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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO CONCEPTS OF PERSONHOOD AND EQUITY,
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO MIXED RACE WOMEN IN POST-
COMPULSORY EDUCATION**

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Abstract

Despite the prevalence of mixed race people in Britain and in Further Education, the study of mixed race identity remains an under-researched area, and little or no research appears to have been done on mixed race identity in relation to the Further Education sector. By bringing mixed race to the forefront of discussion, this PhD thesis endeavours to open up a space for interrogating some much vaunted concepts of personhood and equity evident in the theoretical literature on identity and in education policy. The thesis explores how normative theories and discourses underlying political and cultural constructions of personhood and equity are represented in a selection of recent UK post compulsory education policy texts, and uses the case of 40 mixed-race women studying in Further Education colleges in Inner London to identify similarities and discrepancies between theory, policy and experience. The empirical investigation involves policy analysis and semi-structured interviews with mixed race women. Discourse analysis and content analysis are the main methods used to analyse the data. The theories and discourses of personhood and equity identified in the literature and the policy documents are compared with the discourses articulated by the respondents on their constructions of self, their experiences of education, and on their opinions on government/education policy discourses. The thesis seeks to contribute to ongoing debates around identity and equality, and to provide some insights which may be helpful in moving us beyond the universalist/relativist impasse towards a concept of personhood in which identities may be recognised simultaneously as 'fixed' and as 'fluid'. It also hopes to provide a useful source for sociologists and education policy makers in working towards more equitable policy in the field of education.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between mixed race identity and post compulsory education is the focus of this study, and is an area of research which warrants investigation for several reasons. First, despite the prevalence of mixed race people in Britain and in further education, relatively few studies exist on mixed race identity and no empirical or theoretical research appears to have been done in relation to mixed race people in the Further Education sector (although some research has been done in relation to the school sector); as such, any identity-specific needs which mixed race people may have remain invisible, and cannot be accounted for in education policy. Second, mixed race people are not located within any single normative racial or cultural category, but rather, transverse two or more racial/cultural/community boundaries: thus, again, although there have been recent changes in census policy and an increase in research into mixed race identity, the experiences of mixed race people still, to a large extent, remain unacknowledged. Third, mixed race women, as opposed to mixed race men, have been chosen for study as they are marginalised in terms of male norms (Walkerdine, 1990), an issue which may have implications for a gendered account of mixed race people's experiences. Fourth, and related to the previous points, a study of mixed race adds a new dimension to the problem of how the 'universal' might account for the 'particular', a subject widely debated in social science literature; research in the field of mixed race and education may take this debate forward a step or two. The thesis is an attempt to begin to redress these gaps in the research. The main aims of the investigation are as follows:

- a) To examine how normative theories and discourses underlying political and cultural constructions of personhood in western thought are represented in contemporary post compulsory education policy in Britain, and how these relate to notions of equity.
- b) To use the case of mixed race student women to explore the impact of the concepts of personhood and equity reflected in the theory and the policy on the lives of these women, and to identify similarities and discrepancies between theory, policy and experience.

c) To contribute to ongoing debates around identity and equality, and to provide some insights which may be helpful in working towards a model of personhood which take mixed race women's self-conceptions of identity into account.

d) To ascertain whether mixed race women have identity-specific needs, and if so, to examine to what extent these may be provided for by post compulsory education policy.

By bringing mixed race to the forefront of discussion, a space has been opened up for interrogating some much vaunted conceptualisations of personhood and equity evident in some of the theoretical literature on identity and education policy. In postmodern literature there has been a tendency to view personhood as 'fluid' rather than 'fixed'. British liberal political discourse and education policy, conversely, have tended to represent the self as a rational coherent entity; in recent years, there has been a shift away from a culturally relativist agenda in policy, in which race and culture are understood as essentialist and reified, towards a universalistic conception of personhood in which the person is understood in primarily individualistic ways.

The literature review explores concepts of personhood within feminist debates, in the academic literature and discourses around race, ethnicity and culture in Britain, and in the research on mixed race identity. The empirical investigation involves policy analysis and semi-structured interviews with a sample of 40 mixed race women studying in Further Education colleges in London. The policy analysis engages with a discussion of major government discourses on education, and identifies and analyses discourses of personhood and equity in three selected British post compulsory education policy texts published in the UK since 1997. These documents are *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997), *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998), and *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999).

The policy and interview data are analysed using content and discourse analysis (Burman and Parker, 1993; Ball, 2000 [1993b]). The theories and discourses of personhood identified in the literature and the policy documents are compared with the discourses articulated by the respondents in interviews on their constructions of self, their

experiences of education in FE colleges, and on their opinions of government/policy discourses. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the key concepts and issues which have arisen from the investigation. This discussion focuses in particular on the interplay between postmodernist, essentialist and individualist positions in relation to the mixed race women researched, and the implications concepts of the contemporary subject may have for an emancipatory feminist political project which has mixed race people in mind.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORIES OF PERSONHOOD

INTRODUCTION

For several decades many academic disciplines have been concerned with the question of what constitutes 'personhood'. In both the fields of gender and ethnic relations, the question of whether biology or sociology determines who we are has been intrinsic to this discussion, and has been played out through the debate between two seemingly irreconcilable positions, biologism and sociologism. In biologism, any theory of structure and the development of social relations and human experience looks to biology as its source, where biology is the causal explanation for everything we attribute to conscious life. In sociology, the understanding of the person/body can take two forms: it can be understood either as bio-physical material which is shaped into units of behaviour which correlate with certain variables, or it is organised by interpretative actions which reflect socio-political systems, and are internalised through symbolic processes (Welton, 1998).

These two positions have formed the basis for discussions around the 'self' in feminist studies and for debates around ethnic identification in studies around ethnicity. Whilst a parallel history exists in the study of gender and race, essentialism has been understood quite differently in the two disciplines: my observation is that although it appears to be a fundamental part of social science research to question the basis of gender as either biological or social, race essentialism has for the most part been discredited, and critiques of race difference have generally focussed on the social constructed-ness of race. Outside the field of sociology, however, behaviour genetics has always allowed race scientism to exist, an area which has seen renewed interest in recent years. In gender studies, and feminism in particular, the debate has centred on whether biological foundationalism or social constructionism constitute gender/ed identities, whereas in studies around race, discussion has focussed on cultural and/or social - as opposed to racial - allegiances and identifications based on common interests and experiences. Despite the substitution of the term 'race' for 'ethnicity', the reality of race/ethnic difference is still palpable in social relations through racialisation and related discriminatory attitudes and practices.

Part One of this chapter examines the concept of personhood in feminist debates. A brief overview of the theory of postmodernism in relation to modernism is given, followed by a consideration of key tensions around the critique of the subject which focuses on some aspects of Foucault's (1979, 1981) theories, and the work of Susan Bordo (1989) and Judith Butler (1990/1999, 1993). The main section in Part One examines debates within feminism and focuses in particular on the challenges feminists face on the question of whether the category 'woman' is requisite for effective political action; it also discusses black feminism, especially the issue of white hegemony and its implications for the feminist project. The final section in Part One explores some of the issues around selfhood and structuralism in the context of education, mainly through the work of Bourdieu (1997). Part Two of this chapter briefly explores general theories and dominant discourses around race, ethnicity and culture, with particular reference to the British context. Part Three explores current concepts and theories around mixed race identity (with reference to the UK and the US), gives an overview of mixed race research in Britain, and applies some of the issues previously discussed in the context of feminism and race to the case of mixed race identity.

PART ONE: THE CONCEPT OF PERSONHOOD IN FEMINIST DEBATES

Framing the debates: modernism and postmodernism

Whilst postmodernism as a reaction to 'aesthetic modernism' can be traced back to the early twentieth century, its contemporary understanding as a radical movement against modernism began in the 1960s. It arose out of a reaction against Marxism, the 'reason' of science, and modernism's grand narratives based on Enlightenment rationalism and universalism. Postmodernism differed from modernism in two important ways: one, it replaced the totalising 'truths' of meta-narratives with a relativism of discourse, and two, it did away with foundationalism and the fixed rational subject, replacing this with the idea of 'subject positions', problematising the idea of the universal subject against which all others are defined (Peters, 1996). Postmodernism heralded an epistemological crisis, rejecting the idea that a stable real world existed, and claiming that there was no

transcendent position from which the real could be apprehended and against which ideas could be tested. It therefore concerned the *conditions* of knowing rather than the epistemological variant itself. The argument was that philosophy in its current form was no longer viable as a legitimator of knowledge: knowledge meant representing the world accurately, but if there was no final neutral source of knowledge, and all truth claims were in principle undecidable, then philosophy could not set the standards by which this could be measured. As such, postmodernism is best understood as an ontological stance, a position which is deliberately relativistic with respect to epistemology, and as such intensely anti-hegemonic in character (Dear, 2000).

Many contemporary sociologists and philosophers have either asserted that postmodernism is a form or process internal to late modernity (Habermas, 1987; Beck, 1992), or that it is a separate development or condition which is external to modernity (Harvey, 1989; Bauman, 1992). Gellner (1992) believes that postmodernism is tangential and that modernity remains centre-stage, justifying this position in his claim that Enlightenment thought is the preferred mode of thought for most educated people and is being adopted by most societies (78). According to Wellmer (1991), a follower of Habermas, postmodernism should be seen as a redirection of modernism, a 'post-metaphysical modernism', rather than as its radical alternative. Habermas (1987) sees postmodernity as a conservative ideology which is premature in its rejection of modernity, and claims that modernity is our fate. Renouncing the grand narratives of modernity which encompass the instrumental rationality underlying powerful technological and bureaucratic structures of capitalism would mean making us powerless. The challenge according to Habermas is how to fulfil modernity's promise of universal 'self-consciousness, self-determination and self-realisation', and he asserts that modernity itself can provide the tools with which to deal with this problem (Habermas, 1987, 338). Habermas attempts to save the modernist project of universal emancipation and a rational society by asserting a belief in humanity as a universal human subject, and in finding a structure of agreed or general rules which governs all forms of interaction.

From the 1960s onwards, in both the UK and the US, established canons were opened up and the universal white male 'knowing' subject at the heart of philosophy was challenged. In many US schools, black authors such as Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou were studied, and educational trips were organised for poor working-class children. The shift away from paternalism towards pluralism was coupled with an increasing dominance of market models, in which consumerism was understood as an antidote to paternalism, and so could enable greater class mobility. Irony was a popular feature of postmodernism, which meant that racist and sexist comments could be 'got away with'; this was linked to the preoccupation with surface value, and the idea that 'image is everything'.

Postmodernism was invariably described not only as an epistemological crisis but also as an artistic movement, a cultural trend, and an historical epoch. The poststructuralist movement, although fundamentally linked to postmodernism in that both emphasised fragmentation, multiplicity, and the absence of any totalising force, focussed on the critique of the subject. Marxism was one of the first critiques of the subject: Marx argued that history is made under conditions which are not of our own choosing in that subjects are part of existing social practices but not the sole creators of these practices. Freudianism first referred to the relation between the psychic and the social. It deconstructed the idea of the unity of the individual subject, in that the conscious self was split from the unconscious self, and undermined the possibility of the self as a coherent, rational agent capable of access to truth. Derrida (1976) was concerned primarily with the subject and its place within the production of language. He proposed a radical 'de-centring of the subject' in which the subject and text were merely linguistic products, and because there was no such thing as an authentic or privileged reading, no universal meaning could be reached. Identity in this critique of the subject came to be seen as pluralistic, fluid and flexible, impermanent and unpredictable, a position in which the person can be described as a 'multiple and contradictory subject....contingent and precarious' (Mouffe, 1992, 372).

