IS THIS AS GOOD AS IT GETS? DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION AND EQUALITY IN PUBLIC POLICY-MAKING

By

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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September 2016

Abstract

Theorists have argued that the effectiveness of dialogue about equality-related public policy has been limited by a range of factors (e.g. limited representation of minority groups or dominant discourses about 'equality' that prevent wider discussion). This study focuses on how we might create public dialogue more in keeping with what people really value around the topic of equality. The study does this by firstly mapping English local authority approaches to engaging ethnic minorities in public policy dialogue. This is followed by a 'qualitative experiment' which compares the effects of two popular models of public engagement ('multiculturalism' and 'interculturalism') on participants' experiences. The study identifies important conventions of dialogue associated with 'representative claim-making' that can hinder critical deliberation of equality-related public policy issues. The study also highlights particular aspects of facilitation practice which appear to improve research participants' levels of autonomy and the breadth of equality issues discussed through public dialogue.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisors Professor Jenny Phillimore and Dr Lisa Goodson for their generosity, encouragement and invaluable help and support. Thanks to Maya, friends and family and colleagues that helped along the way. This research was kindly supported by the Economic and Social Research Council.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study explores the public engagement of ethnic minorities in local equality-related public policy in England. The aim of the research is to explore which factors affect the quality of local public engagement about equality-related public policy. In order to do this I identify three underlying research objectives. Firstly, I explore how English local authorities approach dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities. Secondly, I explore which factors influence the scope and content of issues of equality discussed in those public engagement activities. Thirdly, I explore which factors influence the level of autonomy participants in those public engagement activities feel they have.

In this short introductory chapter, I position the study within the broader context of British politics and in relation to the topic of equality in public policy. At the end of the chapter I reiterate the aims and objectives of the study and explain the structure of this thesis.

In 2015, Britain's Independent Human Rights Body, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) released its third triennial review report "Is Britain Fairer?" In this they outline the advances in equality of outcomes experienced by traditionally excluded groups in society. As an example, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi pupils have begun to catch up with the average performance in school examination results (GCSE level). At the same time the EHRC also acknowledge the systematic and cyclical nature of many of the equalities experienced by Britons who are 'different' from the mainstream in society. Black Caribbean and Pakistani babies are still twice

more likely to die in their first year than Bangladeshi or White British babies. Gypsies and Travellers and some types of migrants are still much more likely to face negative attitudes and some social groups face much higher barriers of discrimination and inequality in the world of work, education and public life (EHRC, 2015). In recent years, particular inequalities have started to rise, with certain groups being more heavily affected by austerity. Indeed 85% of benefits cuts in Britain directly affected women which equated to some £22 billion between 2010-14 (Women's Budget Group, 2014). Also black and ethnic minority people (defined as all who are not White British in Runnymede's research) were twice as likely to be worse off after the budget in 2015 (Runnymede Trust 2015).

The persistent nature of inequalities in British society in key fields of public policy (like education, housing, health and employment) are only part of the story however. Whilst this isn't a new story, inequality in other areas of life is increasing too. In particular, the growing gap between the wealthiest in society and the rest has increased significantly over the last ten years (Wilson and Pickett, 2009). As Dorling (2016) argues, these patterns of inequality matter for public policy because they contribute to an environment in which it is much harder to enact the policies that are most in line with what people really value in their lives. He suggests that income inequality and societal values associated with achievement of material wealth have led to a situation in which people concentrate on trying to achieve (or indeed buy) things that are not necessarily strongly associated with well-being. The quality and sustainability of relationships with others is often identified as more important to people's wellbeing than financial wealth in various polls that have been carried out.

Dorling (2016) questions why we would support a type of politics in which policy-decisions rarely align sufficiently with the types of things that actually make most people 'happy'. He admits that 'happiness' is a subjective concept and hard to measure. Yet like Dorling, I use the concept of happiness here to refer broadly to achieving the things that 'matter most to us' and are most strongly associated with our wellbeing (2016, p.13). As I argue later in the study (see Section 4.2) the ability of people to put forward public policy preferences that matter most to them when engaged in public dialogue about equality is an important and often under-explored topic of study.

Dorling (2016) suggests austerity policies in Britain in recent years are a good example of the gap between what we most value as a society and the goals of public policy. He describes how decisions to cut public spending in key public services can illuminate some of the implicit assumptions that politicians (and presumably some of the electorate) have made about the type of equality we can *expect* in society. He uses the example of the death of older people to make this point. Dorling suggests since 2012 tens of thousands of older women have 'died a little too early' (p.26). Early speculative assessments of this trend link this to the impact of austerity policies including cuts in home visits, pensioner income credit and residential care support. Yet people's happiness has been proven to plummet the most when those close to them die. He argues, in this respect, that current policies are not safeguarding us from what most harms us and that we need a better type of politics to help re-cast public dialogue.

This study is concerned directly with a particular part of this challenge that Dorling raises about the politics of equality. How do we generate public dialogue mechanisms that help people to generate progressive equality-related policy solutions that are more in keeping with what people really value? In his book, Dorling (2016) describes how one Director of Public Health that he spoke to described the impoverished elderly women living on their own described above as ‘the canaries in the mine’ (p.26). Although this might not necessarily be an intentional outcome of public policy, arguably we do often value the prevention of death of younger people over older people in our society. How might we generate a form of politics in which assumptions about perceived ‘necessary’ or ‘acceptable’ inequalities in society are critically discussed and the best policy solutions found? As I ask in this study, how can those involved in public dialogue about public policy be supported to discuss which types of equality are important to society? Who needs to be part of this discussion and how might they be best supported to contribute to dialogue of this type in a way that is meaningful for them?

As I developed this study I realised that these broad questions about ‘equality politics’ had the potential to stretch the scope of this PhD and the patience of my supervisors considerably beyond the amount of time and resources that I had allocated to do it. I decided to focus on a particular corner of the world (England), a particular field of politics (public engagement in local policy-making) and a particular aspect of equality (a broad field of ‘race’ equality including treatment of ethnic minority, religious minority and migrant groups). Before outlining why I chose to focus on this field of practice, I make a note about terminology. In this thesis I describe this broad and diverse group of people as ‘ethnic minority groups’. I have

used this broad term to reflect a range of dimensions of identity associated with ‘ethnic minorities’ and ‘migrants’ such as culture, ethnicity, nationality, colour, race, migration status and religion. I have used this term recognising that it is imperfect and that there are many other ‘minority’ groups in society. I also acknowledge the socially constructed, intersectional nature of these aspects of identity and the contested nature of definitions in this field (Craig et al., 2012). I argue that focusing on English local authorities and public engagement with ‘ethnic minority groups’ offered a good lens through which to explore the challenges that we, as a society, face in relation to the politics of equality for three main reasons.

Firstly, the policy and politics of race equality and integration has been well-researched in the UK and there is a rich body of evidence associated with matters of representation and public governance from which I could draw. Also, as I describe later in this thesis, this field of academic debate is often highly contested and would, in my opinion, benefit from new approaches to assessing the contribution of different approaches to the politics of equality.

Secondly, we as a society, are becoming more diverse and more globally-connected than ever before in ways that we are only just beginning to understand. Gone are the days when many local areas could involve a handful of ‘migrant’ representatives (largely from Commonwealth countries) in public decision-making and fairly confidently suggest they had achieved a level of representation that mirrored the local population. Many of these towns and cities are now ‘superdiverse’ (Vertovec, 2007) with people from 150+ nationalities, with various identities and migration statuses living within their borders. We face new and unique challenges in

responding to this complexity. Not only do we face the practical challenge of understanding what people from different backgrounds value and what makes them happy and translating that into public policy. We also face the challenge of balancing those needs and responding to a range of inequalities faced by 'minority' and 'majority' groups.

And thirdly, this is an important time for local politics and local public policy-making. Significant funding cuts to local authorities are having a profound impact upon the ability of many local areas to respond to people's needs and entitlements (Asenova and Stein, 2014). These funding cuts are also concentrated particularly in local authority districts that have historically been more deprived (SPERI, 2014) and, as described above, it has been particular traditionally excluded groups (such as women and ethnic minorities) that have been most affected by benefits changes and austerity policies. Yet at a time when issues of inequality are a significant concern for many local areas and at a time when strong public governance processes are required to involve excluded groups in decisions about effective public resource-allocation, local authorities also face significant pressure in relation to their engagement with the public and democratic functions. For example, in 2013 Birmingham City Council, the largest local authority in Europe, proposed some £14 million reduction between 2014-17 in its 'support costs' which include: corporate policy making, representing local interests, duties arising from public accountability and support work to ensure there is good governance (Birmingham City Council, 2014, p.5). Local authorities are facing important decisions about the distribution of resources and promotion of equality that require effective public engagement and dialogue and would benefit from advice and guidance on how to make the best use

of the limited resources still available for public engagement and consultation activities.

Finally, I chose to focus on the field of race equality and involvement of ethnic minority groups in policy-making as a way to explore the development of a better 'equality politics' for another important reason. As described above, Dorling proposes that a mixture of political ideology and societal values such as: elitism is efficient, exclusion necessary, prejudice natural, greed good, and despair inevitable (Dorling, 2010) have created a situation in which it is harder to create public policies that really make people happy (Dorling 2016). Yet, as I explore in this study, there appear to also be other norms and values associated with the *practice* of equality politics that can get in the way of progressive dialogue on the topic of equality. One particularly important theme I explore in this study is a strong belief in the value of 'descriptive representation' (Pitkin, 1967) as a way to advance the needs and concerns of traditionally excluded groups. This form of representation seeks representatives with particular attributes, such as ethnicity, who are in some sense typical of the larger class of people they represent (Mansbridge, 1999). Focus is placed on the representative's characteristics, 'on what he is or is like, on being something rather than doing something' (Pitkin, 1967, p.61). Thus in this study I explore the influence of beliefs held by public engagement participants about topics of 'equality' and 'representation' upon the practice of public dialogue about equality in order to understand the challenges and opportunities this presents.

Specifically, this study pilots a range of methods to help assess whether established modes of public engagement practice (and alternatives) could provide us with the

type of ‘equality politics’ that pluralist societies like Britain require. As I argue in this study, as austerity measures and the financial resources available to public sector organisations to progress equality tightens further. Also as society becomes more demographically complex, with an increasing number of claims from different minority groups to accommodate. The fractures and inconsistencies associated with models based on simple descriptive representation (such as drawing upon a handful of ethnic minority representatives to represent all ethnic minorities in a local area) are likely to become increasingly stark and contested. Yet in order to assess the contribution of different models of public engagement practice to high quality public dialogue about equality in a study of this type, I first need to refine the research objectives and develop a conceptual framework which will help to define and measure specific aspects of the ‘quality’ of public engagement practice.

Aims and Objectives

As I elaborate through a review of available literature and the development of a conceptual framework in the following three chapters of this thesis, the principle aim of this study is to explore which factors affect the quality of local public engagement about equality-related public policy. With this aim in mind, I identify the following three objectives for this study:

1. To explore *how* English local authorities approach dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities
2. To explore which factors influence the scope and content of issues of equality

discussed in those public engagement activities

3. To explore which factors influence the level of autonomy participants in those public engagement activities feel they have

This study introduces new approaches to assessing the value of different models of public engagement and dialogue concerning equality-related public policy. Given the exploratory nature of some of the methods and theoretical frameworks employed in the study, particular attention is placed in this thesis upon assessing the contribution of those methods and theoretical frameworks to scholarship and how they might be refined for future research.

Thesis Structure

In Chapter 2 I provide a more detailed assessment of the background for this study and describe the problem I aim to address. In particular, I identify three key challenges that relate to the public engagement of ethnic minorities in public policy-making that are becoming increasingly important in contemporary society. In Chapter 3, I explore the extent to which existing literature offers a convincing response to those three challenges and where theoretical and empirical gaps exist that might be addressed through this study. I end the chapter by describing three broad research areas this study is interested in based on the literature review. In Chapter 4, I outline a conceptual framework which was used to help design the study and refine the three research objectives. In Chapter 5, I describe the methodology employed and explain how the conceptual framework was used to design the research instruments. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 outline findings in relation to each of the three research

objectives in turn. In Chapter 9 I describe the implications of those findings and discuss the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of the study. In this chapter I also consider the contribution of the methods and conceptual framework employed to future study in this field. Finally, in Chapter 10 I provide overall conclusions and identify areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Within England, the representation of ethnic minorities through civil society and state have been defined, for some time, as an everyday, 'technical' matter of managing political and social consent (Hall et al., 1978, p.213). Indeed, ethnic minorities have historically played a relatively clear role in local policy making as 'communities of interest' in a pluralist conception of a wider system of electoral politics (Cooke and Vyas, 2008). The role of ethnic minorities in this system has been both defined and protected via race equality legislation and various national and local policy initiatives and voluntary sector funding streams. At the local level, administrative and technical systems have been established to improve equality of the *process* and *structures* of community engagement and representation (e.g. conducting outreach to ensure a proportionate number of people from particular ethnic minorities are present in public decision-making processes) (Blake et al., 2008). Yet in this drive for procedural and technical refinement of the engagement process, rarely are broader questions about what we mean by 'representation' asked. How is representation interpreted at a local level? Are resulting conceptions of representation and public engagement in the policy-making process appropriate for contemporary society and are they likely to improve the lives of traditionally excluded groups in society?

This research takes, as its starting point, the idea that ethnic minority representation cannot be discussed in isolation from these wider narratives of equality. The two are inextricably intertwined. Indeed, it would not be overstating the case to say that the history of ethnic minority engagement and representation in the UK *is* the history of

race relations and of social policy responses to race equality (Afridi and Warmington, 2009).

To explore the relationship between representation and views about equality further, it is important to understand the complex questions that public engagement of minorities in public policy-making conceals. The tendency to reduce the public engagement of minorities to issues of 'process' in social policy analysis and evaluation have left many more philosophical questions about the outcomes, legitimacy, fairness and autonomy of representation practice largely untouched. As I argue in this thesis, the ways in which the legitimacy and representativeness of ethnic minority engagement are judged in practice are influenced heavily by dominant theories about 'equality' and the diverse nature of our society. For example, strong emphasis has been placed on valuing the 'descriptive' representation (Pitkin, 1967) of minorities in public governance. Descriptive representation has involved ensuring demographically proportionate levels of representation for people from particular ethnic backgrounds in society (Rattansi, 2012). Yet this tradition has, arguably, led to a situation in which other aspects of representation are less valued and thus less vigorously pursued in public policy or in associated research.

Two other important dimensions of representation are 'substantive representation' which describes the congruence between the policy preferences advanced by representative and the interests of the represented; and 'symbolic representation' which describes whether the represented *feel* fairly and effectively represented (Pitkin, 1967). Despite numerous critiques of ethnic minority representation that

grapple with the limits of descriptive representation of minorities (Williams, 1998, Phillips, 1995) there is still very little empirical evidence examining substantive or symbolic representation and associated issues of how legitimacy, autonomy and fairness are manifested in the process of public engagement in policy-making and how those involved feel about representation (Afridi, 2016; Brahm Levey, 2015). In this thesis I argue that a more rigorous assessment of the purpose, value and impact of ethnic minority representation in public engagement activities is required to achieve this.

After setting out the historical context, the remainder of this introductory section explores how existing approaches to the thinking and practice of ethnic minority representation in England have been shaped by theories of integration, equality and the management of diversity. It argues that existing approaches to representation have failed ethnic minorities in a number of important ways and that more empirical evidence is required to understand the effect of different models of public participation on particular aspects of substantive representation. I argue that this evidence is required in order to generate a better sense of the type of public dialogue mechanisms that could generate progressive equality-related policy solutions that are more in keeping with what people have reason to value.

2.1 Setting the context: events, policy and initiatives to improve ethnic minority representation in public decision-making processes

The trajectory of policy and practice in the field of ethnic minority public engagement and representation can be linked closely with a range of other developments such as growth of the voluntary sector, immigration patterns, equality legislation and civil

unrest (Solomos and Back, 1995; Afridi and Warmington, 2009). From the riots in Notting Hill London in the 1950s, which led to the first Government Inquiry into British race relations, through to the race-related riots in Brixton and across England in the early 1980s and the resulting Scarman report (Scarman 1981) which called for investment in ethnic minority-led organisations to tackle discrimination and racism. During the 1990s and 2000s a discernible 'black and minority ethnic third sector' emerged with responsibility for delivering public services in a range of fields, but also acting as advocates representing the views of the country's diverse ethnic minority communities (Mayblin and Soteri-Proctor 2011). A range of policies, laws, funding programmes and structures that aimed to engage ethnic minority people in the design and scrutiny of public policy and public services have developed in response to demographic change, in response to changing public opinion and in response to visible examples of race inequality and discrimination (particularly riots and notable deaths of ethnic minority people, often at the hands of the State) (Solanke 2009).

It is in this context that policy and academic debate has grappled with the thorny issue of ethnic minority representation. Increased legislative protection against race discrimination has been hard fought by activists and has gone hand in hand with increased descriptive representation in public decision-making processes for ethnic minorities. Yet throughout this period of a half century there have also been numerous criticisms of approaches to the theory and practice of ethnic minority representation. The nature of critique has changed over the years to respond to different policy initiatives and to reflect differences in the demographic profile of the country and advances in the rights and opportunities afforded to people from ethnic minority backgrounds in society. For example, in the 1970s significant emphasis was

placed on improving basic levels of local political representation for a small selection of particular ethnic minority groups (often the largest groups demographically) through institutions such as ‘Community Relations Councils’ (Law et al. 2008). Over the last 15 years, as part of a broader critique of multiculturalism, more emphasis has been placed on debating the extent to which ‘identity-led’ approaches to representation (based solely on membership of a particular ethnic, ‘racial’ or faith group) and associated public policy-making (e.g. ethnic-specific public services) offer an effective model for ethnic minority community engagement (Murphy, 2012).

The issue of historical context then is particularly important to the study of this subject. What may today seem ‘un-progressive’ practice in the field of ethnic minority representation may, 40 years ago, have been a necessary step in the advancement of the political rights of ethnic minority groups. With this in mind, the following analysis identifies some of the more contemporary critique of the theory and practice of ethnic minority representation.

2.2 Identity, multiculturalism and failures of ethnic representation

Multiculturalism began as a progressive idea in the 1960s in the field of education based on pluralist ideals, where no culture was seen as more ‘valuable’ than the other. In a multicultural approach, cultural differences are identified and celebrated rather than absorbed or expunged (Kymlicka, 2012; Vasta, 2007). As a policy approach it has had significant traction. Yet in recent decades, the theory and implementation of multiculturalism have come under significant scrutiny. Authors have questioned the adequacy of multiculturalism as a way of managing social arrangements both in the UK and internationally (Malik, 2002; Barry, 1998; Hasan,

2010). Critiques of multiculturalism have come from both ends of the political spectrum. From the ‘right’ in defence of common or British values (Goodhart, 2014; Scheffer, 2011) and from the ‘left’ in defence of a more nuanced and pluralised conception of identity and culture (Rattansi, 2012; Bourne, 2007; Malik, 2006). A summary of four key themes from this debate are provided here as they provide the backdrop against which social policy and practice relating to ethnic minority representation has been formulated.

Firstly, commentators have argued that multiculturalism’s focus on difference has led to cities of competing cultures and parallel lives where ‘communities’ (based on ethnicity, faith, belief or other characteristics) – and the organisations that pertain to represent them - jostle for position and resources at the expense of others (Lentin 2008; Cantle 2005). It has been argued that this segregation can significantly reduce the capacity for collective action to address structural inequalities affecting a wide range of traditionally excluded groups (Younge, 2010; Barry, 2001; Sivanandan, 1985) though this is contested.

Secondly, critics have challenged the role that multiculturalism has played in shaping approaches to public policy design for ethnic minority groups. With an expectation that the specific needs of specific groups will be catered for comes a tendency to ‘ethnicise’ service provision and race equality initiatives (Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah, 2010). Barry (2001) refers to this process as ‘culturalization’ and suggests it can make broad, universalist, egalitarian policy goals much harder to formulate and to achieve and can also lead to the neglect of other (non-culture related) causes of group disadvantage. A number of theorists have suggested that

this criticism of multiculturalism is largely unfounded (Modood, 2013). Taylor (1994) for instance argues that cultural entitlements need to be protected, but that their recognition should not be accepted *de facto* and they should be balanced against the rights of others.

Thirdly, Brubaker (2015) suggests that 'reification' is central to the practice of multicultural politics as representatives are encouraged to define a static and uncontested vision of the needs of a particular ethnic group – when actually definitions of culture and of ethnicity are more fluid and dynamic. The result of reifying and essentialising cultural attributes of groups in multicultural politics is that approaches to political representation are often ill-equipped to recognise the heterogeneity and wide range of needs and demands within and between represented groups (Malik, 2002). Bassell, in describing the work of Rancière (2001), too suggests that "race and other identities must be transcended to reinvent politics rather than reproducing categories that are the tools of oppression and control in an unequal social world" (2015 p.95). Modood (2013) on the other hand argues that there is no inherent reification in politicised ethnicity. He acknowledges that culture can change, but he suggests that a cultural reference point of some kind is required in the political practice of equality, even if just to say how a culture has changed. Murji and Solomos (2016) also provide a warning against the limits of 'post-racial' analysis. They suggest that more focus needs to be placed on exploring common-sense notions that we live in post-racial times whilst recognising the 'everyday realities of continuing forms of racialized inequality and ethno-racial political mobilisation' (p.409).

Finally, there is still disagreement regarding which democratic models can best enable effective decisions to be made regarding the protection (or not) of cultural entitlements. Whilst cultural entitlements are viewed as an important component of people's identity and sense of belonging (Clayton, 2012), there are questions, at the same time, about the capacity of liberal political processes (through which multicultural policies are discussed and enacted) to offer an adequate framework for making fair and robust decisions on issues of cultural entitlement (Hall, 2002). Some theorists have suggested that the liberal state has the potential to remain 'neutral' when making decisions regarding the value that should be accorded to particular cultural entitlements and when developing societal norms and laws (Kymlicka, 1995; Rawls, 1993). Whilst others have suggested the state cannot remain neutral (Festenstein, 2005).

This disagreement about the potential for state neutrality has led some to advocate a more 'contextual' approach to addressing multicultural questions, one that is more informed by empirical evidence and the day-to-day practicality of implementing political decisions. Carens (2000) argues that more attention should be paid to the actual claims that are made by different groups and there should be greater analysis of how those demands can be responded to in policy terms. He suggests that this would help to illuminate the practical implications of some of the more abstract moral principles associated with multiculturalism. He also proposes that by weighing up the benefits of different claims to cultural entitlement made by individuals and groups in detail and by reflecting on the theories and discourses associated with these, then there are more opportunities to refresh and improve the analytical categories by which we view society.

Academic debate regarding agreement of shared norms and balancing of cultural entitlements is a rich and complex field of political science which is well-established (Benhabib, 2002; Dworkin, 2000; Raz, 1994; Rawls, 1993; Cohen, 1989). There is still a live debate regarding the extent to which different democratic models could be best applied in the context of a multicultural state (Ayirtman-Ercan, 2011). For example, whilst some authors have argued multicultural politics should include a public and reasoned moral evaluation of cultural identities and entitlements (Parekh, 2006; Taylor, 1994), others, such as Modood (2013), have argued that this type of moral evaluation is not required as cultural identities are mainly important to the bearer and do not have to be discussed as part of cross cultural dialogue. Of particular interest for this study, is how this debate relates to the fair and robust political decision-making about the topic of equality (Crocker, 2006). As Sen (1997) argues, one of the most significant questions for contemporary debate is not 'how much' equality should society be achieving (e.g. what is an acceptable level of inequality in cultural entitlement?), but instead 'what type' of equality should society be achieving (e.g. how should cultural entitlement be defined and how should this be balanced against equality in other fields of life?) This shares much with the questions raised by Dorling (2016) described in the introduction to this thesis about the type of politics we require to generate more meaningful debate about the types of equality we most value in society. Whilst Sen (1997) advocates a deliberative democratic approach to making public decisions of this type, empirical analysis of how fair and robust decisions can be made about equality in policy-making is rare.

2.3 Implications of demographic change and super-diversity

Some of the arguments described above have been a feature of public debate for at least the last thirty years. Yet, as Vertovec (2007) suggests, the last thirty years of government policies and public perceptions have been framed by a particular understanding of immigration and multicultural diversity. In the UK these have been based mainly on a perception of well-organised immigration from commonwealth/ former colonial countries. Vertovec argues that parts of the UK can now be described as 'super-diverse' due to new patterns of migration that have led to a demographic situation in which there is

> *"a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants"* (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1024).

Phillimore (2014) expands upon those defining characteristics of super-diversity that have particular implications for the design and delivery of public services in the UK. These characteristics include: the relatively high speed and pace of migration associated with globalisation and increased interconnectivity across the globe; changes in the scale of migration (with more immigrants arriving in the UK than previously); changes in the spread of migration (with immigrants coming from a more diverse range of 'new' countries not associated with previous patterns of migration); changes in the heterogeneity and complexity of migrants arriving in the UK who, arguably, are characterised by a more diverse range of backgrounds and experiences than previous post-Commonwealth migrants (in terms of, for example, their ethnicity, immigration status, gender, age and work experience); and associated

fragmentation with migrants arriving in relatively low numbers and having little previous connection with their destination (e.g. access to another family member or friend already living in the country).

As a result of these changes Vertovec (2007) suggests that current structures and modes of community organisation are inadequate to ensure effective representation of a super-diverse population and that community based organisations (e.g. those representing particular ethnic minority groups) should be recognised as only partially relevant with regard to their representativeness and scope. Yet to what extent have the implications of super-diversity been explored in relation to the representation and engagement of ethnic minority groups in the policy making process?

An emerging and diverse body of research has begun to explore the implications of super-diversity for a range of areas of public life in more detail. Phillimore (2011) describes the challenges the UK health system has faced in responding to the health needs of a highly diverse range of new migrants and the resulting policy imperatives in an age of super-diversity. Ram et al. (2012), in the context of ethnic minority enterprise, describe the challenge of developing culturally appropriate business support services when the nature of migrants and methods of international communication and travel have changed so widely and so rapidly. For Ram, there is a tension between ‘the needs of new and diverse communities and entrenched organisational imperatives to ‘monitor’ and cater to identifiable and established ‘ethnic minority’ groups’ (2012, p.354). This raises questions about the efficacy of previous multicultural models that were based on developing cultural knowledge of a

small set of ethnic minority groups (in the UK these groups were largely from Commonwealth countries).

In the field of socio-linguistic research too, there have also been challenges to the 'old' multiculturalist or 'multilingualist' model which associated the use of languages with a group of stable socio-cultural linguistic groups (informed by class, ethnicity or religion for instance) (Parkin and Arnaut 2012). New approaches to socio-linguistics have emphasised the dynamic nature of speech patterns, the complexity of semiotics and the hybridity of linguistic formation in super-diverse societies. Blommaert and Rampton (2011) outline the profound effect that new patterns of migration and new technologies are having on the study of language. They call for more focus to be placed on linguistic ethnography that could help explore the speed and complexity of globalisation and migration patterns. Creese and Blackledge (2010) too suggest that new diversity is becoming the site of new negotiations over linguistic resources and the analysis of language offers a particularly useful insight into the nature of super-diverse societies.

Overall, research in the field of super-diversity has focused relatively little on exploring the implications of super-diversity for political and civic engagement and representation of minorities. Vertovec (2010) does raise questions about the effectiveness of ethnic minority agencies and associations to respond to a rapidly changing and diverse society. He argues that the relatively cosy and straightforward relationship between public authorities and well-established ethnic minority agencies is being called into question with increased pressure on public resources to fund such agencies and increased pressure from new arrival groups that would like to

establish similar agencies for their own communities. A key feature of academic analysis of super-diversity has been to describe the complexity and heterogeneity of super-diverse societies (such as the UK) and to suggest that as a result previous approaches to defining 'communities' are insufficient as a foundation for effective community engagement and representation:

> *These facts [*describing the complexity and diversity of UK society and immigration patterns) *underscore the point that simple ethnicity-focused approaches to understanding and engaging various minority ''communities'' in Britain, as taken in many models and policies in conventional multiculturalism, are inadequate and often inappropriate for dealing with individual immigrants' needs or understanding the dynamics of their inclusion or exclusion.*
> (Vertovec, 2010a, p. 4).

Yet analysis of *what* exactly is insufficient about ethnicity-focused approaches to community engagement and representation in the context of super-diversity remains largely under-developed in the literature. For example, why are the 'models' associated with 'conventional multiculturalism' that Vertovec describes in the above quote inappropriate for understanding dynamics of exclusion? Vertovec (2010a, p. 4) suggests that a substantial shift in strategies concerning the assessment of needs, planning, budgeting and commissioning of services is required to respond to super-diversity and that this shift should begin with 'gathering basic information on the new diversity'. Yet how this new information on diversity will be used and what it will help to achieve is underexplored in the literature.

Indeed, whilst a number of studies have elaborated on the implications of super-diversity for research practice, exploration of the policy and practice implications is still an emerging field. Despite its relevance to the scholarly field of political representation, recent studies exploring super-diversity are relatively quiet on the subject (Spoonley, 2014; Spoonley and Tolley, 2012). It is also important to note that nascent analysis of the implications of super-diversity for social policy and representation of ethnic minorities in public decision-making, whilst raising a number of important questions, also echoes some of the debates associated with a longstanding pro/anti multiculturalism debate and with the study of inter-sectionality (Cooper 2004). In particular this line of inquiry echoes more established studies that have highlighted the heterogeneity of migrants' identity and experiences (Wilkinson 2003) and have described the impracticality of ethnic-focused public service design and political representation in contemporary society (Malik, 2002).

Notwithstanding the limits of analysis of the policy and practice implications of super-diversity in the literature, by describing a convergence of factors surrounding patterns of migration since the early 1990s, a growing literature about super-diversity does throw into stark relief the fact that the predictability of the category of 'migrant' and of her sociocultural features has largely disappeared (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011). Historical formulations and understandings of what it means to engage with (and represent) particular 'ethnic minority groups' for instance are turned on their head, as one recognises that contemporary migration patterns have changed, beyond recognition, what we once understood a 'migrant' or a 'resident' in a locality to be (Van der Aa and Blommaert, 2015). A mix of internal EU migration since 2004 and the current 'migration crisis' in Europe and the UK's decision to leave the

European Union, for instance, have contributed to a situation in which migration patterns have become harder to predict. Particularly relevant for this study, the literature challenges a variety of assumptions about 'difference' and demographic context that have informed previous debates about multiculturalism and political representation. In addition, super-diversity raises various methodological challenges associated with a legacy of structuralism in this academic field in which stable categories (such as 'speech communities') have been used to conduct research, measure changes in the population and make sense of the social world (Blommaert et al., 2015).

Despite the embryonic nature of the study of super-diversity and parallels with previous critique of multiculturalism, there are a number of specific challenges that can be extrapolated from work in this field that relate to representation and public engagement of ethnic minority groups in public policy-making. As Blake et al. (2008) argue, super-diversity brings with it a potentially new set of challenges relating to the administration and effective functioning of public governance. There are opportunities to consider further the nature of those challenges and to ask what relevance they have for the future development of community engagement and public participation mechanisms (Goodson et al., 2011). Three challenges emerge from the literature with particular relevance for this research.

The first challenge in a super-diverse society is capturing and understanding the nature of a needs and policy demands of a highly diverse populace**.** These may be the needs that migrants have in relation to the public services they receive (Phillimore, 2014). Or they may be other needs related to their effective participation

as ‘citizens’ and as participants in the democratic process (Erel, 2011). As a result, there is a pressing requirement for public engagement mechanisms that can better illuminate what those needs are.

The second challenge in a super-diverse society relates to the difficulty in providing culturally-specialised public services to people from such a wide range of cultural backgrounds and the challenge of balancing a range of entitlements and claims in the policy-making process (Phillimore, 2014; Vertovec, 2010b). This is partly due to the first challenge: a lack of knowledge about new service users’ needs and the apparent redundancy of some of the categories that have been used to define groups (such as broad ‘ethnic’ categories that are not sufficiently responsive to contemporary patterns of difference). However, this second challenge also relates to the size, scale, mobility and heterogeneity of the service user cohort and the need to balance a range of requests. With service users from so many cultural backgrounds, is it possible to ever design public services that are culturally appropriate for all and that protect all types of equality for all? Public engagement mechanisms are required that involve effective discussion and negotiation of how to balance a range of entitlements and claims in the design of public services (brap, 2012a; Wood and Landry, 2008). If a person’s request for an ‘equality entitlement’ is to be openly discussed and then (at times) legitimately denied for the greater good of society then approaches to public engagement and dialogue need to deliver the necessary assurances that this decision has been achieved fairly, transparently and effectively. As Sen puts it, there is a need to define and agree those ‘necessary inequalities’ in society that may well involve infringement of some people’s needs and entitlements for the greater good of society (1997, p.14). For Sen (2004) these accommodations

need to be arrived at in a way that is justifiable and democratic. The challenges associated with super-diversity and pressure on public resources associated with global recession and policies of welfare austerity have intensified the rationale for ensuring our policy decision-making processes can deliver on this aspiration.

The third challenge relates to effective communication and ensuring equal access and autonomy for those that use public engagement mechanisms. The barriers to effective civic engagement in a super-diverse society are not limited to the quotidian pressures of political apathy, lack of time and the influence of socio-economic position on political activity. The ‘newness’ and ‘novelty’ (Phillimore, 2014, p. 578) experienced by new immigrants and policy makers in a super-diverse society results in some having a lack of knowledge of the local and national political system and political cultures which can lead to limited representation and the exclusion of different social groups from public decision-making. This sits alongside more historic challenges that many ethnic minority groups have faced in gaining sufficient power and autonomy to set agendas, to speak out (sometimes against the views of others within their ‘community’) and to progress issues that are important to them within the policy-making process (Celis and Wauters, 2010; Mansbridge, 1998) . To address this, approaches to engagement are required that remain inclusive and accessible to those with little power or little knowledge of ‘the system’ and enable them to engage in an autonomous way and trust in its decision-making potential.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that there are a number of enduring challenges (many of which have been well covered in academic literature) associated with the models of

public engagement in policy-making traditionally associated with ‘multiculturalism’. In addition, liberal political processes through which multicultural policies are discussed and enacted do not necessarily offer an adequate framework for making fair and robust decisions about issues of cultural entitlement and issues of equality. Many of these challenges of engagement and representation are heightened further as the complexity, scale and speed of migration increase leading to towns and cities that are ‘super-diverse’. In this chapter I have identified three broad challenges that are particularly relevant to the effectiveness of public engagement in equality-related policy at a local level. To summarise, these three public governance challenges are:

a) how to effectively identify a diverse range of social groups’ needs;
b) how to discuss, negotiate and prioritise which of those needs should be acted upon when making policy decisions; and
c) how to develop engagement processes that allow people to act autonomously

Chapter 3 explores the extent to which previous scholarship has helped to respond to respond to each of the three challenges above. For each challenge I examine available literature and identify a number of areas that would benefit from further research. I then use this analysis to formulate three specific research objectives for the study (which are identified at the beginning of chapter 4).

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

As described in the previous chapter there are three important theoretical and practical challenges associated with the engagement and representation of ethnic minorities and these are becoming more pronounced in a modern, globalised and super-diverse society. These include:

a) how to effectively identify a diverse range of social groups' needs;
b) how to discuss, negotiate and prioritise which of those needs should be acted upon when making policy decisions; and
c) how to develop engagement processes that allow people to act autonomously

Academics and practitioners from a range of fields have undertaken research and have argued for different models of democratic practice, engagement and representation to respond to different aspects of these challenges. This chapter explores the extent to which available literature has helped in this regard. Each of the three challenges described above is considered in turn. A summary analysis of the current state of evidence is provided, along with an overview of gaps in the literature and where further research could help to generate new insights. In conducting this literature review I recognised that literature responding to these three challenges can be drawn from a wide range of fields including social policy, political science, ethnic and racial studies and psychology. The approach I took to undertaking the review was thus multi-disciplinary and this has meant that I have, inevitably, not been able to cover in this thesis all arguments in the depth that I wanted to.

3.1 How to effectively identify a diverse range of social groups' needs

3.1.1 A focus on institutional design

In designing effective approaches to participation of ethnic minorities in public decision-making, authors have argued for more innovative forms of institutional design that respond to the specific nature of local social, economic, geographic and political contexts (Phillips et al., 2010; Smith and Stephenson, 2005). As Smith contends "to be most effective, ethnic diversity policy-making at local government level must be tailored to these local circumstances and not constrained by predetermined national rhetoric" (2011, p.5). This emphasis on procedural and institutional design at a local level can be seen in policy guidance on this subject too (for example, IAPT, 2009). Many toolkits focus squarely on how to change governance processes to make them more 'accessible' through revised institutional design (e.g. increased use of 'community' venues, provision of culturally-specific food, or use of community languages and translation) (for example, Harlow Council 2013).

Evaluation of such community engagement initiatives has tended to focus on measuring success of the initiative in terms of the level of 'access' (number of people from particular ethnic minority backgrounds that accessed the initiative) (Aspden and Birch, 2005). This focus echoes some of the emerging theories in the 1990s calling for increased descriptive representation of ethnic minority groups in decision-making processes to address a democratic deficit (Kymlica, 1995; Young, 19s90). Yet, arguably, concentrating on issues of 'access' and the institutional design and structure of engagement mechanisms has stymied more holistic assessments of the

operation and effectiveness of ethnic minority representation approaches at a local level. In particular, a focus on the contribution of institutional design to achieving descriptive representation has meant that other issues associated with substantive representation (such as the quality of debate, fairness of agenda-setting and the extent to which people's needs are conveyed) have received less focus (Levi et al. 2008).

A strong focus on accessibility strategies and improving access for under-represented groups to local decision-making process has also, in turn, limited attempts to assess whether ethnic minorities' needs are being fully accounted for and responded to after they have gained that initial access to the public policy process. Young (2000) echoes this concern when suggesting that less theoretical emphasis has been placed on how to achieve 'internal inclusion', the ways in which people are excluded from the process of decision-making process and ways in which their views are disregarded. As Somerville (2004) has argued, there has been a relative lack of analysis of the 'function' and quality of contemporary local governance systems including how governance systems operate in practice, power relations within those systems, prevailing discourses and language employed during political engagement. A closer consideration of the 'function' of contemporary governance systems in this sense could help to illuminate those issues that help or hinder achievement of substantive representation.

3.1.2 Exploring the function and quality of representation

Hall suggests that in British political debate there is a tendency to construct 'the British people' as without ethnicity, to treat the practice of race and racism as if it

were external to British social formation and thus treat the ‘problem’ of race and racism as if they were merely a ‘matter of policy…not a matter of politics’ (1978 p.31). For Hall, this stifles progressive debate on the issue of representation and equality. Gilroy (1987) also argues that the political language used to describe ‘community’ has a moral dimension that evokes an array of symbols and meanings. He suggests that there have been a number of closures introduced into the emotional repertoire of arguments used to discuss ‘community’ and to progress race equality in the UK. In particular, he suggests that values and emotions relating to ideas of subordination and domination are rarely discussed in the politics of race equality. Arguably in the UK this narrowing of public discourse on the subject of race has led to a situation where arguments for reducing inequality have tended to be objectified and described in terms of policy administration and due legal process. Indeed, a gradual backlash to this phenomenon can be seen in the resurgence of ‘black’ political activity (with a large ‘P’) in recent years in response to UK government austerity policies and a perceived lack of political activism on issues of race equality (e.g. the ‘Black Activists Rise Against Cuts’ campaign in the UK in 2013 http://blackactivistsrisingagainstcuts.blogspot.co.uk/). Young (2000) too has made this point in relation to gender equality and also calls for more recognition of emotional and value-driven discourse in politics.

Conventions of communication within public engagement activity then have the potential to play an important role in shaping which ‘needs’ of participants and those that they represent are discussed. In order to develop a greater understanding of whether ethnic minorities’ needs are being heard and are being met through public engagement processes or whether their views are being distorted by conventions of

communication, there is a strong case to gather more empirical evidence on the function and quality of representation, including how people 'feel' about their participation. This should include a consideration of whether participants are achieving substantive representation through their engagement. In particular, as argued above, this analysis would benefit from focusing on power dynamics within engagement processes, accepted communication and dialogue practices and different discourses that operate within engagement processes. As I describe in Chapters 4 and 5, this study focuses on assessing how different models of public engagement practice might influence the way participants communicate and the level of autonomy they feel they have to say what they want to.

3.1.3 Limitations of alternative frameworks to multiculturalism

As described in Chapter 1, there have been a number of criticisms of 'multicultural' theory which are associated with its limitations in relation to capturing and defining the 'needs' of ethnic minority groups for the purposes of public policy-making. In particular, studies critiquing multiculturalism have noted the tendency of policy makers to 'essentialise' and to put ethnic minority groups in a box that relates to their ethnicity (Barry, 1998). This line of critique suggests that insufficient weight is given to people's diversity and to the fluidity and dynamism of their identity and experience. As a result of the 'short-cuts' used to understand and categorise people from diverse backgrounds, different aspects of their diverse needs can be missed and as a result may not inform policy decisions and subsequent practice.

A number of alternative theories have been developed which do address, in part, some of these apparent shortcomings in multicultural policy's ability to identify and

respond to the dynamic nature of people's needs. This is a field of significant scholarly interest and as such there has been much written on this subject. In this thesis there is only space to describe the broad contours of two such alternative frameworks for defining group needs in public policy very briefly: intersectionality and interculturalism. I have chosen these frameworks as opposed to others such as community cohesion (Cantle, 2005) as they represent two contemporary, relevant and emerging alternatives to multicultural policy in the UK (Balchin, 2013; Barrett, 2013; Levrau and Loobuyck, 2013; Robinson and Flint, 2008). Key issues relevant to this study are summarised below, recognising that there are some similarities and overlaps between these frameworks and that the content of these frameworks is contested in the literature.

a) Intersectionality

Developments in feminist theory have led to a greater recognition of the drawbacks to focusing only on gender as a source of subjugation and inequality. Authors have emphasised how people are also subjected by other forms of social difference (such as race, disability and class) at the same time as being subjected by gender (Crenshaw, 1989; Burman, 2004; Hooks, 1984). This interaction between multiple forms of difference has been described as 'intersectionality'. This concept has informed Development Studies and legal theory for some time now in relation to gender equality in particular. However, it has only become commonplace in the UK social policy lexicon much more recently and even then it has been associated mainly with specialist equality issues and legal matters. In particular, the concept of intersectionality has accompanied research and development associated with the Discrimination Law Review and subsequent Equality Act 2010 which introduced the

legal concept of discrimination on multiple grounds. Hudson (2012) charts the growing policy interest in issues of multiple discrimination, suggesting that there has been increasingly popular argument in the UK that separate institutional strategies based on ‘equality strands’ (e.g. race, gender, disability) can mean that the experiences of people with combinations of certain social characteristics remain hidden.

Yet there is still debate about whether intersectionality and accompanying concepts of multiple-discrimination offer a functional alternative conceptual framework that could help to address some of the problems associated with the narrowly defined versions of ‘ethnic’ need associated with multicultural practice described above (Valentine, 2015). Certainly the concept has the potential to help avoid the theoretical erasure of multiple identities in gender and race analysis (Crenshaw, 1989). Amplifying the voice of minorities within minorities and identifying their specific needs and concerns can help to create a more equal playing field that does not favour otherwise-privileged members of ethnic minority groups. Indeed, it can also help to expose the unique multiple-discrimination faced by less powerful groups within ethnic minorities and can help to challenge adherence to the use of mutually exclusive identity paradigms in law and in policy making (Valentine, 2015).

Yet notwithstanding these advantages, the way in which these different aspects of social difference ‘add up’ to reflect a multiple or composite form of discrimination or inequality has not been fully resolved in conceptual terms and in practice. A common criticism relates to the tendency for race, ethnicity, gender and class to be seen as independent ‘fixed’ categories that are first created and then may intersect with one

another, rather than categories and systems that are co-created and operate in conjunction with one another (McCall, 2005). Yet perhaps the most relevant critique for this research is the tendency for intersectionality to chart *how* groups are currently oppressed, rather than offering possibilities for how the system can be changed to avoid that oppression in the future. For example, it is one thing to recognise that the experience of black women in the workplace may differ from black men. It is another thing entirely to identify and revise effective approaches to workplace equality in order to respond to these differences. The conceptual framework offered by an intersectional approach does not necessarily help in making decisions about how highly diverse needs might be prioritised and responded to through social policies or through broader change in the structures that govern society. This challenge is heightened in super-diverse societies, where traditional identity markers such as ‘gender’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘religion or belief’ are considered alongside a multitude of other dimensions (e.g. legal immigration status and channels of entry) on a more regular basis (Dill, 2010).

b) Interculturalism

Interculturalism’ remains a contested term with a range of different meanings. Interculturalism has emerged as a theory of how public spaces should be designed through city planning in order to manage diversity (Wood et al., 2006). In European Union policy, the term has been used in broad terms to describe relationships between people from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds (largely as the term ‘race relations’ might be used in the UK) (Council of Europe, 2008). The term has also been used to refer to a particular model of community relations compared to other models of community relations (such as multiculturalism or

assimilation) (Cantle, 2013). This research engages mostly with the latter context of the term.

A wide and divergent range of definitions have been offered in relation to use of the term ‘interculturalism’ as a model of community relations (Titley, 2012; Rattansi, 2011; James, 2009; Sandercock, 2003). For the purposes of this research, a recent definition offered by brap is used that engages with and builds upon some of these previous definitions. The definition developed by brap is based upon an evaluation of 20 ‘intercultural’ initiatives that were awarded for their contribution to the progress of intercultural dialogue:

> *Interculturalism recognises that cultural is important and of equal value to all people. It recognises that forcing people to subscribe to one set of values can create tension between individuals and groups. It understands that human beings are multi-dimensional in nature and that cultural fusion has been, and will continue to be, a by-product of human interaction. It requires negotiation to accommodate our expression of culture in the public domain using the principles of human rights to shape shared entitlements.* (brap, 2012a, p.5)

Whilst this is not a definitive or commonly agreed definition of the term, it is based on an empirical examination of practice and the definition refers specifically to the process of public engagement and public decision-making and this makes it particularly useful for this research. The model elaborated by brap identifies the following conceptual and practical principles of interculturalism that are particularly

relevant to improving the identification of diverse social groups' needs in the policy process.

The first principle of intercultural practice recognises that identity is fluid and socially constructed. It gives 'permission' for people to have more than one identity in the policy-making process, to change and to ascribe to different identities and to form attachments to groups as they see fit (Warmington, 2012, p.42). This principle contributes to the effective identification of a diverse range of social groups' needs by offering a theoretical basis upon which to challenge 'essentialised' or 'stereotypical' versions of need accorded to people from a particular background by others. By actively challenging the ascription of particular identities to individuals and by recognising that identity is fluid and ever-changing, interculturalism addresses a commonly held criticism of intersectionality: that different aspects of identity such as gender and ethnicity are treated as separate, bounded and previously created components of identity (Dhamoon, 2011).

