have remained persistent and unresolved.

referred to on pages 108-109, 123 and 129). Minority ethnic groups also express unhappiness with the disadvantages and deprivations which they endure. They do not accept that the 'normally' used 'race' categorisations of ethnicity or culture provide answers to some of the problems they face – discrimination, prejudice, inequality, etc. These categorisations, form part of the regulatory process which shapes the discourse of 'race' and the denial of recognition to aggrieved groups acting as a way of silencing their voice. They are accorded no identity and therefore no recognition. This is part of the 'discourse of reticence', the operation of silence and silencing to quieten, repress and even erase social issues and potential conflicts from the political agenda, leaving voiceless those who would raise their concerns and make their legitimate claims.

The voices in many, if not most, books and journals referred to in the preceding section on the Sites of Silence, along with the particular insight they provide, frequently offer ready and partial remedies to the persisting 'problem' of 'race'. Some offer a remedy through individual counselling and therapies (Wajnryb 2002); others through an anti-racism programme (Nayak 1999); others through community cohesion projects (Cantle 2001); and, yet others through a new and open seminar or course in a safe setting (Tatum 1997 and Day 2001). None address the bigger picture, the way in which the 'discourse of reticence' commonly underpins, mediates and regulates 'race' in a multicultural society, cutting across their different settings and perspectives.

The discipline of sociology has itself been seduced by the call of multiculturalism and post-modernism: for the mainstream, the individual

experience is the authentic thing, and it is where ‘I am’ and what ‘I do’ that matters, without the need for any wider vision or supporting universals. In keeping with the thinking of the age, some sociologists (e.g. S. Hall and Gilroy) are now offering ‘cultural studies’ material – in reality an exercise in maintaining the status quo. Such material provides education programmes on the wonders of human diversity, rather than looking critically at the differences, divisions and fragmentation – the experiences shared by significant groups in society – and more crucially how social change might be wrought. These diversions are accompanied by another trend: the failure to research for local knowledge, leaving some to claim that sociology is out of touch with local communities and the issues faced by them (Ratcliffe, P. 2001). There is then a need to develop a broad theory of ‘race’ discourse and silence as well as to undertake empirical based studies (e.g. Carter 2000) to understand what is actually going on in the local social context.

We return now to the question: How can a society return to a social environment where ‘race’ is not used as a category, given so many other things have changed? Silence has much to communicate in the search for answers. A ‘discourse of reticence’ is not solely the prerogative of the powerful. It can point to where the locus of resistance to the status quo might be found and thus alert to the key contested areas. Where silence arises as an indicator of resistance it identifies both those who resist and the issues they are challenging. Silence as resistance has a long history. The short novella by ‘Vercors’ is both historical (silence as resistance) and literary (silence as sign). The author goes further than simply providing an example of silent resistance in the face of the oppression of Nazi

occupation in asking not only ‘What does silence mean?’ but also the broader question, ‘What is its capacity to signify?’ (Brown and Stokes 1991: 26). In this novella, silence shows resistance from below to a racialised and racialising regime and qualifies its hegemony.

Silence has also long been associated with taboo; and, anthropology has served to show how taboos – these socially constructed regular patterns of silenced words and behaviour – are a special means of protecting both individuals and societies from real or imagined dangers.³⁵ Silence in this way signposts and alerts to threats. Steiner, in his definitive study of the subject, points to taboo’s role in defining danger. He says the use of taboo points out dangerous behaviour and in this respect ‘Taboo has two social functions 1) classification and identification of transgressors; and, 2) institutionalised localization of danger.’ He continues, ‘For until taboos are involved, a danger is not defined and cannot be coped with by institutional behaviour ... to face danger is to face another power.’ Danger is narrowed down by taboo (Steiner 1967: 146-47). Taboo has retained a narrowly anthropological focus and one wonders whether the time is now ripe, if not overdue, for anthropology or indeed sociology to revisit and develop the concept of taboo, with its very long historical antecedents, into a modern concept which fully embraces the role of silence with regard to ‘race’ in today’s society. This thesis can only serve to point toward such a piece of further work, it cannot be developed here.

³⁵ Mead (1937) *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* London: Macmillan, vol VII 502-505 defines taboo – ‘Tabu may be defined as a negative action, a prohibition whose infringement results in an automatic penalty without human or super-human mediation.’ She narrows the term – ‘to describe prohibitions against participation in any situation of such inherent danger that the very act of participation will recoil upon the violator of the tabu.’

It is important to note that taboo and silence are not the same thing, though they may overlap. Taboo is generally focussed around a forbidden action, which may or may not include speaking or writing about something. Sometimes a taboo becomes codified in written law. This may be in the form of censorship, which is indeed official silencing. Taboo has traditionally been associated with religious beliefs and practices, but it cannot be separated from wider social, economic and political practices. In respect of 'race', silence and taboo have similarities because things that become 'un-sayable', have been deemed to be socially dangerous matters to raise. There may be various reasons why this is so and many dangers to which the silence points.

As we have seen silence can indicate many things, and so how it is interpreted is important and cannot be considered without reference to the specific context in which it occurs. Silence can be a useful means by which people protect their self interest, avoid conflict and keep order; and, the price to pay – avoiding the particular subject – is thought worth paying. The problem is that codified patterns of habitual behaviour shrouded in silence are less likely to be subjected to critical review and public scrutiny. This can result in socially detrimental practices as well as socially beneficial practices continuing unchecked until some crisis, leading to a breaking of the silence, occurs. The norm of silence is a practice which is difficult to reconcile with the generally accepted ideal of living in a democratic society where there is an over-riding presumption of freedom of speech, though it has to be remembered, there is also on occasion, a right to remain silent (e.g. the right to remain silent is enshrined in the judicial process,

for example when a person is charged with an offence). Normalising silence is not unproblematic.

How then is one to interpret the imagined situation where, for example, a group of affluent middle class white males in a mainly white suburb of one of Britain's leading cities renders the subject of their majority 'race' group's white self-identity as 'invisible', as 'nonexistent', so far as they are concerned. Whiteness is something they do not see and, therefore, do not, cannot, talk about. They cannot easily find words to describe themselves to other ethnic groups, who by contrast seem very sure who they are and have little hesitation in saying so. The majority group might believe and say they are not of any 'race' and do not believe 'race' to be a helpful categorisation – based as it is on outmoded biological and phenotypical criteria; and, because whenever they see the subject raised it is associated in their mind with public scenes of conflict, they easily accept (whether consciously or subconsciously) that such a controversial and invariably negative conversational subject should be dropped. This is silence on 'race' through a 'discourse of invisibility'. Much of the time, as it is unnoticed and unaddressed it maintains if not promotes the status quo in social life leaving 'race' unaddressed. Research both in the USA and Britain indicates scenarios of this kind are not unknown.³⁶ With whiteness invisible, it also becomes easier to

³⁶ In the USA, Page, H. (1995) 'White Privilege and the Construction of Racial Identity', *Current Anthropology*, 36, (3) June: 526-28, in a review of Frankenberg, R. (1993) *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* London: Routledge writes, 'Using life histories, Ruth Frankenberg examines white culture by exploring the discursive repertoires it employs.' Whiteness is seen as an unmarked group identity. 'Well-intentioned white women have been missing the significance of race.' She concludes, 'white privilege blocks efforts to grasp the gender and class implications of racism ... Women who felt that they should protect their interests in the national racial discourse may have been less likely to speak frankly about such topics. In any case, the wall of silence around whiteness was not easy for Frankenberg to pierce.' Her group contained members who had until coaxed to recall, omitted from memory racial

ignore other social markers of difference and inequality, such as gender, which may or may not correlate with skin colour, cultural or national groupings.

Beside being an indicator of resistance of various kinds, whether facing an occupying oppressor or not wanting to square up to difficult issues of 'race' self-identity, silence is an indicator of other things too. A pervading silence, like a litmus test, can alert to the presence of underlying sharp issues of 'race' – morality, equality, justice, fairness, human rights – and what it means to live not only as individuals but also as members of groups – families, communities and nations. Vercors' novella makes this point for he not only deals with silent resistance to an oppressive occupying foreign army, but also makes the important link that silence is a communicator of moral and philosophical ideas:

communication is precisely what silence aims at, and it is no coincidence that writers during the early war years used silence to transmit messages of various sorts – Resistance, naturally, but also moral, philosophical and ideological ones – to their compatriots as well as to the Nazis. (Brown and Stokes 1991: 26-27)³⁷

Religion and theology have recently assumed a renewed importance in the social and political life of Britain, especially since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7.

Silence has a long and accepted history in religion. Much has been written about it. Perhaps it is time to return to religion and theology not least because of the

incidents of the past. Frankenberg argues that white women learn to construct racial narratives by relying on strategies of colour and power evasion [silencing]. 'Such strategies enable white women to produce and project an image of themselves as 'innocent of racism' and to assert, in the face of contrary evidence, 'the idea of cross racial common humanity.' The strategy produces 'blindness' and serves to divert the eye from the harsh realities of power imbalance. In the UK, Bonnett (2000), Thompson (2001), Nayak (1999) and Fenton (2003) draw attention to the invisibility of whiteness. The significance of 'whiteness' and the work of all the above has been more fully discussed earlier, see pages 17, 21-23, 114, 124, 146-50.

³⁷ The link with morals has been made by Miles and Brown (2003: 10-11), see page 135.

insights they offer on silence, but also because they are crucial component to a comprehensive understanding of 'race', identity and difference. This faiths inclusive approach is all the more needed at a time when 'citizenship' is an important part of Labour Government policy.³⁸ The long period when there was silence through the omission of faiths from policy understanding and response to 'race', which was Labour Government practice until after the 2001 northern city riots, has left some serious catching up to be done by political and civic authorities. Faith communities, embedded in local communities, are arguably well placed to voice the concerns and articulate the silences experienced by local people.

The final two decades of the twentieth century have witnessed the dramatic demise of Marxism as a political and economic philosophy underpinning national government in most parts of the world; and, where Marxism does continue in its various forms, as in China for example, it has begun to assume some of the trappings of capitalism. But the abiding legacy of Marxist theory lies not in its failed national representations, but in its continuing ability to offer a way of interpreting and critiquing capitalist society, and to provide an understanding of the way economic factors and social relationships together determine social institutions and social processes. At a time when the so-called postmodern thinking and multiculturalism have focussed ever more narrowly, to the point of an individual essentialism, Marxism, like religion, is a reminder of the bigger social picture to which one needs to return. It asks 'what is the meta-narrative?' Whereas religion and the faiths ask what moral and spiritual forces are at work,

³⁸ Derek Heater (1999) 'What is Citizenship?' Cambridge: Polity Press provides a helpful introduction to the many facets and complex issues of citizenship.

Marxism asks what the material forces are. What is the national, indeed international meta-narrative, around which those wanting to combat 'race' can gather? It is difficult to see one. To be certain, 'race' needs to be viewed not only as a local story but also as an international and global concept and – meta-narratives provide the bigger picture. For example, the dynamic forces that rapidly move people from one location to another, from one side of the world to another, and at great speed, are one of the defining features of the present time. Such forces have an impact on the local experience, understanding and response to 'race'. Arguably, this is an age when we are told the meta-narrative is in demise, but where it is still functioning.

If, as Kovel (1984: 4) writes, 'racism served a stabilizing function in American culture for many generations', one is then compelled to ask whether dominant ideologies have been and still are complicit in its maintenance. (There is no reason to think that racism serves any different function in Britain.). The dominant established ideologies of society, whether religious or secular, capitalist or Marxist, primarily act to maintain the status quo, they are not there to assist in the process of introducing radical change or to promote more equal societies. How then do difficult issues, which make for difficult and challenging conversations, get raised at all when silence is there to exclude and prevent them from taking place?

The process of bringing social change means identifying a place to start, that might be with an idea, then having the idea owned by a group, then by the wider society. Such an idea needs to be especially owned by those who will be the

change agents and they must be able to see how steps can be taken toward achieving the change. In addition, ideas together with the people to implement them, only result in introducing social change when the time and timing is right. At the present, much effort seems to be directed at making 'race' silent not only at the individual interpersonal level but also at the very widest level of international relations (Vitalis 2000³⁹ and Füredi 1998). One of the present challenges for sociology is then to offer a convincing way of seeing how society changes and can be changed.

The enthusiasm for voicing and tackling 'race' inequality and justice issues has seemed to wane since the US civil rights movement of the 1960s. As the twentieth century moved to a close, politics became dominated in the West by a more conservative climate in which there has been both a silence and the silencing of difficult issues. As Kovel (1984: liv) observes, the antiracism campaigns of the 1960s have waned, 'Racism is no longer a hot topic. As it becomes metaracist, racism tends toward invisibility in late capitalist society.'

Malik (1996) offers one of the most convincing interpretations as to the position of 'race' in the postmodern world. He summarises his argument thus, 'The problem with postmodernism [is that] the postmodernist embrace of difference embodies pluralism and social fragmentation along with hostility to universalism and big theories like Marxism'. He makes the case that the postmodern approach

³⁹ Vitalis (2000) cites Toni Morrison who argues that a highly and historically racialized US culture today exhibits a powerful tendency toward 'silence and evasion' in matters of race. Vitalis examines this 'norm against noticing' in relation to international relations theory. He looks at three practices as evidence of this. These are: 1. the caste system, 2. white supremacist rationales, 3. the export of Jim Crow style US apartheid to the Caribbean, Latin America, Middle East & Asia.

favouring plurality claims to overcome the silencing of ‘traditional politics [which] serves to silence the voices of the weak and the oppressed’, but, as he rightly observes, ironically postmodernism has ‘in its hostility to universalism and in its embrace of the particular and the relative, poststructuralism embodies the same romantic notions of human difference as are contained in racial theory’ (Malik 1996: 3-4). Malik explores the utility of anti-essentialism as a counter to the fundamentally flawed essentialism he sees dominating both traditional ‘race’ and postmodern concepts.

One of the key tenets of postmodern thinking is that ‘race’ identity is constantly recreated, never fixed, always a ‘floating signifier’.⁴⁰ As Winder (2004: 356) in his excellent book on the history of immigration to Britain says, ‘Recent culture has supported a crescendo of identity politics along sexual, religious and many other lines. What we are – what we feel – often seems more significant than what we do or think. And no social signifier is as powerful as ethnic identity’. Since the postmodern/poststructuralist view is that all people carry multiple identities, then it follows, he argues, there is no such thing as an essential identity. That might on the face of it appear to be a good counter to ‘race’ concepts, but as Malik says there is then a problem in recognising the reality of privilege or discrimination experienced by some social groups when all differences are valued equally and when ‘fundamental social relations such as racial oppression become reduced to lifestyle choices.’ As he says, ‘Poststructuralist discourse reduces (or deconstructs) society to the accidental interaction of individuals and removes the subject from the terrain of the social.’ In sum, as he persuasively

⁴⁰ On floating signifier, see Ratcliffe, P. (2004: 19-22) referred to earlier on page 12.

argues, 'The critical flaw in poststructuralist theory is the collapse of historical specificity into a relativistic epistemology' (Malik 1996: 9-10, 14).

Postmodernism therefore leaves to one side questions of equality, for example. With such things it is incompetent to deal, yet for some decades it has stolen the theoretical high ground. Malik again, 'The paradox of poststructuralist anti-essentialism, then is this: it is an outlook that arises from a desire to oppose naturalistic explanations and to put social facts in social context. But, in rejecting all essentialist explanations, in celebrating indeterminacy and in opposing the idea of totality, it has undermined its own ability to explain social facts historically [and] once essential explanations, whether natural or social, are excluded, the very idea of equality also becomes subordinate to the 'contingency of prevailing identities' (Malik 1996: 15-6).

There is a strong line of current discourse exploring identity through literature.⁴¹ One such writer examining literature as a basis for social observation and identifying social phenomenon is Said (1978) whose widely admired book 'Orientalism' has one major failing, it does not expose the most important thing about colonialism, that is its material relations of domination. As Miles and Brown (2003: 122) state, 'Much can be learned about the ideology of racism by this theory and method but its conscious distancing of relations of production and of the interaction of political and economic relations results in silence about other aspects of domination and exploitation.' The way forward for developing an understanding of 'race', they helpfully conclude, is to give attention to the

⁴¹ This has been introduced earlier. See pages 86-89 on silence from literature and pages 138-40 for literature on silence and struggle.

continuing analytical task which is to be conducted with ‘sensitivity to the three aspects of the nature of the expression of racism’, namely:

1. Its complexity, and ‘more attention should be devoted to identifying and explaining the active construction and reproduction of racism among people in different class locations, and the reception and rejection of racism by the audiences of the mass media and politicians, etc.’
 2. ‘The effects of its expression always interact with the extant economic and political relations and with other ideologies.’
 3. ‘theoretical generalisations about the nature and consequences of the expression of racism should be able to account for their “multidimensionality” and their “historical specificity”.’
- (Miles and Brown 2003: 169-72)

When Winder (2004: 356) says of Britain today, ‘in the absence of a common flagpole on which we can all hoist our colours, we have an identity parade’, he is pointing to a failure of the multicultural and postmodern era. The dominant ideology fails to make the links, to build any big picture, to provide any unifying motif. What then brings into public discourse what might otherwise be an issue of little interest is the arrival of new people into Britain from overseas. As Winder (2004: 6) says in his introduction, the ‘untold’ story (i.e. the silent or silenced history) is that British history is one long chapter about immigration, and ‘If the story of immigration remains to an odd extent untold, it must partly be because all the discussions of the subject swiftly turn into conversations about politics and social justice; into debates about rights, racism, multiculturalism and so on’. (He is not alone in being an author who notices the association between ‘race’ and silence but fails to directly explore the meaning of the relationship between the two.) Immigration, tends to come in waves, and at times of particular inflow, this invariably generates calls for defensive responses led by the largest and predominantly white ethnic group, rather than a wider debate about ideologies and ideals. It is unfortunately often the case that discourse is

only propelled to the forefront of the political agenda by some precipitating concern that is fuelled by a groundswell of popular feeling such as a perceived surge of immigration.

When the theologian Chamberlain (1976) describes racism as a 'white folk religion' he is describing 'race' in terms the postmodernist would find it difficult to relate to. 'Race' according to Chamberlain is seen as having a universal quality and in its association with Christianity, racism has shown all the strength and power of another faith. As Kelsey (1965) says:

Racism is a faith. It is a form of idolatry. It is an abortive search for meaning ... It arose as an ideological justification for the constellations of political and economic power which were expressed in colonialism and slavery. But gradually the idea of the superior race was heightened and deepened in meaning and value so that it pointed beyond the historical. (Kelsey 1965: 9)

This is a concept postmodernism totally fails to grasp, with the result that the current discourse on 'race' emerging as it often does at times of an immigration 'crisis', is silenced by being robbed of the ideology and the language through which it might be conducted. Who gains from partial understanding and inadequate discourse? The answer is that it is the ruling hegemony as long as the key silence about the nature of 'race' ideology and its power holds sufficiently, so that the crisis remains marginal and not central to the stability of the society.

There is reason to suppose that the default position for society in the face of difficult issues and difficult conversation is silence rather than speech. People will sometimes close down areas of debate rather than open them up, in order to protect their self interest. For example, in a not totally unrelated setting, that of

employment, it was found that people prefer to be silent: 'loyal employees who experienced unfair workplace treatment primarily responded to suffering in silence ... rather than exercise voice' (Boroff and Lewin 1997: 50, 60). How to facilitate the development of a sufficiently comprehensive ideology that embraces silence and enables the voiceless to speak are two major contemporary challenges as yet unaddressed.

Loomba (1998: 185) in the context of colonialism / postcolonialism asks, 'What does it take for colonial subjects to move from alienation to revolution, from recognition of injustice to resistance? What is it that makes people speak rather than remain silent?' Loomba gives much consideration to this issue. First, she considers the work of Spivak (1985, 1988) who asks whether it is possible to recover the voice of the 'subaltern' or oppressed subject at all, and Spivak's answer is: it is impossible.⁴² Loomba comments on Spivak, 'However, her insistence on subaltern "silence" is problematic if adopted as the definitive statement about colonial relations', for Spivak's theory of subaltern silence which attributes 'an absolute power to the hegemonic discourse' can be shown to be overstated. Loomba rightly concludes it is difficult and unnecessary to choose between these two positions. For Loomba the jury is out. She neither discerns whether the ruling hegemony can force a silence on those who are silent, nor decides those in a position of powerlessness have the capacity to speak. One would have hoped she might have said that the response depends on the specifics of the particular context.

⁴² There are several versions of Spivak's essay, see Loomba (1998) Chapter Three, note 5.

Loomba then turns from class to gender, to debates in feminist theory and historiography to illustrate the problems in recovering woman's voice. She cites Walkowitz (1989) to help bring her argument to a conclusion:

Though women on the margins are bounded by the cultural resources available in their context, that individuals do not fully author their texts does not falsify Marx's insight that men (and in parenthesis women) make their own history, albeit under circumstances that they do not fully control or produce. They are makers as well as users of culture, subjected to the same social and ideological constraints, yet forcefully resisting those same constraints. (Walkowitz 1989: 30 q.v., Loomba 1998: 238)

On the question whether others, academics and writers for example, can speak for the silent ones, she asks, 'Is objectivity possible, or are we merely ventriloquising our own concerns when we make the subaltern speak? Of course to some extent, our investments in the past are inescapably coloured by our own present-day commitments. We are interested in recovering subaltern voices because we are invested in changing contemporary power relations.' With his salutary warning in mind, she argues, 'Thus when Baudrillard speaks of the masses as an implosive force that 'can no longer be spoken for, articulated and represented, Stuart Hall is justified in reading this statement as exemplifying the pessimistic politics of post-modernism.' Not sharing such postmodern constraint, Loomba believes those who can speak for the silent should and can do so, looking for groups, material, contexts and discourses that give their story form (Loomba 1998: 243). In conclusion Loomba advocates the importance of seeing the view of 'the other', and though many 'histories from below' have so often been written 'from above' in recent years, the 'insurrection of subjugated voices in the fields of feminism, black, gay, and post-colonial studies has been led by

members of marginalized groups' (Greenstein 1995: 231, q.v. in Loomba 1998: 257-58).

The idea of facilitating the voice of the oppressed also appears in the writing of Bowers (1996: 493). Bowers notes some of the difficulties: 'The dominant power structures set not only the language rules but the grounds for which the language functions' with the effect they use 'a creative range of strategies to stifle the voices of the oppressed.' She suggests the need to:

1. alert the public to the multiple voices of the oppressed, they are not one group requiring one solution;
2. take control of media discourse by taking control of 'times to speak and to be silent because silence can be a rhetorical strategy'.
3. be prepared to offer multiple voices and not be forced into being heard as a single voice.
4. offer different opinions whilst stressing the commonalities and de-emphasising differences between oppressed people.
5. create a more inclusive agenda. (Bowers 1996: 501-502)

Creativity in the public discourse agenda is required to break the silence. Though P. Williams (1995) argues from a US perspective, her call for more and open discussion is one that could equally apply in Britain. She says,

One of the subtlest challenges we face is to relegitimate the national discussion of racial, ethnic and gender tensions so that we can get past the Catch-22 in which merely talking about it is considered an act of war, in which not talking about it is complete capitulation to the status quo, and in which not talking about it is repeatedly covered up with a lot of high-volume substitute talk about the legalities of censorship and the first amendment. (Williams, P. 1995: 40)

Williams sees the persistence of racism in certain cultural and political practices as disguising the operation of power. The seriousness of any potentially relevant discourse gets deflected by the use of humour. All this has the effect of discouraging and limiting discourse and fuelling oppositions. She is not alone in

noticing how swiftly public discourse becomes pejorative, polarised and fragmented.

Moving from the wider social and indeed global context of silence and ‘race’, it is appropriate to look at the other end of the spectrum, at what can be learned about conceptualising silence from the experiences of individuals who have encountered silence and silencing. The most systematic appreciation of silence at this level is arguably that elucidated by an Australian linguist and academic, Wajnryb (2001) in her book *The Silence*. This work is based on a solid contextual piece of research and formed a major element of my MPhil (Hall, J. 2005). She describes her own experience being brought up as a child of Holocaust survivors and this gave impetus to the research which was to follow:

The home I grew up in was bathed in silence, wrought by trauma. Yet because silence transmits its own messages, it is impossible not to communicate. Meanings are constructed. Snippets of text and fragments of allusion are calibrated against context and sense is haltingly induced. I grew up apprenticed in the skills of inference and versed in the language of the oblique. I became literate in the grammar of silence. (Wajnryb 2001: xi)

In her analysis of the meaning of silence she notes the importance of context in explaining this as well as other means of communication for, ‘Just as words do not carry their meanings around them but are infused by their context, so too the meaning of silence is infused by its context and draws meaning from there’ (Wajnryb 2001: 25).

Her writing brings together many of the separately made observations made by others mentioned earlier in this chapter. On the relation between words and

silence in the context of a history of 'race' hatred she makes the following observations, which can be summarised as follows:

- a. Silence occurs where language falls short.
- b. Silence is as complex as language itself.
- c. Silence is ambiguous, sometimes it is used 'to protect or salvage or cherish', other times as 'a weapon of defence or control or denial' (p. 91).
- d. Silence can cause a painful subject to become a taboo.
- e. Others can collude with silence.
- f. Silence cannot be considered without looking at power in relationships.
- g. Silence isolates, separates, divides, imposes barriers and is anti-relationship building.
- h. Incommunicability can arise through the limitation of words; the weight of emotional pain; and, the nature of the social context.
- i. Silence can arise to avoid a subject where one is disempowered; where the risk of speaking is greater than that of keeping quiet; and, because of feelings of shame and guilt.
- j. There is no silence so deep as when it is naturalised as a social norm, and omitted from all social and personal reference.

Though she is drawn to her subject by her family and community's experience of the Holocaust, Wajnryb makes the point that the silencing of the story of racism is more widespread than the Holocaust. (E.g., she cites the silencing of the story of the Aborigines in her native Australia).⁴³

Wajnryb also explores what might break the silence, and suggests the following possibilities:

- a. The need first to understand the language of silence and what it is doing: silence can be the 'preferred way of communicating, a vernacular in its own right'. (p. 100).
- b. Understanding has to be inferred and deduced in this non-verbal world.
- c. Silence needs to be seen as lying on a continuum between silence and speaking along which 'lie many

⁴³ See also Reynolds, H. (1999) *Why Weren't we Told?* Victoria, Australia: Penguin.

- notches'. At one notch on the continuum silence is 'controlling', at another a 'reflective pause'. (p. 106).
- d. Indirect communication recognises that communication does not rely on text alone. Wajnryb identifies the important contribution/added meaning brought both by listener and context.
 - e. The creation of safe, controlled settings where conversation can occur.
 - f. Where there is silence, the use of less risky 'socialised messages' such as dicta and sayings can be used to mediate meaning, rather than conversation itself.
 - g. The use of 'participation frameworks' can help safe speaking. These might specifically include the avoidance of a direct question and answer format, or asking directly about feelings. Emotions, easily stirred on the subject of 'race' are thus kept under control.
 - h. She warns that in allowing silence to continue, one runs the risk of giving the impression that one is not interested in the other person, or the reason for their silence.

Wajnryb's response to 'race' and silence is stronger on the linguistic and social processes and weaker on understanding social structures, class and groups. She does not develop a socio-economic or political agenda and her text is couched in the language of therapy and counselling. Her significant contribution, however, is to have identified some of the many factors which may be present in a context shrouded in silence. More than this, she offers sensitively aware suggestions as to how one might move beyond silence, with a considerable emphasis on doing so in a caring rather than conflictual manner. Some of her insights were to prove especially helpful in framing the empirical study outlined in Chapter Three (e.g. the importance of creating a safe context in which dialogue can take place). The question remains to be addressed, is Wajnryb right? Is it always good to talk? The following section considers this argument and offers some suggestions.

In this key central part of the chapter it has been argued that ‘race’ and silence have a close if not symbiotic relationship. It is complex and contextually defined. There are often limits to the use powerful groups make of silence; and there are some occasions when the ostensibly powerless use it with varying degrees of effectiveness to support their cause. Silence can also undermine causes too. Ideologies, as well as global forces at work can shape the ‘discourse of reticence’ of the time; and, both prevailing silence as well as voices raised determine the intensity of the discourse on ‘race’, rather like the tuning and volume knobs on a radio sometimes wring clarity of signal loud enough for many people to hear but at other times allow only partial snippets at quiet levels which only a few can grasp. Some of the voices in this chapter argue that silence is a negative force and something to be overcome, though others argue it can also offer the positive benefits of stability, safety and emotional security. In an age when it is commonly assumed it is good to talk, in the following section such a view is re-examined.

2.4 Is it Good to Talk?

One of the fascinating aspects of Wajnryb’s (2001) study is her understanding, when it comes to language and communication, of why silence may be the ‘preferred option’ of those who are traumatized victims of oppression. Her use of the word ‘option’ raises the possibility of other options, one of which is that it is not always good to talk. Wajnryb in describing the post-war Jewish communities’ general preference for silence on the Holocaust, quotes Bergman and Jucovy (1992: 59):

The prevailing feeling was that they should forget the unspeakable past and learn to look toward the future ... Survivors learned to be silent and

to avoid evoking anxiety and guilt in others in order to be accepted ... they had to be cautious in a world that did not want to hear what they had to say. (Wajnryb 2001: 92)

People will opt to avoid confronting painful issues, not only because they themselves find them difficult to raise in conversation but because they perceive those party to their conversation will not want to hear it. Some people will very definitely opt for silence.

It is commonly supposed today that it is good to talk and that there is indeed something uncivilised about not speaking. The German novelist Thomas Mann (1875-1955) writes, 'Speech is civilisation itself. The word, even the most uncivilised word, preserves contact. It is silence which isolates'.⁴⁴ One reflection of this view might be seen in the fact that counselling services have never been so prevalent and offer an ever widening array of services. The implicit point is that issues can be addressed if not resolved through talking. That to talk is civilised is seen in the highly successful television advert for BT starring Bob Hoskins. It carries the catch phrase 'It's good to talk'; and, the new communications industry have made a virtue of putting people 'in touch' as never before. But this assumption deserves closer scrutiny. The BT advert actually only depicts people talking to people like themselves, a mother getting in touch with her son in Australia, for example. These are only conversations between family and friends; BT are not advertising to promote conversation between strangers. Besides, the amount of new 'chatter', albeit only between people who have an affinity for one another, is no indication of the content of

⁴⁴ The author's incomplete reference to this quotation came from the WHSmith's 2003 Diary.

these conversations.

What Wajnryb rightly points out is that people with painful, difficult and complex areas in their lives are going to choose if, when, and with whom they will raise these matters; and, such conversations are only likely to take place in a safe relationship built on trust. When many social contexts will have seriously eroded levels of trust around the issue of 'race' the question is, just how likely is it that 'strangers' will want to talk to one another unless driven to do so out of necessity or crisis? Wajnryb herself found that even in creating the optimum environment conducive to talk, some people would still choose silence as the 'preferred option'. The reason is quite clear, silence is a way of keeping emotions under control, of sparing others and of moving on. The price to pay, leaving issues and the feelings around them unresolved, might be seen as well worth paying because other life issues such as earning a living, protecting one's family and staying 'safe' are seen as more important.

It can be argued that silence is entirely understandable when something as traumatic as genocide is concerned, but so far as the ordinary discourse of life in more settled times, surely there is no substantial obstacle to conversation? In Britain today, surely there will be few places where people will feel so constrained they will be unable to speak? After all, are not the benefits of dialogue manifestly self-evident; and, is it not commonly believed that ignorance can be overcome with knowledge and understanding gained through encounter? Often initiatives to combat racism make the assumption that the answer to these questions is uniformly 'yes', possibly because those who promulgate them think

this way themselves, that it is possible to talk and in talking all will be made well. The contention here is that such an assumption is mistaken, for in reality the relationship between 'race' and silence is both deeply ambiguous and contextual. To seek to implement a strategy to address community cohesion based on talking will be problematic and may even be counter-productive if people feel unsafe and/or otherwise pressurised. Silences indicate someone needs to press the pause button!

Enough has already been said in this thesis to show that the subject of 'race' is a difficult subject for conversation and for many and varied reasons and that silence is a key indicator of these difficulties which will vary with context. Sometimes the silence will be barely discernible and innocuous, maybe just a reflective pause before conversation resumes. At other times it will be so deep, so entrenched and ringed about with perceived danger for those concerned that a powerful taboo will prevent anyone from speaking about the subject. Wajnryb (2001) helpfully describes this in terms, not of speaking and silence, but of a continuum: 'between talk and silence lie many notches'. At one point on the continuum, silence might be pursued as a means of personal or societal control, as a means of protecting self-interest; towards the other end, as a mere reflective pause before talk resumes again. She later adds, 'There are myriad points on this continuum, countless ways of telling and not telling. In other words, the crude division into binary categories of those who talked and those who didn't is facile and impressionistic and does not stand up to the scrutiny of research' (Wajnryb 2001: 105-106, 170).

Silence occupies a significant place in religion, and there is considerable wisdom to be found there. Here too, certainly in the Christian religion, silence is deeply ambiguous and contextual. The relationship between the person/the group and their God, who can be considered as a model of 'the other', provides a fruitful site for enquiry into the nature of silence. There is a negative side, as when God is experienced as silent, even absent from his creation and his creatures. Wiesel (1981: 45) a former Jewish concentration camp inmate expresses his sense of abandonment by God thus, 'Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live.' Similarly, Endo (1980: 61) a Roman Catholic author, regarded as Japan's foremost novelist, describes in his book *Silence* how the central character Father Rodrigues also shares a sense of abandonment by God, 'Behind the depressing silence of this sea, the silence of God ... The feeling that while men raise their voices in anguish God remains with folded arms, silent'.

In a more recent conversation between Endo and the Jesuit theologian Johnston, Endo reveals the effect of silence when adherents of different religious cultures encounter one another. In Zen Buddhism silence is usual, but for western Christians first encountering the practice, such silence is not always comfortable. Endo says, 'when one sits in silence for some time the unconscious begins to surface and one can come into considerable turmoil' (Johnston 1990). This observation makes a lot of sense. When people need to keep silent this can in itself prove to be a difficult thing to achieve and sustain. Indeed some people may find silence so uncomfortable it is broken. That is not to say however, when this happens, that what then replaces the silence will be a conversation on the

difficult matter that led to ending the silence, whether it is encountering the other, the deity or oneself.

Historically, silence in religious life has also been highly regarded as a mark of genuine character and pious discipleship, something to be sought. St Isaac of Nineveh's words on silence, written in the seventh century, still find their way into contemporary religious guides on prayer:

Many are avidly seeking, but they alone find who remain in continual silence ... Every man who delights in a multitude of words, even though he says commendable things, is empty within. If you love truth, be a lover of silence. Silence, like the sunlight, will illuminate you in God, and will deliver you from the phantoms of ignorance, Silence will unite you to God himself ... More than all things love silence. (Leech 1980: 58)

In the everyday experiences of life there are many occasions when the secular and religious combine, as when silence is observed in moments of solemnity at the annual acts of Remembrance on November 11th. The Jewish Passover and Christian Eucharist are religious occasions where silent remembrance features strongly. At such times silence is normative, it is kept and observed and it is not only Christians who appreciate the wisdom in the words of the writer of Ecclesiastes (3.7) that there is a time for everything ... 'a time to be silent and a time to speak'. Thoreau (1985: Chapter 5) captures the ambiguity of silence in the religious imagination when he writes, 'Silence is of various depths and fertility, like soil. Now it is a Sahara, where men perish of hunger and thirst; now a fertile bottom, or prairie, of the West'. In just these few examples it is possible to see that silence can have a valued place, it can be viewed positively or not all,

and consequently a 'discourse of reticence' may be less easy to displace than first thought.