The main critique of deconstructionism, postmodernism and post-structuralism has been that they advocate an apolitical agenda: not only does the 'death' of the meta-narrative

signify a profound disillusionment with ideology, and suggests that the Enlightenment goals of universal emancipation and a rational society are things of the past, but also, the eradication of the subject necessarily means the suppression of a directional social and political force. In the place of the subject is an empty apolitical void of competing subject positions which have no history or foundation, are sceptical of the validity of universal moral truths and collective politics, and so can bear no determinate path. In this critique, 'the rational autonomous individual of liberal theory has been dissolved – 'deconstructed' – into a multiplicity of overlapping and mutually inconsistent persons possessing different identities and interests' (Kumar, 1997, 105), a position which may be described as the 'end of history' (see Fukayama, 1989) in that it heralds the end of ideology and politics. Other criticisms have been that deconstruction is similar to liberalism in so far as they are both private positions, and that deconstruction is closer to modernism than postmodernism in that both espouse the autonomous and separated world of culture (Huysen, 1992; Connor, 1989). Berman (1992), a staunch defender of modernism, disparagingly asserts that the postmodernists have 'dug themselves into a grand metaphysical tomb' (42), whilst some anti-postmodernists have accused the French thinkers of the 1970s of retreating into an esoteric intellectual world separated from social and political reality, a world in which modernist language has been appropriated, taken from its moral and political context, and turned into an aesthetic language game.

Much of the debate around the modernity/postmodernity conjunction has centred on the question of equality, particularly in relation to class, gender and ethnicity. Theorists writing on these issues can be seen as belonging to one of three bands: one, those who explicitly favour postmodern forms of sociological enquiry as only these can account for difference (Weedon, 1989; Bauman, 1992; Ashenden, 1997; Davies, 1997); two, those who condemn postmodernism's relativism for being anti-scientific (Schroeder, 1997; Sokal and Bricmont, 1997); and three, those who argue for a 'modernist' approach to postmodernism, acknowledging some aspects of postmodernism such as its critique of grand narratives, but rejecting its 'deconstructive' dimension (Ramazanoglu, 1993; South, 1997). The first of these bands reflects much of the work by feminist postmodernists, and will be discussed later in the chapter. Some feminist researchers and

philosophers in this category are unwilling to give up the goal of universal equality but recognise that new ways of approaching traditional goals need to be found, and believe that postmodern theory can be incorporated into a modernist political framework (Laclau and Mouffe, 1983).

The important questions throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and up until the present day, have been how to resolve this perceived impasse between modernist and postmodernist tendencies within feminist thought: first, how can feminist theory be based on specifically feminine experiences without using one particular paradigm of universal femaleness, and so circumvent the charge of essentialism, and second, whether an acknowledgement of difference and subjectivity *per se* is what feminists want, and if not, what the objective 'ground' should be upon which particular models are based. Whilst some feminists have claimed the unitary subject is integral to feminist thought, others have insisted that there is an inherent danger in the feminist project assuming a unitary consciousness and a consensual truth about what women's oppression is about, and have questioned the validity of 'universal' tasks undertaken to remedy this oppression. Modernist principles may be useful in providing the basis for a general theory of equality and justice, but feminist epistemology based on an essential female identity is severely limited in that it draws on 'innate' female values, cannot give expression to all of women's experiences, and as such is normative and exclusionary. Therefore, a feminist politics based on such an epistemology cannot be in the interests of universal equality. Haraway (1990) has argued:

'There is nothing about 'female' that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as 'being' female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices. Gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, racism and capitalism.' (197)

Rather than disband modernity completely, many feminists have argued that it is important to acknowledge the social and political dimensions of modernity as a means of advancing democracy (Nicholson and Seidman, 1995), and the emphasis in much feminist research has shifted towards the possibility of redirecting rather than completely breaking

with Enlightenment principles in order to retain the possibility of the feminist political project of emancipation (Mouffe, 1988). It seems that since the 1990s this debate has intensified in response to the unresolved impasse between universalism and the recognition of difference, and the ongoing stalemate between white and black feminism. The work of black feminists will be discussed later in this section. The tension between modernism and postmodernism, and the reconciliation between equality and difference was confounded: where the self is unitary, it has the potential to be of equal value to all others; where it takes up different subject positions, it has no essential relational value to others. These questions are also relevant to debates around race, and have important implications for the study of mixed race identity especially around questions of self-definition as mixed race, perceptions of self in relation to others, and equality and discrimination.

The critique of the subject

The question of whether an essence of 'man' and 'woman' determines gender, or whether sex and gender are separate has framed the debate around biologism and sociologism outlined at the beginning of the chapter. This has initiated heated discussion within many disciplines, especially in feminist theory, developmental psychology, and sociology, as well as in popular discourse in the form of the nature versus nurture debate. The social psychologist Rom Harré (1994) has made a useful distinction between sex and gender, and argues that sex is a biological category, whereas gender has different structures. According to Harré (1994), the genitals, commonly understood as the principal markers of the distinction of sex (following Freud), are nominal complementary markers, and the primary marker of sex distinction is chromosomal difference. Secondary markers take on a symbolic role through which a person's sex is displayed, such as body form, and tertiary characteristics are the external denotations of one's sex through, for example, dress and hairstyle.

In feminism, the key question has been whether the body is socially constituted or invariant across culture and history, or a mixture of both. Two feminist theorists, Susan



Bordo (1989) and Judith Butler (1990, 1993) have both used Foucault's (1979, 1981) concept of the body as cultural text, and both are concerned with showing how the body has a central place in feminist politics. However, although both have claimed there is no 'natural' body, they have parted company on understandings around the materiality of the body, and have come to represent two distinct camps in feminist theory.

The work of Foucault (1979, 1981, 1984, 1986) has been especially influential for post-structuralist feminists such as Butler. Foucault (like Nietzsche before him) identified the central issue to be one of language in which the subject is constructed through linguistic practices. It is not the person as the knowing subject, he argued, who should be at the centre of the study of human sciences, but the discursive practices which construct the person: the self is thus abolished and replaced by subject positions which are not historically produced and self-reproduced, but are positioned within discursive practices which are reproduced by power/knowledge relations within particular discourses. For Foucault (1979), the body was the *site*, and not the agent in relations of power. In this thesis, language/discourse does not neutrally reflect reality or tell truths about the world, but rather constructs reality, where this construction is intimately linked to power. As such, truth itself is an effect of discourse, and is not objective, neutral or universal. The political effects of truths rather than whether something was true or false was the important issue, and he looked at the systems and rules which generated meaning rather than the people who make them.

Foucault rejected generalised histories, and the totalising theories and abstract idealisations produced by philosophers on how power works, and was concerned with how the production of knowledge is always historically bound up with specific regimes of power. Knowledge, for Foucault (1979, 1984) was suffused by power as a productive network which ran through the entire social body without being aware of its own power - power was neither a thing, nor was there anything outside power. Power was neither universal nor unitary, but diffuse and multiple, existing through historically specific discourses and practices. Foucault also rejected scientific classification and statistical measurements, as these resulted in the objectification of subjects with the aim of exerting

social control, and were ways in which norms were determined, and from which categories of the abnormal were created. In this way, argued Foucault, the world became knowable only in particular ways, simultaneously making other things unknowable. Foucault analysed power through a focus on institutions, linking this analysis to forms of discourse. He claimed there are three types of struggles: against forms of domination (ethnic, social, etc); against forms of exploitation which separated individuals from what they produced; and, especially in this age, against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection), that is to say, the power of the state as both individualising and totalising. The main contention some feminists have with Foucault's concept of power as context-bound is that all universal accounts of oppression are therefore also automatically discounted, and as such the 'patriarchy' is not recognised (McNay, 1992).

Butler (1991, 1993), drawing on Foucault's (1979, 1981) critique of the body which sees the body as entirely malleable over the course of history, has claimed that the materiality of the body is the effect of discourse, and that gender is the discursive means by which natural sex is created. For Butler (1990, 1993), the body has no 'natural' ground but is always already a cultural sign. She argues that grounding feminist theory on the materiality of the body is a false objective because matter itself has a history: the materiality of the body is the product of discourse and as such, materiality should be the object of, and not the ground for, feminist research (1993, 49). For Bordo (1989), the materiality of the body is a cultural construction which designates what is 'real' within culture. She insists that feminist politics should be about resisting cultural definitions as they are presented to us, and claims that the body must be the necessary locus of feminist politics, as the site of struggle which should be kept in the 'service of resistance to gender domination, not in the service of 'docility' and gender normalisation' (1989, 28). Bordo (1989) has claimed that the discursive linguistic approach precludes a feminist politics because it lacks material analyses of the dual gendered body, and asserts that the study of the cultural representations of bodies, where these are divorced from their relation to the practical lives of bodies, obscures and misleads (1989, 27). Whilst Bordo rejects feminist postmodernism outright as 'stylish nihilism' for not having a body at all, Butler (1990)

claims that we do not need a unitary concept of woman in which to ground feminist politics, as this reifies regulating gender relations and is conservative rather than revolutionary, and that rather the construction of a variable concept of identity should be our political goal (5).

In contrast to Harre (1994) then, Butler (1990) claims that a sex - gender distinction is untenable from the point of view that there is no body which can be 'discovered' prior to inscription and signification. She claims that sex is not a biological given around which gender is constructed, but is a regulatory ideal which is made manifest in the body through normative practices. The constructed subject, according to Butler, is the genuine agent: the subject requires neither a subject before the constitution of a subject, nor the foreclosure of agency by making the subject the product of societal and cultural processes, but rather that normative constraints determine the possibility for the process of performativity which allows the subject to emerge. The subject can be understood as a pure construct, constructed 'all the way down', so to speak. The subject is real, but only in so far as it is continuously constituted through citationality (O'Connell, 1999). Butler (1993) claims that the subject is constituted through the injunction to assume a sex, whereby sexual identity as permissible or abject is the condition for subjects which matter, or count as subjects, as opposed to those that do not. Butler does not discount the constructed subject as artificial, hiding an essential subject underneath, nor does she disclaim that the constructed subject is the genuine agent.

Whilst agreeing with Butler that there is no such thing as a 'pure' body, and that nature is never untouched by culture, critics of Butler have nevertheless suggested that she has perhaps gone too far in her radical rejection of the natural body, proclaiming that the notion of 'pure' culture prior to nature assumes the human condition exists in a culture-only zone rather than stemming from a natural-cultural relational field. The body is connatural with the world, not prior to culture, nor existing as a separate and passive observer, but participating with its environs as an experiential counterpart. Bigwood (1991) has argued that Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenology could be a useful starting point for a feminist philosophy of the body in which nature is the codetermining force in

the constitution of the body to the female incarnate situation she calls the 'mothering body'. Hekman (1998) has attempted to find possible overlaps between different feminist positions and has drawn attention to the similarities between Butler and Bordo. Both authors, she claims, are concerned with revealing the *cultural construction of exclusion* in an attempt to re-signify the symbolic of that construction: whilst Butler is concerned with showing how the abject body may be a site for the reconfiguration of a hegemonic symbolic, Bordo makes practice out of this theory, and in her work on anorexia and bulimia presents the abject body as a site of resistance of the hegemonic symbolic.