Secondly, interculturalism enables, where relevant, people from the same and different cultures to critically discuss controversial subjects that involve the role of culture and structural inequality in their lives in a way that can lead to positive change (James, 2009). This contributes to the effective identification of diverse social groups' needs by encouraging people within a social group to share views on what they 'need' that may not be strictly in accordance with what others from that social group think is appropriate or 'culturally acceptable'. This shares much with the early aims of intersectionality as described by Crenshaw (1989) and her aim of amplifying the voices of minorities within minorities. However arguably

interculturalism goes beyond this through its focus on the practical importance of dialogue and the active questioning and negotiation of culture between people within the same ‘culture’ and between different ‘cultures’ (Warmington, 2012, p.97).

In some cases, the ‘cultural’ entitlements of ethnic minority groups have been portrayed as more important than other people’s human rights and beyond public debate and negotiation (Renteln, 2004). The third principle of interculturalism relates to not using ‘culture’ to bypass or ‘trump’ established human rights procedures. Interculturalism promotes the idea of equal entitlement on the basis of shared humanity (brap, 2012a). Challenging other people’s cultural views and practices is seen as acceptable and constructive if they are at odds with human rights principles. “It requires negotiation to accommodate our expression of culture in the public domain, using the principles of human rights to shape shared entitlements” (brap, 2012a, p.5). This principle as applied through intercultural dialogue contributes to the effective identification of social groups’ needs by helping public dialogue participants to weigh and balance the claims and entitlements of different groups in order to make proportionate decisions about the protection of different claimants’ rights.

As well as the potential advantages to an intercultural model in supporting the identification of diverse social groups’ needs in the policy-making process, there are also a number of potential challenges and limitations. Perhaps the most significant limitation of interculturalism, for the purpose of this research, is the lack of practical implementation of intercultural dialogue in community relations, community engagement and the policy making process) and the lack of empirical evidence

about how this might work in practice (Afridi, 2012; Meer and Modood, 2012). This is an important gap in available literature. brap (2012) acknowledge that interculturalism, as an approach to community relations and policy making in the UK has little 'currency', is relatively ill-defined compared to its predecessor multiculturalism, and requires a high level of investment of time and resources to engage in the type of dialogue and facilitated conversations that are required for it to work well. There is indeed a paucity of empirically-focused studies exploring the application of interculturalism in relation to community engagement, dialogue and policy making in the UK in available literature (James, 2009). At a European level where the term does have more currency and best practice examples are more readily available, much of the focus in available literature has placed on broad principles of intercultural dialogue such as application of universal norms of human rights, dialogue on the basis of shared values and articulating the benefits of cultural diversity (Barrett, 2013). There has been much less coverage of how some of the challenging discussions about the balance between individuals' cultural entitlements and the rest of society (of the type referred to in the brap model of interculturalism described above) might be enacted.

On a more theoretical level, it is important to note that there is a risk that interculturalism is associated solely with issues of ethnicity, nationality and religion. A broader interpretation of 'culture' would arguably be required (including issues of gender, disability, sexual orientation, migrant status etc.) in order to help avoid the type of criticisms of limited scope that intersectionality has received as described above. There is also an on-going and lively debate about the extent to which 'interculturalism' offers an *alternative* approach to multiculturalism at all (Keval,

2014). A number of critics of the term have argued that ‘interculturalism’ is simply a more ‘critical’ (Farrar, 2011) or ‘updated’ (Lentin, 2008) variant of earlier derivations of multiculturalism. Modood and Meer (2012) too suggest that the very things interculturalists argue are a departure from multiculturalism, such as critiquing illiberal cultural practices and recognising dynamic identities, are, in fact, foundational features of multiculturalism and can be seen in the diverse works of ardent multiculturalists such as Taylor (1994) and Parekh (2006).

It is important to note that a key challenge associated with the current contours of this debate has been the strong focus on issues of definitional precision (arguments for more accurate definitions of ‘intercultural’ and ‘multicultural’) and a lack of empirical evidence about how interculturalism might operate in practice. This has led to some avenues of academic debate on this topic reaching something of a semantic impasse, with those arguing ‘for’ multiculturalism (Modood and Meer, 2011; Parekh, 2000) or those arguing ‘for’ interculturalism (brap, 2012b; Cantle, 2012) often agreeing that the same types of approaches are required to move the thinking and practice of community relations forward but calling their preferred approach something different. I return to this stalemate in the following chapter.

3.1.4 Areas for further research

Chapter 2 identified a number of problems with previous approaches to addressing the question ‘how to effectively identify the needs of diverse social groups’. Whilst the theories and practices identified in this review do offer insights into how to identify diverse social groups’ needs, there are still a number of evidence gaps,

theoretical challenges and inconsistencies that merit further exploration. Three particular areas of exploration emerge.

Firstly, there has been a particular emphasis on analysis of institutional design of public engagement processes and how this contributes to effective identification of diverse social groups' needs. There are opportunities to explore in more detail *how* institutions and governance processes *function* in practice as this is likely to provide a better account of the type of substantive representation achieved for diverse social groups (and their representatives).

Secondly, descriptions of the 'quality' of diverse social groups' engagement in policy-making processes has tended to focus on descriptive representation (the extent to which those involved in public engagement practices 'look like' the rest of the population). There is an opportunity to explore alternative indicators of the 'quality' of public engagement processes in this field of practice. This should include a consideration of whether participants are achieving substantive representation through their engagement (whether representatives are able to further the interests of the represented).

Thirdly, despite a number of potential advances in theory associated particularly with 'interculturalism', there is relatively little empirical evidence of how these theories might translate into the practice of public engagement of diverse social groups in the policy-making process. There is also relatively little empirical evidence of the tangible benefits or impact of models such as multiculturalism or interculturalism on effective identification of diverse social groups' needs in policy.

The approach I take to exploring these three areas of interest further is described in Chapter 4. In order to map 'how' institutions approach public governance and engagement of ethnic minorities in policy-making, I focus on mapping the public engagement practice of local authorities in England (Research Objective 1). In order to explore alternative indicators to 'descriptive representation' to understand the 'quality' of public engagement processes, I develop two such indicators to measure specific aspects of substantive representation in public engagement practice (Research Objectives 2 and 3). Thirdly, in order to address the paucity of evidence about how intercultural dialogue might work in practice in public engagement, I run a qualitative experiment (Kleining, 1986) which directly uses and assesses the impact of 'intercultural' models of public engagement upon participants' experiences (this is described in detail in Chapter 5).

3.2 How to discuss, negotiate and prioritise which social needs should be acted upon when making policy decisions

The debate about the value and cost of identity politics as a model for responding to issues of inequality remains live in academic and policy circles (Meer, 2015; Seymour, 2010). With the continuation of systemic inequalities affecting particular groups in the society, there is an on-going expectation that some form of identity politics is required, where representatives from particular traditionally excluded groups put forward claims in the political process in order to respond to inequality (Kymlicka, 2012; Bernstein, 2005; Young, 2000). Yet with a range of claims made by people representing different social groups, there is still disagreement regarding which democratic models can best enable effective decisions to be made regarding

the protection (or not) of perceived entitlements and needs demanded by diverse social groups in the political process**.**

The challenge of 'how to discuss, negotiate and prioritise which needs of diverse social groups should be acted upon when making policy decisions?' strays into some of the broader debates in political theory about how to improve democratic processes in diverse societies. Below some advances in the field of deliberative democratic theory are considered alongside other developments in social policy and community engagement practice that have been offered as a response to this challenge. I recognise that by focusing on deliberation I neglect developments in other areas of democratic theory, particularly participatory democracy (Gustafson and Hertting, 2016; Richardson and Monro, 2012; Smith, 2009; Barnes et al., 2008; Gaventa, 2004) and representative democracy (Sanders et al., 2014; Urbinati and Warren, 2008). Yet I chose to focus on deliberative democratic theory because of its focus on the *nature* of the processes through which preferences are formed and debated (John et al., 2011; Dworkin, 2000). In particular, many deliberative democrats are concerned with exploring the procedural and substantive conditions for equality in public discourse that can help to generate 'valid' or 'legitimate' social norms for everyone.

3.2.1 Contribution of deliberative democratic theory

In a deliberative democratic model, for a democratic decision to be seen as legitimate, it must be preceded by 'authentic deliberation' and not just be an aggregation of preferences via voting (Cohen, 1997). For Cohen 'authentic' deliberation is free from the influence of unequal relationships of power in wider

society (e.g. unequal power a decision-maker gains because they are wealthy). A deliberative democratic approach recognises differences and inequalities and aims to manage them, to help people deliberate through the differences between them. In the UK there has been an emerging consensus between political parties that a rejuvenation of democracy will require more opportunities for public deliberation and participation, but they have thus far failed to deliver meaningful change (Davidson and Elstub, 2014). This field of democratic innovation is well suited to practice-oriented research topics that explore issues of political inclusion and equality. But to what extent do accounts of deliberative democracy help to identify the conditions necessary for political debate where a wide and diverse range of social groups' needs can be discussed, negotiated and prioritised?

Valadez (2001) suggests that there are significant advantages of a deliberative democratic model in diverse societies which include: a focus on commitment to a 'common good'; promotion of mutual understanding in political discourse; recognition of all political voices; and emphasis on intercultural dialogue. Over the last decade scholars have placed increasing emphasis on assessing the feasibility and implementation of different models of face to face and on-line forms of deliberative democracy (Black, 2011; Smith, 2009). This 'deliberative turn' (Dryzek, 2000) has gone hand in hand with an increased interest since the 1990s in 'participative democracy' that has aimed to nurtured spheres of public action and decision-making (e.g. citizen juries) that can reinvigorate traditional institutions of representative democracy (Brodie et al., 2012; Smith, 2009). Particularly relevant to this study, there has been a consistent focus in many of these interventions on the quality of the *process* of weighing up different claims made about public policy in order to make

political decisions (Allan and Blond, 2012) and there is an emergent evidence base on how these interventions can be practically implemented (see www.participedia.net).

However, in the context of responding to the complexities of social diversity, a number of critics have argued that deliberative democratic models are insufficient. Shapiro (2003) contends that by exacerbating differences between people as part of the deliberative process, the prospect of reaching acceptable consensus becomes much more difficult. He suggests the focus of democracy should be to limit domination rather than enable the expression of some form of consensus that reflects the common good. Williams (1998) suggests deliberative democratic theory hasn't gone far enough to account for differences between ethnic minority groups. For her, this is because focus has been placed primarily on whether deliberative theory achieves *impartiality* in the decision-making process (by avoiding bias in favour of particular societal interests) as opposed to whether those practical processes achieve impartiality *and legitimacy in the eyes of those affected by them.* Thus the 'legitimacy' of political deliberation relating to equality may require more than some of the procedural and substantive conditions of equality described above.

Critics of deliberative democracy also argue that the model as a whole is unsuited to improving democratic quality in the context of social difference and competing visions of social needs (Young, 2000). Three popular forms of argument are included here. Firstly, theorists have argued that deliberative democracy presumes a level of 'homogeneity' of participants in the process, shared communication mechanisms and shared language for the process to work well (Healy, 2011). Yet, in the context

of highly diverse societies, cognitive and moral incommensurability can become a problem when participants are unable to engage in rational deliberation due to incompatible cognitive or moral frameworks associated with cultural differences (Valadez, 2001). Those involved find it hard to give 'reasons' in debate that others will find compelling if the cognitive and moral frameworks that people use aren't similar enough to permit mediation and adjudication of differences between them (Valadez, 2001). Empirical studies have identified considerable context-specific barriers to the widespread use of deliberative techniques too. Sass and Dryzek (2011), for instance, refer to the different 'cultural' meanings of deliberation and the role that geographical context and time can play in shaping the nature and outcomes of deliberation.

A second argument concerns socio-economic inequality and its relationship to political inequality. Boham (1998) argues that a tendency to focus on 'ideal procedures' of deliberation can mean the model is unresponsive to the full range of inequalities that might affect those involved. Deliberative democrats, he suggests, are not usually concerned with structural features of the wider society. As Pateman (2012) contends, this can lead to advocates of deliberative democracy taking wider issues of social, economic and political context for granted rather than considering the potential effect of these issues on inequalities between deliberation participants. Others have also argued that changes in the preferences of participants which have been attributed to deliberation may instead be due to heuristics and forms of social influencing that take place during the deliberation – some of which may be due to differences in access to resources or ability to use those resources (Mendelberg, 2002).

Thirdly, some critics have argued that deliberative forms of governance can be as exclusionary as other forms of more representative governance (Griggs and Howarth, 2008; Mutz, 2006; Young, 2000). Practical questions of how to find the right people to take part in deliberation and the extent to which they are 'representative' of a particular group still abound. In the context of political debate about equality, these types of challenges continue to vex those local policy makers in charge of widening civic participation and encouraging ethnic minority groups to respond to the policy process (Smith, 2010). There have been attempts to address this challenge (Deakin and Koukiadiki, 2012; Karpowitz et al., 2009; Wagenaar, 2006). Yet, arguably, discussion of the 'representative' nature of deliberative democracy has tended to focus on initial access to the deliberation (are people from particular social backgrounds present in the deliberation) as opposed to what happens when people are 'performing' that act of representation (either as a representative of another group – or in terms of their self-representation during the process of deliberation) (Rehfeld, 2005). In particular, there appear to be gaps in the literature in examination of whether people are able to 'represent' and to operate in a way that they would choose when engaging in deliberation on issues of equality.

3.2.2 Areas for further research

As has been discussed in this section, deliberative democratic theory offers a number of useful models to establish whether conditions have been met for political dialogue about differing needs and entitlements of citizens. However, some aspects of existing theoretical models in this field appear less applicable to specific challenges associated with policy debate on issues of equality involving ethnic

minority groups. There is an emerging literature base evaluating the practical application of deliberative democracy and its role in responding to inequalities in wider society (Karpowitz et al., 2009). Yet empirical studies of the challenges of implementing deliberative 'ideal' dialogue scenarios in the context of super-diverse societies where people may have different cognitive and moral frameworks and may struggled to resolve disagreements that relate to competing claims are lacking. As Cooper (2004, p.36) puts it "the process of determining which differences 'count' has been under-theorised within the space diversity policies has opened up". There is potential to test the application of dialogue practices in this regard. In particular, there is scope to explore the 'performance' of representation (Saward, 2006) of ethnic minority groups (how representation is enacted, how representative claims are made, why representative claims are made) in the context of public dialogue about equality. Are representatives able to achieve agenda-setting and acceptance of views fairly as part of the deliberative process? There are gaps in evidence around how participants experience and feel about the deliberative decision-making process where those representative claims are made. As I describe in Chapter 4 I identify two specific research objectives to explore particular aspects of that experience: which factors influence the scope and content of issues of equality discussed in public engagement activities? (Research Objective 2); and which factors influence the level of autonomy participants in public engagement activities feel they have? (Research Objective 3).

Finally, despite a growing interest in this field of democratic innovation, attempts to empirically assess the impact of deliberative models, particularly their relationship to issues of equality, remain in their infancy (Chaney, 2012; Pomatto, 2012). In UK

social policy and voluntary sector practice there are signs of an increasing interest in understanding the effectiveness of different approaches to civic engagement (Brodie et al., 2012; HM Government, 2010) which has not, yet, extended to considering the effectiveness of current approaches to public engagement in policy-making on issues of equality. In this study to respond to this gap I explore, through a qualitative experiment, the impact of different models of equality-related public policy engagement on particular aspects of substantive representation (explained in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5).

3.3 How to develop public engagement processes that allow people to act autonomously

A final aspect of the function and quality of representation and public decision-making which has received relatively little attention is the issue of how to create 'autonomous' processes for engagement of traditionally excluded groups in policy-making. On the issue of 'autonomy' critiques of multiculturalism describe the disempowering and alienating effect of a person being represented by community leaders or other representatives that don't fully represent them (Hasan, 2010). Implicit to some of these arguments has been the idea that 'minorities within minorities' (e.g. women, young people, lesbian, gay or bisexual people) are in some ways coerced by representatives of their ethnic minority group or by wider society to accept particularly policy standpoints and that their choice or autonomy is limited as a result of standard approaches to group representation. Similarly, Barry (2001, p.326) argues that the 'politics of difference' associated with multiculturalism can lead to a preference for cultural relativism which restricts public dialogue about the problems with some cultural practices. Representatives of particular cultural groups

are encouraged to act a particular way in public dialogue and certain subjects, such as female genital mutilation or forced marriage, are considered not open to discussion or are not considered an appropriate target for public policy (Dustin and Phillips, 2004).

The following section assesses the extent to which available literature has helped to identify approaches to public engagement which might respond to this proposed loss of autonomy of ethnic minority communities in public engagement. Whilst, as described above, there is a literature describing this loss of autonomy (Hasan, 2010; Macey, 2009; Dustin and Phillips, 2004), there is less literature describing how it might be addressed specifically in the context of ethnic minority groups (Brahm Levey, 2015; Galeotti, 2015). Thus I draw on more general theoretical debates about improving autonomy in democratic processes.

3.3.1 Developing 'autonomous' processes of engagement

In exploring the type of equality required in a deliberative democratic process, Knight and Johnson (1997) offer a useful distinction between 'access' and 'influence'. They argue that democratic deliberation presupposes procedural guarantees that afford equal *access* to relevant deliberative arenas at *agenda-setting* and *decision-making stages*. They also suggest deliberation presupposes that more 'substantive' guarantees of equality are required to ensure equal *influence.* These guarantees include the equality of resources required to ensure people's assent to arguments advanced by others are un-coerced – i.e. that people are able to act *autonomously*. They also include people's equal ability to advance persuasive claims (Knight and Johnson, 1997).

Also some authors have suggested the nature of conditions required to achieve procedural and substantive equality in deliberative democratic processes. For example, it is important to have individuals who are diverse, with a particular set of cognitive abilities (Chappell, 2007; Benhabib, 2002). It is important to have institutions that enable people to engage fully in deliberation and to access the information they require to make effective decisions (John et al., 2011). Yet some of these aspects of deliberative democratic theory remain 'ideal theory', and even some of the more practical descriptions of how deliberative democracy might be implemented are grounded in theoretical debates about norms of democratic practice (Thompson, 2008).

When compared to available literature on the pre-conditions for 'procedural' and 'substantive' equality in deliberation, much less has been written about the conditions required to ensure people involved in deliberation are acting 'autonomously' and free from coercion and how this links to issues of 'identity' (Brahm Levey, 2015; Hague, 2011). As I described in Chapter 2, a concern with ethnic minority groups' ability to act *autonomously*, with choice, free from the presumed shackles of essentialism and of being put into an 'identity box' is central to critique of some of the previous approaches to political engagement of ethnic minority groups in society. Indeed, much of the policy literature on the drawbacks of multicultural models of 'identity politics' have emphasised the role of 'community leaders' as 'gate-keepers' that misrepresent the views of the excluded groups they pertain to represent (Cantle, 2012). As Malik (2006, online) puts it "the logic of such identity politics (is that) it undermines the possibilities of social change by

subordinating political goals to the demands of ethnic identity". Yet there is less empirical evidence available to understand whether this happens in practice and how this 'subordination' happens. Also it will be important to consider whether this a purposive or unintended strategy on the part of those representatives. These are important gaps in knowledge. In this study I develop conceptual frameworks and methods to explore these issues.

3.3.2 Areas for further research

As described above, critics of multicultural politics have described the loss of autonomy experienced by those that are represented by community leaders. For example, Patel (1998, p.22, cited in Macey, 2009) describes how multiculturalism 'concedes some measure of autonomy to community leaders to govern their communities. In reality this means that community leaders have most control over the family, women and children' (Patel, 1998). Similarly, in a review of literature on the issue of 'identity politics', Bernstein (2005) found that there were examples of studies describing situations in which representatives either chose or were forced to assume a particular identity based on their ethnicity, gender status or sexual orientation. Thus it has been argued that not only *the represented*, but also *representatives* themselves lose aspects of their autonomy through forms of identity politics. Yet empirical evidence of *how* people are influenced or coerced into acting a particular way in public engagement activities and in what circumstances people feel they lose their autonomy is relatively scant in available literature. Indeed, Bernstein (2005) acknowledges there are relatively few empirical studies that explore *how* this loss of autonomy functions in practice. This study focuses specifically on exploring the potential loss of autonomy experienced by public engagement participants

themselves who participate in public engagement activities (as opposed to those they may represent).

It is important to examine the experiences of public engagement participants themselves as this can provide an insight into the quality and impact of different models of engaging diverse social groups in discussion about equality-related public policy. Indeed, issues of choice and autonomy play a central role in contemporary debates about the engagement of ethnic minorities with democratic structures in the UK. For example, recent literature has described: the lack of political efficacy ethnic minority groups feel when engaging in local decision-making fora (Heath et al., 2013) and the lack of power ethnic minority groups have to set agendas and the, sometimes, limited opportunity structure open to representatives of ethnic minority groups within political processes (Saalfeld and Bischof, 2013; Sobolewska, 2013). In Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis I outline an approach to exploring the effect of different models of public engagement activity upon whether participants feel they can act in a way they would choose within the public engagement process. I consider the conditions that might help somebody to act autonomously and the potential 'costs' and 'benefits' to participants of acting in this way. These issues are examined directly through this study under the aegis of Research Objective 3: 'which factors influence the level of autonomy participants in public engagement activities feel they have?'

3.4 Conclusion

I have described in this chapter the extent to which existing literature responds to three particular challenges associated with the engagement of ethnic minorities in

public policy processes. Given the inter-disciplinary nature of this inquiry I recognise that some areas of the literature have not been discussed in the level of depth I would have preferred. Yet I have identified a number of theoretical and empirical gaps in that literature and have outlined where this study will respond to those gaps.

Firstly, I described how theoretical developments such as interculturalism and aspects of deliberative democratic theory, have helped to further our understanding of how best to engage diverse social groups in public engagement activities. However, much of this work has been theoretical in scope and more empirical research is required to understand *how* public engagement on issues of equality-related public policy is approached in practice. The first research objective for this study (outlined in the next chapter) is based on this gap in empirical data.

Secondly, I suggested that attempts to judge the quality of public engagement of ethnic minorities have focused strongly on 'descriptive representation' and that there are opportunities to adopt new indicators which assess achievement of substantive representation. Thirdly, I described how existing literature has emphasised the potential inequalities ethnic minorities may face within the democratic process. Many of these inequalities relate to issues of 'power' and substantive representation within the engagement process (e.g. not being able to put forward policy preferences or raise issues due to conventions of communication). These inequalities affect both 'the represented' and 'representatives' within public policy-making processes. More empirical research is required to understand how these patterns of inequality operate in practice. I argued that examining the experiences of participants within public engagement activities in particular could offer a useful insight into the conditions

required to improve the quality of public engagement activity and to reduce inequalities within that process. The second and third research objectives for this study (outlined in the next chapter) respond to these gaps in our understanding of the substantive representation of ethnic minorities in the policy-making process:

In the next chapter I outline a conceptual framework used to design the study that responds to gaps in the literature identified in this chapter. In particular, I identify three specific research objectives for the study and a set of concepts which can be used to (a) map how public engagement on issues of equality-related public policy is approached in practice and (b) measure particular aspects of substantive representation described in this chapter which appear to be important to the study of inequalities faced by ethnic minorities within public engagement processes.

CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, a conceptual framework is outlined which describes some of the underlying principles and theories used to design the research and to develop research instruments.

As I argued in Chapter 3, traditionally, approaches to researching the engagement of ethnic minorities have used the achievement of descriptive representation as an indicator of quality (ensuring that people with particular 'attributes' such as ethnic background gain access to public engagement activities and policy-making). I identified particular aspects of substantive representation that have featured in literature about inequalities faced by ethnic minorities within public engagement processes and have not been empirically studied in much depth.

In this study I focus on two such aspects of substantive representation. Firstly, I consider the ability of public engagement participants to advance a range of policy preferences about equality (measured by examining the scope of equality issues discussed within different public engagement activities). Identifying the conditions within which this aspect of substantive representation can be achieved will help respond to aspects of the first two challenges described at the end of Chapter 2 (effective identification of the needs of diverse social groups and effective discussion and prioritisation of a range of needs and interests). Secondly, I consider the level of autonomy public engagement participants feel they have to act in a way they would choose during public engagement activities. Identifying the conditions within which

this aspect of substantive representation can be achieved will help respond to the third challenge identified in Chapter 2 (developing engagement processes that allow people to act autonomously).

This narrow focus on very specific aspects of substantive representation will mean that other important aspects will be unexplored (particularly whether the 'represented' themselves feel their interests were being advanced by representatives). Yet a targeted exploration of how participants in public engagement activities themselves feel about engagement will help in assessing particular aspects of the quality and effectiveness of practice. This conceptual framework will also not enable consideration of the 'impact' of public engagement on policy outcomes. As Fischer (2003) notes, this is a complex field of study. There are a number of 'chains of causation' (1998, p.12) in the journey between public consultation processes, the development of public policy, the design of public services and members of the public receiving those services. Carden (2004) describes the difficulties in attributing the effect of public consultation and engagement on public policy and in then tracking the impact of policy upon the design and implementation of public services. Instead this study focuses on a component of that process. It seeks to better understand how particular aspects of public engagement practice used by local authorities might affect what is discussed by participants and how participants feel about the level of autonomy and choice they have in the process.

With these aims in mind, I identified three key research objectives for this study:

1. *How* do English local authorities approach dialogue, decision-making and

representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities

2. *Which* factors influence the scope and content of issues of equality discussed in those public engagement activities
3. *Which* factors influence the level of autonomy participants in those public engagement activities feel they have

Thus the overall conceptual framework outlined in this chapter informs the categorisation of different types of public engagement activity (objective 1) and informs the measurement of particular aspects of substantive representation within public engagement activities (objectives 2 and 3). Table 3 (p.104) provides a more detailed overview of how different components of the conceptual framework respond to each of these three research objectives.

4.1 Developing a typology of different approaches to public decision-making, inter-ethnic dialogue and representation

The typology outlined in this section was created to respond to research objective 1: how do English local authorities approach dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities? This typology was developed to inform the content of a national survey for local authorities (described in more detail in Chapter 5).

As I argued in Chapter 2, comparative analysis to identify which models of managing cultural diversity are most appropriate for contemporary Britain has faced a number of restrictions. In particular I suggested that contemporary comparative analysis of

multiculturalism and interculturalism has followed a strong normative, theoretical trajectory to date. In recent years attention has been placed in scholarly work upon the importance of definitional precision when describing 'multiculturalism' or 'interculturalism' (Kymlicka, 2012; Werbner 2012). As Meer and Modood (2012) argue, many of the proposed advantages of interculturalism (such as its focus on dialogue and its increased capacity to respond to illiberal cultural practices) are already present in previous variants of ‘multiculturalism’ proposed by Taylor (1994) and Parekh (2000). This line of debate is perhaps a good example of how, in studying the politics of cultural diversity, there is not only contention between philosophies, but also contention within philosophies. This dynamic can lead to a situation in which efforts to define terms are never entirely successful (Van Reekum et al., 2012, p.418).

The enduring focus on normative theory and continued calls for careful resolution of semantic ambiguities associated with the term 'multiculturalism' has created something of a stalemate. The ever-expanding, shape-shifting nature of the term has led to a situation in which theoretical critique of multiculturalism has become incredibly hard to sustain because it is a constantly moving target (Farrar, 2011). The barriers to empirical research associated with this imprecision have not been lost on many theorists in the field. Hall describes the ‘maddeningly spongy and imprecise’ nature of the ‘multicultural’ discursive field (Hall 2001, p.3). From a policy perspective too, the polysemic nature of the terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘intercultural’ makes the job of comparative evaluation and impact assessment of different models of managing cultural diversity more difficult to undertake.

There is a need to bridge the increasingly distinct gap between philosophical debates regarding multicultural normative theory and the practical challenges faced by practitioners and policy-makers responsible for managing cultural diversity in contemporary society (Faist, 2012). In particular, reduced capacity of welfare systems to respond to the most excluded in society combined with new and complex migration patterns are putting significant pressure upon policy-makers in many towns and cities. As I argued in Chapter 2, these policy-makers require new thinking to help them respond to this diversity in a way that is efficient, fair and responsive to the complexity associated with super-diversity, the effects of global recession and social policies of austerity.

To respond to this, the first research approach I adopt in this study is to 'map' what local authority staff are doing in empirical terms in relation to the representation and engagement of diverse social groups in public policy-making. I refer here to a type of participant objectivation' (Bourdieu, 2003) to help question some of the underlying power structures and scholarly habits associated with this field of study. Bourdieu (1985, p.725) suggests that this can be a first step in the reflexive research process as it allows researchers to 'manifest the structure of the social space'.

In order to design the underlying theoretical framework for undertaking this mapping I outline in this chapter a basic 'typology' to describe different approaches to managing dialogue and relationships between people involved in local public policy engagement activities. The typology includes a list of practices and attitudes commonly associated with popular theories of managing cultural diversity. To develop this typology I examined literature concerning a range of diverse

approaches to managing cultural diversity, focusing on four of the most popular theories that have been applied in this field in the UK over the last fifty years: assimilation, multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism. These theories provide an important frame of reference and reflect a range of views about how cultural diversity should be managed in the UK. The typology that follows operationalises these normative conceptions of governance practice in order to place future comparative analysis of different governance approaches (the second phase of the research in this study which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5) on a firmer empirical footing.

I do recognise that these theories are, in some cases, highly contested and overlapping. I also recognise that the examples of public governance practices and attitudes identified in this typology are unlikely to capture the breadth of different interpretations of each theory. Certainly it is important that the examples of practices and attitudes within such a typology are sensitive to and balance diverse theoretical standpoints within existing literature. However, I would argue that ultimately the level of 'fit' between the components of the typology and the diverse, sometimes polysemic nature of definitions of terms like 'multiculturalism' and 'community cohesion' in the literature is less important for this study than providing a broad framework which can be used to categorise and empirically map concrete examples of public governance practice and attitudes.

Before outlining assimilationism, multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism and the examples of governance practice and attitudes associated with each, it is important to note that I did not include 'integration' (Saggar et al.,

2012; Spencer, 2011). This is for three reasons. Firstly, the term 'integration', as coined by Roy Jenkins in 1967 as 'equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (1967, p.267) was subsequently adopted as a founding principle of multiculturalism and as such shares a number of traits with multiculturalism. Secondly, the approach, at least in the 1960s, focused strongly on issues of economic and social integration (into the job market and the healthcare system for instance) and there was little focus on issues of political representation and public decision-making. Thirdly, from a policy perspective, although the current Government has recently resurrected the term integration (CLG, 2012) and Communities Secretary Eric Pickles indicated that this 'ends the era of multiculturalism' (Daily Mail, 21st February 2012) the Integration Strategy itself is quite light in its attempts to define integration: 'integration means creating the conditions for everyone to play a full part in national and local life' (CLG, 2012, p. 2). The relatively shallow conceptual depth employed in the Government's recent use of the term makes it harder to use in the context of this research. What follows is my understanding of the main features of public engagement in policy-making associated with assimilation, multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism as defined in the literature.

Assimilation

In the 1950s following a large influx of immigrants to the UK, particularly from Commonwealth countries, a policy of 'assimilation' was adopted which assumed that immigrants could be 'assimilated' as swiftly as possible into the 'host' community. In this model assimilation referred to the loss of minority culture and the adoption of majority culture. The role of dialogue between ethnic groups and civic engagement

of ethnic minority groups was in one direction, aimed largely at educating new arrivals and supporting them to understand what it is to be British (Grosvenor, 1997). Ethnic minority groups did not have an opportunity to offer alternative moral standpoints based on their cultural preferences in the political realm and were not expected to contribute information about particular needs or demands they have.

Some have suggested that assimilationist approaches to the management of community relations have made a come-back in more recent times, particularly since September 11th and 7/7 with, for example, Government denouncements of cultural practices deemed to be 'un-British' (such as 'forced marriages') (Rattansi, 2012). In this 'new –assimilationist' model too, the prospect of a critical two-way dialogue between the State and ethnic minority groups is reduced and where dialogue does take place, discussions of that type are limited in scope, particularly when set against a backdrop of the threat of terrorism and extremism (Back et al., 2002). As Back et al. (2002) suggest:

> *The result is to set up two poles: the first is a consensus position defined and policed by the government (in sharp contrast to the pluralities of moral debate implicit in the logic of localisation) and the second is the province of extremism* (paragraph 3.13)

An 'assimilationist approach' (as defined in this conceptual framework) requires public decisions to be reached with reference to an established, fixed set of values which help comprise a national identity. Secondly, in this model (particularly the assimilationism of the 1950s) there is very little interest from

government in how minority groups are 'represented' politically and how they interact with each other. The assumption is that they will simply engage with the majority population and learn how to assimilate.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism as a distinct strand of official public policy in the UK began life as an educational approach in schools in the late 1960s and later expanded to the provision of public services in other fields and to the funding and empowerment of civic society groups working on behalf of particular ethnic, cultural or religious groups. By valuing, respecting and teaching others about the value and nature of other cultures, multiculturalism offered a different approach to previous 'assimilationist' approaches. As discussed earlier in this thesis, in a multicultural approach, cultural differences would be identified and celebrated rather than absorbed or expunged (Kymlicka, 2012). Multiculturalism began as a progressive idea based on pluralist ideals, where no culture is seen as more 'valuable' than the other. Yet multiculturalism remains a malleable and evolving concept which is hard to define (Modood and Meer, 2012). I focus here on two particular areas of theory and practice relevant to this study: a) cultural identity and group representation; and b) approaches to inter-group dialogue, 'cultural rights' and public decision-making.

a) Cultural identity and group representation

As described in Chapter 2, a number of authors have argued that 'reification' is central to the practice of multicultural politics as 'ethnic' representatives are encouraged to define a static, culturally conservative and uncontested vision of the

needs of a particular ethnic group – when actually definitions of culture and of ethnicity are more fluid and dynamic (Sen, 2007; Brubaker, 2005). Modood (2013) on the other hand argues that there is no inherent reification in politicised ethnicity. He acknowledges that culture can change, but he suggests that a cultural reference point of some kind is required even if just to reflect how a culture has changed. He acknowledges some elements of essentialism in political discourses of identity and culture but suggests that theorists attribute a false importance to them. This leads Modood (2013) to suggest that it is mainly theoretical critique of multiculturalism which affixes ideas of essentialism and reification to multiculturalism – not the political practices themselves. Parekh (2000) too, argues that, at times, critics of multiculturalism have created a straw man of multiculturalism that bears little resemblance to the more nuanced, complex and reflexive practice that is evident in modern society.

Yet Modood's (2013) interpretation of the political practice of multiculturalism in the UK does not match some of the policy literature on this topic. There has been much criticism of multicultural *practice and policies* precisely because of the essentialism associated with its practical and political implementation and this is seen as having an important effect on the lives of ethnic minority groups. In the field of public service design, Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah (2010) have noted a tendency to 'ethnicise' service provision and race equality initiatives to the detriment of the beneficiaries of those services. For example creating specific public services for particular ethnic groups which only cater to a certain 'type' of person within that ethnic group such as older men who are religious (as opposed to older men that are not religious) in a day care centre. In 2007 in the UK the Commission on Integration and Cohesion

concluded, in its review of public policy and community engagement that ‘it seems at times that we lost sight of the complexity of individual identity, its fluid nature’ (Commission on Integration, 2007; 4.4). More recently CLG’s Integration Strategy (2012) and the Government Equality Strategy (HM Government, 2010) have emphasised the risks of ‘type-casting’ groups by virtue of their background or identity.

Notwithstanding Modood’s (2013) objections to the false importance attributed to essentialism in political discourse, for the purpose of the conceptual framework adopted in this research, the existence (or not) of that essentialism or ‘cultural conservatism’ (Sen, 2007) is important to identify when examining the public engagement practices of local authorities through this typology. Ideas of essentialism and reification relate closely to the tendency to judge the authenticity of political group representation solely in terms of ethnic identity (Phillips, 2015; Williams, 1998) and this makes the subject particularly relevant to this research. For the purposes of this conceptual framework, conceptions of ‘culture’ and group identity associated with multiculturalism are defined in culturally conservative and ‘static’ terms. This is compared to an ‘intercultural’ approach (discussed below) which sees culture and group identity as more dynamic, fluid and complex. This definition is developed recognising the multiplicity of definitions and disagreements about where multiculturalism sits on a spectrum of essentialism (Farrar, 2011).

A ‘multicultural approach’ (as defined in this conceptual framework) describes those involved in group representation primarily in terms of their ethnic, cultural or religious identity. That identity is presumed to be largely ‘fixed’ and

static and to offer an insight into the needs and demands of others who share that identity. In this model group representatives are chosen on the basis of their identity group, presuming that they will be able to represent the needs and demands of others in their perceived identity group.

b) Approaches to inter-group dialogue, cultural rights and public decision-making

For the purposes of this study, ‘cultural rights’ or ‘cultural entitlements’ can be defined as recognition of individual expression and cultural identity (Taylor, 1994). For example, in the context of healthcare, this might be a claim made by a Muslim that they have the right to eat halal food in a hospital or have the right to access an Imam for spiritual guidance.

Barry (2001) suggests that in a multicultural model the process of ‘culturalization’ (placing a focus on culture) can make broad, universalist, egalitarian policy goals much harder to formulate and to achieve. Questions about the relative value and importance of ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ are central to this debate. Taylor (1994) argues for a ‘politics of recognition’ where the State has a duty to ensure a culture’s survival through protection of key cultural entitlements. Kymlicka (1995) attaches a strong importance to the protection of cultural rights. He argues the State is responsible for protecting people’s cultural rights as these can impact upon a person’s capacity to form, revise and pursue a conception of what they value in life. Young has called for a ‘democratic cultural pluralism’ which emphasised both ‘general’ civil and political rights for all, but also a more specific system of ‘group-conscious’ rights which include cultural rights (1990, p. 163).

At the same time those authors do not suggest ‘cultural rights’ are the only rights that need to be protected. Young (2000) argues that the ‘identity’ assertions of cultural groups usually appear in the context of broader structural relations of privilege and disadvantage. Banting and Kymlicka (2006) emphasise the significant effect that inequalities in economic and political incorporation of ethnic minorities have upon ethno-racial political cleavages. In addition, Taylor’s (1994) nuanced account of cultural rights, suggests that although recognition of cultural identity is important, cultural rights should not be accepted *de facto*. Whilst the value of a culture should be presumed in the first instance, cultures should also be assessed to understand whether or not related cultural entitlements should be protected (depending on, for example, whether they pose a harm or a threat to people living in that society).

Thus whilst multicultural theory does place significant emphasis on protection of cultural rights, a number of theorists do also recognise the need to protect against other forms of inequality and disadvantage. There is also an emphasis on the need for dialogue to resolve differences where cultural entitlements may conflict with the rights of others. Yet, arguably, it is in the *political implementation* of multiculturalism where concerns about the ‘primacy’ of culture and cultural entitlement still feature strongly. In the UK it could be argued that the type of multiculturalism that involves public and reasoned moral evaluation of cultural identities and entitlements proposed by Taylor (1994) and Parekh (2000) has yet to materialise. Over the last three decades there have been numerous examples of conflict relating to differing views of cultural entitlement which have resulted in violence or legal action such as the ‘Behzti’ play in Birmingham which depicted a rape in a Sikh temple (McEvoy, 2016). Attempts to ‘impose’ national views of Britishness such as the ‘cricket test’ proposed

by Norman Tebbit in 1990 have also resulted in a passionate backlash from ethnic minority groups who have emphasised the importance of particular cultural entitlements (Ameli et al., 2006).

Arguably, opportunities to openly discuss and criticise cultural practices and perceived cultural entitlements have been relatively limited. Decisions about the protection of cultural entitlements have been made on the basis of a group's ability to lobby for their cultural entitlement in a competitive political environment, rather than on the basis of a reasoned discussion about the impact of those cultural practices on others. For example, Phillips (2007) suggests that an emphasis on 'toleration' of other cultural practices has led to a situation where people feel unable to discuss or criticise them. Whether or not this is accurate, it could certainly be argued that the implementation of multicultural politics in the UK has not yet developed sufficient forms of dialogue and reasoned political discourse to avoid occasional violent or legal conflict about issues of cultural entitlement.

A 'multicultural' approach to inter-group dialogue, cultural rights and public decision-making (as defined in this conceptual framework) describes a principle focus on the protection of groups' cultural entitlements in public decisions and policy making, This dialogue is presumed to not include reasoned public discussion about the impact that the exercise of those cultural entitlements have upon the rights of others and how those rights should be balanced. Whilst some forms of multicultural theory have argued for negotiation and discussion of shared societal norms and values, this type of

cultural accommodation has proven elusive in the practical implementation of multiculturalism in the UK.

Community Cohesion

Community cohesion can be seen as a response to some of the competition and conflict which was said to have been exacerbated by the lack of contact and communication between different communities. Following civil unrest in parts of the UK in the summer of 2001 and following community tensions associated with the events of September 11th 2001, the concept of community cohesion offered an explanation for the causes and solutions to the disturbances. The Cantle report (Home Office, 2001), commissioned in response to civil unrest in Northern mill towns in the UK in 2001, cited residential segregation, a lack of interaction between people from different ethnic and religious groups and a lack of shared values between those groups as a causal factor for civil breakdown and unrest. Published guidance on the subject following the Cantle report was to undertake activity to promote 'a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities' through developing positive relationships between people from different backgrounds at the neighbourhood level (LGA, 2002, p.6).

Community cohesion fast became a national policy concern in the UK (Cantle, 2005) and yet, as Robinson and Flint (2008) argue, the significance of the agenda was questionable. It used an ill-defined concept that could be interpreted in a number of ways and it was a policy agenda with no statutory framework to underpin its delivery and no dedicated funding stream. Finney and Simpson (2009) too have questioned the empirical basis upon which assessments of segregation and violent conflict were

based in the UK in this period. Despite these objections to the empirical basis of community cohesion it did appear, as an approach to reducing segregation and potential violent conflict, to capture the imagination of both local and national policy makers. Between 2005 and 2009 the Department for Communities and Local Government published a number of guidance documents or reports on the subject (CLG, 2008; 2009).

Whilst community cohesion policy placed significance emphasis on participation and engagement as an indicator and a lever of cohesion (CLG, 2007), related Government guidance (CLG, 2009) offered little direction on desirable models for representation and engagement of ethnic minority groups in public decision making. There are, however, traces of an underlying theoretical basis for the role of community engagement and representation in a community cohesion focused model. Cantle (2005) for instance, explicitly connected community cohesion to the New Labour aim of ‘active citizenship’ which focused on creating a civic culture through education, citizenship ceremonies and volunteering.

Lowndes and Thorp (2011) suggest that a common interpretation of community cohesion has been through a ‘republican’ lens, viewing cohesion in terms of political consensus. In a Republican model, of the type proposed by Rousseau, citizens enter into a ‘social contract’ whereby they have a responsibility to engage in public decision-making and to engage in public services. In return for this, they receive protection from the state and the respect of fellow citizens (Lowndes and Thorp, 2011). In this model, greater cohesion is sought primarily through engagement between people in the public sphere. Through a process of interaction, shared

narratives, shared goals and shared projects are developed which help to encourage understanding between people and greater consensus. Yet, as some critics have noted, by focusing on shared values through community cohesion policy, issues of difference and the structural inequality associated with that difference can be ignored (Afridi 2007). Cohesion approaches that call for greater focus on 'national' or 'shared' values can lack substance and fail to define what those values actually look like (Werbner, 2005). Similarly, the imposition of these values may require people to disregard important cultural values that are fundamental to their identity (Modood, 2013). Cohesion becomes a type of integration that is 'forced' on minorities in this respect.

It is here where both the benefits and the limits of community cohesion as an approach to engagement of ethnic minority groups in public decision making are most clear. Arguably, community cohesion theory was progressive in its attempts to move beyond the unconditional primacy afforded to 'culture' in a multicultural model. As Cantle (2005) suggests, whereas 'multiculturalism' assumed it is people's ethnic/ religious characteristics that define action, community cohesion relies on people to discuss and compare their beliefs and values with others from different cultures and to engage in dialogue to reach consensus (Cantle, 2005). Yet models of cohesion have continued to rely on notions of 'bridging' social capital. Bringing together people from (what are assumed to be) distinct social groups, based mainly on ethnicity or religion, to improve relations between them. In doing this, the nature of those ethnic, religious and cultural boundaries are not questioned and they are sometimes (albeit unintentionally) reinforced. "Rather than act across cultural boundaries, people are asked to assume them" (James 2009, p. 7).

Despite some of the underlying theoretical intentions of community cohesion to encourage cross-cultural dialogue and to generate shared values, in practice, cohesion initiatives in the UK have generally focused on encouraging 'contact' between people from pre-defined ethnic minority groups (James, 2009). Whilst some of this activity has encouraged people to reflect upon the culture of others through discussion, approaches to achieving this are ill-defined in the literature and rarely has dialogue been of a 'critical' nature and examined challenging issues of cultural conflict and the cause of inequality in society. As a result, discussions about how to respond to structural inequalities experienced by minorities or how to respond to issues of class and socio-economic disadvantage were largely absent from interventions focused on community cohesion (Flint and Robinson, 2008). Where shared values were defined and encouraged through cohesion policy, these tended to be imposed by Government with reference to core republican or libertarian values such as respect, dignity, freedom of speech. Particular interpretations of these values can, at times, stand in potential opposition to other cultural values that are important to people's identity.

A community cohesion approach to inter-group dialogue and public decision-making (as defined in this conceptual framework) encourages (even requires) people to engage in civic activities and in dialogue with others in the public sphere to achieve a consensual outlook on the shared values required to live together. Focus is placed on bringing together representatives from pre-defined ethnic minority groups in group activities to achieve this. The cultural boundaries of those groups engaging in dialogue is not questioned.

‘Toleration’ of difference is still encouraged with little critical discussion of where cultural outlooks may conflict, or where there are differing views about how public resources should be used to protect minorities. The mechanisms used to achieve ‘consensus’ are either through repeated ‘contact’ between people from different backgrounds (which should result in the development of bridging social capital, shared goals and shared outlooks) or through the imposition of a set of ‘national’ values defined by political cultures and traditions of the Nation State.