There are voices in society speaking up for marginal, oppressed and vulnerable people and sometimes on issues others would prefer were kept silent. Jonathan Sacks (2002: 11) captures the thoughts of many such voices when he writes, 'We must speak the silent cry of those who today suffer from want, hunger, disease, powerlessness and lack of freedom.' In some contexts voices of this kind will be influential and take others with them, think of Bob Geldof and the 'Live Aid' project, in other places this will not be the case. As noted earlier in respect of Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, courageously outspoken people are the exception rather than the rule.

In some contexts things can be so difficult and unpromising and silence is the refuge for those who deliberately choose it when words fail. Bonhoeffer (1959: 160) the German pastor who spoke out against Nazism, also hid his views as a means of working against them. He describes how when words have lost their power, the only action left is to 'remain silent'. Time and again people in oppressive circumstances find that words cannot be called to their aid, and they have to fall back upon silence as the last resort to support their cause. In some circumstances the only 'good' option is silence.

Then again, certain groups of people use silence and silencing as an established group practice. In an article in *The Daily Telegraph*, Hawse (2002) goes so far as to argue that the internalised prohibitions that anthropologists call *taboos* 'govern

much behaviour in Britain today'. He cites, for example, 'schoolchildren, Mafiosi and others who observe a code of not "telling", not because it is immoral, or even because of the revenge exacted on grasses, but because it is simply not done'. Some groups have social conventions regarding silence – sometimes families, sometimes wider groups of people.⁴⁵ Wajnryb (2001: 69) describes how Romanians, for example, have responded to past tragedy with a rule of silence, backed by sayings, such as, 'When you eat the honey do you ask the bee to show you the flower?' In other words, take what is good now without talking about how it got to be so. Such culturally specific codes or rules of silence, built into a 'discourse of reticence', need to be appreciated, if not understood, by those seeking to introduce initiatives to build community cohesion. This is not self-evident and begs the question whether the philosophy of community cohesion is designed to avoid raising such issues, with the prior purpose of keeping potential demands for greater equality (and the costly conflict which might go with them) from public debate altogether.

It seems obvious, but silence, or something approaching it, is required if people are to actually hear what is being said to one another. The continuing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians may seem an unfruitful place to find wisdom on overcoming silence. Yet this was the case on 23 October 2002, when awards for peace work were made in the ruins of the old Coventry Cathedral: Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, Rabbi Michael Melchior and Palestinian Sheikh Tal el Sider both received public recognition for their work for peace. Rabbi Melchior said, 'Being sent to Coventry usually means you want to silence somebody. And yes,

⁴⁵ See pages 163-64 for earlier discussion of taboo.

we do have to have silence. But not a silence which is to stop dialogue but a silence in order to be able to listen to the voice and pain of the other' (Gouldner 2002). Silence is part of the process of ordinary communication. It is a time to listen to the talking.

Wajnryb (2001: 104) acknowledges that it need not only be the Holocaust that provokes silence, 'all kinds and shapes of the tragic qualify here ... it need not be on a massive scale'. She provides examples of silence in other contexts: following a baby's death; leaving a Roman Catholic Religious Community; where a husband never uses his wife's name; death; a teenage pregnancy; and finally the silencing of the story of cultural genocide in the Australian treatment of the indigenous Aborigines. Silence and 'race' as has been said earlier is but one silence amongst many and these may sometimes be tied to one another. Silence can be for more than one reason, as for example when a parent whose child has been hurt or killed as a result of conflict in a community divided by 'race' may not wish to speak out because of their personal grief as well as for the reason they find 'race' a difficult subject for conversation.

When Wajnryb (2001) describes the 'pathology of silence' she says that even when people speak, what they say can contain a paradox in which though speaking, some things remain excluded (as if banished) and become unspeakable. She gives the example of one grandmother who replied to her granddaughter's repeated questions, 'Be quiet now. Auschwitz is not for talking' (Wajnryb 2002: 36). She says this partial conversation occurs when the discomfort of both parties in the telling creates such stresses that communication nearly always

disintegrates. This 'paradox of intelligibility' where, though 'language is the mediating influence, it also falls short of its task and disintegrates under the strain results in what she terms 'dysphoria'.⁴⁶ It is important to recognise that when a conversation is taking place, it may contain areas masked and silenced out of conversation in just the way Wajnryb describes.

Wajnryb summarises what she learns about silence and conversation from the stories her subjects tell her thus:

In all these cases and others akin to them, people experienced the incommunicability of trauma, the impact of an imposed silence and the suffering that is wrought in trying to forge coherence in a silent world. I have learned that silence is as complex as spoken language, as differentiated and as subtle. Sometimes it is self-imposed, sometimes other imposed. Sometimes it is driven by the urge to protect or salvage or cherish; at other times, as a weapon of defence or control or denial. One thing that underscores all instances, it is rarely unproblematic. (Wajnryb 2001: 51)

Like many who write in this field, Wajnryb wants to end silence. Her reason for thinking it is good to talk is that for her 'it is talk that makes us human. It allows us to intermesh. Silence keeps us separate, enclosed behind our own barriers, wondering at our own reality'. Perhaps ultimately, whether silence should be broken or not, is a matter of personal conviction and circumstance (Wajnryb 2001: 77-78).

Hitherto in this section much of the focus has been on the individual, but does the nation state have an interest in silence and silencing on 'race' or does it want to see conversation on 'race'? Füredi (1998) would say it does. In one of the few pieces written addressing this issue, he considers the way silence on 'race'

⁴⁶ The word 'dysphoria' describes the 'tension, heaviness, discomfort and frailty that accompanies such talk' (Wajnryb 2002: 32-36).

operates in international relations and makes a strong case. Specifically included is a whole chapter on, 'The Second World War as Race War'. Here he explores the way 'race' became a dilemma for the political leadership in America and Britain. During a war that was 'ostensibly against an ideology of extreme racism' it was difficult to raise the matter of 'race' without drawing attention to racial discrimination in the home countries and colonies. The reluctance to bring the discourse of 'race' into international political affairs in the period leading up to and during the 2nd World War had the result that 'the silencing of racial concerns became public policy' and the silencing of the race agenda continues to shape the racialized global political context in the post-war era.

In the introduction to his book he expresses the view that the 'tendency to hesitate before engaging in open discussion of racial issues has often been rationalised on the grounds that the special sensitivity of the subject means that public discussion could enflame passions and make the situation far worse' Füredi (1998: 163).⁴⁷ Here is a strong motive for governments to prefer silence: to address things openly might enflame passions and thereby threaten to destabilize and change things at home. Where forums do take place, governments are generally keen to organise them in such a way as to render them 'safe', placing their own officers with their own agendas to follow and using a demanding bureaucratic and paper trail to keep voices from below at bay. It is helpful to remember that though power and control can be set aside to let the outsider and marginalised speak, it is more usual that it is competed for and the

⁴⁷ Füredi, F. (1998), Chapter 6 is a most helpful overview and analysis of the handling of race politics during the Second World War, pp. 160-92.

stronger preordinate group(s) usually win out.

If conversation in a particular context is thought to be a good idea in principle, it can still fail to communicate. Language itself can be an obstacle as has been discussed earlier in respect of the use of PC and euphemism in conversation. Wajnryb (2001: 102) says language can be thought of as having two primary functions: 'If language as representation might be said to be language in the service of *information*, then language as communication might be said to be language in the service of *relationships*'. Clearly improved communication in the service of the latter, improved relationships, is a desirable objective for social cohesion initiatives. One wonders just how often this half of the function of language is absent through the desire for silence.

Wajnryb also writes of dissonance, when words and actions do not quite match each other. The quietness of those present may simply reflect suppressed emotions whether of anger, guilt, pain, or whatever. She writes, 'Suppressed emotion is a management strategy adopted by survivors to enable them to speak, without which words would be drowned out by emotion'. Conversation has three participants: teller, listener and text, and text can swamp both. She describes the outcomes:

To compensate, the communication becomes increasingly indirect: messages are fragmented and dissonant, and meaning is so oblique that listeners' inferential skills are obliged to work overtime. There are ways to overcome the problem, through subtle and not so subtle shifts in the 'participation framework' ... These moves enabled them to sidestep the painful proximity of simple speaker-to-listener discourse. (Wajnryb 2001: 223, 240)

The concept of a 'participation framework' borrowed by Wajnryb (2001: 239) from Goffman (1961: 3) is used as a means to enable a safe sharing exchange of communication to occur. One strategy used to assist a 'safe' communication into being is to create the role of 'ratified eavesdropper', (Goffman 1961) with the listener adopting a non-interactive bystander role; another, a 'this is my life' approach whereby the telling is to an outside party, so reducing the emotional load; and a third, the 'go-between' pattern, whereby a third party acts as a mediating conduit for communication. If it is good to talk, where a difficult conversation needs facilitating than these kinds of considerations become important and may determine whether the communication is effective both in terms of communication per se and in the service of improved relationships.

In Holocaust survivor households, Wajnryb (2001: 249-65) sees four specific types of silence. These types of excluded communication, which can be seen in other contexts where conversation is problematic, are:

1. Taboo Topics – the subjects that cause most emotional pain.
2. Detail Omission – key detail is omitted often resulting in it being difficult for the listener to get the full picture.
3. Disallowed Behaviour – because it carries echoes of times which are too emotionally difficult to communicate in words.
4. Unasked Questions – Eye signals may be enough to indicate that conversation is approaching a no-go destabilising area.⁴⁸

Wajnryb explains what happens in situations where a difficult conversation is likely: 'what develops is a collusion, a conspiracy where each party tiptoes

⁴⁸ The difference between exclusions and omissions is important. In "Exclusions"... there's an elaborate conspiracy of silence ... he or she knows it's there and chooses not to trespass. "Omissions", on the other hand, lie outside the visual field. They are therefore non-existent, not part of one's world. The terrain registers as absent ... These absences have long been established as normal; naturalised, they remain unnoticed. A trusty sign that omission has taken place is where the respondent sees as unproblematic something that is inherently complex and fraught.' On the subject of omissions she concludes: 'In my imagination, there is no silence more silent than this' (Wajnryb 2001: 278-80).

around each other.’ Here are deep resonances of Ted Cattle’s words as Chair of the Government’s Working Group on Community Cohesion: ‘The failure to communicate is compounded by the lack of an honest and robust debate, as people ‘tiptoe around’ the sensitive issues of race, religion and culture’ (Cattle 2001: Chapter 5. 1:3). Examples of such tiptoeing emerge from Wajnryb’s interviews:

Elsa summed it up beautifully when she said, “It was almost a game we played: I’ll let you protect me by not asking.” ... Julia said, “There are some questions we don’t know how to ask.” (Wajnryb 2001: 265)

Excluded communication, reflected in tiptoeing, is a clear indication that people do not always think it is good to talk.

It may also not be good to talk when silence, in the social arena of community life, is seen as a silence of resistance in the face of opposing beliefs, values, powers, aims and objectives. Silence can also be a deliberate act of defiance or resistance when speaking out is perceived as the more dangerous or difficult option. Yet, silence can provide a creative positive space for the participants to engage in a period of reflection. All these elements add to the repertoire of the normal conversational process by expanding it, and a ‘discourse of reticence’ can symbolize a period where the given power relations are temporarily set aside. In such cases silence is mutually observed, and may not be seen as simply there for the breaching.

The ‘discourse of reticence’ contains examples of where it is not always good to talk, for silence can be an attractive alternative to speech. It can be a means of safely handling and controlling deeply felt emotions relating to a difficult issue.

In this way it avoids the necessity of bringing a potentially or actually dangerous subject into conversation. To breach such benevolently intentioned silence suggests that a great deal of understanding, care and sensitivity is going to be needed together with a shared conviction that the end dividend is worth the risks.

Silence safely hides away from sight the fears and guilt people have of the stranger, the other, those who are different. Further, silence quite possibly protects from scrutiny personal and group insecurities. Paradoxically, the presence of silence may also betray these feelings. For all these reasons, the maintenance of silence may actually be conducive to inter-personal harmony as well as inter-national harmony, however superficial or contradictory it may appear to the observer. In the language of taboo, it keeps vulnerable areas away from what is perceived to be dangerous intrusion.

As a feature of social life, silence like other features, can be socially constructed and socially maintained, even institutionalised to the end that the normative behaviour requires the problematic subject of 'race' to remain off-limits. (That is not to say that discourse may arise in allowed settings, places felt to be safe venues, such as in the home or with friends at a public house.)

But in the final analysis, for all the reasons outlined, silence might be the preferred option, even though silence isolates, divides and segregates. Its crucial though almost universally unrecognized association with 'othering', its role in the maintenance of a system which divides those who are 'outsiders' from 'insiders', the included from the excluded, ought to be made subject to more critical scrutiny by those who value and pursue the goals of social equality,

justice and inclusion. Though sometimes it may not be thought to be good to talk, there are strong arguments for generally supporting the need to make the issues of 'race' explicit. One way to start doing this is to appreciate why, for many reasons, the 'discourse of reticence' is sometimes seen as the preferred option by those expected to be party to a conversation / dialogue on 'race'.

Conclusion

'Race' is a difficult subject for conversation and in many and various social situations inter-personal communication on the subject has proved to be problematic; and in seeking to conceptualise silence one finds not a simple social process at work but one that is both complex and demanding. Understanding why this might be so is a task made none the easier by the gap in the literature in this area. Using an eclectic approach and drawing on personal experience, examples of silence and silencing have been considered in this chapter each in turn.

Context has been shown to be an important determinant of meaning. Since one of the features of silence in communication is that it is not heard, cloaked, even invisible, it has been shown to be easily disregarded and overlooked. The chapter offers evidence to show that silence usually means something. Further, it is argued here that its presence, meaning and significance deserve to be attended to and made explicit.

'Race' is sometimes a difficult subject of conversation, hedged around by silence and silencing, and this chapter offers examples of where this has been observed. One place where difficult conversations have been observed is in the classroom. They have also been observed in politics, literature, as well as other areas of

social life and these have been noted. The silences around 'race' and racism have been shown to be not only occurring in inter-personal communication but also more widely in social discourse, indeed social structures and processes are shaped by it. These silences raise the important question 'does silence and silencing serve the interests of some social groups at the expense of other groups?' Silence then has to be interpreted, but how is this to be done? What tools are available? The chapter explores the approach Krista Ratcliffe (1999) offers, the use of 'rhetorical listening' as an interpretative tool.

This chapter then presents a detailed exploration of more sites of silence and silencing. A rigorously objective study of the silences in newspaper coverage of homelessness by Huckin (2002) brings out and provides a telling account and analysis of the power silence has to shape discourse. It raises the question 'why could not "race", racism and silence be similarly explored as thoroughly as homelessness and its silences? Why not indeed?'

In the classroom the writing of Tatum (1997, 2001) and Day (2001) provides detailed narrative accounts of how silence shapes 'race' in classroom conversation. Indeed whether the subject area in the literature is the classroom, asylum seekers, black women writers or theology, there is evidence in all these areas for silence and silencing around 'race' and racism. This eclectic range of material was yet further expanded in this chapter in a deepening exploration of the nature of silence and silencing. For example, silence was considered in a variety of settings, as a deliberate act in time of wartime occupation (Brown and Stokes 1991); as theology's 'greatest sin' (Cone 2004); as a mark of the

oppressed (Fenton 2003); as an aspect of English character (Kumar 2003); as an indicator of racism in further education (Basu 2001); in reflections on how national census data and ethnic groups are defined (Mason 2000 and Modood 1992); as a feature noted in studies of cultural literature (Sandu 2004) or as something noted by sociologists (Ratcliffe, P. 2001) anthropologists (Harrison 1995) and geographers (Nayak 1999). Emerging from this material one finds cross-cutting themes, for example the way silence and silencing in 'race' discourse masks inequalities and renders invisible some social groups, especially the one defined by 'whiteness'.

The chapter then goes on to suggest that the relationship between 'race' and silence is a close if not symbiotic one. In conceptualizing silence and silencing the material presented suggests the relationship may be far from simple, rather it is more likely to be complex and contextual. It is not necessarily easy for the outsider to understand. Silence is often marked by ambivalence and ambiguity and although there are occasions when it may be used as an instrumental tool of the powerful, there are other occasions when the presence of silence is a reflection of other considerations at work. The literature as a whole, though suggestive of a discourse of reticence warns against over simplistic interpretations of silence and silencing in respect of 'race' and racism. The abilities of the powerful to silence opposition on the one hand and the ability of the oppressed to give voice to their concerns on the other hand can all too easily be assumed whereas closer analysis might well show things to far from clear cut either way (Loomba 1998).

In seeking to understand how silence shapes discourse at an interpersonal level, Wajnryb (2001) helpfully reminds that silence is complex and but one of many notches on a continuum between silence and speaking. For Wajnryb silence always means something. Her conceptualizing of silence and her practical ideas for using safe frameworks of participation to enable conversation would prove especially helpful ideas in the design of the empirical work described in Chapter Three.

The idea of 'race' being socially constructed has been an important emerging theme. Further, some of the key contemporary concepts used in discourse, such as 'multiculturalism' and 'community cohesion' are themselves socially constructed. Sociology points to the contested nature of these constructs and the need for critical appraisal in assessing them. Sociology is also shown in this chapter to be a key discipline in understanding issues of identity, difference and discourse in respect of 'race', racism and silence.

The direction taken by the empirical work described in the following chapter reflects some of the emerging themes explored in this chapter. One key theme to emerge is that silence and silencing in 'race' discourse is to be understood in the social context in which it arises, hence the need for locally conducted empirical research. Also the research gaze must be broad enough to be able to see the bigger social picture, able to see the place of silence and silencing in the social structures and processes as well as in an analysis of observed inter-personal conversations. The literature has alerted to the importance of the complex, ambiguous, multi-faceted, nuanced and sometimes invisible nature of the subject

matter. It is an area where others have also noted that the significance of silence and silencing is easily overlooked and missed.

This chapter has provided methodological help, indicating for example the importance of creating safe places for dialogue and the need to give careful attention to the creation of structures and frameworks of participation. Further, the literature offers many stimulating and potentially fruitful suggestions for analyzing what is observed, so expanding the research possibilities, not closing them down. In posing and exploring the question in the course of Chapter Two ‘Is it good to talk?’ it is suggested that contrary to the expectation of some people who think it is always good to talk, there are some circumstances in which silence rather than conversation might be the preferred option. Taken as a whole, this chapter argues that silence needs both attentive listening and careful interpretation if its true meaning and significance is not to be missed. Chapter Three will describe in detail the development of a project in which ‘race’ and silence are empirically explored.

Introduction

The empirical work outlined in this chapter picks up the theoretical insights on 'race' and its roots raised in Chapter One and examines 'othering' and self-identity as experienced by children and young people in Coventry and Warwickshire. It also looks critically at discourse with its many voices and silences, taking its cue from the material on silence and silencing outlined in Chapter Two and the need for rhetorical listening. The value of undertaking a contextual study is that it offers a real engagement, beyond the theoretical, the chance to see how easy or difficult conversations about 'race' are, and the chance to engage with the insights and the imaginative creativity which are so much a part of children and young people's lives.

At another level, the study also provides an opportunity to appraise the experience of a group of children and young people against the Government's agenda around cohesion and inclusion. This chapter therefore begins with a reflection on the political context and background which helps adding to an understanding of the wider social context in which the project took place.

It was the Cattle Report (2001) which signalled the end of 'multiculturalism', whose emphasis on celebrating cultural difference had served government policy since the last major outbreaks of civil disturbance (the 'riots' of 1981 and the years immediately following). At the same time 'community cohesion' has been offered as a parallel ideology, if not as multiculturalism's successor. However

well-intentioned, both emerge from government, and in reality, both avoid addressing the fundamental inequalities which lie behind the divisions and differences in society which civil disorder reflects. Swapping Cultures was a community cohesion project. By way of background, we begin this chapter looking briefly at the policy context.

The British Government's Home Office Report (2005), *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: The Government's Strategy to Increase Race Equality and Community Cohesion* is the most recent in a succession of reports on a similar theme produced since the civil disturbances of 2001. This is a significant document which charts where government policy and strategy have now arrived. In his foreword, the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, sums up the present situation – the tendency in Britain to put ‘people from minority ethnic communities in one category and those from the majority in another’ and the danger that this ‘can fuel the politics of division’. This sounds exactly like a recognition of the process of ‘othering’ set forth in the first chapter of this thesis. Clarke then lays out a strategy through which he seeks to bring about greater equality of opportunity hand-in-hand with a strengthened and more cohesive society. He does not believe government can achieve the latter alone, though it can help provide a lead. Such a lead means, he says, ‘helping people come together from different backgrounds; supporting people to contribute to society; and taking a stand against racism and extremists who promote hatred’ (Home Office 2005: Foreword).

The strategy acknowledges that more needs to be done to improve the ‘life chances’ of ‘Black and ethnic minority communities’ – in education, employment, health, housing, and criminal justice (Home Office 2005: 8-10, 23-40). At the same time, whilst carefully avoiding the use of the word ‘multicultural’, it sets forth a six point strategy, what is called initially, a ‘cohesive society’ (11) and later is called an ‘inclusive British citizenship’ (21):

1. Young People from different communities grow up with a sense of common belonging.
 2. New immigrants are integrated.
 3. People have opportunities to develop a greater understanding of the range of cultures that contribute to our strength as a country.
 4. People from all backgrounds have opportunities to participate in civic society.
 5. Racism is unacceptable.
 6. Extremists who promote hatred are marginalised.
- (Home Office 2005: 11-13)

The phrase ‘Britain is a multicultural society’ – which ‘is bandied about religiously, but whose meaning is rarely examined’ – has officially been put aside after ‘dominating race relations thinking in Britain for two decades’ (Kundnani 2002). What has replaced it might be described as community cohesion with citizenship. The problem with multiculturalism, as has been discussed here earlier,⁴⁹ is that in placing emphasis on celebrating diversity it pays insufficient attention to the material, social, religious and other differences between ethnic groups – what in reality divides them; and, consequently, it does not go far enough to address what needs to be done to build bridges of dialogue and relationship across what are real, though denied, cultural divides.

⁴⁹ See pages 70-71, 116-17, 123, 129, 147, 150, 158-62, 167.

Kundnani (2002) argues that the ‘riots’ of the summer and the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 finally marked ‘the death of multiculturalism’ in public policy because multiculturalism allowed disaffected elements to flourish under the guise of diversity. What then replaced it was a more centrally controlled and directed community cohesion agenda which, especially under Clarke’s predecessor David Blunkett, called for a tightening of controls on new arrivals from abroad and for the introduction and imposition of a common citizenship test upon those people already in Britain. In a bid to build cohesion, the difficulties of difference were played down, even rendered invisible, for the sake of a public discourse of calm.

Still feeling the threat to stability of the ‘disturbances in the summer of 2001’ (Home Office 2005: 42), the report, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* calls for ‘inclusive British citizenship’ and sets forth in Chapter Four its strategy detail for ‘Building Community Cohesion’. It lays stress on building a ‘sense of common identity and belonging ... characterized by tolerance and fairness rather than prejudice and hate’ which ‘fundamentally ... rests on an inclusive sense of Britishness ... with the expectation people will play their part in society and respect others.’ New citizens will be expected to have English ‘language skills and ... knowledge of life in the UK’. It acknowledges that ‘in a diverse society there will be differences in values and ambitions’ but:

Our respect for freedom means that no one set of cultural values should be privileged more than another. With the exception of the values of respect for others and the rule of law, including tolerance and mutual obligations between citizens, which we consider essential elements of Britishness, differences in values and customs need to be resolved through negotiation.

Since Cattle (2001), a priority has been placed upon the role of young people as those who might 'lead the way'. The Home Office report (2005: 43-44) continues to advocate this approach. Building on the work since 2001, the Government is keen to 'step up the opportunities for young people to develop a sense of inclusive British citizenship and to better understand and work with people from other ethnic and religious backgrounds.'

Specifically this means the new citizenship education element being included and improved upon within the National Curriculum in schools. Ideas now advocated include: volunteering in the local community; new materials and training to help teachers and others engage in citizenship; pilots to be run with 16-19 year olds (who are currently not subject to a compulsory citizenship element); a transition ceremony to mark adulthood in citizenship; a wider understanding of the 'range' of faiths; initiatives to improve young people's engagement with society; and, new services which promote inclusion and reduce segregation outside school and generally bring together different individuals and groups from different backgrounds to learn and socialize together (Home Office 2005: 44).

The report has a section on 'Helping to ensure that racism is unacceptable' containing the sentence, 'When people see blatant racism in other countries, the vast majority are appalled.' (It seemed safer to comment on the racism happening elsewhere in the world as a way of using self congratulation to affirm an all prevailing sense of British fair play at home.) The Report proposes measures to tackle the figure of 200,000 racially motivated incidents⁵⁰ reported in its own

⁵⁰ British Crime Survey estimate for 2002/03

backyard. These include tackling racially motivated crime, working with young people to ensure all schools have an anti-bullying charter, including racist bullying, youth work to tackle hate and prejudice, work with the voluntary sector to 'challenge racist attitudes and promote understanding ... and respect'; and, support the provision of guidance to journalists on 'reporting faith, race and cohesion' (Home Office 2005: 49-50). Alongside measures on racism, moves are also currently under way in 2005 to place an offence of incitement to religious hatred on the statute book.

In seeking to build cohesion at the local level the new Home Office (2005) report gives no indication that it is aware of some of the issues highlighted in this thesis, namely the process of othering and the continuing inequalities in society. Racism itself has come 'to be understood as an outcome of cultural segregation, not its cause. And segregation is now seen as self-imposed' (Kundnani 2002). What government ideologies provide is a self-serving means of silencing debate on the real issues.

The issue of racism has been ducked. The normalcy and invisibility of whiteness; the importance of understanding the local context; the unheard grievances of the white working class; the vilification of new arrivals; the need to identify and address major issues of difference; and, the need to meet the challenge of the postmodern void all wait to be taken sufficiently seriously. The Government's strategy also reflects an increased pandering to popular racism where new arrivals to the country are seen as the problem and measures are predominantly aimed at ensuring they toe the line and sign up as model citizens. Where, as

Kundnani (2001: 59) so rightly asks, are the initiatives in schools ‘to explain to young people from where and why refugees come’ to Britain? These are still missing. Indeed, one might add where is the commitment to ensure all pupils are taught about the past and present impact of slavery and colonialism on British life? The curriculum is also silent on these issues.

More positively, what the Home Office Report does indicate is the Government’s continuing commitment in recent years to work with children and young people through programmes that seek through learning and socializing to build understanding. Since much ‘race’ thinking has been based on ignorance of the other, this is a positive move. (One can see multiculturalism and community cohesion in the same positive, though ultimately goal-limited, way.) The result of the Government’s approach has been to see a range of particular projects introduced under the community cohesion / social inclusion umbrella, working with children and young people, especially in places of potential conflict and/or deprivation. The Swapping Cultures Initiative is one such project.

The reason why this level of detail has been provided is because it sets forth the recent and projected direction of government discourse, and the broad context within which the empirical work of this thesis took place. In sum it shows a policy and strategic emphasis on making different groups compliant and unified as British citizens, in a country in which racism is deemed unacceptable. It is to the citizenship agenda which has also informed the Swapping Cultures Initiative this thesis now briefly turns.⁵¹

⁵¹ Citizenship has been discussed in the previous chapters on pages 8-9, 39, 62, 129, 167.

The language of citizenship has been seized upon by government to deliver its policy and strategy agendas. It rests on the idea of the relational, of individuals being able to work cooperatively together for the common good. It is essential for good governance. As Oldfield (1990: 159) cogently said, the idea of a 'private citizen is an oxymoron'. Private individuals and public citizens are bound together. However, in spite of its near universal popular appeal, the citizenship agenda is not unproblematic. It is important to recognize that citizenship too is a government ideology and, therefore, requires critical evaluation, as much for what it purports to 'say' as for what it 'says' through its silences and omissions. Different views as to what the status of a citizen entails abound. Just how egalitarian and exclusive should an agreed model of citizenship be? How are conflicts arising from the inequalities and injustices between citizens and the capitalist society in which they live to be resolved?

It is important then to recognize that citizenship is not a given, but a contested site, where rights and responsibilities are fought out. Some people will be treated as citizens and some not. Peoples of different cultural backgrounds do end up being treated differently. Through its close association with nationality, citizenship raises questions of immigration laws and practice. In seeking to enhance national belonging this in turn means that it cannot be conceptually divorced from the discourse of 'race'. Citizenship, because it has such strong roots in liberalism and individualism, in the primacy of individual agency, it can therefore fail to assist us in seeing the way the structures of power can create and perpetuate inequality, a point well made by Faulks (2000: 58-59). It is important that citizenship is understood with these caveats in mind, for it is in the context

of community cohesion and citizenship that the empirical work which follows took place. Having said a little of the policy context, we will now turn, again briefly, to the social context.

As the earlier chapters have established, 'race' and silence exist side by side. In Britain the social process of 'othering', in part constructed for the individual and in part constructed by them, feeds a constant separation of person from person on the basis of 'race', often silently, and hand-in-hand with many other dichotomies – affluence and poverty; upper class and lower class; Labour and Conservative; elite and proletariat, superior and inferior; men and women, heterosexual and homosexual; Christian from Muslim and Muslim from Jew; one neighbourhood and another; one football team and another; between schools, gangs, families, and groups.

What characterises 'othering' today is its intensity and fluidity for identities are now in a global world often freed from traditional moorings, and many people appear to be engaged endlessly in creating and recreating themselves. This of course does not suit everyone and such a fluid identity dynamic creates great ambivalence and insecurity which for some is remedied by finding a retro-identity, a solace in the more fundamentalist religions or in traditional family values. However insecure individuals may feel, what governments cannot afford is to allow the working economic base of society to come under threat and so it has some vested interest (as well as a prime function) in promoting a cohesive harmonious society. There are other benefits in stability too, but upon economic well-being much else depends, as indeed does the well-being of those in power.

In the body politic in Britain, therefore, there has been support and investment over the past two to three decades for developing a multicultural basis for keeping all these different individuals, including ethnic minorities, feeling valued and belonging to 'society'. As was said in the previous section, the Government has sought to strengthen a sense of common identity, of belonging, by recent policy and strategy pronouncements in favour of developing citizenship, not only in schools and with young people, but with newcomers from abroad who wish to attain British citizenship.

The arrival of people in Britain from abroad has a long history, and with immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees continuing to come in recent decades this brings an added dimension to the 'othering' process. People seek, create and are given their identities; they will want to be one of 'us' and not one of 'them'. They will want to enjoy the benefits of belonging, of being normative and not being marginal and vulnerable. The social process of identification defines those who are 'normal' from those who are deviant, and today's deviants in popular discourse are the strangers whose visible roots originate abroad. This process is couched in silence for the purposes of social manipulation / management.

Ironically, as Sarup (1996: 10-11) notes: 'this insecurity, the stranger's experience, is one that most of us now share. Amid the universal homelessness, individuals turn to their private lives as the only location where they may hope to build a home.' For in a social world where all the traditional given-ness of identity has largely been eroded, though some still find refuge there, people have become strangers themselves and join everyone else in the quest to belong, to be included.

The identity-chase process starts young, and children and young people are impelled to join the search for identity with enthusiasm. This search for identity is driven in part by the natural human delight found in relating with others, in belonging; but, as Bauman (2004: 92-93) writing about the ‘elusive and ambivalent’ nature of identity says, the search for identity is also driven by fear.

A fear of:

abandonment, exclusion, being rejected, blackballed, disowned, dropped, stripped of what we are, not allowed to be what we wish to be. We fear being left alone, helpless and hapless. We fear being denied company, loving hearts, helping hands. We fear being dumped in the scrapyard. What we fear most is the certainty that all that won’t happen – not to us.

Identity is an ambivalent mix of hopes and fears, but in another Lacanian sense, (one needs a ‘mirror’ as a point of reference outside oneself in order to define oneself) identity is also about defining, through the use of language / conversation, who the other is in order to define self. This would also seem to require that once so defined the other is in their separateness perceived as a threat until some way of bringing them back in to be like ‘us’ can be found.

3.1 Developing the Project

With whom might such a project be conducted; how could it come about; in what environment and context; and, what kind of talk might be generated? How indeed might the discourse of reticence around ‘race’ be explored – would it be found amongst children and young people; and how did all this square in the wider context where the political leadership was engaged in a quest for cohesion and inclusion?

Well, the seed of opportunity was sown during 2001-2002 by two local events, one in Coventry called the 'Coventry Harmony Project' (held in November 2001) the second, a 'Beyond Labels Youth Conference' (in Leicester, July 2002). Capitalising on the local enthusiasm of these two events in adjacent cities and under the lead of a Coventry based charity called 'Minorities of Europe', a new multi-agency partnership of statutory, community, voluntary and faith representatives came together during the winter of 2002-2003 to bring into being a new community cohesion project. By February 2003 this had become the Project Steering Group which went on to meet monthly for the next two years. Initially, in the autumn of 2002 there was a period of exploratory discussion with teachers and youth workers in Coventry and Warwickshire. Approaches were then made to different agencies who might be interested in a local community cohesion project. Agency negotiation, preliminary organisation and fund-raising issues were addressed before the initial exploratory project trial in December 2002. By the beginning of 2003 a Steering Group had formed (Appendix 2 provides details of the Steering Group membership).⁵²

The community cohesion project was initially called the 'Young Peoples Cultural Exchange and Currency Initiative' (YPCECI) but was fortunately soon renamed 'Swapping Cultures', or the 'Swapping Cultures Initiative' (SCI) to give it its full title. From the outset, the project was the Trojan Horse within which would be

⁵² My own role was as a founder member of the Project. I had earlier organised the Coventry Harmony Project in 2001 and subsequently chaired a working group which arose from that event whose aim was to bring into being a community cohesion initiative with young people. The Secretary General of 'Minorities of Europe', Deepak Naik, who had been responsible for the July 2002 'Beyond Labels' youth event in Leicester met with me for initial discussions about organising a collaborative project in 2003. After 24 initial consultations with teachers and youth workers, and a school project trial in December 2002, we felt confident enough to convene the first meeting of the Steering Group on 28 February 2003. Coventry City Councillor, Heather Parker initially chaired the group, others, including myself, chaired it later.

ensconced a research element; and the author, having a key foundational role, negotiated this at the outset with the Steering Group who readily endorsed the research, not least because it was seen as adding credence to both the project funding bids and the future development of the project. The Steering Group agreed to the author assuming responsibility for the research within a wider project monitoring and reporting brief. As Chair of the Research and Monitoring Sub-Group which reported to the Steering Group, the author was not only able to have oversight and some control of the wider project but well placed to ensure that in its design and structure the project engaged with key questions of ‘race’, silence, identity and difference identified in this thesis. The Research and Monitoring Group subsequently met regularly from 2003 until January 2005. It had the help of a small number of assistants, chief of whom was a research assistant and the group provided a feedback report to the Steering Group each month.⁵³

The Steering Group began their task mindful of the unrest in northern cities in 2001 and elsewhere. At the same time local councils were under central government direction to demonstrate that they were addressing the issues of ‘Community Cohesion’.⁵⁴ This had been institutionalized in the setting up of a Community Cohesion Review Group within the Home Office under Cante to keep the agenda live. Cante (2001) had earlier spelled out the contributory factors to the 2001 disturbances as including:

⁵³ Through applications I made to the Bellefontaine Trust, the Sheldon Trust and the Diocese of Coventry’s ‘Allchurches’ Development Fund, financial support was obtained for the appointment of Dr Elizabeth McDonnell to act as Research Assistant from October 2003 – January 2005. The support of these funding bodies is gratefully acknowledged.

⁵⁴ See page 197 and also the report of the Ministerial Group, the ‘Denham Report’ (Home Office 2001) which brought together the findings of these reports in December 2001.

- Lack of strong civic identity or shared social values
- Fragmentation and polarization of communities on economic, geographical, racial and cultural lines
- Disengagement of young people from the local decision-making process and an increasing territorial mentality in asserting racial, cultural and religious identities
- Weak political and community leadership

These factors resonate with discussion earlier in this thesis around the issues of polarization, fragmentation, the sense of disengagement from society,⁵⁵ and the increasing assertion of particular identities around ‘race’, religion and culture.