'Western' feminism: essentialism, constructionism, and the political agenda

Frankenberg and Mani (1993) have usefully argued that feminism comprises at least four tendencies: first, the white feminist rearguard which argues for the primacy of gender domination; second, a white feminist neo-rearguard, which aims to incorporate plural subjectivities under the single 'mistress narrative' of gender domination; third, feminists, often black women and women of colour, who insist on a non-hierarchical analysis of how oppression works, placing race, gender and class alongside each other; and fourth, feminists who claim that domination and oppression may be experienced differently according to relationships which shift in tandem with different axes of domination. Although this is a useful model to illustrate different feminist positions, it is nevertheless limiting in that it simplifies some of the complexities and contradictions within feminism. I will examine the first two and fourth tendencies in depth through the work of western feminists working largely from a western perspective, whilst the third tendency will be explored under the sub-heading 'black feminism'.

The first tendency is a position adopted by standpoint or radical feminists. It is one which tends to view biology as foundational and declares that a common essential criteria based on the sexed body defines the categories 'woman' and 'man'. This modernist position (Assiter, 1996) asserts that womanhood must draw on a universal female subject, as this is fundamental to emancipatory politics. Standpoint feminism has been criticised for conflating politics and epistemology on two counts: one, that knowledge is understood as

emancipatory and able to free women from power/ideology, and two, that the tension between the situatedness of the observer and the desire for objectivity in feminist scientific research is only overcome by positing an homogeneous entity 'woman' and valorising certain female values by claiming that women's access to reality provides the 'better' form of truth (Ashenden, 1997). To assume that the category 'woman' is a stable and coherent entity, and to reject a universal oppressive structure (the 'patriarchy') is essentialist and enforces a rigid gender division which views heterosexuality as the norm. Moreover, in representing itself as a politics of authentic identity, and configuring its principles around the idea of a 'greater-than-male universal', it premises its own politics on a universal, which it assumes is attainable (Ashenden, 1997). This is reminiscent of Judith Butler's (1990) claim that feminist theorists who support essentialist views of gender are actually reinstating 'ideal orders' which create new relations of domination and oppression (20). The contention revolves around whether ethical universal abstractions should be rejected on the grounds that they are inevitably rooted in liberalist, 'masculinist' ways of thinking, or whether precisely such abstract forms of reasoning can give particularist projects a purpose in working towards greater equality.

The question of whether gender should be based on epistemological separatism such as that evoked by standpoint feminism is central to discussions in feminist theory. The separatist strategy challenges the so-called objectivity of knowledge as 'masculinist' and universalising, and suggests a production of knowledge and a mode of theorising which is both by women and for women, and uses women's experience as its basis. Harding (1986, 1987, 1991) has drawn on Hegel's master/slave dialectic - in which the master, dominant in social relations, has a distorted sense of reality, whilst the slave's compromised position and need to survive means that he/she has greater access to reality - to argue that a feminist standpoint position provides greater objectivity of observation. Harding (1987, 1991) attempts to retain the scientific element of research alongside the recognition that knowledge which acknowledges the 'situatedness' of the researcher, rather than the elimination of bias through research, provides a greater capacity for objectivity.

Hartsock (1983) too, draws on Hegel's dialectic. Hartsock's (1983) premise is that

women's position is different from men's due to the sexual division of labour, a position she develops from Marx's theory of knowledge which states that social positioning structures a person's experience and ways of knowing. Hartsock expands Marx's ideas to encompass 'all human activity' (1983, 283) which produces new forms of knowledge seen from the point of view of women's lives. This would create new 'truth' narratives which are 'more' universal than the limited universal theories of Marx based on class and capitalism. The work of Harding and Hartsock may be considered controversial in that women are assumed to be the privileged bearers of knowledge because of their subordinate positions in social relations, and that the greatest truths emerge out of these positions. Flax (1990) has disputed the idea that the oppressed have a privileged position on the grounds that such a view relies on unexamined assumptions, which in turn depend upon an uncritical appropriation of Enlightenment ideas. It presupposes that there is a group of people who are fundamentally similar because of their sex, and as such, assigns the same kind of 'otherness' that men consign to women. Such a standpoint, she argues, assumes that women, unlike men, may be free of participation in relations of domination (1990, 55-56).

The second strand in feminism, known as feminist post-structuralism, evolved out of the perceived theoretical one-dimensionality of standpoint feminism and a disillusion with Marxist gender-blindness. Foucault and Derrida, and also Lacanian psychoanalysis and Levi-Strauss's kinship theory have influenced feminist post-structuralist thought (see section on Butler and Foucault above). The main argument against the post-structuralist position is that its epistemological status cannot sustain a unitary reform project and gives little guidance to feminist politics generally. If the idea of the self as a unitary identity is deconstructed, it undermines the possibility of access to universal truth and experience, and if meta-narratives are ruled out, then there is no language of struggle (Lovibond, 1983; Cole and Hill, 1995), or at very least, results in ambivalence around emancipatory narratives. Apart from these charges, standpoint feminists have criticised post-structuralism for being androcentric (Soper, 1993), and politically reactionary in its attempt to debilitate feminism's goals (Hartsock, 1990). Hartsock (1990) claimed that postmodernism was a dangerous approach for marginalised groups to adopt: at best,

postmodernism is critical of standpoint theories without putting anything in their place, whilst at worst, 'postmodern theories can recapitulate the effects of Enlightenment theories which deny the right to participate in defining the terms of interaction' (1990, 159-160).

During the 1990s, the fourth strand in feminism (the third strand which concerns issues around black feminism is discussed in the next section) became more dominant, and there was a gradual shift in focus away from the body *per se* to political sites of struggle. By that time, it was widely recognised that the denunciation of universal abstractions of equality and justice would be a self-defeating and an unnecessary move, especially in view of the fact that the alternative would be a 'difference' politics which must ultimately condone a particularist deregulated social policy (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Benhabib and Cornell, 1987; Soper, 1990). In this vein, several feminist theorists have attempted to reconfigure or marry elements of the modernist and postmodernist positions in an attempt to show that a feminist project may be emancipatory and democratic without the category 'woman' having a determinate meaning (Best and Kellner, 1991; Francis, 1999a). Davies (1990) did not want to discard the feminine/masculine distinction, but to dismantle the social processes by which this distinction was mapped onto biological determinations of persons as male or female. Harding (1993) has argued for a political way out of postmodernism's relativism, suggesting that elements of Enlightenment discourses may be amalgamated with aspects of postmodernism to enable feminists to overcome male-centred relations (Harding, 1991). Fragmentation of the subject, it has been argued, does not necessarily lead to paralysis, but on the contrary, can open up new possibilities for feminism in organising feminist politics around particular identities, and around specific issues and struggles which have a broader democratic project in mind (Mouffe, 1995). Some post-structuralist feminist writers, however, have pointed out that a combination of modernist and postmodernist principles is not only theoretically dubious but empirically impracticable (Jones, 1997; Francis, 1999a).

The point in these new ways of thinking was not to deny the category 'woman' *per se* but to reject its homogeneity and examine how notions of self were constituted in a set of

social and political relations and practices, without need of a prior normative framework (Nicholson and Seidman, 1995). Rejecting the category 'woman' was not the same as saying that gender was not a category of oppression, and the foundational subject as the target of postmodernism's critique should not be confused with the importance of selfhood or subjectivity; feminist epistemology and its critique of foundationalism, therefore, did not necessarily entail a denial of feminist politics or human values (Ashenden, 1997). Ashenden (1997) argued that a shift towards political identification brought the constitution of communities to the fore, and that the dissolution of the meta-narrative in postmodern philosophy was the opportunity for 'identity', rather than 'truth', to become the focus for feminist politics. Nicholson and Seidman (1995) argued that the category 'woman' should not possess a singular meaning but a series of meanings based on specific political motivations rather than on the perceived common needs of the universal 'woman'. Similarly, Mouffe (1995) claimed there was no 'woman' as a singular position, but women who occupy multiple social positions.

Some feminists also began to debate the question of how to approach the feminist political project where this recognised difference more generally. Soper (1990), a proponent of modernist feminist principles, called for an 'objective model of relating' which implies a commitment to the principle of justice as that which grounds the demand for an end to discrimination, not only against women but against any marginalised or oppressed grouping' (1990, 220), with the justification that this probably appeals to far more women than the idea of a utopia of multiplying difference (1990, 221). Mouffe (1995) criticised Soper for creating an untenable opposition between the category 'woman' which was founded on the notion of *a priori* belonging and the unity of womanhood, and, in the absence of the unity of womanhood, an apolitical space in which no feminist politics is able to exist. Indeed, Mouffe and Laclau had as early as 1983 recognised the need for the centrality of political struggles and argued for what they called a 'chain of equivalence' among different democratic struggles, where this was an articulation between the demands of various subordinated groups of people as an ensemble of subject positions who made contemporary struggles appear as a 'totalising effect' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1983). The feminist political movement, argued Mouffe (1995), should not be limited to pursuing

feminist goals which only had the idea of 'women as women' in mind, and whose objective was to realise the equality of a particular definable group with a common essence, nor should it be the quest to prove that one particular form of feminist discourse was the correct one. Instead, it should be seen as a struggle against the *plural forms in which the category woman is constructed in subordination*, that is to say, through class, ethnicity, race, etc. Any single truth narrative around feminist politics must therefore be abandoned, as there are infinite numbers of discourses within which a feminist politics could be framed.

Mouffe (1995) believed that postmodern theory had profound implications for the meaning of democracy, where democracy could no longer be based on the idea of a rational unitary agent as the holder of universal liberal rights, but should be understood as a concept which incorporated a plurality of perspectives and identities. In this view, postmodernism was not necessarily modernism's antithesis, but opened up new ways for understanding modernity. Because it denied the concept of a universalising 'whole', and kept the space of critical theory open, it effectively held the potential for becoming a politicised terrain of indeterminate and infinite struggle. In other words, where modernism offered a redemption from politics, postmodernism provided its opposite. From this perspective, feminism could be seen as a 'permanently shifting political coalition', whereby identification with feminist struggles was not based on epistemology but on the problematic of social practices (Ashenden, 1997, 56) in which the subject was constituted through political identifications. For Mouffe (1995), once the essential homogeneous subject 'woman' was discarded, the whole drama around the equality versus difference could be dissipated (319). If 'woman' no longer opposes 'man', and in place of this opposition we have a set of social relations within which sexual difference is constructed in a myriad of ways, and where struggles against subordination are both specific and varied, then the possibility of engaging with a radical democratic politics which can explode the equality versus difference dilemma is opened up.

The work of Laclau (1996) is useful in these debates in so far as he saw the 'universal' and the 'particular' as inextricably linked. Laclau's (1996) main thesis is that the

omnipresence of power means that the quest for universal emancipation, despite being an inevitable part of the human condition, is a fruitless task: political resistance can only function within a discourse of dominant/oppressive power relations which is both the reason for and the condition of its existence. When an identity asserts itself as a particularity in relation to other identities, it is also sanctioning the status quo of power relations between the groups because of the discursive framework within which it operates. The discourses of the oppressor and the discourses of the oppressed are therefore one and the same thing:

‘I cannot assert a differential identity without distinguishing it from a context; and in the process of making the distinction, I am asserting the context at the same time. And the opposite is also true: I cannot destroy a context without destroying at the same time the identity of the particular subject who carries out the destruction. It is a very well known historical fact that an oppositionist force whose identity is constructed within a certain system of power is ambiguous with respect to that system, because the latter is what prevents the constitution of the identity and it is, at the same time, its condition of existence.’ (Laclau, 1996, 51)

Democracy is therefore dependent on there being no concrete universal or content, a space in which different groups can compete amongst themselves in their attempt to fill the ‘missing fullness’ which is the universal. Thus: ‘the universal is the symbol of missing fullness, and the particular exists only in the contradictory movement of simultaneously asserting a differential identity and cancelling it through its subsumption into a non-differential medium’ (Laclau, 1996, 52). The irregularity of the social determines which differential struggle assumes the dominant role and the universal function: in this scenario, particularist positions continuously vie with each other for dominance, and as such, emancipation is never complete or fixed, but always temporary and contingent.