Interculturalism

This thesis is most directly concerned with the application of intercultural thinking in the context of social policy and political theory. James (2009) and brap (2012) argue for a version of interculturalism, or in Parekh’s case ‘interactive multiculturalism’ (2007 p.46), that moves beyond ideas of ‘contact theory’ (Ananthi and Hewstone, 2013) between ‘fixed’ cultural groups more commonly associated with community cohesion. They argue for a more fluid and heterogeneous conception of culture. In this model, people engage with others through dialogue to explore, test and challenge the boundaries of their own and others’ cultural attitudes and practices to generate ways of living that benefit society as a whole (brap, 2012a; Sen, 2004). A number of theorists have offered alternate visions for how this might be achieved. As discussed in Chapter 2, in this study I use a definition of interculturalism developed through empirical research in the UK. brap (2012) offer the following framework for defining the key ingredients of intercultural dialogue theory and practice described in Table 1:

Table 1: Overview of interculturalism

Theme	Description
Equal Status	Dialogue between equals
Common Goals	Individuals brought together around common project / issue they care about
Individuals not representatives	People are not brought to the table as 'representatives' of a particular community – this helps to avoid the danger of them conforming to roles and cultural boundaries associated with that identity.
Values and frameworks	Dialogue is undertaken with reference to some common framework, such as equality, the universality of human rights, respect and dignity. Discussion is then mediated with reference to those common values.
Central role of dialogue	Recognition that the way we discuss issues of identity and culture are importance because this can help to transform and change social relations. Rather than simply 'tolerate' differences (which can reinforce cultural boundaries and maintain asymmetrical power relations), dialogue offers an opportunity to discuss and challenge people's cultural views and actions.
Culture is important	In seeking to avoid the dominance of one culture over another, multiculturalism avoids discussion of culture. Interculturalism encourages critical discussion of culture – particularly those aspects of culture that, if discussed, could be a route to improving social conditions.
Shared humanity	Importance of discussing the commonalities between people (rather than simply tolerating the differences) – this can be a route to developing collective social action

Source: adapted from brap (2012) Interculturalism: A breakdown of thinking and practice

In this model, intercultural dialogue offers an opportunity to discuss whether particular 'cultural' entitlements should be protected by the State. The rights of individuals or groups to live in a particular way, or to receive particular specialised services or to enjoy particular cultural entitlements, are balanced against the rights of people living in society as a whole. This type of dialogue approach can be directly

applied to the process of public decision-making and public policy formation (brap, 2012a).

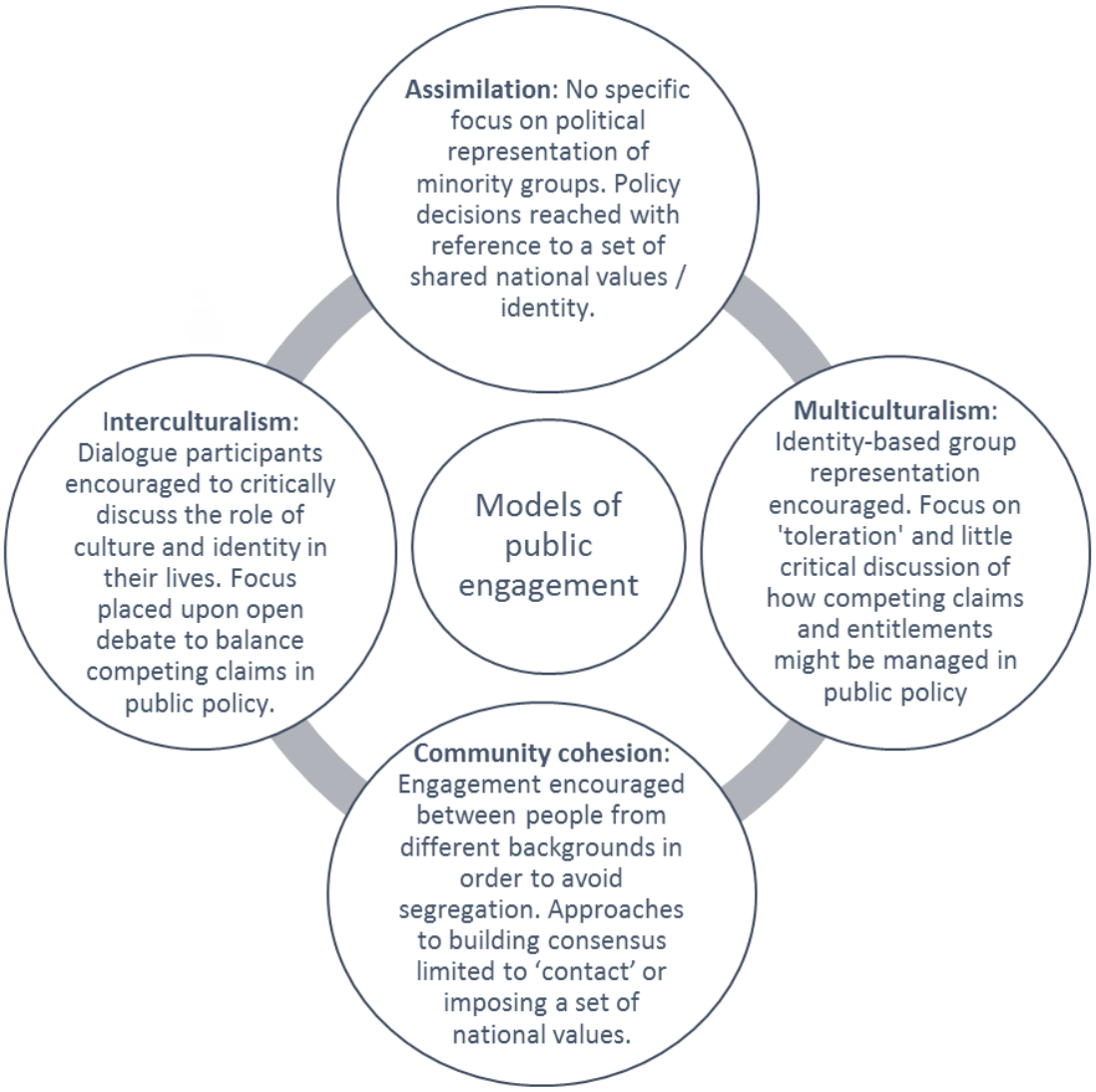
There are a range of alternative theories of responding to cultural diversity all of which offer a dynamic vision of culture and of intercultural exchange. These include, for example: intercultural dialogue (Cantle, 2013), 'critical' multiculturalism (Modood and Meer, 2012) and cosmopolitanism (Hall, 2008). I choose to use the definition provided by brap (described above) for the typology of public engagement in this thesis as it is based on empirical examples of dialogue practice and speaks directly to issues of representation and public decision-making which are the focus of this thesis. It also directly responds to some of the perceived drawbacks of previous models of engagement associated with assimilationism, multiculturalism and community cohesion (as described above).

Based on the literature reviewed, an intercultural approach to group dialogue involves enabling people from different backgrounds and the same background to critically discuss the role of culture in their lives in a way that can lead to positive change. An intercultural approach to public decision-making requires open and critical debate to generate a better sense of when it is appropriate to protect particular entitlements for particular individuals and a better sense of the universal rights and responsibilities we should all enjoy in society. An intercultural approach to public decision-making focuses on mainstreaming equitable provision of public services, rather than only producing 'add on' services for particular excluded groups in response to assumptions about their 'cultural' needs.

I recognise that the definitions of assimilation, multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism described above are by no means tightly bounded. Indeed, there is potential for significant crossover between the different definitions I have described. However, for the purpose of this study, a typology is required to help identify distinct approaches to public decision-making; group dialogue and representation. As I describe in chapter 5, this typology will be used to inform a descriptive survey of *practices and attitudes* employed by local practitioners to engage ethnic minority groups in equality-related policy-making practices. This will help to ensure that subsequent comparative analysis of specific public engagement practices is empirically grounded. Chapter 5 describes how this typology was used to construct a survey which was sent to local authorities in England.

An overview of the key themes from this typology is provided in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Overview of typology of public engagement models



4.2 Developing theoretical frameworks to examine 'substantive representation' in public engagement activities

Pitkin's claim (1967) that one cannot *assume* a link between the characteristics of a representative (e.g. their ethnicity) and their actions is an important foundational principle applied in this study. For Pitkin (1967), the success of this type of 'descriptive' representation would be judged by assessing the representative to see whether there is an accurate resemblance between the representative and the

represented. Whereas ‘substantive’ representation would be judged by assessing whether policy outcomes advanced by the representative serve the ‘best interests’ of the represented (Pitkin, 1967, p.213). Pitkin did not necessarily argue that these two forms of representation are mutually exclusive. However, she did say suggest that disagreements relating to political representation are often caused by the ‘confusion’ (1967, p.7) of people viewing the purpose and hence the success of representation differently.

In this research I explore the conditions in which participants in public engagement activities experience particular aspects of substantive representation. In the context of public dialogue about ‘equality’ I aim to explore what it might mean for public engagement activity participants to serve the ‘best interests’ of others in society. I recognise that by focusing on the perceptions of public engagement participants alone, I exclude an important source of judgment for whether substantive representation is being achieved (i.e. those that are ‘represented’ and not present in the policy consultation process). Yet with the time and resources available to me, I have chosen to limit this research to a particular part of the public engagement process. I am particularly interested in exploring two components of how substantive representation might be judged. Firstly, the perceived ability of public engagement participants to serve the best interests of those they represent. As I outline in this and the following chapter, this will be measured by asking participants in different public engagement activities about their levels of autonomy. Secondly, the ability of public engagement participants to advance a range of policy preferences about equality. This will be measured by examining the scope of equality issues discussed within different public engagement activities. In this chapter I describe the theoretical

frameworks employed in the study to measure the scope of equality issues in public policy dialogue.

I developed these two sets of measures by drawing upon theories associated with 'the capability approach' (Sen, 2004) and an 'Equality Measurement Framework' in the UK which also drew upon the capability approach (Alkire et al., 2009). The 'capability approach' is an interdisciplinary framework for analysing inequality (Sen, 2004; Nussbaum, 2000). A capability approach is based on the premise that well-being should not only be measured in relation to the level of wealth or pleasure a person has, but also in relation to how people manage to live their lives and the extent to which they are able to do the things that are important to them. Sen (2004) argues that this approach can be seen as a departure from previous conceptions of equality which have been based on comparisons of wealth (income), utility (pleasure) or access to basic social goods (such as education or employment) of the type proposed by Rawls (1971). Rather than having a 'single' definition of wellbeing against which equality should be judged (e.g. levels of employment, a common measure of 'satisfaction' or 'happiness', or levels of GDP), the capability approach pays closer attention to diversity among people and advocates a more pluralistic conception of wellbeing (Alkire, 2002).

In the remainder of this chapter I describe my approach to 'operationalising' these two aspects of substantive representation: (a) the perceived ability of public engagement participants to serve the best interests of those they represent (measured by asking participants in different public engagement activities about their levels of autonomy) and (b) the ability of public engagement participants to advance

a range of policy preferences about equality (measured by examining the scope of equality issues discussed within different public engagement activities). Before outlining the measures employed in this study I should note that they are un-tested and exploratory. Whilst these measures will be used to capture data and undertake analysis, throughout the study I will also set out to reflect upon the usefulness of measures employed and to understand whether there might be better ways to account for what I observe in public engagement activities.

4.2.1 Autonomy of participants

To understand the first aspect of substantive representation: whether people feel they have an opportunity to 'serve the best interests' of others, I outline measures to capture the level of autonomy people feel they have within public policy engagement activities. As discussed in Section 3.3, I focus on the issue of autonomy because a dialogic environment free from coercion and effects of societal inequality is seen as a foundation of effective deliberation (Richardson, 2002, Bohman, 1996; Habermas, 1984). The issue of autonomy during the process of 'representing' is also an important and common theme in the literature on the engagement of ethnic minority groups in the political process. Critics of multiculturalism have emphasised the alienating, disempowering and de-humanising nature of being put into an 'ethnic box' in the policy making field (Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah, 2010). Representatives of particular minorities can feel that they lack choice and autonomy in how they act (Kymlicka, 1995). Critics have suggested that this is one of the most significant limitations of an identity-led approach to public representation. Thus the measures outlined below are designed to help me understand whether representatives can act autonomously. In particular they examine whether representatives feel they can act

in a way that they value and not in a way that they are expected to by others due to their ethnic background (Sen, 2007).

In order to develop these measures I draw upon a measurement framework for 'equality of autonomy' developed by Burchardt et al. (2010) as part of a national 'Equality Measurement Framework'. Burchardt et al. (2010) describe 'autonomy' as the "amount of choice, control and empowerment an individual has over their life". Achieving autonomy ensures that individuals and groups are empowered to make appropriate decisions in important areas of their lives. Burchardt et al.'s definition of autonomy goes further than asking simply about the decision-making process, for example, did that person make a choice? It also captures other issues that may affect somebody's autonomy such as: how adequate are the options available?; was the person able to make an informed choice?; were there any other personal factors that prevented the person from making an autonomous choice (e.g. a person's poor experience of previous public engagement activities might limit their expectations about future public engagement activities)?

A holistic interpretation of autonomy of this type is important to apply in this study because it allows for a consideration of 'internal' factors that may affect somebody's autonomy (such as their perceptions, expectations and entrenched behaviour patterns) and 'external' constraints on choice (such as coercion from others or the effect of somebody's social and economic circumstances). Despite a significant focus on issues of choice, empowerment and autonomy in the literature (Phillips, 2015), as discussed in Chapter 3, there is relatively little empirical evidence exploring *how* and *when* that lack of autonomy manifests itself (Brahm Levey, 2015).

The framework offered by Burchardt et al. (2010) was adapted in this research to directly explore these issues in the context of public engagement activity. Measures for examining barriers to autonomy are summarised and adapted for the purposes of this research in Table 2.

Table 2: Measures of autonomy

Component	*Barriers to autonomy*
i. Self-reflection Self-determining, able to resist social pressures.	**Conditioned expectations** When an individual's outlook, preferences or goals has been unduly narrowed by previous experience. **Based on the opinions or demands of others** 'Introjection': where an individual's behaviour is not owned or valued by them and is formed as a result of internal pressure or tension (e.g. the desire for social approval amongst peers).
ii. Active decision-making Making decisions for oneself / delegating decisions appropriately	**Denial of Agency** Where assumptions are wrongly made that somebody does not have the capacity to make choices for themself. **Coercion and Passivity** Where the individual can't take an active role and their preferences are overruled by someone more powerful.
iii. Wide range of high quality options 'Opportunity structure' – number and awareness of available opportunities/ ability to choose options.	**Structural constraints; lack of information, advice and support** Opportunity structure can be limited by a range of factors such as a lack of human/ financial/ social capital that prevents finding out about or choosing an option.

Source: adapted from Burchardt et al. (2010)

The original equality of autonomy framework developed by Burchardt et al. (2010) was developed specifically for inclusion in a household survey to assess the levels of autonomy people feel they have in different areas of their lives (e.g. in employment, in education). I adapted it in the context of this research to enable exploration of the experience of those involved in public activities. The following question topics and associated references (which were taken directly from Burchardt et al.'s framework and adapted) were used in this study:

i. Self-reflection

- Participants' assessment of whether others have influenced their decisions – are their acts fully endorsed by the self and in accordance with their values and interests (Ricoeur, 1966 cited in Ryan and Deci, 2006)?
- Has a participant's outlook been unduly narrowed by previous experience (adaptive preference/ conditioned expectation)? For example, has consultation always led to a particular outcome and as a result are a participant's actions in the consultation/ decision not to participate in the consultation directly influenced by this?
- Does the participant have 'hope' in the process of consultation and a positive belief in their own ability to influence it – a state which is created by the success of past experiences (Moraitou et al., 2006)?

ii. Active decision-making

- If a person does not make decisions in relation to a consultation – could they if they wanted to? Do they receive support to do so (if they need it)?

- Are community representatives coerced by other people within the decision-making process so their preferences are overruled by somebody more powerful?

iii. Wide range of high quality options

- Participants' awareness of the level/ range of options available to them in giving their response to public consultation (Bavetta and Peragine, 2006).
- What effect, if any, do people's circumstances (e.g. self-confidence, communicative capacity or economic position) have upon their ability to participate – and to make particular preferences in the consultation process/ pursue particular lines of argument and social action?

These three dimensions of autonomy were developed to design research instruments to pursue the third objective of this research 'which factors influence the level of autonomy participants in public engagement activities feel they have?'. I chose the question areas above as most relevant to this study based on existing knowledge about topics that might restrict people's autonomy in the context of public engagement (see Section 3.3). Thus I chose not to include a range of question domains which are important components of the original equality of autonomy framework offered by Burchardt et al. (2010) such as questions related specifically to autonomy within family relationships.

4.2.2 Discourse in public engagement activities

The second set of measures explore whether public engagement participants are able to to advance policy preferences of their choosing by focusing on examining the

content of public discourse about equality. For this set of measures, the sharing of information by participants in a public engagement space is seen as the potential starting point of a 'policy preference' because this information can provide material for policy makers to develop policies (whether they choose to use that material or not). Though this conception of 'advancing policy preferences' is limited in scope I chose to adopt it because the 'content' of policy consultation discussions is an important and often overlooked issue to examine in the context of equality-related social policy. When describing what qualitative political equality might look like in the context of deliberative democracy, Bohman (1996, p.120) suggests the best definition for the purposes of deliberative processes relates to 'requisite capacities', in particular, the capacity to initiate public debate on a particular theme or a topic. This principle of examining whether participants have the requisite capacities to both initiate and sustain public debate is used in the measures for examining the content of public dialogue described below.

In designing these measures I was particularly interested in examining the requisite capacities of public engagement participants to respond to a range of prevailing ideologies that various authors have identified as limiting the scope and effectiveness of the politics of 'race' (Hall, 1998, Gilroy, 1987). Hall (1981), for instance suggests that ideologies associated with 'race' become 'naturalised' and ideologically motivated representations mask themselves as 'common sense' (p.31). Mendoza (2010) too suggests the nature of what is discussed in political space and in the media is limited by powerful interests in society through the operation of symbolic power, its pretensions to naturalness and its arbitrary foreclosures to discussion. In this study I see the examination of discourse in public engagement

activities as an opportunity to explore how issues of 'equality' affecting ethnic minority groups are discussed and whether there were observable limits to the range of equality issues discussed. This will help provide an insight into whether public engagement participants have the chance to advance policy preferences that are of benefit to others (a central tenet of substantive representation). Is policy discussion limited by some of the arbitrary foreclosures to discussion of 'race' or 'equality' that theorists have identified in the past? Is discussion limited to particular 'types' of equality? Or does dialogue recognise and critically respond to some of the prevailing discourses and ideologies that have guided the nature of discussion about equality? I argue below that in order to understand this, there is merit in assessing (a) the 'type' of equality issues that are discussed in public engagement activities and (b) the ways in which claims for ethnic minority groups' entitlements are framed.

Categorising the 'type' of equality discussed in public dialogue

In order to develop measures to categorise the 'type' of equality discussed by participants in public dialogue as part of this study I drew upon a basic distinction between equality of outcome, equality of process and equality of autonomy employed in the UK Equalities Measurement Framework (Alkire et al., 2009). This typology of equality is described below and is taken directly from a briefing paper on the Equality Measurement Framework (EHRC, 2009):

a) **Inequality of outcome** - that is, inequality in the central and valuable things in life that individuals and groups actually achieve

Example:

Tracey and Yvonne are 16-year-olds. Tracey has a hearing impairment, she uses a hearing aid and lip reads, but her school does not always take account of her needs. As a result, Tracey cannot get as much out of the curriculum as Yvonne, and her GCSE grades do not reflect her potential. This is inequality in **outcomes**.

b) **Inequality of process** - reflecting inequalities in treatment through discrimination by other individuals and groups, or by institutions and systems, including not being treated with dignity and respect

Example:

Ishan, who is from a Pakistani ethnic background, and Mark, who is White British. Both apply for a job as a trainee manager in a car hire firm. They have the same qualifications work experience. Mark is offered an interview, Ishan is not. Ishan is told, 'Your sort wouldn't fit in round here'. Cases of discrimination of this type, as well as other forms of unequal treatment, such as a lack of dignity and respect, are inequality in **process**.

c) **Inequality of autonomy** - that is, inequality in the degree of empowerment people have to make decisions affecting their lives, how much choice and control they really have given their circumstances.

Example:

Ethel and Marie live in care homes. In both homes, the staff take the residents out for an afternoon each week. In Ethel's, the staff decide: bingo or shopping. In

Marie's, the residents decide. Cases of inequality in choice and control of this type are inequality in **autonomy**

Categorising approaches to 'framing' equality in public dialogue

The question of whether the capability approach can be 'operationalised' has been covered widely in the literature (Alkire, 2002, Sugden, 1993). Sen (2004) has remained reluctant to offer a 'definitive' list of capabilities as these will, he argues, change in relation to particular contexts and particular purposes. At the very least, Sen (2004) suggests that the development of relevant dimensions of capability poverty or wealth should be developed in a democratic space through informed judgments by the people that are affected by those decisions. This is relevant in the context of equality-related social policy development for two main reasons.

Firstly, Sen suggests that the key question to be addressed is 'equality of what?' as opposed to 'why equality?' if we are to understand the distinctions between (and identify the best from) a range of diverse ethical approaches to social arrangements (1997, p.130). He argues this is because many ethical theories of social arrangements include a demand for equality as a foundational feature of that system. But, it is the answer to the question 'equality of what' that really distinguishes different approaches. For example, 'libertarians' are concerned with equal liberties, 'economic egalitarians' with equal incomes or wealth and so on. If this thinking were applied to the context of UK social policy development, one can see how much of the debate has been focused on the question 'why equality?' (e.g. do people from certain backgrounds deserve equality) or 'equality for whom?' (e.g. which social

groups should receive protection from the state). Arguably less focus has been placed upon the question ‘equality of what?’. In which domains of life can we legitimately expect or demand equality? In recent years, for instance, there has been a growing social movement campaigning for greater income equality in the UK and a ‘living wage’ (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). This was a domain of equality that previously had received relatively little media or public policy coverage. In the context of this research, I aimed to create opportunities to examine under which conditions participants in public engagement activities felt they had an opportunity to discuss some of these more challenging and foundational issues of equality in society.

Secondly, the approach recommended by Sen (1997) is interesting in the context of equality-related social policy because he asks what the democratic space should like in which informed judgments are made about questions such as ‘equality of what?’. Sen (2004) has not addressed what this democratic space might look like in detail in his writing, but he and other authors that advocate a capability approach have stressed the importance of space for democracy and public discussion (Crocker, 2008; Sen, 2004). Crocker (2006) suggests that a capability approach lends itself well to the theory and practice of ‘deliberative democracy’. In the context of this research, I see there to be opportunities to contribute to this debate by exploring whether any aspects of representation, dialogue and decision-making practice support public dialogue about the question ‘equality of what?’ At the time of writing in the UK there are significant pressures on public spending and significant cuts to the welfare system. As I argued in the introduction to this thesis, the challenge of responding to questions of this type about how to define and promote the happiness

and wellbeing of citizens, developing better forms of ‘equality politics’ and identifying where resources should be prioritised and invested is more pressing than ever.

Thus before developing research instruments and analysis procedures for this study, I identified one key approach to ‘framing’ discussion of equality in public dialogue that I was particularly interested in exploring (whether participants in public dialogue frame their equality claims in response to the question ‘equality of what?’). I saw this as an indication of whether participants are able to raise and set agendas that challenge the boundaries of traditional agendas set by policy-makers or other dialogue participants when undertaking public consultation on equality.

In order to operationalise this concept for the purposes of research and to identify whether this ‘framing’ is present in public dialogue, there is merit in differentiating two levels of treatment of this question. Firstly, at the most basic level, I would argue that dialogue about ‘equality of what’ would be characterised by critical discussion amongst dialogue participants about whether inequalities in particular ‘domains’ (such as housing, education and employment) are important to focus on in public policy. Analysis of this would involve examining whether these issues are critically discussed by dialogue participants and the relative merits of investment in particular areas weighed up against one another? Secondly, I would propose that a more ‘advanced’ level of dialogue on the question ‘equality of what?’ would involve a more fundamental evaluation of the equality of social arrangements and the pros and cons of how inequality is measured and judged in society. This would involve the introduction of new agendas that may challenge or sit outside the boundaries of traditional ‘equality’ policy agendas that have been discussed in public policy

consultation. Analysis of this would involve examining whether dialogue participants make claims about, for example, aspects of life that have not traditionally been addressed through local public policy but are seen as important to people's well-being (such as wealth inequality or working conditions). This concept of 'basic' and 'advanced' levels of discussion of 'equality of what' will be used in the study to differentiate different levels of treatment of the question 'equality of what? I see this as an important feature of high quality public dialogue about equality and see the presence of debate about this question as an indication that participants are able to initiate public debate about a range of topics and discuss issues that are important to them.

These two approaches outlined above for examining (a) the 'type' of equality discussed in public dialogue and (b) the way equality is 'framed' by participants were both developed to be used to inform analysis of transcripts of public policy-related dialogue. The approach taken to operationalising these approaches and to collecting and analysing data is covered in the next chapter.

4.3 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has argued that in order to respond to challenges associated with public engagement of ethnic minority groups, there is benefit in comparing particular aspects of the 'quality' of different forms of public engagement activity. This quality can be judged by measuring levels of substantive representation participants feel they have within those public engagement activities. Yet in order to decide which forms of public engagement activity should be compared in this study, there would be merit in first understanding and mapping what current approaches to

public engagement activity look like amongst the target population for this research (English local authorities).

In order to explore these issues, as explained in this chapter, I drew upon and sought to operationalise a range of theories and concepts from a diverse range of disciplines in order to relevant generate categories and measures. I recognised that the typology and theoretical frameworks employed were relatively complex and that my approach was exploratory and ambitious. For this reason as the study progressed I aimed to assess the applicability and usefulness of the conceptual framework and the methods employed (see Chapter 9).

I have proposed in this chapter three separate (but related) theoretical frameworks and sets of measures for categorising different phenomena that are of interest in this study which, when combined, provide an overall conceptual framework for this study:

- A basic typology to classify public engagement activities aimed at supporting ethnic minority groups focusing in particular on dialogue, representation and public decision-making practice (section 4.1)
- A theoretical framework to explore and measure levels of autonomy people feel they have within public engagement activities (section 4.2.1)
- A theoretical framework to explore the nature and scope of discourse about equality in public engagement activities based on ‘type’ of equality discussed and approaches to ‘framing’ equality (section 4.2.2)

The Methodology chapter that follows explains in more detail how these categories and measures were integrated to create a coherent research design and how they were used to design research instruments and conduct analysis of data.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the design, methodology and approach to analysis employed in the study. The introductory sections (5.1 and 5.2) provide an overview of the whole methodology along with philosophical considerations of the research approach. Section 5.3 describes the first phase of the research (a national online questionnaire) which helped to inform the approach taken in the second phase of the research. Section 5.4 describes this second phase, a 'qualitative experiment' (Kleining, 1986). Finally, Section 5.5 discusses ethical considerations.

5.1 Overview of design, methodology and integration with conceptual framework

This study gathered empirical data to help (a) describe current approaches to representation and engagement being used by a sample of local authorities in England and (b) understand whether differing levels of substantive representation for minorities might be explained by the types of models of representation and dialogue used in the practice of public engagement or other factors.

To achieve this, the research was conducted in two phases. Firstly, a national survey was run based on a typology which classified different public engagement activities aimed at supporting ethnic minority groups in local public policy engagement practice in England (as described in the previous chapter). Results from this survey were used to identify popular examples of practice and attitudes associated with the public

engagement of ethnic minorities at a local level that would inform the nature of interventions used in the qualitative experiment.

Secondly, a qualitative experiment (Kleining, 1986) was used to conduct a comparative analysis of two different approaches to the practice of public engagement to understand the potential effect of either approach on the quality of engagement experienced by participants. A large, urban, ethnically diverse local authority district was identified in which to conduct the qualitative experiment and it was co-designed by myself, a local equality charity and the local authority. The focus of the qualitative experiment was a public engagement process created to discuss impending local authority spending cuts, priorities for future public service re-design and the implications of this for race equality and social cohesion in the locality. Qualitative experimental methods were used to compare two different models of dialogue, representation and decision-making to understand whether different models (or other factors identified through the research) affected consultation participants differently. Two public engagement sessions were observed and a sample of participants were surveyed and interviewed in order to generate relevant data that could be used for the study. Measures of substantive representation based on levels of autonomy of participants and the scope and content of equality issues discussed in public discourse (as described in the previous chapter in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2) were used to assess differences in the experience of participants between each session.

Table 3 provides a summary of the mixed methods that were used to gather information in response to each of the research objectives. The table also describes

how the conceptual frameworks described in the previous chapter were integrated into the overall research design.

Table 3: Summary of research methods

Research Objective	Conceptual Framework employed	Method
Survey		
1. To explore *how* local authorities in England approach dialogue, decision-making and representation that involves ethnic minority groups	Typology of public engagement activities (assimilationism, multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism) used to develop wording of questions in survey Two most popular approaches adopted by survey sample used to design interventions for qualitative experiment	National online survey to local authorities in England to establish the range and frequency of different approaches to dialogue, decision-making and representation
Qualitative experiment		
2. To explore which factors influence the scope and content of equality issues discussed in public engagement activities	Framework for assessing the nature and scope of discourse about equality (types of equality and 'framing' of equality) used to assess differences in advancement of a range of policy preferences across two public engagement sessions.	Observation of two public engagement sessions and analysis of dialogue transcripts.
		Interviews with participants in two public engagement sessions to explore views about how issues of equality were discussed and what might have affected that
3. To explore which factors influence the level of autonomy participants in public engagement activities feel they have	Framework for assessing levels of autonomy used to assess differences in ability of participants to advance best interests of those they represent across two public engagement sessions.	Observation of public engagement sessions and analysis of dialogue
		Interviews with participants in two public engagement sessions to explore levels of autonomy and views about what affected that

As can be seen in Table 3, the research was designed with an overall aim to explore the influence that particular public engagement practices (or other factors) might have upon public engagement participants' levels of substantive representation. The public engagement practices compared in phase two, the qualitative experiment, were designed based upon empirical examples of the two most popular engagement practices identified through phase one, a survey of a sample of English local authorities. I compared whether levels of particular aspects of substantive representation differed amongst participants in two different types of public engagement activity (the intervention) and examined the reasons behind those differences. I undertook this qualitative experiment in order to generate new insights into effective public engagement practices and to respond to gaps in available literature identified in Chapter 3.

5.2 Ontological and epistemological considerations

I have argued in this thesis that there has been relatively little comparative empirical research to explain the value and effectiveness of different models of dialogue and representation associated with social theories and policies such as multiculturalism and interculturalism. I have also argued that the conceptual tools that have been used to measure or assess the quality of diverse social groups' participation in public engagement activities have been limited in scope and require increased sophistication. Thus the approach taken in this study was exploratory, with a view to piloting methods for: (a) defining different models of representation dialogue and public decision-making that are used to engage ethnic minorities in equality-related public policy; and (b) assessing the quality of those different models of public engagement. The focus was idiographic, a snapshot of a particular time and place. I

aimed to identify findings that could lead to the development of theories for future exploration and testing in a wider range of contexts in the future.

Given the study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods in a sequential mixed design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Teddlie and Yu, 2007) a number of questions about epistemological and ontological consistency were raised, particularly in the context of sampling. I adopted both probability and purposive sampling strategies at different stages of the research which are commonly associated with different ontological standpoints. The approach to sampling adopted in this study was, I would argue, appropriate to the purpose of the research and was consistent with my interpretative outlook. Using a probability sample in the online survey in Phase 1 was an effective way to generate a descriptive understanding of current approaches to the practice of representation, dialogue and engagement of ethnic minorities in local authorities (one of the core aims of the research). The aim of this survey was to provide a non-generalisable 'snapshot' of current social practice. Bourdieu has described this as a first stage in participant objectivation (Bourdieu, 2003). He suggests that statistical analyses can be a first step in the reflexive research process in that they allow researchers to 'manifest the structure of the social space' (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 725) before then going on to explore the subjective processes that influence variables identified in social practice (Fries, 2009).

Whilst the approach adopted in this research was inductive, the conceptual framework outlined in the previous chapter does also describe the use of some pre-defined measures to help guide exploration of: (a) the models of representation and

dialogue that are being used to engage ethnic minorities in policy-making processes; and (b) particular aspects of the quality of those different models of representation and dialogue. In piloting these newly developed indicators and measures, as an interpretative researcher, I also aimed, through the analysis process, to examine whether they were best suited to understanding the behaviours observed in the public engagement sessions that I observed and in understanding the meanings ascribed to them by respondents. Additional measures were incorporated if these were better suited. For example, when analysing the discourse within public dialogue transcripts as part of this study, I recognised that participants were ‘framing’ their claims in relation to the needs of specific identity groups. Though I had not originally intended to collate and analyse the dialogue transcripts in this way before collecting empirical data, I later decided to include this as a component of analysis and this resulted in a number of interesting insights in relation to theories of representative claim-making (Saward, 2006). In this sense, the study could be said to belong to the "reconstructive" paradigm (Bohnsack, 2003, cited in Evers, 2009) in which theoretical knowledge is adopted intensively before the beginning and in the course of the empirical period. As Evers (2009) suggests, this theoretical knowledge is not used to deduce models and hypotheses from it, operationalize and test them. Instead it helps to create a "theoretical sensitivity" (Wagner 1999, cited in Evers 2009) which ensures that the construction and analysis of data does not remain at the stage of description, but probes into the stage of subject-related theory construction.

This approach is consistent with my ontological standpoint that reality is socially constructed (Elder-Vass, 2012; Hacking, 2000). There are a number of different

interpretations of social construction theory (Elder-Vass, 2012). However, I have used one of its earlier interpretations (Bergman and Luckmann, 1966) as a basic tenet of this study. I assumed that knowledge is derived from and maintained by social interactions and that when people interact, they perceive that their own respective understandings of reality are related, and when acting on this basis their common knowledge of reality becomes reinforced. Exploring the practice of public engagement sessions using this theory of knowledge opened a number of interesting avenues for investigation. In particular, it enabled consideration of how common understandings of societal inequality might be reinforced (and indeed disrupted or challenged) in group dialogue environments of the type observed in this study.

I adopted a relativist epistemology (Kuhn, 1970) accepting that particular features of my judgments about what was happening in policy consultation processes that I observed would be relative to particular contextual conditions associated with the subject of the research and with respondents. For example, I recognised that people's belief in a particular cultural standpoint might be tied to a conceptual system, which may be 'real' for some people, but not for others. I recognised in this research that I could not separate myself from what I know and that my values were inherent in all parts of the research process thus I negotiated 'truth' (Luper, 2004, p.284) with others involved in the research process. This included both research participants, but also research partners (local authority and local equality charity) that were involved in the process of research. I used methods that allowed me to have sufficient dialogue with others involved in the research (e.g. observation and interviews with participants and meetings with research partners) to collaboratively construct an interpretation of reality that was meaningful.

In the case of this research, I have worked as an equality and human rights activist, researcher and lobbyist on issues of equality for the past ten years. I will have formed views about the nature of public engagement of ethnic minority groups over that time and, as somebody living in the UK, I will have developed interpretations of the role of topics such as ethnicity and 'race' in society too. Self-reflection and explicit recognition and examination of the potential effect of these 'embodied characteristics' in data collection and analysis is an important issue to consider in many studies (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004, p.16) and this study is no different. This can help others to better understand the reliability and validity of the methods and the conclusions that are drawn from this research. I have highlighted a small number of instances of where I felt this to be particularly relevant in the analysis that follows in this thesis.

In the remainder of this chapter, each phase of research is described in more detail, with a critical discussion of design, sampling approach, data collection and analysis.

5.3 Research Phase 1: Mapping and classifying different approaches to dialogue, decision-making and representation of ethnic minority groups in England

5.3.1 Research objective addressed

An online survey was used to explore how English local authorities approach dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities

5.3.2 Sampling

Local authorities were chosen as survey respondents because they administer a high level of public engagement activities and have statutory responsibilities relating to localism and engagement in local democracy.

Target recipients of the email request were Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or their equivalent in each local authority. These were identified through a Municipal Yearbook (2014) which contained contact details of a range of staff in English Local Authorities. Three local authorities did not share CEO contact information in the Yearbook and in these cases the email was sent to contact details for the most senior staff member listed with a relevant portfolio. The names of roles and those with responsibility for public engagement can vary widely between local authorities, so sending the email to senior management and asking them to forward it to relevant staff was felt to be the most expedient approach to dissemination.

When contact information was available about named officers with particular roles relevant to public engagement I also sent the email to them. I used specific key-words to identify relevant respondents which included roles related to: equality, community development, community engagement, consultation and user involvement. Naturally some local authorities had more staff contact details than others in the Yearbook, but I aimed to reduce risk of sampling bias by using consistent key-words to identify relevant staff roles. To reduce risk of sampling bias associated with more people being likely to respond that have more interest in the subject matter (Jobber, 1984), the survey and cover email clearly described the

benefits of respondent participation and I conducted systematic reminders for non-respondents (generic followed by personal emails/ then phone calls). In total I sent four emails to potential survey respondents. The original generic group email was followed by a reminder generic group email two weeks later. This was followed by a direct phone call to potential respondents who hadn't completed the survey with a follow-up individual reminder email. I finally sent one final generic group reminder email encouraging participants to complete before the survey closed.

My original sampling strategy of conducting a 'census' survey of all 326 local authorities was refined quickly, after receiving only two responses after two weeks and a reminder email. I recognised that much more additional work would be required to secure survey participants in local authorities (which at the time of writing are under intense budgetary and staffing resource constraints). I then decided to identify a random sample of Local Authority respondents so that I could effectively manage the limited time and resources available to when reminding people via phone and email to respond to the survey. I felt a random sample would also help to improve response rate and reduce non-response error (Dillman et al., 2009). To do this I generated a 'simple' random sample (Oppenheim 1996, p.40) of half of the Local Authority population (163) using a random number generator. This sample list included the two local authorities that I had already received responses from in the previous email campaign. I did not receive any additional responses from local authorities that weren't on the list of 163. Whilst a larger sample could have helped to provide a better estimate of the population, I felt that given the aim of the study and the statistical quality required for this type of descriptive statistics, that half of all

local authorities in England would be a suitable target sample given available resources.

Some 41 respondents completed the survey from a total of 36 different local authorities (more than one staff member completed the survey in some Local Authorities). This corresponds to 22% of the sample of local authorities. The response rate of 22% was respectable for an unsolicited online survey of this type (Oppenheim, 1996). I recognised there was a strong possibility that random variation in the sampling process and potential bias would mean that the sample may not be fully representative of all local authorities in England. With a simple survey of this type I felt that the best way to assess this would be to understand how the sample differs from the population. I was particularly interested in exploring potential differences in the administrative status of local authorities, their geographic location, levels or rurality / urbanity and local demographic profiles (such as nationality, ethnicity and levels of deprivation). These were all factors that I thought might have a potential effect on the nature of local authority-run public engagement with ethnic minority groups and also on respondents' willingness / ability to share information about it via a survey.

The tables in Appendix 1 offer an in-depth description of how the final sample compared to the population after different sources of bias have had their combined effect. In summary, there were relatively low levels of variation between the target sample and the local authority population as a whole. However, there were signs of potential non-response bias and selection bias in the final sample. In particular, authorities that were Metropolitan District and London Borough and more urban

responded in greater numbers to the survey. There was an important gap in the final sample from local authorities in the South West of England. In addition there were slight variances in the population characteristics of local authorities in the final sample compared to the overall population of local authorities (final sample local authorities being larger, with higher local concentrations of deprivation and less residents from White British backgrounds and born in the UK).

These variances have important implications for the conclusions one can draw from the data. The sample cannot be considered representative of the overall population of local authorities in England. In summary it was a small final sample size that may not reflect regional variances (particularly in the South West) and which included a higher proportion of urban, ethnically diverse, larger local authorities. However, in some respects, the variance between final sample and overall population was minor (e.g., between 4 and 8.5% for population characteristics). Thus I treated the final sample as in indicative snapshot of local authorities in England and a useful indication of the different types of public engagement activities being employed across different local areas.

5.3.3 Developing a typology for the survey

The review described in section 4.1 identified particular *representation, dialogue and decision-making practices* commonly associated with four broad policy approaches (assimilation, multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism). This typology informed question wording to help define which practices and attitudes are reflective of current approaches to local governance (attitudes and practice of local authority officers). I aimed to identify clear descriptions of *practice* and *attitudes*

associated with each of these policy approaches to support respondents to answer questions effectively.

A copy of the survey is included at Appendix 2 and this includes the exact wording used to describe practices and attitudes associated with each of the four policy approaches in different fields of practice (representation practice, dialogue practice and decision-making practice). For example, in the field of representation the following descriptions described in Table 4 were used:

Table 4: Example of survey question wording

Which of the following statements most accurately describes how you see the role of ethnic minority representation in the public forum?
Ethnic minority groups do not require separate representation **(Assimilationism)**
Ethnic minority representatives help us to understand specific needs and how public services should change to accommodate these **(Multiculturalism)**
We need to bring representatives / community leaders from different ethnic minority backgrounds together to build more cohesive communities **(Community Cohesion)**
Within ethnic minority groups needs may differ, thus we need to explore differences both within and between those groups (**Interculturalism**)

In the table above, the words ‘assimilationism’, ‘multiculturalism’, ‘community cohesion’ and ‘interculturalism’ were not shown to respondents and are added here simply to demonstrate from which broad set of theories each statement was drawn. As discussed in Section 4.1, I did not see these statements as categorical definitions

of each theory of managing cultural diversity and I recognised that participants would perceive the statements differently. However, I did seek to generate a theoretically sensitive set of descriptions of public governance practices and attitudes that were sufficiently different for respondents to identify which they felt *most* described their approach. To help test the policy and theoretical relevance of concepts, I consulted two experts in the field (head of a national race equality charity and a social care policy advisor with 30 years' experience of race equality initiatives). Both supported the typology, but stressed there could be overlaps and the four models were not mutually exclusive. Thus they suggested it would help to ask respondents which type of approach 'most' informs people's practice (this wording was used in questions in the final survey).

I decided to use a broad term of 'people from ethnic minority backgrounds' in the survey. I indicated to respondents that this included both established and newer migrants and different aspects of identity such as ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion and migration status.

5.3.4 Choice of questions

Type of Question

Closed questions were chosen to: help with the speed and efficiency of response (Fowler, 2002); ensure respondents were able to easily understand the meaning of answers and minimise satisficing (Krosnick and Presser 2010); and increase opportunities to identity patterns in response (Oppenheim 1996). Identifying patterns

was particularly important for the ‘mapping’ purposes of this survey. I recognised that using only closed questions risked limiting survey participants’ ability to say what they felt and risked bias by limiting responses to only a few potential answers (O’Cathain and Thomas, 2004). Thus respondents were given an option to answer ‘other’ (please specify). I also used some ‘open’, follow-up questions to help respondents to say if they didn’t agree with categories used and to improve theoretical sensitivity of the typology applied in the survey (e.g. Question 17).

Order of Questions

A ‘welcome’ page with a question about consent was included to provide participants with context about the research along with information about the researcher, research purpose and necessary assurances about ethical protections (Fowler, 2002). I included a question for respondents to indicate if they would like to receive a short summary of the findings and ensured that people were reminded on the ‘thank you’ page (Fowler 2002, p.9) how their responses would be used to improve future thinking and practice in this field. These steps were taken to ensure survey completion was felt to be a pleasant activity relevant to people’s jobs and interests.

Some easy to answer questions at the start of the survey (e.g. such as the type of issues that are discussed in public engagement) were designed to help build rapport with the respondent and focus their attention on the types of public engagement activities this survey would cover. On reflection, I feel I could have included more questions that explicitly addressed the survey topic at the very beginning of the questionnaire (Krosnick and Presser, 2010) rather than including potentially sensitive

or less interesting questions about respondent characteristics (Questions 3, 5 and 8) which would have been better placed at the end of the survey.

Three main sections (Questions 9-14) grouped together questions on the same topic, corresponding to topics of representation, dialogue and decision-making. Questions 9, 10 and 11 aimed to 'funnel' (Oppenheim,1996, p.111) and prepared respondents to answer detailed questions relating to the specific typology of public engagement adopted in this survey (Questions 12-15).

Question wording

Each question about representation, dialogue and decision-making adopted by local authorities (Questions 12-15) conformed to the four models described above in Section 4.1 of this thesis (in that order: assimilation, multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism). I decided to present answers in this order because respondents would benefit from reading response options in order and would then be better placed to choose their answer in relation to other potential responses. I used simple wording to help improve accuracy of self-reporting (Dillman et al., 2009). More difficult to answer questions (such as improvements that could be made to existing public engagement practices) were placed in a final section. This section was described 'future plans' to help respondents feel they were not being 'judged' for any perceived lack of performance in their local authority.

5.3.5 Visual presentation

Non-response related to survey content is a higher risk in mail/ internet-based surveys compared to surveys that actively enlist cooperation (Fowler, 2002). Thus in order to improve levels of response, the attractiveness and lay-out of the survey was considered in detail (Dillman, 2000). Bristol Online Survey software was used which includes standard design features that have been tested and refined over many years. This meant that I had limited influence over the font/ format and colour scheme but I was able to highlight (in bold) particular words that I wanted to emphasise to help respondents identify the most important content of each question (see Questions 12-15 in particular).

5.3.6 Piloting

Two local authority officers piloted the survey. I asked them for feedback on topics of: language used, structure of the survey and ease of use (Dillman et al., 2009). They identified the following improvements. Firstly, the cover email required more emphasis on quick speed of completion, benefits of participating and the text was seen to be too long. Secondly, what was originally a single question on 'dialogue' was seen as too complicated and vague, so this was turned into two separate questions to better explain what was meant by dialogue (resulting in Q14 and Q15) which helped to improve content validity. Thirdly, it was felt that respondents should have an option to print the survey after they had completed it. These changes were all made before circulating the survey.

5.3.7 Mode of Collection

An online survey was felt appropriate for this target population because access to the internet and email was widespread. Indeed, an email address was available for 99% of the target population of local authority CEOs via a Municipal Yearbook (2014). I also recognised that it was likely that CEOs would not be the eventual survey respondent (only one CEO completed the survey) and an online survey could be easily sent to other colleagues via email. The cover email suggested that CEOs should identify the most appropriate person in their team to complete the survey.

5.3.8 Analysis

This stage of the research aimed to generate a descriptive snapshot of current local authority practice in England by exploring perceptions of local authority staff about their approach to public engagement. Given the research aim, I felt that simple descriptive statistics would be the best way to demonstrate *how* local authorities are approaching this topic. With a relatively small final sample (n=36) there was little benefit in attempting to disaggregate results in relation to different local authority characteristics (such as region, type of local authority district or local demographic profile).

The majority of the survey was multiple-choice which made analysis of the frequency of responses relatively straightforward to calculate. However, the survey did also include a limited number of ‘open text’ boxes where respondents could elaborate on their answers or explain why they felt a multiple choice answer was not applicable to them. I analysed this textual data using an ‘Applied Thematic Analysis’ approach (Guest et al., 2012). This involves a structured approach to coding and handling

textual data and is discussed in more detail in Section 5.4.6.