By contrast, in the Draft Guidance on Community Cohesion to Local Authorities (LGA 2002) the nature of a ‘strong and safe’ cohesive community was set forth as one where:

- There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for communities
- The diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Local authorities were strongly encouraged to explore with local communities cohesion building. These efforts ‘should all be based on an open and honest dialogue ... [and] special efforts should be made to involve young people’ (LGA 2002: 10). All this was to avoid any repeat of the 2001 civil disorder and meant that the community cohesion concept fell upon receptive ears in Coventry and Warwickshire anchoring Swapping Cultures firmly within this strategy. A caveat must be added at this point, for in seeking to build goodwill and improve community relations, the ideology of community cohesion fails to address the

⁵⁵ See pages 68, 70, 72, 75-76, 149, 151, 159, 162, 169, 177.

critically important issues of equality and diversity, and stands in real danger, therefore, of ultimately failing in its task of delivering cohesion.

At the same time developments were taking place within education. Citizenship education, whilst not a statutory requirement in primary schools had by 2002 become a significant part of the normal curriculum. In primary schools citizenship was being taught as an element within Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). In September 2002 citizenship became a statutory component of the schools' National Curriculum. The statutory requirements are set out in the National Curriculum in three 'strands' – knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens; developing skills of enquiry and communication; and, developing skills of participation and responsible action. More specifically the National Curriculum on PSHE and Citizenship for Key Stage 2 sees preparing to play an active role as citizens as including the following goals (which have been selected on the basis of relevance to this thesis):

- (2a) to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events.
- (2b) to realise the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviours, such as bullying and racism, on individuals and communities.
- (2e) to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people's experiences.
- (2i) to appreciate the range of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom.

Pupils at Key Stage 2 are further required to develop good relationships and respect for the differences between people and this means learning:

- (4a) to care about other people's feelings and to try and see things from their point of view.
- (4b) to think about the lives of people living in other places and times, and people with different values and customs.
- (4d) to realise the nature and consequences of racism, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours, and how to respond to them and ask for help.

(4e) to recognise and challenge stereotypes.

(4f) that differences and similarities between people arise from a number of factors, including cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversity, gender and disability.

At Key Stage 3, pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are extended to enable them to develop their own confidence and sense of identity, and to develop good relationships respecting the differences between people. This means learning in PSHE:

(1b) to respect the differences between people as they develop their own sense of identity.

(3a) about the effects of all types of stereotyping, prejudice, bullying, racism and discrimination and how to challenge them assertively.

(3b) how to empathise with people different from themselves.

(3c) about the nature of friendship and to make and keep friends.

(3d) to recognise some of the cultural norms in society, including the range of lifestyles and relationships.

In Citizenship, pupils are to learn in Key Stage 3:

(1b) About the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.

And in developing skills of enquiry and communication to:

(2a) think about topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events by analysing information and its sources.

(2b) justify orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events.

(2c) contribute to group and exploratory class discussions, and take part in debates.

And finally in developing skills of participation and responsive action to:

(3a) use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own.

In 2004 the needs of secondary age pupils were addressed in a government report, the 'Tomlinson Report' (DfES 2004: 34). It states that individuals in the 14-19 year old age group should 'have the skills and attributes necessary for active citizenship ... know about other countries and cultures, and understand and value ethnic, cultural and religious diversity'.

Suitable teacher resources to deliver this agenda are still in need of development and a casual perusal of what there is currently on offer by a major book supplier in the way of teaching resources appears under-developed.⁵⁶

The crucial question that still seems to be unanswered is whether the new emphasis on citizenship is seen as a means of socializing children into one unified society gathered around a historic sense of national British identity, or whether citizenship is seen as learning to be cosmopolitan and respecting the rights of others, whilst citizens actually carry a plurality and diversity of identities around with them. To place an emphasis on the former has the unfortunate effect of inevitably carrying with it unlearned lessons from the past about empire, superiority and nationalism; whereas to give emphasis to the latter may risk normalizing a sense of fragmentation, insecurity and individualism. The National Curriculum reads like a utopian litany to a cohesive society as read through rose-tinted spectacles. Where is the conflict, the challenge and the airing

⁵⁶ Hunter, J. and S. Phillips (2002) is a teacher resource book for the teaching of 8-11 year olds but is not unusual in having nothing at all about 'race' and racism in it. Arthur, J. and D. Wright (2001) is deficient in just the same way. Hollingbery, P. (2003) has one activity in Section 2 (pp. 17-20) 'Bullies, Racists and Friends', but is no more than a list of sentences for discussion. There appears to be a dearth of teacher resource material. On the web, <http://www.Britkid.org> has creatively put together an interactive site which contains teachers' material and relates what is provided on the site to Key Stages 2 and 3.

of issues of justice and equality? Are these to be left unaddressed? Apparently so. Here however, is not the place for a longer debate. Suffice it to say that the Swapping Cultures project made a timely entrance when there was a gap in teaching resources to deliver the new curriculum on citizenship and PSHE.⁵⁷ Coventry City Council was quick to see that the Swapping Cultures project also answered their need to be addressing community cohesion. Reporting on Coventry City Council's progress on the community cohesion agenda, Stella Manzie, Chief Executive, wrote in the Council's submission to the ODPM in January 2004, 'the Council and its partners have produced specific initiatives targeted at increasing community cohesion and tackling forces designed to damage it.' Top of her list, she highlights, 'Swapping Cultures – a specific opportunity for young people to exchange information about their culture. Supported by Coventry and Warwickshire Councils, and others this exciting partnership aims to help build cohesive communities by encouraging young people to exchange information about their different cultures' (Manzie 2004).

The project's ability to slot into the new National Curriculum and gain Coventry City Council's backing enabled the project to quickly tap the necessary funding streams, drawing on local authority, charitable and Lottery sources (though not central government funds).

One of the first priorities for the Swapping Culture's Steering Group was to organize its structures, processes and personnel, and to set terms of reference and

⁵⁷ Subsequently a useful resource for teachers on citizenship has been made available through the DfES since the summer of 2003 by Dadzie, S. (2003). Also, Chris Gaine (2001) has done some successful work integrating racism intervention approaches into teacher training course modules.

rules for governance in place. It was agreed that Minorities of Europe (MoE), a registered charity with a small but dedicated staff team and offices in Coventry, should act as the lead agency and accountable body for the project. The Steering Group was served throughout by a secretariat provided by MoE. Very quickly, roles and responsibilities were settled, MoE taking on the day-to-day running of the project under the management of the Steering Group. The Steering Group decided to set up a Youth Advisory Forum, which brought together young people to help contribute and participate in both the management of and the running of the project. A project Evaluation Group under the author's chairmanship was also established; and, from time to time various working tasked sub-groups were formed, for example to organize the project 'launch' with civic dignitaries and local media present and to 'celebrate' its achievements.⁵⁸

The author gave particular attention to ensure ethical issues and the question of gaining the necessary consents were placed on the agenda of the Steering Group and appropriately addressed. Agreement was then reached on a protocol to ensure the necessary permissions were obtained. A parental consent form was used to permit participation and data recording (data protection, photographic, video and sound) and clarity around teacher/ youth leader and Swapping Cultures facilitator roles in obtaining these was agreed.

⁵⁸ The public launch of Swapping Cultures took place at Sidney Stringer Community College, Coventry on 9th October 2003. Ted Cante was guest speaker. Indian drummers introduced the event and young people presented their experiences of Swapping Culture in the piloted trials. Councillors Heather Parker (Coventry) and Martin Brassington (Warwickshire) represented the two unitary authorities. The *Coventry Evening Telegraph* featured the initiative. A celebration event took place in Coventry on 11 July 2005 to mark the completion of the Coventry and Warwickshire phase and to disseminate the Evaluation Group's Final Report. MoE used the occasion to announce their intention to re-launch Swapping Culture as a national project.

Registration to enable the creation and electronic storage of data was obtained under the Data Protection Act. It was agreed that the formal identities of participants would be protected at all times. Through working with the teachers and the leaders of the children and young people taking part, who were always present, it was possible to ensure a further layer of health and safety, child protection, ethical and professional codes and practice were operative.

A proposed project programme was prepared by the Steering Group (Appendix 3 shows both the proposed and actual programmes). The initial programme hoped to involve 2,600 children and young people between the ages of 8 and 19. Within this group, the largest age band targeted would be the 11-16 year olds with slightly more participants coming from the urban centres than the rural, a balance reflecting the distribution of the population as a whole across Coventry and Warwickshire. These numbers would soon prove to be over-ambitious for reasons which will be made apparent later.

Through the course of the project, the Steering Committee agreed to meet monthly. They planned to develop 'Swapping Cultures' into a tried and tested, sustainable and replicable programme to bring individuals from different communities together and build citizenship. MoE in particular were keen for the project to have national if not European recognition. The Steering Group agreed to the preparation and provision of resource material and a tool kit to enable Swapping Cultures workshops to be run autonomously, indicating how the resource material could be adapted for use in different contexts. Task groups were set up under the auspices of the Steering Group to assemble, publish and

deliver these.

It is important to note at this point that the group of people most directly involved with the actual running of the Swapping Cultures workshops reflected a mix of ethnic identities. Though group members were never directly asked to disclose their cultural identities, it became evident that the day-to-day project management team included English, Irish, Indian, African and Chinese members. Further, there were men and women, teenagers and middle-aged, Hindus, Sikhs and Christians. Some lived in urban Coventry, some in rural Warwickshire. In all, more than 20 different people helped in running the briefings, circle times, workshops, focus groups, post-workshop interviews or acted as observers. Their briefing and organisation was managed by the MoE staff in collaboration with the author.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 A Real World Enquiry

The starting premise driving the project was the assumption that there was a general lack of awareness of culture, ethnicity, 'race'; a lack of knowledge and understanding of diversity; a limited dialogue or even contact between those of different backgrounds; and, this lack of knowledge and understanding potentially and actually created feelings of tension between individuals and communities. This was a taken for granted working assumption, held strongly in place from the very beginning, as the various people, including the author, came to form the Steering Group. The Swapping Cultures Initiative therefore sought to provide an

opportunity for children and young people to explore their own cultural identity and to facilitate a sharing of this information, through dialogue, in an exercise which would promote social and personal understanding, mutual tolerance and greater harmony. It was believed and understood it would also help build community cohesion.

Importantly, no thought was given by the Steering Group as to the possibility that the opposite might arise – i.e. that the cultural exchange could potentially or actually lead to tension or even hostility. This concerned the author who from the outset treated the project as a real world enquiry – a case study. Accordingly, issues like this were noted and logged. The Steering Group's relaxed approach reflects, in the author's view, the Coventry and Warwickshire context, where, not having experienced any major outbreaks of community tension, there was a good deal of optimism and good will expressed by the different partners from the outset! Would-be participants believed Swapping Cultures would be a useful exercise to try out and their confidence and enthusiasm undoubtedly smoothed its later path.

The Steering Group, through drawing its membership from across different agencies, both statutory and voluntary, was strong in terms of members who might help implement the project, but was weak in terms of any more critical and reflective members able to evaluate it. This was very much where the author anticipated making his contribution, though not without having to argue strongly for a rigorous methodology to be applied, or recruiting outside research assistance to give added capacity. The author gathered his research ideas in a

written research proposal which combined providing critical and evaluative support for Swapping Cultures as well as integrating specific research questions to be addressed around 'race' and the 'discourse of silence'. The question of methodology, how to do a 'real world' piece of research on this subject was framed with reference to standard texts now available to social scientists.⁵⁹ It was decided to use quantitative and qualitative data collection together, each in their distinctive ways contributing to the whole research Wisker (2001: 138).

3.2.2 Ethics

Ethics, as Reynolds (1979) says, refers to rules of conduct – typically to conformity to a code or set of principles; and, many ethical codes, both statutory legal and professional ethical codes have been increasingly developed over the years to help protect both researchers and subjects.⁶⁰ The project involved working in a sensitive subject area, with vulnerable children and young people, and these matters are, therefore, particularly important in research such as this. As the project developed, the author ensured that ethical considerations remained high on the Steering Group agenda by making specific recommendations, insisting for example, on full compliance with data protection law and ensuring compliance at every stage. The Steering Group may otherwise have not initiated action on this, placing, by default, an over-reliance on the participating youth leaders and school teachers bringing into operation their own professional ethical

⁵⁹ There are many publications covering this area including: Allan, G. and Skinner, C. (2000); Burgess, R.G. (1993); Punch, K.F. (1998); Richards, L. (2005); Robson, C. (1993); Silverman, D. (2001) and Wisker, G. (2001).

⁶⁰ Lee, R. (1993) *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, London: Sage. Researchers also need to be aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act, 1998 which are designed to protect individuals and their privacy, as well as giving them certain rights. The British Sociological Association, their Statement of Ethical Practice (March 2002) and their Guidelines for Good Professional Conduct have both been adhered to in conducting this research (available on line <http://www.britsoc.org> accessed 6 November 2002).

practice as they saw fit. The making of video footage, taking still photographs and storage of data were all areas which needed to be addressed and covered by obtaining the necessary written consents beforehand and protecting anonymity and privacy afterwards.

There was, also, an important ethical consideration when it came to participation. It was agreed and made clear at the beginning of each session that participation and sharing was not compulsory – though, in practice, the author observed an implicit expectation from leaders that their children and young people would participate. In the event, only four subjects did not join in the workshops, for specific reasons centring on their concern not to jeopardise their right to remain in the UK. Throughout the project, those involved in leading or participating in the project were engaged on the principle of informed consent.

The research element around ‘race’ and silence was explicitly discussed and agreed in the Steering Group meetings: but although it was also discussed with teachers and leaders who looked at the whole process in some detail, so far as participating subjects and their parents or guardians were concerned the research element was not singled out for particular attention. The research was seamlessly embedded in the agreed workshop process, just another element in the agreed data collection and analysis process. It would be wrong to describe this as covert research, as the principle of informed consent was not violated and there was no intrusion on privacy. It might be said with the benefit of hindsight that, from the point of view of the research itself, it was probably helpful in gaining reliable

and valid response data by not drawing particular and undue attention to this element.

After workshops and follow up groups had taken place, feedback on the results of the project both through conversation with leaders and the provision of interim and final reports by the author were published and made available. The author retained all worksheets in a safe and secure place and undertook to destroy these as confidential waste within one year of writing up.

Ethics was a matter that the author personally felt obliged to take a lead responsibility and to keep under constant scrutiny throughout the project, for although some partners, especially those from the local authorities were more aware of ethical requirements and considerations, those from the voluntary sector were generally less aware, and only the author drove ethical standards toward British Sociological Association expectations.

3.2.3 Selection of Schools

Though a Project Programme Proposal was drawn up at the outset which included a balanced sample group of children and young people reflecting the intended diversity of cultures, ages, gender, rural/urban and Coventry/Warwickshire sorted in subjects (Appendix 3), in the event actual participants came from schools and groups where contacts had been made by Steering Group members and a positive response elicited. Though letters and telephone calls were made widely to secure participants in line with the proposal, those who ultimately took part were a largely self-selecting group. The final

subject sample group therefore probably included those for whom the exercise did not appear too much of a threat, even appeared attractive (meeting organisational policy targets for PSHE perhaps) and, on a practical level, fitted in with other priorities at the time. The selection process was marked by two distinct characteristics: a focus on Coventry schools at the expense of Warwickshire schools, and a greater proportion of junior rather than secondary schools taking part, both factors which are discussed further later (pages 235-38).

3.2.4 Facilitator Selection

The facilitation of briefings and workshops necessarily relied upon volunteer offers of help from Steering Committee members together with staff based at Minorities of Europe (MOE), the lead agency. These personnel resources were supplemented, wherever possible, by additional recruitment from the youth forum monitoring the project and by willing additional personnel brought in by the partner agencies. The Chief Executive of MOE took responsibility for recruiting, selecting, training and briefing facilitators before each workshop. The author, together with a professionally qualified facilitator as research assistant, recruited by him, acted as consultants to the project team. Pre-workshop preparatory meetings took place to prepare and organise facilitators. Workshops were always led by the author or one of six skilled personnel who had varying numbers of assistants to help them depending on the size of the workshop. There were always a minimum of two facilitators present on each occasion and they were usually supported by teachers and youth leaders who were in attendance. On some occasions, young people from the forum were given the opportunity, under supervision, of leading the workshop sessions. Facilitators were chosen on

the basis of having a good working knowledge of the Swapping Cultures process, good presentation skills in order to introduce and run the workshops, and full integration in the ongoing Swapping Cultures programme beyond the individual session they were responsible for. It was fortuitous that the group of facilitators the author brought together comprised a group of people of different cultural backgrounds, genders and ages.

3.2.5 The Workshop Process

The Swapping Cultures process began with briefing sessions. Teachers, youth leaders and others who carried the day-to-day responsibility for the children and young people targeted were invited (sometimes inviting themselves as word of mouth made the project known) to a pre-workshop briefing session and several of these were held during the project period. These preparatory briefing sessions were aimed at providing information about the project and gave guidance on how the main workshop should be run. They also built commitment to the project.

Although a series of age-banded standardized worksheets ('approved' by the Steering Group) were provided as a basis for all workshops, invitees were asked to reflect on how best the worksheet might be adapted for use in their particular context. Some control over what took place subsequently was lost as worksheet design was devolved to local teachers and youth leaders, etc., but all were clearly instructed to keep certain key questions in the worksheet, though other questions could be changed. (A typical worksheet template is provided in Appendix 4. The 'essential' questions are shown, as then, marked in red.)

Where teachers and young people's leaders indicated an interest, pre-workshop icebreaking preparation activities such as primary school 'Circle Time' or email 'Pen-Pal' contacts were also facilitated to enable children and young people to gently move into meeting someone new.

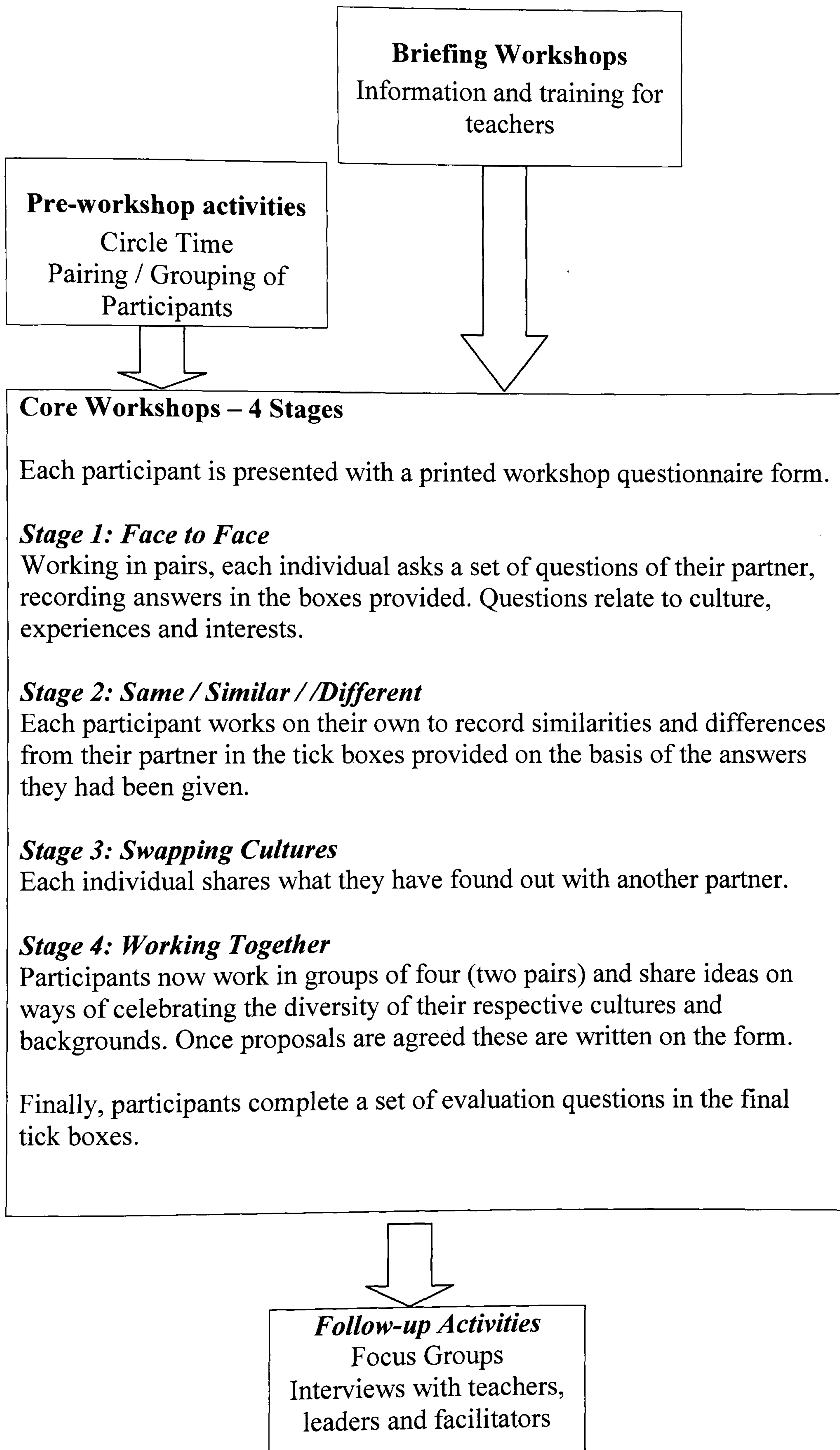
The main workshop session followed this preparatory stage. It had four elements and was constructed to facilitate communication amongst participants. The structured questionnaire within the worksheet provided a working tool for the engagement and a stimulus for conversation. This was followed by co-operative activities that prompted further interaction and dialogue. Each workshop was designed to last from 1.5 to 2 hours. Figure 1 on page 228 provides a diagrammatic outline of the workshop process. Facilitators provided an introduction to the session, got the process under way and organised transition from one element to the next.

3.2.6 Focus Groups

The author put in place, with the Steering Group's explicit approval, the holding of focus groups. Workshops were followed up on several occasions by focus groups which were facilitated solely by four members of the Evaluation Group (This was a mix of people by culture, gender and age. Focus groups were led on each occasion by two facilitators, one who took the lead, the second to observe. Best practice in participant observation was followed.)⁶¹ Focus groups required a higher level of skilled leadership and additional preparation under the instruction and specific guidance of the author as Chair of the Evaluation Group. These were

⁶¹ Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) and Spradley (1980).

Figure 1: Swapping Cultures: Workshop Process



designed to reinforce the experience of the workshop and also to gain further feedback from participants.

Focus groups were organised on the basis of a membership of between 8-12 people and ran for about one hour to one and a half hours each time, depending on the age of the subjects and the time made available. Further formal and informal feedback was obtained from teachers and leaders by holding group meetings and by the use of post-workshop telephone questionnaire interviews. Non-participant, independent observers were also used on occasion and their written feedback was collected and collated. Analysis of the project relied on a triangulation of quantitative data (mainly from the questionnaires but also from other records from the workshops; both written and through other outputs such as film and sound recordings); qualitative data obtained from the focus groups (which also included tape recorded and written material); and, further participant and observer reports obtained from a wide cross-section of people.

All focus groups followed a semi-structured protocol prepared by the author that was to be followed on each occasion. The protocol provided for a full written report of the focus group meeting to be produced on each occasion. The use of focus groups was structured on well established research practice.⁶² Robson (1993: 383) says triangulation 'is an indispensable tool in real world enquiry ... a means of testing one source of information against other sources.' Ethical considerations in respect of focus groups were fully considered to ensure the groups process was fully explained beforehand, informed consent was given, and

⁶² Kitzinger, J. (1995); Morgan, D. (1988); Stewart, D. W. and Shamdasani, P. N. (1990). A useful web page quick reference on focus groups is, Anita Gibbs, (1997).

confidentiality observed. Control of membership of the focus groups was intended to ensure attendance which was truly reflective of the earlier workshop group to which it related and from which membership was drawn, though teachers and youth leaders were in practice well placed to have the final say as to whom they placed in groups, a role which they invariably exercised to a greater or lesser extent.

3.2.7 Worksheet Design

The worksheets used on each occasion included ‘essential’ questions located within the longer list of workshop ‘Face to Face’ questions. These sought to address the areas of interest central to this thesis and through the course of discussion evolved to become:

1. What is your religion?
2. How would you describe your cultural background?
3. Do you find talking about your cultural background, easy or difficult? Why?
4. Have you personally experienced racism?
5. Who in the world would you most like to be?

Although these questions were discussed and agreed by the Steering Group at the outset, in the event, control of what questions were actually asked and in what form as each workshop was organised was quite another story, as the following section of this thesis reports.

The reason for the choice of these ‘essential’ questions, added to those otherwise included, was to provide participants with the opportunity to dialogue in the potentially difficult subject areas around identity including such issues as religion and cultural background. They were also being asked to consider ‘race’ in terms of their personal experience of racism which may or may not be a difficult

subject for them to talk about. The Steering Group did not want to include a question directly asking participants to give their ‘ethnicity’, considering such a question to be just another way of asking for a ‘race’ categorisation, something which they were sensitive about and keen to avoid raising. The Steering Group were much more comfortable about using the more neutral and less pejorative category ‘cultural background’ – a safer phrase they fell back on. It was clear the Group did not want to facilitate any topic that they anticipated might lead to a difficult dialogue. They silenced these topics notwithstanding the author’s determined argument to have them included.

Influenced by the concept of multiculturalism, there was an implicit assumption in the Group that Swapping Cultures was all about positively valuing one another’s different backgrounds. The Steering Group tended to view any cultural differences to emerge from the workshops as something positive (but would this always be the case either for participants or their leaders?) Though ‘culture’ was the buzz word, they sometimes slipped into talking about ‘ethnicity’, but the word ‘race’ always added tension – the word itself more often than not something of a taboo because of its perceived negative connotations. The Steering Group further expressed the view that children and young people would not have a sufficient grasp of these complex categories such as ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’, though ‘culture’ would be alright, and so the use of the former should therefore be avoided whenever possible. The silence around the word ‘race’ in schools and youth settings in Coventry and Warwickshire was presented as normal, not questioned, and therefore not perceived as something problematic or requiring attention.

There is good evidence from other various sources to suggest that teachers have been ill-prepared and are themselves ill at ease to teach or tackle 'race' and racism and they themselves contribute to the normative silence: Gaine (1987, 1995) Gillborn and Gipps (1996) Hatcher (1987) and Jones (1999). Jones (1999: 5) writes, 'The absence of any educational input on issues of race means that many teachers and learners cannot recognise the importance of acknowledging and understanding ethnic status in the classroom, nor do they have professional strategies to combat racism in the educational system.' Hatcher's (1987: 199) calls for anti-racist education in the 1980s, for example, were 'met with silence'.

In fact Jones's (1999) study of new teachers, their supervising teachers and the training colleges which taught them reveals a world where subjects 'repeatedly found ways to avoid dealing with the subject, ... refusing to talk about ethnic issues in case the talk itself creates a problem that wasn't there before', concluding that together 'these voices forge a formidable silence which characterised my entire investigation' (Jones 1999: 17, 76-77). He notes, in particular, the way in which exclusively white beginning teachers and their supervisors in predominantly white schools 'thought it strange that I should want to talk about issues of ethnicity' and he rightly observes, 'It is precisely the disappearances, omissions and silences that became the substantive matter of my research.' He concludes from his own data, 'predominantly white primary schools have become equally adept (*as the Higher Education Institutions who train teachers*) at turning 'race' into a silent issue in their classrooms.' (Jones 1999: 110, 142). Quoting Mukherjee (1984: 6) Jones adds, 'Your racism has been your silence ... Inaction or silence, to me, means action. To me your

inaction means collusion’,⁶³

Gaine (1995) in a study of youth leaders in Huddersfield identified four particular reasons why they avoided race equality issues with their predominantly white young people – insecurity (they were unsure of their ground); lack of knowledge and skills (they did not understand the issues and were not trained to do this); stress and exhaustion (it was easier not to take on what was seen as a difficult area); and, avoidance (lack of overt racial tension meant there ‘is no problem here’ and that justified doing nothing). Given the prevailing disincentives to engage with ‘race’ and ethnicity issues themselves, the Swapping Cultures Initiative provided teachers and young people’s leaders with a welcome means, should they wish to avail themselves of it, of meeting the new government strictures for PSHE and citizenship input in these areas, without having to do it themselves. In the event, so far as Swapping Cultures was concerned, children and young people for their part were to demonstrate a greater degree of understanding and sensitivity than their leaders were generally prepared to credit them with. This surprising ability to engage in dialogue on the issues of ‘race’ and ethnicity was especially remarked upon in respect of the 8-11 year old age group.

Returning to the matter of specific worksheet design, MoE staff took it upon

⁶³ Lillian Polite and Elizabeth Baird Saenger, (2003) describe their experience in a New York City kindergarten school where ‘teachers may unwittingly create *communities of silence*’ and ‘the most pernicious and pervasive silence in primary school classrooms is the silence surrounding the subject of race’. They observe that for the children this ‘isn’t just fine. Beneath the surface, they are learning rules about what can be acknowledged and what can be discussed’. As Beverley Daniels Tatum has written, ‘Children who have been silenced often enough learn not to talk about race publicly. Their questions don’t go away, they just go unasked.’ (Tatum 1999). Polite and Saenger ask, ‘We teachers must ask whether the silence comes more from us or from the children?’

themselves to excise a further set of proposed ‘essential’ questions from the main body of the ‘Face to Face’ opening dialogue and transpose them in the participant self-evaluation tick box at the very end of the workshop questionnaire form. It was a bridge too far for them to include them. Like many teachers and youth leaders, the MoE staff also felt uncomfortable allowing the main thrust of the workshop dialogue to include explicit conversation around ‘race’ and ethnicity’.

As a result this piece of research would no longer lend itself to yielding particularly useful quantitative data, though some interesting pointers, indications and generalisations would emerge. Unfortunately, the final form design of these self-evaluation questions contained a degree of suggestibility as to the ‘required affirmative endorsement’ which removed much of their value for research purposes. In addition answers from participants were further closed down by the tick box format asking for just one of three choices. For example, to the question ‘How easy or difficult is it for you when you talk about racism?’ answers were restricted to ‘Easy’, ‘Average’ or ‘Difficult’. Nonetheless, all things considered, given the many different agendas in the Steering Group – the deep seated anxieties, if not fears around raising the subject matter, and the lack of understanding and skills to deliver on this difficult subject – it was something of a triumph to have got the essential and evaluation questions asked in the workshop at all!

3.3 Findings and Reflections on Methodology

3.3.1 Scope of the Project

The actual total number of workshops held within the allotted time period (1 December 2002 – 30 April 2004)⁶⁴ in the Coventry and Warwickshire geographical area was 21, with 786 participants returning 654 project worksheets. A further 13 workshops were held elsewhere or with other than children and young people, making 34 workshops in all. Some of these took place at youth events in Europe (Spain and Hungary) and some involving adults (e.g. the National Farmers Union and Government Office for the West Midlands staff). MoE figures estimate a total of 1,076 people took part in the full 34 workshops. The figure of 34 workshops compares favourably with the projected number of 36 originally planned, though the actual number was less than half the optimistic projected figure of 2,600.⁶⁵

Given the largely voluntary staffing of the project, the running of all the workshop sessions within 20 months was labour intensive and a considerable achievement. There were several reasons for the significant shortfall in the number of projected participants. In part this was due to logistical reasons – the bringing together of the ever changing personnel and their diaries with the competing demands of school and youth club timetables made arranging workshops more difficult than anticipated. Indeed many factors combined to cause consistent erosion in participant numbers. On one occasion half a school

⁶⁴ The time period was later extended to 12 August 2004.

⁶⁵ More detail on the project programme, giving actual and projected figures, is provided in Appendix 3. The number and setting of workshops together with the age sets and genders of those participating is also provided.

group was on a school trip on the day of the Swapping Cultures workshop; on another occasion, a few pupils were absent for a music lesson. It was an oft-repeated scenario. With hindsight, had the project management had leadership lodged within the education setting and not outside in Minorities Of Europe, then some of these organisational and timetabling difficulties might have been overcome and greater numbers might have participated. However, the benefit gained in using an independent organisation meant that although participant numbers were lower than planned, there was less local bias or steer toward school self-promotional agendas driven by inter-school competitiveness and the public's perception of them, and arguably, more interest, enthusiasm and openness from participants who clearly enjoyed something new introduced by fresh faces.

In part reduced numbers were due to Warwickshire County Council's internal difficulty and delay in endorsing Swapping Cultures, which also had the effect of reducing the original geographic reach of the project. The project had been advised, in spite of expressions of interest from particular Warwickshire schools, to await the Council's resolution of support before actually running workshops in Warwickshire. This formal endorsement was a long time in coming, even though a Warwickshire Councillor had been involved from the outset and had attended the first Steering Group meeting. This resulted in Warwickshire schools not requesting workshops until after the project period had ended, and so the focus remained firmly within Coventry. Had the project not been constrained by funding and partnership deadlines, it might have proved possible to work with a wider sample of schools and create some more dynamic exchanges by bringing

together participants from more widely different backgrounds. The fact that it was always envisaged that Swapping Cultures might be further developed and its availability extended more widely both regionally and nationally, after this initial phase, meant that schools not able to participate at this time might be able to do so later. Indeed since 2005, a number of Swapping Cultures workshops have taken place in Warwickshire schools and in 2006 National Lottery funding was granted to Minorities Of Europe to develop and extend Swapping Cultures as a national, three-year programme.

It is interesting to reflect on the contrasting enthusiasm between the two quite different communities represented by Coventry and Warwickshire Councils. Coventry was quick to back the project, whereas Warwickshire County Council never gave the issue the same priority from the outset. The culturally diverse authority was keen, whereas the more homogenously white county authority was reticent. One is tempted to draw, no doubt overhasty and speculative conclusions based on work elsewhere that those responsible for the predominantly white schools and youth groups in this area, were reticent to engage with the issues Swapping Cultures raised, but only a closer piece of investigative work looking in detail at the local politics and decision-making processes at work in the two quite different local authorities, city and county, would throw further light on the actual reasons for Warwickshire's delayed participation and such an exercise lies beyond the scope of this research.

Though original participant figures were down on those anticipated, the Steering Group was pleased with their achievement. Further Swapping Cultures

workshops continue to take place and plans are well developed at the time of writing to roll an improved version of the project out nationally in due course, but this is beyond the scope of this research.

3.3.2 Control of Data

The reduced number of returned worksheets did not jeopardise the purpose of obtaining sufficient and useful quantitative data. From the 654 worksheets from the 21 Coventry and Warwickshire workshops, there were 422 returned with reliable data. Ages were provided: 188 in 8-11 year old group; 100 12-15s; and 111 16-19s. Only 23 (5%) worksheets came from those aged 20+. As the figures in Appendix 3 indicate, each age group was almost exactly evenly split by gender (202 males and 205 females with just 15 worksheets not indicating gender). The most significant fact that emerges from this analysis is that a much greater proportion of youngest age group participants took part than was originally planned. This is significant.

There are clear reasons for the greater involvement of younger children. The primary schools themselves were keen to invite Swapping Cultures – not only because it was easier to find a timetabling slot, but also because primary teachers and the pupils themselves appeared to find it easier and safer to engage with a project based on the concept of having a dialogue about one's culture and background. In practice, observers reported that the 8-11s appeared less socially constrained than older pupils. Perhaps there were less explicit reasons, too, for the project moving toward the younger age groups; reasons to do with the added

challenge presented by the thought of working with older participants in such a difficult area.