This fourth strand in feminism also had implications for the ongoing tensions between white and black feminism, a subject discussed in the next section. In an attempt to resolve these tensions, universalist modernist principles of ‘truth’ were de-coupled from theories of the subject in an attempt to hold on to the emancipatory agenda, whilst simultaneously ditching the idea that any essential differences between black and white women were

tenable. Indeed, it has been widely acknowledged that similarities between class and ethnicity exist in that they are powerfully internalised, infused within body, language and thought, and that they are constantly played out in interactions with others (Frankenberg, 1993; Kuhn, 1995; Mirza, 1997; Reay, 1997). In foregrounding political justice and equality, race and class were seen as intrinsically linked to the myriad of ways in which women were constructed as subordinated. The main difficulty with this view was, as Butler (1993) pointed out, that it was not simply a matter of relating race and sexuality and gender as if they were separable axes of power: the pluralist conception of these terms as categories or positions was founded on an exclusionary principle which attributed a false uniformity to them, and could potentially result in the endless multiplication of categories and positions, 'an ever-expanding list that effectively separates that which it purports to connect' (116-117). In general, however, it was recognised that it was necessary to distinguish between subjectivity and hierarchies of domination and subordination, and that the emphasis should be on the social structures - rather than the social facts of race/racism, gender/sexism, etc. - through which inequalities were created and perpetuated (Gilroy (1993). Amongst black and white feminists in the 1990s, this was, theoretically at least, expressed through black/white alliances which focussed on anti-racist struggles.

Black feminism

Amongst black feminists in the 1980s, physical difference as a primary marker of belonging was about the process of becoming racialised to share a common structural location which was a racial location (Mercer, 1990; Hall, 1992), and black women's sense of racialisation and objectification in Britain led to politicised collective action against dominant white authority. The homogenous construction of the 'black community', Hall (1992) argued, arose out of the struggle for recognition of black Britons in the face of white mainstream culture which continues to refute difference and relations of power. The tendency to homogenise the oppression of black people, whilst useful for invoking a 'category of a new politics of resistance' (Hall, 1992, 252), also reinforced the 'ethnic absolutisms' used to categorise and define marginalised people. Lorde (1984) pointed out

that the desire for unity and connectedness was often rooted in common experiences of racism amongst black people, but that this was frequently misnamed homogeneity. The kinds of ideals forged around notions of essentialism and community, both in social relations generally and in feminist politics, were also viewed as problematic in that they could lead to exclusions which could reinforce homogeneity (Young, 1990, 301). Bell hooks (1983) insisted that there could not be a feminist science because feminism was fundamentally an antagonistic position which opposed dominant stories. Concurrently, there was an increasing demand amongst black feminists to be seen as culturally, and not as racially different (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). Mirza (1997) has argued that the desire for meaningful personal identifications amongst black women expresses the longing for a 'place called home'. In the context of black feminism as a political movement, Harris (cited in Persram, 1997) has usefully pointed out how the ideology of the nation as 'home' need not be a specific place, but can be a sense of movement or a process.

Most theorists who have written on hybridity and diaspora have generally done so in relation to migration and postcolonialism (Christian, 2004). The shift towards personal and political identifications enabled black women to break out of what Bhabha (1990) has referred to as a 'third space'. Bhabha (1990) has claimed that hybridity is the 'third space' which allows other positions to emerge, a space which 'displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom' (221). It is a concept which enables a different way of understanding binaries and dichotomies, and introduces the notion that it is possible to challenge power and be free from the shackles of the past. Despite the 'third space' purportedly being a space of cultural progressiveness and strength, Mirza (1997) has argued that, because it 'overlaps the margins of the race, gender and class discourse and occupies the empty spaces in between, [it] exists in a vacuum of erasure and contradiction' (4). With reference to the work of Higginbotham (1992), Mirza (1997) has claimed that this space has been maintained by the polarisation of the world into black on one side and women on the other, where the subject of racial discourses are men, gendered discourses are (white) women, and class discourses deem race invisible.

Christian (2004) has criticised Bhabha's concept of hybridity for being ahistorical, divorced for reality, and naive in its dismissal of the experiences of the once 'colonised' who have migrated to the metropolises (308-309). He has remarked that whilst this concept is useful, 'when put to the acid-test of the social world it fails....Of course history and culture is dynamic and ever-changing, but the pattern or framework of oppression and social exclusion can often remain a constant' (308). According to Christian (2004), Bhabha's theories do not hold for coloured people's experience of occupying the 'third space' under apartheid in South Africa; these people were intrinsically products of their 'parent histories' (one Black of African descent, and one white of European descent), and did not create something new or separate from the histories they were connected to (309).

As we have seen above, the crucial question of how, and indeed, whether, it was possible to achieve equality within difference took on new importance, especially with respect to the dilemma facing feminism as a viable political movement in the 1990s. Whilst feminism in the 1980s focussed on the right to be equal, the focus in the 'postmodern' 1990s was on the right to be different. This was in part due to the endeavour, on the part of white feminists, to 'compensate' for their exclusionist politics. The reaction of black feminists to the politics of white feminists, and the inability of white feminism - which made very specific claims around the family and the nature of patriarchy - to incorporate the experiences of black women, shifted the white feminist discourse from universalism to difference (Mirza, 1997). However, in an attempt to rectify the concerns which came from black feminists, the experience of being oppressed frequently became romanticised, and culture came to represent an either/or polarisation of those who were 'privileged' and those who were 'oppressed'; moreover, white feminists were unable to become fully engaged with what it meant to be part of the dominant group (Frankenberg, 1993; Razack, 1998). White feminism was not able to resolve the problem of racial hegemony within gender relations, and as such, its epistemology which centred around notions of inclusion and equality remained exclusive and inequitable. Difference still privileged whiteness, and as difference was always perceived in relation to the white norm, white authority within the feminist movement was unavoidable. Within the academy, the question of the legitimacy of standpoint feminism and its universalistic humanism weighed heavy for

many black feminists whose voices could only be legitimated through white feminism (Ware, 1991; Mohanty, 1992).

The problem of exclusion and legitimacy, however, was not confined to white feminism, but was also inherent within black feminism itself (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Brah, 1994). The first difficulty was that difference depoliticised feminism and dissipated the possibility for black collective action. This issue mirrored the one in the debate on feminism explored above through the work of Bordo and Butler: the modernist discourse of blackness was a universalistic conception, and ultimately an exclusionary one which could not adequately account for differences within it; a relativistic conception on the other hand, which asserted the heterogeneity of identities, weakened the possibility of effective political action. Amongst black feminists the question of personal identification for political and personal purposes raised the question of who could or should be called 'black'. This is an issue I will return to later in the context of mixed race identity. It has implications for the study of mixed race women whose self-identifications may challenge these homogeneous constructions of race.

It had also become increasingly clear that any attempt to democratise the 'grand' theories simply served to produce monolithic meta-categories which were frequently positioned against each other, and as such were exclusionary: the notion of the 'black (middle-class) superwoman' who 'has it all', for example, may be juxtaposed with the 'marginalised black working class male' (Reynolds, 1997). In the bid to find their place within feminist politics, black feminists have been criticised for trying to 'milk' their triple oppression of race, class and gender (Mirza, 1997, 9). As Carby (1982) has pointed out, the main danger with universalist feminist articulations is the assumption that all women are oppressed by patriarchy, whilst all black women are oppressed simultaneously by patriarchy, racial subordination, and the stigma of class (213). The danger of relativist feminism, on the other hand, is that it 'de-relativises' experiences of oppression and tries to make them comparable. Childers and hooks (1990) have asserted that it is important not to assume that all black women experience oppression in exactly the same way, and that there is a need 'to make a distinction between what it means to be from an oppressed group and yet

be privileged – while still sharing in the collective reality of black women’ (75). As Gilroy (1993) has pointed out, ‘gender, class, culture and locality may become more significant determinants of identity than either biological phenotype or the supposed cultural essences of what are now known as ethnic groups’ (109).

Like some other black feminists (Trinh, 1989; Collins, 1990), Razack (1998) focuses on capitalism, patriarchy and white supremacy in an attempt to uncover the essentialist constructs which mask relations of power. Razack (1998) is concerned with the *relationship* between domination and subordination. Through her study of classrooms and courtrooms, she researches ‘hegemonic ways of seeing through which subjects make themselves dominant’ (11), that is to say, how white people, and specifically white women, secure their power. Rejecting the idea of an additive model of oppression, claiming that this merely multiplies ‘essences’, Razack (1998) argues that it is necessary to theorise the simultaneity and complexity of systems of domination and how they mutually constitute one another, invoking a dialectical approach in which women exist simultaneously in symbiotic and hierarchical relations to each other in ‘interlocking systems’ of mutual domination and dependency (12-14). She is particularly interested in bringing the issue of complicity within the relationships between white and black women to the fore, arguing that white women frequently deny their dominance by withdrawing into a position of subordination when confronted with white racial superiority. Razack (1998) claims that it is important to move beyond essences, but just as importantly, not just to replace this with the assertion that we are all human beings. This position resounds with that of several researchers working on mixed race issues who are grappling with the problem of finding a model of personhood which resorts neither to essentialism nor to individualism (Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Mahtani and Moreno, 2001). This issue will be discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Six.

The ‘self’ and education

Debates around the self, as we have seen, have centred around the tension between biologism and sociologism, or the fixity and fluidity of the self. I now turn to the issue of

selfhood and education, and in particular to the tensions which exist between agency and structure within educational debates. In the late 1970s, ethnographic work began to focus on agency and cultural re/production (Willis, 1977; Macleod, 1987) rather than on the straightforward internalisation of structural effects such as that espoused by Bowles and Gintis (1976) who explained social inequality in economic terms, and in terms of the correlate between the organisation of work and schooling. These studies introduced cultural elements into deterministic macro-theories, where culture was not merely a reflection of structural forces but a system of meaning which mediated social structure and human agency. The focus in such studies was on revealing the complex mechanisms behind education as a tool for reproducing identities: children were no longer understood to be mere empty vessels who are 'filled' with education, but were subject to other external forces, such as class, race and gender, which played a significant part in the construction of their identities. Willis's (1977) study of working-class 'lad' culture in schools was seminal in that it emphasised both resistance and reproduction in the formation of identities. The 'cultures of resistance' amongst working-class boys as contestation served to reproduce rather than change the social order; resisting the dominant ethos of achievement and identifying manual labour with masculinity meant that the boys perpetuated the class structure and thereby compromised their economic position in society. Agency existed in so far as individual working-class children could succeed in education, but never the whole class.

More recent theories of education have been largely concerned with explaining discrepancies between intention and outcome by revealing their underlying political, economic and cultural causes, and by suggesting that self and processes are both dynamic and interrelated. Drawing on post-structuralist concepts, some educationalists and researchers have suggested that in the same way that identities are neither consistent nor follow predictable patterns, there can be no correlation between the intended effects of education and its actual effects. The key idea here is that control is never absolute but always contingent on account of agency (Clegg, 1989), and that the cultural realm may be significantly autonomous from structural constraints. Such studies have shown that people are not simply subject to and shaped by external forces beyond their control, but that they

are 'active sense makers' in that they make choices from alternatives in often contradictory circumstances (Mehan, 2000 [1992], 507). In one study of school children and their parents, for example, Lareau (1989) showed that although dominant middle-class values were adopted by the school in which she did her research, both working-class and middle-class people took on purposeful forms of cultural capital and utilised different strategies as a means for achieving success for their children.