5.4 Research Phase 2: Qualitative Experiment

5.4.1 Research aim addressed

A qualitative experiment was run that exposed two different groups to two commonly used, but different approaches to public engagement (multiculturalism and interculturalism) in order to better understand the effect that they, or other factors, might have upon particular aspects of substantive representation.

As discussed in the previous chapter, I developed measures of substantive representation for this study based on (a) the scope of equality discussed in public dialogue and (b) the level of autonomy of participants. I argued these two measures relate closely to relevant literature on the public engagement of ethnic minorities. The two measures have the potential to offer important insights into the ability of participants to serve the best interests of those they represent and the ability of participants to advance a range of policy preferences. Thus this phase of the research responded to the second and third research objectives of this study: which factors influence the scope and content of issues of equality discussed in those public engagement activities? Which factors influence the level of autonomy participants in those public engagement activities feel they have?

5.4.2 Rationale

Though the ‘qualitative experiment’ has a long history, it was formally defined by Kleining in 1986. It refers to:

> *The intervention with relation to a (social) subject which is executed following scientific rules and towards the exploration of the subject's structure. It is the explorative, heuristic form of an experiment (*Kleining, 1986, p.724*,* translation from Ravasio et al., 2004*).*

Whereas quantitative experiments focus primarily on testing hypotheses and using numerical calculations to establish potential causality between variables, qualitative experiments focus on heuristics (Ravasio et al., 2004). The researcher makes observations based on what they see, hear and feel within an experimental setting and draw conclusions on that basis using qualitative methods (rather than solely based on numerical calculations). Robinson and Mendelson suggest that qualitative experiments which are able to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods and 'ways of knowing' help to provide the type of 'holistic' reading of social reality that many mixed methods researchers aspire to (2012, p. 2). In this case, in order to create an environment within which two groups of participants experienced different models of public engagement practice, participants were assigned to different groups under experimental conditions and exposed to an intervention (these interventions are described in Section 5.4.2 below). However, it was also felt that qualitative strategies (e.g. observation of participants and pre and post-testing via in-depth interviews with participants) would help to capture differences in the way that participants perceived what happened in the consultation sessions and differences in the way that people behaved and discussed issues (Ravasio et al., 2004). In particular an examination of the *context* surrounding each public engagement session and the effect of different aspects of participants' lives would be critical to

understanding the factors that influence people's perception of the quality of the consultation and policy-making process.

I recognised that adopting a qualitative experiment would reduce the level of external validity of the design when compared to other relevant traditional forms of quantitative experimental design such as field experiments (Paluck, 2010). I also acknowledged the results would not be generalisable to a broader population and that the experiment would be harder to replicate when compared to quantitative experiments which tend to employ a higher level of abstraction of key concepts and activities (Ravisio et al., 2004). This was a trade-off that I felt comfortable with given the exploratory nature of this research. I felt that this reduction in external validity and potential replicability was a sufficient compromise to allow me to explore a range of relationships, processes and behaviours within public engagement that were largely unknown and had not previously been empirically researched. Similar to the approach that Kleining and Witt (2000) advocate, I wanted to remain open to new concepts and to change my preconceptions if the data were not in agreement with them.

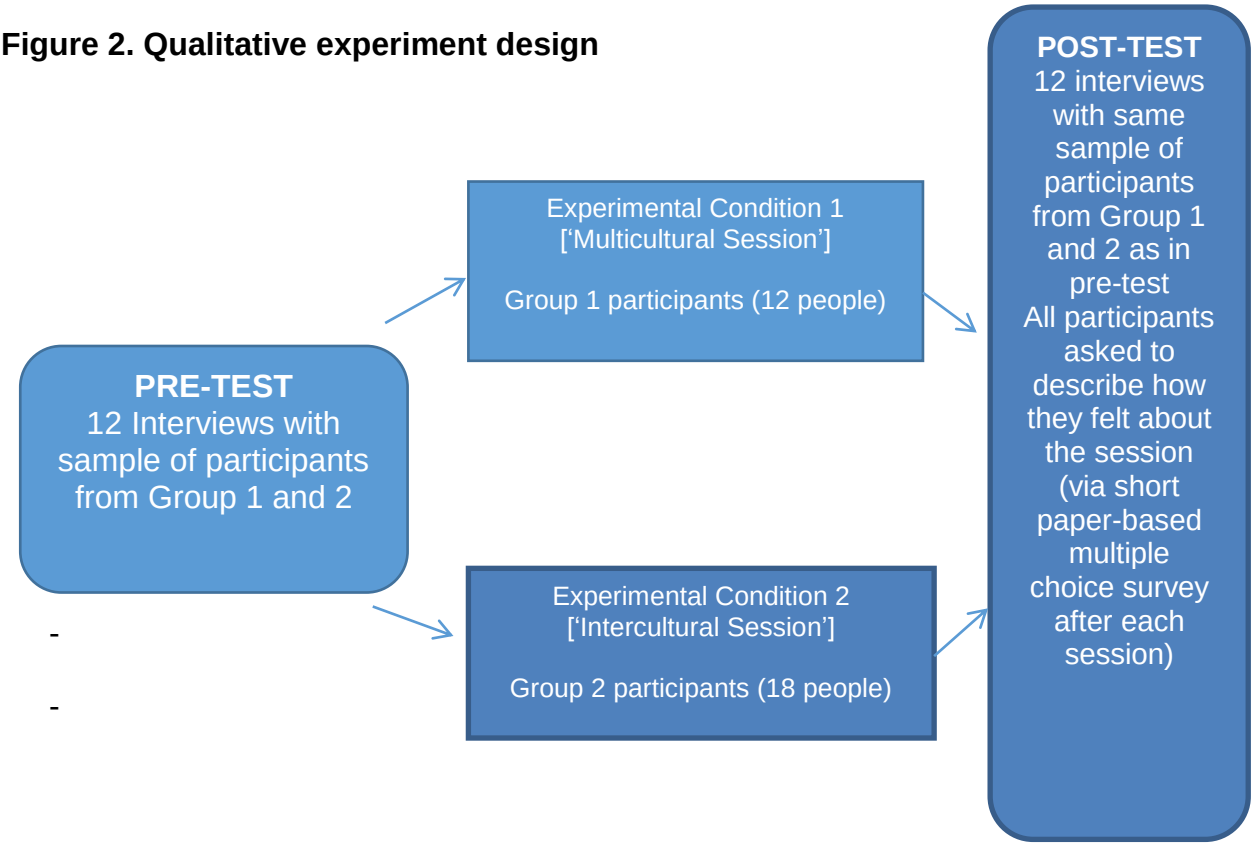
Yet, at the same time, the experimental design played an important role in helping me to improve internal validity of the comparison between the two models of facilitation and representation adopted. I aimed to use focused research design to increase the potential leverage of findings (King, Keohane and Verba et al., 1994) and to help explain why variations between the two public engagement sessions may have happened. When designing the research, I had considered originally only studying 'naturally occurring' case study examples of public engagement. However, I

realised quickly that it would have been extremely difficult to find suitable and comparable examples of public engagement activity. I felt that the qualitative experiment was a suitable compromise between, on the one hand, a wholly iterative, qualitative, multiple case study approach and on the other hand a quantitative field experiment, where the activities and conditions of the experiment and measurements designed to assess impact would have been highly abstracted and strictly controlled. Given the inductive and exploratory nature of this study, adopting a qualitative experiment enabled me to control and adapt research conditions sufficiently to examine the potential effect of factors described in relevant literature (such as the potentially limiting effect of identity-based representation models on the autonomy of participants) and to examine and potentially identify other factors not found in the literature to date.

5.4.2 Design

As described above, the aim of this engagement activity was to expose two different groups to two commonly used, but different approaches to engagement (dialogue, representation and decision-making techniques) in order to better understand the effect (if any) that they might have upon participants' perceptions of autonomy, and upon the scope and content of equality issues discussed. Figure 2 provides an overview of the qualitative experiment design:

Figure 2. Qualitative experiment design



In order to develop appropriate experimental conditions for public engagement sessions, results from the national online survey were analysed to identify the most popular examples of practices and attitudes expressed by a sample of local authority officers in the fields of representation, dialogue and decision-making when engaging ethnic minority groups in public decision-making processes. The two most popular responses were found to correlate broadly to the examples of practices and attitudes described as 'multicultural' and 'intercultural' in the typology outlined in the conceptual framework for this study (Section 4.1). These specific, empirical examples of practice and attitudes were then used to inform two particular sets of practices employed in each of the public engagement sessions run as part of this qualitative experiment. In the remainder of this thesis, for reasons of brevity, these sessions are referred to as the 'Multicultural Session' and 'Intercultural Session'.

However, as stated above, in theoretical terms, there is potential overlap between both.

Two public engagement sessions were developed with research partners: a local equality charity and a local authority (see Section 5.4.7). Each session ran for two and a half hours and they were run in the same location (a Further Education college meeting room in a centrally accessible part of the locality which has historically had high proportions of ethnic minority residents). Originally it was intended that each session would be attended by 15 people – though in practice (with some cancellations and over-booking to avoid risk of potential drop-out), 12 people attended the first session and 18 people attended the second.

The approach to operationalising each of the two sets of practices and attitudes in the running of the public engagement sessions was developed through a workshop between myself and two local equality charity staff members who were responsible for arranging the consultation sessions and facilitating them. Though each 'model' of public engagement practice was based on the typology outlined in the questionnaire from Phase 1 of this study, this was also interpreted and implemented by the equality charity staff. Whilst I, as the researcher, provided some initial input to explain the typology adopted in this study, the equality charity were also responsible for interpreting it and developing relevant consultation sessions which would respond to their policy making concerns (indeed they had already written practitioner guidance on related topics and were well placed to do this). This resulted in a selection of co-designed prompts and questions for facilitators which helped them to adopt a particular model of public engagement practice as part of the consultation sessions. I

was asked to help develop a power point presentation too which could be used to outline key local statistics / key issues (from a ‘multicultural’ and an ‘intercultural’ perspective).

Each session was facilitated by two facilitators (the same two facilitators for each session). These facilitators were chosen by the equality charity and were their two most experienced and qualified facilitators. Appendix 3 includes copies of facilitator prompts for each of the two sessions. Prompts for facilitators included both specific questions, but also instructions for how facilitators should respond to different claims and issues raised by participants. In particular, prompts for the Multicultural Session advised facilitators to encourage ‘toleration’ of claims made by participants about the needs or cultural entitlements of particular identity groups (by not encouraging critical discussion of those claims between participants). Whereas prompts for the Intercultural Session advised facilitators to encourage critical discussion and reflection upon the nature of these types of identity group-based claim. I include here, in Table 5, an example, for illustrative purposes, to demonstrate how the approach to facilitating the two sessions was differentiated to reflect each of the two models of public engagement (multicultural and intercultural).

Table 5: Example of facilitator prompts used in qualitative experiment

Model	Multicultural Session	Intercultural Session
Assumption of that ‘model’	Ethnic minority representatives help us to understand specific needs and how public services should change to accommodate these	Within ethnic minority groups needs may differ, thus we need to explore differences both within and between those groups
Corresponding facilitator prompt	Was there anything missing from the presentation you have just heard and what are the most important issues for *your*	Was there anything missing from the presentation you have just heard and what are the most important inequality issues *for*

	community in terms of inequality? Facilitator prompt to encourage respect for group-specific claims and not encourage critical discussion of those claims.	*[name of locality]?* Facilitator prompt to challenge group-specific claims (does everybody within group face that? Do other groups face that in [name of locality]?)

With a small sample of participants and running only two sessions, I recognised that the effect of differences between the participants of the two groups themselves was likely to be significant. Though a design with four sessions (each group of participants exposed to both the multicultural and Intercultural Session) may have helped improve internal validity, it was felt by the charity organising the sessions that attending two sessions was too burdensome a request for participants. Thus, a compromise needed to be reached and it was agreed that the sessions would be reduced to two sessions.

5.4.3 Participant recruitment

Participants were recruited using open advertisements through the channels which the two research partners would normally use to recruit consultation participants (both had large databases of community groups, mainly working with people from ethnic minority backgrounds). Participants for both rounds of policy consultation were recruited using the same publicity in order to help avoid people choosing a particular session based on the advertisement. Participants were informed that the research partners were running a round of policy consultation which would be used to inform local public policy on the topic of race equality and cohesion. Participants were also informed that at the same time research partners would be testing methods of engagement to help understand their effectiveness in partnership with a researcher

from Birmingham University – the learning from which would be used to inform future approaches to engagement of ethnic minorities in public policy making processes. Participants were provided with a voucher (£20) to thank them for their participation at the end of the public engagement session.

Participants were self-selecting and all 38 people that applied after a particular cut-off date were randomly assigned to a particular session (19 in each to achieve target number of 15 for each session allowing for potential drop-out). Though assignment to each session was random in the sense that people did not choose a particular session based on their knowledge of the intervention (multicultural or intercultural), the participants were self-selecting (i.e. they were asked to register their interest in contributing to the policy consultation). Thus already participants in both sessions are likely to have demonstrated particular characteristics that are potentially different from the broader population. Participants in each session were not asked to complete a monitoring form because the equality charity organising the sessions felt that asking people to complete a formal monitoring form with details of age, sexual orientation and so on would be unnecessarily obtrusive and out of keeping with other engagement activities they had run.

Despite the lack of formal monitoring data about the sample, as an observer and based upon information shared during the sessions and during interviews I am able to share basic anecdotal information about the sample (recognising the limitation of my subjective judgment on this). The majority of participants worked within the public sector or voluntary sector on issues broadly related to social welfare and equality such as: migrant support in social housing and support for young black men at risk of

criminality. Both groups included participants who were experienced in their respective fields and were mainly from between the ages of 30-60 years old. There was a relatively even spread of ethnic minority groups between each session (particularly South Asian, African Caribbean and African). However, there were some noticeable absences (particularly low levels of White British participants, Eastern European participants and other ethnic groups such as Chinese). Most participants had engaged in some form of public engagement activity before and many were relatively experienced. Thus the range of self-selected participants in this study were relatively familiar with public policy engagement processes and could not be said to be typical or representative of a broader population.

5.4.5 Data Collection

A mixed methodology approach was used to gather data from the public engagement sessions and from participants about factors that might affect (a) the scope/ content of discussion on issues of equality and (b) the level of autonomy people had within the public engagement sessions. Each method is considered below in turn, with a description of the approach to sampling and to data collection.

Observation and preparation of transcripts for thematic content analysis

I organised thank-you vouchers for participants, provided a power point presentation on patterns of local inequality (see section 5.4.2) and engaged with participants to thank them for attending. However, this was my main level of participation. I attended the meeting as an observer as opposed to a participant observer. I was introduced to the group as a researcher from University of Birmingham that would be

observing the session and taking notes. Participants had already been told that I would be in attendance and was undertaking a study to understand the effectiveness of models of public dialogue. After providing a power point presentation at the start of each session about local patterns of inequality I sat near the back of the room away from the large table where the discussion took place. I typed notes of what was being said by participants contemporaneously and placed four recording devices around the room which would be used to help prepare a fuller transcription of each large group discussion.

Observation enabled me to obtain more detailed and accurate information about issues relevant to the research which would supplement the thematic content analysis (see Section 5.4.6). For instance, it allowed identification of body language and intonation that may not be directly identifiable through analysis of the transcript. To capture this a basic version of a socio-gram (Philip, 2010) was used to record when different people spoke at different times within the meeting. Arrows were drawn between participants when they were interacting and additional notes were recorded next to each person to record my own perceptions of body language and emotion. For example, when a heated debate between two participants happened, I made a note of when participants changed their body language (e.g. became more agitated in their movements, or disengaged and stopped looking at the person with whom they were talking).

Challenges associated with this type of overt observation relate primarily to the potential ‘observer effect’ and bias associated with the researcher’s presence (Jarvie and Zamora-Banilla eds., 2011). This was recognised as a potential limitation of the

approach and that it may have resulted in the behaviour of participants and organisers of the consultation being altered due to the researcher's presence. However, by the researcher not being directly involved in the discussion, and by attending both meetings, I aimed to reduce the potential for bias. In addition, I felt there were a number of specific advantages of conducting observation. In particular, it was important to observe the actions of the consultation process within a 'natural setting' and to better understand the dynamics of the consultation process. An 'overt' approach was preferred to a 'covert' one because there was a need to openly record data and it was not felt that the level of effort (and deceit) required to act as a covert observer was justified or required for the type of data that was being collected.

Interviewee selection

A sample of 16 participants was chosen at random (eight from each consultation session). In order to gather an effective response, I aimed to gather two interviews (before and after). Two people who were invited requested not to take part in the interviews. Though I gathered 14 'before' interviews, I was only able to gather 12 'after' interviews (as two respondents did not manage to attend the consultation session). Thus I gathered useable information from 12 participants in total. Of the 12 participants, six attended the first session and six attended the second session. This equated to half of attendees at the first session (12 participants in total) and a third of attendees at the second session (18 participants in total).

Consultation participant respondents were informed prior to engaging in the consultation that they may be asked to be interviewed as part of the consultation

process. It is important to note the risk of selection bias associated with the two potential respondents who decided not to participate in interviews. Given the research's focus on issues of autonomy and confidence amongst participants, specific steps were taken to assure participants that the researcher would create a 'safe space' in which they could discuss any issues they would like to. For example, I went out to meet potential interview participants face to face, I also asked them to describe the types of issues they would like to discuss in the policy consultation. The latter approach aimed to help participants feel that their involvement would be worthwhile for them and – when those issues were introduced through the session prompts – that I had listened to them and that they could trust that I would do what I said I was going to do.

I also acknowledged that there was a risk that some potential participants may not have been able to participate in the research because of a barrier that excluded them (e.g. childcare commitments or language barriers). To minimise this risk, I paid attention to potential language or communication needs of research participants and aimed to be flexible in the times for interviews. Invitations to take part in the research were produced in large print using Plain English. It was not anticipated that additional language/ translation services would be required (given the public nature of the consultation process) but I planned to make provision for this, should it have been required.

Interviews

Interview questions were created to explore views about public engagement activity amongst a sample of participants involved in each session. Semi-structured interviews were felt to be an appropriate method of data collection as they can be less intrusive for participants than more formal, structured interviews (Johnson, 2002). They provide an opportunity for respondents to also ask questions of the interviewer and this two-way communication can support the process of learning (an important component of the inductive approach adopted in this case study). Some of the issues discussed in the interviews would be of a sensitive nature and it was felt that semi-structured interviews would better enable respondents to choose either to discuss or not to discuss those issues in a 'safe space'. Interviews were conducted in two stages (pre and post session) to help understand the potential effect of the intervention upon people. Interviews lasted, on average, 45 minutes, though two lasted about one and a half hours. All were held face to face.

The last ten minutes of each interview included a more structured set of interview questions (with a range of multiple choice responses) which aimed to explore the level of autonomy participants felt they had in previous public engagement activities (pre-test interview) and during the session they attended as part of this study (post-test interview). A carefully worded survey was chosen for this section of the interview because questions about 'autonomy', particularly those that had not been reflected upon previously by a participant can require a degree of prompting on the part of the interviewer and require careful wording (Burchardt et al., 2010). Participants were also asked a small number of 'open' questions in this section of the interview to enable them to describe, in their own words, how they felt about the level of autonomy they had. Conducting pre and post-test interviews using similar wording of

questions enabled me to directly compare ‘pre’ and ‘post’ levels of autonomy and to enable more reliable comparison between participants who participated in each session.

A list of detailed questions for pre and post-test interviews is available at Appendix 4. Key themes from the interviews for session participants are summarised below.

‘Pre-test’ interview:

Participants were asked about any past experience they had of involvement in other public engagement or consultation processes. Questions covered topics relevant to the purpose of this study including:

- Views about the scope and content of equality issues discussed within public engagement activities (*how* issues were discussed, *how* decisions were made, *content of* discussions and the types of equality issues discussed)
- Experience of ‘representing’ the views of others
- Levels of autonomy and choice they felt they had in public engagement activities they had participated in the past (structured multiple choice questions with small number of open questions)

‘Post-test’ interview:

- Views about the scope and content of equality issues discussed in the session they attended (*how* issues were discussed, *how* decisions were made, *content of* discussions and the types of equality issues discussed)

- Whether they felt they were ‘representing’ the views of others
- Levels of autonomy and choice they felt they had in the session (structured multiple choice questions with small number of open questions)

In the post-session interview, respondents were asked to reflect upon whether their answers had changed since before the consultation – and if they had, why they had changed. I encouraged respondents to draw on concrete examples from the session they attended and I used a range of prompts to achieve this (e.g. by referring to specific conversations in consultation sessions that it would be useful for respondents to reflect upon).

5.4.6 Analysis

5.4.6.1 Scope and content of equality issues discussed (Research Objective 2)

The scope and content of equality issues discussed by participants were assessed through content analysis of transcripts of the dialogue from each session. I subsequently used analysis of interview transcripts to explore participants’ perceptions of the sessions they had attended and to help verify whether initial patterns in dialogue and behaviour identified through content analysis of the sessions were also significant or noticeable for interviewees.

I used an ‘Applied Thematic analysis’ approach (Guest et al., 2012) which offers an inductive and systematic approach to identifying key themes in text, aggregating these into codes and also applying a range of other techniques such as word-

frequency searches and other data reduction techniques (Guest et al., 2012). The approach enables researchers to use a range of tools to undertake analysis in a systematic and rigorous way. The synthesis of quantitative and qualitative methods was particularly appealing for this research.

When reviewing dialogue transcripts and making sense of participants' references to what was said during the public engagement session they attended, I used the concept of 'claims' expounded by political science authors such as Saward (2006) as a lens through which to separate and compare different contributions from participants on the topic of equality. In the context of this research, an 'equality claim' refers to something that somebody says as part of a public dialogue which states somebody (e.g. an individual or group) is experiencing inequality or needs equality. An example of a claim might be "Bangladeshi young people need more support in school because teachers treat them differently".

The approach to analysis included drawing upon a basic interpretation of Toulmin's (1969) model of argumentation as an instrument to examine grounds and warrants of different 'claims' in my analysis. The 'grounds' of a claim refer to the reasons or supporting evidence that support it. For example, if the claim were 'Bangladeshi men need more access to jobs' then the 'grounds' of the claim might be '20% of Bangladeshi men are unemployed in the local area'. The 'warrant' refers to the main provision or chain of reasoning that connects the grounds/reason to the claim. A warrant helps to answer the question 'why does that evidence or reason mean that your claim is true / worthy of attention?'. As an example, 'Bangladeshi men require

more support to access the labour market because they make up a significant portion of the local population'.

NVIVO software enabled quick and accurate searches of different forms of these 'equality claims'. With dialogue transcripts, I used NVIVO to count equality claims made during each public engagement session. I also used NVIVO to examine and manage references to particular aspects of the context within which those equality claims had been made. NVIVO was also used to collate all individual contributions made by a particular participant within each session. The process that was used to collate and analyse data using NVIVO is summarized below.

Firstly, for both dialogue transcripts I read each text and identified key themes. I also drew upon field notes and a basic socio-gram I had used to record body language and emotional responses from dialogue participants. I began this thematic analysis with a number of pre-defined themes to structure the analysis (Welsh, 2002). These included themes relating to 'type' of equality (equality of outcome, equality of process and equality of autonomy) and the 'framing' of equality ('equality of what?') (see Section 4.2). As I read through each transcript I identified additional themes which emerged and appeared relevant to the study. For example, I noticed that a number of equality-related claims made by participants referred to the needs or entitlements of specific ethnic groups ('identity-specific' claims), so I identified this as a theme that merited further analysis.

Secondly, I converted these themes into codes which I aggregated in a codebook within NVIVO. Thirdly, I read the public dialogue transcripts and systematically coded

equality claims and subsequent discussion in each public engagement session. This descriptive coding provided me with a summary description of what was in each transcript. I then undertook basic analytical coding to enable me to run a number of 'matrix queries' within the NVIVO software programme. For example, I analysed how many 'equality of outcome' claims had been made in each session and how many of each of those had been 'group-specific' claims (referring to one specific identity group). This helped me to understand and compare differences between each public engagement session in terms of the types and frequency of equality claims made by participants.

Fourthly, I read interview transcripts to identify the potential factors which may have influenced participants' decisions to speak or behave in a particular way during the session. This process helped to confirm or challenge assumptions I had made about the potential significance of patterns in claim-making identified as part of the comparative analysis of each transcript. Fifthly, I compared my analysis of both dialogue transcripts and interview transcripts to examine whether, on balance, patterns identified in the content analysis of dialogue transcripts appeared to be supported by the views of dialogue participants. This involved examining the potential effect, if any, of the intervention upon the scope and content of equality issues discussed during each session.

This overall analytical process was not without challenges. Participants did not always share opinions in their interviews about particular patterns of claim-making that I identified in my analysis of the transcripts from each public engagement session. This was mainly due to the timing of research activities (insufficient time to

analyse dialogue transcripts before interviewing participants in their post-test interviews). However, despite this limitation, I was able to identify a number of relevant passages from interviews that helped to provide important context for my analysis of the content of public dialogue from both sessions.

I also recognised that the overall Applied Thematic Analysis approach adopted in this study had some disadvantages compared to other analysis frameworks. In particular, there are important drawbacks associated with quantitative content analysis based on counting the number of references to a particular subject during a segment of dialogue. For example, developing the coding system involved interpretation and the risk of bias similar to that in other more qualitative measurement techniques (Insch et al., 1997). Similarly, by treating specific parts of content of the transcript as abstract and in isolation to its context, I risked losing the meaning of that part of the content. Indeed a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Juliet 1994) might have enabled a more nuanced and systematic analysis of the text. However, given the relatively large data set (two dialogue transcripts each two and a half hours long as well as 24 interviews of at least 45 minutes long), I favoured an approach that enabled me to conduct nuanced word frequency analyses that could be undertaken efficiently. I was also able to supplement this with more in-depth analysis of a small number of particularly significant segments of the dialogue and I was able to explore the context of those segments of dialogue through interviews with the participants involved.

5.4.6.2 Levels of autonomy people feel they have in public engagement activities (Research Objective 3)

In Chapter 4 I proposed a theoretical framework to understand whether public engagement participants had an opportunity to 'serve the best interests of others' in a way they chose by examining their level of autonomy during the public engagement session they attended and comparing this to their previous experiences of public engagement activity.

To explore levels of autonomy people felt they had in public engagement activities I also used an Applied Thematic Analysis approach. This approach incorporated both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to identify themes and issues relevant to the topic of study. I undertook a quantitative analysis of interviewees' levels of reported autonomy pre and post-test. This helped me to understand the *change* in people's level of autonomy experienced during the intervention (compared to how they felt about previous public engagement activities they had attended). The levels of change in autonomy reported by interviewees in each session were then aggregated and compared to see which session resulted in an overall increase or decrease of autonomy amongst participants.

To understand *why* people had reported a particular level of autonomy, people's interview responses were qualitatively analysed and key themes identified. Where relevant, individual interview responses were also examined in more detail and compared to what was said in relevant parts of the public dialogue in each engagement session. For example, if a person described experiencing a low level of autonomy after a particular encounter with the facilitator or another participant, the transcript from that section of the session was analysed in more detail to better understand the factors that may have contributed to that low level of autonomy. This,

more fine-grained, analysis was used to better understand the context for specific participants' interview responses.

5.4.7 Co-production

Durose et al. argue that 'co-production in research aims to put principles of empowerment into practice, working *with* communities and offering communities greater control over the research process and providing opportunities to learn and reflect from their experience' (2013, p.1). In this study I did not seek to achieve co-production in this broad sense due to the constraints on my time and resources, but I did seek to engage relevant research partners in the location of the qualitative experiment that would (a) have an existing mandate for organising and facilitating public consultation and engagement activities of the type explored through this research and (b) welcome the opportunity to reflect upon current engagement practice and share in a learning process that would support the development of improved practice in the future. After three initial meetings and discussion about the focus of the research, I secured the active participation of a local authority and a local equality charity within that area. These were both organisations with whom I had engaged with in the past and were already planning to conduct local consultation on issues of race equality and public service re-design. This helped me to find willing staff members that would lead on participation for their organisation.

The content of the public engagement sessions and approach to facilitation were co-produced between the researcher, a local equality charity and the local authority. Table 6 outlines respective roles and activities for this part of the research:

Table 6: Responsibilities for production of the qualitative experiment

	Researcher	Local Equality Charity	Local Authority
Design of experimental protocols (e.g. approach to experimental controls and comparators), approach to recruitment and sampling	✓	✓	
Direct recruitment of participants		✓	✓
Logistical issues (venue, refreshments, writing session invites etc.)	✓		✓
Design of sessions (activities, information shared with participants, approach to facilitation)	✓	✓	
Facilitating sessions		✓	
Securing interview participants, conducting interviews, observing and recording consultation sessions	✓		

This (albeit limited) approach to co-producing the research was challenging and required a degree of trust-building and compromise between all parties involved. Firstly, I needed to ensure the policy consultation would be of benefit to and would feed into 'live' policy decisions that the local authority was making at the time. Secondly, I needed to ensure that the local equality charity felt they were running a credible and worthwhile consultation activity based on their values and mission as an organisation (which required me to discuss my approach to the research in depth and to discuss ways in which the findings could be used by the charity to further their cause). Thirdly, I sought to ensure that I had an opportunity to expose consultation participants to the two most dominant models of group facilitation and representation that I had identified in the first phase of the research and to negotiate my interpretation of these with the local equality charity.

After a three-month process of negotiation and development, an approach to design and delivery of the public engagement sessions was reached that helped to respond

to research partners' interests and views. In addition to liaising with research partner agencies, I also contacted potential participants (specifically members of the local equality charity involved in the research) to ensure that I had a good grasp of the issues that they might want to discuss in the consultation sessions – and that these were reflected in the questions and activities used by facilitators. A central concern for all research partners was that (irrespective of the approach to facilitation adopted) all policy consultation participants would have an opportunity to share their views and that these would be recorded and shared with policy makers.

5.5. Ethical considerations

5.5.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was ensured by assigning an ID code to respondents and storing data securely in password protected files behind a secure IT firewall system. The views of respondents captured via interviews were not shared with other respondents except through research reporting which did not record their name. I aimed to be respectful of privacy when discussing the results with other respondents or fellow researchers. I also explained to research subjects that they were entitled, if they wish, to reject particular forms of data gathering (e.g. use of digital sound recorders in the interview). However no participants felt the need to do this.

5.5.2 Anonymity

Anonymity was achieved for respondents by ensuring interview quotes were recorded in this thesis and other related research outputs in a way that was not attributable to individual participants. However, I recognised that anonymity would be

harder to achieve for all respondents, particularly the research partners in the study. For example, statements or activities within the consultation process recorded by the researcher (either through observation or thematic content analysis) may also have been recorded as a matter of public record and may have been attributable to particular organisations as a result. Participants were advised of this and of the potential implications of this prior to participation.

5.5.3 Consent

Obtaining informed consent can be harder to obtain with 'vulnerable groups'. I did not intend to interview any 'vulnerable' populations through this research (e.g. children, those with a learning disability or those in a dependent relationship to the researcher or a body that had commissioned the research).I sought to ensure that 'informed-consent' was achieved. To do this I made a judgment about the level of information potential participants required and the level of effort/ support and time required to help them understand the information. Information included a description of what would be done to research participants, the limits of their participation and a discussion of any potential risks they might have incurred. Participants were informed that they were able to pull out of the research at any time (before analysis – 3 months after the interviews) and data they had provided would be destroyed.

Before each session in the qualitative experiment all participants were informed via email that they'd be audio-recorded in the session but any findings would be reported anonymously and if they had any concerns to let me know before-hand. In the session itself, the purpose of research was explained again and consent was verbally confirmed again for recording the session.

Consent from individual respondents to take part in interviews was secured on a one-by-one basis (confirmed by a signed consent form). I held one-to-one conversations with each respondent to explain (a) the information sheet about the research which was provided to them; (b) that they had the opportunity to ask questions about the study; (c) that they would be recorded if that was ok with them; (d) that their name or personal demographic information would not be revealed to anybody outside of the research, though due to the public nature of the policy consultation process any statements or activities within that consultation may be attributable to them; (e) that they may be quoted anonymously in reports relating to the research; (f) that they could remove themselves from the study at any time up to the data analysis stage and would not be asked why they no longer want to participate. This conversation was used to check that the respondent had been given sufficient time to consider participating and that they agreed to take part in the study. Only then were respondents asked to sign the consent form. A copy of the consent form and accompanying participant information sheet is included at Appendix 4.

5.5.4 Risks and mitigation

One potential risk for research participants was the limits to confidentiality presupposed by this research approach. Whilst pseudonyms were used to describe participants in this study, other participants within the study may have been able to identify particular respondents by what they said during each session (as groups were relatively small). This could (though there was a low possibility of this) have led to harm if other people disagreed with what the participant has said. To minimise

potential harm to research participants, they were not named, also, where possible, they were described in a way that was sufficiently general to avoid particular quotes being attributed to particular people. This helped to prevent undue disclosure of identities. In addition to this, research participants were fully informed of approaches to anonymity and confidentiality and were asked to sign up to a group agreement at the start of each of both sessions to ensure each person was treated with dignity and respect as the research process is conducted.

Potential risks to society of undertaking this research related primarily to the impact it may have had upon the operation of the consultation process (which was the object of the study) and the local public policy decisions made as a result. The main associated risk related to the presence of a researcher in the consultation process and that this may have influenced different decisions being made by participants (and subsequently by policy-makers) about public policy. However, the risk of this happening in this research was relatively low. For this inquiry, the researcher was acting as an observer. I was not able to contribute to the debate within those consultation processes. I ensured that I had an opportunity to ask people questions outside of the consultation process itself. This was unlikely to have had a significant effect on the outcome of decisions made within the consultation process. In terms or risks associated with the presence of a researcher (e.g. attempts to ‘please’ the researcher), to mitigate this risk I I took steps to minimise the disturbance associated with the research process. These steps included: informing the participants fully about the consequences of their participation; the researcher not intervening in discussions during the consultation sessions; ensuring anonymity and confidentiality where possible.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an overview of this two-phase study. In summary, in Phase 1 I used a national online survey to explore how a sample of English local authorities approached dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities. The questions used in this survey were informed by a 'typology' of different practices and attitudes to public engagement associated with different theories and policies of managing cultural diversity (assimilationism, multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism). The results from this survey were used to identify the two most popular approaches to public engagement adopted by the survey sample ('multicultural' and 'intercultural').

In Phase 2, these two most popular approaches to public engagement, as identified through the national survey, were used to design a qualitative experiment. In the qualitative experiment two groups of people were exposed to a different type of public engagement approach (multicultural or intercultural). These two public engagement sessions were observed, the transcripts of dialogue were analysed and a sample of participants were interviewed to establish whether the nature of the intervention (or other factors) influenced (a) the scope and content of equality issues discussed by participants and (b) the level of autonomy of participants. The scope and content of equality issues was measured by analysing dialogue transcripts to identify the content of 'claims' made by participants (using frameworks based on 'type' of equality and 'framing' of equality). The content of discussions was compared with the views of interviewees to better understand whether the intervention or other

factors influenced what was said during the sessions. The level of autonomy of participants was measured by interviewing participants before and after the session they attended to establish whether the nature of the intervention they attended (or other factors) influenced their levels of autonomy.

The results of this qualitative experiment were then used to help identify any aspects of public engagement practice (or indeed other factors) that might be important in responding to key challenges associated with public governance practice in an era of super-diversity. In particular, I sought to identify issues that might be relevant in terms of: effectively identifying the needs of a diverse range of social groups; discussing, negotiating and prioritising which of those needs should be acted upon when making policy decisions; and engaging people in a way that allows them to act autonomously. The three chapters that follow provide an account of the findings from the study.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS FROM NATIONAL SURVEY

6.0 Introduction

The first objective of this research was 'to explore *how* English local authorities approach dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities'. In order to do this a survey was sent to local authorities in England. This chapter gives an account of the results from the survey and assesses what the findings mean for this research objective. As discussed in Chapter 5, I felt that simple descriptive statistics would be the best way to demonstrate *how* local authorities are approaching this topic. With a relatively small final sample (n=36) there was little benefit in attempting to disaggregate results in relation to different local authority characteristics (such as region, type of local authority district or local demographic profile). The descriptive tables that follow provide high-level responses from the sample as a whole.

6.1 Background information about the aims and structure of public engagement activities

Survey respondents were asked to focus their responses to the survey specifically on examples of public engagement activity where equality and the needs of people from different ethnic minority backgrounds were specifically discussed. They were asked to describe: the aims and objectives of their public engagement forum / activities and the mechanisms used to deliver public engagement. A diverse range of aims and approaches to delivering public engagement activities were identified by survey respondents and these are summarised in this section.

6.1.1 Aims and objectives of public engagement forum

This was an open-text question and a range of aims and objectives of community engagement activities were identified in response. Table 7 provides a summary breakdown of the key themes / types of objectives that respondents listed (some respondents indicated more than one of these):

Table 7: Reported objectives of public engagement activities

Objective of public engagement activities	Number of local authorities that identified this aim (n=36)	Percentage of final sample that chose this option
Race equality issues / issues affecting ethnic minority groups are picked up through **mainstream or geographically-focused engagement processes** that are not 'equality'-specific (such as local neighbourhood engagement forums).	17	46%
To provide a **specific space for discussion of race equality issues** separate from other parallel equality-focused consultation activities (e.g. those focused on other protected characteristics such as gender or disability)	10	27%
To provide a **space for discussion of all equality issues** / all protected characteristics in the same place (including but not limited to race equality).	8	22%
To **promote community cohesion** and good community relations	8	22%
Community engagement activities **specific for refugees and asylum seekers**	3	8%
Specific role for the community engagement relating to **monitoring community tensions and extremism**	2	5%
Engagement work **focused on a particular ethnic minority group**	1	3%

All survey respondents answered this question and were able to choose more than one option. Nearly half of respondents (46%) suggested that their local authority used mainstream or geographically-focused engagement processes (such as ward

committees or neighbourhood forums) to discuss issues of equality (including issues affecting ethnic minority groups). In addition, about half (49%) of respondents indicated they create public engagement opportunities which focus *specifically* on discussing equality (27% race equality-specific public engagement activities and 22% public engagement activities covering a range of protected characteristics such as race, disability and gender). A large proportion (22%) of local authorities also focused on community cohesion and community relations in their public engagement work.

Some respondents went on to describe why they were focused on these topics and why they had chosen to organise public engagement activities in a particular way. A small selection of respondents were explicit in their view that more mainstream approaches to engagement of ethnic minority groups were the most suitable strategy for the future:

> *The mechanisms we use are similar so people do not feel like we are doing something 'special' for them. They appreciate the opportunities given to have their say.*
>
> (Local Authority, North)

Yet other respondents argued that race equality-specific mechanisms of engagement were required because these issues were rarely discussed in mainstream public engagement processes. The findings from respondents as a whole suggest that local authority staff varied quite widely in their views about

whether ‘equality-specific’ engagement activities were required to enable ethnic minority groups to have their say on the topic of equality and issues that affect them.

6.2 Approaches to ‘Representation’

Participants were asked questions about the types of people who attend community engagement activities and whom they might represent. Table 8 describes responses to this question. Where respondents answered ‘other’, their open-text responses are summarised.

Table 8: Approaches to representation

From your point of view, which type of people would you most like to attend the public engagement activities? (please pick one -- the most important)	No. of LAs (n=35)	% of LAs
Mostly people that represent a particular ethnic minority or religious background who will understand the needs of that community:	28	80.0 %
Mostly people that have equality expertise (e.g. knowledge of equality practice, equality law or designing fair public services):	0	0%
Mostly people that have expertise in the field of social policy being discussed (e.g. health, education, or employment):	2	5.7%
Other *(please specify)*:	5	14.3 %
Summarised responses for ‘other’ • Those who understand, interact with and influence communities in the city. • A combination of the three multiple choice answers above would be best (i.e. somebody with equality and policy expertise as well as representing a particular ethnic minority background) • Would depend on the purpose of the engagement activity • All residents		

The data in table 8 indicate that 80% of respondents to this question would like attendees at their public engagement activities to be “mostly people that represent a particular ethnic minority background who will understand the needs of that community”. 28 of 35 respondents answered ‘yes’ to this question. They then went

on to describe which groups they would like to participate more. Common answers included: women, young people, people from specific ethnic or religious backgrounds and new arrivals to the country. About a third answering this question referred to particular ethnic minority groups. For example, one respondent stated:

> *We tried to engage the 'established' Polish community at the outset of the project without success (although the 'newer' Polish community are represented). We have tried to engage the Bangladeshi community but not managed to get regular participation - mainly due to the time commitment rather than an unwillingness to take part. Also whilst the Indian and West Indian communities are represented, changes within a couple of BME associations have meant that the input from both has reduced slightly.*
> (Local Authority officer, Midlands)

To help clarify respondents' views on the value and purpose of ethnic minority representation an additional question was asked about the 'role' of representation (Table 9).

Table 9: Views on the role of ethnic minority representation in public engagement:

Which of the following statements most accurately describes how you see the role of ethnic minority representation in the public forum?	No. of LAs (n=35)	% of LAs
Ethnic minority groups do not require separate representation **(Assimilationism)**	1	2.9
Ethnic minority representatives help us to understand specific needs and how public services should change to accommodate these **(Multiculturalism)**	13	37.1
We need to bring representatives / community leaders from	8	22.9

different ethnic backgrounds together to build more cohesive communities **(Community Cohesion)**		
Within ethnic groups needs may differ, thus we need to explore differences both within and between ethnic groups (**Interculturalism**)	11	31.4
Other *(please specify)*:	2	5.7
Summarised responses for 'other': • A combination of the last three multiple choice answers (multiculturalism, community cohesion and interculturalism) • A combination of 2 and 4 (representatives help us to understand specific needs; and we need to explore differences within and between groups)		

Data in Table 9 suggest that respondents were fairly evenly split in their views about the role of identity-based representation. The 'multicultural' response was most popular (37.1%) followed by 'intercultural' (31.4%), 'community cohesion' (22.9%) and 'assimilation' (2.9%) responses. It is interesting to compare data from tables 8 and 9. Survey data in Table 8 indicate that 28 out of 35 (80%) of respondents were most concerned with finding people with particular identity-based attributes who would understand the needs of that 'community'. Yet at the same time, as described in Table 9, when asked about the *role* of representation, less than half of these respondents (n=13) felt most strongly that representatives could help in understanding 'specific' needs of diverse social groups, with nearly as many reporting they were most keen to explore the differences in need within groups as well as between groups (n=11). The implications of this apparent tension are explored in more detail in the discussion of these findings in Section 9.2.

6.3 Approaches to dialogue and facilitation

As discussed in Chapter 5 the thematic framework used to construct this part of the survey treated approaches to dialogue and facilitation aimed principally at toleration

and protecting / conserving cultural entitlements as corresponding to a ‘multicultural’ response. The ‘intercultural’ response placed greater emphasis on ‘cultural freedom’ and identifying compromise between groups. The ‘assimilation’ response suggested little discussion was needed about different ethnic minority groups (because their needs are assumed to be the same as the needs of the rest of the population). The ‘community cohesion’ response focused on putting people from different ethnic backgrounds in contact with each other.

Views of respondents in relation to the topic of ‘dialogue’ and ‘facilitation’ are recorded separately in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10: Approaches to dialogue

Which of the following statements best describes the approach you take to *discussing* the needs of diverse ethnic minority groups in the public engagement activities?	No. of LAs (n=35)	% of LAs
There is little discussion about the needs of different ethnic minority communities: **(Assimilationism)**	0	0.0
It is most important that ethnic minority representatives are given the chance to express their culturally specific needs: **(Multiculturalism)**	17	48.6
It is most important that different ethnic groups are put into contact with each other to improve community relations: **(Community Cohesion)**	3	8.6
It is most important that people discuss how compromises can be reached that meet the needs and demands of a range of different ethnic groups: **(Interculturalism)**	12	34.2
Other *(please specify)*:	3	8.6
Summarised responses for ‘other’: - All except answer one (there is little discussion about needs of different communities) - Whilst the answer should be two (representatives given a chance to express their culturally specific needs), historically we have struggled to achieve this		

- I would agree with the second statement but it is also about expressing specific experiences not just needs.		

Higher responses for the ‘multicultural’ option (48.6%) in Table 10 appear to indicate that respondents felt it was most important for ethnic minority representatives to be given the chance to express culturally-specific needs. The wording of this multiple choice response also suggests that they judged the individual expression of those cultural needs through dialogue as more important than reaching a compromise when there was conflict or inadequate resources to meet all needs. A respondent who answered ‘other’ in the survey, suggested they aspired to give representatives a chance to express their culturally specific needs, but had struggled to be effective:

> *This should be answer 2* [multicultural response] *but our local authority gets its knickers in a twist making sure that we try and engage with different groups. Historically we have had quite a low BME [black and minority ethnic] population - only recently that we have had a reasonably substantial BME population. This has been a massive learning curve. Our largest non-white British group is white 'other'. It can be a concern to forget the 'majority' - when you talk about cohesion. They feel the same weight isn't given to their views. The way that people started to notice that new arrivals were coming to our area - asylum seekers were brought from another authority and overnight we had a different population.*
>
> (Local Authority officer, Midlands)

Table 11: Approaches to facilitation

Which of the following best describes the approach that is taken to *facilitation* / *discussion* in the public engagement activities?	No. of LAs (n=34)	% of LAs
There are no specific opportunities for ethnic minorities to outline their needs: **(Assimilationism)**	0	0.0
There are specific opportunities for each ethnic minority representative to separately outline their needs, but no critical group discussion of these: **(Multiculturalism)**	5	14.7
People from different ethnic backgrounds come together to agree priorities for action - but views about the needs of communities are not critically discussed/ challenged: **(Community Cohesion)**	3	8.8
Views of participants are critically discussed/ challenged so that the needs of particular ethnic minority groups can be balanced with the needs of others: **(Interculturalism)**	17	50.0
Other *(please specify)*:	9	26.5
Summarised responses for 'other': - Combination of all answers (except number 1) - Each ethnic minority group is given an opportunity to express their needs and challenge and contribute to the development of Council's action plans - We operate a system that is flexible and responds to the situation.		

Responses in Table 11 indicate that overall, respondents appeared to find multiple choice options less applicable than in previous questions (9 respondents answered 'other'). Still, the most popular multiple choice option was the 'intercultural' approach to facilitation, with 17 respondents choosing that option.

6.4 Approaches to decision-making

In order to explore further the judgment criteria used by respondents to identify a 'good' policy decision involving the needs of ethnic minority groups, respondents were asked what they did when competing needs are identified as part of the public engagement process. Answers to this question are described in Table 12.