As discussed earlier, obtaining reliable quantitative data was a problem.⁶⁶ Such information was limited. Although 654 participants returned worksheets, those who took part in the first two workshops at *Smiths* Community College and *Jones* Primary School (both in Coventry) were involved in what were seen by the Steering Group as trial sessions.⁶⁷ These trials involved an estimated 224 participants (91 in the 15-19 age group and 56 in the 8-11 age group returning a total of 147 worksheets). The subsequent workshop design, material resources and worksheets were significantly modified and improved upon in the light of these two trials. For example, the worksheet was substantially revised. What the trials revealed to be ambiguous questions, requiring answers to be given as an 'x' mark along a happy-sad face continuum line, were changed into a series of specific questions requiring written answers.

After the trials were over, 507 revised worksheets were returned on completion of the later workshops. Only these worksheets are considered for the final quantitative analysis. Even then some interpretative work on the data is necessary, for example in bringing together answers to similar worded questions used in the Face to Face section.

⁶⁶ See pages 226, 230.

⁶⁷ The italicized names are fictional and have been used to protect identity.

3.3.3 Flexibility and Contextual Sensitivity

Teachers and leaders exercised some discretion in how the workshop material was mediated and worked upon. For example, there was some imaginative use of art work where reading and writing skills, especially amongst some of the youngest children were thought unlikely to be mature enough for the task as prescribed. This was also an issue where facilitators knew that a proportion of participants would not have the ability to ask questions and write down answers in English. Further, some leaders expressed the view that participants would see being presented with the worksheet as similar to being given a test or examination, and they wanted to avoid this impression so as to engage with them in their class or group as inclusively as possible. These are important factors to be aware of for the future. On reflection, the project was initially too tied to the pre-prepared written worksheet format. Flexibility, contextual sensitivity and a willingness to adapt the material are needed and this may mean in some contexts not using the worksheet, though retaining the idea and purpose behind it.

Recognition of the need to avoid overdependence on an English-based question and answer worksheet resulted in new approaches being developed. One involved the creation of a piece of collage art work being made by participants in the form of a rainbow, an activity all the children felt able to join in with. It managed to achieve the same ends as the worksheet but through collaborative group work rather than work in pairs. The differences and similarities identified in the verbal worksheets thus became pictures located on the colours of a large rainbow. Each coloured arc of the rainbow had pictures the children had cut from magazines, for example, showing their favourite food or a symbol that

represented their religion. Finally, in the centre of the rainbow were placed pictures of themselves. The completed work (see Picture 1, page 241) was placed on the classroom wall and visually represented how all similarities and differences were held together in a picture of colourful variety and harmony. This adaptation had the important effect of making the teachers and facilitators feel more comfortable with the exercises and they were clearly relieved and pleased with the result of their efforts.

Picture 1: Collage produced by Coventry 8-11 year olds



Also, the use of artwork and more physical means of handling the Face to Face activity rather than using the verbal-literary expressions of self-identity were encouraged. In one workshop, an element of the Face to Face stage involved each person lying down in turn on a large sheet of paper on the floor whilst their outline was marked out by their partner. In another approach,

Picture 2: Drawing the Outline Shape of a Person Lying Down



Picture 3: Putting Different Colours Together to Complete the Circle



participants had to work together to make a single circular shape from large coloured cut out plastic shapes. As with the collage approach, the coloured plastic shapes came together to form a colourful and complete circle. Facilitators in each case talked the activity through with participants. (Pictures 2 and 3 on the previous page illustrate these activities in progress).

3.3.4 This is About Bullying Too

A secondary school teacher in Coventry reported how pleased he was to be part of an exercise that sought to achieve something he himself had been totally unable to do in the classroom; to help pupils of different ethnic backgrounds to talk and work with one another. Another teacher said that to say a school was ethnically diverse did not mean that the pupils within that school actually talked with each other or formed friendships across ethnic groups. One teacher at a second secondary school in Coventry (which was exploring the possibility, but which had not yet taken part in Swapping Cultures) said, that although outside appearance would suggest his was a harmonious school, he was concerned that when the school assembly takes place, pupils nonetheless still gather in ethnic groups rather than mix with one another, as indeed they do in the playground. He felt deeply unsettled by this as it reflected continuing deep divisions between pupils. He thought it needed to change, but was quite at a loss how to begin to address it.

It is interesting to see Smith's (2005) observation on exactly this point in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Research looking at *Children's Perspectives on Believing and Belonging*. In this case, school lunchtimes and assemblies were

seen as events that marked religious difference and promoted clustering. Though teachers did not like to talk about it for it might reflect badly on the school's public image in an age when league table 'success' counts for so much, the research found they frequently tentatively indicated (in reality, probably unnecessarily worrying) divisions in their schools along 'race' and ethnic lines.⁶⁸

Through participation in workshop sessions and focus groups, participants brought with them a range of experiences and knowledge of 'race', ethnicity and culture. In some settings, participants found themselves working with someone who appeared familiar, but more often they found themselves embarking upon a new exercise with someone whose background and experiences were very alien to them – often someone with whom they would not normally have a one-to-one conversation. In some cases, they met with people they said they would avoid in the course of a normal school day. In spite of assumptions made by some teachers, young people's leaders and facilitators that the workshops might founder; participants were being asked to talk with a stranger, in the event for many participants this was new and became a distinctive feature of Swapping Cultures.

⁶⁸ In an interesting article based on research in a Californian multi-racial school, Heather Lewis-Charp grapples with the complexities and inconsistencies in pupil's attitudes, especially white pupils, and shows how pupils relate to one another across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. Notwithstanding the idealized views on diversity, 'race' and ethnicity expressed by white pupils in the school, the day-to-day stresses involved in handling difference led to 'crises', withdrawal, anger and silence. Lewis-Charp, H. (2003). The comments by teachers in the Swapping Cultures Initiative resonate with this research from the United States. My own anecdotal observations in Coventry suggest that whereas a school might claim it has good relations between pupils of different backgrounds in school, outside the school gate and in the communities to which pupils return home, groups tend to be more ethnically and culturally homogeneous, as they are in the playground and the dining hall. Perhaps this is because, as Lewis-Charp argues, schools often do not do a good job in 'teaching cultural competency, and this leaves many young-people ill-equipped to negotiate cultural, racial, or linguistic differences.' Further research along these lines in Britain would be extremely helpful in reaching a better understanding of the complexities, ambivalences and silences in relations between young people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Preparatory work in advance of the workshops was undertaken, especially with the primary schools; and this was often built on good practice and work done on PHSE and Citizenship. Supplementary activities, where undertaken – exploring what is meant by ‘race’ ethnicity, culture, difference and identity – certainly helped the later smooth running of these particular workshops. Where pupils who did not know one another had prepared the way with pen pal email correspondence between their respective schools, the eventual meeting up for Swapping Cultures definitely added to an air of excited anticipation. Feedback from both teachers and facilitators where this had taken place highlighted the value in such preliminary preparatory work.

Swapping Cultures raised issues of how to deal safely with unfamiliar issues and concepts such as ‘ethnicity’, and to engage in conversation with people they did not know. Undoubtedly, some participants felt that taking part was risky and indeed threatening, though it has to be said the overriding response at the final evaluation was that the vast majority of pupils very much enjoyed the experience. This said, the biggest issue participants raised with facilitators (and this was not fully anticipated in the preparation of Swapping Cultures) was that of bullying. A moment’s reflection easily links bullying and racism, because the same process of ‘othering’ is at work in both. Bullying may focus on any of a number of perceived differences to justify itself – size, ability, etc. – whereas ‘racism’ is more narrowly focussed – predominantly on a difference of skin colour, though religion, nationality, etc. can also be factors. It would be fair to suggest that bullying is probably the dominant reality of which racist taunts, etc. are a subset, rather than racism dominating and bullying one form of it.

Given this feedback from participants about bullying, it is, therefore, all the more vital that the Swapping Cultures exchanges take place in a safe setting and with suitably skilled facilitators. Thankfully, creating a safe and suitable setting with appropriate adults to hand is standard practice. The importance of this is indicated in what participants themselves said. In his focus group reflection of an earlier workshop in which he had taken part, one young person (from an after school club for 12-15 year olds) said:

Could ask these questions, couldn't do it in the playground – would just get 'what do you want to know for?' Some people don't want to listen, just want to fight.

Time and again, bullying was raised by pupils, especially in the focus groups. In a primary school focus group, one pupil described how personally challenging it had been just to share information with his partner in the workshop for:

It was uncomfortable to tell my partner about me. I've been bullied, he had not. It was difficult to explain.

At another primary school a boy said:

I think bullying is silly, but some people think differently and some people just take it out on other people.

Bearing in mind the issue of bullying, it is not altogether surprising to find that the paired conversations around similarity and difference were not always easy for, as yet another primary school pupil said:

We found it difficult to ask our partners the questions because we have never asked ourselves, or our partners, these questions before.

Swapping Cultures meant entering into a situation of risky exchange with someone who one could not be sure about, someone not known, a stranger: talking about subjects one might prefer to keep in the private domain, not surprisingly, made some pupils feel vulnerable. Another primary school focus

group gave feedback which again underlines the potential and actual difficulties inherent in conversations around these subjects. Examples of typical comments made by three pupils are given below:

It is difficult to talk about racism, religion, if you have not experienced it. Also difficult to talk if you have experienced it, people don't understand nor know what offends me – the differences, my faith.

Christians could be racist to people from other religions. Or they could be better treated, be kind.

I realise how much difference there is, I had not experienced it up to now until the school exchange.

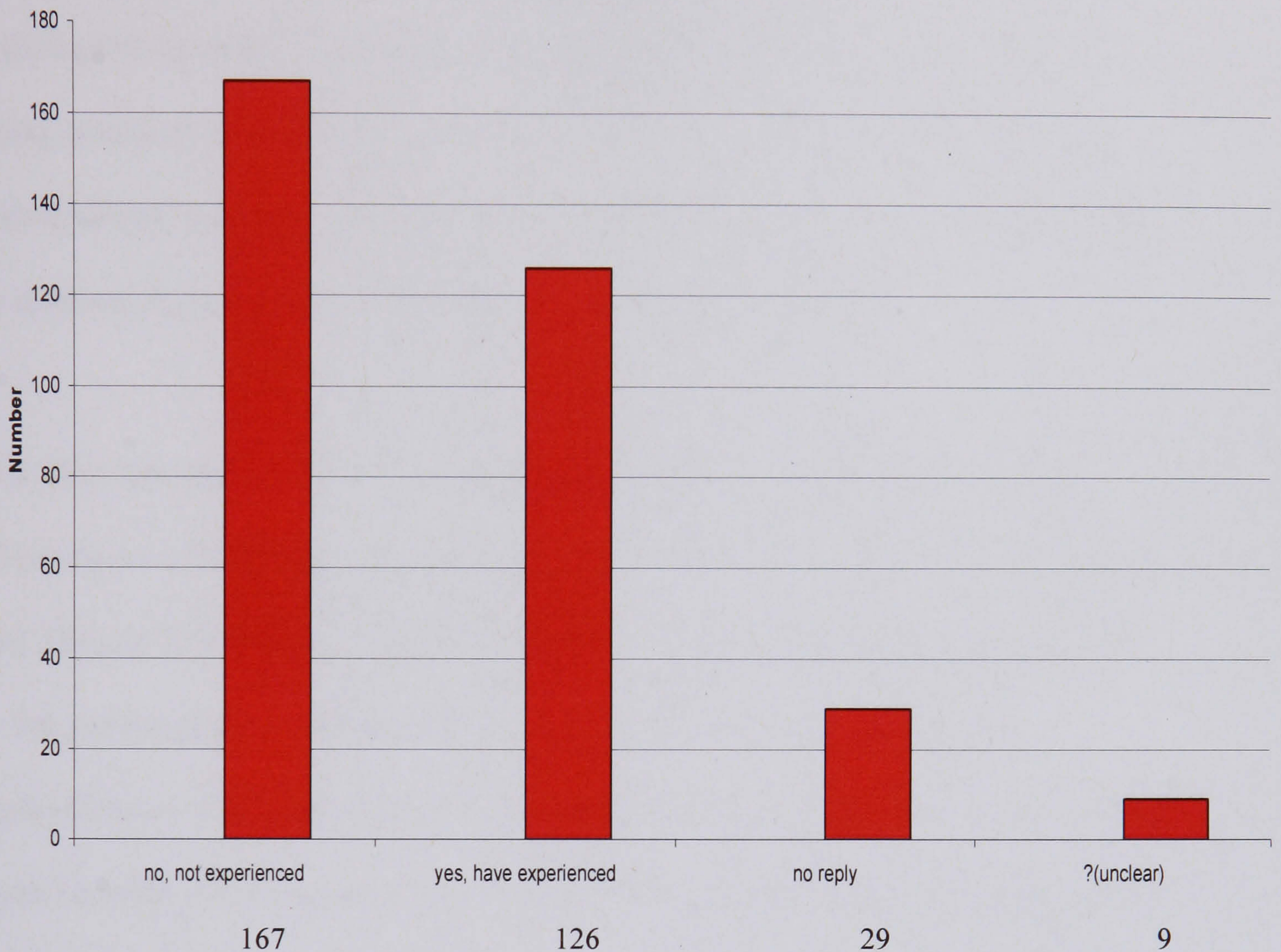
Most worksheet questionnaires contained a question which contained one or more of the following three elements: (a) bullying (in general); (b) experience of racism; and/or (c) being picked on by someone else (such as someone calling them names because of their culture or background). Chart 1 (page 248) shows 167 (50.5%) of 331 participants who answered this question cluster said they had not experienced any of these things. However, 126 (38.1%) said they had, with the remainder either making no reply 29 (8.8%) or an unclear reply 9 (2.7%). To find that 38.1% of participants acknowledged an experience of bullying, racism or being picked on flags this up as a significant issue in the local context where the project took place.

When looking at the answers to the question by age set, whether they had experienced these things, it is clear that the youngest age group mentioned that they had been bullied, etc. rather more than those in older age sets. For example, 45% of both boys and girls in the 8-11 age range reported such an experience. For this group, bullying / racism / being picked on, was a major concern.

Chart 1: Experience of bullying / racism /being picked on / etc.

n = 331

Experiences - bullied / racism / picked on / etc.



The following comments from three different members of a primary school focus group make this very clear:

Little ones get bullied and older ones too.

It is hard to talk about bullying, if 'grass' then you get bullied more.

I think bullying is silly but some people think differently and some people just take it out on other people.

One particular focus group of primary age children gave over a large part of their time reporting back on the subject of bullying. This particularly centred on racist bullying experienced in the group. Had it not been for the pupils' own assurances

that good systems were in place at the school to allow instances of bullying to be reported, the two group facilitators present would have been bound to break their rule of confidentiality given to these sessions and report back to the school what had been disclosed. The strong link between issues of 'race' and racism and bullying was convincingly apparent to all facilitators, as indeed was bullying being based on wider issues of 'difference'. What was clear from observation and feedback was that bullying relied on children and young people making use of differences based on socially constructed 'race' categories.

For older age groups, there is evidence of a significant reluctance to report experiences of bullying or harassment.⁶⁹ It was down from 49% to 22% for boys and 38% to 22% for girls. This decline raises questions. Was this reduction due to the participants' increased ability to deal with these experiences for themselves or was it due to a lack of confidence in those in authority to deal with them (maybe, even a combination of both)? Or indeed, is the decline due to their socialisation into the cultural practice that says these issues are matters about which one learns to become silent? Using the categories for understanding silence proposed by Huckin (2002) this might be categorised as a 'discreet silence' and / or a 'conventional silence'. It seems most improbable it could be due to an actual reduction in the experience, being older would suggest, if anything, that they had had an even greater opportunity to experience these things. Facilitators felt these older participants had learned 'to keep their mouth shut', as a useful practical strategy.

⁶⁹ Though it would be incorrect to read too much into this and other age set comparisons in this study, for these are comparisons between different participants. A longitudinal study following the same pupils through time would be a useful further piece of research.

Simply at the level of creating a safe environment for the Swapping Cultures interaction and subsequent discussion, those with direct responsibility for the children and young people, as well as the project facilitators, knew that sessions had to be structured with safety in mind, ensuring as far as possible a careful eye was kept on vulnerable participants. Fortunately, in the whole Swapping Cultures programme, there was only one inter-personal interaction that threatened to escalate from heated verbal exchanges into a serious incident, but close supervision swiftly brought into place, kept matters from getting out of hand. In this particular case, post-workshop discussion in the school staff room de-brief immediately afterwards revealed that the random allocation of pupils to pairs had coincidentally thrown together two ‘difficult’ pupils whose personalities were ‘guaranteed’ to lead to confrontation.

Arrangements to set up what are difficult conversations meant that appropriate initial briefings were most important. Even so, it was clear from feedback that children, some as young as 8 years old, did on occasion find it challenging, if not beyond them, to handle such difficult abstract concepts as culture, ethnicity, ‘race’, religion and cultural background. However, what surprised all who observed the participants was that although individuals varied greatly in their depth of understanding of these complex matters (and some indeed had difficulty in relating to the terminology used and in engaging with the task), most engaged positively, with understanding and sensitivity. This is indicated by what those who took part said. When asked the question, ‘How did you find the first stage of Swapping Cultures?’ the following responses provide a reflective range of views from primary school participants:

It was hard to talk about myself and my family to my partner; I found it difficult talking about my culture to my partner – I never really speak to him.

Quite fun – my partner was from a different country.

Questions about culture were difficult.

Stage 1 was easy – fascinating to learn about my partner, the differences.

One pupil from *Fiat* Primary School said it was difficult to talk because of wars abroad. This was not the only occasion when it was clear that what was happening internationally and globally had an impact upon pupil conversations locally. Where the reach of participant identities extended into wider situations of conflict, it is of little surprise then to find participants fearful and reluctant, not least because of potential conflict involving them or their families. Felt awareness of conflicts abroad proved to be a fertile ground for the development of a local ‘discourse of reticence’.

Additionally, the project data reveals that a significant number of Coventry participants came as migrants or asylum seekers and/or refugees from places such as Eastern Europe, Somalia, Kashmir, and Kurdish areas of the Middle East. When, in one focus group, it was asked why some 12-15 year old Albanian pupils were extremely reticent to respond to questions from other pupils in the Face to Face, it transpired that this was because they were living in fear of being returned to Albania as soon as they reached 17 years of age. They feared the disclosure of personal information which might be used later against them. They feared that facilitators being adults and ‘foreign’ adults, would conspire together against them and no amount of invitation or reassurance by their facilitators, or

indeed their peers, could overcome their silence. The result was not just a reluctance to answer what might be construed as ‘risky’ questions, but a more or less total refusal to answer any questions, however innocuous. One could describe this as a natural fear arising out of their uncertain situation in the face of foreign and powerful authorities who can make decisions about you and your future.

The Swapping Cultures Initiative, in seeking to provide the opportunity for dialogue between strangers, not only brought participants together from very different cultural backgrounds, but also brought broader issues of ‘othering’ to the fore, in particular, the issue of bullying. Though teachers and leaders are aware of these issues to a greater or lesser extent, participants of different ages were markedly different in being prepared to give voice to this. Even within participant groups, it appears significant that the older the child, the more silent they are likely to be on these issues, though further research is needed to establish whether this is normally the case.

3.3.5 Cultural Identities

Within the confines of a small, cohesive, all-white participant group (the Young Farmers’ Club, Warwickshire) one member said, ‘We all have a surface view of multi-culture from what we can see – but what we lack is the knowledge and background of a person’s culture and religion.’ Curiosity and natural interest in finding out something new are powerful drivers to engage in dialogue, and the members of this group were not alone in expressing this. These same qualities which can help bridge silence and open up paths to dialogue are noted in a quite

different setting by Clendinnen (2005) in her analysis of the first encounter between the British First Fleet and the Australian Aborigines. Clendinnen notes the fragility of a dialogue based on curiosity and interest, and the fact that it did not remain strong enough to prevent later inter-cultural conflict and genocide. Clendinnen's skilfully and imaginatively written Chapter entitled 'What the Australians Saw' describes how the British were seen by the Australians as probably they never saw themselves – with a yawning gap of mutual misunderstanding and mistrust. The huge gulf between cultures, reflected acutely in the lack of common language between them, was not seriously bridged, notwithstanding all the amity expressed by the British leader in those first five years. This suggests the fragility of relations, and that much listening, reflecting, dialogue and long-standing work at building bridges between different cultural groups is needed. Clearly, there are many more factors to be considered in seeking to understand the later catastrophic events that marked the Australian – British inter-cultural experience than can be addressed here.

The Swapping Cultures process is one of self exploration and discovery, and it was not without personal challenge. As one pupil from *Fiat* Primary School, Coventry said, 'We found it difficult to ask our partners questions because we have never asked ourselves or our partners these questions before.' Participants expressed a belief in the importance of knowing about one another's cultures, whether this was something they had picked up from adults or something they had discovered for themselves, it was not possible to tell. Certainly the leaders from the all white and all Christian Warwickshire Girl Guides group expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for reaching out to other cultural backgrounds,

expressed entirely with goodwill; but, again, it was not exactly clear what the factors were that drove this enthusiasm. One pupil from *Hills Primary School* in Coventry expressed this sentiment thus: ‘Even though we are different we must make friends, even though we have different ends.’ Another pupil at *Cohens After-School Club* echoed this: ‘Getting to know one another helps people to be more friendly.’ Reflecting on her experience of Swapping Cultures, a girl at *Smiths Community College*, Coventry also expressed similar thoughts in a poem with the title ‘Who said We Cannot Be Friends?’:

So different, so the same
So close, so far away
What makes the gap between us?
What means we cannot stay?

They say religion matters
They say we can’t understand
We talk a different language
Originate from a different land

But we are near to each other now
And it’s hard for me to see
Why you and I can’t be viewed the same
Due to our race and creed.

The poem exudes tension, and the awkwardness of the last line ‘race and creed’ grates on the ear. It summarises the reason for this tension in words that are awkward on the ear for the politically correct – ‘race’ and religion, but amazingly find themselves innocently expressed by a pupil given permission to express their thoughts and feelings in poetry. Goodwill and friendship as well as curiosity and interest were clearly important motivators for participants and their leaders alike – all qualities that help overcome silence and stimulate dialogue, qualities Clendinnen (2005) reminds her readers that are all too easily overlooked.

For the young participants, the concept of celebrating multiculturalism was never far away, and this sentiment found itself expressed in various ways. A poem written to be sung, by a 10 year old girl at *St Jills* Primary School had the title ‘Differences’:

1. Do you have a different coloured skin?
Are you wide or are you thin?
Do people always bug you because you’re not the same like them?
Try and make friends to help you through
If they are true mates they will always be with you.

*People think we’re different by the way we look or dress
but we are just as good or bad as the rest.
Just be proud of what you are and what you’re dream may be
when you look at the mirror, what do you see? Say yes, it’s me.*

2. Are you quiet and small?
Or are you loud and tall?
Do they say you’re weird
on how you once have dressed?
Go on, be yourself, but don’t be like the rest

People think we’re different...

3. Don’t give up the chances that you may think you have lost
Don’t let people around you control
and around you have been bossed
Keep on climbing up the mountain to your dreams
Whatever it seems, even if..

People think we’re different...

This poem picks up many of the elements that comprise a person’s identity. It is significant that the writer begins with the category of, ‘different coloured skin’ before considering other differences. The theme throughout the poem is the insistent call that no matter what the pressures and tensions and the assaults made on one’s own identity, one should remain self-confident, proud, in control, independent and focussed upon living up to one’s own aspirations. Clearly expressed in the poem is the tension creating process of ‘othering’. It is seen in

the line, 'Do people always bug you because you're not the same like them?' It is similarly to be found in the line that refers to being, or rather not being, 'like the rest'; and it is once again seen in the use of the word 'weird' to describe how others see oneself.

The idea that different identities lead to moral views being expressed as to whether someone is 'good or bad' is picked up in the chorus lines, 'People think we're different by the way we look or dress but we are just as good or bad as the rest.' The line is quite startling, revealing as it does another element in the process of 'othering', for this pupil accurately perceives that 'othering' involves placing people within a moral hierarchy of values. Racism is based upon just such a value system. This pupil is not alone amongst the 8-11 year olds who demonstrated a sophisticated and able understanding and handling of this difficult subject.

In one of the focus groups a primary school pupil said, 'I think Swapping Cultures was a good way to get to know other people, coz most people judge each other by where they are from or what colour skin they are. I think they should do most [sic] of these programmes so that people would learn more about each other.' Once again a young participant (8-11 year old) makes a tellingly perceptive observation, this time about the power, process and prevalence of racism. Racism involves 'most people' and it is about how they 'judge each other' on the basis of skin colour.

Another poem by a pupil from a primary school with a Christian foundation was entitled 'Differences and Similarities'. It was written in a workshop session during the period of personal reflection following the Face to Face dialogue. She writes:

Everyone is different
The whole wide world too
Some have similarities
Especially me and you

We all need to be happy
We need to spread the love
We need to be truthful
To our God above

Our school and *Fiat*
Are swapping all our cultures
We are having fun, fun, fun
All the boys and girls

We could have a party
Dance and play and eat
Celebrate and dress up
When we all meet

We will have lots of fun
All of us together
Swapping things and giving things
In any old weather

A strong affirmation of celebrating difference positively, and the message that 'we need to' fulfil certain moral obligations comes across strongly in this poem. In the first verse there is the observation that in getting to know someone in this way, it is the similarities, not the differences which emerge as key to the project participant's dialogue. The young author also wants to express that in the cultural exchange there is fun to be had, and the word 'fun' appears no less than four times. Enthusiasm and enjoyment in taking part was commonly expressed in the workshops.

It is interesting to note that in the context of Coventry and Warwickshire, it was fun rather than fear that was consistently voiced. This says something about the general lack of serious polarisation and tension in this particular geographical area and social context. Things are very different in other parts of the country where fear can be a real issue. In Burnley, for example, 'The Breaking Barriers in Burnley Project' gave 44 young people cultural ambassadorial roles following the 2001 disturbances, it is described as a project taking place in a social context where 'everything was very raw for everyone' and 'here it is all about fear.

When a White person sits on a bus, for example, and hears someone talking in a different language, that frightens them' (Readfern 2004). The sense of fun, rather than fear, tipped the balance for a positive view toward participation by the schools and youth organisations in Coventry and Warwickshire, though of course it would be fair to say that other factors contributed to this, for example, the commitment of various adult leaders to the project. Local context and history are highly significant, with locally varying factors, when thinking about entering into a process of cross-cultural dialogue through a project like Swapping Cultures.

Another typically positive statement of the Swapping Cultures experience is seen in the following reflection made by a pupil at *St Jills* Primary School, Coventry:

Being same and being different are both really good. I enjoy being same and different and so you should – its really amazing that everyone's different or the same. If you're different and unique or diverse, shout out loud, so everyone can hear – being different is not a curse, I love being different.

What is interesting is that amongst all the need to express how positive this pupil feels, there is reference to the fact that 'being different is not a curse', an idea which by its very inclusion belies the issue – 'race', ethnic, cultural difference

can be seen as a curse perhaps not by this participant, but certainly by others..

Here is a sentiment which might have been, but was not actually followed up in later discussion – can we perceive here a deep tension, the acceptable public expression of multiculturalism juxtaposed with a private alternative view which holds with those different really being accursed? Curse is a deep and emotive term in the history of racism, which carries with it religious overtones of the outsider and outcast, those bearing the mark of Cain, those who do not belong in the land. There is something alarming to hear a primary school pupil recognizing ‘race’ as curse.

It is important to note that a tendency was observed, in the expressions made by those in public office such as teachers, to mask ‘race’ tensions and to praise multiculturalism – in general providing an overstatement of liberal, well-meaning attitudes with a glossing over of difficulties. Participants and leaders alike preferred to see ‘race’ through rose-tinted spectacles and were reticent about expressing negative views or engaging seriously with difference. Perhaps ‘race’, racism and the issues surrounding them are not always so easily or overtly expressed. Research done in the USA by Krysan (1998) suggests such a pattern can be found in other social contexts. She tested just such a hypothesis across a number of social contexts and found that when placed in a ‘safe’ private setting, white respondents feel more comfortable expressing prejudicial attitudes toward black people than might otherwise be publicly expressed. She concludes, ‘Much, though not all, of the evidence supported the hypothesis about this difference’ (Krysan 1998: 530). Although such a hypothesis was not tested in the course of the Swapping Cultures Initiative, it would be surprising if something similar was

not going on here, and indeed there were resonances of this in the unguarded innocence of participant's comments and poems as indicated above.

When the completed worksheets are examined, the data in respect of the questions relating to 'identity' reveals useful information relating to language, religion and cultural background. Taking the category of language first: although the question was asked in the Face to Face session as to what language was spoken, the question was neither specific enough nor was it followed up with a secondary question in order to ascertain a participant's actual 'mother tongue' and whether English was a second language for them. When asked about languages spoken, it was clear that a few pupils thought this referred to whether they were learning French, German or Spanish at school. Inadequate thought was given to the place of English in the questions. It was simply assumed to be the common language, though it was clear from a small number of participants that some had only very limited English language skills and needed help, which in the event was almost invariably provided by other participants.

Given these weaknesses in the questions, which were designed primarily to facilitate a dialogue rather than provide quantitative data, it is nonetheless possible to show that a substantial mix of languages were spoken by participants. Those who facilitated the workshops are clear that the figure of 39% who answered the question with 'English' as their answer, is a significant understatement of the proportion of participants for whom English is their sole or usual language at home and school. As English is the 'normal' language (just as 'British' or 'English' are the 'normal' cultural identity) it became invisible or was

taken for granted / understood and, therefore, unnecessary to record. This is an important point to note, as the normalising of whiteness indicated by white language deafness / invisibility sits alongside a marked reluctance in the predominantly white areas to consider 'racism' to be an issue for them. It is interesting to note that with regard to the all white Warwickshire Young Farmers' group, their local leader in collaboration with the Minorities Of Europe project staff decided from the outset to omit the question on language from the worksheet altogether. Here is clear evidence of invisibility and/or a 'discourse of reticence' around what is perceived as the normative language.

One of the fascinating findings from the simple question, 'What languages do you speak?' is the group of responses falling in the category of 'Other'. (Chart 2 on page 262). Participants indicated a large range of languages spoken other than English. The 101 participants categorised as 'Other' (of 423 participants in all) fell into 78 different language groups with no more than three people in any one group. A wide cultural diversity on the basis of language is demonstrated with the largest groups speaking languages from Asia and Africa, with smaller numbers with languages originating in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In the absence of a question which would have yielded more precise data on languages spoken, of the participant groups it is possible on the basis of observation to say that participation in a workshop where 'English' was the only language in the group only occurred amongst the young farmers in north Warwickshire. (Anecdotally, feedback from the Warwickshire Guiders Group indicated a second all white and all English speaking group, amongst whom a few had learned French or German sufficiently to describe themselves as fluent

Chart 2

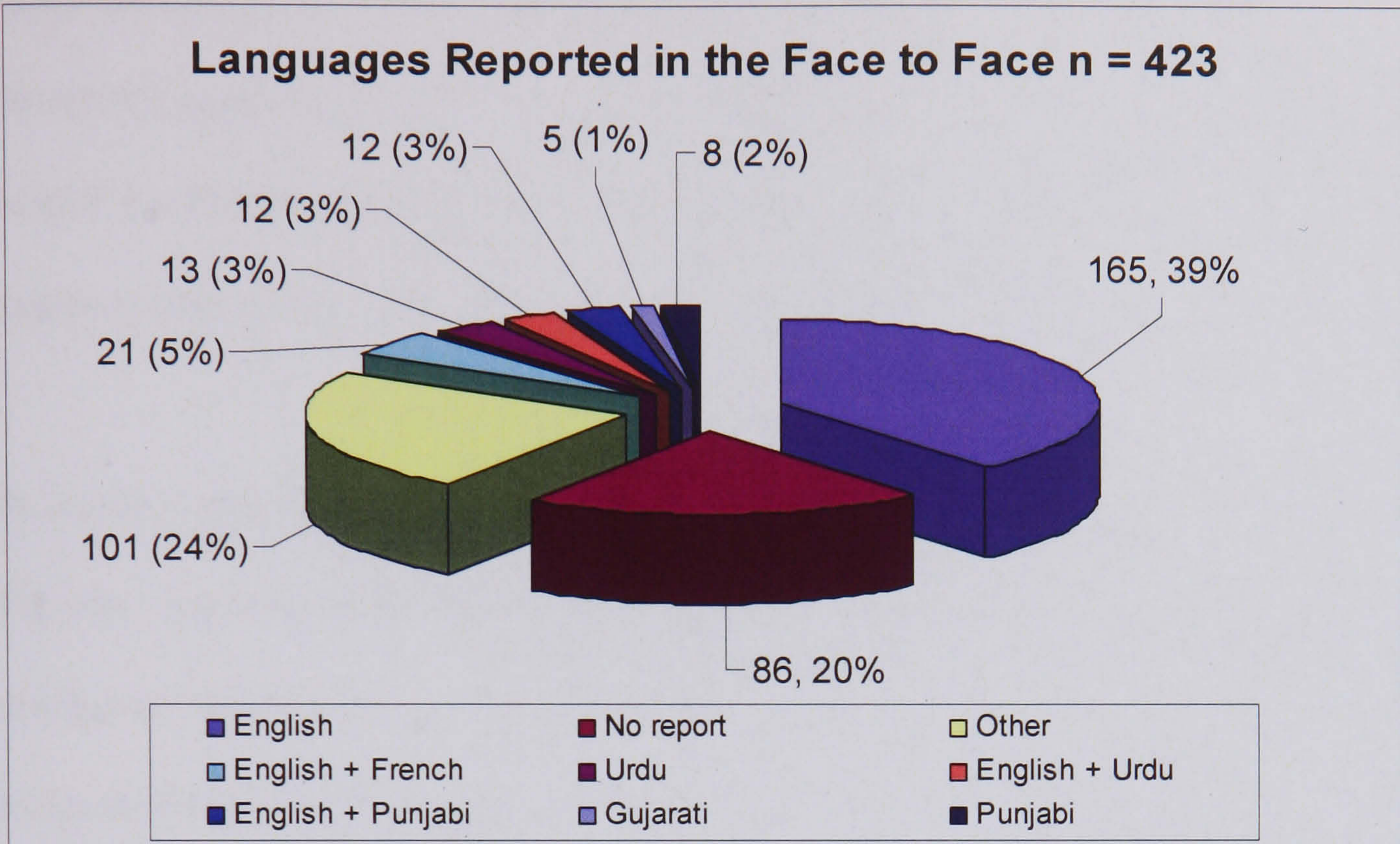
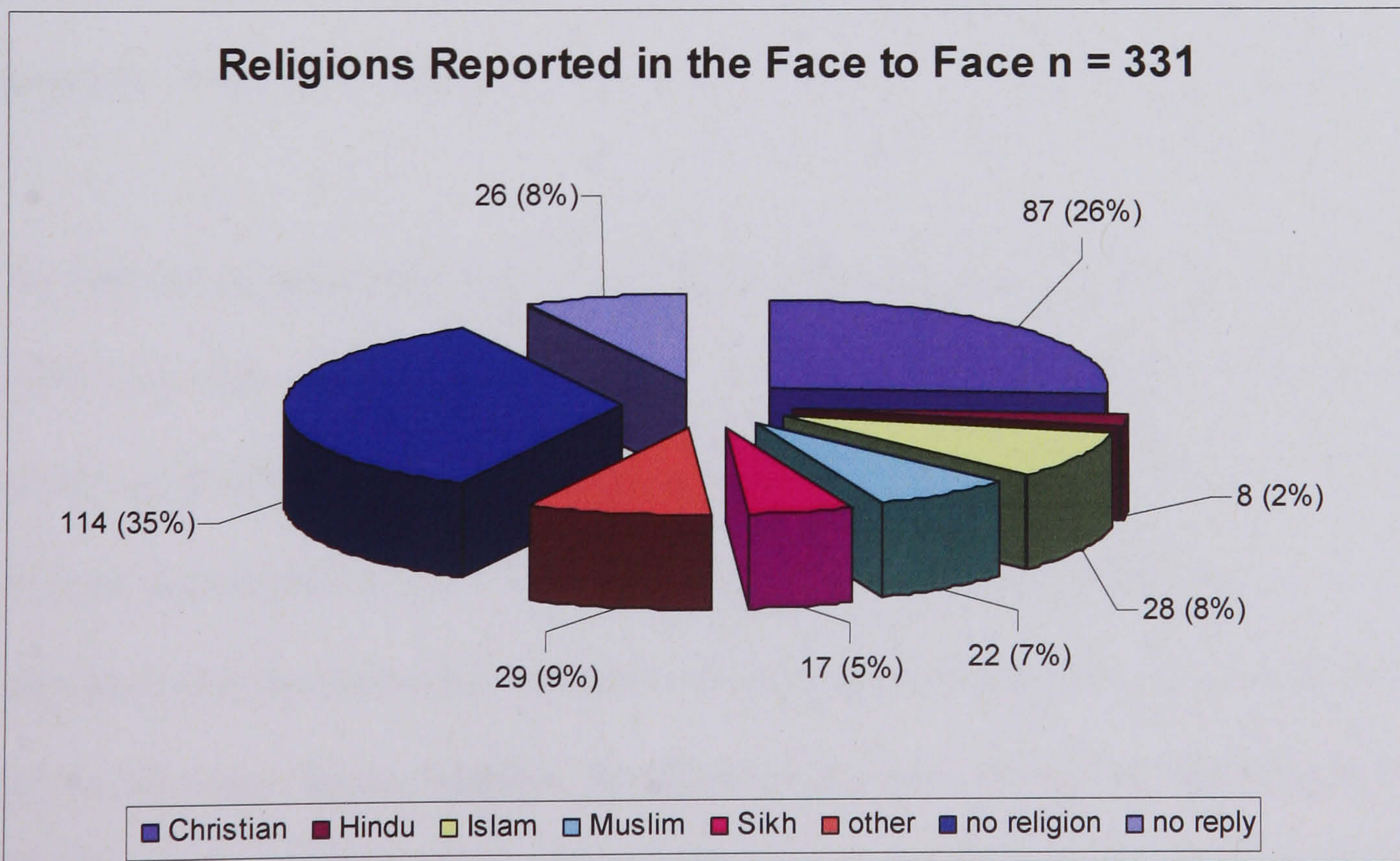


Chart 3



speakers.) In sum, it is true to say that language diversity itself proved to be a significant cultural marker. Such diversity of language also suggests that over hasty stereotyping of cultural backgrounds into a limited number of groups denies the great variety and complexity of backgrounds the answers on language reveal. Further, to be silent around the dominant language (English) may have a negative impact upon conversations/ dialogue held.