One of the main questions preoccupying educationalists and policy makers today is why, despite extensive government initiatives to widen participation, etc., students from working-class backgrounds are not as successful in school as middle-class students, and why they still predominantly go into working-class jobs. Whilst acknowledging that agents are not simply passive players within dominant discourses and are actively engaged in 'individual and collective self-making and sense-making' (Delhi, 1996 cited in Reay, 2000), Reay (2000) - drawing on Bourdieu's theories - has argued that the discourses within which working-class people position themselves are the middle-class discourses of the 'market and individual reliance; primarily middle-class versions of social life' (1994).

Several researchers have also attempted to uncover some of the possible constraints facing young people in making post-16 choices in terms of access and aspirations. Du Bois-Reymond (1998) has pointed out that the recognition of 'choice biographies' does not imply a discounting of long-standing structural constraints like class, gender and ethnicity on many young people's choices. Reay et al. (2001) have suggested that the educational choices young people make parallel their unequal access to cultural, social and economic capital, and that different positions in relation to risk or privilege may impact upon the kinds of choices which people feel are available to them. Moreover, as Reay (2000) has pointed out, working-class people position themselves within middle-class discourses which are seldom chosen by working-class people themselves. As such, working-class people have limited choice and can either accept a 'spoilt identity' (Reay and Ball, 1997), or, as increasingly appears to be the case, reject the label 'working-class' (Skeggs, 1997). Central to these ideas is Bourdieu's (1977) concept of 'habitus' (see Chapter One) whereby certain dominant ways of thinking, concepts and categories have been

internalised and hard-wired into certain self-beliefs and ways of behaving. Using this theory of 'habitus', and the 'sense of limits' it engenders, it would seem that particular policy objectives, such as those which propose increased participation in education, do not necessarily result in an immediate transformation of a person's self-beliefs and/or educational aspirations. Arguably, the government's education policy objective to create a 'culture of learning', and the agenda of 'instant gratification' which maintains that (under-represented) people will unhesitatingly reap the rewards of their investment in learning, seems rather short-sighted.

The work of Bourdieu (1977) has been especially useful for understanding the continuing discrepancies between the achievements of people from working-class and middle-class backgrounds. Bourdieu's work is mainly concerned with the relationship between the socio-cultural realm and structure. Central to Bourdieu's theories is the concept of 'habitus', in which the biological is linked to the social. The 'habitus' is built up from early experiences which are prior or simultaneous to the emergence of our subjective sense of self, and as such is the basis of self-knowledge, thoughts and feelings. This initial sense of self is reinforced throughout life and is considerably resistant to change; thus, the 'habitus' has a great ability to reproduce social forces without initiating social change.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) view cultural capital in the same way as economic capital, and explain inequality by drawing on the notion of a cultural element which reconciles economic structures, schooling and people's lives. According to this theory, cultural knowledge is transmitted by the families of each social class and absorbed through successive generations to create the 'habitus', a hard-wired norm which arises out of cultural socialisation. The meaning of culture, according to Bourdieu, is constructed through the power dimension of symbolic practice. The dominant culture transmits to the marginal but not the other way round, and where the marginal culture does transfer meaning this is usually superficial (an example of this may be seen in the case of the celebration of multiculturalism - see section 'The celebration of mixed race identity' in Part Three). Different social classes inherit different levels of linguistic and cultural competences, an inheritance perpetuated by a 'sense of limits' in which people are

confined to their 'habitus', and (degrees of) success and failure are dependent on how a person's structural position is perceived.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) have argued that the education system is one of the fundamental agencies for the reproduction of the system of class relations: an homology exists between the structure of class relations and the structure of achievement within schools whereby the correlation between objective and internalised classes are intuitively perceived and educational choices made accordingly (1977, 164). The education system works as a reproduction strategy for the dominant group, structured to favour those who have cultural capital and acting as a filter in the cultural reproduction of a hierarchical society. Success and underachievement is therefore not something which is inherent in cultural difference, but rather, schools take on the 'habitus' of the dominant class, and this sets the standards for academic success.

Although the theories of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu and Boltanski (1981) overcome the problem of economic determinism (see Bowles and Gintis, 1976), the authors have been criticised for being culturally deterministic in the sense that cultural practices are considered to be a mere reflection of structural forces, and that the culture transmitted by schools, for example, sustains the culture of the dominant groups whilst marginalising the cultures of subordinate groups (Apple, 1983; Macleod, 1987). Bourdieu, however, sees 'habitus' as incorporated *possibilities*, not as socialisation, as the source rather than the prescription of choice. As Hoy (1999) has pointed out, the 'habitus' may actually explain agency in that it attempts to elucidate how people perceive possibilities for action and choice within structures which they do not themselves consciously create.

PART TWO: RACE, ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

Theories of ethnicity and race

'Ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' were terms first used in the late 1960s. The work of both Max Weber (1968) and Frederick Barth (1969) was important for anthropological and

sociological theory because it shifted the focus away from essentialist notions of race, or primordialism (often disguised as socio-biology) which questioned whether ethnic relations were 'innate' extensions of kinship (Geertz, 1963; Van den Berghe, 1981), towards the idea of ethnicity as social organisation and the *relational* quality of ethnic groups. Weber (1968) claimed that ethnic membership did not create a group in itself, but that collective political action and collective interests *facilitate* ethnic identification and group formation, especially in the political sphere. His description of the ethnic group is as one of 'those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of the memories of colonisation or migration: conversely it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists' (Weber, 1968, 389).

Barth (1969) maintained that culture itself did not constitute ethnic identification, and the stasis of the boundaries between groups was contrasted with the fluidity of 'cultural stuff', such as the flow of information and people, *across* these boundaries. His theory incorporates the idea of ascription and self-ascription, giving it the dual-dimension of social organisation and consciousness. Similarly, Anthony Cohen (1985) asserted that the concept of 'community' described both similarity and difference, '[expressing] a *relational* idea: the opposition of one community to others...It seems appropriate, therefore, to focus our examination of the nature of community on the element which embodies this sense of discrimination, namely the *boundary*' (12, original italics). Ethnicity here may be described as socially *constructed* or instrumentalist, in the sense that ethnic affiliations are subject to change, and political or economic motives usually lie behind new affiliations. Thus there is no necessary essential identity around which political affiliations are constructed, but rather, common interests make particular identities possible. The Rushdie affair, which began in 1989 when multiculturalism was at its height in Britain, illustrates how 'culture' was prioritised over 'boundary'. British institutions and Islamic organisations from diverse political backgrounds all agreed on what it is to be a 'Muslim' in an 'Islamic community', where Muslimness hinged on being 'for' or 'against' freedom of speech, and freedom of speech was the marker of western liberalism and tolerance (see Asad, 1993).

Banton (1988) asserted that race was distinguishable from ethnicity in much the same way that physical and cultural differences could be contrasted. Jenkins (1996) has claimed that the ethnic group is voluntarily entered into, whilst the racial group is not; in this way ethnicity is about group identification, or 'us', and race is about social categorisation, or 'them'. Some writers have argued for a convergence between race and ethnicity. Both Wallman (1986) and Eriksen (1993) have claimed that race incorporates only one aspect of ethnic relations, and is in itself not a decisive factor. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) have focussed on ethnic disadvantage, and shown how ethnic differences may be constructed around ideas of race. Although 'ethnicity', as opposed to 'race', has become the favoured concept in both academic and public policy fields when referring to groups and individuals from 'ethnic minority' backgrounds, largely because of the race essentialist connotations of the term 'race', the term 'race' is still used in the context of discrimination and racism.

Weber and Barth were forerunners in understanding ethnic/racial identities as socially constructed rather than reified. In the last 15 years or so, proponents of constructionism, mainly those working in a postmodernist, poststructuralist or feminist vein, have argued that people are not stable and unitary entities who can be neatly categorised and analysed according to the essentialist criteria associated with such classifications, but rather that identities are constructed through language. Post-structuralists see identity as arising out of a myriad of discourses which are culturally available to individuals, and which are drawn upon in people's communications with each other. Vivien Burr (1995) has articulated it thus:

'For each of us, then, a multitude of discourses is constantly at work constructing and producing our identity. Our identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs, a sea that is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings.' (53)

As postmodernism has heralded a move away from binary notions of black/white and confounded the idea that universals can be produced, reified ideas round race have also changed. The increase in the number of people who define and demand recognition as

mixed race - where this is not necessarily based on the traditional black/white definition of mixed race - is one example of this. The work of Stuart Hall (1992), and in particular his depiction of 'new ethnicities', has been considerably influential in promoting ways of thinking about identity as culturally dynamic and hybrid, rather than reified and homogeneous. Hall (1996) viewed identity as both a common experience and individually specific, in which a 'multiplicity of identities' described the potential character of the black British subject. He drew attention to the importance of locatedness, stating: 'we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture....We are all in a sense ethnically located' (Hall, 1992, 258). The intersection between race, culture and other subjectivities such as class and gender was also recognised (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Reay, 1998), and it was acknowledged that a more nuanced notion of racism/s was required (Goldberg, 1990; Miles, 1993).

Despite the emphasis on the socially constructed evanescent and multiple nature of identities, it has been generally recognised that identity is materially configured and that asymmetric relations of power continue to constitute hegemony, racial hierarchies, and inequalities along black/white lines (Mac an Ghail 1988, 1999). Kymlicka (1995) has argued that multicultural policy, in which cultural and ethnic identifications are celebrated as a backdrop for national identity, has obscured forms of institutional racism, whilst the focus on identity has detracted from racial ideologies and the problem of racism. Charles Mills (1998) has usefully pointed out that historical processes have made race a social reality and that, despite not having any natural basis, ontological status is arrived at through processes of intersubjectivity (47). Whereas the former legitimates the concept of race as 'a valid scientific typology' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992, 11), the latter can be described as a 'dialectical process by which *meaning* is attributed to particular biological features of human beings as a result of which individuals may be *assigned* to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically' (Miles, 1989, 76, my italics).

In recent years, the recognition that 'whiteness' as an ethnicity is fundamentally implicated in social relations and processes of racialisation has come to the fore in the academic literature, mainly in the US (see Roediger, 1991; Ware, 1991; Frankenberg,

1993, 1997; Dyer, 1997; Fine et al., 1997; Nakayama, 1998; Razack, 1998; Ware and Back, 2002). White ethnicity is no different to black ethnicity in that it is historically produced, contingent and processual (Frankenberg, 1993). Whiteness, according to Frankenberg, displaces blackness and brown-ness, constructing identity through producing, labelling, and marginalizing others (193). Frankenberg (1993) has argued that culture can be understood in two main ways – one, as bounded and classified, in which culture is separated from material life, and two, as a normative space which can be viewed more broadly as ‘constructing daily practices and world views in complex relations with material life’, a space which she refers to as ‘white culture’ (228); whiteness, then, is ‘not so much void or formlessness as norm’ (198). In this view, whiteness in itself has no meaning, and is constructed and defined only in relation to marginal cultures (Frankenberg, 1993), an ‘immutable’ social construction in that it is ‘an unmarked marker of others’ ‘differentness’ (231). Razack (1998) has argued that white is the colour of domination (11), where the boundary is a (racial) category defined by colour. This notion reflects the ideas expressed by Barth (1969) and Cohen (1985) referred to above, in which relationality is defined by the boundary rather than the content of culture. Because of the dominant discourse on culture, which is only given through the materiality of its history and which is impossible to undo, it is easier to focus on the way in which culture is categorised and named, than on how dominant (white) culture permeates all of life (Frankenberg, 1993).