Table 12: Approaches to decision-making

Sometimes people within public engagement activities will disagree about policy decisions that need to be made, or will feel that their community's needs are the most important (this can obviously apply to 'majority' as well as 'minority' communities living in your area). (Q4): Which of the following best describes the approach you take to making decisions when there are conflicting views from different ethnic minority groups about what is needed?	No. of LAs (n=34)	% of LAs
There is no need to respond to different ethnic minority groups' needs in the decisions that are made – everybody broadly needs the same thing: **(Assimilationism)**	1	2.9
A good decision is one that respects and tolerates every ethnic group's cultural attitudes and beliefs: **(Multiculturalism)**	9	26.5
Not all claims and interests of ethnic minority groups can be responded to. Yet people are unsure how to decide whose needs and entitlements should be responded to and why: **(Community Cohesion)**	0	0.0
Not all claims and interests of ethnic minority groups can be responded to and supported. People spend time discussing the pros and cons of different decisions and make decisions accordingly: **(Interculturalism)**	17	50.0
Other *(please specify)*:	7	20.6
Summarised responses for 'other' - All except answer 1 (no need to respond to different needs) - We haven't encountered this conflict - Not all claims and interests of ethnic minority groups can be responded to. But community groups are not sufficiently robust enough to acknowledge this, and organisations are only now receptive to the idea of a collaborative approach where their needs coincide. - We make sure people are represented in their views - but if a conflict arises - normally there's a lot of "faffing" about and we don't necessarily always reach the right conclusions		

Again the 'intercultural' (50%) and 'multicultural' (26.5%) responses emerged as the most popular descriptions of public engagement practice. The 'other' responses offered insights into some of the challenges local authorities have faced in

responding to public decision-making when there are competing claims and entitlements from local residents. In particular, respondents highlighted the need for community groups and local authority staff to be sufficiently supported to deal with issues of ‘conflict’ and balancing of scarce public resources.

6.5 Approaches to evaluation and assessment of impact

In a final section of the survey, respondents were asked for more general reflections on their approach to public engagement and their aspirations for future practice. One question asked: ‘how do you judge if the public engagement activities are working well / achieving their purpose’?

Some 34 respondents answered that question with 12 people describing having no form of evaluation or feedback mechanisms in place. 11 people used ‘informal’ or ‘ad hoc’ feedback which was occasionally used to improve the process of public engagement. The remaining third described more systematic approaches with specific indicators used to assess impact and quality. Of this latter group, respondents described a mix of indicators. These are described below (in approximate order of frequency with the most popular first):

- Good attendance from a ‘representative’ cohort of residents
- Relevant topics discussed in meetings
- Assessment of how ‘involved’ participants feel they are / whether can influence decision-making
- Changes in public policy and outcomes (e.g. improved take-up of services by ethnic minority groups that were previously experiencing inequality)
- No shouting, conflict or aggressive behaviour

- Less public unrest and ‘early warning systems’ for community conflict working well

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the findings from a national survey to explore how local authorities approached engagement of ethnic minority groups in public dialogue about equality. I described differing views between different local authorities about the need for ‘equality-specific’ or ‘mainstream’ consultation mechanisms in order to engage ethnic minority groups in discussion about equality-related policy. I also captured views about current approaches to public engagement practice and facilitation using the typology described in Section 4.1 of this thesis. The most popular responses to multiple choice questions about approaches to representation, dialogue facilitation and decision-making corresponded to the ‘multicultural’ and ‘intercultural’ options.

When respondents were asked different questions about their views on ‘representation’, an interesting tension emerged. On the one hand a large proportion of respondents (80%) stated they were most concerned with finding people with particular identity-based attributes who would understand the needs of that ‘community’. Yet, when asked about the ‘role’ of representation, a much smaller proportion of respondents (37.1%) stated they felt most strongly that representatives could help in understanding ‘specific’ needs of diverse social groups, with nearly as many reporting they were most keen to explore the differences in need within groups as well as between groups (31.4%). Finally, only a third of respondents described using systematic approaches to evaluation and assessing the impact of their public

engagement activities. The implications of these findings in relation to the research objective are discussed in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE EXPERIMENT (SCOPE AND CONTENT OF EQUALITY)

7.0 Introduction

This chapter responds to the second research aim of this study: which factors influence the scope and content of equality issues discussed in public engagement activities? In Chapter 4 I argued that that the ability of public engagement activity participants to advance particular policy outcomes is an important aspect of substantive representation that would be explored through this study. I also outlined an approach to measuring this aspect of substantive representation based on examining the range of equality issues discussed in public dialogue ('type' of equality and 'framing' of equality in claims made by participants) and analysing participants' views about the scope of that dialogue. This chapter provides an account of the scope and content of equality issues discussed in the two sessions conducted as part of the qualitative experiment. The chapter begins with an overview of the findings and is followed by an assessment of reasons for similarities and differences between public engagement sessions that I observed. In the chapter, key themes in the discourse relating to equality (type of equality and 'frames' used to make claims) were used to provide an overall structure. Different participants in the discussion are named (using pseudonyms) so that interviewees' description of the dynamics of dialogue can be better understood.

7.1 Type of equality

As discussed in Section 4.2 a framework was used to aid identification of differences in 'types' of equality invoked through claims. Each separate time an 'equality of outcome', 'equality of process' or 'equality of autonomy' claim was made in the transcript, it was recorded in a table. These tables are not included in this section for reasons of brevity and can be found in Appendix 5. Multiple, consecutive references to the same claim by the same person in a passage of conversation were not recorded (unless they mentioned the claim again after somebody else had spoken).

There were no significant differences between the two sessions in relation to the frequency of 'equality of outcome' claims (7 claims in the Multicultural Session and 10 in the Intercultural Session). The Multicultural Session had fewer equality of process claims overall (8 claims compared to 21 in the Intercultural Session). There were also fewer examples of claimants providing grounds and warrants for their equality of process claims. This only happened twice in the Multicultural Session, whereas in the Intercultural Session, many more claimants did explain the grounds and warrants for their claims (why they felt *X* structure or policy or behaviour leads to *Y* inequality of treatment for *Z* individuals or groups). In the Multicultural Session there were also fewer equality of autonomy claims (9 claims compared to 18 claims in the Intercultural Session). The Multicultural Session included more 'self-reflection' based equality of autonomy claims. Interestingly, this was the least referred to aspect of equality of autonomy in the Intercultural Session. There were many more references in the Intercultural Session to other aspects of equality of autonomy (active decision-making and denial of agency and wide range of high quality options).

Proportionally more group-specific claims were made in the Multicultural Session (54% of claims were group-specific) compared to the Intercultural Session (20% of claims were group-specific). These group-specific claims were largely framed in a way that described inequalities of outcome (such as unemployment) as affecting that group *in particular* or *more* than another group. Many of these took the form of a 'representative claim': "a representative claim is a claim to represent or to know what represents the interests of someone or something" (Saward 2006, p.305). Three illustrative examples of group-specific claims are included below:

> *With the schools, it's my community, the African Caribbean community, the lads that are getting kicked out of school.*
> (David, Multicultural Session)

> *Three quarters of African Caribbean boys are excluded for aggression which is unfair. Teachers just don't understand the body language of African Caribbean boys.* (Lisa, Multicultural Session)

> *Domestic violence, it knows no ethnicity, however it does discriminate against South Asian women in the way that the services link with the problem and how communities respond.*
> (Laura, Intercultural Session)

In terms of the overall context and flow of discussion, in the Multicultural Session, though there were isolated attempts by participants to challenge the 'group-specific'

premise of the questions being asked by the facilitator (such as ‘which communities should we prioritise for investment’), there was only one example of a participant challenging another participant’s group-specific claim. Also despite a number of eloquent attempts by three participants to challenge the framing of the debate by the facilitator (who had instructions to encourage people to make ‘group-specific claims’ and to instruct participants to ‘tolerate’ and not challenge those claims) claims were still framed as group-specific by other participants right up to the end of the session. When taken as a whole, the overall character of the discussion in the Multicultural Session appeared to be a series of separate, largely group-specific claims, rather than a more deliberative process which resulted in people changing their claims and positions in response to convincing arguments.

In the Intercultural Session, there was a much higher level of inter-participant critical deliberation of group-specific claims when they did occur and group-specific claims occurred increasingly rarely as the session progressed. As an example, the following comment was made by Lola after Jardir made a claim arguing that there was a lack of ‘Black’ and ‘Asian’ people in the commissioning process:

> *Just because you're African Caribbean, doesn't mean what you see in your community is what I see in the community. That's the issue we're having. There's a black person here there's a black person there and automatically the black people are catered for in the community. It doesn't work like that.* (Lola, Intercultural Session)

Attempts by participants to challenge the underlying rationale of group-specific claims though present in both sessions were more prominent in the Intercultural Session and appeared to have a more lasting impact on the overall tenor of the debate.

Two broad underlying and inter-connected themes emerged which appeared to be relevant to differences observed between each session. Firstly, active efforts by facilitators to challenge and encourage discussion about group-specific claims in the Intercultural Session appeared to be associated with a higher number and richer discussion of equality of process and equality of autonomy claims and a lower number of group-specific claims (compared to the Multicultural Session). Secondly, in both sessions (though more in the Multicultural Session), interviewees made conscious decisions not to discuss particular topics of equality of process and equality of autonomy.

Each of these themes is considered in turn.

7.1.1 Facilitator encouragement of critical discussion of representative claims

Facilitator encouragement of critical discussion about representative claims was associated with a greater range of equality claims and less group-specific / more universal equality claims. In the Multicultural Session, facilitators were advised not to challenge group-specific claims made by participants and to encourage participants to 'respect' and 'tolerate' claims made by others. The use of particular questions inviting a 'group-specific' response appeared to influence some group-specific equality of outcome claims from participants. For example, in his first response to the

question ‘which equality issues are most important for *your community*’, David said “business, jobs and opportunities. Lack of opportunities.” The Facilitator then asked for clarification “to promote your own business?” This then led David to respond more directly to the question “The city isn’t focused. If you’re talking about ‘a community’, when we get job opportunities it doesn’t feed down to, well I’m really looking at the African Caribbean boys or young lads.” In this case, the wording of the question seems to have contributed to the framing of the claim as ‘group-specific’.

Six of eight references to equality of process in the Multicultural Session came, one after the other, at the start of the session when participants were asked to outline ‘which equality issues are most important for *your community*”. The facilitator was briefed to ask each person in turn to feed back their views on this subject and claimants were mostly not asked to clarify claims by the facilitator and other participants were not invited to critically discuss claims. There was very little evaluative discussion about the content of people’s claims. From analysis of the dialogue transcript this appeared to be a significant reason for less detailed elaboration of the ‘grounds’ and ‘warrants’ of people’s claims. In the first thirty minutes of the discussion in the Multicultural Session only one person’s claim (Sharon) was challenged by two colleagues and this resulted in a more fine-grained analysis of the problem and of potential solutions.

Similarly, the most detailed interpretations of equality of autonomy in the Multicultural Session tended to be following a clarification or challenge from the facilitator (which happened a lot less in the Multicultural Session due to the facilitator’s brief to not challenge group-specific claims). The lower number and lesser detail of equality of

process and equality of autonomy claims in the Multicultural Session appeared to relate, in part, to less encouragement for participants to deliberate upon those claims.

A number of participants in the Multicultural Session challenged the premise of the facilitator's questions which invited a group-specific response, but this largely did not affect the overall tenor of the debate (a series of separate group-based claims). Only one participant challenged another participant's group-specific claim (the interplay between David and Andy which is described in Section 7.1.2). A number of participants expressed frustration during the session about their inability to change the nature of the debate from a series of identity-based, group-specific claims to a wider discussion about similarities in experience of inequality across communities and where resources should be invested.

Interestingly, despite the apparent influence of facilitation approach on the nature of claim-making and low levels of critical discussion in the Multicultural Session, interviewees themselves largely did not feel that this was due to the facilitators' actions. Only one participant (David) felt there was limited discussion of the topic of equality due to the nature of the questions asked. He felt that the wording of a question used in the Multicultural Session "which communities should we prioritise for support" limited deliberation because it meant people only focused on what was important to 'their' group and, as a result thought others should be given the time to share what their groups need too. He described how people focused only on 'their bit of the puzzle' and not on the wider picture.

Some interviewees suggested they decided to make group-specific claims because that was a topic they were particularly interested in or because of a particular client group they worked with. Lisa, for instance, in highlighting the importance of school exclusion faced particularly by African Caribbean and African boys stated in her interview “that’s my bug bear, I could go on for hours sorry”. Also despite the low level of critical discussion of group-specific claims made by participants, overall David, Andy and Lisa felt like people *could have* critically discussed group-specific claims made by other participants if they had wanted to. Only Anthony felt critical discussion of group-specific claims was not embedded enough in the discussion and that this limited the breadth of discussion about policy solutions. A number of participants stated that the facilitator would have been able to do very little to influence how comfortable they felt challenging and critically discussing another participant’s group specific claims in a public dialogue context. Instead interviewees stated that their decision not to discuss or challenge group-specific claims was due to their *own* personal strategies or reasons for avoiding conflict or maintaining politeness (see Section 7.1.2).

In the Intercultural Session, there were proportionally fewer group-specific claims (20% of claims compared to 54% of claims in the Multicultural Session). In the Multicultural Session, participants were asked questions that were less-inviting of a group-specific response “what are the most important issues for [name of locality]” and “what poses the greatest risk to cohesion in [name of locality]”. Overall, from an analysis of the session transcript, the general tenor of the conversation in the Intercultural Session was critical reflection on the role of identity categories such as ethnicity. In the Intercultural Session there were many more direct claims relating to

the problems with categorising the experiences and needs of local residents along ‘ethnic’ or ‘religious’ or ‘migrant status’ lines. This questioning of categories and the role that they play in theorising and (potentially sustaining) difference became a recurrent theme in the session. For example, following the presentation at the beginning of the Intercultural Session, Ameena stated “I would say it’s important to look at the way categories are institutionalised…I think we should start to move away from the categories.” Interestingly, the two participants who were most prominent in making group-specific claims (Evelyn and Jardir) were met with a lightly challenging response from both the facilitator and (as the session progressed) from other members of the group. Jardir, for example, was challenged a number of times by facilitators and by the participants in the session to describe what he meant by ‘more representation’ from Asian groups. His claims (which were largely group-specific) resulted in a rich discussion about the relative merits and pitfalls of identity-based representation in governance of local policy-making.

In addition to encouraging participants to reflect on whether their group-specific equality claims also related to other groups, the challenging and prompting of claimants to reflect upon any group-specific dimensions of their claims in the Intercultural Session also appeared to result in more detailed elaboration by claimants (and counter-claimants) about the nature of inequality of process and equality of autonomy that was being referred to. The act of challenging a claim resulted in the claimant providing more detail about the grounds and warrants for that claim. For example, reporting back from discussion in her group, Evelyn introduced her first equality of process claim relating to African Caribbean nurses not securing management positions due to unfair policies. This was followed by

prompting from the facilitator which resulted in her second equality of process claim (in bold below). The 'grounds' and 'warrant' for the claim are also highlighted in bold and indicated in parenthesis.

So what do you think the problem is then?

(Facilitator)

The problem is there is not enough representation of BME people among policy makers, they don't get a seat the table which is unfair [claim and grounds]

(*Evelyn, Intercultural Session*)

Which leads to what?

(Facilitator 1)

Which leads to misunderstanding and a misinterpretation of causes of inequality at a decision-making level [warrant]

(Evelyn, Intercultural Session)

…Do you think that more representation of BME communities at particular levels of policy and decision-making- would lead to better, fairer more competent decisions?

(Facilitator 1)

It will be a long walk because there are so many factors that make us as the BMEs not engage with people in power... The policy makers are changing things without understanding our original cultures….Whether an African child or an adult, it will take us ages to acclimatise. It can take up to 15 years for people to go from lower positions to management.

(Evelyn, Intercultural Session)

But I must ask this. Why should this matter? How does that view get brought into policy making? [Group laughs and a few people nod and say 'yes']. Yes Sheila.

(Facilitator 1)

I think related to this are two challenges. Do I need to have to be a man to deliver a man a good service? I don't believe I need to be of his DNA and biological type. But what can happen with policy makers - is that assumptions are made about causal factors…. If people around the table aren't equipped with good knowledge and able to think outside of bias and prejudice and be conscious of it. Then they come up with dud solutions. That's the challenge we have about representation. Do I think representation is the solution? No I don't. Do i have a better model given I routinely see racist decisions being made, sexist decisions being made, ageist decisions being made by people who are included about people who are excluded - I don't know what we do.

(Sheila, Intercultural Session)

In this discussion gentle probing and exploration of Evelyn's original claim (re African Caribbean nurses in management) by the facilitator appeared to lead to a subsequent claim (about BME people not getting a seat at the policy-making table). The facilitator, as briefed, led this original probing of Evelyn's claims. The warrant and grounds underlying Evelyn's claims were explored in more detail by Sheila following this prompting too as she questioned whether a person with particular identity attributes are best placed to deliver services to somebody from the same identity. In addition, despite Evelyn's original claim (about African Caribbean nurses) being 'group-specific', probing by the facilitator appeared to prompt a 'wider' claim about BME representation.

In other parts of the Intercultural Session, there were examples of the impact of gentle probing by the facilitator leading to more nuanced and detailed discussions of what 'inequality' meant in relation to equality of process and autonomy claims. For example, when pushed by the facilitator to explain whether she was referring to black people or to young people in a claim about black young people's mental health, Pauline stated "No I'm not talking about white, black or Asian. I'm talking right across the board. Those young people are more likely to have a mental health problem".

But why did there appear to be more critical, evaluative discussion of the topic of equality in the Intercultural Session? Was it due to the nature of the intervention? More detailed exploration of this topic with interviewees suggested that four of six interviewees after the Intercultural Session described how the facilitators' actions in challenging group-specific claims contributed to more critical deliberation about the

topic of equality. In his interview, only Jardir referred specifically to the influence of the ‘wording’ of the questions posed by facilitators as influencing the focus on ‘common issues’. He felt people, overall, were less focused on framing their claims in relation to the needs of specific ethnic groups and that the critical challenging by facilitators and their use of ‘neutral wording’ was useful in helping people to see beyond their own issues.

John too suggested that he felt able to challenge and critically discuss some claims that were framed as ‘group-specific’ with other participants (indeed he challenged three times). He applauded the facilitators’ attempts to set the ‘cat amongst the pigeons’ in terms of critical debate. Though most described the role of facilitators in challenging participants as positive, there was also another side to this challenge role. Pauline and John noted the potentially alienating effect that insensitive probing could have on participants, particularly if they lacked self-confidence or felt in the minority. Pauline described feeling, at times, slightly intimidated by the challenging facilitator (though she suggested this was acceptable for her as she had a high level of self-confidence). John described how he did not feel he had a completely free reign to challenge identity-based claims. He referred to being unable to challenge people when they made claims about certain ethnic minority groups not feeling British and the British being ultimately responsible for inequality through colonialism. John directly stated that he felt some of the boundaries of discussion were too open and flexible and that strong criticism of Britain, which he did not feel able to challenge, could have been questioned by the facilitator and closed down.

Arnab (who identified as Pakistani) raised similar concerns as John about this part of the Intercultural Session, but John (as the only White British person in the room) viewed critique of the British as stereotypical in nature and possible directed at him. Being in a minority John did not feel he could challenge statements and the lack of intervention from the facilitator meant there was no space to contest. Indeed the facilitator appeared to have been selective about *which* identity-based assumptions to challenge and did not appear to challenge assertions about the negative role of British people. When asked about how this could have been improved, John suggested the facilitator could have played more of a role in enabling him to feel legitimate and able to challenge somebody from a different ethnic background (e.g. by taking time to build trust between participants before they engaged in dialogue about public policy).

Finally, some participants in the Intercultural Session felt that the discussion took a particular direction not because of the facilitator's role, but due to the influence of particular influential and eloquent participants. Both Pauline and Ayesha identified the influence of Sanjay's contribution which helped to frame the way that the topic of representation and policy consultation was discussed by other participants.

7.1.2 Participant views about 'acceptable' contributions to the discussion

Differences in the content of equality of process and autonomy claims also appeared to relate to choices made by participants about what was deemed 'acceptable', 'beneficial' or 'sensible' to discuss within the group setting. In some cases, people described a strategic and considered assessment of both the costs and benefits of making a particular type of claim or challenging a particular type of claim made by

somebody else. By combining analysis of transcripts with interview data I identified a number of ‘closures’ in discussion relating to both equality of process and equality of autonomy topics. There were more examples of these types of closures amongst participants from the Multicultural Session. Though all interviewees in this session described their decision not to make a claim or to avoid challenging a claim as their own decision (and not related to the actions of the facilitator) I argue in Chapter 9 that it appears the role of group facilitation could be influential in enabling participants to re-assess the nature of the ‘cost-benefit’ analysis that some of them described.

There were a number of instances in the Multicultural Session where participants appeared to visibly hold back from making their claim or appeared to step down from challenging another participant’s contribution. One of the benefits of conducting a pre-test interview with participants was that I was able to discuss with interviews in their post-test interview whether they felt they had a chance to discuss topics I knew they had stated they wanted to discuss.

For example, one participant (Anthony) in his ‘pre-test’ interview spent a significant amount of time describing how he would be keen to discuss the limits of identity-based models of public service design (such as educational attainment initiatives focused at addressing inequality experienced by African Caribbean boys). However, he raised this topic only twice during the Multicultural Session. Both times he vocally disagreed with the identity-based focus of questions put forward by the facilitator. Anthony raised concerns about the risk of stereotyping individuals’ needs in the policy-making process when questions of this type are used. In response to the

question “which communities are at most risk of polarisation and isolation?” Anthony responded to the facilitator by saying the question involved “completely misplaced categorisation of people – people are at risk of categorisation. People are put at risk by that labelling.” However, each time Anthony raised a point about the limits of identity-based public service provision he aimed this only at the facilitator and not participants making group-specific claims. Similarly when addressing the facilitator with an opening comment (like that described above), he did not engage in further dialogue on the topic and appeared to step down from the debate.

When asked, in his interview, about whether he felt he had a chance to talk about issues of misplaced categorisation and stereotyping of people and whether the facilitator helped with this, he explained:

> *Yes some of us raised it but did it move on? We didn't touch on the things we have in common much. My take has always been is that we ignore the experts within these communities with talents, organisational skills - a resource is being ignored. But we mustn't stop there. Not everybody agrees though you've got to meet people where they are at.*
> (Anthony, Multicultural Session)

Two participants in the Multicultural Session (David and Anthony) explicitly described not feeling they could challenge, what they saw as, a tendency for community leaders to stereotype a community’s needs when advocating on their behalf in public consultations. Stereotyping and unfounded assumptions about the needs of particular groups (enacted by community ‘representatives’ and policy makers) and

other forms of coercion which communities feel unable to challenge are seen as relevant barriers to the enjoyment of a particular aspect of autonomy (active or delegated decision-making). There were much fewer claims relating to this type of equality of autonomy in the Multicultural Session compared to the Intercultural Session. Both David and Anthony referred to how, whilst they did raise the topic, they did not feel they could sustain a discussion about this subject within the group. In particular, they described feeling concerned that others, who were making group-specific claims, might not be willing or able to talk about some of these difficult and potentially controversial subjects.

Interestingly, these boundaries of politeness and tolerance for others' group-specific claims were the same that facilitators in the Multicultural Session were briefed to reinforce. In the Intercultural Session, facilitators were prompted to enable participants to cross those boundaries, but in a constructive and critical way (e.g. by enabling critical discussion of identity and views about cultural entitlement). Yet whilst there were differences in treatment of this topic of equality of autonomy across the two sessions it should be noted that, when asked, most interviewees from the Multicultural Session did not see the facilitator's actions as contributing to their decision not to cross these particular 'boundaries' of discussion. Anthony, for instance, did not suggest that the actions of the facilitator during this session prevented him from discussing the limits of largely male, older community representatives' ability to express the needs of all people within their community (such as women and children), despite stating in his pre-session in interview that this was something that concerned him. Instead he put this down to not wanting to force

his views on other participants if they weren't in agreement or could not understand his point.

Another example of an apparent 'closure' in discussion was discussed in detail by both participants involved. David made a critical response to Andy's comment about unfair housing policy and the need for consideration of faith in policy-making. This contribution from David was quite abrupt in terms of the overall flow of the conversation. David had only made one contribution to the overall group discussion since the start of the session. In the fifteen minutes prior to the following intervention by David, Andy (whom David responds to in the passage below) had made a number of references to religion and to the need to focus on 'black' communities that are poorer and in worse social housing:

> *You are talking about areas where there are just white people too– there are white communities that are more deprived in [name of locality] than any ethnic community – we should cut religion completely out of this – it doesn't have anything to do with communities at all – faith for me is personal. If dealing with issues – need to deal with issues- need to deal with everybody and not just our own thing. For years they've been cutting out the White communities from investment and not giving them good housing, focusing on ethnic minorities and housing issues instead …With the schools – it's my community – the African Caribbean community - the lads that are getting kicked out of school. It's a lot about parents – not going to parents evening – when there are issues at school. But there are black kids who don't get kicked out of school – we*

need to be careful how we box people – we need to have less focus on the faith stuff.

(David, Multicultural Session)

David referred directly to this encounter in his interview. He suggested that he did wait until nearly the end of the session to raise his point in response to Andy because he was aware that it might mean that Andy would view his intervention in a negative light (and thus Andy would think of him negatively). David suggests he struggled to challenge some claims made by participants in relation to the needs of particular groups. In the following quote, when referring to calling people 'in silo' he is referring to a tendency towards asking representatives from separate ethnic groups to speak on behalf of their community in public policy consultation separately:

I think there's a danger of calling people in silo. I see the logistic, the logic of it - because you get down to the core needs of that community - but it's like communities then speak in silo. So they don't think about everybody else, they think about 'me'. But how do you stop that train? I did try on the White housing thing but people have something to say. And I think that if you talk about [name of locality] [name of locality] needs to disband this segregating the communities and stop that because it's dangerous.

(David, Multicultural Session)

Both Andy and David identified as being from the 'black' community. Though David did not directly describe why he felt comfortable challenging Andy in the example described above, slightly later in his interview he did suggest that challenging group-

specific claims and assumptions about community needs can be easier when somebody from within the same 'community' does this. He suggested this issue of 'legitimacy' is important:

> *…the people who are turning up and claiming to represent don't represent really. They don't represent the person on the street. They represent - it tends to be - their own vested interest of their own organisation or their own agenda. It needs a bit of braveness. And it probably needs individuals from the same community to get up and steer it away from that - and who are strong enough to do it without getting chopped down, but it does need to be done.*
> (David, Multicultural Session)

David described a careful weighing up of the potential 'costs' and 'benefits' of challenging Andy during the Session and he related this to other times when he had chosen not to speak out in public meetings where community leaders from within the African Caribbean community had made representative claims that he did not agree with, but it made more political sense to not challenge it.

Interestingly, Andy too, was reluctant to get involved in critical discussion about the issue of fair resource allocation and conflict between community groups. He describes the point at which David challenged his claim:

> *You know, I intentionally didn't say those types of stuff, partly out of concern for what you were trying to achieve, and partly out of concern for how I might be perceived by other people…. And I was right in that decision, because*

towards the end, you know, I did mention you know, certain communities need certain help. Straight away that was uncomfortable for some people, so I guess straight away that sort of confirmed for me that I was correct not to push the boat too much, so I guess that's something that happens a lot in group consultations where certain people won't say certain things hoping that they won't offend people.

(Andy, Multicultural Session)

Here Andy referred specifically to his desire not to enter into conflict and / or 'offend' people. Merrison (2002) suggests, in the context of maintaining 'face', speakers seek to manage potential 'transaction threatening acts' (TTAs) by simplifying the interaction and avoiding generation of unnecessary talk and conflict and by avoiding pointing out any non-competence on the part of their interlocutor. Both David and Andy appeared to be thinking about issues of politeness and a desire to avoid conflict when not pursuing particular claims or counter-claims as part of the dialogue. These were the only examples of what might be described as 'heated' debate between participants in the Multicultural Session and on both occasions the participants involved described a form of 'strategic retreat' from conflict. For Andy, Anthony and David, when asked about whether the facilitator could have done more to help them to feel more comfortable making particular claims or challenging other claims, none of them suggested that the facilitator's actions prevented them from saying what they wanted to. However, they did describe how the group-specific nature of claims was something they considered when deciding not to make or challenge particular claims.

During the Intercultural Session there were many more examples of heated and critical debate between participants but only one clear example of where a discussion (in this case about a previous equality of process claim) appeared to 'close down'. Yet this was after a much longer exchange of claims and counter-claims than those described in the Multicultural Session. This is described below:

> *Just to put a spanner in the works though - why is cohesion what we're aiming for? I'm not being funny, this society is racist and classist. The idea is that the solution is cohesion, but the solution is conflict. It's about taking power from people who have it and distributing it to those who don't. The idea that the solution is that people who don't have power is to cohede isn't right.*
> (James, Intercultural Session)

> *But if they take that power, they'd just have endless conflict? If they take the power – what do they do with it?*
> (John, Intercultural Session)

> *They take the power and create a better society.*
> (James, Intercultural Session)

[Observation note: John and James start to talk over each other]

> *Can I just clarify* [raises voice] *so cohesion is an issue for those who are poor? If you're wealthy no-one's aiming to 'cohede' you. Who wants to be 'coheded'? They are aiming it at the poor parts of the city?*

(Facilitator 1)

If you look at what the cohesion agenda is about – it's about quieting down poor people, black people. The system creates all of these problems and the issue is we need to create a better system which is a good idea.

(James, Intercultural Session)

I didn't say it wasn't. I was just trying to understand.

(John, Intercultural Session)

The point is that we need to address that racist system.

(James, Intercultural Session)

If it's as simple as that – so why isn't it happening?

(John, Intercultural Session)

Solutions are complicated – but it's about getting people, community people to organise.

(James, Intercultural Session)

[Observation note: John visibly disengages from conversation and looks down]

So part of the solution is people getting together?

[Facilitator 2]

People need to get together but cohesion as an aim isn't necessarily right.

(James, Intercultural Session)

Through analysing John's interview, I explored what, if anything enabled or prevented him from continuing this line of critical discussion. John described feeling he needed to withdraw and was not supported to continue:

I didn't want to cause a riot, but also the other guy saying that we shouldn't have cohesion… and I tried to ask a question about that - and asked how does that work - and I remember thinking very quickly this isn't a question to ask…. And basically got a 'no' - bang - and I backed right off and thought, I'm not going with this and I did ask one question 'I'm trying to understand' but I felt like this is going to end up in a conflict here, I'm backing right off. There were 2 of 3 points facilitation could have helped.

(John, Intercultural Session)

John contributed a wide range of critical comments about people's claims and asked three different people to clarify and justify their claims further and he described how the facilitator helped him to do this on a number of occasions. Yet when interviewed, John highlighted points of the conversation where he did not feel comfortable criticising. In addition to a desire to avoid conflict, his reticence (and to raise other points about inequalities faced by White British people) appeared to be related to his sense of legitimacy and ability to challenge identity-based claims as the 'only White British person in the room'. John suggested that the facilitator could have done more to help him sustain his critical line of discussion in these instances.

This more detailed analysis of participants' motivations for stepping away from critical debate during public dialogue activities has helped in exploring further whether approaches to facilitation influenced the nature of claims and critical discussion of those claims. Interviewees in the Intercultural Session felt that it did, whereas most interviewees in the Multicultural Session felt that facilitation did not influence this. In this section I have also suggested that some participants described how they were aware of their engagement as a 'performative act' (Saward, 2006). People described a complex and often conscious assessment of the potential costs and benefits of this performance. David described assessing the risk of negative relationships with Andy before intervening to criticise Andy's claim about the need for social housing for 'black people'. Andy described the risk of offending others if he had continued to make group-specific claims of this type. John described his desire to avoid conflict in some instances and his lack of legitimacy to challenge the claims of other participants about race inequality due to his own status as a 'White British' person. Despite interviewees in the Multicultural Session not feeling that the facilitator influenced what they did and didn't say, in each of these instances, arguably the facilitator could have helped participants to feel more protected and able to make interventions that were more in line with what they had reason to value. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

Finally, as well as the role of facilitation, there were other factors which were less amenable to testing as part of this study that may have influenced levels of critical debate and the claims made by participants. Some of these were raised by interviewees and included differences in: levels of confidence; discursive skills;

previous experience of public engagement or familiarity with the subject of discussion. Without exposing participants to both models of facilitation and representation practice under more rigorous experimental conditions (e.g. randomised recruitment of participants), or without repeating the qualitative experiment with other groups, it is hard to know whether differences in the scope and content of equality issues discussed as observed in the analysis above could be attributed mainly to the intervention or to other factors. This is discussed further in Chapter 9.

7.2 Framing of equality claims

As described in Section 5.4.6, I analysed claims to identify how they were framed in order to understand where the emphasis was placed by participants on the topic of equality. I identified how arguments were made, and explored how those claims were subsequently discussed and evaluated by other participants as part of the dialogue. I focused in particular on a potential 'frame' associated with the question 'equality of what?' as this is an important, and often underexplored, question for the politics of equality.

7.2.1 Equality of what?

Sen (1997) argues that the question 'equality of what' is the central question that differentiates approaches to egalitarianism. This question asks 'what is the space or the focal variable that is chosen to compare different people (such as wealth, income happiness or need-fulfilment)?' In this study I argued that at the most basic level, dialogue about 'equality of what' would be characterised by evaluation of particular 'domains' of equality (such as housing, education and employment). Are these

issues critically discussed by dialogue participants? Also are the relative merits of investment to address particular aspects of inequality weighed up against one another? I also proposed that a more 'advanced' level of dialogue on the question 'equality of what?' would involve a more fundamental evaluation of the equality of social arrangements and the ways in which inequality is measured and judged.

To analyse dialogue participants' treatment of this question 'equality of what?', firstly, I explored the spread of domains of equality identified in claims by participants in each session. I examined whether or not those claims were critically discussed and the ways in which the topic of balancing competing entitlements with scarce public resources was approached within the dialogue. All claims made in each Session were coded in relation to the particular 'domain' of equality (e.g. housing, education and employment) referred to. Whilst a spread of claims based on different equality domains is a useful indicator of the breadth of dialogue about 'equality of what', a more detailed analysis of the wording of claims and subsequent discussion across the two sessions also helped to identify examples of debate about the *relative merits* of investing scarce public resources in particular areas (such as education and housing). To explore this systematically I coded each example of a 'claim' in NVIVO (73 claims in total) and added an additional code to describe simply when the nature of that claim was discussed or referred to by a subsequent participant in the consultation.

Secondly, to explore the more 'advanced' stage of dialogue on 'equality of what' I explored whether either session included more fundamental discussions about the

relative merits of judging equality in a particular way or consideration of a range of diverse ethical approaches to social arrangements.

7.2.1.1 Domains of equality and the balancing of competing needs and entitlements

In Appendix 5, table 4 provides an account of the spread of claims made in each session about different domains of equality and whether or not those claims were subsequently discussed or referred to by other participants as part of the dialogue. The data in table 4 (Appendix 5) suggest that overall, the framing of claims in relation to 'equality of what' was undertaken at a basic level across both sessions. Participants discussed a range of domains of equality (e.g. housing, health, education) in each though some domains were more prominent in each session. For example, in the Multicultural Session issues of educational inequality featured highly, whereas in the Intercultural Session issues of health inequality were discussed much more. The data in table 4 (Appendix 5) also suggests that claims were subsequently discussed by other participants less in the Multicultural Session than in the Intercultural Session. Some 6 of 27 claims were subsequently discussed and debated in the Multicultural Session compared to 24 of 46 claims in the Intercultural Session. An analysis of the context of that discussion also suggests that this type of evaluative discussion about priorities for investment began much later in the Multicultural Session than it did in the Intercultural Session.

There appeared to be four main reasons for these differences. Firstly, differences in the types of domains discussed in each session appeared to relate to variation in the

particular areas of expertise and interests of participants. This was supported by the views of participants in interviews (e.g. high levels of health-related claims in the Intercultural Session where the majority of participants happened to be working in health-related fields).

Secondly, the relative lack of critical, evaluative discussion of the topic 'equality of what' and prioritisation of resources on particular domains of equality in the Multicultural Session appeared to relate to the longer length of time it took for participants to first discuss and challenge the idea that 'particular communities' might need priority support. The question raised by the facilitator relating to where public resources should be invested in the Multicultural Session was met with particular scepticism and challenge. This appeared to be mainly due to the wording of the question. In the Intercultural Session, participants were asked "'which issues should we prioritise for [name of locality]?". In the Multicultural Session, participants were asked 'which communities should we prioritise in [name of locality]?'. Four participants actively challenged the premise of this question 'which communities should we prioritise?' in order to attain the level of evaluative discussion that they felt was appropriate. Even then, some participants (e.g. Andy) attempted to re-focus the conversation on 'which groups' should receive priority support, rather than which domains of equality should be prioritised. The group-specific nature of claim-making in the Multicultural Session appeared to delay evaluative discussion of which domains of equality were most important for investment within society. Discussion of this topic began much earlier in the Intercultural Session.

Thirdly, one could argue that grounds and warrants for particular equality claims put forward by representatives are important where decisions are made about priority domains for investment to address inequalities in a locality. By discussing details about the causes for different forms of inequality and the rationale for addressing that type of inequality, participants are arguably in a better position to make informed decisions about where investment should be prioritised / or the nature of policy solutions. The level of detail of grounds and warrants of claims made by participants (particularly equality of process) was much higher in the Intercultural Session and, as discussed in Section 7.1.1, this appeared to be due, in some part, to promotion of critical reflection and dialogue about equality claims by the facilitator.

Finally, it is important to note there were a number of similarities between the views of participants in both sessions about the limitations associated with public dialogue about prioritising use of public resources to respond to inequality. In both sessions a key barrier to effective deliberation identified by interviewees was the lack of access to appropriate evidence and information about the resources available for investment (this information was not made available to participants in either session). Despite participants being presented with detailed statistics about levels of inequality in a power-point presentation prior to dialogue they may need more support to digest and interpret evidence about patterns of inequality as part of the deliberative process. One participant (Sharon, the Multicultural Session) would have preferred to receive the statistics in advance so she could make sense of them before the session.

7.2.1.2 Consideration of diverse ethical approaches to social arrangements

When it came to a more advanced treatment of the question ‘equality of what?’, participants in both sessions drew on their expertise about topics (such as education or health) to question the way in which equality is measured or judged. In the Intercultural Session, there were many more examples of critical, evaluative discussion about the merits of previous strategies and practices to promote equality and integration. For example, there were two long discussions about the merit of concepts of ‘community cohesion’ and ‘toleration’ in public policy. In the Intercultural Session, discussion focused more on critical appraisal of previous equality policy and practice and there were more (though still few) examples of what alternative approaches to equality practice might look like.

There was very little data available in the interviews about what prompted or prevented this more advanced treatment of the question ‘equality of what?’ so determining the reasons for differences between the two sessions was a harder task. Analysis of content of dialogue transcripts suggested that in the Intercultural Session the approach to facilitation appeared to play a role in encouraging critical discussion of the theory and practice of equality. For example, Ameena, following a contribution from Eveleyn about female genital mutilation (FGM), stated “it’s important to have tolerance”. This was immediately followed by a light-hearted critical response from the facilitator, as briefed, to encourage Ameena to explain and reflect upon what she meant by ‘tolerance’:

> *I don't like that word [tolerance] - google it now on your phone. If after that you still like it, I'll put it on the flipchart*

(Facilitator 1)

Ameena then explained she was not suggesting that practices like FGM should be tolerated but meant that dialogue about sensitive topics like this should be approached in particular ways with parents. Two further questions from the facilitator encouraged Ameena to explore what she meant by ‘toleration’ and how ‘toleration’ of the views of adults might maintain relationships of power within communities. There were other examples in the Intercultural Session, where critical prompting from the facilitator about what ‘alternative’ approaches to previous equality practice might look like resulted in more nuanced discussion of potential policy solutions. For example, when challenged on his original claim that we need more ‘specialist support’ for particular minority religions around spiritual health in the health service, Sanjay referred to the need for greater focus on ‘core competencies’ of staff to provide a good service (rather than providing separate specialised services to particular community groups).

As my analysis of dialogue transcripts progressed I began to notice that there were more similarities than differences between what was discussed in each session on this ‘advanced level’ discussion of the topic ‘equality of what’. If the question ‘equality of what’ is interpreted as ‘which domains of life can we legitimately expect or demand equality?’, then participants did not tend to frame their claims for equality (in both sessions) beyond calls for ‘descriptive’ political representation and identity-based models of public service provision. In the Multicultural Session, the value of descriptive representation and identity-based public service design went relatively unchallenged (by facilitators as briefed and by participants). In the Intercultural

Session, both facilitators and participants actively questioned and discussed the presumptions underlying group-specific claims. Yet at the same time participants argued that descriptive representation (appointment of representatives who can speak on behalf of specific identity groups) was what was most needed to improve the equality of various public policies and that culturally-specific public services were the best response available to address inequality.

Strong beliefs articulated about the value of descriptive representation was present in both participants who appeared to be in favour of provision of culturally specific services and some participants who were quite critical of 'identity-based' models of service provision. They saw descriptive representation as a route to achieve greater equity in the delivery of public services to diverse social groups. Arguably a tension or a contradiction can be seen here between people who favoured a more universalist, anti-essentialist approach to the design of public services, but at the same time advocated an identity-based / descriptive model of representation to advance the design of fair public services. The following examples help to describe this tension:

Amir who was highly critical of the notion that particular communities require particular types of support stated the following:

> *If we want to see a real change – need to see more BME MPs, Councillors etc* (Amir, Multicultural Session)

Anthony who was also highly critical of the idea that communities should be labelled as having particular needs stated the following:

> *You need someone in that community to be able to hold their councillor to account. You are not doing what you're supposed to do. We are also lacking in representation – the communities we are talking about here. The people that are excluding a black child if you went around the table they are not black – do you get where I'm coming from. The group that will be saying 'this child is aggressive' they don't understand how the black person would communicate.* (Anthony, Multicultural Session)

There was little recognition or discussion in the Multicultural Session of the potential tension or contradiction between the two positions of (a) criticising the essentialist and stereotypical nature of identity-driven public service design and (b) advocating the appointment of people with particular ethnic or religious identities in positions of power to create fairer public services. The Intercultural Session showed more signs of reflection on this tension. For example, Sheila asked whether somebody needed to be a man to deliver a man a good service and that more important is people being able to recognise the influence of bias and prejudice they may have (irrespective of their background). Though Sheila too acknowledged that she did not recognise what an alternative to descriptive representation might look like.

Yet whilst the dialogue in the Intercultural Session offered examples of greater reflection upon the value of descriptive representation, participants (even those that were critical of the concept) continued to emphasise its importance. Indeed, in both sessions, participants indicated they did not have a clear idea of what an alternative to descriptive representation might constitute. There appeared to be limits to people's theoretical and practical knowledge on this topic. Arguably this is likely to

have led some people to make claims about the need for descriptive representation, despite not necessarily believing that this was the best way to progress equality. This type of practice is suggestive of implicit or unconscious behaviour by participants, where some form of heuristic, or mental shortcut is used to make sense of the issue of inequality or to help people orientate their conduct within the consultation environment. Blommaert refers to use of language in this way as a 'behavioural script'. He describes how:

> language rarely occurs alone…language "almost always comes with a sort of indexical "envelope", so to speak, of ***behavioral scripts***. Such scripts can best be described as *imaginable situations in marked (i.e. nonrandom) spacetime, provoking enregistered (and therefore normative, expected and presupposed) modes of behavior."* (2015, para 3)

As I conducted my analysis of dialogue transcripts I began to see ways in which these enregistered modes of behaviour and language could be mapped. These behaviours were applicable to participants' treatment of the topic of descriptive political representation as well as 'identity-based' models of public service design. Some participants identified the limits of identity-based models and the desire to develop services that avoided 'essentialising' the needs of particular social groups (particularly in the Intercultural Session). Yet participants in both sessions largely did not identify what an alternative to culturally specific / identity-based models of service design might look like. There appeared to be limits to people's verbal and conceptual repertoires: an inability to imagine and discuss how a 'different' approach might operate. The limits and boundaries of potential solutions to this issue could be seen

most clearly in the inconsistencies and paradoxes within the language of different participants' equality claims. There were several examples of this, I have included three from David, Andy and Sarah.

David appealed to other participants' sense of a wider community "we need to deal with everybody" yet at the same time emphasised the issues affecting "my community – the African Caribbean community": Andy challenged the notion of 'community' only to use it again to describe the black and Asian community

> *The question itself is – which is the most important issue for your community. I feel the word 'community' is wrong. If we're honest – we are speaking about the black and Asian community* (Andy, Multicultural Session).

Sarah indicated her desire to avoid using boxes to describe people – yet at same time she suggested cultural awareness as one route to understanding why there is inequality and poor communication with particular service users. To do this, she provided an example of 'Black people talk with their hands' to explain how they are misinterpreted by mental health professionals or social workers. Clearly it was not Sarah's intention to essentialise or stereotype a cultural group in doing this. Indeed, on a number of occasions Sarah emphasised the importance of recognising our 'shared humanity' and universal conceptions of human rights. But still the passage that follows raises the important issue of the limits associated with the vocabulary and concepts available to use to make sense of cultural difference and how to manage and benefit from that diversity.

*They put everyone in the same category in this country. They don't go into people's backgrounds - e.g. if they're from a war torn country - they don't want to know. They put everyone in the same category. So when, for example we are trying to explain behaviour - black people talk with their hands like Irish people. People think you're being aggressive, but that's just how you talk. The same is true of some new arrival communities (*Sarah, Multicultural Session*)*.

7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described a complex range of factors that appeared to influence the scope and content of equality issues discussed as part of public engagement sessions examined in this study. Some aspects of the scope and content of discussion appeared to have little to do with the nature of the intervention and related to personal characteristics of participants (such as levels of knowledge about particular areas of public policy or self-confidence). Differences in these personal characteristics of participants appeared to influence differences in their ability to further the policy preferences that they thought were important (important either for themselves or for others they 'represented') during the session they attended. Yet, at the same time, the differences between the two sessions in terms of the *content* of discussion about some aspects of equality were pronounced. The Intercultural Session saw a greater number of claims and more detailed, critical discussion of those claims. Claims also related to a wider range of types of equality in the Intercultural Session. In addition, there was a much higher proportion of group-specific claims recorded in the Multicultural Session compared to the Intercultural Session. Participants' views about the reasons for those differences and analysis of

the transcripts suggests that some of these differences appeared to not only be explainable by differences in the composition of engagement participants.

Indeed, different approaches to facilitation and representation adopted in each session appeared to affect some aspects of public dialogue about equality. Firstly, facilitator encouragement of critical discussion in the Intercultural Session appeared to be associated with a greater range of equality claims, more detailed discussion of the grounds and warrants of claims and less group-specific claims compared to the Multicultural Session. Secondly, differences in the content of equality of process and autonomy claims also appeared to relate to choices made by participants about what was deemed ‘acceptable’, ‘beneficial’ or ‘sensible’ to discuss within the group setting. In some cases, people described consciously deciding to not make or challenge group-specific claims based on factors such as risk of offending somebody or being harmed through conflict that might ensue. There were more examples of these closures amongst participants from the Multicultural Session compared to the Intercultural Session and this appeared to relate, in part, to the role played by the facilitator in enabling critical discussion of representative claims made by participants in the Intercultural Session.