A second cultural background question participants asked one another in the Face to Face was, 'What is your religion?' Participants saw religion as a clear marker of racial, ethnic and cultural difference. 'Race', ethnicity, culture and religion are all part of the panoply of categories, often overlapping, which provide a language for expressing difference. Smith (2005) in his study of 9-11 year olds in London and the North West of England says, 'The ethnic term '*Asian*' and the religious term '*Christian*' were both used by children as markers of racial difference, underlining how the categories of ethnicity and religion overlap in children's discourse.' The answers provided to the Face to Face question 'What is your Religion?' are shown in the Chart 3 on page 262.

As with the other questions, the wording and form of the question on religious belief was often amended in the process of moving from the suggested worksheet to the one finally used in a particular context. So for example, at *Wards Primary School*, participants asked 'What is your religion?' and were immediately provided with the following strangely ordered and selected brief list of religions to choose from: 'Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Christian, Hindu, No Religion, and Other'; whereas participants at *Cohens School* were asked simply, 'Do you have

any religious beliefs?’ with a line following on which to write the respondent’s reply. The Young Women’s Group worksheet simply has ‘Their religion’ with a space following for the reply to be written down.

Notwithstanding the inconsistencies between questions, the data on religion, as with the language data, indicates a complex and diverse range of beliefs. It is clear that most participants were able to give an answer to a question on religious identity indicating that religion is a significant identity category with 35% (n = 331) responding they had ‘no religion’. The largest single numbers of responses for any one religious identity were those who indicated, ‘Christian’ (26%). If ‘Islam’ (8%) and ‘Muslim’ (7%) are taken together, as surely they must be, at 15% they form the second largest religious group.⁷⁰ The ‘Other’ (9%), ‘No Reply’ (8%) ‘Sikh’ (5%) and ‘Hindu’ (2%) groups make up the remaining religious categories. The dialogical style did not permit for expanded answers to illumine replies, but it is possible to see how members of the youngest age group sometimes gave simple answers like ‘Allah’ or ‘Gurnak’ rather than a precise religious category requested. Likewise it is possible to see in some of the older age group replies a greater degree of sophistication such as, ‘Born Again Christian’; ‘Sikh, partly agnostic’ and ‘Believe in god but not religious’.

What is particularly interesting, but perhaps not altogether surprising, is that when responses are looked at by age group, there is a marked difference in the openness between replies given by 8-11 year olds and those of 12-15 years; and

⁷⁰ Though it is interesting to reflect on why almost equal numbers of participants split into two between Islam and Muslim. It has been suggested that this is because Muslim refers to belonging to the people of the faith where as Islam is a more associated with a definition of the faith. How the participants understood the two words requires further research though they clearly indicate the same religion.

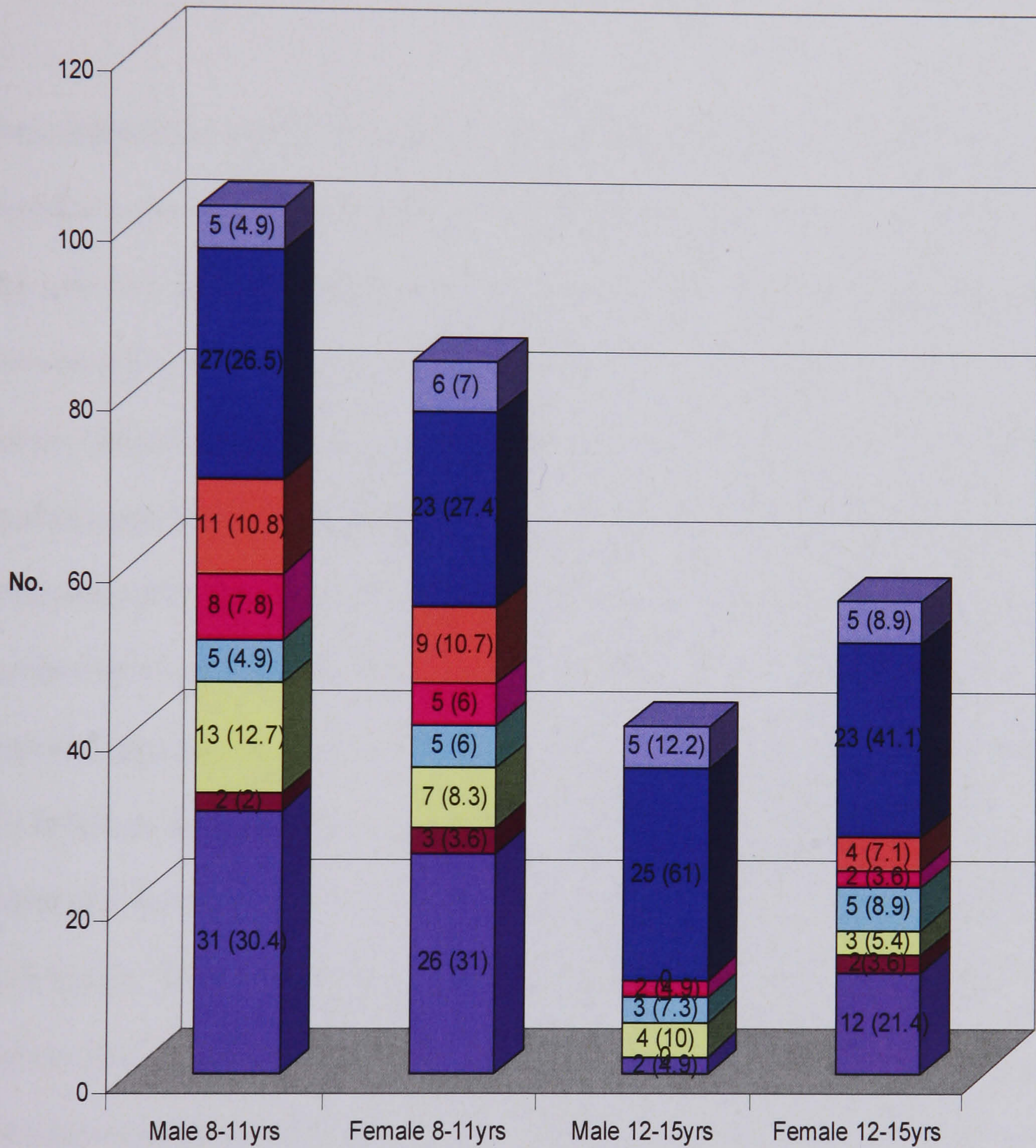
there is also a significant difference in reply between genders for the older age group. (Chart 4 on page 266 shows religions given by age and gender.) It looks very much as if the more firmly and confidently expressed convictions held on religious identities at 8-11 years become less securely in place and more guarded for 12-15 year olds. This is what one might expect as youngsters enter the identity searching age of adolescence. Yet the data suggests this is not something that affects all religious groups equally. Looking across the different religions, this is particularly so for Christians: whilst 30% of boys responding 'Christian' at 8-11 year old, it was just 5% for the 12-15 year old group. The decline is evident for other faith groups but less strongly. (The comparative Islam/Muslim fall is only from 18% to 17% which suggests religious identity, for whatever reason, is more closely bound to self-identity for this group with whatever this means for the adolescent quest for identity).

As children get older, they appear to establish distance from named categories as they seek to forge an identity for themselves. Hence, the Swapping Cultures 12-15 year olds were much more likely to answer 'No religion' than their younger contemporaries; and, for boys this was especially striking (the 26% of the younger group answering 'No Religion' becoming 61% for the 12-15 year olds).

In all, it seems reasonable to suggest that the strength of religious affiliation will vary between faiths and within faiths, but this was not closely explored with the participants. The study (of 9-11 year olds) by Smith (2005) indicates that individual children display very different levels and patterns of understanding, observance and personal commitment to religion, irrespective of their particular

Chart 4

Religions given by Age and Gender n = 283 (%)



■ Christian
 ■ Hindu
 ■ Islam
 ■ Muslim
 ■ Sikh
 ■ other
 ■ no religion
 ■ no reply

religious affiliation. Fluidity between children on religious matters was observed – religion acting as a ‘floating signifier’ of identity. In fact Smith (2005) notes how religious and ethnic labels are used interchangeably by children as markers of racial difference, demonstrating how religious and ethnic categories often overlap.

The complexities around religious identity are no more apparent than in the recorded comments made by individual participants (both written and verbal). One said ‘We have the same religion. He speaks Urdu’. This participant observes how, though a single faith is shared, there can be a difference of language between adherents. Broadening the complexities of identity categories further, another pupil, at *Smiths* Community College, reflecting on the similarities and differences after a Face to Face dialogue, writes, ‘We have the same religion but we have different opinions and different interests.’ Yet another, ‘We share interests, language and nationality (British), our religion and colour is different. We both hate racism.’ These complexities are captured in many similar reflections, for example, in the cryptic note, ‘Difference in religion, language. Both Indian.’ Here it is neither religion nor language where there is common identity, but a common identity found in yet another category – nationality. It was striking too how many times national flags were drawn to mark identity, especially the flag of Pakistan and, occasionally, that of India.

Reflecting on the complexities of identity shown by these participants, the author is reminded of the equally colourful multi-faceted description given by Hall, T. (2005: 2) of his East End landlord, Mr Ali:

Mr Ali's choice of clothing was as much a reflection of his mixed cultural identity as his accent. He wore a long, collarless *salwar*, but in place of the usual matching baggy pants and sandals or slip-on shoes, he'd opted for a pair of Levis and alligator cowboy boots. His white prayer cap, although in need of a wash, suggested a man of faith; but it was at odds with the whiff of booze on his breath, and helped complete the impression of a man of contradictions.

Swapping Cultures seems to throw up similar complex identities where traditional religion and modern cultural patterns paint a vibrant, dynamic if not contradictory tableau of life in twenty-first century Coventry and Warwickshire.

The question on religion is in turn followed by another question to participants:

'How would you describe your cultural background?' So far as possible

Swapping Cultures was designed to give participants open-ended questions so as to elicit their own answers, and this is especially the case with this question. P.

Ratcliffe (2001: 76) writes in commending this approach: 'The way for social science to proceed is, first, to accept the need to move away from the value placed on ascriptive social categories to focus on the categories of self-identification, to give people their own *voice*, and understand the *process* and *structure* [sic] of ideological thinking.'

As a result, a very wide range of answers to the question of 'cultural identity' was provided by the 232 participants who addressed this question. Some replies betray a total non comprehension of the question, such as 'Wikid', 'Nothing' and 'Don't have one'. Then there are also answers that bring together different categories including class, employment, geography and nationality, replies such as 'British mixed with a little bit of Caribbean' and 'Middle class Irish suburban'. Others show that they think of culture as belonging to a place, hence

three responses cited Coventry, with the response, 'Coventrian' by one person. Others were silent on the matter of culture, for example, as seen in the reply: 'A secret (where family are from)'. The answers 'normal' and 'typical English' betray something of the issue of whiteness and its invisibility referred to earlier in respect of language (cf. pp. 56, 63, 159, 193, 245).

A whole string of responses fall into nationality defined categories, hence Albanian, Bangladeshi, Canada, English, British, Indian, Libyan, Malaysian, Somali and Pakistani were specifically mentioned as single word cultural identifiers. On many occasions such national categories were not so simple, because respondents linked nationality with another, such as 'Bangladesh French', 'Black African European', 'Black Caribbean', 'Born in Hong Kong, grew up in England', 'British Caribbean (Jamaican)', 'British East European', 'British Indian', 'British mixed with a little Caribbean', 'English Jamaican' and 'Mixture Punjabi and English'. Sometimes the nationality identifier was qualified in other ways, for example, 'Bengali, Indian sweets,' 'British White', 'Brown Asian', 'Fun British', 'Indian, strict upbringing' and 'Typical English'. For some the complexities were such they simply answered 'Complicated'. As with the 'Coventrian' reply, others also saw the question of culture having quite specific and local geographic meaning, for example, in the replies 'Cornwall' and 'Dad lived here all his life, Mum and I from Birmingham'.

Less frequently, cultural identity was expressed in religious categories as in 'Catholic', 'Christian', 'Muslim', 'Sikhism' or in terms of occupation 'farmers' and 'butchers'. Only a small number of respondents used skin colour as the

identifier, only one said 'white' and one 'black'. Skin colour was mentioned however, on other occasions, as for example, when it was linked, usually with a geographical category, such as 'Brown Asian'. A small number of respondents reduced culture to personal attributes such as appearance and character, giving replies such as 'Friends', 'Peaceful', 'Kind and respectable,' 'I wear glasses'. But by far the largest number of respondents are those who mention geographical and national roots to describe culture. Interestingly culture is never described in terms of high culture, such as fine or performing arts.

A more open approach asking respondents to define their own identity was used in a small but significant social study undertaken by the Birmingham Race Action Partnership (b:RAP 2002). They began their research by asking a group of 28 black and ethnic minority 17-30 year olds from Birmingham to define themselves in response to the questions, 'I am ...' which they had to answer five times, followed by a further five statements of 'I am not ...'. The openness of this approach resulted in respondents placing much greater emphasis in their replies on individual and personal identity (48%) based around categories of 'character' rather than upon any categories reflecting group identity based around 'ethnicity' (11%). I proposed the use of these more open identity questions for Swapping Cultures, albeit limiting the replies to just one 'I am ...' and one 'I am not ...' question and answer response. Although the Steering Group subsequently decided against including these questions, I was able to use them in a supplementary worksheet for individuals to fill in on their own. It was titled 'About Me'. It was used at the second workshop held at *Jones Primary School* when 56 pupils returned 'About Me' forms and *Smiths Community College* (161

pupils). These pupils' responses are worth reporting. To the very open self-descriptive question 'I am ...' and 'I am not ...', the replies provided by pupils at *Jones Primary School* and *Smiths Community College* can be categorized as the following Table 1 and Table 2 show:

**Table 1: *Jones Primary School:*
'I am ...' 'I am not ...' Responses**

| | 'I am ...' (100%) | 'I am not ...' (100%) |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Character / appearance / ability | 32 | 43 |
| Gender | 32 | 28 |
| Sport interest | 27 | 10 |
| Ethnicity / religion | 7 | 5 |
| Other | 2 | 14 |

**Table 2: *Smiths Community College:*
'I am ...' 'I am not ...' Responses**

| | 'I am ...' (100%) | 'I am not ...' (100%) |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Character / appearance / ability | 44 | 61 |
| Gender | 25 | 22 |
| Sport interest | 13 | 8 |
| Ethnicity / religion | 9 | 3 |
| Other | 9 | 6 |

Replies show individual identities to be predominantly gathered around character / appearance / ability, gender and sport. Ethnicity and religion are mentioned in only 7% of replies. A very different set of identity responses are gained when posing the statement, 'When asked about ethnicity, race, colour or culture, I describe myself as' Participants' replies, as the following Charts 5 and 6 on pages 273 and 274 show, indicate how significant religion and nationality are. Other categories nonetheless make up 37% of replies and are indicative of the wide range of elements seen as comprising 'race', ethnic and cultural identity.

Discussion with teachers and facilitators at *Jones Primary School* afterwards revealed that although they had been surprised by the children's ability to understand and respond to the open questions, those in charge had still found it necessary to give some limited illustrative explanation to this 10-11 year old class group. The results have, therefore, to be treated with some caution.

The *Smiths Community College* replies, shown in Table 2, place an even greater emphasis on individual character traits, appearance and ability, with a corresponding reduction in those using the categories of gender and sport. In terms of individual identity, ethnicity and religion remain a fairly constant minor marker being mentioned in just 5% of replies (14 in 305 replies). The question is, why are these categories mentioned so few times when, in response to the *Swapping Cultures* worksheet question as to religious identity, 65% of participants give a religious category they identify with. Were participants more reticent to use ethnicity and religious identifiers unless directly asked? Perhaps so. Further work on this question is suggested.

Chart 5

Jones Primary School: 'About Me' Categories
'When asked about ethnicity, race, colour or
culture, I describe myself as...'
n = 65 (from 56 pupils)

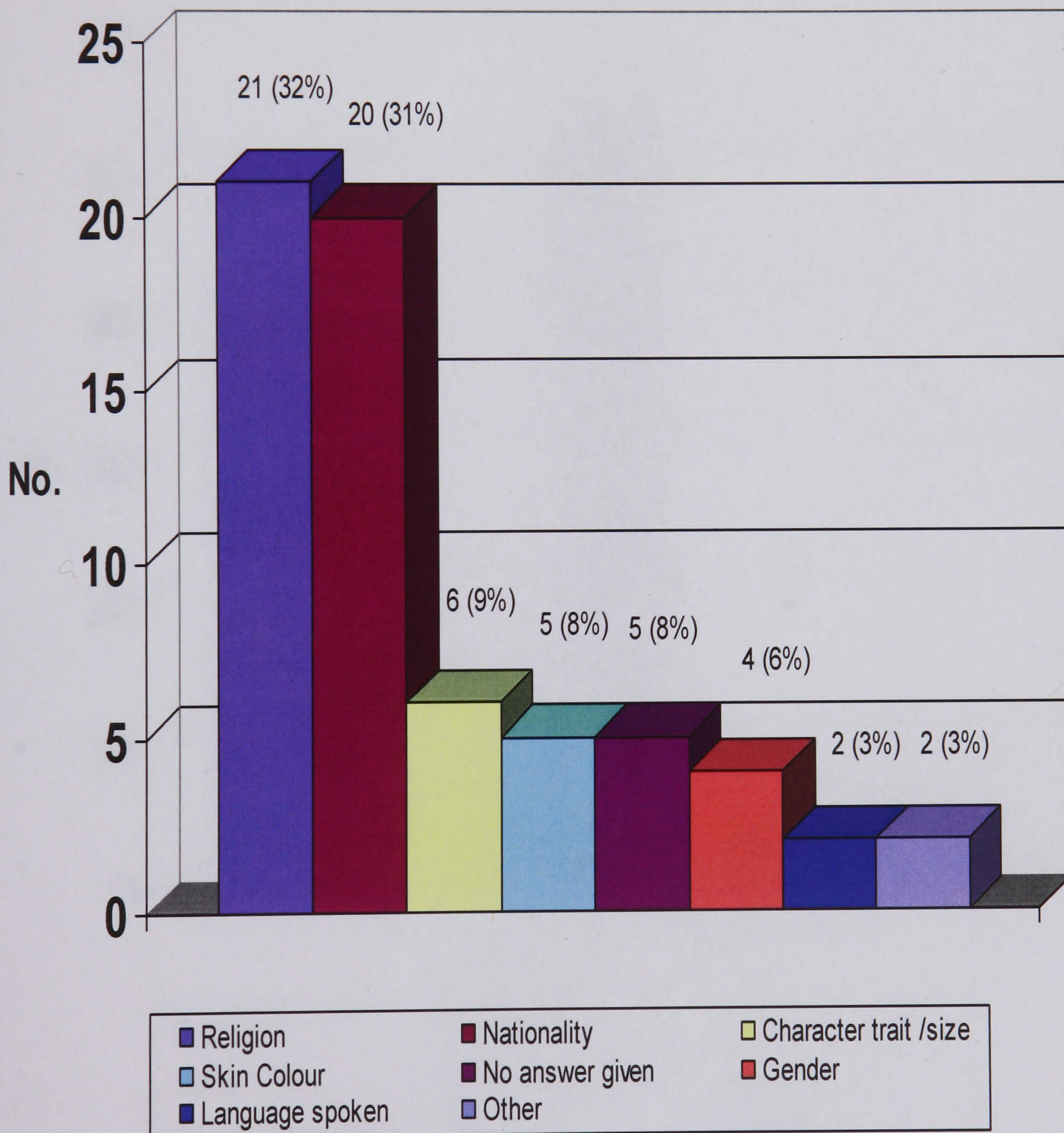
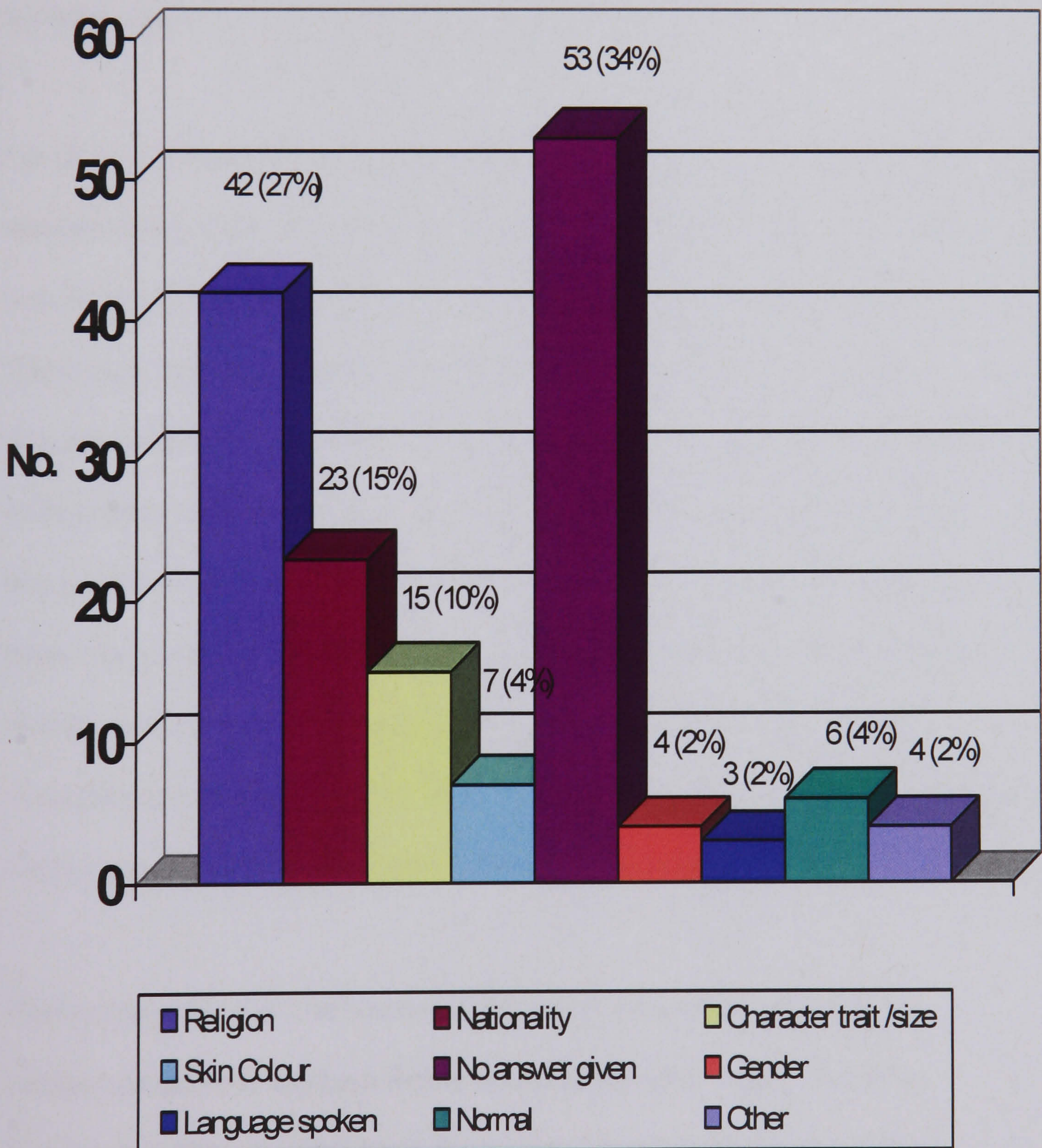


Chart 6

Smiths Community College: 'About Me' Categories
'When asked about ethnicity, race, colour or culture, I
describe myself as...'
n = 157 (from 161 pupils)



The Project Steering Group in its discussion of this workshop subsequently decided to omit the more open and individual identity emphasis and format, preferring instead to abandon the 'About Me' questions in favour of having more specific core questions within the single A3 size folded worksheet. What the *Jones* and *Smiths* experiences illustrate is what can be learned from the use of more open 'I am ...' / 'I am not ...' individual identity questions in addition to the less open 'race', ethnic and cultural identities question asked in the main workshop sheets.

For the 11-12 year old group at *Smiths* Community College, although religion and nationality form the largest specific categories mentioned, it is interesting to note from Chart 6 (page 274) that 34% of replies fall into 'No answer given'.

There are a number of possible reasons why this is so. One probable reason is that these pupils found it more difficult to answer because they were less certain of their group identity; but, then again, perhaps the explanation lies in the fact this group had after all been advised by their facilitator to pass over and leave blank any questions they found hard to answer. What one can say, however, is that the wide variety of categories used in the limited 'About Me' format is consonant with the equally wide variety of categories seen in the wider Swapping Culture worksheet data of the main study.

That participants might feel more reticent about using ethnic and religious identity categories is apparent from a recent Birmingham study. The b:RAP study took a different approach to Swapping Cultures toward group identity, asking subjects specific questions such as 'Could you say a few words about

your background?’ and ‘You must have had to fill in forms, at times, which ask for ethnic group. What do you think about this?’ and ‘Are the categories acceptable?’ An interesting further question, again not asked in Swapping Cultures was: ‘Have you ever changed the way in which you describe yourself over time?’ The b:RAP study concludes that the categories of ethnicity for this Birmingham group are only one aspect of individual identity – for some a matter of pride, for others not even important enough to mention. The study found that being categorised by society into ethnic groups was problematic for people, and ‘The all too regular requirement for them to provide ethnic details was seen variously as intrusive, impertinent, alienating, prejudicial and open to abuse’ (b:RAP 2002: 58).

The study also shows that identities change; they are floating and are constantly being re-negotiated. There are similarities here with Swapping Cultures in that whether the emphasis is individual (as with b:RAP) or group (as with the Swapping Cultures Initiative), identity is seen as a complex and multi-faceted concept. More than this, the b:RAP study shows exploration of the area is not always welcome and can be problematic for subjects – a potential site for division and conflict. They note comments made by individuals showing a reluctance to answer direct questions on ethnic identity – it is secret, hidden and silent and ‘you get judged by it’ (b:RAP 2002: 15). It is to this reticence of subjects publicly to declare themselves on the question of ‘race’, ethnic and cultural identity to which we now turn.

3.3.6 Reticence and Fluency

The 'About Me' worksheet used at *Jones Primary School* and *Smiths Community College* contained a question asking participants to state how easy or difficult they found it talk about the subject of 'race, colour or culture'. The replies from the participants at the two locations are tabulated below in Chart 7 and Chart 8 (Pages 277 and 278).

These 'About Me' replies suggest that conversations about 'race', colour and ethnicity are easy for some and difficult for others. There is a broad range of responses for both age groups. At *Jones Primary School*, leaving to one side the ambiguous middle ground category of 'not so difficult' (35%), just under half

Chart 7

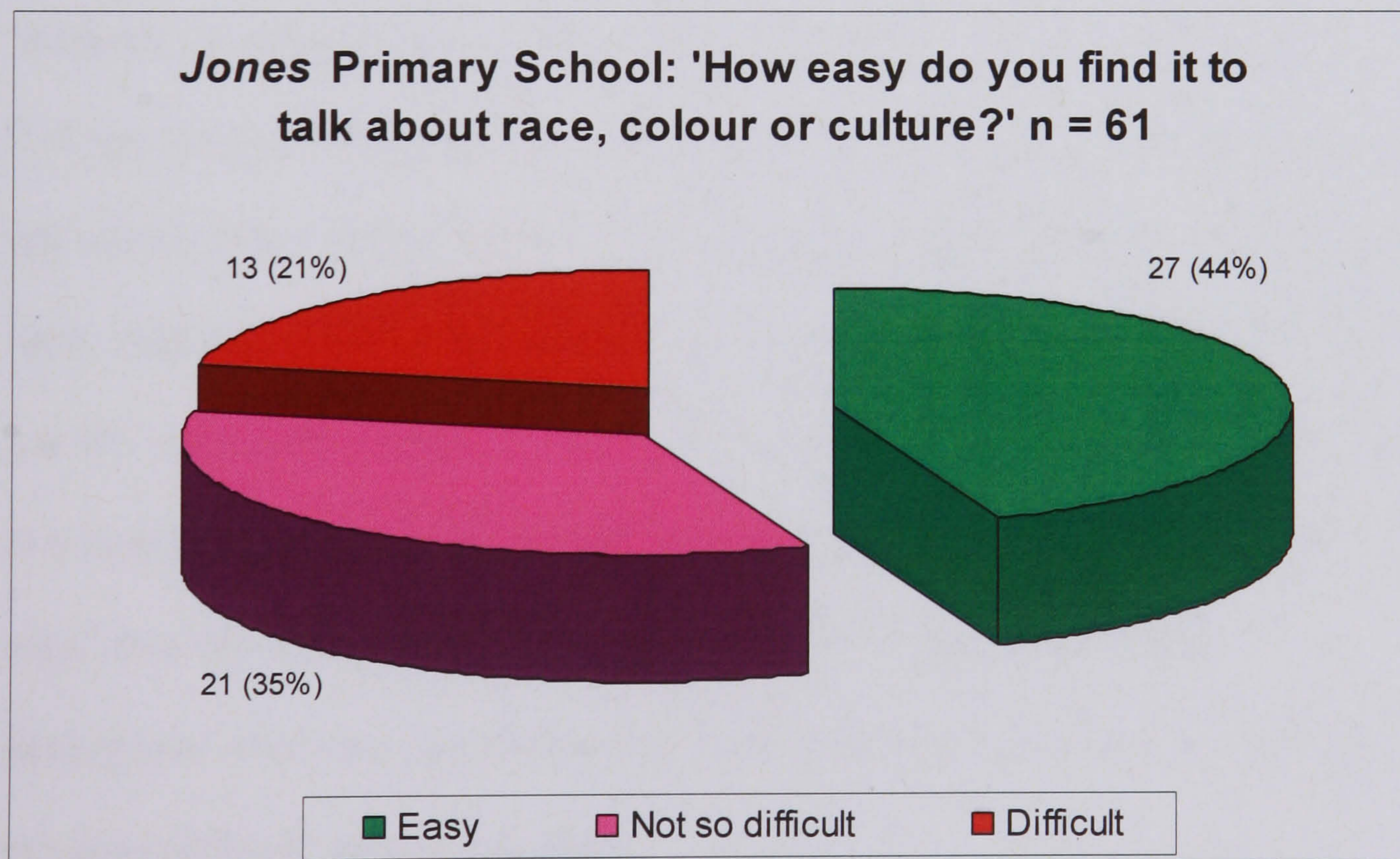
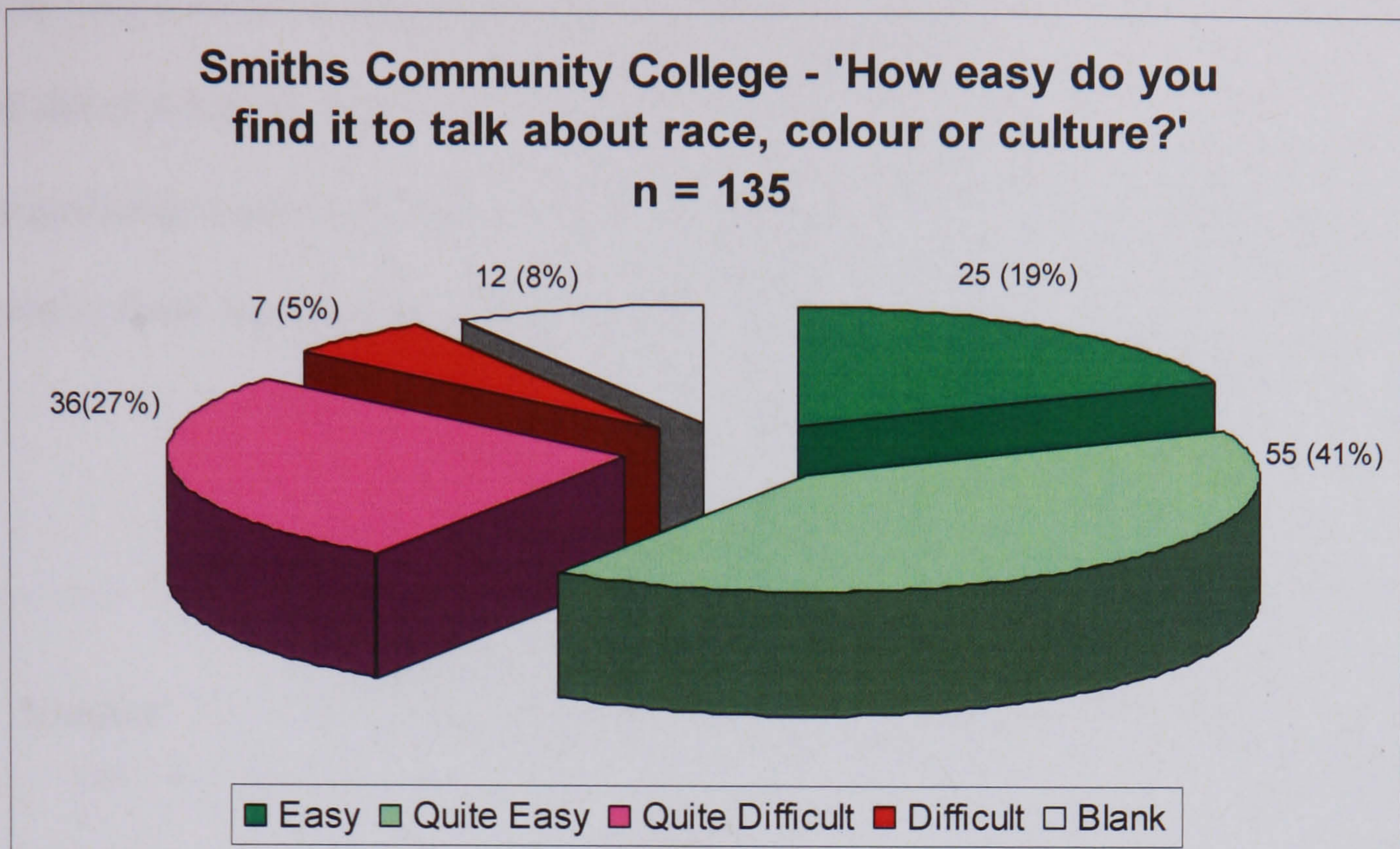


Chart 8

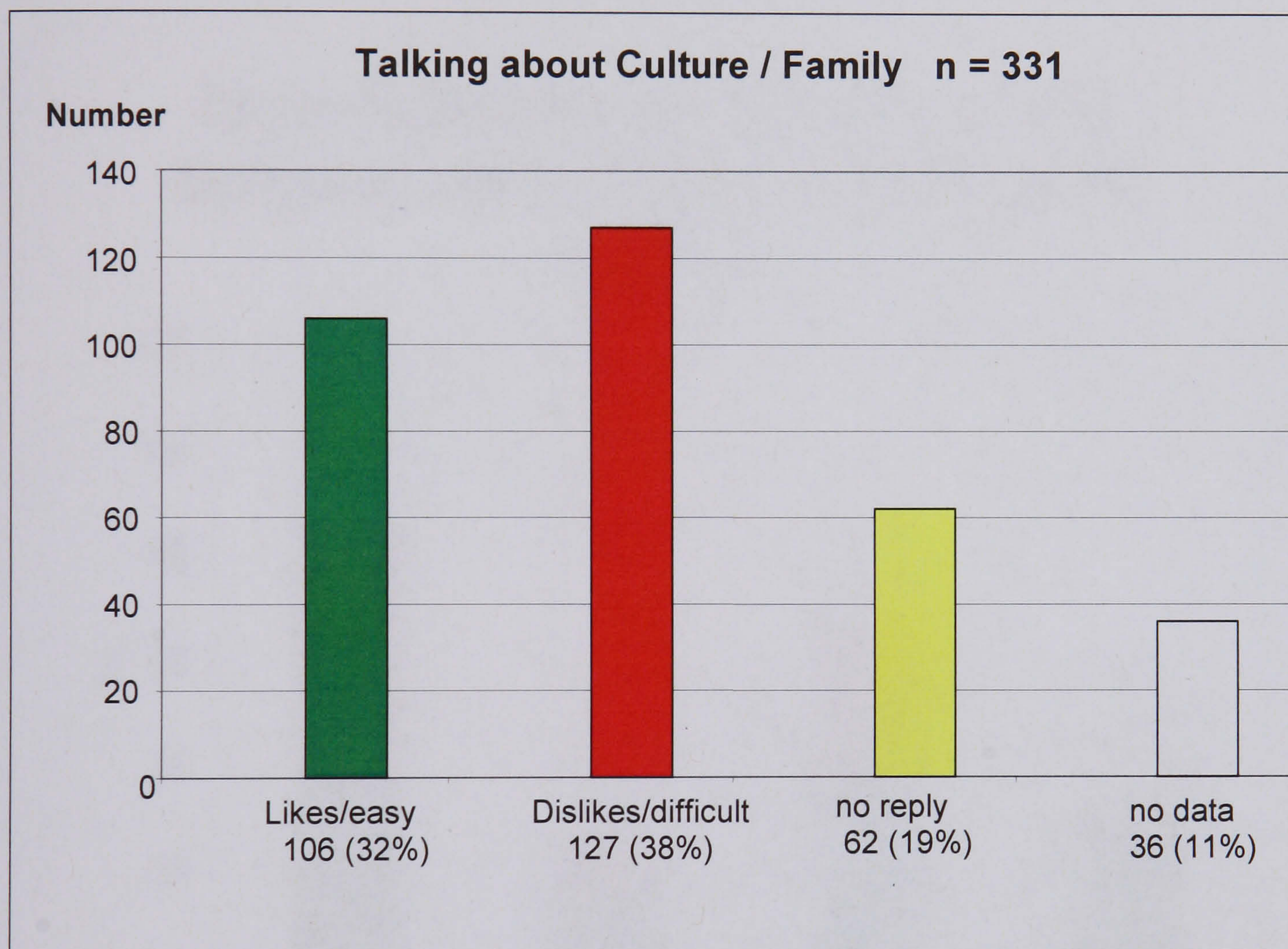


found it 'easy' (44%) with 21% of replies indicating such conversations were 'difficult'. Looking at the slightly older age group from *Smiths* Community College, the majority of pupils (60%) say they found it 'easy' or 'quite easy' to talk about (19% + 41%), with 32% responding that they found it 'difficult' or 'quite difficult' (5% + 27%), in this case there was no middle ground (0%), with just 8% leaving the answer as a blank. What these 'About Me' replies from these two locations show is that although 44% or even 60% find it 'easy' or 'quite easy', this still leaves a significant proportion, 21% and 32%, of these participants who were prepared to say 'race', colour and ethnicity is a 'difficult' or 'quite difficult' area to talk about.