One of the major dilemmas facing theorists and researchers who have attempted to deconstruct social categories and ‘move beyond’ race, gender, sexuality and class altogether (Butler, 1993; Gilroy, 2000a), is that in so doing, there are no tools with which to combat oppression. In other words, if we disband ‘race’, ‘sex’, ‘class’ altogether, then we cannot also claim that race/sex/class discrimination exist, and challenge such inequality. Ali (2003) has argued that whilst the deconstruction of race may be understood as a-political, it is nevertheless important to try and understand how visual signs work in order to recognise race, and so to undermine race. Like Gilroy, she claims that people need to free themselves from the ‘bonds of raciology’ and ‘compulsory raciality’ (Gilroy cited in Ali, 2003, 18), and has stated that the ‘only way to move beyond racialised

constraints is to begin a process of deconstruction....and to engage with the possibility of post-race futures' (Ali, 2003, 18). The consensus amongst many authors is that *race* should not be glorified but that there is a need to acknowledge the prevalence of *racialisation* (Ifekwunigwe, 1987; Gilroy, 1993). Race as a discourse has real effects even though race as a thing does not exist. As Parker has put it: 'A strong form of the argument would be that discourses allow us to see things that are not 'really' there, and that once an object has been elaborated in discourse it is difficult not to refer to it as if it were real' (1992, 5). Within this framework, the distinction between race as a biological concept and race as a social category is necessary, where the latter should be retained as a potential means for combating racism.

Public discourse in Britain: The multiculturalist agenda and 'race thinking'

Although racial classification has always been culturological (Feuchtwang, 1990), in recent years there has been increasing recognition that race is not unequivocally the same as culture. Indeed, Weber (1968), as mentioned above, recognised that objective blood relations do not determine affiliations, but rather that common causes and collective interests facilitate the construction of particular identities (389). In Britain, as second and third generation children of immigrants grow up, culture has featured more prominently in the way people from ethnic minority groups, including mixed race people, define themselves, and the postmodern idea that British identities are in a 'process of transition' (see Parekh Report, 2000) has become commonplace. Whilst this shift has been reflected in both public discourse and postmodern literature, it appears that much education policy has circumvented pluralistic concepts of personhood completely, and leapt from a 'multiculturalist' stance on personhood, evident in policy of the 1980s (e.g. DES, 1981; DES, 1985), to a non-relativistic universalist position (*The Learning Age*, 1998; *Learning to Succeed*, 1999). The multiculturalist ethos around personhood tended to assume that people belonged to specific cultural groups which all had equal value to one another, whilst the universalist ethos of personhood is one which effectively de-categorises, and so too 'de-culturalises' and 'de-races', the individual (this issue is also discussed in Chapter Three). In the context of education, there is debate around the inter-relationship between

the discourses of economic efficiency and social justice, and whether the universalist economic discourse can incorporate, or simply silences, difference (see Avis, 1997).

The tensions within education are reflected in the broader politico-philosophical debates around citizenship and difference in western societies. Two main camps of thought can be identified: one camp advocates a relativist position in claiming the differentiated rights of particular cultural groups (e.g. Young, 1990; Kymlicka, 1995), whilst the other camp promotes a predominantly neutralist or universalist position (eg. Barry, 2000). In order to maintain political authority, a balance must be seen to be struck between integration and the right to cultural difference. Thus, multiculturalism speaks two languages: its ideological language is expressed in the language of civic universal rights, whilst its practical language is expressed through the dominant state discourse which aims to maintain difference. Evidence of the latter is revealed in education policy (DES 1981; DES 1985; DfEE, 1997; DfEE, 1998: see Chapter Three) where cultural groups are represented as their reified ethnic equivalents, in which these reifications are based on homogenised versions of 'innate' meta-cultures drawing on objective similarities such as family background, language, religion. It is interesting to note that the discourse of multiculturalism encompasses the entire political field from far-right to far-left. A third camp which combines elements from both liberalist and post-structuralist thought and attempts to move beyond the universalist/particularist impasse (for a discussion of this see Laclau, 1996) is useful in the context of the problem of how to reconcile a universal education with identity-specific needs.

In recent years, the debate has centred around the politics of representation and categorisation to show how the authority of state discourse marginalises ethnic groups. Multiculturalism has extended this view of majority/minority relations to incorporate the idea of 'diversity within unity'. Bikhu Parekh (2000), in his vision of the future of 'multi-ethnic Britain', has asserted that both equality and difference have to be taken into account in any attempt to create an equitable society: universalism is not enough, he has claimed, particularism must be part of it. Parekh (2000) has drawn attention to the difference between agency and structure, and has argued that recognising that everyone has equal

worth and equal claims to opportunities is something quite different from the ways in which these opportunities are compromised by structural inequalities. He has also importantly highlighted the issue of racism (although it seems that his analysis of this problem focuses on structural inequality rather than on people's attitudes).

Most recently, within the postmodern context, multiculturalism has been discussed as a benign aspect of British culture, as something to be celebrated rather than tolerated. Underpinning this benevolent view of 'culture' is one of 'race thinking'. Such 'race thinking' exposes the paradox of liberalism as this is articulated by David Goldberg (1993): *race is irrelevant but all is race*. This issue is discussed in greater depth in Part Three, with reference to the celebration of mixed race identity, and in Chapter Six. Despite scientific research which has shown that there is more variation within 'races' than between them (Gist and Dworkin, 1972), the association between race, biology and phenotype remains a popular and pervasive one (Small, 1994; Ifekwunigwe, 1999). Indeed, theories of race have always reflected beliefs about the sanctity of racial 'purity', where these social constructions have become integral to social relations, and political and economic structures (Omi and Winant, 1994). In recent years there has been a rise in genetic and genomic constructions of race, and the ways in which race is understood corresponds with the ways in which the relationship between human beings and nature is being constructed under the influence of the DNA revolution (Gilroy, 2000a; Skinner, 2004). Gilroy (2000a) has argued that it is incumbent upon us to 'take possession of that profound transformation and somehow set it to work against the tainted logic that produced it', where this crisis of 'race' is precisely the cue we need to 'free ourselves from the bonds of all raciology' (150). He also asserts, however, that raciology is trenchant 'and to imagine that its dangerous meanings can be easily rearticulated into benign, democratic forms would be to exaggerate the power of critical and oppositional interests' (Gilroy, 2000a, 12).

Race essentialism, it seems, is no less evident in public discourse in Britain today than during the halcyon days of multiculturalism in the 1980s, appearing in the sanitised form of cultural essentialism. In this view, culture simply replaces race, and culture is

categorised as homogeneous and reified, and becomes the dominant feature of identity (Gilroy, 1987; Gilroy, 2000a; Rattansi, 1992). This view of 'race as culture' turns the theories of Weber (1968) and Barth (1969) upside down, in that it emphasises the perennial nature of identity and affiliations. In contemporary Britain, one example of this can be seen in the way in which Caribbean culture, and Jamaican working-class culture in particular, has come to represent the culture and tastes of all black people in Britain (Bakare-Yusuf, 1997). Some of Gilroy's (2000b) more recent work has emphasised the stake that minority people have in the creation of such essentialist notions of culture and race. The terminology used to describe such essentialism has, in both academic and policy literature, and in public discourse, become increasingly culturally pluralistic over the years, variously re-vamped as 'multiculturalism', '(cultural) diversity', '(cultural) hybridity' and most recently 'cosmopolitanism'. One of the dangers of such a titivation of the term culture is that in purportedly serving to de-essentialise the subject, it creates a semblance of egalitarian pluralism. Razack (1998) has described this situation in the context of education in the US. She claims that whilst the popularity of the cultural differences model remains trenchant, education about cultural differences remains fundamentally flawed in so far as it involves surface understandings of cultural practices. It is not so much diversity itself which is the problem, but as Razack (1998) has pointed out, that the

'emphasis on cultural diversity too often descends, in a multicultural spiral, to a superficial reading of differences that makes power relations invisible and keeps dominant cultural norms in place. The strategy becomes inclusion and all too often what Chandra Mohanty has described as 'harmonious, empty pluralism' (9).

Gilroy (1987) has argued that reifications have been used as political tools to bolster existing inequalities between ethnic 'communities' in Britain. Indeed, Rothschild has claimed that culture has become a form of 'ethnopolitics' which is used to '[mobilise] ethnicity from a psychological or cultural or social datum into political leverage for the purpose of altering or reinforcing.....systems of structured inequality between and among ethnic categories' (Rothschild, 1981, 1-2). Aziz (1997) has argued that the black/white binary is intentionally upheld in order to maintain differences between supposedly

'bounded' groups, which also has had the effect of keeping women in distinct camps. She states:

'The energetic assertion of black/white (or any other) difference tends to create fixed and oppositional categories which can result in another version of the suppression of difference. Differences *within* categories – here black and white – are underplayed in order to establish it *between* them. Consequently, each category takes on a deceptive air of internal coherence, and similarities between women in the different categories are thus suppressed...the heterogeneity of *white* women as a group, on the other hand, goes almost unacknowledged.' (72)

The political reification of culture is one result of the recent transition from a focus on immigration to a culturalist notion of ethnic diversity, in which the interaction between social segregation and an ideology of differential culturalism has created false constructs of community (Al-Azmeh cited in Ranger, 1996). Turner (1993) has stated that '*multiculturalism* tends to become a form of identity politics, in which the concept of *culture* becomes merged with that of ethnic identity....It risks essentialising the idea of culture as the property of an ethnic group or race; it risks reifying cultures as separate entities by overemphasising their boundedness and mutual distinctness' (411-12, original italics; see also Rattansi, 1992; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). This notion is reflected in what Al-Azmeh has called the 'over-Islamicisation of Muslims, over-Hinduisation of Hindus and over-Africanisation of Blacks' (Al-Azmeh, 1994 in Ranger). Since 9:11 and the war in Iraq, such reification has been amplified, especially in the context of Muslims.

The key point here is that 'common sense' notions of liberalism and pluralism have merely sustained racial division by finding new 'acceptable' forms within which to disguise it. An example of this can be seen in the recent media attention shift away from black and ethnic minority people to a focus on asylum seekers in Britain. Indeed, one effect of this media focus on asylum seekers has been, according to Tina Attoh (2004), the displacement of the fact that mixed race is the fastest growing ethnic group in Britain. (Mixed race people are either pathologised or 'celebrated' in public discourse for their culture and diversity. This issue is discussed more fully in Part Three). Arguably, the race distinction has to be maintained within the discourse of liberalism as a marker and

constant reminder of what is outside the realm of universal normativity in any given moment. Because of the 'common sense' notion inherent in liberal discourse, premised on freedom, equality and liberty, Razack (1998) has pointed out, 'finding a way out of liberalism is difficult' (27). Pateman (1998) has argued that the principle of the social contract at the core of liberalism has foreclosed any discussion about domination in so far as it is premised on political freedom. People's 'common sense' judgements are justified when the political freedom and values of the dominant group are seen to be compromised. From this perspective, Lefort's assertion that a symbolic process of social division has to be created in order for the image of the unity of the state – in this case Britain – to be secured and sustained, appears irrefutable (Lefort cited in Norval, 1996).