I noted that interviewee perceptions about the influence of the facilitators’ role differed between the two sessions. Whilst interviewees in the Intercultural Session largely confirmed that the intervention affected the nature of discussion in the ways described above, most interviewees who participated in the Multicultural Session did not feel the intervention influenced a narrower range of discussion about equality and instead felt this was due to their own decisions and actions. I describe, in the

Chapter that follows, how viewing these issues through a lens of ‘autonomy’ can help to understand whether ‘conscious’ decisions to not make or challenge claims can be judged as an autonomous action. I argue that in some cases refraining from saying what one believes (even if this is done consciously) is not autonomous and I argue that the role of facilitator could be influential in enabling participants to say what they have reason to value.

Finally, the topic ‘Equality of What?’ was discussed marginally more and in a more advanced way in the Intercultural Session. As explained in Section 4.2.2, I saw this more ‘advanced’ treatment of the question ‘Equality of What?’ as involving critical discussion of the ways in which equality is measured and judged in society (as opposed to claim-making based within the boundaries of traditional public policy agendas and measures of inequality only). In the Intercultural Session a number of participants questioned and discussed some of the principles that have been used to guide previous public policies and theories of equality and diversity. Yet little interview evidence was available to help explain this difference in focus between the two sessions.

I did however identify a range of factors described by interviewees which appear likely to support more effective discussion of this question in public dialogue in the future. Some of these factors share much with what is already known about effective deliberative democratic techniques such as: sharing appropriate information with people beforehand about what can be invested and evidence that can inform discussions (John et al. 2011); and ensuring people with particular expertise (e.g. equality domain-specific) knowledge are present in the deliberative space (Fischer

2009). Yet other issues for further exploration relate specifically to challenges associated with discussing the topic of *equality*. These include: recognising and discussing issues of 'legitimacy' and 'authenticity' when participants are encouraged to critically debate group-specific equality claims; acknowledging the potential influence of wider societal discourses about equalities and 'behavioural or linguistic' scripts associated with claims made by people; conditioned expectations about the type of 'equality' in society that may be possible to achieve through the public policy-making process. Indeed, in both sessions there appeared to be important limitations associated with the range and breadth of discussion of this question 'equality of what?'. Policy solutions put forward by participants in both sessions tended to be limited to claims framed in terms of 'descriptive representation' or specialised public service provision for particular identity groups.

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE EXPERIMENT (AUTONOMY)

8.0 Introduction

This chapter responds to the third research aim of this study: which factors influence the level of autonomy people feel they have in public engagement activities? In Section 4.2 I proposed a framework to understand whether public engagement participants had an opportunity to 'serve the best interests of others' in a way they chose (an important aspect of substantive representation). This framework was based on a set of measures for examining participants' level of autonomy during the public engagement session they attend and comparing this to their previous experiences of public engagement activity. Interviewees' views on this subject in each session were compared to understand which factors may have contributed to any differences in the levels of autonomy of participants across the two public engagement sessions. Thus the analysis in this chapter is drawn directly from interviews before and after each session in the qualitative experiment along with analysis of relevant examples from dialogue transcripts that help to exemplify the potential reasons for why participants reported particular levels of autonomy.

The questions used in interviews were mainly multiple choice along with more open-ended questions that allowed participants to describe why they had answered a multiple choice question in a particular way (see Appendix 4). In addition to direct questions about levels of autonomy, participants were also asked about the extent to which they saw themselves as a 'representative' of a particular group and the extent to which others may see them as a 'representative'. As discussed in Sections 3.3 and 4.2, this question in particular aimed to explore some of the autonomy-related

issues associated with previous literature about the negative effects of identity-based representation and the degree to which people from particular ethnic groups are forced to play a particular role based on their 'identity' (Lentin and Titley, 2011).

The question framework used to explore autonomy employed in this study was exploratory. In this study I sought to assess the extent to which aspects of the framework employed by Burchardt et al. (2010) might be applied to examine barriers to autonomy within public engagement settings. Thus before identifying differences between levels of autonomy reported by participants in each session, I first summarise empirical examples of barriers to autonomy in public engagement activity that the question framework was able to identify through interviews. This analysis is followed by a description of differences in levels of autonomy and barriers to autonomy reported by participants in each session and how people felt about the issue of 'representation'. Finally, I offer an analysis of the potential factors which appeared to influence differences in levels of autonomy between each session and differences in participants' views about their role as a representative.

8.1 Empirical examples of barriers to autonomy

Despite some of the limitations with question wording (described in more detail in Section 9.1.6) the survey questions used in 'before' and 'after' session interviews did help to prompt interesting and useful discussions about potential barriers to autonomy faced by session participants. I summarise below the main barriers to autonomy that participants described that appear relevant to this area of study. The following common barriers to autonomy were identified by participants.

8.1.1 Self-reflection

One particular question prompted discussion about potential barriers to self-reflection relevant to this area of study. People were asked whether they often, sometimes, rarely or never feel that “other people’s attitudes towards me prevents me from doing or saying things that are important to me in public consultation meetings”. Three people said they often or sometimes felt like people’s attitudes towards them prevented them from doing or saying things that were important to them. These three participants described examples of barriers to autonomy during the session that related directly. As an example, David and Andy referred to the interplay described in Section 7.1.2, where they refrained from challenging each other more than once on the topic of social housing needed for ‘black’ communities. In particular, David, Andy and John described not saying what they wanted to out of a desire not to offend others and to ensure others in the group did not dislike them. This is an example of ‘introjection’ (being motivated to act by a desire for social approval or self-worth). David, Andy and John described in their interviews how they had made assumptions about the attitudes of other participants on particular topics (such as whether people would accept claims made about inequality faced by White British people).

All three participants (who held back from making claims or challenging others) described how this was a conscious decision and that they chose to forego this aspect of their autonomy because of the potential cost of exercising it in the public engagement space. Though this was consciously done, all participants described the internal tension they faced in making those decisions. The presence of this internal

tension is, as Burchardt et al. (2010) argue, what would qualify these examples as representing an absence of autonomy. Two (John and David) also said that, were the benefits greater or the conditions of dialogue more likely to minimise this cost, then they may have exercised that autonomy by saying what they wanted to during the session.

8.1.2 Active or delegated decision-making

During interviews participants were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “sometimes I feel I am being pressurised and I can’t choose what I do in public consultation meetings”. This was an attempt to adapt a survey question used by Burchardt et al. (2010) “pressure from others prevents me from doing things that are important to me” (p.137). The survey question adopted in this PhD study was broader and invited respondents to consider a potentially wide range of factors that might be putting ‘pressure’ on them. Of those respondents who agreed with this question during the session (three people), two people (David and John) referred in their interviews to other individuals who influenced them to act in a particular way (they described fear of potential conflict or reprisals as a reason for not saying what they wanted to during the intervention). The third respondent (Sharon), however, described feeling ‘pressurised’ because she didn’t have sufficient time to read and make sense of information and statistics shared during the intervention (she would have preferred for this to be shared in advance).

In addition to this, three participants referred to the influence of community expectations on them regarding how they should act within public engagement activities (e.g. not being seen to ‘cross the party line’ or criticise claims made by

‘community leaders’ or ‘elders’ when these were being put forward about the needs of people within their ethnic group). Andy also described how he didn’t want to challenge other participants from his broad ‘black’ ethnic group when they made claims because of respect for elders from within his community. Though a number of participants referred to forms of coercion that came from within their own ‘community’ later in the interview when describing their views on ‘representation’, it is important to note that references to these forms of coercion *were not* prompted by the question above about feeling ‘pressure from others’. Thus though this survey question about feeling pressure from others was able to identify some aspects of coercion associated with fear of conflict with other participants, it did not effectively prompt participants to refer to pressure they felt to act in a deferential towards others (particularly those that are older than them) from within their own social group.

8.1.3 Wide range of high quality options

Finally, a question about people’s belief in the potential for public engagement activities to change public policy helped to identify a range of views about structural constraints associated with the policy-making process. Participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I feel that there are lots of opportunities to change things through the public engagement session I attended (e.g. changes to public policy/ the way public services are delivered)”. Half of respondents disagreed with this statement (spread relatively equally over both sessions). When asked about this in more detail, participants described how they felt that pressures placed on local authorities associated with significant public sector budget cuts, demographic pressures in some wards of the locality, and poor practice by policy-makers meant that public engagement activities were unlikely to influence

the way that policy and public services were re-designed. Few participants in either session described an improvement in this aspect of autonomy (before and after the session).

As Burchardt et al. (2010) suggest, adaptive preferences or conditioned expectations "occur when an individual's outlook, including his or her preferences and goals, has been unduly narrowed by previous experience" (p.18). In the context of this survey question, this might refer to people not being able to imagine that their efforts to take part in public engagement activities on the topic of equality would be likely to influence policy or public services because of poor experience of this in the past. Similarly, it might include limitations to the choices that people make and the policy preferences they advocate within public dialogue. The latter issue has particular ramifications for the achievement of substantive representation in the equality-related policy-making process. That would make this a worthwhile area of further investigation and probing in future research, particularly if people's interest in improving 'opportunities to change things' through public engagement activities they attend were also assessed too.

8.2 Differences in reported levels of autonomy, barriers to autonomy and views about representation

In most areas of autonomy, participants in the Intercultural Session reported a greater increase in levels of autonomy compared to their previous experience of public engagement activities. As discussed in Chapter 5, I recognised that changes in levels of autonomy was an imperfect indicator because potential for recall bias was high given that participants were recalling how they had felt about their

autonomy in previous public engagement activities (the nature of which will have differed across participants). However, I argued using this method would help me to take into account, at least partly, variation in internal characteristics associated with autonomy amongst the sample (such as levels of self-confidence). The differences in levels of autonomy between the two groups are summarised below.

Participants were asked a series of questions which explored their perceptions about the levels of autonomy they had within public engagement activities they had attended in the past (pre-test interview) and within the session they attended as part of this qualitative experiment (post-test interview). Each question was designed to explore specific aspects of the three forms of autonomy described in Chapter 4 (self-reflection; active or delegated decision-making; and wide range of high quality options). The results from these interviews are summarised on Table 13 below. In the table pre-test interview results are described as ‘before’ and post-test interview results are described as ‘after’. Similarly, participants were asked about barriers to autonomy they may have faced within public engagement activities they had attended in the past (pre-test interview) and within the session they attended as part of this qualitative experiment (post-test interview). The results from these interviews are summarised on Table 14 below. Three interviewees (Ayesha and Sharon) indicated in their pre-test interviews that they did not have experience of previous public engagement activities so ‘before’ results are not available for them. Similarly, John did not feel he remembered enough about previous public engagement activities he had attended to answer the ‘before’ questions. These tables are included here in the body of the text (rather than as an appendix) in order to share the nature of questions asked to participants.

Table 13 People's reported level of autonomy

Name		I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	I judge myself by what I think is important, not by what others in public engagement meetings think is important	I have a clear idea of the issues I want to discuss in the public engagement meetings	Sometimes I feel I am being pressurised and I can't choose what I do in public engagement meetings	I feel there are lots of opportunities to change things through public engagement meetings (e.g. changes to public policy/ the way public services are delivered)
MULTICULTURAL SESSION						
Lisa	Before	Neither A/D	Agree	Agree	Neither A/D	Neither A/D
	After	Strongly Agree	Neither A/D	Neither A/D	Disagree	Disagree
David	Before	Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Neither A/D
	After	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
Andy	Before	Disagree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
	After	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Anthony	Before	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
	After	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Arman	Before	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree
	After	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Sharon	After	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
INTERCULTURAL SESSION						
John	After	Disagree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Neither A/D
Pauline	Before	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
	After	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neither A/D
Jardir	Before	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree
	After	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Amir	Before	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree
	After	Disagree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Ayesha	After	Agree	Agree	Neither A/D	Neither A/D	Disagree
Laura	Before	Agree	Agree	Neither A/D	Agree	Neither A/D
	After	Disagree	Strongly agree	Neither A/D	Disagree	Agree

Colour code: Red = decrease in autonomy during the session (compared to previous experience of public engagement)
Amber = no change in autonomy during the session (compared to previous experience of public engagement)
Green = increase in autonomy during the session (compared to previous experience of public engagement)

I noticed a number of interesting variations in the data in Table 13. Firstly, all participants in the Multicultural Session either reported the same amount or an increase in the level of influence by people with strong opinions, compared to only a quarter of the interviewees that answered this question from the Intercultural Session (the rest reported a decrease in influence by people with strong opinions). Secondly, all participants in the Multicultural Session either reported the same amount or a decrease in the extent to which they judged themselves by what they thought was important, not by what others in the public engagement session thought was important. This is compared to only a quarter of interviewees that felt that way in the Intercultural Session (the rest reported an increase in this aspect of autonomy). Thirdly, the only session in which people reported the same or an increase in feeling pressurised and not able to choose what they do was the Multicultural Session (3 out of 5 people). Though it should be noted in the Intercultural Session, John reported feeling this way but had no previous experience of public engagement to compare it too.

Table 14: Perceptions about barriers to choice and control in public engagement activities

Name		Lack of support prevents me from doing or saying things that are important to me in public engagement activities	Lack of advice prevents me from doing or saying things that are important to me in public engagement activities	My age, sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief (please specify) prevents me from doing or saying things that are important to me in public engagement activities	The way discussions are facilitated prevents me from doing or saying things that are important to me in public engagement activities	Other people's attitudes towards me prevents me from doing or saying things that are important to me in public engagement activities	Lack of self-confidence prevents me from doing or saying things that are important to me in public engagement activities	Other
MULTICULTURAL SESSION								
Lisa	Before	Rarely	Sometimes	**Rarely**	**Often**	**Never**	**Never**	
	After	Never	Never	**Never**	**Never**	**Never**	**Never**	
David	Before	Rarely	Never	Never	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Rarely**	
	After	Never	Never	Never	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Never**	
Andy	Before	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	**Sometimes**	**Sometimes**	**Never**	
	After	Rarely	Rarely	Often	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Rarely**	
Anthony	Before	Rarely	Rarely	Sometimes	**Sometimes**	Rarely	Rarely	
	After	Rarely	Rarely	Sometimes	**Rarely**	Rarely	Rarely	
Arman	Before	Never	Never	Sometimes	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Rarely**	
	After	Never	Never	Never	**Rarely**	**Never**	**Rarely**	
Sharon	Before							
	After	Sometimes	Sometimes	Rarely	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Often**	
INTERCULTURAL SESSION								
John	Before							
	After	Sometimes	Never	Often	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Sometimes**	
Pauline	Before	Rarely	Rarely	Never	**Sometimes**	**Sometimes**	**Sometimes**	
	After	Never	Sometimes	Never	**Never**	**Never**	**Never**	
Jardir	Before	Often	Sometimes	Never	**Sometimes**	**Sometimes**	**Sometimes**	
	After	Never	Never	Never	**Never**	**Never**	**Never**	
Amir	Before	Rarely	Rarely	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Never**	**Rarely**	
	After	Rarely	Rarely	Rarely	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	

Ayesha	Before							
	After	Often	Rarely	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	
Laura	Before	Sometimes	Sometimes	Often	**Often**	**Often**	**Rarely**	
	After	Rarely	Rarely	Rarely	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Rarely**	

Colour code: Red = decrease in autonomy during the session (compared to previous experience of public engagement)
Amber = no change in autonomy during the session (compared to previous experience of public engagement)
Green = increase in autonomy during the session (compared to previous experience of public engagement)

The data in Table 14 suggest that the overall level of barriers to autonomy felt by participants in both Sessions 1 and 2 was relatively similar. The biggest differences were recorded in two areas. Firstly, more participants in the Intercultural Session felt that the way discussions were facilitated prevented them from doing or saying things that were important to them (two people said this happened often and two said it happened sometimes in the Intercultural Session). Secondly, more people in the Multicultural Session felt that that other people's attitudes towards them prevented them from doing or saying things that were important to them (two people said this happened often during the Multicultural Session). The potential reasons for this were explored through interview transcripts and are described below in Section 8.3.

Finally, Participants were asked about their previous experience of public engagement and their experience of the engagement session they attended as part of this study. They were asked (a) did you see yourself as a representative of a particular group or community? (b) do you think others saw you as a representative of a particular group or community? Table 15 below provides an overview of participants' answers to each of these questions. Sharon and Ayesha did not provide 'before' answers as they indicated in their pre-test interviews that they had not attended public engagement activities before the session they attended as part of this study.

Table 15: Views about representation

		Did you see yourself as a representative (e.g. of a particular group or community?)		Do you think others saw you as a representative (e.g. of a particular group or community?)	
		Before	After	Before	After
Session 1	David	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Andy	No	No	Yes	Yes
	Sharon		Yes		Not sure
	Arman	No	No	Yes	Not sure
	Lisa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not sure
	Anthony	No	Yes	Yes	Not sure
Session 2	John	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Pauline	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not sure
	Jardir	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Amir	No	No	Yes	Not sure
	Ayesha		No		No
	Laura	Yes	No	Yes	No

The data in Table 15 suggest there was a slight difference between the Multicultural and Intercultural Sessions in whether people *saw themselves* as a representative (four of six people did in the Multicultural Session and two of six people did in the Intercultural Session). When individual responses about how participants felt during the intervention were compared to their experience of previous public engagement activities too, some interesting results emerge. Most people gave the same answer before and after the intervention. There were four examples of people changing their view. David and Anthony in the Multicultural Session and John and Laura in the Intercultural Session. The potential reasons for this shift were explored through interviews (described below). When asked about whether *others saw them* as a representative, everybody answered either ‘Yes’ or ‘Not sure’ in the Multicultural Session, and four people answered ‘No’, 2 people answered ‘Not sure’ in the Intercultural Session. When compared to views about previous public engagement

experience, the difference in participants' experience between the Multicultural and Intercultural Sessions became more prominent. All respondents (across both sessions) answered 'Yes' to this question when describing previous public engagement activities. So, an answer of 'No' would appear to signal a shift in view.

8.3 Reasons for differences

Quantitative analysis of differences in levels of autonomy between the two sessions based on interview surveys found a greater increase in different fields of autonomy experienced by participants in the Intercultural Session. However, given the inductive, exploratory assumptions of the qualitative experiment, not to mention the very low sample rates, I did not anticipate that these differences would be used to deduce causal links. Though this numerical analysis was useful for illustrative purposes and was a constituent element of the Applied Thematic Analysis approach (Guest et al. 2012), it was people's interviews that were particularly instructive in shining a light on the potential influence of factors on their levels of autonomy.

Ultimately for respondents, their level of reported autonomy appeared to be influenced by a mix of both 'internal' factors (such as people's own levels of self-confidence or previous experience of public engagement activity or discrimination) and 'external' factors (such as what was said and how people were made to feel by others in the session they attended). People described different approaches to negotiating or balancing these different factors in different situations. I aimed to help reduce the potential influence of 'internal' factors on the results of the interview survey by asking participants about previous experience and then asking, in a later interview about their experience of the intervention. I felt this would help to account,

at least in part, for varying 'internal' barriers to autonomy within the sample by measuring levels of *change* in autonomy before and after the intervention. Yet it was extremely hard to tell whether this strategy was successful with such a small sample size of respondents. Certainly, when previous experience was accounted for, changes in the level of autonomy were more pronounced across sessions (with the Intercultural Session participants generally reporting a higher increase in autonomy). Yet with this topic of study and using quantitative analysis of changes in levels of autonomy, it was difficult to discern the potential influence of the intervention. Often there appeared to be a range of numerous and complex influences upon a person's perceptions of their level of autonomy within the public engagement session they attended which were hard to disentangle.

Despite these limitations in discerning causation this was consistent with the qualitative experimental approach I chose to adopt. My analysis of differences in levels of autonomy between participants did, I feel, benefit from the experimental setting in two main ways. I was able to use comparison of the two interventions as a heuristic device to (a) explore whether there were noticeable differences in participants' levels of autonomy between the two sessions and (b) use those differences as a prompt to examine whether there was evidence that I observed or heard from interviewees that would suggest the nature of the intervention (or other factors) influenced those differences.

Overall I observed relatively little influence of the intervention on many of the areas of autonomy that were measured. Yet there were a small number of important aspects of the intervention which appeared to create some specific barriers to

specific types of autonomy within participants in both sessions. These are described below, alongside other factors (not related to the intervention) which appeared to influence levels of autonomy within participants.

8.3.1 Intervention-related factors

8.3.1.1 Role of facilitator in supporting particular forms of claim-making

As described in Chapter 7, there were examples of participants feeling they couldn't make claims that they wanted to or that they disagreed with what others were saying but felt they couldn't speak out about this. Talking to interviewees about their perceived level of autonomy it was possible to link people's reported barriers to autonomy with some of the concrete examples of 'closures' in discussion from the public dialogue described in Chapter 7.

Both David and Andy (the Multicultural Session) stated they 'often' felt that other people's attitudes towards them prevented them from doing or saying things that were important to them during the session. In the Intercultural Session John stated 'sometimes' to this question and Amir answered 'rarely' in response to this. Amir and John also stated the way discussions were facilitated often prevented them from doing or saying things that were important to him. The significance of these responses in particular were examined further by reviewing participants' interview transcripts.

Some interviewees saw the role of the facilitator as central to the barriers to autonomy they experienced. For David (the Multicultural Session) he felt the facilitator could have done a lot more to ensure that particular types of claims (specifically faith-based claims) were not used in the discussion. This was because he felt these types of claims are particularly difficult to challenge due to their emotional and identity-based nature, in particular he suggested people can get offended when their faith-based claims are challenged. He also did not see how people's religious beliefs relate to issues of public policy. David suggested that the absence of the facilitator's role in doing this (indeed it was the facilitator's brief to ensure everybody 'tolerated' and 'respected' rather than challenged identity-based claims) meant that too many claims were tolerated and he had to overcome an internal tension in order to finally challenge somebody on making faith-based claims. He described how, for much of the session, he had wanted to challenge faith-based claims but didn't do so because he didn't want to offend and wanted the person making them not to dislike him (this is a form of introjection).

In the Intercultural Session John and Amir saw the approach to facilitation being, at times, too critical and did not feel that their claims were respected or would have been respected if they had made them. John felt he had been, as he described it, 'slapped down' for trying to suggest that people from his identity-group (White British) also experienced inequality. John didn't feel adequately supported to make his claim as the facilitator and other participants were being highly critical of it. Amir also felt that he couldn't intervene as he was not confident enough to speak out as other participants were making a number of critical comments about the nature of British society that he felt were offensive to his own sense of British-Pakistani

identity. Like John, Amir also described how the facilitator could have done more to encourage ‘quiet voices’ like his to be heard during a highly critical and passionate part of the dialogue. In this case John appeared to feel a barrier to active decision-making caused by the actions of the facilitator and other participants. Amir too described feeling forced not to speak out because of the conditions of the discussion.

Both of these forms of barriers to autonomy felt by participants in the Multicultural Session and 2 appear to be consistent with the nature of the intervention that was intended. In the Multicultural Session, participants were encouraged to respect and *not challenge* other people’s identity-based claims and David and Andy felt a lack of autonomy as a result of that. They described this in terms of ‘introjection’ and not wanting others to disapprove of them (arguably an environment that was reinforced by aspects of the facilitation approach). In the Intercultural Session, participants were encouraged to engage with each other more critically to explore and challenge boundaries of cultural, ethnic and religious ‘identity’. In this session, participants described feeling, at times, inadequately supported to challenge the group dynamic associated with that more discursive, critical discussion. This was described more in terms of barriers to active decision-making (e.g. coercion) than in terms of introjection (a barrier to self-reflection).

However, participants who felt barriers to autonomy associated with the claims they (or others) made did not all agree the facilitator could have played a role in improving their situation. Andy (the Multicultural Session) didn’t feel the facilitator could have done anything to change the way that people approached claim-making during the

session he attended. When prompted on why he felt like this, he referred to previous experience of public engagement activities and the limited impact he had seen facilitators have on issues like this. This raises an important question about the extent to which people's previous experience of public engagement activities may have affected their ability to reflect, during interviews, upon the role of the facilitator during the intervention in this study.

8.3.1.2 Role of facilitator in addressing issues of 'legitimacy' associated with identity

Another dimension of the barriers to autonomy felt by Amir and John (the Intercultural Session) described above related to their perceived 'legitimacy' to challenge claims. Though the facilitators encouraged participants to do so with each other and modelled this in their interaction with participants, John and Amir did not feel able to challenge claims due to issues associated with their own identity. For John, describing himself as the 'only White British person in the room', he did not feel he had the legitimacy to challenge claims made by other ethnic minority participants about the influence of the British Empire on slavery and race inequality. In his interview John accompanied this point with his assertion that he could not legitimately make claims relating to inequality faced by White British people because others assume White British people do not face inequality. When asked about whether people felt they were a 'representative' of a particular group, John was the only interviewee to refer to the role of the facilitator in making him feel that he was *not* a representative because a representative claim about White British people was critically countered by the facilitator very quickly. He felt his role as a representative

was not seen as legitimate because he couldn't make representative claims on that basis. A key challenge for facilitators adopting this facilitation approach (the Intercultural Session) appeared to be supporting John to think that he could engage in the conflictual discussion without fear of reprisal or harm. John's views that he described in the interview gave an insight into the important symbolic power that facilitators can play in shaping the tone and nature of the debate.

> *Because I wanted to say in the white community we don't have community leaders. And very quickly - I wasn't finished –I think she said very quickly ' well you don't need them'. OK - I felt I won't reply - I felt slapped down a bit - because some white people might say well actually we do need them because we're not actually as represented as we think we are - but I thought that's obviously not a subject that's spoken here* (John, Intercultural Session).

Amir too did not feel he could, as a Pakistani man, challenge claims made by others about the negative effect of British Empire. Though he wanted to challenge them, he did not feel he could because others may see him as, in some way, not supporting the cause of ethnic minority people. Thus, in addition to the barriers to active decision-making (from concern about reprisals or coercion from facilitator and participants), John and Amir also described a form of 'introjection' which is a barrier to self-reflection. Arguably they had assumed that they did not have the legitimacy to challenge the claims being made due to the nature of their identity and how others in the room would see them on that basis. Both John and Amir felt the facilitator could have done more to enable them to share what they were feeling and to challenge claims being made. This suggests that when claims are open to critical debate (as

was particularly encouraged in the Intercultural Session), the facilitator has a particularly important role to play in addressing these issues of identity and legitimacy to enable all people to engage equally in the discussion. It is important to also note that other participants in both sessions also described how, at different times during the discussion, they felt more or less confident to speak based on a range of other factors associated with 'legitimacy' less amenable to influence by the facilitator (such as the way they were dressed or their technical knowledge of a particular subject).

Interestingly, David (the Multicultural Session) was the only person to suggest that he had been made to feel like a representative of a particular community by the nature of the questions asked by the facilitator. He described in various parts of his interview how the facilitators had asked him to put forward claims about the needs of the African Caribbean community which he had tried to resist. For David, he was made to feel like a representative of his community, but in this instance this was not a role that he wanted to play.

Finally, Andy made an interesting point about the perceived 'legitimacy' of the facilitator when engaged in discussion about issues of inequality. He felt that, facilitators can improve the way they approach this topic, but that they don't always recognise this. For Andy, this was because it often relates to 'what the facilitator embodies as a person'. He suggested this is sometimes hard to control for the facilitator. He gave the example of a White British man who came to provide a workshop on gangs-awareness for young people he worked with (most of whom were also White British). Yet he said that very few young people saw what the

presenter was telling them as ‘authentic’ because he was White British. They had assumed he should be from a different ethnic background (e.g. African Caribbean) if sharing personal experience and information about gangs. He described in the following excerpt how he thought the facilitator could have addressed this and how this relates to consultation work on equality-related policy:

> *It's how you act. It's not about what you think - it's about what the people think of you. Need to be aware of the dynamics - the authenticity issue and the trust issue. We can say - at the start - deal with the tension - he's black he doesn't live in this area - you need to deal with the tension.... Even if you are thinking 'I'm from the hood' - other people might not hear that. Doesn't matter what I think about myself, it's what others perceive you to be. It's being aware of that. During consultations that happens a lot. People have this image of you - before you open your mouth. Need to set that first 5 minutes up so well to let people know you aware that they may not trust you and they may not trust each other.* (Andy, Multicultural Session)

8.3.2 Other influential factors

Interviewees described many other factors that influenced their level of autonomy which were not seemingly related to the nature of the intervention run in the qualitative experiment. The five most prominent of these are described below (not in any particular order).

8.3.2.1 Demographic profile of the group and expectations to ‘represent’

Firstly, people described the negative effects of being expected to act as a representative of a particular ethnic or religious group. For some, this was less to do with what the facilitator did (e.g. in the Multicultural Session participants were directly asked to 'represent' their community) and more to do with the perceived background of others in the room. If they were the only person from a particular group, a number of interviewees described feeling an expectation that they would represent that group when discussing issues of inequality (even if they did not see themselves personally as a 'representative' in this sense). The following quote from David (the Multicultural Session) is a good example of that:

> *Looking around the table made you feel a bit African Caribbean-ish to some degree…the inclination was that we were there to represent African Caribbean, but the conversations, as we've said, didn't necessarily go that way*
> (David, Multicultural Session)

Even when, in the Intercultural Session, the facilitator encouraged people to identify shared experiences of inequality *across groups*, some participants still felt they were expected to speak out about inequalities faced by their particular ethnic group due to the demographic profile of participants. Making these sorts of representative claims was not always something people *wanted* to do, but something they felt they *had* to do, because it was expected of them by others in the room or because they felt the claims they made about the needs of specific groups would not have been put forward by somebody else.

8.3.2.2 Community expectations about what it means to 'represent'

A number of participants described how they often felt pressure from people within their own 'community' of family / friendship networks to act in a particular way when involved in equality-related policy making. For example, several participants described how they had to weigh up the pros and cons of being perceived to go against the needs and interests of representatives within their own community (e.g. their ethnic group). The approach taken to facilitation appeared to have little influence on how people felt about this type of pressure. Anthony and Andy described how, just by engaging in mainstream policy-making processes (whatever approach to facilitation was taken), others around them might assume that they were in some way 'selling out' or not sufficiently representing the needs of people from their ethnic community because they would have to compromise when engaging with other communities (e.g. White British people). Anthony, for instance, described the risk of being seen as a 'coconut' (brown on the outside and white in middle) by his peers when taking part in mainstream policy consultation. Andy described how he negotiates, what for him is, a 'double-edged' sword of being criticised by peers for engaging with White people and the advantages of getting his voice heard in the policy-making process.

> *To an extent, among the group of my friends, I'm now seen as the politician. they see me going to a lot of these meetings. It's a double-edged sword, because i get 'ah bruv you're a sell-out talking to all these white folks'. They talk to me differently. Even though it's banter I can see there's something going on there. And sometimes it's like. Ah they'll use me - 'what's really going*

on in the city'. Sometimes they'll use it. I don't mind that (Andy, Multicultural Session)

8.3.2.3 Boundaries of discussion about equality and commitment of organisers / facilitators

A number of participants described not being able to say what they wanted to because it would have been too uncomfortable for people to hear. For these respondents this was less about the nature of the intervention adopted and more about wider societal perceptions about what 'equality' really means and the 'genuineness' of the facilitator and other participants in their desire to address inequality in a wide sense (e.g. in their desire to explore issues associated with the question 'equality of what' as described in Chapter 7). Andy who was very vocal about this particular subject suggested that this was less to do with the way questions are asked by a facilitator and more to do with *whom* is asking those questions. He suggested that if public engagement activities go beyond the usual suspects and into communities, they will find some uncomfortable answers about the reasons for inequality that they wouldn't get when speaking to seasoned public engagement participants.

8.3.2.4 Self-confidence and levels of trust in others

Two participants, Sharon (the Multicultural Session) and Ayesha (the Intercultural Session) who both indicated that they felt 'a lack of support prevented them from doing or saying things that were important to them' described how they would have

felt more confident if they had received some of the information shared during the session (e.g. statistics about inequality) in advance so they had a chance to interpret it and think about what they might say about it. Amir and Ayesha similarly stated how they would have liked an opportunity to share their views in other ways too (rather than just via group discussion) as they were less confident speaking out in the larger group. Arguably this was less to do with the specific nature of each intervention and more to do with general issues of facilitation practice. In both sessions participants described how the facilitator could have done more to adapt the process to suit their particular learning style or communication style (e.g. by encouraging more small group work or by giving people a chance to write down their responses after the session). In fact the facilitator did many of these things, but these participants did not feel it was sufficient.

Similarly, two participants, Pauline (the Intercultural Session) and Andy (the Multicultural Session) described how people are more likely to say what they think and not hold back if they ‘trust’ the facilitator. Andy, as described above, put this down to the facilitator being from a ‘background’ that fits with particular expectations people have about what a facilitator should look like or how they should act when working with a group to facilitate discussion on a particular subject. Pauline too described how there are certain things a facilitator can do to gain the trust of a particular group (such as speaking with a particular accent, conducting themselves or dressing in a particular way). These can be seen as issues of trust and bias that dialogue participants hold that have less to do with the nature of the intervention trialled as part of this study. However, arguably some of these issues are amenable to change by the facilitator. For example, Andy suggested a facilitator can take steps

acknowledge that there may be barriers to trust that need to be addressed first between the facilitator and the group (such as acknowledging differences in status or differences in experience before discussing issues of inequality).

8.3.2.5 Active decision-making despite influence of the intervention

When interviewees described whether they saw themselves as 'representatives' or not and when they decided to make particular equality-related claims or not, a number of participants described an *active* process of decision-making. In short, participants were not passive recipients in formulating their response to particular stimuli during the intervention. Thus some of the constraining effects of the intervention on autonomy (as described above in terms of claim-making and legitimacy) were not always clear-cut. Participants often made an active decision to not say or not act in a way that they wanted to based on internal issues of self-confidence or *assessment of the costs and benefits* of doing or saying a particular thing. For example, as described above, John in the Intercultural Session did feel supported to engage critically with other respondents and to challenge narrow interpretations of British society (when others were criticising the role of British Empire) to an extent. However, when it came to making claims based on the inequalities that some White British people feel they face he did not feel supported by the facilitator to do this. He chose not to engage because the potential 'cost' of doing this was too high (conflict and associated discomfort). Similarly, as described in Chapter 7, a number of participants in the Multicultural Session too (such as Andy and David) described holding back from making particular claims or challenging each other's claims because of the perceived 'cost' (such as offending somebody or

making another person not like them). When describing this dynamic, David related it to other public engagement activities he had attended. He described how he tends to act strategically, weighing up the pros and cons of making particular statements based on assessment of the potential effects it will have upon him and based upon his potential to move the debate forward. For instance, he described how he is strategic in choosing when to 'tow the line' and not speak out when other community leaders are describing needs of the African Caribbean community in public meetings which he feels are stereotypical.

Whilst this assessment of 'costs and benefits' of making a claim or challenging a claim (as described by John and David above) was sometimes a conscious decision, this would arguably still be seen as a barrier to autonomy because people were not saying things or acting in a way they had reason to value. They were not acting in this way based on an internal barrier to autonomy. Yet these examples of limited autonomy do reinforce the importance of internal, personal factors such as values and beliefs which will have influenced people's levels of reported autonomy. For example, though Anthony was consistently thwarted in his attempts to challenge the group-based nature of claim-making during the Session he attended, he still reported a high level of autonomy for all indicators in the survey. This may have been due to Anthony's own personal sense of resilience or comfort in acting in a way that was critical of the role the facilitator played in the session.

8.3.2.6 'Unconscious' nature of some representative claims

Finally, in addition to people making conscious, strategic decisions to act as a representative or make particular types of claims (based on an assessment of costs and benefits and in line with their values and beliefs), there were examples of people making seemingly ‘unconscious’ claims that were not in line with their stated values and beliefs. The section of the interview focused on autonomy and representation created a space for participants to say whether they, themselves were acting as a representative. This resulted in a number of participants discussing whether they believed in or supported the idea of ‘identity-based representation’. More than half respondents expressed, often in quite strong terms, critical views about the idea that representatives can adequately ‘represent’ the full range of views of particular ethnic or religious communities. Here are two examples of contributions from participants in either session. Firstly, Andy (the Multicultural Session) described how ‘representative’ status of this type had often been forced upon him when he hadn’t chosen it:

> *I'm not the voice of them. When they ask me to be a representative, they're asking me to fit the quote, to tick a box and say 'we've spoken to a black person' and 'this is what they said'. So - you spoke to a black person and that changes to this is what 'they' said? [Laughs]. In the same sentence - you know, ok, how does that even make sense. We spoke to a black person and this is what 'they' said? That's done so often it's unbelievable. They'll speak to one individual and that becomes 'them'.*
>
> (Andy, Multicultural Session)

Later in his interview Andy suggested that this sort of ‘tick-box’ approach to representation may be used because other ‘deeper’ forms of representation might be too uncomfortable and may not conform to the types of stereotypes that policy-makers generate about particular groups (in this case single parent families in the black community):

> *You get people saying, I sympathise, 'I know there's a lot of gun crime in the black community, I understand it that there's lot of absent fathers, i understand it'. But why is there? Do you really want to find out why there are absent fathers? Come talk to the children, they will tell you why their dad isn't able to get a job. How, as a result of not being able to get a job, the family dynamics break down. As a consequence of council stopping mom's work, mom is now putting pressure on dad and dad just can't take it and just had to leave.* (Andy, Multicultural Session)

As a second example, John described how he felt that the value of identity-based representation is dwindling in a society characterised by high levels of diversity within society:

> *I think one of the real challenges is the real problem of representation. It's an outmoded concept - you can't possibly talk about representation in a place like [name of locality] anymore it just is nonsense with 100 plus nationalities. Where do you go with this? ...Will they do Chinese? What about the working class / gay Chinese community? Do you do the White Europeans, the White European Muslims, the White European Christians etc?*

(John, Intercultural Session)

Many participants did not agree with the practice of identity-based representation for some of the reasons described in the quotes above. Also many, when asked, did not see themselves as a 'representative'. However, there were still numerous examples of the same people making representative claims during the public dialogue. Six participants (David, Andy, Amir, John, Ayesha and Laura) who did not feel they were acting as representatives during the session they attended also made a representative claim or claims (about inequality their 'own' community faces) at some point during the Session they attended. One could argue this is suggestive of a lack of autonomy as participants appeared to be acting in a way that is not fully in accordance with their values and interests (Ricoeur 1996 cited in Ryan and Deci 2006). As described in previous findings chapters (6 and 7), I noted the presence of particular norms of behaviour and language associated with the making of 'representative claims', some of which did not appear to be acknowledged by participants.

Only two participants appeared to recognise this apparent tension between (a) their belief that identity-based representation was problematic (and that they were not well-placed to represent a particular community) and (b) their decision to make representative claim(s) during the session. Amir (the Intercultural Session) described how, though he didn't believe he could represent a whole community, he was aware of particular types of inequality faced within the Pakistani community (of which he was a part) and he felt that this was important to share as part of the discussion which is why he did it. Similarly John (the Intercultural Session) recognised that he

had felt obliged to make a representative claim about inequality faced by White British people in the conversation because he felt these were being side-lined, despite not believing that identity-based representation (which tends to be based on a system of representative claim-making) is working in a superdiverse locality like the one he was living in.

8.4 Conclusion

This Chapter has provided a detailed account of my findings in relation to the last research objective of this study: “which factors influence the level of autonomy participants in public engagement activities feel they have?”. The survey questions used in this study were new and the approach taken exploratory, thus I outlined in Section 8.1 the extent to which the survey questions were relevant. Some aspects of autonomy examined through the survey used in the study did not appear to be relevant to participants. However, in-depth interviews enabled me to identify a number of empirical examples of how and when a lack of autonomy might manifest itself in public engagement activity of the type run in the qualitative experiment. These included: the influence of introjection on people’s ability to self-reflect and the influence of coercion on people’s ability to make active decisions. Some of these issues were similar to the barriers to engagement participants described in the previous chapter (7). However, viewing these issues through the lens of ‘autonomy’ helped to identify the dynamics of the barriers that participants can face when participating in public engagement activities. As I argue in Chapter 9, some of these barriers to autonomy appear amenable to influence through the role of group facilitators.

In particular, participants in the Multicultural Session described forms of introjection (desire for social approval and not to upset others) which, arguably, were associated with being asked to 'respect' and 'tolerate' the views of others as part of the intervention's designated facilitation approach. In the Intercultural Session, some participants described barriers to active decision-making (e.g. being worried about potential conflict) which, arguably was associated with participants not feeling adequately supported by the facilitator or other participants in a dialogue environment where participants were encouraged to be highly critical and challenging of each other's claims and the assumptions underlying them. I suggested that the role of the facilitator appeared to be important in responding to these barriers in terms of (a) supporting particular forms of claim-making and (b) addressing issues of 'legitimacy' associated with identity. However, at the same time, some barriers to autonomy examined in the study did not appear to be related to the facilitation approach at all (such as self-confidence). Ultimately I argued that focusing on particularly relevant barriers to autonomy in further research and refining tools to measure them would be particularly instructive in understanding some of the barriers dialogue participants face when engaged in equality-related policy discussions.

The following chapter provides an overview of the meaning and implications of each set of findings that I have presented (chapters 6, 7 and 8). I begin by critically reflecting upon the conceptual framework and methodology employed in the study. This is followed by a detailed account of what, on balance I have been able to conclude in response to my three research objectives. In particular I identify the methodological, theoretical and practical contributions of this study to our understanding of effective 'equality politics' in the future.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION

An edited version of parts of this chapter and chapter 10 have been published in Afridi, A. *(2016) 'Identity, representation and the acceptable face of equalities policy-making in Britain', Journal of Poverty and Social Justice, 24(1), pp. 77-83*.

9.0 Introduction

In this penultimate chapter, I begin by providing a critical appraisal of the conceptual framework and methodology employed in the study. As discussed in Chapter 4 some aspects of the conceptual framework and methodologies employed in this study were new and un-tested. The approach I took to operationalising a range of complex concepts was ambitious and I recognised that I would need to assess how well I had achieved that and what could be improved for future research. I have included the assessment of these exploratory approaches in detail in this chapter as I saw this as a contribution to knowledge in this field of study. This section is followed by a consideration of each of the study's three research objectives in turn. I first describe what, on balance I have been able to conclude in response to each research objective. I then identify the methodological, theoretical and practical contributions of this study to our understanding of effective 'equality politics' in an era of super-diversity and suggest useful avenues for further research.

9.1 Methodological reflections

9.1.1 Typology of public engagement and national survey

In the national survey I used to respond to research objective 1, I adopted an approach to mapping different types of attitudes and practices associated with public engagement of ethnic minority groups by local authorities. I argued that, as part of a process of 'participant objectivation', there was benefit in 'manifesting the structure of the social space' (Bourdieu 2003, p.725) in order to identify examples of practice and attitudes employed by local authorities which could form the basis of subsequent comparative research. The typology used to record results included a list of practices and attitudes commonly associated with popular theories of managing cultural diversity. As discussed in Chapter 4, the highly contestable nature of this discursive field would leave this study open to significant challenge if I were to suggest any element of the typology managed to 'represent' a whole theory or policy approach such as multiculturalism.

Thus in judging the appropriateness of this typology I focused specifically on understanding the extent to which survey participants felt that the range of multiple choice answers offered reflected the range of attitudes and practices that they employed within their own local authority. As discussed in Chapter 6, respondents were much more likely to answer one of the multiple choice responses than to tick 'other' which does suggest that the potential responses corresponded to the views of participating local authority staff about current practice. There were two particular questions where multiple choice answers appeared less applicable to participants, with 26% of respondents answering 'other' on the 'facilitation' question and 20% answering 'other' on the 'decision-making' question. Most of those ticking 'other' were keen to combine two or more of the answers offered (e.g. combining a

‘multicultural’ and a ‘community cohesion’ response). However, there are challenges in using survey response patterns in this way to assess construct validity. Were this typology to be used again, there would be benefit in applying a range of different theoretically-sensitive forms of wording for all aspects of the typology (representation, dialogue, facilitation and decision-making) to improve construct validity.

There were also a number of limitations associated with the wording of the survey which were identified after receiving responses. Firstly, for practical reasons, I chose to only include one potential response option in the survey to indicate a preference. I didn’t feel that I would be able to encourage the target population to answer a survey that lasted longer than 15 minutes and this was confirmed by local authority officers with whom I piloted the survey. Whilst repeated surveys conducted with the same respondents would have helped to assess construct validity, I recognised this would have been impractical given the nature of the sample. Instead, I could have included a number of items within the survey (worded slightly differently) to measure the same construct. Analysing response variance would have helped me to better understand construct validity associated with the question wording (and underlying conceptual framework) employed. Were the survey to be repeated, I would reduce the amount of questions about context (e.g. frequency of public engagement activities) and include more questions about the key topics of representation, facilitation and decision-making practice to further test construct validity.

Secondly, there would have been benefit in increasing the variety of question responses based on the typology to reduce the risk of cognitive bias (Plous, 1993)

associated with negative ‘framing’ of answers influencing people’s responses. For example, consider the following wording for a question response which was designed to reflect an interpretation of ‘community cohesion’ policy:

> *People from ethnic backgrounds come together to agree priorities for action - but views about the needs of communities are not critically discussed/ challenged:*

Having reflected on the wording of this multiple choice response, I can see that framing in a negative way may have made it unlikely for people to choose it and arguably those who used a community cohesion approach may have framed the statement differently.

A further limitation was associated with the approach to sampling and recruitment. I limited my target sample to half of the local authority district population because of time required to personally email and call different local authorities to secure a response. My final sample was too low to engage in any kind of meaningful statistical analysis (other than the descriptive statistics that I outlined). There would be benefit in conducting a full census survey with more time invested in piloting different approaches to attracting potential responses (e.g. different wording or use of images in the cover email). Similarly, whilst the randomly-selected target sample was broadly representative of the overall population, the final sample showed signs of sample bias (with local authorities from larger, urban, more ethnically diverse districts more likely to respond). I could have spent more time on the cover email ensuring that the research was framed as relevant to smaller, more rural and less

ethnically diverse local authority districts and could have focused more time on calling these authorities.

Finally, there would have been benefit in conducting follow-up interviews with a sample of survey respondents to better understand what they had *meant* by their answers to the survey. This was not undertaken due to my own time constraints and the perceived time constraints of the sample. However, interviews of this type would have improved my understanding of what people meant by responding to the survey in the way they did. This would have further helped to assess construct validity of the questions and to improve wording of future surveys on a similar topic.