If one then looks at the responses made in the subsequent worksheets as to whether participants found 'talking about your culture or family background easy

or difficult', the data presents a similar picture to the 'About Me' replies, showing a sizeable proportion of participants (38%) finding it difficult to talk or disliked doing so, with fewer declaring (32%) they found it easy, though cognisance needs to be taken of the 30% group who either did not reply or for whom there was no data (Chart 9 page 279).

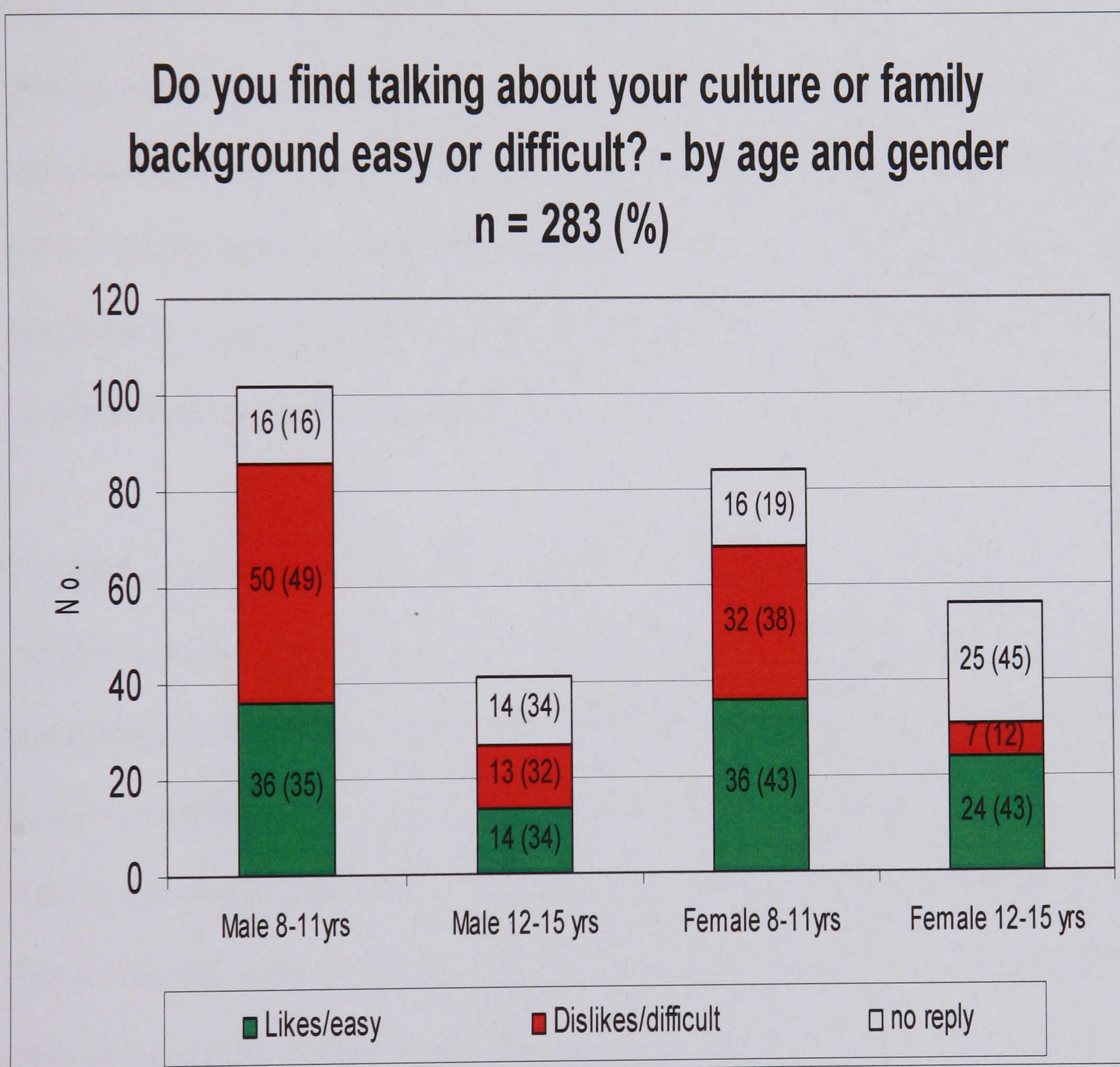
Chart 9



When these replies are looked at by gender and age, as shown in the next Chart 10 (page 280) the data raises the questions: do younger males find it more difficult to talk than younger females (49% compared with 38%); and for the older age group, do females finding it significantly easier to talk (34% of males

compared with 43% of females). Overall females appear to find it both less difficult and easier to talk than males. Is there something of wider significance here? Is there not a suggestion that females have some different qualities they bring to inter-cultural relationships missing to some extent in males? (A follow up longitudinal study would be interesting to undertake.)

Chart 10



The data also suggest there is an observable difference between the younger and older age groups, and this is true for both males and females. Male replies show

that whereas there is little difference between the age groups in the proportion finding it easy to talk (35% + 34%), the younger group found it comparatively more difficult to talk (49% + 32%), however, one needs to treat this with caution as a greater proportion of the older group did not give an indication as to whether it was easy or difficult (16% + 34%).

For females, whereas exactly the same proportion in the two age groups found it easy to talk (43% + 43%) once again it is the younger ones who found it more difficult to talk than the older ones (38% + 12%), although one needs to have regard to the proportion of no indications which is increased for the older group (19% + 45%). However, observation suggested that females generally seemed to find it easier to talk about this subject area than their male counterparts. This would fit with the understanding that this reflects a wider gender trait at work.

Though some caution needs to be exercised when interpreting this age and gender worksheet data in relation to the ease or difficulty in talking about culture and family, especially given the relatively small numbers in some of the category groups; nonetheless, it is clearly indicated that many participants found the subject area either a difficult one or one which they disliked talking about. One reason why the younger age group may well find it more difficult is because they have yet to acquire the necessary understanding and skills needed to handle it in dialogue. Yet, paradoxically the opposite could also be argued – their relative naivety and un-guardedness might lend them to talk about the subject area rather more easily than older participants.

The replies indicating any experience of ‘racism’, bullying and being picked on were introduced in Section 3.3.4 (Chart 1 on 8245 shows that 38.1% reported having had such an experience). It is worth returning to this briefly here to raise the question whether difficult conversations are in any way linked with the potential or actual threat of verbal or physical aggression. Common sense would suggest they are linked, for no-one is going to reveal information in conversation which may later be used as evidence against them. Self-preservation would favour the option for silence. So what did participants themselves say? Some participants were asked the follow-up question, ‘If so how?’, whereas others were asked the rather different question, ‘How did you feel?’ Their replies make interesting reading. Where there was a racism / bullying experience, to the follow-up question, ‘If so how?’ some singled out racism, as the following sample of replies given indicates:

- ‘experienced racism’
- ‘a mate called him a honky’
- ‘because people call me India Bindia’
- ‘called my God elephant’
- ‘been teased about where I come from’
- ‘been offended calling us Packi’
- ‘They call her Paki’
- ‘people saying she is too black’
- ‘calling him chinese’
- ‘called a Paki at school, very upset’
- ‘Asians at school wanted to beat him up, called him a milky bar kid’
- ‘due to skin colour and religious background’
- ‘been teased about where I come from, Paki’
- ‘colour of skin’
- ‘they call you packi and tell you to go back to your own country’
- ‘racial abuse’
- ‘experienced discrimination’
- ‘being a farmer by ‘Townies’’
- ‘name-calling’
- ‘racism’
- ‘been teased about where from a few times’
- ‘teased about where come from – they say Kurdistan isn’t a good place’
- ‘was teased about being English in Scotland’

The reply, 'teased about where I come from' is mentioned 14 times, 'experienced racism' 13 times, 'name calling' and other non-specific experiences many times. Personal characteristics, such as a size (tall or small), age, length of legs, being new, and being 'silly sometimes' were other replies all given as explanation. Abuse was also directed at people perceived to be 'goody goody'. Another said, 'X used to beat me up, called me a poof'. Another said he was called 'gay boy and fagit'. Yet another felt they experienced these things because they were 'deaf'.

Those who were asked the question, 'How did you feel?', provided wide ranging but unsurprising answers: 'sad', 'angry', 'wanted to fight', 'upset', 'humiliated', 'not happy' and 'mad'. It was sad to read comments that indicate the experiences were repeated occurrences for some participants. One person wrote, 'been picked on before' – and what had happened was not just the action of one person, but due to 'a lot of people'.

Some of the 38.1% (126) participants who had answered 'yes' to the question whether they had experienced racism, bullying or being picked on were also asked the 'If so how?' or 'How did you feel?' follow-up questions. In a number of workshop settings, those designing the worksheet had chosen to omit any further exploration of the 'yes' replies with follow-up questions. 'Why?', because perhaps it opened up too difficult an area for participant or teacher / leader alike. It was easier to keep the matter shrouded in silence and out of the limelight. These were shocking and painful replies with no ready solution – little surprise then that a 'discourse of reticence' should prevail.

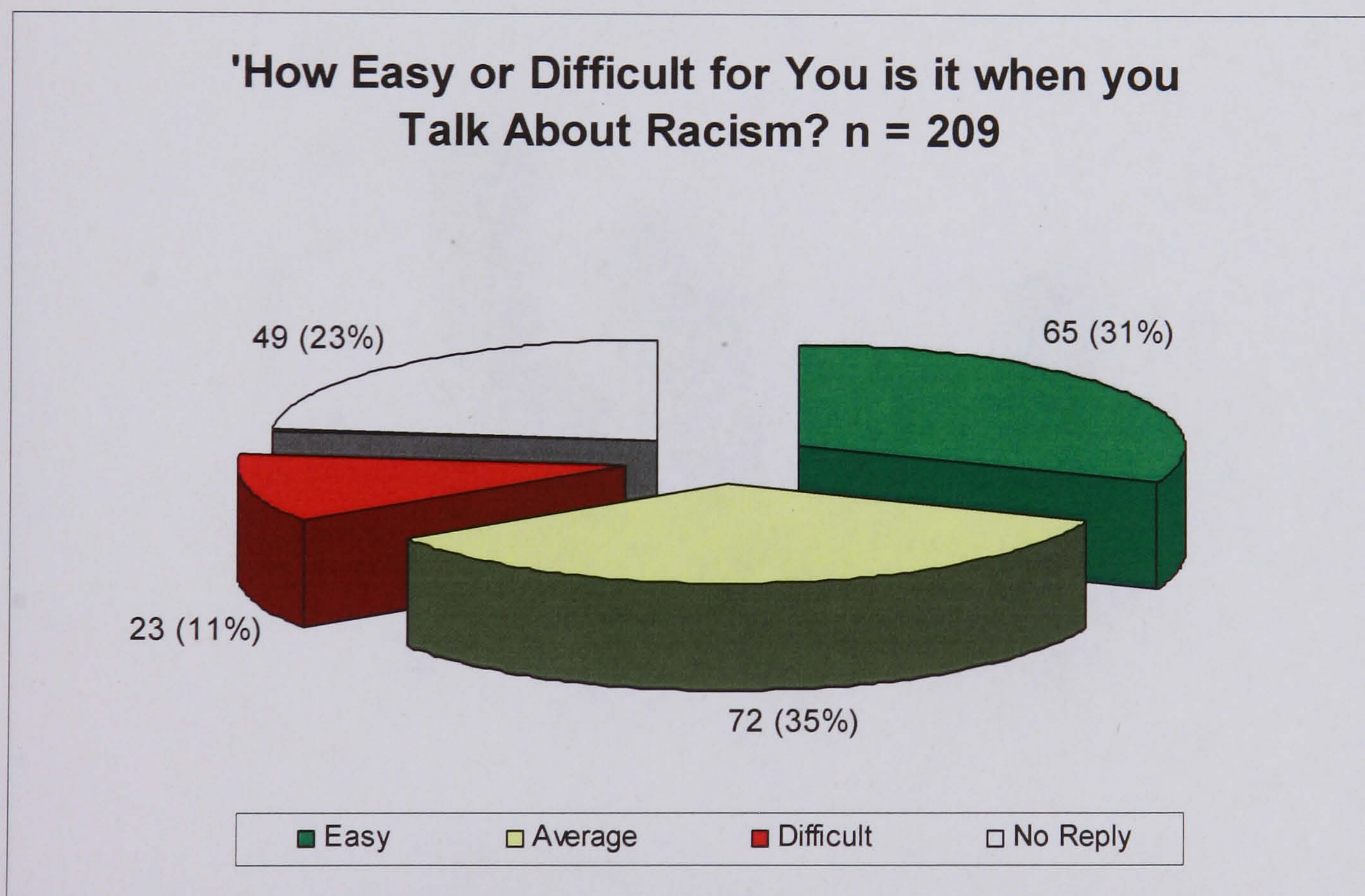
So far as these 126 participants themselves were concerned, these were not easy things to tell someone else and one might well imagine many participants being reticent to be open about their experience or having to screw up their courage to give an answer, especially when, however safe the setting might appear, they found themselves paired with someone in the Face to Face stage they had most likely not held such a personally searching conversation with before.

What was said in the follow up discussions however is most revealing, and underlines the prevailing presence of racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination at work, resulting in verbal and sometimes physical abuse for those on the receiving end. This data could be used to initiate a conversation around the subject with those responsible for the formal and informal groups from which participants came. What is interesting to note is that initially, Minorities Of Europe, actively intervened to prevent any sharing of this particular data, their spokesman saying, 'it would reflect badly on Coventry Schools'. It was only much later when the author had initiated further discussion on this matter in the Steering Group arguing for the integrity of the data to be kept, that its inclusion was finally accepted. In an age when image rather than substance is thought to count for more in the scramble for public reputation, it is the truth that is sacrificed and silenced, which is what almost occurred in this case.

Most participants were asked in the final evaluation section of the worksheet the question, 'How easy or difficult for you is it when you talk about racism?' The first point to note is that for 51% of the 423 participants (whose worksheets were

returned), this was not a question included in their worksheet. For the others who were asked, Chart 11 (page 285) shows the range of replies given. 31% (n = 65) found it easy to talk about racism, 11% (n = 23) found it difficult, with 35% (n = 72) indicating it was average, neither particularly easy nor difficult and 23% (n = 49) giving no reply to the question. This question gives the clearest indication, directly from participants themselves, that some 11% were prepared to say racism was a difficult subject to talk about. Less than one third were prepared to say conversation about racism was easy.

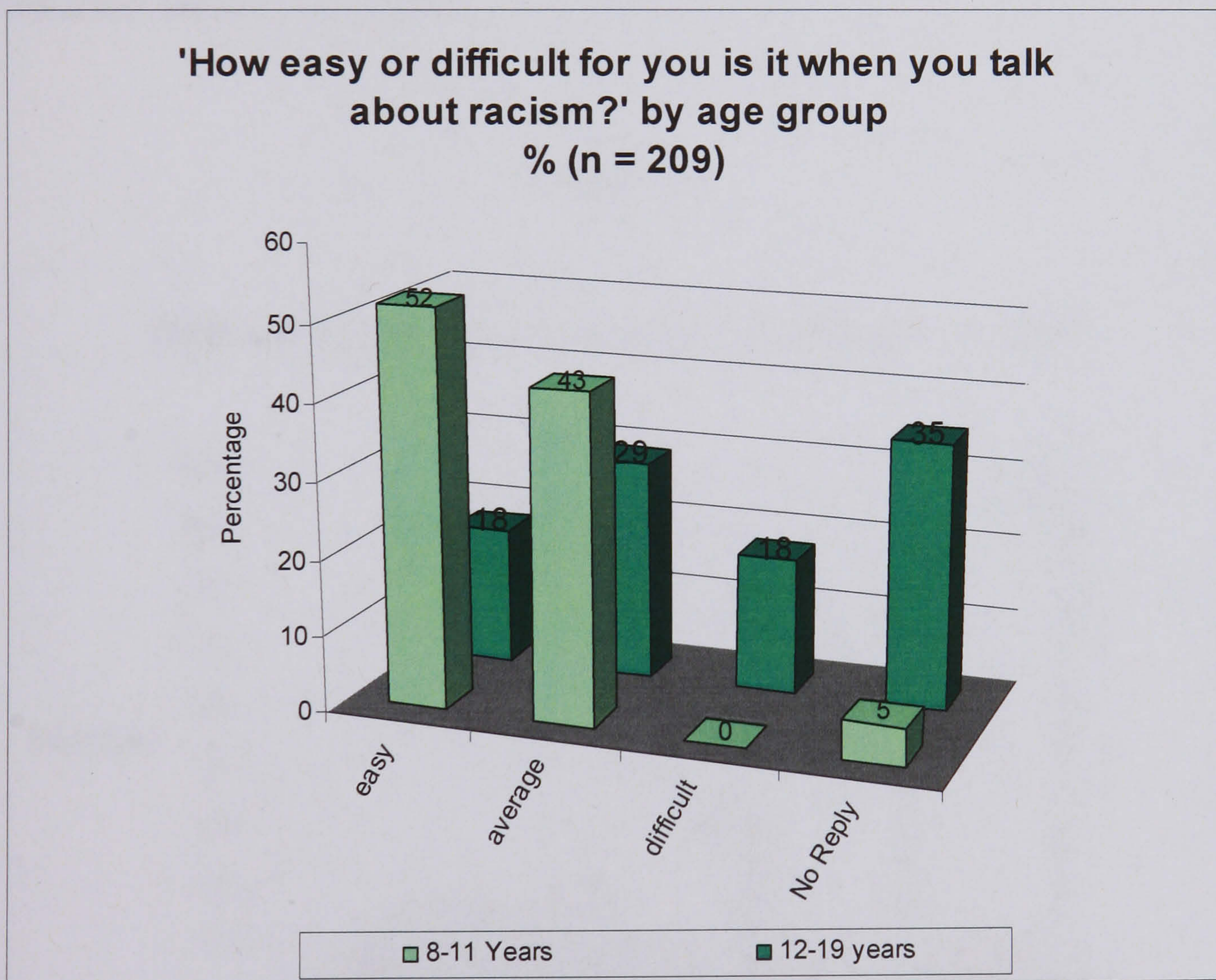
Chart 11



What is particularly interesting is just how contrasting replies were between the younger and older age groups. Over half (52%) of the 8-11 year age group found it easy compared with only 18% of the 12-19 year old group. None of the 8-11

year olds said it was difficult to talk about racism, whereas 18% of the older group said it was, with a further 35% of the older group giving no reply against 5% of the younger ones. When the data sets for gender are looked at, there is a discernible difference between male and female replies to this question, with girls finding it easier to talk than boys. The contrast in replies between younger and older age participants suggests there is an increased reticence and difficulty in talking about racism for participants of secondary school age (See Chart 12, page 286).

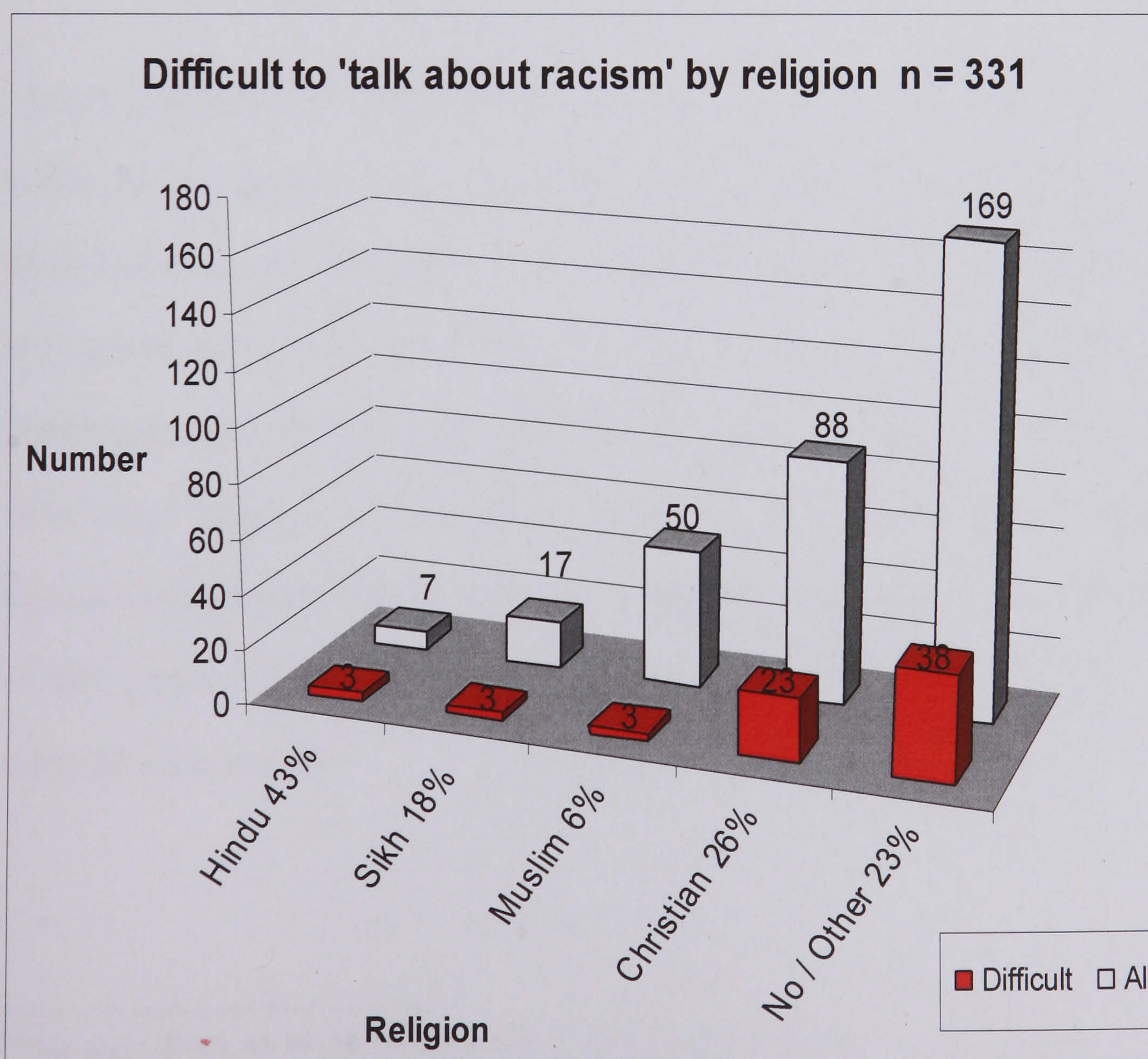
Chart 12



There is a one further question to ask of the data produced in this chapter and it is this: Does it tell us whether different ethnic groups find it easier or more difficult to talk about 'race' / racism? One way to do this is to look at the replies to the

question ‘How easy or difficult for you is it when you talk about racism?’ by different religion. Religion has been shown to be a key identifier given by participants (reflected in, for example, it being the largest identifier category group when *Jones Primary School* were asked the About Me ‘I am ... ’ question and the second largest identifier group by the *Smiths Community College* after ‘nationality’. Religion also appeared in the participants’ poems, for example in the lines ‘race and creed’ and ‘we need to be thankful to our God above’, as well as being given as a reason for experiencing bullying and or racism). The following Chart 13 shows answers to the question ‘How easy do you find it to talk about racism?’ by religion.

Chart 13



Of the 80 participants who indicated it was difficult to talk, 46 were male (57.5%) and 34 female (42.5%), with 63 of the 80 (78.7%) from the youngest 8-11 age set. The percentage figure shown in Chart 13 against each religion refers to the proportion of that religion for whom talking about racism was difficult. So for example, 6% of Muslims indicated that it was difficult, whereas for Hindus 43% found it difficult. Bearing in mind the very small numbers of Hindus involved, with only 3 indicating difficulty from a total of 7, it is not possible to draw conclusions from these particular figures. (Sikhs' similarly are a fairly small group here.) However, it is interesting to note that of 50 Muslim / Islam respondents, just 3 found it difficult to talk whereas for the largest two groups – Christian and No Religion / No Data / Other, 26% and 23% respectively said they found it difficult to talk about racism.

There is a suggestion, borne out by the findings of other research referred to earlier that it is the larger majority groupings that find it more difficult to talk about racism, not the smaller ethnic and religious minorities.⁷¹ The question, is why this should be so. Quite possibly the majority group take their culture for granted and rarely if ever have to negotiate their way as minority ethnic groups have to do. Further, they may have grievances they feel unable to express or they find carrying the difference between their idealized views and the social realities of their situation just too difficult to grapple with in dialogue. Indeed there are many possible reasons.

⁷¹ See pages 20-22, 41-44, 58, 66, 83, 96-97 in this chapter. The issue is a recurrent theme throughout Chapter Two.

Where participants gave further explanation for their difficulty in talking, they said things like, 'I am shy', 'Because it is hard', 'Like privacy', 'You don't really want to talk about it' and 'I don't think about it.' A number did not feel they could give a reason. One said, it is difficult because 'has lots of different cultures'. This contrasted with the comments of those who found it easy to talk who said things like, 'it's fun', 'I'm proud to be Italian', 'a nice background', 'is proud', and 'people will know more about me'.

When the difficulty of talking is looked at by language, it proved possible only to see that where English was the most strongly indicated language, 58 participants of 221 (26.2%) indicated it was difficult for them to talk about racism. These figures correlate very closely with the Christian and No Religion / No Data / Other, given above, lending support to the suggestion that around one quarter of the larger majority group find it difficult to talk.

Another interesting data search enquiry showed that of those who found it difficult to talk (n = 80), a clear majority (n = 50) also said they had experienced bullying / racism / being picked on themselves. This may suggest that on a personally sensitive matter, such as a participant being on the receiving end of such treatment, there is the probability that a 'discourse of reticence' will be the outcome (though the incidence of the racism element alone is not separately quantified). If there is a problem in talking about 'race' and racism amongst children and young people in Coventry and Warwickshire, the suggestion from this research is that talking is a difficulty for the majority group, especially amongst older males.

Drawing this chapter to a conclusion, it is possible to say that it is evident the project provides a valuable real life context in which to explore the theoretical issues around 'race' and silence which were raised in the first two chapters. It is also interesting to note that even in the earliest stages of the project design process and adoption of a methodology, a 'discourse of reticence' arose in the discourse amongst the various project partners. The nature of this discourse has been noted many times since.

In the early stages the researcher had to argue hard with the project partners, not entirely successfully, for a rigorous and consistent social science approach which would generate potentially useful research data. In the course of the developing project a number of unanticipated problems for the researcher in controlling the project occurred, which in itself was interesting. Nonetheless as Chapter Three has shown, a wealth of data was collected and some key observations have already been noted, for example, the project revealed an unanticipated though not wholly unsurprising link between 'race', racism and bullying. Turning now to Chapter Four, the point has come when it is time to make some concluding reflections on what the project, in the light of the earlier theoretical chapters, contributes to an understanding of a 'discourse of reticence'.

Chapter Four Concluding Reflections on ‘Race’ and Silence

4.1 Learning from the Project

Most feedback from participants and their leaders indicates the Swapping Cultures Initiative was experienced positively. In broad terms: it was fun and interesting to meet another person; and, in the course of a dialogue focussing on cultural background and identity, it satisfied and stimulated curiosity – serious issues were sometimes aired and reflected on; and, just very occasionally inter-relational clashes and difficulties were encountered. Typically, a secondary school pupil in Coventry said:

I think Swapping Cultures is a good way to get to know other people because most people judge each other by where they’re from, or what colour skin they have. I think they should do more of these programmes so that people would learn more about each other.

But what was learned? What, in summary, are the key outcomes from this research which focussed on children and young people; and, what about ‘race’ and racism, silence and silencing and holding difficult conversations about these things: did it illuminate or confound? Having earlier introduced the inclusion of focus groups (p. 224) and post-workshop de-brief meetings with teachers and young people’s group leaders as part of the empirical project, the data generated in these settings now needs to be presented. These groups provided additional information which can be set alongside both the other empirical findings outlined in the previous chapter and the theoretical work with which this thesis began.

In all seven focus groups met and written reports were compiled jointly by the facilitator and author immediately after each meeting. All workshops were also followed up with a de-brief group session with teachers and young people’s

leaders, usually on the same day before the Swapping Cultures facilitators left the site, otherwise they took place within a week of the workshop to which it related. Later telephone conversations with the workshop link teacher or leader were routinely used to follow up all workshops in the weeks following to obtain further feedback as to their experience of the project. Data from all three sources – focus groups, de-brief sessions and telephone follow up add to and strengthen what can be learned from the workshop data alone.

Focus groups were carefully structured occasions and yielded useful qualitative data in their own right. It was in these groups that some of the difficulties arising from the workshop sessions were raised and further explored with participants. Sometimes the difficulties in talking about ‘race’ and silence were found to reflect the low level of listening and questioning skills of some participants. For others focus group members indicated there was a real difficulty for participants in knowing what was meant by ‘culture’, which was described as a difficult concept to grasp. One youngster explained his reticence at talking about his own cultural background for ‘fear I might be misunderstood’. Clearly language itself was also sometimes an obstacle, one focus group member describes his dialogue partner thus ‘he has difficulty with English’.

In another focus group one member talked about feeling nervous and embarrassed at the self-disclosure around culture and background; and another commented on their reticence to talk with someone they didn’t know, ‘it was a bit weird being with another school. I didn’t know them.’ In another group, an 11 year old said, ‘it is difficult to talk about racism... religion, if you haven’t

experienced it – people don't know what offends me'. One person noted how their workshop conversation changed, 'we got on well at first, then it was difficult, then it was OK again.' Clearly a 'discourse of reticence' could arise, as argued in Chapter Two, for a number of different reasons, and this was reflected in the feedback received from these groups.

Members of another focus group wanted to use the occasion to talk about their school workshop in the context of their experiences of bullying. The dialogue, difficult for some pupils at this school, seemed to be something pupils felt safe enough to air and explore within the confidentiality the focus group afforded.

One teacher in a de-brief meeting describes how 'race' had arisen shortly before the workshop, when on a school coach trip. Recalling the occasion she said, 'Race, racism becomes very emotional, emotive... has caused flare up, a temper on one occasion... on the coach to Alton Towers. It is a difficult subject. We had to intervene.' The focus groups and meetings with teachers and leaders invariably generated much energy, lively discussion and reflective engagement on the experience of the workshop.

For the majority of the time focus group members spoke positively about their workshop experience, typically, one 11 year old said, 'Christian and Muslim, we got on fine' and in the same group, another participant comments on their awareness that in the wider world there were global conflicts between different groups, but for them 'it was OK in school'. Having a 'safe place' to talk and using frameworks of participation clearly helped the dialogue process.