PART THREE: THE STUDY OF MIXED RACE

Early studies of identity formation

Research on racial attitudes and marginality from the 1930s through to the 1980s focused on doll studies. Early studies by Clark and Clark (1939, 1947) concluded that because the majority of black children preferred white dolls, they misidentified as white; as such, these children had internalized society's rejection of them as black, and had therefore rejected their own blackness. These studies have been criticized for their fallibility on several counts – for example, that the dolls were presupposed to represent real people, that black dolls were unfamiliar to most children, and that choices were limited to two options. Even if the choice of doll were to say something about mis/identification, it is still difficult to draw any conclusions about racial identity formation from such identifications, especially in the case of mixed race children, whose choice of either a white or a black doll could be understood as an identification with the family member or culture which is dominant in their lives.

The work of Robert Park (1928, 1952, 1964) has been very influential in attempts to understand the identities of marginalized groups in society. Park (1964) argued against the idea that people of different races inherently possessed different personalities, yet he also

viewed mixed race people as pathologically unstable because of their marginalized and contradictory position in society. The stimulus to which they were subjected as a result of this position however, made them 'more enterprising than the Negroes, more restless, aggressive, and ambitious'. The mulatto and the mixed blood are often sensitive and self-conscious to an extraordinary degree' (Park, 1964, 387). Stonequist (1937), too, developed this notion of the marginal condition amongst mixed race people. His thesis was that this condition had three stages: First, mixed race children identify with and attempt to integrate into the dominant white culture, yet soon understand that they are not accepted by white society. Second, they identify with the minority group, whilst still desiring to belong to the dominant group; this results in a state of ambivalence in which the white party is alternately idealized and denigrated, and the black party is varyingly seen as a safe haven which shares their experiences of oppression, and a prison from which they cannot escape (see Katz, 1996, 22). Third, the mixed race person assimilates either into the dominant group, or into the subordinate group, or finds accommodation between the two groups. Stonequist's theory is useful in the context of this study because it emphasizes psychological processes, as opposed to philosophical and sociological processes discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

Statistics on mixed race

Few official statistics on the mixed race population in Britain have been published. In the 1991 census, of the ethnic minority population that lived with a partner, 16 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women were living with a white partner. Mixed relationships were more usual amongst people under 35, and amongst black and Chinese people than people of South Asian descent. Figures from the Fourth National Survey claimed that 50 per cent of African Caribbean men and 30 per cent of African Caribbean women under the age of 30 who were partnered had white partners (Modood et al., 1997). In 1991 it was estimated that there were 230,000 people of mixed race descent, whilst the Labour Force Survey estimated this as closer to 290,000. A new estimate following the 2001 census puts the figure at 674,000.

The significance of age amongst the mixed race population cannot be under-estimated. Data gathered by the Labour Force Survey between 1995 and 1997 from 60,000 households shows that whilst the percentage of ethnic minority people who are mixed race remains fairly constant at around 7 per cent amongst the 20-44 age group (and steadily declines to 0 per cent for the 44-75 age group) the mixed race population is dominated by far by people under the age of 15 (54 per cent, compared to 20 per cent of the total population). Of the total population in Britain of 7 per cent of children aged 0-4, 25 per cent were black/mixed and 20 per cent were other/mixed (Schuman, cited in Owen, 2001). Schuman (cited in Owen, 2001) estimates that 0.7 per cent of all children under 15, and 10 per cent of all ethnic minority children are of mixed race parentage. Owen has pointed out that figures may be skewed because single white mothers especially may emphasize their child's mixed or minority heritage, and that at 18 that child, now adult, may choose not to identify as mixed race. Conversely, an aspect which has been omitted in these discussions, is that a white parent may choose to rebuff their child's minority heritage, which that child may choose to reclaim as an adult. Moreover, whilst there is no reason to doubt Phoenix and Owen's (1996) assumption that 'many of these children will be living with a white parent, often a lone white mother' (111-135), by neglecting to suggest that some children will be living with a single black mother, the implicit statement is that black men are more likely to leave mixed race partnerships than white men.

It has recently been asserted that the mixed race population is growing so fast in the UK that there are more mixed race people than people from any other ethnic background (apart from white) under the age of 16 (Owen, 2004). A recent estimate claims that 50% of mixed race people in Britain are under the age of 15, and less than 3% are over 65 (Aspinall, 2004). The age profile of mixed race people in London especially has been highlighted. Rob Lewis (2004) in a recent public seminar made the point that 'London is different', in that the percentage of mixed race people in London was far higher - around 3% in Greater London, and around 4% in Inner London - than the national average of 1%, and that 20% of all children under the age of 15 were mixed race. Recent data from the Labour Force Survey shows that there is a similarity in the percentages of mixed race

people and white people who have higher qualifications or no qualifications. An observation of the age aggregate, however, reveals that there is a relatively high percentage of mixed race people aged 16-24 who have no qualifications, and a comparatively high rate of unemployment (similar to that of Pakistani, Black-Caribbean and Black-African). It also shows that mixed race people tend to be in occupations which are of lower status than those of white British people.

Although a multiracial movement did not arise in Britain as it did in the US, possibly because there was no official policy of hypodescent nor a significant black consciousness movement, the rapid rise in the numbers of mixed race children born and the increase in interracial partnerships in the last decade especially, has brought about a gradual change in understanding/s around mixed race. One response to this has been an increase in mixed race organisations, pressure groups and interest groups which provide information or advice, and places where mixed race people can come together to share experiences, or can participate in common struggles for racial and social justice (for example, People in Harmony, UK). In the run-up to the 2001 census, such forums frequently focussed on the question of 'rights' for mixed race people, and focus groups and cognitive tests showed that mixed race people were in favour of a 'mixed race' category, which alongside support from government departments and the Commission for Racial Equality, led to the introduction of the mixed race category in the 2001 census in Britain.

The 2001 census to some extent then, saw the convergence between the British government's conceptualization of race and mixed race people's self-identifications, and included mixed race options for the first time - 'White and Black Caribbean', 'White and Black African', 'White and Asian' or 'Any other mixed background'. Statistics published by the Office for National Statistics in 2001 indicated that the mixed race population had increased by more than 75% in the 1990s to 415,000; that is to say, England and Wales had a 'mixed' population of 1.27%, Scotland 0.25%, and Northern Ireland 0.20%. Consequently, the Commission for Racial Equality, in their submission to the Office for National Statistics, recommended that ethnic monitoring should be based on self-identification, something which was echoed by many mixed race people generally.

Phoenix and Tizard's (1993) study in secondary schools had also already indicated that mixed race adolescents identified positively with their mixed race identity. Moreover, it brought the specific needs of mixed race children to the forefront of discussion, especially concerning their over-representation in care and the potential failings of social services.

The different meanings which are attached to the category mixed race can be seen in the results of the Fourth National Survey (Modood et al., 1997). Of those who described their family origin as mixed, only 40% said their ethnic group membership was mixed - 13% selected the 'white' option; 14% the 'black' option, and 15% defined themselves as 'Black-British' (Modood et al., 1997). This suggests that these mixed race people did not necessarily have singular views of their identity, but rather, amalgamated mixed race and mono-racial/cultural identities, or shifted between the two according to context. In so doing, they may have been distinguishing between race and culture in their self-identifications, that is to say, whereas race or descent may have been defined in mixed (dual or multiple) terms, cultural identification was with a mono-racial group. This is in keeping with the post-modern notion of identity as fluid and dynamic, and also with the findings of my research. Aspinall (2003) has argued that the 2001 census categories have mistakenly focussed on 'race' and not on ethnic and cultural identifications, thereby reinforcing rather than challenging the rigidity of racial boundaries, and fortifying dominant racial norms (289). This is further invoked by the emphasis on dual-racial heritage, and not multiple heritages and cultural diversity. Aspinall (2003) asserts that because the category 'White' dominates as a co-identity, it remains the principle group maintaining the historically entrenched asymmetries of race relations.

Research on mixed race identity

In contrast to the US, virtually no official data exists on mixed race in the UK, apart from the use of 'mixed race' in the Labour Force and General House Surveys, and preliminary research leading up to the 2001 census. The experiences of mixed race people were assumed to correlate with those of black or ethnic minority people, and as such were effectively kept out of the mainstream literature. Consequently, very few early studies of

mixed race people exist, and those that do are US based and subsumed within studies of black identity. However, in the last decade there has been a growing body of work on critical mixed race theory, most particularly in the US (Root, 1992, 1996; Zack, 1995; Daniel, 1996; Rockquemore, 2002; Mahtani, 2002; Winters, 2003), but also in the UK (Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993]; Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Parker and Song, 2001; Olumide, 2002; Ali, 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s, studies of mixed race focussed on how people of mixed race heritage developed black identities, and concentrated largely on experiences of marginality of black people and related identity problems. They drew largely on the work of psychologists such as Erikson (1968) who claimed that many adolescents experienced an identity crisis in their bid to become 'integrated' adults. Erikson's developmental framework was used by Gibbs (1997) in her work with biracial adolescents. Gibbs (1997) and other US researchers using a developmental model believed that an integrated biracial as opposed to a black identity was the desirable goal for mixed race people. The challenge for the young people in Gibbs' study was twofold: one, to successfully integrate dual racial/ cultural identifications whilst simultaneously learning how to develop a positive self-concept and sense of their own ability; and two, to develop a stable sense of personal identity alongside a positive racial identity. Gibbs (1997) reported that developmental problems could arise when mixed race adolescents experienced conflicts in their attempts to resolve basic psychosocial tasks. These problems included feelings of anxiety about social acceptance, shame about physical appearance, rejection by peer groups, rejection by one parental culture completely, anxiety over career options, and difficulty in partnerships.

Since the 1990s in the US (Root, 1992, 1996; Zack, 1995) and the late 1970s in the UK (Bagley and Young, 1979; Wilson, 1987), studies of mixed race have been less problem-focussed and have attempted to expel the idea that mixed race people suffer more than mono-racial people from identity problems which are rooted in psychopathology or as a result of dysfunctional families. Rather, the focus has been on how racism and racialisation impacts on mixed race people's lives (Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993]; Olumide, 2002), an observation which is also echoed in this piece of research. Moreover,

there is increasing recognition that discrimination can occur within families and that mixed race people may experience ostracisation from one cultural group. In a study by Gibbs and Hines (1992), the researchers found a positive sense of self-esteem amongst a small sample of biracial adolescents. Similarly, Bagley and Young (1979) found high levels of self-esteem amongst a sample of 4-7 year olds, and Wilson (1987) reported little evidence of identity confusion in her study with 9 year-olds. Self-identifying as mixed race appears to be one indicator of a 'positive identity' by some researchers (see Wilson, 1987 and Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993]), a gauge which in itself does not, in my opinion, shed much light on the actual experience of being mixed race as either positive or negative. Similarly, Wilson's conclusion that most of the children in her study felt comfortable with an 'intermediate' identity, a finding based largely on the children in her sample choosing a photograph of a child that looked most like them from a variety of photographs of white, black and mixed-parentage children, and identifying as neither black nor white, seems somewhat dubious.

In the last decade or so, studies of mixed race people have relied more on mixed race people's own accounts and opened up a theoretical space which draws on the lived experience of mixed race people. Several British studies have focussed on children and young people of black-white parentage. These studies have shown how the boundaries of rigid black-white essentialism may be disrupted, and that mixed race people refer to 'in-between' categories. Wilson's (1987) study showed that 59% of 6-9 year olds saw themselves as neither black or white but as 'brown', or 'half-and half', 'coloured' or 'half-caste'. Later studies have tended to support the 2001 census findings on distinctions and co-usages of race and culture in self-definition. Fatimilehin (1999) found that whilst many respondents identified as mixed race, even more identified as mono-racially black. Tizard and Phoenix's (2001[1993]) study showed that 39% of the respondents identified as black, and 49% of respondents identified as 'mixed', 'brown', 'half-and half', 'coloured' or 'half-caste'. Moreover, around 10% of the respondents said their identifications changed in different situations. My research supports these findings. A significant body of research has also shown the discrepancies between mixed race self-perceptions of identity and their perceptions of how they believe they are seen by others as black.