9.1.2 Qualitative experiment

As an inductive, reflexive researcher I wanted to better understand the wide range of factors that may influence people's actions and how they felt within a public engagement environment. I wanted to draw conclusions based on what I observed and based upon what interviewees told me about how they constructed meaning from what they had done and said during the intervention. However, I also wanted to apply experimental conditions. These conditions helped me in applying some level of consistency between each session as I did not believe that it would be easy to find and compare naturally occurring examples of particular approaches to governance based upon the types of popular attitudes and practices that respondents recorded in the national survey that I ran. In this sense, the qualitative experiment served its purpose. I was able to use quantitative data to examine patterns in the dependent variables that I was interested in for this study (levels of autonomy and scope and content of equality issues discussed). I was also able to use my observation of public

dialogue sessions and interviews with participants to make sense of those patterns and better understand their potential meaning in relation to other aspects of behaviour and the perceptions of interviewees.

Yet I recognised there were a range of challenges associated with creation and execution of ‘experimental’ conditions for comparison. Firstly, though the conditions were broadly similar for each group of participants, the nature of the intervention (a small, group-facilitated session between peers) was different and not necessarily typical of other forms of public engagement activity sometimes employed by local authorities (such as large, public events where participants have to speak up of their own accord in order to get their point across without support from the facilitator). Secondly, there were drawbacks to participant selection. Although participants were randomly allocated they were self-selecting. With the small size and number of groups, natural variation of participants will have had a significant impact upon issues I was measuring. Thirdly, the two different approaches to facilitation and dialogue (‘multicultural’ and ‘intercultural’) that were used to develop each intervention were not applied completely consistently. For example, facilitators challenged one ‘group-specific’ claim during the Multicultural Session which was not within their brief. Fourthly, as discussed above, the application of measures (such as the identification and counting of claims in the public dialogue) was subject to bias and interpretation by myself as a researcher.

Whilst addressing some of these issues would have helped to improve my ability to make assumptions about causality and generalisability, this form of deduction was not something that I sought. The experimental design was primarily heuristic in

nature. It helped to improve conditions in which I could make observations deducible from my own senses (and not from instruments or numerical calculations) and draw conclusions from what I observed. As Sørensen et al. (2009) argue, this type of approach can still be seen as ‘experimental’ in the sense that it involves investigating the change of a dependent variable (in this case different measures of substantive representation based upon the scope and content of public dialogue and the levels of autonomy of participants) due to a planned / deliberate action caused by the researcher or another agent upon an independent variable (in this case the approach taken to facilitation practice).

I would argue that this method offered an important advantage over a positivist quantitative experiment, particularly at this early stage of theory-building about processes that are often highly complex. The research design I adopted supported a holistic interpretation of the process of public engagement. From an ontological standpoint I recognised that reality is socially constructed (Elder-Vass, 2012) and that a range of factors play a role in the construction of people’s perceived social reality. I sought to better understand this complex process by combining analysis of people’s own internal perceptions about other participants and about topics such as ‘equality’, ‘representation’ and ‘autonomy’ with concrete examples of interactions between people in a public dialogue context. This helped me to generate a range of interesting insights into the complex, interpersonal nature of ‘equality politics’ in public dialogue situations. It also helped me, in a few instances, to identify the potential role that the intervention might have played in this process and how facilitation practices could be improved to create better forms of equality politics in the future.

9.1.3 Analysis

As discussed in Section 5.4.6, I saw a number of advantages to running a combination of word-frequency based analyses (using separate 'claims' as a measurement) alongside more in-depth, qualitative analysis of the meaning and context of particular claims made by participants. The 'Applied Thematic Analysis' approach which combined quantitative and qualitative approaches helped to provide an account of what happened in public engagement sessions. The method was unobtrusive and would be relatively easy to replicate for another researcher. However, I also recognised that I needed to make a number of choices as to what constituted a 'claim' and interpret participants' behaviour in order to do that. That process of interpretation is likely to have been heavily influenced by my own, subjective judgments about what constitutes 'equality' and what constitutes a 'claim'. As a researcher with 15 previous years' experience of working as an equality activist and campaigner I am likely to have made judgments, for instance, about what 'types' of equality are most usefully discussed within a public dialogue setting. For instance, my decision to not include 'equality of opportunity' as one of the 'types' of equality is likely to have been influenced by my own, personal, dislike of the term as I associate it closely with principles of meritocracy and 'aspiration' that I, personally see as damaging when applied to public policy.

I also recognised that the content analysis had important limitations in that it described rather than explained people's behaviours. Taken on its own, this type of content analysis cannot help develop a full understanding of the way statements made were understood by participants. I included interviews to help understand and

verify some of the patterns or incidents within the public dialogue transcripts. My approach was partially successful. Successes included identifying examples of where participants made some statements, or appeared to hold back from making other statements and then using participant interviews to assess how they felt about those incidents. This type of cross-checking helped to understand the meaning of claims or counter-claims made by participants. Yet it was only possible for a relatively small number of examples because, as a researcher, I was unable to conduct a detailed analysis of the dialogue transcripts before interviewing participants as interviews were planned in the week directly after the session in order to reduce potential recall bias. If I had more time to analyse the dialogue transcripts, I would have been able to identify relevant examples of statements where interviewees had been involved to help understand the motivations of interviewees in making those statements.

These examples of verifying what claimants meant when they made (or didn't make) claims during public dialogue were instructive and, I would argue, valuable contributions to this field of study. They were valuable because they help to understand whether those who make representative claims in the context of policy-making activities do intend to actually 'represent or know what represents the interests of someone or something' (Saward, 2006, p.305). I could have improved opportunities to generate more relevant interview data by making a number of changes to my methodology. In future research there would be benefit in conducting an initial analysis of the dialogue transcripts before conducting the second round interviews. This approach would help to identify examples from the dialogue and prepare prompts to maximise opportunities to explore what aspects of the discussion

meant to participants rather than relying on prompts the research gathers from attending and observing the sessions.

Finally, my decision to run ‘pre’ and ‘post-test’ interviews was particularly useful in examining changes in people’s level of perceived autonomy enabling them to compare their experiences of previous public engagement activities to the one they attended as part of the intervention. The results of ‘post-test’ interviews, taken on their own, did not indicate many strong variations between participants in either session. However, when the level of change comparing experience of the intervention to experiences of previous public engagement activities was taken into account, the differences between each session were more pronounced and this prompted subsequent qualitative analysis of people’s interview responses.

Whilst the pre and post-test interview format was useful in understanding the question of autonomy, this approach was less useful in exploring people’s views about factors that affect the scope and content of equality discussed in public engagement activities. I was hoping in the ‘pre-test’ interview to identify views about factors that had affected participants’ ability to raise particular topics during public engagement activities they had attended in the past. However, when trying to discuss this, the conversation often became highly abstract with people referring to general things they’d been able to say in a range of public consultation activities they attended. Challenges associated with recollection and selectivity featured highly when conducting ‘pre-test’ interviews about previous experiences of public engagement. These questions were much more easily applied in post-test interviews where the interviewee and I could draw upon examples from the Multicultural or

Intercultural Session to discuss what might have influenced their decision to say particular things (or not). In retrospect, the research would have been less intrusive if I had conducted a simple 15-minute autonomy-related survey and interview in the pre-test stage. However, a useful outcome of the pre-test interview was that participants got an opportunity to talk about the types of topics they would like to cover in the session they attended. This information was shared with the facilitators to ensure the presentation and topics were more relevant to participants' concerns and interests.

9.1.4 Type of equality

Type of equality' proved to be a useful framework to describe differences in the nature of claims made by participants about different equality topics. The framework was relatively easy to apply and there was only one type of claim I identified that appeared to straddle two different types of equality. Specifically, two claims about unfair treatment of people who were 'put into a box' by others by public service providers because of their identity (equality of process) could also be judged to be about coercion of people so that they couldn't make decisions for themselves about their needs (equality of autonomy). In these two instances the claims were classed as referring to both equality of autonomy and equality of process.

Despite the ease of use and applicability of the framework, it did favour the recording of particular types of equality at the expense of others. For example, 'equality of opportunity' has been increasingly used in public policy language in the UK since 2010 to describe the affording of equal opportunities for everybody to progress in society, based on principles of meritocracy (Allen, 2011). In some respects, equality

of opportunity relates closely to ‘equality of process’ (for example, ensuring that all people within a company have access to information about new job opportunities that they can then apply for based on merit). Yet this framework did not specifically record the meritocratic-based overtones of equality of opportunity-based claims.

If the different types of equality are not seen as mutually exclusive, then the framework was a useful heuristic device to help identify patterns in discourse about equality across the two sessions. However, as the study progressed I recognised that this framework on its own would not be sufficient to capture the full breadth and meaning of people’s claims. In particular, my initial analysis of data reaffirmed the need to add to the framework by also capturing the ‘domain’ of equality (such as health, housing etc.) that each claim referred to in addition to ‘type’ of equality. I also recognised that simply counting the ‘number’ of claims made by participants about particular types of equality would not capture the level of discussion and reflection associated with each claim. For this reason, as the analysis progressed I also developed ways to identify (a) whether a claim was then referred to / critically discussed by other participants and (b) whether a claim contained information about the ‘grounds’ and ‘warrants’ for the claim using Toulmin’s (1969) model of argumentation.

9.1.5 Framing of claims

In Chapter 4 I identified a particular type of ‘frame’ that I would be interested in exploring through this study: ‘equality of what’. I recognised early on in my analysis that ‘equality of what’ was a difficult type of ‘frame’ to identify and categorise within the public dialogue transcripts. I found that there were benefits in splitting it into a

more ‘basic’ and ‘advanced’ level of discussion of the topic. The ‘basic’ level, as I described it, was relatively easy to capture (whether there was a discussion about the relative merits of investing public resources in responding to inequality in particular domains of equality – such as housing and education). The ‘advanced’ level discussion of ‘equality of what’ was harder to categorise and identify. In Section 4.2.2 I described how Sen (1997) suggests that the key question to be addressed is ‘equality of what?’ as opposed to ‘why equality?’ if we are to identify the best from a range of diverse ethical approaches to social arrangements (p.130). This is because every ethical theory of social arrangements tends to include a demand for equality as a foundational feature of that system. However, it is the answer to the question ‘equality of what?’ that really distinguishes different approaches. I described how British politics rarely enables discussion of this question (Dorling, 2016) and that, as a result, our public policies are often focused on aspects of equality that bear little resemblance to what, in reality, we value and actually makes us most happy.

Yet the question ‘equality of what?’ potentially has a range of meanings, as I discovered when undertaking this analysis. One of those meanings proved relatively easy to capture. I examined whether participants proposed different approaches to ‘measuring’ or ‘judging’ the progress of equality in particular domains (e.g. the way that inequalities in school exclusions are measured and judged) and I found a number of examples of this. Another meaning of the question ‘equality of what?’ is ‘in which domains of life can we legitimately expect or demand equality?’. Discussion of this might involve people identifying domains of life or happiness and wellbeing that are not often considered by policy makers, or may involve identifying areas of equality that have previously been seen as ‘off limits’ such as the increasing interest

in the field of wealth equality (Wilson and Pickett, 2010). This latter interpretation of the question proved much harder to explore. I found relatively few examples of 'alternative' suggestions for domains of life where equality should be promoted. Yet, what an analysis of alternative visions of equality did help me to do was (a) identify where participants were involved in critical deliberation about the merits of previous approaches to the theory and practice of equality and (b) identity potential norms or 'behavioural or linguistic scripts' (Blommaert, 2015) that appeared to shape the way that people approach the question 'equality of what?' that may be preventing future progress on this subject. In particular, I noted how significant emphasis was placed by dialogue participants on the advancement of descriptive political representation and identity-based public service design, despite many participants not necessarily believing these policy aspirations would result in the type of equality that would make them or others happy.

Another 'frame' which I identified through inductive, iterative analysis of dialogue transcripts was 'equality for whom'. In order to manage the data and run simple quantitative analyses I needed to adopt a specific definition that I could use to judge whether a claim used this 'frame'. I adopted a rather simplistic definition which identified a claim as being 'group-specific' when it referred to only *one* social group (e.g. African Caribbean people). This enabled me to identify where claims were made about the needs of particular groups. It also enabled me to identify whether participants engaged in critical evaluative discussion about those types of claims (as opposed to others). Yet I recognised some of the drawbacks to this process of categorisation as the analysis process progressed. For example, a claim could have been seen as 'group-specific' even though it referred to two ethnic minority groups or

broader categorisations of ethnic minority groups (e.g. ‘black and minority ethnic people’) who experience inequality. There were a number of such claims made that were not described as ‘group-specific’.

Saward’s definition of a ‘representative’ claim provides a useful framework against which to assess the relevance of the definition of ‘group-specific claims’ that I used in the study: “a representative claim is a claim to represent or to know what represents the interests of someone or something” (2006, p.305). Taking Saward’s definition, I could have included claims that ‘represented’ broader groupings (such as ethnic minority people as whole) as a group-specific claim. I chose not to do this because of my desire to explore particular criticisms associated with multicultural forms of governance practice and a tendency to encourage ‘single-identity’ group claims (Saggar, 2010).

Still Saward’s definition provides a useful counterpoint here for examining the nature of the group-specific claims that I heard in the session. Many of the claimants described in the analysis of public dialogue transcripts in this study did not explicitly describe themselves as ‘representing’ a particular group (interview results in Chapter 8), yet they did directly describe the needs of people from particular groups which would arguably relate to them ‘knowing’ what represents the interests of those groups. I suggested that an interesting tension emerged between participants’ beliefs that they were often not representing anybody, and their continued invocation of ‘group-specific’ claims during public engagement activities they attended. As I have argued above, there appears to be benefit in combining data about participants’ perceptions of their role (or not) as a ‘representative’ with actual examples of group-

specific claims. The analysis approach adopted in this study, where actual claims and motivations of claimants are compared, can help to understand whether a person is, as Saward suggests, claiming to 'represent or to know what represents the interests of someone or something' (2006, p.305). Arguably this is important, in methodological terms, for further research because making a representative claim (judged by reading the wording of a claim) may not be the same as that person 'claiming' to represent somebody (as they may not mean to be seen in this way).

9.1.6 Autonomy of public engagement participants

As discussed in Chapter 4, the question framework that was used to explore autonomy in this study was exploratory. An important aim of this study was to explore the extent to which aspects of the framework adopted by Burchardt et al. (2010) could be applied to the field of public dialogue about social policy. As identified in chapter 8, I found that in-depth interviews did enable me to identify a number of empirical examples of how and when a lack of autonomy might manifest itself in public engagement activity of the type run in the qualitative experiment. Yet some barriers to autonomy examined in the study did not appear to be relevant to the participants in either of the two sessions and these are examined below.

Firstly, as described in Section 4.2.1, I defined 'self-reflection' as relating to a person's level of self-determination (acting in a way that is in accordance with their values and interests), a person's ability to resist social pressures (such as other's opinions) and a person's outlook not being unduly narrowed by previous experience (conditioned expectations). The following question was used particularly to identify whether people felt that the way they acted was based on the opinions or demands

of others: “I judge myself by what I think is important not by what others in public consultation meetings think is important”. If people disagreed with this statement, this would be seen as a potential lack of autonomy as they would not be judging themselves in accordance with their own values or interests, but judging themselves based on the values and interests of others. Nobody taking the survey disagreed with this question. Yet interestingly, in response to other questions in the survey, a number of participants described acting based on the opinions of others (which was not in accordance with their values and interests about the subject of equality). For example, participants described acting in a particular way (e.g. not making particular claims about equality) based on what they thought others might find acceptable and not offensive. Thus there were examples of potential barriers to self-reflection. However, the question above did not appear to accurately capture the nature of those barriers to self-reflection. Indeed, Burchardt et al. (2010) acknowledge the problematic nature of capturing self-reflection in survey questions and suggest that this type of autonomy is better captured via in-depth cognitive interviews. Limitations associated with the survey question wording suggest that there are benefits in combining structured survey questioning with more in-depth interviews on this subject. Such a strategy bore fruit in this study as it enabled me to probe participants further on topics around which they described general barriers to autonomy (e.g. feeling pressurised by others). Follow-up open interview questions enabled me to better understand some of the reasons why they had felt pressurised and how the intervention may have played a role in influencing those feelings.

Secondly, another question designed to explore a similar aspect of self-reflection was: “I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions”. If people agreed with

this statement, this would be seen as a potential lack of autonomy (self-reflection). Two people did agree with this statement. However, when I asked follow-up questions to understand why they answered in this way, it became apparent that their positive response to the question was unlikely to represent a lack of autonomy in this context. This is because the indicator was developed in particular to identify levels of self-determination and whether participants were carrying out an action based on the opinions or demands of others. If they answered positively to the statement this would be judged a 'controlled behaviour' and a barrier to autonomy. However, Lisa and Ayesha both described making the decisions they did not because of the 'demands' of others or because of some internal tension about which decision to make, but because they agreed with others' opinions. A similar point is made by Burchardt et al. (2010) when describing the work of self-determination theorists Ryan and Deci (2006). They suggest that not all external influences (such as the opinions of others in a public meeting) are negative. A person can still act in a self-determined way whilst at the same time agreeing to an external demand or receiving advice (if that advice is received consensually and the person agrees with it). This, for me was another example of the difficulty of using survey questions to understand levels of self-reflection. Certainly in this study, the interview question used did not appear to provide a sufficient account of the level of self-determination people had.

Thirdly, it is important to note that there were a range of potential barriers to autonomy which were not described by interview respondents in their answers to the structured survey about levels of autonomy, but did come out during the more semi-structured conditions of the rest of the interview. For example, in the survey, though

very few participants described feeling that discrimination against them prevented them from doing or saying things that were important to them in previous public engagement activities, earlier in the interview a number of participants referred to examples of stereotyping and unequal treatment they had faced in public engagement activity. It is important to consider how questions about discrimination should be worded in a survey of this type. As Blank et al. (2004) suggest, there is benefit in undertaking cognitive research to understand what respondents specifically include and exclude when they hear words such as ‘discrimination’ or ‘unfair treatment’ in a survey about a particular subject. In designing a similar survey there would be benefit in undertaking preparatory cognitive research and also including a range of question wordings and placements to understand potential variation and to identify which combination might result in the most accurate results.

Finally, an important limitation of my approach was that I only asked follow-up questions when participants indicated they were facing a particular barrier to autonomy (based on their response to one of the structured multiple choice questions). If they did not describe a barrier I could not determine whether this was because either (a) they did not experience the barrier to autonomy or (b) the question language that was used did not sufficiently capture the type of autonomy I was trying to describe. Using a range of different question wordings in the survey to describe similar barriers to autonomy would have helped to improve construct validity in this respect. However, I do recognise that a much larger sample would be required in order to understand response variance and to draw firmer conclusions about validity.

9.1.7 Conclusion

In summary, in this section I have identified various limitations associated with the conceptual framework and methodology employed. In this study I aimed to explicitly examine the limitations and contribution of these approaches in detail because they were new and exploratory. I have identified a number of ways in which these approaches could be improved for application in future research. Yet, at the same time, the study has identified a number of useful and important findings that respond directly to the three research objectives for this study. In the remainder of this chapter I outline these and the contribution this study has made to scholarship in this field.

9.2 Research objective 1: how do English local authorities approach dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities?

9.2.1 Response to the research objective

The national survey played an important role in identifying examples of practices and attitudes of local authorities that could be used to design the qualitative experiment. Similarly, the survey results provided an insight into how a sample of English local authorities approach dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities. I outline three prominent issues below.

Firstly, since 2010, the UK Government has adopted a policy of devolution of power and decision-making to local authorities. This has resulted in a relatively high level of

autonomy for local authorities to decide how they approach (and measure progress on) a range of topics, including civic engagement, equality and integration (CLG, 2012). Yet, at the same time, the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 has created new requirements to engage citizens from a wider range of 'protected characteristics' to ensure that equality is progressed and discrimination eliminated. The Government's Equality Strategy (2010-215) highlights its aim to move away from 'identity politics' to focus more on individual needs (HMG 2010, p.6). A range of national race equality-focused NGOs have suggested that this policy trajectory has led to a significant reduction in the political and financial priority given to the topic of race equality (Coalition of Race Equality Organisations, 2010). For example, the Commission for Race Equality was replaced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, funding for the Home Office-run regional BME policy engagement networks was cut in 2010. Similarly local authority funding cuts are likely to have significantly curtailed local authorities' capacity to engage in the same level of activity in *any* of the public engagement activities that they once did (Aseonva and Stein, 2014; LGA, 2014).

The results from this survey suggest that the local authorities surveyed appeared to be responding to this changing policy and funding environment in a variety of ways. Ten years ago, in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, local structures to engage with councils specifically on race equality issues were common across England (Reeves, 2006). In this survey nearly half of respondents (46%) indicated that race equality issues were now instead discussed through their 'mainstream' engagement mechanisms (such as local neighbourhood forums). Similarly, despite a Central Government policy which advocates more 'pan-equality' approaches

(responding to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010) and a move away from 'identity-based' policy, there is still a sizeable number of local authorities who favoured race equality-specific models of engagement (27%). In addition, it's important to note that despite a gradual distancing by Central Government from 'community cohesion' as a policy (Ratcliffe, 2012), about a quarter of local authorities surveyed (22%) still saw this as a central aim of their local public engagement activities.

There would be benefit in future research considering the added benefit of running 'separate' equality-focused consultation activities. In particular it would be useful to consider the extent to which local public opinion and the views of policy-makers differ on this and whether it is possible in the context of increased demographic complexity and significant reductions in public spending to sustain specialised public engagement activities of this type for separate groups.

Secondly, I identified a stated desire to encourage identity-based representation amongst respondents, despite recognition of its limitations. Some 80% (28 of 35) of survey respondents indicated they were most concerned with finding people with particular identity-based attributes who would understand the needs of that 'community'. Yet at the same time, when asked about the *role of representation* and what it helped them to achieve, less than half of these respondents (n=13) felt most strongly that representatives could help in understanding 'specific' needs of diverse social groups, with nearly as many reporting they were most keen to explore the differences in need within groups as well as between groups (n=11). One could argue that a desire to explore differences in need within groups is not mutually

exclusive from seeking representatives from a particular background (Modood, 2013; Squires, 2001). However, an underlying question that emerges here is why might some respondents find a form of identity-based representation attractive when they don't appear to also strongly believe it will fulfil a core function of public engagement and consultation (to understand the needs of people within the community that is being represented)?

It would be useful to run the survey with a larger number of people and to provide a range of differently worded responses (with a similar message) to help confirm whether this tension exists amongst others. I would argue that this might be explained by an underlying expectation from many minority communities that people from their background will be 'represented' in the political process (Phillips, 1995). Achievement of 'descriptive' representation is often seen as a goal in itself, a visible sign of increased equity in the democratic process, as well as a means to improve equity in policy decisions. For example, Calhoun (1994) emphasises the, often necessary, constitutive role of cultural, ethnic and religious identifications in contemporary politics and has stressed that 'identity politics' in one form or another have been a feature of politics for centuries. Given the enduring socioeconomic and political inequalities faced by a range of diverse social groups in England (EHRC, 2015) local authorities may face political sensitivities if they did not publicly advocate models of representation that were descriptive in nature.

Indeed as I have identified through the qualitative experiment results in this study, I identified examples of many public engagement participants making claims about the need for more ethnic minority people to be present around the public policy decision-

making table. Yet this apparent belief in the achievement and value of descriptive representation amongst participants in this study stands in uneasy contrast with the increasingly global and superdiverse nature of some towns and cities. As our society becomes increasingly diverse and globalised (take the cities of Birmingham and London for instance with people from 150+ nationalities in residence), the job of finding a sufficient number of representatives from particular social groups and getting them around the policy-making table at the same time becomes a feat of epic administrative proportions.

I would argue that those organising public engagement activities of this type in the future are already facing challenges in achieving the 'mirroring' of the local population expected of them and are likely to feel it more in the future as our society becomes more demographically complex. In fact, I would suggest that the 'tension' I have outlined above is likely to be indicative of a lack of choice and autonomy that public engagement practitioners and policy makers have in designing models of engagement that are responsive to these new demands for representation. Ryan and Deci (2006) suggest that for an act to be 'autonomous' it needs to be fully endorsed by the self and in accordance with that person's values and interests. The tension that some respondents described between their stated preference for identity-based representation and weaker belief in the value of identity-based representation to define ethnic minority groups' needs suggests a lack of autonomy. This tension is suggestive of survey respondents acting and thinking in a way that is not entirely in accordance with their values. I would suggest that this lack of choice and autonomy derives partly from a paucity of information about alternative models to descriptive representation that might be adopted, but also the political and social

pressure that many public engagement practitioners arguably face to deliver models of engagement based on descriptive representation.

The lack of choice amongst practitioners to adopt alternative models to descriptive representation arguably has important implications for the breadth and innovation of future responses to local democratic activity. In particular, if practitioners have concerns about the ability of identity-based representation models to accurately predict the needs of particular social groups, then they should have opportunities to pursue those professional instincts and adopt and evaluate alternatives. In future research there would be merit in exploring further the autonomy of public engagement practitioners to choose 'alternative' forms of representation as a way to understand the needs of people from diverse backgrounds (such as recruiting representatives via interview based on their policy knowledge). Do practitioners and policy makers feel 'forced', by public opinion for instance, to adopt a particular approach? Do local authorities lack a credible-alternative to identity-based models of representation? There appears to have been a lack of attention paid to defining the purpose and measuring the value and impact of public engagement models (Duffy et al., 2008). Have policy-makers lacked a useable framework within which alternative approaches to descriptive representation and engagement of diverse groups might be comparatively evaluated? Or are there more 'implicit' factors at play here, where practitioners unconsciously adopt particular normative modes of behaviour when engaging ethnic minority groups in the policy-making process (Jones, 2013)? Interviews with public engagement practitioners would help to explore this in more detail.

Thirdly, I noted an apparent blurring of boundaries between different theories of managing cultural diversity (such as multiculturalism and interculturalism). In Section 4.1, I argued that in studying the politics of cultural diversity, there is not only contention between philosophies, but also contention *about* philosophies (e.g. how 'multiculturalism' should be best defined). This contention can mean that when focus is placed upon normative theoretical comparison of different models of managing cultural diversity, efforts to compare and evaluate the merits of different models are never entirely successful. I argued that, in developing a typology of public engagement practice that could be used in this survey, ultimately the level of 'fit' between the components of the typology and the diverse nature of definitions of terms such as 'multiculturalism' was less important for this study than simply describing concrete examples of public governance practice and attitudes that can be empirically mapped in the target population. I argued that these examples of existing practice would be likely to provide a responsive and convincing basis for comparative research of different governance approaches to assess their contribution to pressing contemporary social challenges.

Despite the drawbacks associated with categorically defining highly contested theories within short multiple choice survey responses, it is still interesting to note the pattern of responses gathered in the survey and what this might mean for the coherence of (what are often described as) 'bounded' theories such as multiculturalism, interculturalism and assimilationism when describing the activities of local authorities. A particularly interesting finding was the high levels of support for 'identity-based', descriptive models of *representation* and how this contrasted with support for models of *dialogue* and *decision-making* practice amongst local

authorities which involved a critical response to the notions of representative claim-making commonly associated with identity-based representation. There has been a tendency by some theorists to treat public governance practice associated with particular 'theories' of cultural difference such as assimilationism and multiculturalism as relatively bounded (Brubaker, 2005; Cantle, 2005). Whereas others (Brahm Levey, 2012; Modood and Meer, 2012) have argued that the boundaries between different theories of cultural diversity (particularly multiculturalism and interculturalism) are often blurred and that multiculturalism could be expanded to incorporate important components of other theories (Vasta, 2007). Certainly, the basic, descriptive results gathered through this survey would support the assertion that the lines are blurred between different theories of managing cultural diversity. Though useful as theoretical frames to describe broad schools of thought on governance practice, survey findings from this study indicate that implementation of 'multicultural' or 'intercultural' approaches to representation and governance are not as paradigmatic nor as Manichean as they are alleged to be in much literature on this subject (Barrett, 2013; Kymlicka, 2012; Werbner, 2012).

9.2.2 Implications of the findings

9.2.2.1 Theoretical

The principle theoretical contribution of these findings has been in the empirical demonstration of the blurring of lines between different theories of managing cultural diversity, particularly multiculturalism and interculturalism. Yet whether the blurring of lines between theoretical approaches is because attributes of 'intercultural' theory,

such as a critical rather than reifying stance on discussion of culture and identity, are in fact already present in formulations of 'multicultural' theory (as argued by theorists including Brahm Levey, 2012; Modood and Meer, 2012 and Taylor, 2012) is perhaps not the most important point here. Arguably a broader challenge lies in the apparently artificial and imposed nature of boundaries associated with different theoretical models of cultural difference. As Werbner (2012) suggests, multiculturalism can also be seen as a discourse in which scholars, cultural actors, politicians and the media participate and negotiate the meaning of the term, as well as being seen as a bounded political 'theory'. The local authority survey respondents in this study appear to have viewed discrete aspects of governance (representation, facilitation and decision-making) on their own merits. They have adopted forms of practice and behaviour that skate across and between the conceptual boundaries of particular theories of cultural difference. The apparent permeability of these theoretical frameworks as applied to public governance practice has important implications for future methodologies employed to understand their relative value and impact. These methodological considerations are considered below.

9.2.2.2 Policy and practice

As McGhee (2008) contends, multicultural forms of practice have continued at a local level in England despite national policy rhetoric to the contrary (he calls this 'reflexive multiculturalism') and this study supports that assertion, particularly in relation to the continued use of 'identity-based' forms of representation where representatives are sought based on attributes of ethnicity, culture and religion. Yet there were also signs that respondents were less convinced about the role identity-

based representation can play in describing the needs of specific social groups. I argued that there would be benefits in exploring this further through future research to understand whether public engagement practitioners feel there is a lack of information about alternative approaches to engaging with and gathering information about the needs of different social groups. I also suggested there would be benefit in understanding whether policy-makers felt, in some way, forced to adopt identity-based approaches to representation due to political or social pressures (e.g. calls from local communities for a 'representative' from their community to attend).

The future lines of inquiry prompted by this study are important for future policy and practice in this field because, whilst descriptive representation of traditionally excluded people is as an important step in the democratic process, it is also, arguably a relatively conservative aim and not always in the interests of the populace. Indeed, the contribution of increased descriptive representation to the advancement of policy preferences of minority groups (substantive representation) is not a foregone conclusion (Chaney and Fevre, 2002). As Phillips (1995) puts it when referring to the role of women representatives, women, when present in politics are more likely to act for women than men, but there is no guarantee that they will. If there are barriers in people's available conceptual or practical knowledge that is preventing the achievement of more substantive forms of representation for ethnic minority groups then these need to be illuminated further and addressed.

This study has also identified the need for future innovation and evaluation of new models of public engagement to help policy-makers and communities to decide whether these are more effective in identifying diverse social groups' needs in the

policy-making process. In particular, the study results suggest that in 2014 when data was collected, respondents favoured approaches to facilitation and decision-making practice that could be said to be more 'intercultural' in nature. As local authorities respond to the impact of significant reductions in their budget and increasing demographic complexity at a local level, these survey results indicate that respondents aspired to, or already were, finding ways to balance competing needs and 'claims' from diverse social groups as part of the policymaking process. However, some respondents also noted the significant challenges that arise in adopting these more deliberative, negotiation-based forms of public engagement and policy-making. For example, one respondent described how communities were not sufficiently 'robust' to engage in forms of public deliberation where the competing interests and demands of communities would be balanced. Improving the capacity of communities (and local authorities) to engage in discussions where the entitlements and public resource requests of diverse social groups are effectively discussed and balanced appears to be an important agenda for the future. Indeed, as I describe in the remainder of this chapter, this study has identified a number of useful issues that can help to inform future approaches to equality-related public policy dialogue and claim-making.

9.2.2.3 Methodological

The principle methodological contribution of the survey in this study has been in demonstrating the benefits of empirically mapping the practice and attitudes of public engagement practitioners and policy-makers. A significant portion of scholarly debate concerning the contribution of multicultural theory to contemporary

representation and governance practice has been conducted using predominantly philosophical modes of inquiry. As Faist argues ‘given the sweeping claims advanced by both critics and defenders of multiculturalism, it is indeed astonishing that the bulk of this work shares something in common insofar as it has largely revolved around normative theory (2012, p. 23). Yet this study has argued that there are limitations of using normative theory alone as an evaluative space to judge the contribution and impact of this aspect of public governance practice in contemporary society. This is partly because there are some specifically *practical* contemporary challenges associated with responding to an increasingly diverse populace. In the England of the 1970s it may have been easier to anticipate the ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds of local ethnic minority residents and to seek political representation from each group. In 2016, this task has become harder for public policy-makers as the populations of many towns and cities are increasingly characterized by high levels of ethnic diversity, along with new migration patterns and migrants with differences in legal immigration status, gender and age within each group.

The study of super-diversity underlines the need for empirically-oriented research with the exploration of the meaning of these forms of *practical* challenges at its heart. Another central tenet of emerging theory associated with super-diversity is the questioning of the coherence and currency of traditional units of analysis (such as ‘nation’ or ‘ethnic group’) that have driven comparative research about inequality faced by diverse social groups in society (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015). As an example, multicultural theory has tended to treat citizenship through the lens of a nation-centred approach (Van Reekum et al., 2012). With the growth of increasingly

complex migration patterns associated with super-diversity, transnationalism and the questioning of national identity has become the norm. This raises searching questions about the value and sustainability of policies that are designed based on those units of analysis (e.g. ‘nation’, ‘ethnic group’, ‘culture’). Arguably, the currency of policies designed to manage cultural difference and promote equality will increasingly need to be judged in terms of whether they can respond to new social formations and demographic realities associated with the unpredictability of ‘diversity’ categories and high levels of complex and overlapping diversities within localities.

There are then a number of important contemporary challenges associated with increasing demographic complexity and associated pressures on public resource allocation and policy decisions. Given the poverty of empirical research associated with critical assessments of the impact of ‘multiculturalism’ on contemporary society (Faist, 2012) there is a need for more systematic and comparative analysis of *particular forms* of governance and representation practice used by practitioners and policy-makers to assess whether they help to respond to these new demographic and social challenges. Survey evidence, of the type described in this study, could help improve the responsiveness of the type of comparative analysis employed by offering empirical evidence about real-life public engagement practices that are being adopted. This comparative analysis needs to be based on real examples of practice that practitioners are actually using as opposed to theoretical comparison alone (and all of the analytical dead-ends involved in comparing apparently ‘bounded’ theories with definitions which regularly shift their shape). These examples of existing practice would be likely to provide a more responsive and

convincing basis for comparative research of different governance approaches to assess their contribution to pressing contemporary social challenges.

In this study I have outlined an approach to operationalizing normative conceptions of governance practice associated with the engagement of diverse social groups in policy-making in this study. The sample used could be increased and there were also limitations in the wording of questions used (as described in Section 9.1.1). Yet, repeating a similar exercise with a more representative sample and with a more sophisticated set of multiple choice questions that had been tested for construct validity would help to achieve this. These examples of practice could then provide a more responsive basis for comparative research of different governance approaches and theories of managing cultural diversity to assess their contribution to pressing contemporary social challenges.

9.3 Research objective 2: which factors influence the scope and content of issues of equality discussed in public engagement activities?

9.3.1 Response to the research objective

As discussed in Chapter 7, I described a complex range of factors that appeared to influence the scope and content of equality issues discussed as part of public engagement sessions examined in this study. Some aspects of discussion about equality appeared to have very little to do with the nature of the intervention. In particular, personal characteristics such as levels of self-confidence, knowledge and expertise about particular 'domains' of equality (such as housing or education) or personal views about what 'equality' meant were described by interviewees as

important factors that influenced their decision to contribute (or not contribute) to discussions about equality in a particular way. People's profession and their areas of personal interest had a significant bearing upon the types of equality issues they wanted to discuss. Similarly, some participants were particularly vocal and persuasive which meant that particular topics that they introduced to the discussion were more likely to be discussed by other participants. These differences in characteristics between participants appeared to influence differences in the ability of participants to further the policy preferences that they thought were important (important either for themselves or for others they 'represented') during the session they attended.

Yet, at the same time, the differences between the two sessions in terms of the *content* of discussion about some aspects of equality were pronounced. The Intercultural Session saw a greater number of claims and more detailed, critical discussion of those claims. Claims also related to a wider range of types of equality in the Intercultural Session. In addition, there was a much higher proportion of group-specific claims recorded in the Multicultural Session compared to the Intercultural Session. Participants' views about the reasons for those differences and analysis of the transcripts suggests that some of these differences appeared to not only be explainable by differences in the composition of engagement participants. Indeed, different approaches to facilitation and representation adopted in each session appeared to affect some aspects of public dialogue about equality. Three key factors associated with the intervention or approaches to facilitation that appeared to influence the scope and content of equality issues discussed by participants are summarised below.

Firstly, facilitator encouragement of critical discussion and the challenging of group-specific claims in the Intercultural Session appeared to be associated with a greater range of equality claims, more detailed discussion of the grounds and warrants of claims and less group-specific claims compared to the Multicultural Session. Despite attempts by a number of participants in the Multicultural Session to challenge the role the facilitator played (particularly the facilitator's encouragement of participants to make group-specific claims and to tolerate the claims made by others) there was less inter-group dialogue about the content of people's claims and people continued to make group-specific claims with only one example of critical discussion of a claim throughout the session. This assessment of the influence of the facilitation role was broadly supported by interviewees from the Intercultural Session. However, this assessment was less supported by interviewees from the Multicultural Session who felt the reasons for lower levels of critical debate about people's claims was due to choices they made themselves (rather than the influence of the facilitation approach).

Secondly, differences in the content of equality of process and autonomy claims also appeared to relate to choices made by participants about what was deemed 'acceptable', 'beneficial' or 'sensible' to discuss within the group setting. In some cases, people described a very strategic and considered assessment of both the costs and benefits of making a particular type of equality-based claim or challenging (largely representative) claims made by somebody else based on factors such as risk of offending somebody or being harmed through conflict that might ensue. By combining analysis of transcripts with interview data I identified a number of

‘closures’ in discussion relating to both equality of process and equality of autonomy topics. There were more examples of these closures amongst participants from the Multicultural Session and though all interviewees in this session described their decision not to make a claim or to avoid challenging a claim as their own decision (and not related to the actions of the facilitator) I would argue that the role of facilitator could be influential in enabling participants to re-assess the nature of the ‘cost-benefit’ analysis that some of them described. Indeed some participants in the Intercultural Session, though recognising facilitators had helped them to engage in difficult and conflictual discussions, felt the facilitator could have done even more to address closures in the discussion and described what should be done.

Thirdly, the topic ‘Equality of What?’ was discussed marginally more and in a more sophisticated way in the Intercultural Session. There was relatively little interview evidence available to help explain this pattern. I did however identify a range of factors described by interviewees which appear likely to support more effective discussion of this question in public dialogue in the future. Some of these techniques share much with what is already known about effective deliberative democratic techniques such as: sharing appropriate information with people beforehand about what can be invested and evidence that can inform discussions (John et al., 2011); and ensuring people with particular expertise (e.g. equality domain-specific) knowledge are present in the deliberative space (Fischer 2009). Yet other issues for further exploration relate specifically to challenges associated with discussing the topic of *equality*. These include: recognising and discussing issues of ‘legitimacy’ and ‘authenticity’ when participants are encouraged to critically debate group-specific equality claims; acknowledging the potential influence of wider societal discourses

about equalities and ‘behavioural or linguistic’ scripts associated with claims made by people relating to ‘equality of what’; and recognising the effect of conditioned expectations about the type of ‘equality’ in society that may be possible to achieve through the policy-making process. Indeed on this latter point, in both sessions there appeared to be important limitations associated with the range and breadth of discussion of this question ‘equality of what?’. Policy solutions put forward by participants in both sessions tended to be limited to claims framed in terms of ‘descriptive representation’ or specialised public service provision for particular identity groups. This was despite some of the same participants stating in their interviews that these forms of representation and public service design were problematic and can be ineffective.

9.3.3 Implications of the findings

9.3.3.1 Theoretical

Firstly, an important contribution of this study to the theory of public engagement and the policy-making process has been illumination of the role of the facilitator in enabling critical discussion of ‘representative claims’. A representative claim is “a claim to represent or to know what represents the interests of someone or something” (Saward 2006, p.305). The definition of ‘group-specific’ claims examined in this study are one example of representative claims (relating to one specific social group such as an ethnic group). Analysis of public dialogue transcripts in this study suggested that representative claims appeared to be harder for other participants to challenge and discuss without prompting and support from facilitators. There would

be benefit in further study to understand what it is about representative claims in the context of equality-related policy making that appear to make it harder for people to challenge and discuss them openly as part of the democratic process.

Saward's work in the field of representative claim-making offers an important foundation. He acknowledges that the 'context' or 'environment' within which a claim is made may influence whether or not it is seen as a 'representative' claim or simply a factual statement (Saward, 2010). Similarly, Disch (2012) suggests that, rather than reflecting already existing identity groups, representation (as an activity) *produces* particular ontological effects. For example, when acting as a representative of a group in a public engagement context, the representative names or describes a group and in doing this influences how subsequent claims about that group may or may not be recognised by others. Indeed, claims made relating to the needs or entitlements of particular social groups do appear to take on a particular 'representative' character within a context of policy discussion about 'equality'. Representation is a process and an important context for how identities are viewed, discussed and performed by dialogue participants. An important contribution of this study has been to show how these dynamics of representation can operate. This study has shown, through the use of a small number of in-depth examples, how participants can feel hesitant about challenging representative claims. It has also shown how particular aspects of facilitation practice, such as gentle probing of claims that people make about the needs or entitlements of specific ethnic groups as was employed in the Intercultural Session, can influence or disrupt the 'context' within which claims are made, recognised and discussed. This disruption of the context of claim-making arguably makes the authority and robustness of 'representative' claims

a legitimate subject for dialogue. This can, in turn, influence the degree to which those claims are subject to critical deliberation and assessment by other participants and can influence the extent to which alternative claims are recognised.

Saward (2010) also describes the important role that 'makers' of claims play in contributing their own agendas that drive the making of a claim and its content. A number of authors have explored the roles that claim-makers play in constructing representative claims in recent years (Vargovcikova, 2015; Thompson, 2012; Beckwith, 2011). In this study I gathered empirical information about how some respondents put forward claims during the session that they had said they wanted to in interviews before the session and that were closely related to their own interests and interpretation of what 'equality' meant. Yet, in a slightly different direction to Saward's analysis, it has been interesting in this study to also consider what influenced people's ability to *sustain claims in line with their motivations*, what influenced whether their claims were *seen* as 'representative' by other participants in the group and, related to this, whether other participants chose to *criticise* those claims. In fact, in this study, claim-makers' underlying motivations and agendas do not appear to have been the main influence. Indeed, nearly all respondents interviewed suggested that they did not see themselves as 'representing' people from a particular social group, yet through interviews I found that many claims were still interpreted as 'representative claims' by other participants. Similarly, some interviewees from the Multicultural Session did not feel they could make certain claims or challenge claims because they were representative in nature, whereas many in the Intercultural Session felt they could. Thus the 'purpose' or underlying motivations of claimants appeared to play a less important role than 'context' and the

dialogic environment in each session when considering whether group-specific claims were seen as ‘representative’ by other participants and whether they were sustained or critically discussed.

These findings provide an important contribution to our understanding of representative claim-making because they suggest, firstly, that dialogic environment and context are important factors in influencing people’s decisions to not only *make*, but also *sustain*, or *criticise* representative claims when publicly discussing issues of equality-related policy. The study has identified examples of factors that can both impede and support critical dialogue of people’s claims. This is important because critical deliberation of representative claims is likely to be increasingly required in future policy development in towns and cities in the UK that are becoming increasingly diverse. Effective dialogue and balancing and negotiation of claims is particularly important with less discretionary public funding available to accommodate specialised public service responses to representative claims from a wider range of social groups (such as ethnic-specific components of public services).

The second important contribution of this study to theoretical understanding of the politics of equality has been in its exploration of dialogue participants’ treatment of the question ‘equality of what?’. Sen (1997) asks what the democratic space should look like in which informed judgments are made about questions such as ‘equality of what?’ This study has, I would argue, advanced our understanding in this field. In addition to identifying facilitation practices that can support this (see ‘policy and practice’ below), I have identified the role that norms of behaviour and language associated with equality-related policy dialogue appear to play in limiting free and

critical debate of the question ‘equality of what?’. I suggested that some of the claims made about the need for descriptive representation and identity-based models of public service provision may have been made (and ultimately recorded by policy-makers as important to the community), despite people not believing that this was the best way to progress equality. This type of practice is suggestive of implicit or unconscious behaviour by participants, where some form of heuristic (Blommaert, 2015) is used to make sense of equality and diversity and to help participants orientate their conduct within the consultation environment. When faced with the question ‘equality of what’?’ there appeared to be limits to people’s available conceptual knowledge and ability to imagine and discuss what a ‘different’ approach might look like. With a couple of exceptions, participants in both conversations seemed to act within these unconscious boundaries of language and behaviour, irrespective of whether they agreed with the value of descriptive representation and identity-based public service design or not.

From a theoretical point of view, these apparently unconscious boundaries of public dialogue and practice are important to recognise because, I would argue, the contribution of descriptive representation to the furthering of equality in policy-making needs to be considered more consciously and systematically. If we are not able to recognise the limits to current policy debate about the value and impact of descriptive representation and associated norms of representative claim-making, then we are unlikely to be able to explore the value and nature of alternative models to engaging minorities in decisions about public policy. I would argue this is a central ‘equality of what?’ question that needs to feature more highly in academic and policy debate. This is particularly true in the context of a superdiverse society. Public

governance processes are required that are able to respond to a high level of diversity and demographic change. Arguably, traditional models of descriptive representation, where a small number of residents from a relatively static population of largely Commonwealth countries represented the needs and interest of their 'community' are under pressure (Vertovec, 2007). In particular, these models are struggling to cope with the complexity associated with super-diversity and the speed, scale and spread (Phillimore, 2014) of migrant groups.

Yet exploring and questioning the salience and value of simple descriptive representation in the politics of migration and equality is also important because a reliance on particular models of public governance can mask or limit our aspirations for the achievement of other forms of equality in the policy-making process. When descriptive representation is judged as a goal in itself, it can be a useful symbolic indicator of more equal access for minority groups to the policy process (Chaney, 2014; Haider-Markel, 2011; Childs, 2008; Phillips, 1995). Descriptive representation can even be (and often is) judged as a proxy for or an indicator of the achievement of other forms of representation such as substantive representation (the congruence between the policy preferences advanced by the representative and the interests of the represented) and 'symbolic representation' (whether the represented feel fairly and effectively represented). Indeed, in terms of gender and politics, some have argued that we have reached a situation where 'women's presence matters, above and beyond whether or not it can be "proved" that they are more likely to act for women' (Evans, 2012, p.185). Yet arguably, this can lead to confusion about the underlying purpose of descriptive representation. Some will see the achievement of descriptive representation as a 'goal' in itself (for example, more ethnic minority

councillors). Whereas others will judge the success of increased descriptive representation in terms of what those representatives do.