It was only in the debrief sessions that discourse and silences were more fully explained. One teacher was not surprised when it was reported back that certain pupils had not joined in the dialogue parts of the workshop. She said it was because 'they were new to the UK... would feel vulnerable exposing themselves.' In this case it was the impact of asylum rules and regulations which created a 'discourse of reticence'. Generally the converse was true and feedback reflects the high level of dialogue which occurred through the workshops. Teachers and young people's leaders were generally impressed by the seriousness with which participants engaged in the process and at their surprising depth of understanding and sophistication in handling dialogue in what were seen as sensitive subject areas.

Perhaps two pupil's comments written on Postit Notes in a focus group sum up the experience of many:

I think Swapping Cultures was good because I learned a lot from others in the group.

It was brill talking to people I didn't know.

Leaders for their part expressed positive feedback and felt the programme offered them an otherwise unavailable tool for dialogue which helped them bridge the prevailing inter-personal small group patterns in a way no other curriculum resource available to them could.

This thesis began with a personal journey: a reflection on my personal experience growing up in white middle England, then encountering 'race' thinking and racism in the West Midlands and beyond – on occasion being close to some of its most raw and divisive moments. I have found there is much value in deep

listening, in rhetorical listening (c.f. Krista Ratcliffe 1999):⁷² to *hear* what is happening behind the voices, stereotypes and hyped discourse whether that listening is attuned to ‘race’ riots or everyday interpersonal communication. This listening invariably reveals a more complex and nuanced social picture than at first appears to be the case. The journalist, Neal Ascherson wrote immediately after the Broadwater Farm riot in 1985, ‘After a great riot, there is much to be cleared away: the rubble, the burned-out cars, the broken glass. But then, for weeks afterwards, there is work to be done to clear away the thick layer of nonsense which sifts down like ash from the stratosphere upon us all.’ He sees rioting as a voice, ‘the traditional resort of those who feel excluded and oppressed by the social and political structure under which – rather than in which – they live.’ (*Sunday Observer*).

Similarly, the history of ‘race’, since its invention about the time of the steam engine, has often been characterised by thick layers of nonsense which have obscured, silenced and hidden its form, its historic and present significance, and its continuing discourse and intent. At its root lie questions of individual and group identities and social power, a fundamental relational dichotomy: what makes *me* one of *us*, one of *ours*; and, *you* the *other*, the stranger, one of *them*. ‘Race’ is a site of struggle, of contest and division; and, in any struggle there will be alliances. Hence ‘race’ appears and disappears alongside other struggles of class, gender, religion and politics. In Britain the legacies of the slave trade and the post-imperial migrations together with the pan-global movements of asylum seekers and refugees have led to the significant physical presence and

⁷² see pages 113-16.

demographic changes which project the issues of ‘race’ into contemporary popular discourse. Accordingly, ‘race’ has been subject to the influence of various social constructs which occupy, preoccupy and shape public discourse: these include assimilation, multiculturalism, integration, political correctness and community cohesion. What is surprising is that these constructs are often viewed less than critically – silently allowed to shape thinking and practice. In reality what these constructs do is to serve as part of the making and masking mechanisms which perpetuate a racialised society, and this is done silently, through what Goldberg (2002: 2) calls ‘one of the most telling evasions of the past two decades of thinking about race ... the almost complete silence concerning the *state*.’

If nothing else the empirical work undertaken here points toward the continuing significance and power of ‘race’ whose presence and operation is shrouded in silence and silencing. The contextual significance of key social constructs is addressed in the following sub-sections before considering the specific insights the Swapping Cultures project provided. This is then followed by some reflections on what this might have to say to about theory; some suggestions for further research; and, finally some concluding remarks about the power of ‘the discourse of reticence’ in maintaining a continuing racialised society with its racialised structures and processes perpetuating racisms and inequalities.

4.1.1 Assimilation

Assimilation, as a social construct, has as its primary aim, seeing minority groups merge, or being submerged, in the majority and dominant culture.⁷³ It is historicist in nature, and can be seen in evidence as early as the 1880s when it dominated, for example, both French colonial thinking and American policy toward Native Americans. In Britain it has perhaps been best characterised more recently by the Conservative politician Norman Tebbit's cricket test.⁷⁴ Some minority groups have long feared assimilation for what they see is a fusing together of cultures in a new and undesirable homogeneity in which their own identity is lost. In the early 1960s government education policy in Britain was firmly assimilationist, aimed at, 'bringing about the assimilation of immigrant children into national life' (Tomlinson 1983: 16). In Britain, assimilationism slipped from its ascendant position in politics, when in 1966 the then influential Labour politician, Roy Jenkins, in a memorable speech, discarded it to insist that 'race' should not be handled by 'a flattening out process of assimilation but equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (Labour History 1968: April). What followed was the panacea of multiculturalism, captured by Glazer (1997) in his book title, *We are all Multiculturalists Now* and immortalised by Parekh's (2000) description of Britain as a 'community of communities'. As assimilation was dropped from discourse multiculturalism became the rising new star.

⁷³ Assimilation needs to be distinguished from acculturation. Acculturation refers to the process of contact between people of different cultures and the outcome of such contact. Assimilation is a process whereby minority groups give themselves up to the dominant culture.

⁷⁴ In the 1983 General Election campaign, a Conservative election poster said: 'Labour says he's black, we say he's British.' The senior conservative politician, Norman Tebbit explained the implication – a suggested test of Britishness would be to ask which national cricket team people supported. This assimilative approach designated all but the most minimal appearances of cultural difference as unBritish.

4.1.2 Multiculturalism

It can likewise be questioned as to whether it is a sufficiently adequate construct to create social stability. Multiculturalism is both a theory and a practice. Is it able to achieve a cohesive society in which difference and diversity co-exist within a political framework of liberalism and tolerance, whilst critically addressing some of the key pillars supporting a racial state? Clearly such crude polarities as extreme assimilationism (where all minorities are subsumed) or extreme multiculturalism (which David Miliband recently described as ‘difference and group identity at the expense of national identity’, by which he means only British national identity (Miliband 2006), do not do justice to the normative place of multiculturalism in the mainstream of early twenty-first century British society.

Notwithstanding multiculturalism’s dominance, there have recently been notable public voices speaking out against multiculturalism and calling for a wider debate around integration, e.g. (Philips, T. 2005; Kundnani 2004).⁷⁵ Kundnani perhaps overstates the case when he says that events of September 11th 2001 denoted ‘the death of multiculturalism’, because multiculturalism had allowed disaffected elements to flourish under the guise of diversity (Kundnani: 2002), but he is surely correct when he points out that it had serious shortcomings and it took a crisis to make these transparently obvious.

⁷⁵ To be fair to Sir Trevor Philips, he is not arguing for an integration into a traditional model of Britishness which has somehow distilled it into a codified fixed core, but integration as a process involving a redefinition of what it means to be British in the light of the changes in society brought about by immigration and social change. The danger in Philips’ dramatic pronouncement is that he is wrongly perceived as entirely rejecting multiculturalism and embracing old-style assimilationism which is clearly not his position.

Multiculturalism marks a shift away from a 'race' referenced to an ethnic pluralism based society, if not one ostensibly marked by 'racelessness'. This has resulted in what Goldberg (2002: 217) calls a racial state characterised by 'insistent silences'. One might see these silences occurring where one might have expected a discourse on, for example, 'race' histories (e.g. colonialism) and/or on current tensions in the racial state (e.g. on racist housing policies or racist criminal justice). In practice though mentioned on the margins, these are silenced in the mainstream of social discourse. Multiculturalism itself is therefore open to criticism on several grounds:

First, the ideology of multiculturalism is largely silent on addressing matters of difference and inequality, for in seeking to celebrate all cultures it naturally essentialises cultural groups into 'race' or ethnic categories whilst simultaneously diverting the focus away from looking at issues of difference and inequality that actually exist between contesting and identifiable groups in society. As Malik rightly concludes, multiculturalism, in seeking to promote an equality of cultures, attempts to suppress dialogue on diversity and difference in the name of 'tolerance' (Malik 2002). Goldberg (2002: 218) draws attention to the way state multiculturalism has 'made more difficult the drawing of causal connections between colonial legacies and contemporary racial conditions in European or settler societies'.

Secondly, multiculturalism neither delivers equality nor ends discrimination. In so far as it promotes increased understanding and cultural awareness it seeks to contribute to community harmony, but in avoiding the underlying contested

issues in 'race' and racism it acts like someone trying to keep the lid on a pan that could boil over at any time. 'Race' and racism have been and continue to be present in British society; and naturally this includes Coventry and Warwickshire the location for our own study. Malik appreciates that silence and silencing are linked with multiculturalism and with the use of political correctness, going so far as to argue that 'The Thought Police are already at work' (Malik 2002). The result – silence on 'race'.

Thirdly, multiculturalism has not been sufficiently developed theoretically so as to be equipped to address racism. This is reflected in the way projects, sponsored under the community cohesion umbrella, have emerged. For example, there has been no insistence on a critical reflective or academic critique of the Swapping Cultures Initiative. All that was required was a final report from the lead agency. It is interesting to observe how projects tend to fall into one of two camps – anti-racism based projects (e.g. Peacemaker Oldham) or multicultural projects (e.g. Swapping Cultures). These have been pursued on parallel tracks and it is unusual if not unknown for integrated projects which address both to have been developed. As Carby (1982) shows this has always been a problem for multiculturalism.

The Swapping Cultures project exposed how teachers and youth leaders were ill prepared and reluctant to handle dialogue on 'race' and racism – issues raised in undertaking the multicultural Swapping Cultures project. The formal training was not designed to equip them to look at this area. It omitted and thereby silenced it.

Reflecting on what took place in the classrooms leaves important issues outstanding – that participants need ‘safe’ spaces in which to dialogue about ‘race’; that thought needs to be given to how the multicultural content of Swapping Cultures might be brought into the future curricula of the school or youth group; and, that teachers and youth leaders need training and support themselves to enhance their own understanding and skills in this area. That leaders chose not to raise any of these areas in discussion groups or follow-up telephone interviews is remarkable. There could be various reasons for this. Perhaps such activity is seen as peripheral to core activities / curriculum. Equally likely, their responses reflect the pervading influence of the ‘discourse of reticence’.

There can be little doubt that multiculturalism, as it is currently constructed, is not intended to facilitate a substantive critical engagement with issues of ‘race’, racism and equality. As Cante himself writes, underlining if not endorsing the power of the status quo, ‘social policy has generally been framed on the basis that racism is a regrettable, but inevitable part of multicultural life’ (Cante 2005: 16).

Fourthly, contrary to past attempts to naturalise ‘race’, by placing people in discrete ‘race’ categories, it proved to be a slippery and ‘floating signifier’ of identity. It easily elides into ethnicity. As the empirical work in Swapping Cultures found, people often prefer that both ‘race’ and ethnicity are lost through using a less contested categorisation such as ‘cultural background’. Was multiculturalism responsible for this? When the advocates of multiculturalism,

most keenly present in the field of education, ostensibly wish to celebrate what they see as the rich diversity of cultural groups they end up in practice tending toward a new, or rather regressive, essentialising of 'race' categories once again, but this time legitimated by the demands of the multicultural construct. The state's protective reticence comes powerfully into play when differences are seen as touchstones of social danger and anything which poses a potential for division is socially understood as best avoided. Indeed 'race', always a difficult subject for conversation in all manner of fields and disciplines, is as we have seen, hedged around with silences, and multiculturalism contributes significantly to these.

4.1.3 Political Correctness

Contrary to first impressions, silence on 'race' has been shown to be a fruitful and revealing line of enquiry. Indeed, it is as much a form of communication as words and voices, and it is therefore a significant site of study in its own right. Silence can indicate that a potentially explosive conversation and topic has been avoided and many people have pointed out that silence can sometimes be a preferred option, for example Seamus Heaney's advice 'say nothing' (Heaney 1975). The power of silence can be seen in its ability for example to sustain the status quo, which means it enables a continuing pattern of super- and subordination to continue unchallenged in a racialised society.

The detail of how silencing works has been explored in depth. When, for example, the language and communication of 'race' is examined, its inadequacy for the task can result in crude binaries at work, empirical studies showing these

to be hollow and insufficient models of social reality (e.g. Back 1996). Popular forms of accepted patterns of speech, covered by the phrase ‘politically correct’, are found on closer reflection to be a means of silencing, of avoiding difficult issues by setting the accepted / safe boundaries of acceptable speech. Operating mainly through the threat of ridicule, political correctness works ambiguously, closing down speech as often as facilitating a more full and open discourse. Difficult and contested discourses are therefore often avoided.

Political correctness is an insidious social construct whose danger is not usually recognised for what it truly is. Ostensibly it offers society a way of speaking and behaving which is ostensibly attractive for being common sense and commonly agreed. In reality it deceives by attempting to disarm potential critique and through ridicule attempts to dismiss attempts to discuss racism and inequality as being a left wing tactic and ill-judged. Ridicule is sometimes deserved and such examples add strength by giving credence to political correctness. Political correctness is another silencing tool.

The frequently observed tendency to see the white majority group finding silence about ‘race’ normalised or invisible, is perhaps one of the most alarming features to emerge from this study.⁷⁶ The great silences that are around whiteness render the majority cultural group often quite unable to see its own cultural characteristics, through a process of cultural normalcy and invisibility. In Britain

⁷⁶ Majority feelings on ‘race’ can be expressed in many other ways than through silence, as Hewitt’s recent book, *White Backlash and the Politics of Multiculturalism*, which contains a detailed study of racism and the politics of multiculturalism in Eltham, London illustrates. Sadly, Hewitt does not address white silence as a response (Hewitt 2005).

there are both riots, racial incidents and voices; and, quietness and silence, but it is the latter which is the more often overlooked.

Incidentally, there is a marked difference between quiet conversation and silence, as Khaled Hosseini's fictional hero Amir observes in his nephew Sohrab:

It would be erroneous to say Sohrab was quiet. Quiet is peace. Tranquillity. Quiet is turning down the VOLUME knob on life. Silence is pushing the OFF button. Shutting it down. All of it. Sohrab's silence wasn't the self-imposed silence of those with convictions, of protesters who seek to speak their cause by not speaking at all. It was the silence of one who has taken cover in a dark place; curled up all the edges and tucked them under. (Hosseini 2003: 315)

Whites sometimes opt not just for quiet conversations in safe venues, but also for silence. Similarly, silence can be deep indeed, not just quietening conversations, but silencing them altogether. It is Füredi (2005) who has perceptively observed that political correctness derives much of its power from the prevailing culture of fear which emanates substantially from the ruling hegemony.

As Beckford (2004), Cone (2004) and others have observed, whites do not want to talk about 'race' or whiteness. Fenton (2003) rightly describes the ethnic majority as a 'silent majority', who are after all, Carlyle's 'silent people'. To search for silence is to find silence. In literature, in politics, in academia (even in the social sciences) and in the media there is silence on 'race'. What is interesting is that empirical studies conducted at the local level prove to be particularly illuminating. For example, Nayak (1999) on white ethnicities in NE England reveals how he found whites quite unable to articulate their own grievances (see pages 144-149). The prevailing social constructs are responsible for ensuring so deep a silence. It is Nayak's work more than any other which

pointed to the value of undertaking a local contextual study with children and young people through which to explore 'race' and silence further.

4.1.4 Community Cohesion

Community Cohesion has been an attempt, using a new social construct, to focus on building understanding, harmony and bridges between people of different cultural backgrounds. It was placed at the heart of government thinking by the Home Secretary in 2001 when he established the Community Cohesion Review Team.

In seeking to build cohesion through building relationships, one might think that the Review Team's work would inevitably be drawn into facing racism and inequality as substantive issues. After some five years with community cohesion driving the policy agenda that point has not yet arrived. Will it, or will this social construct give way in turn to a new one?

Trust, tolerance and harmony between groups can only be at best partially achieved whilst issues of difference remain unaddressed. Within community cohesion, as within multiculturalism, there is a tendency, a bias, toward a strong citizenship and integrationist agenda, and an aversion toward exploring and addressing underlying issues of substance. It is important to recognise that *Swapping Cultures* was sponsored and supported as part of the government's community cohesion initiative – the project is sited within this construct and political agenda. It was therefore shaped by this ideology; more than this, the Steering Group partners identified strongly with it, indeed they arranged for Ted

Cantle to launch the project personally and fostered continuing links with him and his government Community Cohesion Unit throughout the project. The project partners together with those in the project Steering Group accepted community cohesion uncritically, without a single voice of dissent being raised – a sure testimony to the power of this social construct and its ability to silence any attention being given to the underlying issues of difference and inequality.

Community cohesion refers back to multiculturalism in its similar emphasis on creating positive attitudes between groups and its lack of emphasis on exploring and addressing issues of inequality and racism. On these it has been silent. The subtitle to Cantle's opus on *Community Cohesion* is 'A New Framework for Race and Diversity'; the fact that it is offering a framework, a tool for practice, reflects how embedded the construct is to delivering a government agenda (Cantle 2005). Community cohesion is a sign of the government's need to impose order where it is thought there is a real and present danger, a fear to be faced and a potential threat of civil disturbance to be allayed.

Is cohesion but a quick-fix social glue being applied by government to hold the different groups together, a plea for community harmony built at the level of personal good relations, when the structural issues needing to be addressed relating to 'race', class and inequality rumble underneath? The danger is that these deep forces, if unaddressed, may ultimately prove so strong they will pull community apart at the seams. Are not these the real and continuing issues that lie behind the disturbances that arose in 2001?

Community cohesion as a construct has yet to demonstrate that it has been taken beyond the political arena and been subject to critical review. It is an idea which until now is yet another social construct wedded to government policy, giving no more than lip service in the direction of racism and inequality. In diverting attention, in distracting focus, it silences by default the development of dialogue, understanding and policy development on critically important issues of difference.

4.1.5 'Race' and the Complex 'Discourse of Reticence'

Considerable space has been given in this thesis (see section 2.3) to thinking about how to conceptualise silence. This has meant looking at difficult conversations around 'race' and asking when and whether indeed it is always possible to speak (Loomba 1998); and, when silence occurs, what might this mean. It can be, as Loomba argues, a means of disguising the operation of power. 'Vercors' shows silence as the voice of resistance to oppression (Brown and Stokes 1991); and, Mead as pointing toward and alerting of a social danger (Baldwin 1972), usually seen as something to be avoided. Yes, conversation around 'race' is made the more difficult because in the arena of power, identities and language constantly shift; and, 'race' itself serving as a 'floating signifier' in which individuals and groups are constantly renegotiating who they are in their social situation; and, how they present themselves to others. Though silence occurs in this process, dialogue and conversation can still be possible. Addressing 'race' becomes all the more difficult when, in addition, government generates social constructs which repeatedly have the effect of silencing 'race'.

'Race' is a subject of complexity and ambivalence and for those who say it is good to talk, section 2.4 examined when and why this might not always be the case, for silence takes many forms, it can be individual as well as international; it can be morally positive striving for justice as well as negative and colluding with inequality; and, it can fail unintentionally if the 'frameworks of participation' are not there or sufficiently robust, Goffman (1968) and Wajnryb (2001). Ultimately, the 'discourse of silence' presents as a means of maintaining the status quo; perpetuating the othering process; and, colludes with the avoidance of full engagement with the issues of equality and justice. It is significant, can be powerful and yet is often unnoticed. Even in theoretical literature there is much silence, not only at seeking to understand the 'discourse of reticence' around 'race' at the inter-personal level, but also as Goldberg crucially observes:

the theoretical literature on state formation is virtually silent about the racial dimensions of the modern state. And the theoretical literature on race and racism, given the culturalist turn of the past two decades, until very recently has largely avoided in any comprehensive fashion the implication of the state in racial formation and racist exclusion.
(Goldberg 2002: 2)

Swapping Cultures took place very much within an education setting, in schools and youth groups. Teachers and youth leaders have been found to be inadequately prepared to deal with issues of 'race' (Gaine 1995 and Jones 1999). Jones in particular was so taken with this when looking at the experience of new teachers, that for him the 'avoidance of the subject of "race"' and the 'disappearances, omissions and silences' then became central in his research. The Swapping Cultures-based empirical work in Chapter Three resonates with and amplifies Gaine's findings. 'Race' is indeed subject to a 'discourse of silence'

which stretches from the powerful ruling hegemony to relations between powerless young children.

What was learned through Swapping Cultures can be summarised as follows, many of the key points are shown to relate clearly to the operation of a ‘discourse of reticence’. It was difficult to control data. Adults responsible for the project tried at various points to remove the ‘race’ word and elide the challenge of a difficult conversation on ‘race’ into one on the safer neutral subject of ‘culture’, usually done in the context of thinking of celebrating it. The methodology relied too strongly on the use of a written worksheet, and when different approaches were tried, e.g. through art and drama exercises, these proved fruitful alternatives for self expression. In part the difficulties with the written worksheet were due to the limited verbal and written abilities of some participants, but in part they were also resulting from wider social constructs and silencing constraints at work which had an impact on participants.

Conversation was built upon the twin principles of having a safe place and enabling facilitators. What was not said at the time, but is clear on later reflection, is that the need for a safe place indicates the presence of unsafe environments in which conversation is unlikely, and the need for enabling facilitators suggests a prevailing ‘discourse of reticence’ to be overcome. Feedback from focus groups and post workshop briefings and interviews helped in the exploration of meaning which the quantitative data did not always sufficiently illumine or explain.

Children and young people link together bullying and racism arising from their cultural background; and, a significant proportion had experienced this (38.1%). The Steering group found the extent of bullying and the link between 'race' and bullying the most profound and indeed shocking findings of the project. There was an initial reticence to include this in the findings for fear this would have a negative impact on the public image of Coventry schools. The author's insistence ultimately prevailed.

There are suggestions that there is a significant age and gender difference with older groups and males being more silent than younger age groups and females. Silence is not evenly distributed. It is illuminating to see where it is most prevalent. Individuals varied greatly in their understanding of the concepts of 'race', ethnicity, culture, etc. Adults were generally surprised at the level and sophistication of understanding they found. Where had adults gained the view that children and young people did not sufficiently understand the issues other than through taking on board prevailing social constructs and ideologies which seek to silence discussion around 'race' and equality issues? Migrations and wider global events and conflicts have some impact on local conversations and silences.

The process of othering happens at school. It is seen especially in the less formal settings of lunchtimes and playtimes (see also Smith 2005). Just how effective a community cohesion initiative is in terms of creating harmonious relations might best be understood by looking at changes in the patterns of social interaction outside the school gate. The Steering Group did not give attention to the different

social worlds within which participants moved, the initiative focussed on just one aspect.

The importance of curiosity, interest and goodwill was observed. These are positive motivators and important qualities to nurture and build on. Swapping Cultures undoubtedly offers the opportunity to strengthen and build community relations building on these attributes. The local experience of Swapping Cultures in Coventry and Warwickshire was characterised by fun rather than fear. One wonders whether this may have enabled subjects to voice issues and hold conversations here when in other locations heightened tensions and fears might render the subject of cultural difference a matter for a 'safe', easier to handle, deep silence.

The importance of the creative arts, the writing of poetry and songs in enabling verbal expression of thoughts and feelings provide valuable supplementary alternatives to the constraining written worksheet.

Cultural identities, so easily stereotyped, are in reality complex and nuanced. The range of languages spoken, the varieties of religious and ethnic identity, the mix of nationalities and self descriptions given by participants indicate a need for public debate to be much more tailored to complex cultural realities. Public discourse often resorts to stereotypes and thus ill prepares participants for conversations of cultural complexity.

Some 38% of participants acknowledged that 'race', ethnicity and colour were difficult subjects about which to converse. Rates varied between different groups and there was a gender difference and age difference. Again, findings suggest older age groups and males find it more difficult to talk. Is it the case, as people become older and assume adult roles, they become increasingly subject to the 'discourse of reticence'?

The normalcy and invisibility of the majority white English identity appeared at various points in the research. More work needs to be done to explore how the majority identity / identities can be more freely acknowledged and discussed.

This is a particularly significant site of silence. There is a suggestion that Muslim participants found it easier to talk about racism than those from the majority faith group who define themselves as Christian.

What was said in the course of Swapping Cultures may not be either what is said in more public settings or what is thought in the silence of private thought and venue. Accordingly, it is more likely the full extent of participants' silence is more likely to be underestimated in this study than overestimated, notwithstanding all the efforts made to facilitate conversation. (see Krysan 1998)

Since the events of 9/11 and 7/7 the focus of debate around 'race' in Britain has shifted from skin colour to faith and one of the questions in popular discourse now is: has Islam become the new black? Crises and times of tension can propel people into conversation. They can equally lead to silence and the silencing of discussion. How is the latest crisis shaping discourse around 'race'? In more

settled times and in the relative tranquillity of middle England, the study undertaken in Coventry and Warwickshire shows that both racism and the othering exclusions upon which it is based make for difficult conversations even at the best of times. These conversations are complex and as subtle as they are sophisticated. They are both ambiguous and ambivalent. Such difficult conversations are clearly marked and defined by a 'discourse of reticence' underscored by powerful social constructs such as community cohesion which express government thinking and policy, and the prevailing ethos of popular discourse. The 'discourse of reticence' reveals a need for further theoretical work to be undertaken to understand 'race' discourse and the continuing racialisation of society in a racial state.

4.2 Implications for Theory

It has not been the main purpose of this thesis to theorise about 'race' and racism; the material presented in Chapter One simply provides the ground work for looking at the particular question of discourse on 'race'. Chapter Two shows how this is characterised not only by many voices but often by silence and silencing too. These features have been noted in passing by many people, but here in this study the 'discourse of reticence' takes centre stage, for too long having been hurriedly passed over. It has been argued that these silences which are pervasive and persistently attached to discourse on racial societies are to be listened to and understood. Social constructs such as assimilation and multiculturalism are attempts by socially dominant and powerful groups to protect, even promote, their prevailing ideologies. Built within each of them are

mechanisms to silence any minority voices intent on questioning the economic interests and social position of the dominant hegemony.

The theoretical exploration undertaken in Chapters One and Two clearly points to the continuing need to research the roots of 'race' and the 'discourse of silence' that so often surrounds it. The recent culturalisation of racism – especially the move from skin colour to religion, and indeed to more complex and combination identifiers including class, gender, nation and disability – has merely broadened the ground and may have diverted some of the focus away from inequalities, injustices and lack of civil rights, which got earlier generations so passionately aroused. Conversely, it may also have served to inadvertently bring together those disparate groups of people on the receiving end of such ideologies, policies and practices into new collaborative groupings built around what have become common issues. It remains too soon to tell.

Today meta-narratives have lost ground to the relativism of the post modern. In such a context there is, therefore, no substitute for historical and local reality based studies which tell the story of the multi-faceted and complex ways in which 'race' thinking and conversation continues to reproduce and to have impact on society today. A critical engagement with the Swapping Cultures project has revealed silence and silencing. It has served to raise crucial questions about community cohesion and other social constructs which reflect government thinking.

The effect of silence can be to mask 'race' and racism from public discourse and

keep these subjects off the political agenda. Indeed ‘race’ thinking and racism are not only a matter of silence, they are also often verbally denied and steered into silence (denial being an important element in the ‘discourse of reticence’) and it is therefore important that future research delivers on both the voices of ‘race’ and racism as well as the silences.⁷⁷ In the West Midlands, since the events of 2001, there has been a monitoring of extreme right wing parties, their activities – what they have been saying publicly and through their web sites, conducted by both the Commission for Racial Equality and the Government Office West Midlands Community Cohesion Office. However, there has been no monitoring of the silences at work in the region, no public body initiative to look at the underlying issues around cultural diversity and points of tension; and, no public scheme or project to facilitate discussion or debate around those matters people have not been able to talk about.

Specific further areas of research are suggested by the work undertaken in Chapter Three and these are outlined in the following section. Especially important are critical reflections on prevailing social constructs such as multiculturalism, community cohesion and political correctness. So often received as a given, they need to be held up to critical review and tested. As Bhavani et al (2005) rightly point out, most policy interventions provide a ‘what to do’ approach to ‘race’ and racism, ‘and frequently ignore the “why”’ (the causes of racism). This same study draws attention to the important link between the local racisms of the ordinary members of the public and the racism of the ‘elite’ who hold power and often legitimate the local racisms. Theoretical

⁷⁷ The International Council on Human Rights Policy (2000) study on global racism showed that the denial of racism is almost as common as prejudice itself.

research needs to further explore the ways in which this relationship works (Bhavani et al 2005: 133). Remembering of course, like all relationships, it is conducted using communication, which includes silences as well as words.

4.3 Suggestions for Future Research and Action

Swapping Cultures was an ambitious local community cohesion initiative with broader horizons than exploring ‘the discourse of reticence’. Nonetheless, it proved a useful vehicle through which to make some initial explorations of the issue; and, suggestions for future research and action emerge from it. There are more general areas such as those relating to identity and discourse as well as project specific areas that directly arise from the Swapping Cultures experience. The latter is probably the best place to start as some of what emerged from the local context leads into what might be done in a more general sense.

The fact that 38.1% of participants indicated that they had experienced bullying or racism based on their culture or background raises this field as a serious social issue. The policy initiatives taken through Community Cohesion projects such as the Swapping Cultures project are deserving of further study in their own right.

The inauguration of a new Institute of Community Cohesion in December 2005 at Coventry University under Professor Ted Cante is a welcome commitment to provide academic understanding and scrutiny to this policy agenda. The concurrent publication by Cante (2005) in his book on community cohesion includes chapters on ‘Multiculturalism’ (Chapter Three) and ‘Prejudice, Discrimination and the “Fear of Difference”’ (Chapter Four). He later explores

the link between values and identity, and the citizenship agenda in Chapter Five. It is insightful material charting the progress, mainly uncritically, of contemporary government ideologies and policies.

In his final chapter he looks at developing a programme of community cohesion. In doing this he stresses the importance of finding a common language, and that 'dialogue is a prerequisite for common understanding' and that does not necessarily mean having a debate, but moving into a position of trust, shared values and meaningful relationships. (Cantle: 160) This is as near as Cantle gets to recognising silence (though he tells how in Northern Ireland, years of enmity between people have made the opportunities for meeting for dialogue less easy to arrange). Cantle never sees the state as racial or the power of silence at work as a controlling instrument.

Cantle praises the 'imaginative "swapping cultures" programmes' as an example of community cohesion work undertaken in the voluntary sector (Cantle: 192).

The biggest criticism that can be made of Cantle is that just as he fails to critically address the limitations of community cohesion projects he also fails to address critically multiculturalism or community cohesion as ideologies and in so doing allies himself firmly with government, its policies and the ruling hegemony.

Swapping Cultures is not unique in that it was funded with no requirement that it should be critically evaluated. For this reason, though not entirely so, it proved a difficult project to control and the quantitative data produced was limited. Indeed

there were times when the focus on 'race' looked uncertain as teachers and leaders feared addressing 'dangerous' issues overtly. Such projects could gain from better background information, preparation, guidelines, built in research expectations, etc. For example, adults commonly underestimated the understanding and sophistication even 8-11 year olds had of abstract concepts like 'race', ethnicity and culture. Nonetheless some interesting material did emerge and further research is suggested.

For example, a longitudinal study would help to establish whether or not the older the child / young person becomes, the more silent they are on the subject of 'race'. It might also explore gender differences further, as this study suggests boys find it more difficult to talk about 'race' and related issues less than girls. Swapping Cultures suggested different religious groups found it more difficult than others to talk. Why was this? Is it because the largest, predominantly white and dominant Christian group, see themselves, in Perry's term, as being constructed as 'cultureless identities' (Perry 2001) and, therefore, unable to negotiate 'race' or inter-cultural / inter-religious issues? It would be interesting to explore this area, especially in relation to the smaller religious groups where the sample size needed to be larger. Similarly the suggestion that around a quarter of the majority religious group as well as the large 'no religion / no data / other' groups found it difficult to talk about 'race' and racism is worth exploring to see if it is replicated in other settings. The research revealed the important link between bullying and 'race' / racism, the participants themselves making the point.

Swapping Cultures contains much that can be improved on in the light of experience and it would be useful to test out the efficacy for example of different ways of holding 'Face to Face' dialogue, with less emphasis being made in future on the written worksheet and the English language. Leaders and participants pointed toward the importance of those occasions in school life like lunch time and playtime and what happens outside the school gate as places providing significant indications of the underlying social interaction realities. Some future research might be conducted to explore this area. Does more or less 'race' talk / silence occur where different social constraints are at work than in the more formally arranged settings?

Clearly, Swapping Cultures took place in a context where the atmosphere was predominantly 'fun' rather than 'fear'. Some research into the experience where 'fear' is the stronger might be informative. In Coventry and Warwickshire, the natural curiosity of children and young people to meet with and engage freely with someone different to them was an extremely helpful trait to build on.

Whether such a curiosity is commonly found might be worthy of enquiry. The production of stories, poems and art was richly creative and provided most interesting and informative information. Though this was a by-product of the exercise; given the energy and imagination used in its production, it would be interesting to explore further how more such material might be produced and utilized.

On a more general level, identity and discourse emerge as key areas for further research. What characterizes the process of 'othering' in the local context as well

as at wider levels in society – including here the way ‘strangers’ are perceived – seems so fundamental to the basic division of ‘us’ and ‘them’, which lies behind bullying and racism. This is surely a pre-requisite before any citizenship studies take place. Linked with this must be an exploration of the fears that fuel the divisions between identities. Such fears fuel silence. Where do they originate and who feeds them? Identity is itself seen in *Swapping Cultures* as an extremely complex and nuanced subject. It is multi-faceted, transient, ever changing and ever re-negotiated.

4.4 Concluding Thoughts

Silences and the silencing are there to be understood, not quickly passed over, and there is no quick substitute for doing the hard work of rhetorical listening in the local context in order to appreciate the complexities and nuances of identity and the communication accompanying it. In the search for social inclusion and deep rather than superficial cohesion perhaps we should take heart from the example of Tariq Modood, an academic who brings discussion of multiculturalism into the public arena. Modood admits to a childhood in which ‘we did not talk about such things as racism at home’ (Modood 2005: 4) and yet today there appears to be no limit to what he has to say and the conversations he stimulates on the matter. Indeed, what this serves to remind is that all conversation has to start from somewhere and even the most unpromising of environments can, with the right stimulus, become fruitful! However, this is a challenging stance to adopt, as the prevailing ‘discourse of reticence’ operates powerfully to protect what Goldberg calls the ‘racial contract’. Goldberg adds, ‘In so far as the racially exclusionary and exploitative contractual effects have

been contractually endorsed for the benefit of and among white people, their legitimation is taken silently and invisibly – in a sense “naturally” to be part of the social fabric on contractual terms’ (Goldberg 2002: 36).