Improved rigour in the evaluation of public engagement practice (of the type advocated in this comparative study) could help people to be clearer about the type of 'representation' that is achieved by using different models of facilitation and engagement. Providing people with evidence about the extent to which descriptive models of representation (such as practices adopted in the Multicultural Session in this study) lead (or do not lead) to substantive or symbolic representation can help people to assess the appropriateness of the models they are adopting. Yet this study has also emphasised that despite great potential for the development and testing of new models of representation focused on substantive and symbolic representation, there are important reasons for descriptive representation still being seen as the 'gold standard' in equalities-based policy making. The potential political fall-out of not being seen to promote improved descriptive representation for ethnic minority groups is only one. Arguably our belief in the pursuit of descriptive representation (and the lack of focus on promoting and measuring other forms of representation too) also stems from societal assumptions about 'difference' and the type of equality that is believed to be achievable through the engagement of ethnic minority groups in public policy.

The assumed relationship between 'identity' and the ability of representatives to reason as part of the policymaking process is one such assumption. As Sen (1999) puts it, even though certain basic cultural attitudes and beliefs may influence representatives, 'there are various influences on our reasoning, and we need not

lose our ability to consider other ways of reasoning, just because we identify with, and have been influenced by membership of, a particular group' (p. 23). I have argued in this study that people should have greater opportunity to critically explore with others the role that a particular 'identity' plays in their lives and in determining their life preferences. This can result in more nuanced and detailed consideration of people's claims and equality-related policy issues. Unfortunately, as I have identified in this study, the approaches that minorities take to reasoning (and their aspirations and social needs) are often assumed to be determined principally by some aspect of their culture or identity, or at the very least, those issues of culture and identity can be presumed to be 'off limits' to critical debate by others. As I suggest below, organisers and facilitators of public engagement activities can play important roles in seeking to address and disrupt these limits to critical deliberation.

9.3.3.2 Policy and practice

Confronting the obstacles facing anyone hoping to engage disagreement and other forms of difference through public deliberation is 'not a path for the fainthearted' (Makau and Marty, 2013, p.248). Indeed, as this study has shown, there are a range of factors which can restrict the quality of equality-related public policy discourse (assessed in this study in terms of the scope and content of equality issues discussed). Some of these factors have been identified in other studies too. These factors include: differences in communicative capacity which can affect differences in levels of justification for arguments (justification rationality) and negotiation with other participants (Han et al., 2015); differences in confidence of participants and volume of speech which can lead to inequalities in participation (Karpowitz et al., 2012); and

differences in knowledge and access to information which can support effective deliberation about policy options (John et al., 2011).

Other authors (Rienstra and Hook, 2006; Bohman, 1996) have noted the significant challenges in meeting many of the normative, 'ideal' standards associated with early configurations of deliberative democracy (Benhabib, 2002; Habermas, 1984). In particular, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, authors have raised concerns about the likely replication within public deliberation environments of patterns of marginalisation and inequality already present within wider society (Young, 2000; Mansbridge, 1998). This study has contributed to this debate by offering a number of empirical examples of instances in which the quality of deliberation was reduced by dialogue participants not saying what they wanted to. Some of this related to inequalities between participants (e.g. in perceived differences in 'legitimacy' to make or challenge representative claims). Some of this also related to apparent discourses and ways of behaving in broader society that appeared to influence the types of claims participants made and the way in which they interacted with each other. For example, participants described not wanting to challenge representative claims made by others for fear of offending somebody or creating conflict. Other participants voiced concerns about the effectiveness of descriptive representation and identity-based models of public service-design, yet at the same time made claims within the sessions in favour of these models. This was suggestive of limits to people's knowledge or confidence in suggesting alternatives to these types of models.

By comparing different models of facilitation, I have argued in this study that some of

these barriers to effective deliberation are amenable to influence through the actions of facilitators within a group dialogue context. I outline below four key areas of public engagement practice that appear to be relevant in supporting high quality public deliberation about equality-related policy.

Firstly, participants in public deliberation about equality-related public policy can be supported to critically discuss representative claims by facilitators adopting some of the practices deployed in the Intercultural Session in this study. In the Multicultural Session participants were enabled to make representative claims but these claims were 'tolerated' rather than questioned or explored. Whereas in the Intercultural Session, whilst the wording of questions played a role (e.g. inviting or not inviting group-specific claims), the most significant influence on effective deliberation of representative claims appeared to be the role facilitators played in simply questioning and challenging representative claims. The modelling of this behaviour by the facilitators in the Intercultural Session also appeared to enable participants to do the same when responding to claims made by other participants. This enabled greater exploration of the grounds and warrants underlying people's claims which is an important component of the process of *balancing and prioritising* claims about equality.

Secondly, in order to provide a foundation for a better type of 'equality politics', critical debate about equality issues needs to be sustained. The facilitation style which was used in the Intercultural Session did appear to enable more 'heated' debates than in the Multicultural Session. In the Intercultural Session, more people described learning about the topic of equality and I observed a number of people

changing their position and their claims on a particular equality topic (e.g. originally arguing that inequality affects one group and changing this to a claim that inequality affects other groups too as a result of challenge by somebody else and resulting debate). Yet this can be an uncomfortable process for dialogue participants. Indeed, there did appear to be limits to the scope and effectiveness of the model adopted in the Intercultural Session. For example, some participants felt they could not challenge others when they raised claims relating to the legacy of the British Empire. A number of respondents expressed a desire to reduce conflict and maintain politeness by avoiding actions that would threaten their relationships with others. Yet arguably, it is through this form of critical discussion, when properly facilitated, that new ideas and new alliances can emerge. This a field of practice that would benefit from new thinking.

One promising area of new thinking in the field of democracy and conflict resolution in recent years has been ‘process work’. Describing a particular approach to group facilitation called ‘process work’, Mindell (2014) argues that conflict between people with different perspectives on an issue is central to social change. He describes how people will often have an ‘edge’ on certain topics. Mindell describes an edge as ‘a communication block’ that occurs when an individual or group, out of fear, represses something that is trying to emerge (e.g. discussion of a topic such as racism or homophobia) (2014, p.41). Mindell suggests that a facilitator can play a role in enabling a group to address ‘edges’ such as this and to bring discussion about those topics out. Conflict and an atmosphere of tension within a group plays an important role in enabling people to recognise where their ‘edge’ lies and in helping people to question and go beyond it. Indeed, this particular form of facilitation encourages a

whole group to sustain conflict and the tension associated with it for as long as a resolution takes. He describes how this process of ‘sitting in the fire’ can help to bring groups together. Instead of avoiding conflict, or letting conflict break groups apart, process work encourages people to sustain the uncomfortableness associated with conflict to find resolutions to issues (however small those issues or minor those resolutions might be). This, Mindell argues, can result in building a sense of community within the group that can be used, over time, to respond to larger, more fundamental issues of conflict.

Adopting elements of this group facilitation approach may have helped to address some of the limits in critical dialogue I observed in the Intercultural Session. For example, they may have helped participants to have explicitly discussed some of the inconsistencies John observed in the treatment of White British people in the discussion. John felt that, whilst stereotypes about people from particular ethnic minority backgrounds were discussed extensively by the group, the facilitator and other participants reinforced stereotypes about White British people and did not give him an opportunity to sustain critical debate of this topic amongst the group. This left John feeling a lack of solidarity with the facilitator and some participants in the room (despite him also agreeing that inequality is experienced by a range of other minority groups in British society too). Yet, as a number of respondents in this study suggested, the facilitation of conflict needs to be extremely well managed in order to avoid potential harm or distress to those involved. For example, participants described how they purposefully avoided challenging claims made by other participants about the needs or entitlements of particular groups in order to protect themselves. This is a difficult and challenging field of political debate and facilitators

need to be very skilled to enable discussion of this level to happen. Indeed, in the field of process work, group facilitators are generally only deemed ‘qualified’ after many years of training and study (often in the field of psychological therapy).

Thirdly, as respondents noted in this research, as well as benefits for effective deliberation, there are also important personal ‘costs’ to participants associated with critical discussion of representative claims. Discussion of representative claims can touch upon sensitive issues of cultural belief and associated entitlement that are highly emotive and central to people’s sense of identity. They may also require people to enter into conflictual situations which they do not feel comfortable with. In neither session did participants appear to be completely supported by the facilitator to handle some of these costs (though there were more examples of this type of dialogue in the Intercultural Session). Yet I did identify a number of facilitation practices that would appear to support this process. In particular, there would be benefit in the facilitator supporting participants to reflect upon and reduce the potential ‘costs’ they may feel in making or challenging claims that they value. As an example, number of participants described how the facilitator could have done more to address the role that ‘identity’ plays in conferring people with more or less perceived ‘legitimacy’ to make or challenge claims in different situations. Some participants felt they couldn’t challenge or critically discuss somebody else’s representative claim because they, themselves weren’t from the same ethnic group. Facilitators can raise awareness of, what Mindell (2014) refers to as ‘rank’ conferred by particular identity attributes within a group dialogue setting. But also they can support dialogue participants to become more aware of the power of that rank and to support participants to respectfully discuss and even challenge it when it is not

considered by the group to be in the interests of the pursuit of social justice and open critical dialogue. In practical terms, this can involve facilitators nudging or challenging people during the dialogue when they fall into roles that reinforce particular stereotypes (as was the brief for facilitators in the Intercultural Session). In short, facilitators could help to re-frame discussions where issues may become polarised due to people being unable to challenge hierarchy of privilege within the group.

It is important to note that the facilitator's role in helping people to engage in effective, critical dialogue with each other is arguably more suited to a longer-term developmental process for participants. This type of developmental support is likely to require repeated shared public engagement experiences for the group to develop this level of knowledge and quality of relationships. Indeed a number of respondents in this study described how more time was required to help to build relationships of trust between participants before they started putting forward claims and critically discussing other people's claims. In the current pressurised and fleeting environment of public participation in policy-making (Bertels, 2015) this type of investment in relationship-building may appear difficult to justify. However, as this study has shown, some respondents felt having relationships of trust between participants was the only way for there to be open discussion about the topic of equality.

Finally, from a policy perspective it has been interesting to note the nature of claims made by participants in this study stood in stark contrast to neo-liberal forms of public policy favoured by the current UK Government (Littler, 2013; Hall, 2011). Despite attempts by facilitators in both sessions to encourage participants to focus on 'priority' issues (which the local authority in this study had asked facilitators to

emphasise given significant public funding cuts), participants continued to put forward a range of separate and disparate equality claims, many of which required significant additional public investment and neither group identified clear priorities for local investment to respond to inequality. It will be important to consider through future research how to balance a tradition of claim-making that emphasises equality of outcomes (often for particular groups with discretionary spend available for ethnic group specific initiatives) with a significant reduction in the available public funding and political will to accommodate claims of this type.

9.3.3.3 Methodological

The principal contribution to knowledge of this part of the study has been to provide an example of how a qualitative experiment can be used to explore the wide range of factors that may influence people's actions and how they feel within a policy-oriented public engagement environment. The experimental conditions applied to both sessions enabled me to discount some of the obvious variables that may have influenced participants' experience (such as the location or the facilitators) in a way that comparison of other 'naturally occurring' examples of public engagement activity might not have done. Yet, at the same time, there were benefits in adopting an inductive approach to analysis which saw the experimental design as a largely heuristic advice which enabled me to examine patterns of behaviour. This inductive process was greatly aided by the Applied Thematic Analysis approach (Guest et al., 2012) that I adopted. In particular, I was able to use quantitative data to examine patterns in the study's dependent variables (levels of autonomy and scope and content of equality issues discussed). I then used my observation of public dialogue

sessions and interviews with participants to make sense of those patterns and better understand their potential meaning in relation to the research objectives. This comparison of content analysis of 'claims' and interviews was particularly useful because it enabled me to explore and compare claim-makers' motivations to what was said (and indeed not said) during each session.

Celis et al. (2014) contend, in the field of gender and politics, that an important future research agenda is to 'generate innovative insights into what representation is and what it means for particular groups' (p.151). I would argue that the analytical process of comparing the content of claims with the motivations of claimants I have described in this study can be useful in this regard. Also the qualitative experimental design employed in this study has offers an interesting approach to evaluating the effects of different models of public engagement practice on representation. In this study I have taken a number of complex concepts (e.g. autonomy and 'types' and 'frames' of equality) and have operationalised these so they can be used as measurements of particular aspects of substantive representation that have been particularly neglected in the study of 'equality politics'. I recognise that the research design was ambitious and there were a number of drawbacks to the conceptual frameworks employed (see Section 9.1). Yet overall, I would argue the design is worthy of further testing and refinement and has offered a useful foundation for the evaluation of different models of public engagement practice in the future.

9.4 Research objective 3: which factors influence the level of autonomy people feel they have in public engagement activities?

9.4.1 Response to the research objective

Analysis of interview data revealed two specific aspects of the intervention that appeared to influence levels of autonomy experienced by participants in each of the two sessions. Firstly, the approach adopted influenced how supported claimants felt about making or challenging equality-related representative claims. Aspects of this dynamic are described above in section 9.3.3.1. However, viewing these issues through the lens of 'autonomy' helped to identify particular types of barriers to autonomy that participants faced associated with the approach to facilitation. In the Multicultural Session, participants described forms of introjection (desire for social approval and not to upset others) which, arguably, were associated with being asked to 'respect' and 'tolerate' the views of others as part of the intervention's designated facilitation approach. In the Intercultural Session, some participants described barriers to active decision-making (e.g. being worried about potential conflict) which, arguably were associated with participants not feeling adequately supported in a dialogue environment where participants were encouraged to be highly critical and challenging of each other's claims and the assumptions underlying them.

Secondly, participants in the Intercultural Session described how they felt that they weren't able to make or challenge particular claims due to their own identity and the perceived legitimacy this conferred upon them within the group. They noted the role the facilitator could have played in supporting them to do this more effectively. Thus when claims are open to critical debate (as was encouraged in the Intercultural Session), the facilitator has a particularly important role to play in addressing these issues of identity and legitimacy to enable all people to engage with equal autonomy in the discussion.

Finally, there were a range of other factors that appeared to influence participants' levels of autonomy which were not directly attributable to the nature of the intervention. Firstly, participants in both sessions felt they were forced to act as a representative due to the expectations of others (either due to the demographic profile of the group or due to pressure from others within their community). Secondly, analysis of dialogue transcripts and interviews suggested that the parameters of policy dialogue about 'equality' are constrained in a number of ways by broader societal understanding of 'equality' and by the actions of policy-makers who were perceived as not always having a 'genuine' desire to progress equality in its widest sense. Thirdly, people had a range of 'internal' barriers to autonomy such as low self-confidence or poor trust and bias associated with people from particular backgrounds based on previous experience. Fourthly, there were important signs that participants were not passive recipients in formulating their response to particular stimuli during the intervention. People negotiated with internal factors (such as confidence, values or beliefs) to make personal assessments about the cost and benefits associated with acting in a way they had reason to value during the public engagement activity. I argued, in some instances, dialogue participants' decision to not act due to perceived 'cost' of their actions could still be seen as a lack of autonomy if people acted in a way that they didn't value (even if this decision was consciously made). Finally, some people, though saying they didn't believe in identity-based representation or weren't acting as a representative still made representative claims, suggesting a lack of autonomy.

9.4.2 Implications of the findings

9.4.2.1 Theoretical

As discussed in Chapter 3, research in the field of 'identity politics' has described situations in which representatives either choose or are forced to assume particular identities based on attributes like their ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation (Bernstein, 2005). Yet there are relatively few examples of empirical studies that explore this dynamic. In Chapter 3 I suggested that authors in the field of ethnic and racial studies and political science have also suggested that identity politics associated with multicultural theory can 'subordinate political goals to the demands of ethnic identity' (Malik 2006, online). In some of the literature on this topic, representatives are portrayed as having little choice but to engage in the 'divide and rule', identity-based claim-making associated with essentialist forms of identity politics in order to get their point across to policy-makers (Barry 2001, p.11). Yet in much of the literature there is little empirical evidence regarding the extent to which the enactment of identity politics is 'done to' communities, or whether adopting identity-based representation strategies are a purposive, autonomous choice for those representatives. By viewing these issues of essentialism and subordination through a structured framework of autonomy, this study has contributed to filing these gaps in empirical evidence in two principle ways.

Firstly, applying the autonomy framework used in this study to understand the potentially 'limiting' effect of identity-based representation has highlighted some interesting dynamics. I generated empirical evidence of, what appeared to be,

‘introjection’ which is a barrier to the ‘self-reflection’ component of autonomy. This involved public engagement participants choosing whether or not to make or challenge representative claims based on a desire for social approval or self-worth. I also identified evidence of barriers to active decision-making associated with coercion or pressure from others. Some respondents described feeling pressurised about not speaking out when they disagreed with something being said by other participants about the needs of a particular community because of the fear of conflict that might ensue or because of pressure they felt from others (e.g. people in their community). I also identified numerous examples of people acting in a way that did not appear to be in accordance with their stated values concerning the underlying principles of identity-based representation. In this situation, however, the source of the barrier to autonomy was less clear. I would argue (as I did above in relation to research objective 2) that underlying the enactment of public dialogue about equality-related policy are a number of unconscious assumptions or ‘behavioural and linguistic scripts’ (Blommaert, 2015) or a lack of viable alternatives to representative claim-making that encourage people to make representative claims, even if their underlying values and beliefs do not appear to be in accordance with this.

Though the barriers to autonomy described above offer a useful theoretical foundation upon which to conduct more detailed research in the future. This research would focus on these specific aspects of autonomy in more detail and would seek to test some of the theories and assertions I have begun to build in this study. Do particular forms of facilitation, particular combinations of group make-up, or particular forms of learning and capacity-building help to reduce these barriers to autonomy? Comparative, experimental research could help to explore this in more detail.

Secondly, I believe that the autonomy framework used in this study helped to shed light on some of the blurry and grey boundaries associated with 'choice' of participants in the field of public engagement practice. As argued in Chapter 3, the debate about the merits of multicultural theory compared to other forms of theory in the context of public governance and representation can be very polemic. On the one hand multicultural theory is criticised for encouraging identity politics (Lentin and Titley, 2012). On the other hand, descriptive representation is seen as an empowering pursuit and a necessary, constituent element of the politics of equality as it enables people with experience of inequality who are rarely heard to have a voice (Modood, 20013).

Viewing the debate about the coercive or empowering nature of identity-based representation through a lens of 'autonomy' helps to identify, in empirical terms, where people may have a 'choice'. Interviews with participants demonstrated how, often, they actively weighed up the pros and cons of making or challenging a particular form of claim. Such decisions were sometimes *active* and based on factors such as levels of self-confidence and views about the potential risk of negative consequences of their actions. Yet viewing these issues through a lens of autonomy helped to identify that even though these decisions were sometimes consciously made and people sometimes acknowledged the effect of introjection or coercion on their decision, they could still be seen to be a lack of autonomy. This is because, using the autonomy framework employed in this study, I was able to identify the *internal tension* people faced when they acted in a way that was not consistent with their underlying beliefs or interests.

Thus even when people appeared to be ‘choosing’ to act, there were instances their behaviour was not autonomous. The internal tensions that people faced when ‘choosing’ whether to act a particular way need to be acknowledged and studied more systematically when analysing dynamics of ‘essentialism’ and ‘subordination’ associated with identity politics. Similarly, other unconscious norms of behaviour and language or a lack of viable alternatives to representative claim-making need to be explored through further research to better understand the apparent contradiction between people’s stated values and beliefs and how they make claims in this type of public dialogue environment. On a practical level, there may also be, as I suggest below, advantages in encouraging public dialogue participants themselves to acknowledge these types of tensions and decisions too in order to improve levels of autonomy.

9.4.2.2 Policy and practice

In the literature, debate about the value and limits of ‘toleration’ as a strategy for integration and public dialogue are well-established. Whereas some have argued toleration is needed to safeguard individual autonomy (Parekh, 2000), a number of theorists have suggested that limits need to be applied if cultural practices harm that autonomy (Walzer, 1997, Kymlicka, 1995; Raz, 1986). Much debate in this field has focused on determining *where* those limits to toleration might be most usefully applied and how (Vitakinen, 2015; Forst, 2003). Literature in this field has often treated different philosophical standpoints on this issue as quite separate. There are those arguing from a liberal egalitarian position that the State should offer special

protections to cultural groups as this is important to their individual autonomy and should not interfere unnecessarily with the internal affairs of cultural groups (Kymlicka, 1995). Others have rejected the role of individual autonomy in guiding state policies and have suggested there should be more focus on building mutual toleration and balancing different individuals' and groups' needs (Vitakinen, 2015).

The first important contribution to our understanding of policy and practice is that this study has provided empirical examples of how both of these positions in the literature can play out at an interpersonal level in public policy dialogue. For example, some participants appeared to value the role of the public policy consultation organisers in not interfering or challenging claims made about cultural entitlement in the Multicultural Session (consistent with the liberal egalitarian position). Some in the Intercultural Session thought the practice of critically discussing representative claims uncomfortable and this led them to disengage from the discussion to avoid potential conflict. The study has also shown how the boundaries of some of these theoretical standpoints may be blurred in practice because people can experience individual autonomy differently in different situations. For example, one participant (Andy) in the Multicultural Session valued the opportunity to make representative claims based on his group membership and described a lack of autonomy when he was not able to do so when challenged by others. Yet at the same time Andy also described his frustration at not feeling able to challenge illiberal cultural practices or stereotypical views about particular ethnic groups put forward by other participants.

These barriers to autonomy are important to effective public dialogue about equality-related policy. The empirical examples examined in this study suggest a balance needs to be struck between approaches that advocate individual autonomy and mutual tolerance.

Individual autonomy is felt in different ways by different people and does not, for all, in all situations, equate to a liberal egalitarian vision for 'toleration' and the protection of the right to make representative claims without interference or challenge. Similarly, this study has shown how critical discussion and balancing of different people's representative claims can be associated with a reduction in autonomy if dialogue participants are not adequately supported or protected by the facilitator in this process. It is important that policy-makers and those running public engagement activities seek to strike a balance between enabling people to sustain their claims in a public dialogue environment without fear or coercion, but also providing other participants with sufficient freedom to challenge and discuss other people's representative claims when they don't agree with them.

Secondly, this study has offered empirical examples of how deliberative conditions and other factors may influence issues of legitimacy and inequality. In the field of deliberative democratic theory, there has been a tendency to focus on 'ideal procedures' of deliberation which can lead to a lack of responsiveness to social, economic and political context and the full range of inequalities that might affect those involved (Pateman, 2012; Bohman,1998). Mendelberg (2002) argues that people may make particular decisions in a deliberative space not because of the quality of the argument but because of heuristics and social influencing that operates during the deliberation, some of which may be due to differences in resources or

ability to use those resources between participants (Mendelberg, 2002). This study has provided empirical examples of these inequalities in practice. In particular, it has described how differential levels of perceived 'legitimacy' or 'authenticity' amongst participants in their contribution to the dialogue based on factors like their ethnicity and differential legitimacy accorded to certain types of claims can create or sustain inequalities between participants within the deliberative space. Often these issues of legitimacy were not voiced by participants as part of the dialogue (and only picked up through interviews).

I demonstrated how these inequalities can, in some cases, limit the autonomy of participants in policy deliberation. I identified two key factors that appeared important in conferring 'legitimacy' to people or claims within a deliberative space. Firstly, the attributes of participants (such as ethnicity) can influence their perceived level of legitimacy when making certain types of equality-related claims. Some felt they couldn't make a claim because they didn't have the legitimacy to do so (e.g. a White British person who wanted to make a claim about race inequality White British people face). Others described feeling obliged to make representative claims about equality faced by 'their' group because they felt they were the only people in the room from that group. Secondly, the attributes of participants were seen as important in conferring legitimacy upon somebody to *challenge* claims made by another person about equality. In particular participants described how they felt that being from the same ethnic background as the claimant gave them weight and legitimacy when challenging the claim. However, those same participants also described the pressures associated with 'towing the line' and resistance they could feel in

challenging representative claims made by somebody from the same ‘community’ in public dialogue about equality-related policy.

The principle learning point for the practice of public engagement involving ethnic minority groups has been the important role the facilitator can play in encouraging and supporting people to make claims or challenge claims in the face of potential hostility and when less ‘legitimacy’ is accorded to their claims by other participants. If a facilitator’s role could be extended to raise awareness of the potential risk of treating other people’s contributions to the discussion as more or less ‘legitimate’, then this could help to address some of the barriers to autonomy identified in this study. It could help, for instance, to address some of the issues around exclusion to the race inequality policy debate faced by White British people (Beider, 2011; Garner, 2009) or indeed exclusion faced by ethnic minority people who feel forced to assume particular roles and make (or refrain from making) particular claims due to their ethnicity. In addition, if facilitators could help groups to explore and critically discuss some of these ‘roles’ that people may be expected to play due to their identity (e.g. being the only African Caribbean person in a room and thus feeling obliged to raise the concerns of that specific ethnic group), then I would argue, this would help people to address some of the barriers to autonomy participants in this study described.

Thus greater attention needs to be paid within public dialogue and debate to the *actual claims* that are made by different groups as opposed to only the background or perceived legitimacy of the person making those claims. A similar point is made by Carens (2000) who argues that analysis of actual claims in politics can help to

illuminate some of the practical implications of abstract moral principles associated with multiculturalism such as ‘toleration’ and ‘justice’. I have suggested in this study that facilitators can play an important role in focusing the attention of public engagement participants on critical dialogue about the content of claims themselves as opposed to the assumed background and legitimacy of the claimant. As our society becomes more superdiverse and as recognition of the multiple and complex nature of people’s identities increases, we will need to develop approaches to judging the value of people’s claims that goes beyond perceptions of the ‘legitimacy’ of claimants associated principally with aspects of ‘identity’ or ‘culture’. More systematic analysis of evidence of need and interrogation of the grounds and warrants of claims is required to enable effective decisions to be made about priorities for public investment and public service design. Some of the barriers to autonomy described in this paper can impede that form of evidence-based decision making and negotiation.

9.4.2.3 Methodological

The principle methodological contribution of this part of the study has been its elaboration of how an established framework for measuring equality of autonomy (Burchardt et al., 2010) can be adapted and applied in the context of public engagement activities. Adoption of this framework offers a useful contribution to knowledge and future research for two main reasons. Firstly, I have examined which aspects of autonomy appeared relevant to participants in the context of public engagement activities and which indicators of autonomy might merit from further testing and exploration in the future. I identified a small range of barriers to autonomy

which were raised by interviewees and appear important to future study regarding the effectiveness of public dialogue about equality (introjection, coercion and perceptions of limited range of options associated with equality-related policy solutions).

Secondly, I have explored the application of a set of autonomy-based indicators to measure a particular aspect of substantive representation (whether 'representatives' felt they could act in a way they chose during public engagement activities). I have suggested autonomy was an important component of substantive representation for participants in this study because people's level of autonomy and choice can affect their ability to make claims and advance policy preferences that they feel are needed to address inequality. This is an important contribution to knowledge because this aspect of substantive representation is rarely measured or examined when assessing the effectiveness of public engagement in policy-making. Over the last ten years, a common indicator to gauge the appropriateness of democratic activity in local authorities in England has been the percentage of people who 'feel they can influence decisions in their locality' (CLG/LGA, 2007). This indicator has helped in understanding perceptions of influence, and results can be disaggregated by group characteristics to identify inequalities in experience. Yet, this study has shown how, on its own, this type of indicator would be limited in terms of its ability to capture how those engaged in public engagement activities really feel about representation (Chanan and Miller, 2013). In this study I have introduced a range of new perception-based indicators that improve our understanding of how public engagement participants feel about issues associated with autonomy such as coercion,

authenticity, legitimacy and the range of options available to them in describing and acting upon the inequality that they and others experience.

9.5 Conclusion

In summary, this discussion chapter has shown how there were some limitations associated with the conceptual frameworks adopted to explore the three research objectives upon which this study is based. In some cases, the research tools and pilot methods that I used were not successful in reducing risks to particular types of validity and bias. Indeed I sought to learn from this exploratory study and to identify potential improvements that could be made to research design and methods in the future. Despite these limitations, I was able to identify a number of patterns in the data which helped me to respond to all three research objectives. I have described how the evidence gathered through this study and the methods employed have important implications for our understanding of theories of managing diversity and 'equality politics' in a superdiverse society. I have also identified learning for policy and practice associated with the public engagement of ethnic minority groups in equality-related policy-making. The key contributions made by this research in relation to each research objective along with areas for further research are summarised in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Summary of this study's contribution to knowledge and areas for further research identified

Research Objective	Contribution to knowledge	Areas for further research
1. How do English local authorities approach	*Theoretical:* Empirical demonstration of the permeable nature of boundaries associated with different	Permeability of theoretical frameworks needs to be considered in future comparative research and impact

dialogue, decision-making and representation when involving ethnic minority groups in public engagement activities?	theoretical models of managing cultural diversity *Policy and Practice:* Identification of doubts about the value of identity-based representation amongst policy-makers despite a continued use of these models. *Methodological:* Method for empirically mapping and comparing approaches to engaging ethnic minorities in equality-related public policy	assessment of public policy / public engagement practice. Need for the development of and more systematic evaluation of new models for engaging ethnic minorities equality-related public policy Opportunities to repeat survey with more representative sample and to test construct validity. This will help to provide foundation for comparative research of the value of different models of public governance.
2. Which factors influence the scope and content of issues of equality discussed in those public engagement activities?	*Theoretical:* Identified role of facilitator in enabling critical discussion of representative claims. Identified the role of social norms and 'behavioural and linguistic scripts' in influencing the scope of policy dialogue about equality. *Policy and Practice:* Identified empirical examples of where the quality of dialogue was reduced by participants not saying what they wanted to – and areas where facilitator intervention could help to address this. *Methodological:* Example of how a qualitative experiment can be applied to examine the effect of different approaches to public engagement activity on the scope and content of dialogue. Technique for comparing content analysis of 'claims' with dialogue participant perceptions was useful and innovative.	Future examination of factors that impede and support effective dialogue on the topic of equality. Particular focus on approaches to disrupting influence of social norms and patterns of representative claim-making that can limit effective deliberation. Development of prompts and support for facilitators and evaluation of impact of new approaches to facilitation. Further testing and refinement of approach incorporating more interventions. For example, test groups exposed to both interventions to help reduce influence of participant characteristics on dependent variables.
3. Which factors influence the	*Theoretical:* Provided framework for identifying empirical examples of	Applying theories of autonomy more systematically to empirical studies that examine the

level of autonomy participants in those public engagement activities feel they have?	barriers to autonomy which are lacking in many accounts of the loss of autonomy associated with multicultural politics. *Policy and Practice:* Provided empirical examples of how different theories of cultural 'toleration' are experienced by people at an interpersonal level. Identification of how dialogue conditions (e.g. facilitators' response to inequalities between participants) can impede or improve policy deliberation. *Methodological:* Elaboration of a framework for measuring autonomy in the context of public engagement activities. Identification and testing of particularly relevant measures.	limitations of different approaches to managing cultural diversity. Examination of the role that the perceived 'legitimacy' and 'authenticity' of dialogue participants plays in improving or reducing the quality of equality-related policy deliberation. Examination of conditions that enable effective interrogation of the grounds and warrants of equality-based claims. Refinement of measures of autonomy and efforts to improve construct validity. Developing measures to examine autonomy of those 'represented' by participants in public engagement activities. Development of new perception-based indicators for policy-makers and practitioners to assess levels of autonomy of public policy engagement participants.

The concluding chapter of this thesis revisits some of the questions that I posed at the start about how we might create forms of 'equality politics' that are more likely to create public policies that people have reason to value. Based on some of the key conclusions I have outlined in this chapter, I offer in the final chapter a brief summary of the main practical and theoretical learning points from this research that could be used to improve facilitation and engagement practice in this field of public governance. I outline the key barriers that are likely to be faced in implementing those changes and finally, I briefly reinforce two key areas where more research on this topic would be particularly useful in the future.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS

10.0 Introduction

I began this thesis by asking a broad question: how do we create public dialogue mechanisms that help people to generate progressive equality-related policy solutions that are more in keeping with what people value? I suggested that this is an important question because sometimes commonly held assumptions and values in society about the topic of 'equality' can narrow the scope of choices available to both members of the public and policy-makers. I provided Dorling's (2016) example of premature deaths among elderly women as a result of austerity measures in the UK as a reminder that sometimes conventions of discourse and dominant societal values (such as the presumed inevitability of inequality for some groups) prevents us from recognising that the political decisions we have made might harm us and deprive us of what makes us most happy. Dorling provides a call for a 'better politics' and advocates approaches to policy-making that enable those without power and resources to determine what is meant by 'fairness' and 'equality'.

This study has focused on a small but important part of this 'politics of equality'. By examining public engagement in policy-making at a local level in England on the subject of equality (principally 'race' equality), I have offered empirical examples of where the practice of public engagement appeared to both limit and enable discussion about the things that people most value in relation to equality. I have achieved this whilst also testing new methods to map and compare different forms of public engagement practice. In the previous chapter I provided a systematic summary of this study's contribution to scholarship, focusing in particular on its

theoretical, methodological and policy and practice contributions. In this final chapter I draw out several key learning points below as they apply to the future of 'equality politics' in contemporary society.

10.1 Stronger empirical and comparative focus

This study has identified the need for a stronger empirical and comparative focus to assess the contribution of previous models of managing cultural diversity and involving ethnic minority groups in public policy-making. As Faist (2012) acknowledges, scholarly debate in defence or in criticism of multiculturalism has drawn heavily on normative theory as opposed to empirical evidence. This has important implications for our ability to identify effective and equitable forms of public governance that enable traditionally excluded minority groups and 'majority' groups to share and debate what they think is important with each other and with policy-makers. I have argued in this study that comparative research of the benefits of different theories for managing cultural diversity need to be placed upon a firmer empirical footing. There are opportunities for further research to assess the extent to which normative analysis of apparently bounded theories (such as multiculturalism or community cohesion) reflect what is happening 'on the ground' when ethnic minority groups are engaged in the public policy process. I have demonstrated in this study how the practice and attitudes of policy-makers and organisers of public engagement activities can be mapped to understand what is happening on the ground. I have also proposed that the direction offered by Carens (2000), who calls for greater focus on examination of the nature of actual claims made by different stakeholders and how those are treated as part of the policy-making process, shows promise in this regard too.

10.2 Beyond descriptive representation alone

When descriptive representation is judged as a *goal* in itself, it can be a useful symbolic indicator of more equal access for ethnic minority groups to the policy process. Yet, as I have argued in this study, descriptive representation can be (and often was by participants in this study) judged as a proxy for or an indicator of the achievement of other forms of representation (such as substantive or symbolic representation). In the field of equality-related policy-making, there are opportunities to be clearer about this *purpose* or this *quality* of representation. There are particular opportunities to improve rigour in the evaluation of representation and governance practice in some of the more formalised, bureaucratic forms of 'consultation' that public authorities have used to gauge the public's views and involve them in public decisions. I have identified two such approaches in this study based upon assessing the scope and content of equality issues discussed in public dialogue and based upon assessing participants' levels of autonomy. Measuring these types of issues are important because behind the formal façade of statutory public engagement processes are important assumptions about the type of equality that can be achieved in our society. Indeed, I have identified some of these in this study. These aspirations are often relatively conservative in scope and should be the subject of public debate.

Thirdly, this study has identified an interesting and unexpected characteristic of public dialogue and attitudes about the progress of equality. A majority of public officials felt they most wanted to achieve identity-based representation but appeared less convinced, when asked about it in more detail, whether it would give them what

they were looking for (an insight into the needs of a particular community). Similarly, as part of the public dialogue observed in this study, descriptive representation (greater proportions of ethnic minorities in policy-making positions) was put forward by many participants as a claim and described as route through which to achieve more equitable public policies. Yet at the same time many of those same claimants felt that there were significant limits associated with the model of descriptive representation as a way to represent the needs and interests of traditionally excluded groups. Similarly some participants who were highly critical of identity-based models of public service provision in their interviews still advocated for these or did not criticize claims made by others about these during public dialogue. Whilst some of these tensions and contradictions were acknowledged by participants, often there were signs that the behaviours and limitations to language used by participants were more implicit and unconscious. I have argued that recognising the existence of these 'behavioural and linguistic scripts' are important for the progress of equality politics because the norms that underlie them can limit free and effective dialogue.

Indeed, despite great potential for the development of new models of representation focused on substantive and symbolic representation, there are perhaps important reasons for descriptive representation still being seen as the 'gold standard' in equalities-based policy making. The potential political fall-out of not being seen to promote improved descriptive representation for ethnic minority groups is only one. Arguably our belief in the pursuit of descriptive representation (and the lack of focus on promoting and measuring other forms of representation too) also stems from societal assumptions about 'difference' and the type of equality that is believed to be achievable through the engagement of ethnic minority groups in public policy. As I

argued in Section 9.3.3.1 the assumed relationship between ‘identity’ and the ability of representatives to reason as part of the policymaking process is one such assumption.

These views about the relationship between culture, identity and reason have arguably led to a situation in which representative and deliberative practices that inform British equality policy-making draw, too often, on heuristic short-cuts to explain and accommodate the claims of ethnic minority groups. It is enough, for instance, to assume that a claim for the provision of day care specifically for Pakistani men made in a local authority consultation is a legitimate claim and is not appropriate for further critical debate. To challenge or discuss the claim (for example, to ask what Pakistani women need in terms of support, or to discuss whether there are other communities that need similar support) may be seen as disrespectful, or even racist. A number of participants in this study described that type of dynamic and the lack of autonomy associated with their decision not to respond to claims of this type. They felt this was problematic because it prevented full discussion of sometimes discriminatory or stereotypical attitudes that might be held by some representatives about particular topics or the needs of particular communities. Yet the logic of the descriptive representation model we tend to use to judge success would not see this as a problem: the Pakistani community have been involved so representation has been achieved. There is a certain comfort in this, at least for those involved in the process. But, as this study has argued, there is so much potential to assess further whether this brand of representation practice is resulting in the types of policy solutions British society requires. As austerity measures and finance available to public sector organisations to progress equality tightens further.

As society becomes more demographically complex, with an increasing number of claims from different ethnic minority groups to accommodate. The fractures and inconsistencies associated with models based on simple descriptive representation (and associated forms of un-contested representative claim-making) will likely become increasingly stark and contested.

10.3 Effective public engagement practice

When outlining his capability approach to equality, Sen (2004) suggests that deliberative democracy is required to enable evaluation of policy-options for the advancement of equality in society (Crocker, 2006). Yet Sen (2004) leaves open a number of questions about how different aspects of that deliberation might be best advanced. This study has focused specifically on such questions about the practice of policy dialogue. How should deliberation concerning equality-related public policy be conducted? What, if any rules of engagement should guide facilitation and deliberation? A particularly important stance for Sen (2000) has been his refusal to dictate the weight that should be placed on the aspects of equality that individuals may value. As Poe and Souffrant contend ‘Sen’s capability approach requires that valuation be a social exercise that allows communities to acknowledge the role of social values and prevailing mores which influence the freedoms that people enjoy and have reason to treasure’ (2015, p.157).

In this study, I have suggested a number of practical facilitation approaches and theoretical frameworks that might be used to enable identification and critical deliberation of some of these social values and prevailing mores. As an example, I have mapped in the national survey and in the qualitative experiment how

participants described a stated belief in the value of ‘descriptive representation’ and identity-based models of public service provision, whilst at the same time not believing that this would necessarily result in the type of equality they wanted to achieve in society. I have suggested that these social norms and enregistered behaviours can be ‘mapped’ and analysed through content analysis of dialogue and public policy. Similarly, I have argued that a lack of critical deliberation about these issues and a lack of critical deliberation about representative claims can stymy effective public debate and policy-making in the field of equality.

My aim in identifying the potential *barriers* to effective public engagement practice described in this chapter has been to understand how the conditions of dialogue (or other relevant conditions) might be adapted in the future to remove some of those barriers and improve the effectiveness of a particular aspect of ‘equality politics’. I identified a small number of aspects of public engagement practice which appeared to be associated with greater levels of the aspects of substantive representation measured as part of this study. These practices are summarized below.

Firstly, this study reinforces previous work in the field of deliberative democracy and public engagement (John et al. 2011) which has suggested that organisers of engagement activities need to think proactively about the type of information that people will require to make an informed decision about policy priorities. To make decisions about policy priorities in relation to issues of inequality, participants require sufficient information about levels of public resources available for investment and how this relates to patterns of inequality and they can require time and support to interpret that information.

Secondly, people don't always say what they feel about the topic of equality in public dialogue because they want to avoid potential conflict or uncomfortableness associated with making or challenging particular equality claims. This study has suggested that, in the public dialogue sessions observed, 'heated' discussions and critical discussion appeared to help people to change their positions and their claims on equality and to develop more collective and collaborative positions on the issue of equality. Actions by the facilitator to encourage critical discussion of representative claims (in the Intercultural Session) also appeared to result in more nuanced discussion of claims (with participants elaborating grounds and warrants for claims following critical challenge from the facilitator). Yet this can be an uncomfortable process for dialogue participants. Whilst there are benefits to sustaining healthy levels of critical discussion and 'tension' within a group, it requires significant skill on the part of the facilitator to be able to enable groups to find resolutions to conflicts when they occur and to enable participants to discuss or change their minds on positions that are highly emotive and close to their own personal sense of identity and social justice. I suggested that group facilitation associated with 'process work' (Mindell, 2014) offers a number of useful avenues for further study in this respect.

Thirdly, there are benefits in supporting dialogue participants to consider the power relationships within the group and the role that 'identity' plays in conferring people with more or less perceived legitimacy to make or challenge claims in different situations. For example, people with particular ethnic backgrounds should feel they are able to engage in critical discussion with participants from the same or different groups about the nature of claims they have made and the resulting nature of public

policy priorities. Responding to the negative effects of power differentials and perceived hierarchy of legitimacy within the group as a facilitator would require different approaches than those trialled herein. I suggested that facilitators can raise awareness of, what Mindell (2014) refers to as ‘rank’ conferred by particular identity attributes within a group dialogue setting. But also they can support dialogue participants to become more aware of the power of that rank and to support participants to respectfully discuss and even challenge it when it is not considered by the group to be in the interests of the pursuit of social justice, equality and free and open critical dialogue.

Finally, local public engagement mechanisms are under considerable pressure from a lack of resources. This is operating in two ways. Firstly, in some local authority districts there are less resources to conduct public engagement. Secondly, in some local authority districts, significant public sector spending cuts are increasing the range and severity of public service redesign issues that are likely to affect patterns of inequality within those areas (and hence need to be subject to public consultation and engagement). In this pressurised and fleeting environment of public participation in policy-making (Bartels, 2015) it may seem unusual to recommend greater investment in improving the quality of relationships between public dialogue participants. However, a number of participants in this study described how developing longer-term relationships of trust between public engagement participants was the only way for there to be open discussion about the topic of equality.

10.4 Closing remarks

At the time of concluding this thesis, the issues of 'identity politics' examined in this study are centre-stage. A campaign, against police brutality in the USA against black people called 'Black lives matter' which has widened into an international movement has raised an intense debate about whether white people could ever understand or legitimately campaign against racism experienced by black people (Andrews, 2016). Debates of this type are long-standing in the UK and Europe too (Aronowitz, 1992). In this study I have identified empirical examples of where the quality of public dialogue can be reduced because people feel excluded or unable to engage in debate about inequality in society. I have argued that there are benefits in promoting forms of public dialogue that encourage critical deliberation about how equality should be progressed.

In this study I have shown that the practice of representative claim-making along identity-based lines can make that type of critical deliberation and the recognition of other claims harder to achieve in two important ways. Firstly, people can feel unable to challenge or critically discuss the content of other people's representative claims because they don't feel they have the authenticity or legitimacy to do so (e.g. a White British person feeling they can't critically discuss representative claims made by an African Caribbean person about discrimination African Caribbean people face in the labour market). Secondly, people from within a particular identity group can feel pressure to act particular ways. Participants in this study described feeling they could not challenge representative claims made by others within their own ethnic group because they may be seen as a 'traitor' or a 'sell-out' to the group. Also participants described feeling pressurised to make representative claims because they were the

only person present in a group from a particular community (even though they didn't want to make those representative claims). In short, the dynamics of representative claim-making can easily set the tone for equality-related public policy dialogue and it is important that we better understand the benefits and risks to critical deliberation associated with this.

I have demonstrated that support from facilitators can help participants to explore, discuss and, if relevant, challenge representative claims made during public dialogue about equality-related policy. Yet, as I have identified in this study, there are also important and powerful societal influences which appear to sustain the application of identity politics and associated forms of representative claim-making in organised local public policy-making processes. I end this thesis by identifying two particularly important issues that will need to be addressed through further research in the future.

Firstly, the perceived ethnic or cultural 'authenticity' of dialogue participants can bestow them with a legitimacy in making particular types of equality claim that other dialogue participants feel unable to question or challenge. As Levey (2015) argues, in cases such as this, particular forms of authenticity are called upon to anchor or legitimate claims to some kind of public recognition. Yet, as I have suggested in this study, it can be damaging to accord authenticity with the importance that it sometimes receives in the politics of equality. As Phillips (2015) suggests, the role of 'authenticity' is perhaps avoidable when making sense of and evaluating different equality-related claims. In this study I have suggested practical routes to problematizing and discussing these issues of authenticity and legitimacy. These

merit exploration and will be increasingly important as our society becomes increasingly diverse and the range and scale of identity-based policy claims made by different people widens.

Secondly, and finally, there appear to be important limits to the forms of ‘equality’ and ‘representation’ that are imagined and furthered through the types of policy-making dialogue processes described in this study. Fundamental questions about the type of equality we want to progress as a society and critical questions about the ineffectiveness of established responses to inequality (such as identity-based models of public service provision and the primacy afforded to descriptive representation) are being left undiscussed and unanswered. Ultimately this will continue to make public engagement approaches designed to inform public policies ineffective. Improvements in the descriptive representation of minority groups in public policy-making have been hard fought and represent an important symbolic indicator of improved equity of ethnic minorities’ access to public policy decisions. Yet at the same time, it will be important to examine whether improved descriptive representation of ethnic minorities in public policy-making is improving the substantive equality they experience in other areas of their life such as housing, education and employment.

Arguably we need to raise our expectations. We can achieve richer forms of substantive and symbolic representation for traditionally excluded groups in society and public policy-makers should try to promote these for people engaged in public dialogue about equality-related policy. As this study has argued, we need a more

systematic and rigorous focus on the level of power and autonomy participants have within the public engagement process (both ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ participants alike). Dialogue participants also require support to recognise and critically discuss the influence of prevailing social norms about the limited scope of equality that can be achieved in society that, if left un-checked, will continue to limit and narrow the scope of public policy responses to inequality. This study has provided a foundation for examining and measuring these issues in more detail in the future.

Word count: 77,277 (excluding tables and diagrams)

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