Although this may indicate the bigger picture, the details in the relationship between ‘race’ and silence cannot be simply understood as either the defence used by the powerful to protect their interests or the hushed whisper of the silenced powerless – it is far more complex and nuanced than this. Sometimes there will be loud voices and sometimes these voices will have influence, in other contexts not. Equally, there will be quiet voices and silences – whose contribution and significance is easily overlooked. This thesis suggests that ‘race’ discourse is permeated through and through with silences and silencing. This is so even at times of intense political and public interest in ‘race’. At such times constructs such as ‘multiculturalism’ shape and direct ‘race’ discourse, giving voice to some agendas but silencing others. At the very least this thesis says let’s listen, critically reflect, enquire and then talk about ‘race’ and silence for it is the significance and meaning of the silences in the discourse which is more likely to be overlooked. Not to do so is a fraught path, for as Goldberg writes, there are dangers in ignoring silence:

Silence and invisibility are mutually reinforcing. Being written into the official record as not white is at once to be whitened out, so to speak, to be made part of the natural landscape, the silent backdrop in relation to which life is lived, taken for granted or passed by while being ignored (Goldberg 2002: 92)

This thesis, if it achieves anything of value, will have served to profile the ‘discourse of reticence’ and expose it to future critical scrutiny.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

| Ethnicity & Religion in Coventry & Warwickshire: 2001 Census | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| ETHNICITY | COVENTRY | WARWICKSHIRE | W. MIDLANDS | ENGLAND |
| White | 84 | 95.6 | 88.8 | 90.9 |
| British | 78.3 | 92.8 | 86.2 | 87.0 |
| Irish | 3.5 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| Other White | 2.2 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 2.6 |
| Mixed | 1.7 | 0.8 | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| White and Black Caribbean | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 0.5 |
| White and Black African | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| White and Asian | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Other Mixed | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| Asian or Asian British | 11.3 | 2.8 | 7.3 | 4.6 |
| Indian | 8.0 | 2.4 | 3.4 | 2.1 |
| Pakistani | 2.1 | 0.2 | 2.9 | 1.4 |
| Bangladeshi | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| Other Asian | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.5 |
| Black or Black British | 1.8 | 0.4 | 1.9 | 2.3 |
| Black Caribbean | 1.1 | 0.3 | 1.6 | 1.1 |
| Black African | 0.6 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 1.0 |
| Other Black | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Other Chinese or Other Ethnic Group | 1.2 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.9 |
| Chinese | 0.7 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.5 |
| Other Ethnic Group | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| | | | | |
| All People | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | | | | |
| RELIGION | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Christian | 65.3 | 76.6 | 72.6 | 71.7 |
| Buddhist | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| Hindu | 2.6 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Jewish | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.5 |
| Muslim | 3.9 | 0.7 | 4.1 | 3.1 |
| Sikh | 4.6 | 1.3 | 2 | 0.7 |
| Other religions | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| No religion | 15.1 | 13.1 | 12.3 | 14.6 |
| Religion not stated | 8 | 7.1 | 7.5 | 7.7 |
| All People | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Office of National Statistics

Appendix 2: Organisations and Groups Involved in the Swapping Cultures Initiative

Steering Committee Representation from:

Coventry City Councillors
Connexions (Coventry and Warwickshire)
Minorities of Europe
Common Purpose (Coventry and Warwickshire)
Minority Group Support Services (Coventry City Council)
Corporate Policy Unit (Coventry City Council)
Youth Service (Coventry City Council)
Learning and Skills Council (Coventry and Warwickshire)
Education Support and Advisory Service (Coventry City Council)
Diocese of Coventry
Groundwork (Coventry and Warwickshire)
National Primary Trust
Sidney Stringer Community Technology College, Coventry
Warwickshire Voluntary Youth Council

Other Supporting Organisations:

In addition to those groups and organisations that were directly involved via the Steering Committee, support was given in other ways by:

Commission for Racial Equality (Midlands)
Coventry Evening Telegraph
Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
Coventry Youth Voluntary Service Council
CV One Ltd
Government Office for the West Midlands
Warwickshire County Council
Warwickshire County Council Youth Service

Steering Group's Terms of Reference:

- To support the project by giving advice, sharing experiences and problem solving which help the project to become successful and achieve its maximum benefit
- To help identify sources of funding and if possible support the process of application
- To lead, if possible, elements of work such as the creation of a Tool Kit, Resources Pack and / or devising and implementing a monitoring process and in producing evaluation and other written reports, etc.

- To assist in the testing, trialing and development of the project in different social and geographical contexts.
- To help create a Development Plan for subsequent use of the Project at Regional, National and at European levels.
- To help publicise and promote the project.

Appendix 3: The Project Programme: Actual and Projected

Participants by Age and Gender: Actual and (Projected)

| Age | Percentage | Number | Male | Female | No Reply |
|--------------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 8 - 11 | 45 (18) | 188 (480) | 102 (240) | 84 (240) | 2 (0) |
| 12 - 15 | 24 (49) | 100 (1280) | 41 (640) | 55 (640) | 4 (0) |
| 16 - 19 | 26 (23) | 111 (600) | 48 (300) | 60 (300) | 3 (0) |
| 20+ | 3 (10) | 12 (240) | 8 (120) | 4 (120) | 0 (0) |
| NR | 2 (0) | 11 (0) | 3 (0) | 2 (0) | 6 (0) |
| Totals: No. | | 422 (2600) | 202 (1300) | 205 (1300) | 15 (0) |
| Percentage | | 100 (100) | 48 (50) | 49 (50) | 3 (0) |

Workshop by Setting: Actual and (Projected)

| Locations | Workshops | Participants | Worksheets |
|--|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| Schools and Colleges Primary Schools Secondary School College University | 16 (14) | 703 (1850) | 589 |
| Youth Young People's Informal Settings Excluded young people Drugs Related organisation | 14 (11) | 285 (150) | 153 |
| Others Voluntary, Community & Faith Black and Minority Ethnic New and Emerging Groups Established or Host Groups Other bodies | 4 (11) | 88 (600) | 0 |
| Totals | 34 (36) | 1076 (2600) | 742 |

The Actual Programme (December 2002 - August 2004)

| Date | School & Colleges | Partici-pants | Work-sheets | Male | Female | No reply |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 17 Dec 02 | <i>Smiths Community College, Coventry</i> | 164 | 91 | 39 | 49 | 3 |
| 24 Jun 03 | <i>Jones Primary School, Coventry</i> | 60 | 56 | 28 | 28 | 0 |
| 9 Jul 03 | <i>Smiths Community College</i> | 161 | 161 | 81 | 79 | 1 |
| 26 Jan and Feb 04 | <i>Mackay College, Coventry (2 workshops)</i> | 28 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| 9 and 11 Feb 04 | <i>Hills Primary School, Coventry (2 workshops)</i> | 54 | 53 | 32 | 20 | 1 |
| 3 and 9 Mar 04 | <i>St Jill's & Fiat Primary Schools, Coventry (2 workshops)</i> | 60 | 42 | 19 | 23 | 0 |
| 11 Mar 04 | <i>Valley College, Coventry</i> | 8 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| 19 May 04 | <i>Chipper School, Coventry</i> | 61 | 61 | 37 | 24 | 0 |
| 24 Jun 04 | <i>Wards Primary School, Coventry</i> | 28 | 25 | 12 | 13 | 0 |
| 10 Feb 04 9, 16, 23 Jun 04 | <i>Cohens School Yr 9, Coventry (4 workshops)</i> | 79 | 84 | 39 | 36 | 9 |
| | Youth Groups | | | | | |
| 8 Nov 03 | Girl Guides, Warks | 16 | 16 | 0 | 16 | 0 |
| 9 Nov 03 | Budapest trial | 35 | 25 | 11 | 12 | 2 |
| 20 Feb 04 | Budapest trial | 20 | 12 | 1 | 1 | 10 |
| Jan/Feb 04 | <i>Ferret Youth Group</i> | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 and 10 Feb 04 | <i>Cohens 'After School Club' (2 workshops)</i> | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 Mar 04 | <i>Cats Young Farmers' Club</i> | 16 | 14 | 7 | 7 | 0 |
| 14 Apr 04 | <i>'Monopoly'</i> | 10 | 12 | 7 | 5 | 0 |
| 2 Jun 04 | Young Womens' Conference, Coventry | 30 | 15 | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| 29 Jun 04 | CC Initiative | 11 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| 12 Aug 04 | Iranian Exchange Group | 20 | 12 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Aug 04 | World Youth Festival, Barcelona (2 workshops) | 50 | 23 | 5 | 11 | 7 |
| 24 Aug 04 | 'Strength in Diversity' | 35 | 16 | 10 | 4 | 2 |
| | Other Groups | | | | | |
| Jun 04 | MoE Group, Coventry | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jan 04 | National Farmers' Union | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Apr 04 | Gov. Office W. Midlands | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Apr 04 | Black Environmental Network | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 34 workshops | 1076 | 742 | 343 | 358 | 41 |

Italicised names are fictional and have been used to protect identity. Participant numbers are based on estimated figures supplied by MoE. Coventry and Warwickshire workshops are shown shaded (totalling 21 workshops with 786 participants returning 654 worksheets).

**B. The Coventry and Warwickshire (December 2002 – August 2004)
Programme showing numbers of completed worksheets received back from
participants.**

| | Date | School & Colleges | Work- sheets | Other Activities |
|--|------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | Dec 02 Jul 03 | <i>Smiths</i> Community College, Coventry (2 Workshops) | 252 | Observers used |
| 2 | Jun 03 | <i>Jones</i> Primary School, Coventry | 56 | |
| 3 | Mar 04 | <i>Mackay</i> College, Coventry (2 workshops) | 8 | |
| 4 | Feb 04 | <i>Hills</i> Primary School, Coventry (2 workshops) | 53 | |
| 5 | Mar 04 | <i>Valley</i> College, Coventry | 8 | |
| 6 | Mar 04 | <i>St Jill's & Fiat</i> Primary Schools, Coventry (2 workshops) | 42 | 8 Circle Times 1 Focus Group |
| 7 | May 04 | <i>Chipper</i> School, Coventry | 61 | 4 Circle times |
| 8 | Jun 04 | <i>Wards</i> Primary School, Coventry | 25 | 3 Focus Groups |
| 9 | Jun 04 | <i>Cohens School</i> Yr 9, Coventry (3 workshops) | 54 | 1 Focus Group |
| | | Youth Groups | | |
| 10 | Nov 03 | Girl Guides, Warks | 16 | |
| 11 | Feb 04 | <i>Cohens 'After School Club'</i> (2 workshops) | 30 | 1 Design workshop 1 Focus Group |
| 12 | Mar 04 | <i>Cats</i> Young Farmers' Club, Warks | 14 | |
| 13 | Apr 04 | ' <i>Monopoly</i> ', Coventry | 12 | 1 Focus Group |
| 14 | Jun 04 | Young Womens' Conference, Coventry | 15 | |
| 15 | Jun 04 | <i>CC Initiative</i> , Warks | 8 | 1 Design Workshop 1 Circle Time 1 Focus Group |
| A total of 21 Workshops with a total number of 654 participants | | | | |

C. The Minorities of Europe Published 'Full' Programme (December 2002 - August 2004)

| | Date | School & Colleges | Partici -pants | Other Activities |
|---|-------------|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1 | Dec 02 | <i>Smiths</i> Community College, Coventry | 325 | Observers used |
| 2 | Jul 03 | <i>Jones</i> Primary School, Coventry | 60 | |
| 3 | Jan/Feb 04 | <i>Mackay</i> College, Coventry (2 workshops) | 28 | |
| 4 | Feb 04 | <i>Hills</i> Primary School, Coventry (2 workshops) | 54 | |
| 5 | Mar 04 | <i>St Jill's & Fiat</i> Primary Schools, Coventry (2 workshops) | 60 | 8 Circle Times 1 Focus Group |
| 6 | May 04 | <i>Chipper</i> School, Coventry | 60 | 4 Circle times |
| 7 | Jun 04 | <i>Wards</i> Primary School, Coventry | 28 | 3 Focus Groups |
| 8 | Jun 04 | <i>Cohens School</i> Yr 9, Coventry (3 workshops) | 79 | 1 Focus Group |
| | | Youth Groups | | |
| 9 | Jan/Feb 04 | <i>Ferret</i> Youth Group | 12 | |
| 10 | Nov 03 | Budapest trial | 35 | |
| 11 | Feb 04 | Budapest trial | 20 | |
| 12 | Feb 04 | <i>Cohens 'After School Club'</i> (2 workshops) | 30 | 1 Design workshop 1 Focus Group |
| 13 | Mar 04 | <i>Cats</i> Young Farmers' Club | 16 | |
| 14 | Apr 04 | ' <i>Monopoly</i> ' | 10 | 1 Focus Group |
| 15 | Jun 04 | CC Initiative | 11 | 1 Design Workshop 1 Circle Time 1 Focus Group |
| 16 | Jun 04 | Young Womens' Conference, Coventry | 30 | |
| 17 | Aug 04 | Iranian Exchange Group | 20 | |
| 18 | Aug 04 | World Youth Festival, Barcelona (2 workshops) | 50 | |
| 19 | Aug 04 | 'Strength in Diversity' | 35 | |
| | | Other Groups | | |
| 20 | Jun 04 | MoE Group, Coventry | 8 | |
| 21 | Jan 04 | National Farmers' Union | 20 | |
| 22 | Apr 04 | Gov. Office W. Midlands | 25 | |
| 23 | Apr 04 | Black Environmental Network | 35 | |
| A total of 30 Workshops with a total number of 1051 participants | | | | |

Italicised names are fictional and have been used to protect identity

Projected Geographic Spread – Urban and Rural

| Urban | Rural |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Coventry | North Warwickshire |
| Rugby | South Warwickshire |
| Leamington Spa | e.g. Shipston-on-Stour |
| Warwick | e.g. Southam |
| Nuneaton | |
| Stratford-on-Avon | |

Appendix 4: Swapping Cultures Worksheet Template



Swapping Cultures Template ver.1.2



| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Name: | | | | Group number: | | | |
| Name of School: | | | | | | | |
| Gender: | Male <input type="checkbox"/> | Female <input type="checkbox"/> | Age Group: | 8-11 <input type="checkbox"/> | 12-15 <input type="checkbox"/> | 16-19 <input type="checkbox"/> | 20+ <input type="checkbox"/> |

YOUR LOGO (Optional)

The Swapping Cultures Initiative

A Coventry and Warwickshire Pilot

YOUR MESSAGE (Optional)

DATE, TIME & VENUE of EVENT (Essential)

The purpose of this "Workshop Trial" is to help you take part in a pilot project. Please complete it as carefully as you can, as we will collect the form from you later.



www.moe-online.com

PART ONE: Face to Face

Using the questions below, have a conversation with your partner and use the space provided to write down your answers.

Questions: (Questions highlighted in red are 'essential'. All other questions can be adapted to your requirements - see questionnaire matrix)

How old are you? _____

What is your religion? _____

Family: who do you live with? _____

What is your favourite sport? _____

What is your first language? _____

How would you describe your cultural background? _____

Do you find talking about your cultural background, easy or difficult? Why? _____

What is your favourite colour? _____

What is your favourite TV program? _____

What is your favourite subject at school? _____

What is your LEAST favourite subject at school? _____

Have you personally experienced racism? _____

What is your favourite food? _____

One wish: something they would like to do? _____

Who in the World would you most like to be? _____



So now you know more about your friend. Are they the same, similar or different to you? **GO TO** part 2






PART 2: Same, Similar, Different (Questions relates to Face to Face)

By yourself, reflect on your conversation & think how you & your *friend* may be same, similar or different. With a pen, put a tick in the box, to indicate how similar or different you are to the other person

| AREAS | Same/Similar to friend | Different to friend |
|---|------------------------|---------------------|
| Age | | |
| Religion | | |
| Family: who do you live with? | | |
| Favourite sport? | | |
| First language ? | | |
| Describing Cultural Background | | |
| Easy or difficult when talking about cultural background? | | |
| Favourite colour? | | |
| Favourite TV programme? | | |
| Least favourite TV programme | | |
| Favourite subject at school? | | |
| Experience of Racism | | |
| Favourite food? | | |
| One wish: something you would like to do? | | |
| Who in the world would you like to be? | | |

Using your above notes as a reference, you may express your similarities or differences by using a poem, story or draw a picture in the box below.



A large empty rectangular box for drawing or writing.





PART 3: Swapping Cultures

Using your Same, Similar Different table from part 2 as a reminder, talk about what you have learnt with another person from your group.

PART 4: Working together

Think of an idea of how you would like to celebrate diversity between you and your friends, and then in your group, agree on one idea. Use the paper provided.

MY IDEA!

We passionately believe that it is important to learn from the work that we do. We are confident that with you taking part in this "workshop" that you are well placed to comment. Please complete the Evaluation Questionnaire to the best of your ability.

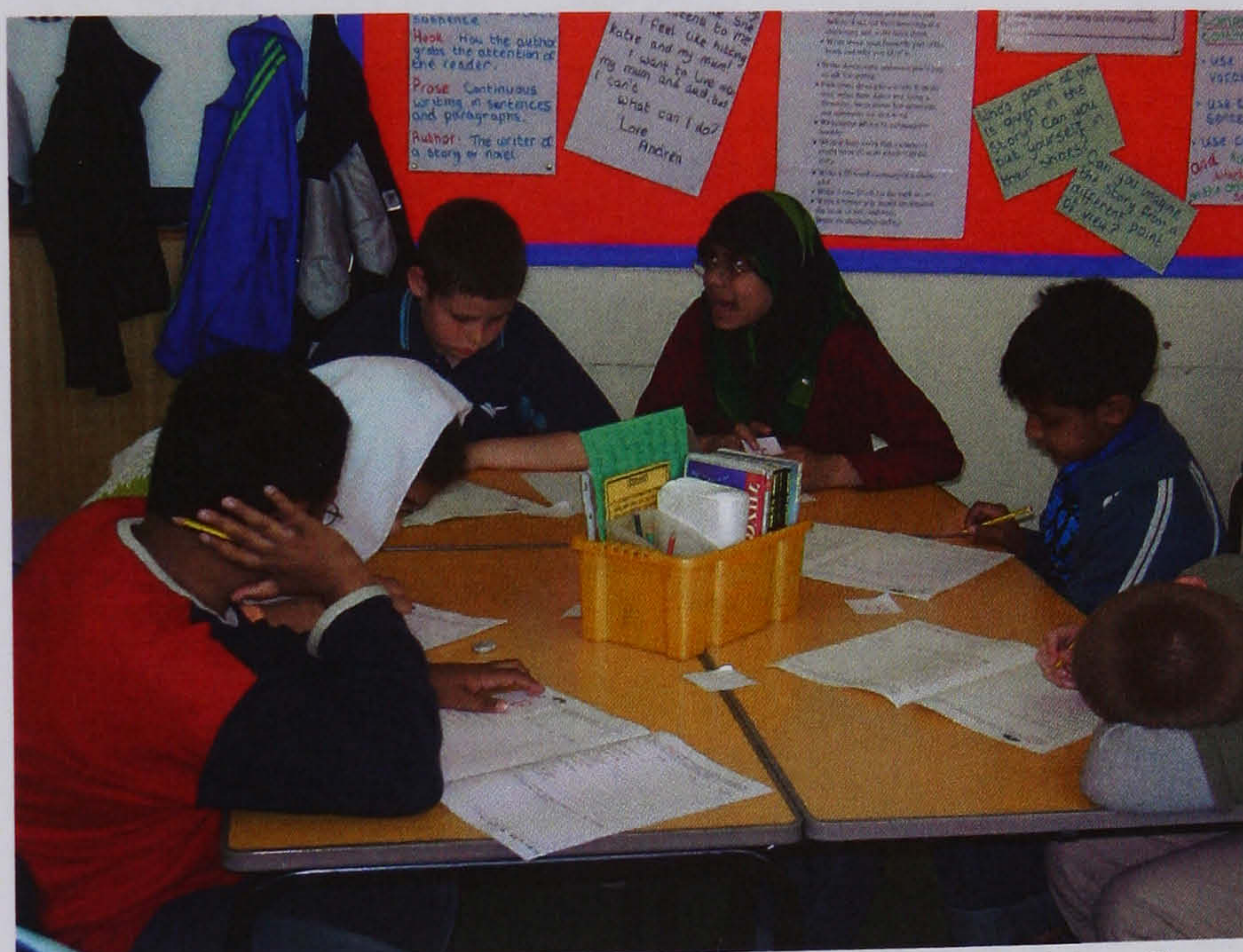
| | QUESTIONS (Essential, non-negotiable) | YOUR ANSWER | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | How much did you enjoy taking part in the workshop | Disliked it | It was okay | Enjoyed it! |
| 2 | Do you think taking part in this workshop.... | Pushes people apart | Makes no difference | Brings people together |
| 3 | How easy or difficult is it for you when you talk about racism? | Easy | Average | Difficult |
| 4 | Has the workshop 'changed' the way you see the other person? | Like them less | No change | Like them more |
| 5 | How likely would you have talked to the other person if you did not do this workshop? | Would not have talked | May have talked | We already talk |
| 6 | Did the workshop make you less or more confident when you talk about yourself or your cultural background? | Less confidence | No change | More confidence |
| 7 | How important do you think it is to learn of someone else's culture and background? | Not important | Don't know | Important |
| 8 | Workshop Leader Question | 1 | 2 | 3 |



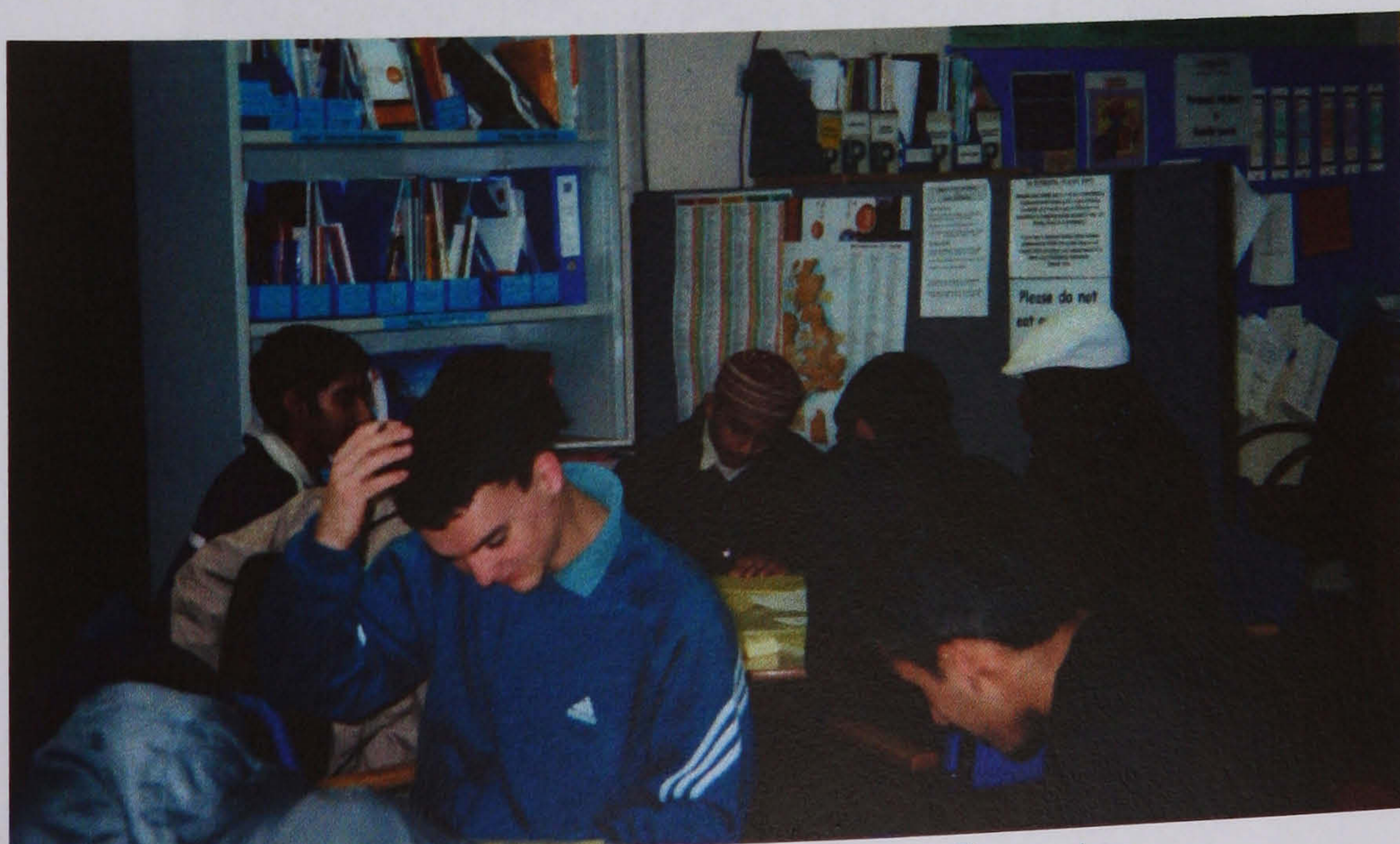
Appendix 5 A short photographic record



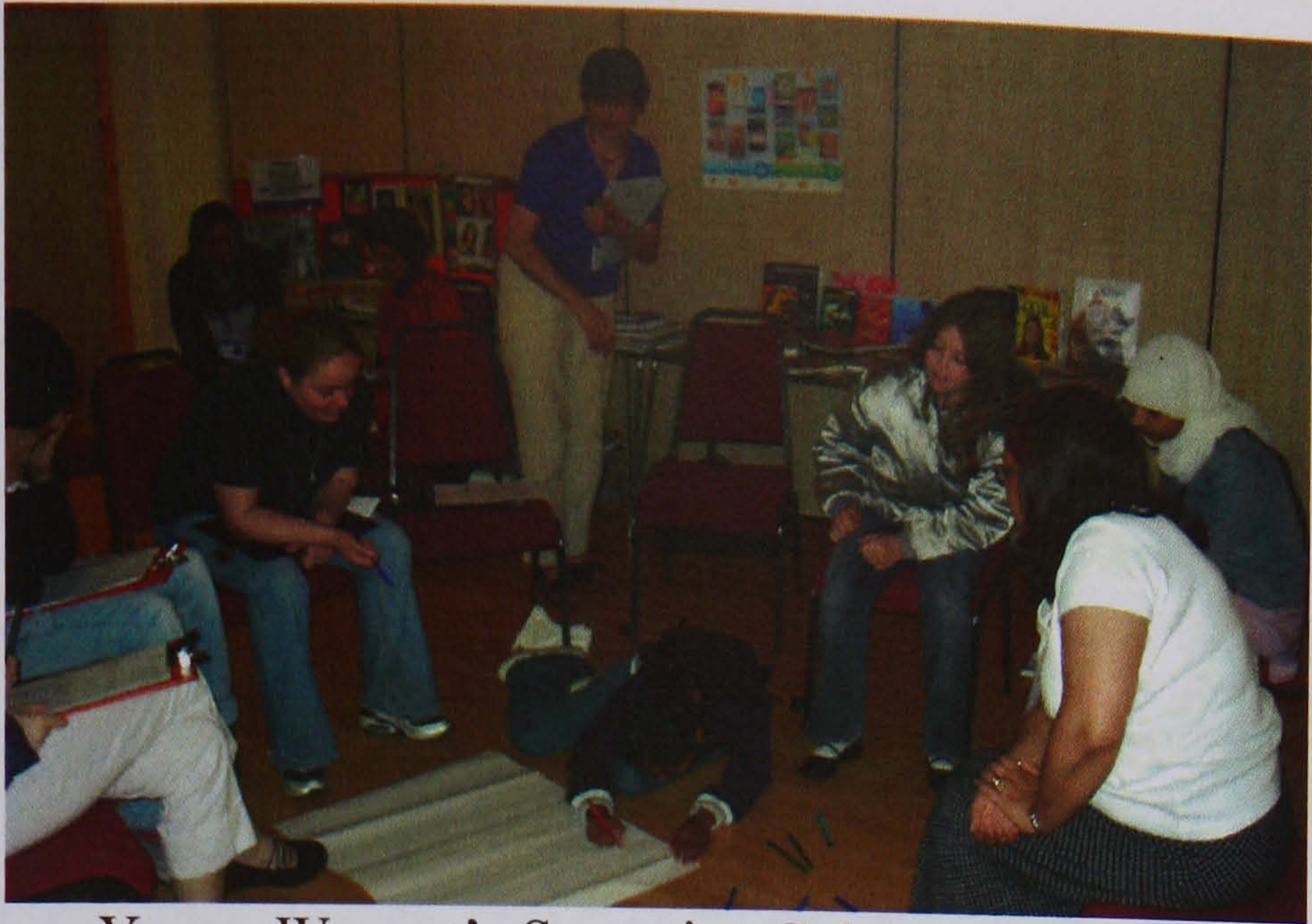
Teacher briefing Sixth Form before Swapping Cultures, Coventry



'Face to Face' – Dialogue in pairs 10-11 year olds, Coventry



Sixth form pupils' workshop, Coventry



Young Women's Swapping Cultures Workshop,
a Community Centre, Coventry



Workshop, Primary School, Coventry



'Face to Face' dialogue in a Workshop, Coventry



A Focus Group meeting facilitated by the author,
at a Secondary School, Coventry



Focus Group in Nuneaton, Warwickshire



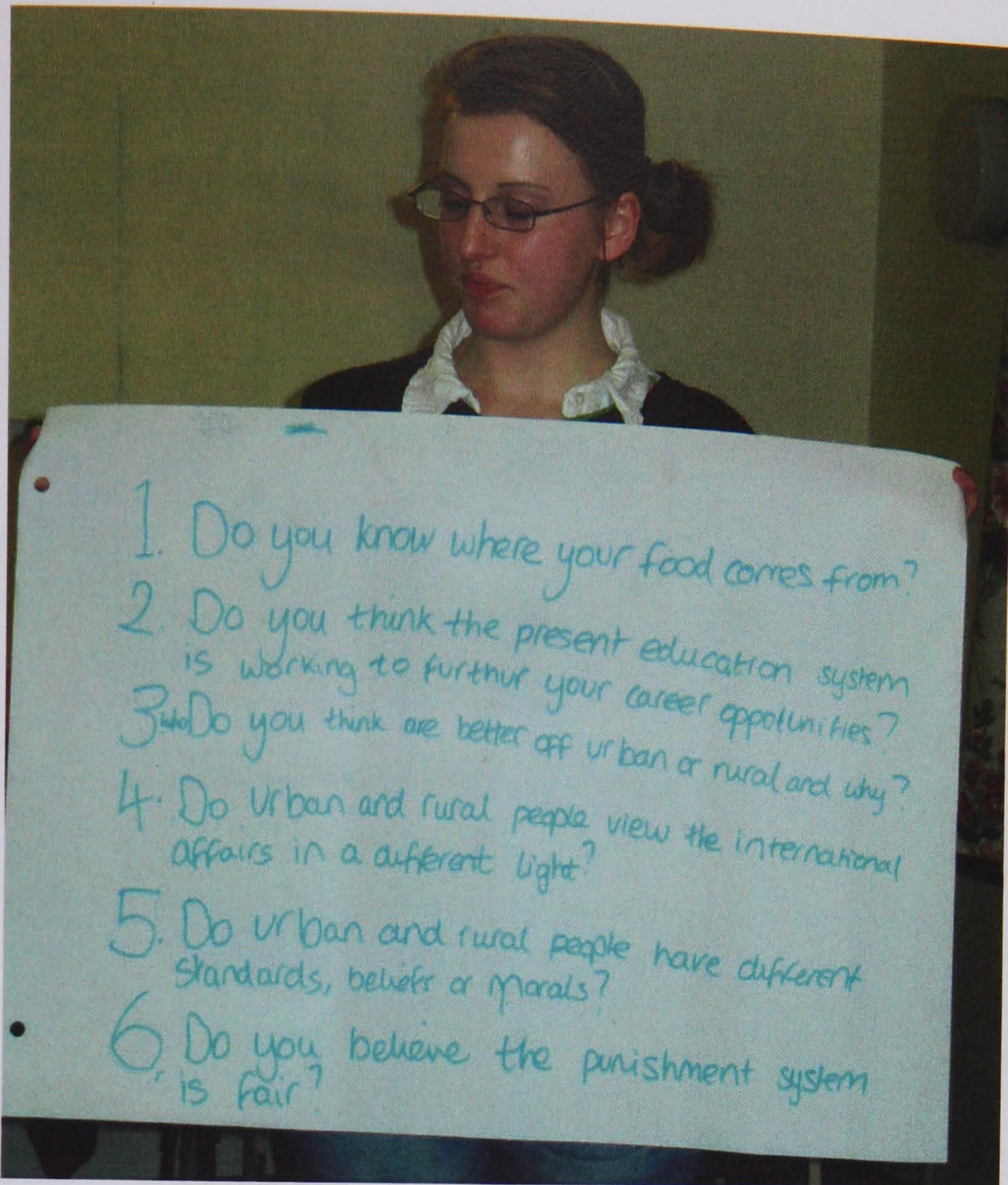
Swapping Cultures Workshop – 10-11 year olds
at a preparation for Secondary School transition, Coventry



Face to Face, Coventry



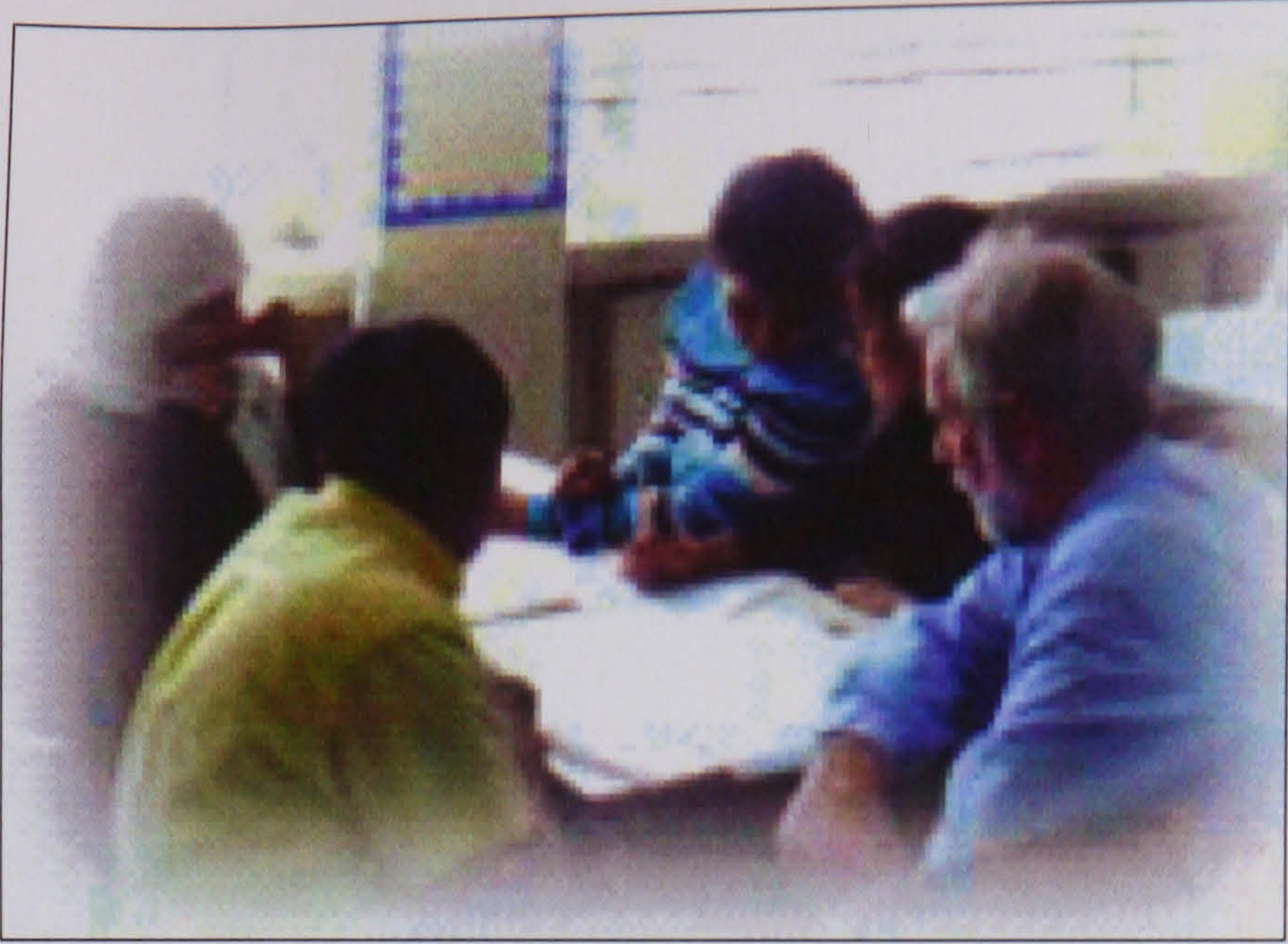
A Facilitator helps a Primary School girl with her Reflections, Coventry



Young Farmers, Warwickshire – Making Explicit their Concerns in a series of ‘Do you know...?’ Questions



Workshop – Sharing Reflections, Primary School, Coventry



The Author Facilitating 'Face to Face'