In the recent literature on mixed race, constructionist theories have created a space for the boundaries of mixed race to not only incorporate the binary black/white framework (see Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993]; Wilson, 1987), but also more recently, dual/diverse ethnic minority heritage (Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Mahtani and Moreno, 2001; Olumide, 2002). Recent studies have shown that mixed race people identified as mixed race – for example, as black *and* white, rather than black *or* white, etc. - and that they had positive self-conceptions (Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993]; Rockquemore, 2002). Anzaldua (1987), in a US context, has described mixed race identity as a ‘border identity’, one which ‘lies in-between’ two predefined social categories. In her conceptualisation, mixed race people do not consider themselves to be either black or white but incorporate both blackness and whiteness into a unique hybrid category of self-reference.

In Britain, postmodern notions of hybridity and the fluidity have been attractive to many researchers in the context of mixed race identity in that they de-emphasise race, biology, and the ‘ethnic absolutisms’ referred to by Gilroy (1987), and can encapsulate the diversity of mixed race people’s experiences. In the context of Britain, ‘anything goes’ understandings of mixed race based on self-definition draw on postmodernist ideas. With reference to the work of Stuart Hall, Tizard and Phoenix (2001[1993]) have argued in the context of mixed race identity, ‘it is generally accepted that people have several identities at the same time’ (Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993], 5). This notion of hybridity also debunks the idea of racial purity (Ifekwunigwe, 1997). Thus, whilst mixed race is viewed by some people as a fixed social category, others see it as a potential anti-racist strategy and as possibly leading the way towards a ‘raceless’ future (Gordon, 1995).

The discrimination of mixed race people: who counts?

As we have seen above, the question of individual rights for mixed race people and the discovery of new forms of identification has recently spawned a mixed race political ‘movement’ in Britain in so far as this has been the impetus behind the official recognition of a mixed race people through the introduction of a mixed race category in the 2001

census. One of the key questions this has opened up in critical mixed race theory has been 'who counts as mixed race?' This parallels the debate within the black feminist movement about 'who counts as black?' and is intrinsic to this debate in so far as whoever counts as mixed race cannot also count as black.

Despite the accreditation of mixed race as a self-identification, one of the problems facing mixed race people in Britain today, argues Alibhai-Brown (2001), is the legacy of hypodescent in the US, or the 'one-drop rule' which, forces people of mixed race heritage to choose one identity, usually the minority identity (see also Root, 1996). The degree of agency which is given a 'mixed race' person is therefore partly contingent upon readings of phenotype in relation to systems of categorisation and classification, which may in turn reinforce 'race' science fiction (Ifekwunigwe, 2001). Ifekwunigwe (1999) has pointed out that the inaccurate conflation between biology and culture, and the specific social meanings assigned to physical characteristics, 'create politically charged, manufactured hierarchically ranked conceptions of Blackness and Whiteness, which in turn govern inter-group relationships' (13). Not only do biological features signify group membership, but also the social meaning such membership has in society at large. Bi-racialisation, a term referred to in the US but not in the UK, refers to the specific structural and oppositional relationship forged between people socially designated as Black and those regarded as White (Frankenburg, 1997). Mahtani (2001) has argued that mixed race people have been made intelligible in ways that maintain racial hierarchies, in that they have been categorised as *either* black *or* white. The mere presence of 'mixed race' people, as such, challenges mainstream racial categories constructed precisely to police boundaries that are already heavy with classed and gendered meanings. Thus, researchers have floundered over definitions around mixed race, where this has centred around the tension between 'race' as a discredited concept, and the language which is used to maintain this concept. This has been discussed elsewhere (see also Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Aspinall, 2003; Ali, 2003).

A further problem is that of political validity. Researchers, mainly in the US, have argued that the political salience of the black movement would be compromised if mixed race

people did not define as black. The main challenge against a mixed race category has been that to accept such a category would *weaken* rather than create the possibility for struggle against racism (Gordon, 1995) because many of those who previously defined as black would 'defect' to a mixed race grouping. In the UK, up until the 1990s, the British government's concern with counting and categorising only the main racialised and ethnic groups in Britain excluded mixed race as an official identity, and mixed race people were in official terms categorised as 'black' or 'other'. The black political movement, however, was never particularly strong in the UK, which perhaps accounts for the fact that the notion of 'black consciousness' in both public discourse and academic literature has always been minimal. In the UK today, any misgivings about a mixed race category have been expressed primarily by individual public figures via the media. Two of these commentators, discussed below, have claimed that a mixed race category is indefensible, and that it is imperative that mixed race people self-define as black for political reasons. The late Bernie Grant (cited in Owen, 2001), a black Labour MP, for example, claimed that mixed race people who have one black parent should regard themselves as black as they encounter the same racism and discrimination as black people. In the Guardian newspaper he stated: 'Society sees mixed race people as black, and they are treated as black. They are never accepted as white, so they have no choice' (Young, 1997, 2).

Claire Gorham (2003), a mixed race TV presenter, recently argued that black and mixed race people are united by virtue of being a minority who are discriminated against, and that mixed race people would remain 'in limbo' until British society puts an end to race discrimination (Guardian Weekend, 35). Gorham's justification for this position was that she believed that some white people simply see the colour 'black' as the defining physical characteristic of a person, regardless of features, skin tone, and sometimes gender. After all, she claimed, 'if we were to stand in front of a crowd of National Front supporters, their hatred would hardly be curbed by the fact that we're a 'lighter' tone of non-white' (35). However, she raises the crucial issue of discrimination against mixed race people by black people: 'black people see degrees of blackness – and in some cases, the wrong shade of black' and suggests that black people are no better than white people when it comes to discriminating against mixed race people. According to Gorham, first black discrimination

against mixed race people has to be overcome so that together they can form a solid community and become a force to be reckoned with in combating white race discrimination.

Fundamentally, one of the main difficulties with defining mixed race people as black is that it inevitably excludes vast numbers of mixed race people who do not define as black. Others have argued that the fact of mixed race itself de-stabilises the homogeneity of fixed racial categorisations and as such may be useful for supporting anti-racist strategies. In Britain, most academics writing on the subject of mixed race have argued that mixed race people do not want to define themselves as black. Indeed, some researchers have asserted that mixed race people are producing their own cartographies of identity and that there is a fundamental desire for a category 'mixed race' (Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Mahtani and Moreno, 2001). Ifekwunigwe (2001), for example, has claimed that mixed race people seek a clear term which is both non-essentialist and encompasses the specificity of their (common) experience (17). These claims are supported by recent research in the US. In a survey carried out by Rockquemore (2002), 58 per cent of biracial people defined themselves as neither black or white but as part of 'a third and separate category that draws from both of these group characteristics and has some additional uniqueness in its combination' (43); of these respondents, however, over half expressed a lack of coherence between self-understanding and how they socially experienced their race as black.

The dilemma centres around the question of whether a separate category of mixed race should exist, in which identity claims are specific to mixed race people, but experiences of discrimination are common to both mixed race and black people, or whether the 'dilution' of common experiences into separate claims merely serves to undermine the political agenda which challenges universal racial discrimination. This dilemma is further complicated by the 'woman' issue and implications for feminism as a universal political project, and the debate within the black feminist movement about who counts as black, discussed earlier.

Aspinall (2003), arguing against the category of mixed race, has stated: 'The challenge is to find ways of allowing for hybridised identities that represent allegiances to multiple groups rather than an outcome from two putatively 'pure' categories' (292). However, Mahtani and Moreno (2001) have pointed out that for race to possess power as a social category and to be an effective political force, not only is such a category of (mixed) race prerequisite, but that there must also be a clear notion of who is 'in' and 'out' of this category. This parallels the key debate, and indeed the fundamental question facing black feminism and western feminism generally – must it be exclusive (and so too, essentialist) to have political power? The authors have argued for a pluralist understanding of mixed race identity on the grounds that the discrimination experienced by people of mono-racial, black/white, or dual minority parentage may not be dissimilar. However, they recognize the danger of this 'ironic impasse' in which we try to be inclusive and hold on to a mixed race category, yet are justly threatened by the emergence of a majority mixed race group within that category which silences minority voices. Moreover, Aziz (1997) has argued that black women are represented as '*homogeneously oppressed in almost every politically significant way*', that is to say, by racial oppression, sexual domination, and class, but also that racism does not affect all black women equally, and nor does the assumption that they are all working-class hold (73). By extension, one could argue that mixed race people do not experience discrimination equally, and that their classed identities are influenced by a myriad of factors related to their gendered and racialised positions in society. Drawing on my data with mixed race women, the relationship between mixed race identity and political action will be discussed further in Chapter Six: Discussion.

The celebration of mixed race identity

Mixed race people have always had to serve some broader purpose in society to justify their existence. Traditionally, this has been in terms of pathology, as the racial scapegoat, as marginal, 'out of place', and confused about racial identity (Root, 1996; Ifekwunigwe, 1999). More recently, as mixed race people have become increasingly visible, the attention has been focussed on them as harbingers of a more egalitarian and progressive society. As possessors of two cultures at least – and having the 'best of both worlds' - they

are celebrated as cultural bridge-builders who have the potential to cure society of its racial ills. Mahtani (2002) has described this celebration thus:

‘It has also been assumed that the ‘mixed race’ individual has the solution for the world’s racist problems in a vacant celebration of sanitised cultural hybridity, where the mixed race person is seen as a ‘rainbow child’ glimmering with hope for a colour-blind future.’ (470-471)

This celebration of mixed race identity is tied in with the discourse of ‘race thinking’ discussed in Part Two, in which the concept of race (and race difference) is substituted by the more benign concept of culture (and cultural difference). Culture, in this rhetoric, is the inoffensive and superficial overlay to the *real* individual underneath who is ‘equal’ to the next person. Razack (1998) has referred to white celebration of black women in contemporary America as the ‘commodification of otherness’ (5). Bell hooks’ (1992) has developed Fanon’s ideas to incorporate the gendered dimension of the colonial encounter, and although hooks’ refers to white men’s engagement in sex with non-white women, her idea may be applied to the celebration of mixed race women. She argued:

‘To make oneself vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the other, does not require that one relinquish one’s mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races genders, sexual practices affirm their power in intimate relations with the other.’ (hooks, 1992, 23)

The established BBC internet site gives an insight into popular assumptions around mixed race people in Britain. The opening article of ‘Race UK’, entitled ‘The changing face of Britain: Britain’s blurring ethnic mix’, is a good example of what Parker and Song (2001) have called the ‘celebration’ discourse of mixed race people as ‘embodiments of the progressive and harmonious intermingling of cultures and people’ and ‘exemplars of contemporary cultural creativity’ (2001, 4). The leading caption, flanked by a photo of Dawn French and Lenny Henry, triumphantly claims: ‘The united Kingdom has one of the fastest growing mixed race populations in the world, fuelled by the continuing rise of inter-ethnic relationships’. The article goes on to claim that ‘Britons of all shades are embracing each other more than ever before’, and informs us that celebrities such as

Michael Caine and Trevor Macdonald, Sade and Salman Rushdie 'are, or have been, in mixed race relationships'. Shirley Bassey, Oona King MP and Hanif Kureshi moreover, are 'high-profile examples of Britain's burgeoning mixed race population'. Inter-racial liaisons are described as a thriving industry - 'inter-racial relationships are flourishing with a fifth of Asian men and 10% of Asian women opting for a white partner'. The article therefore suggests that mixed race identity is no more than 'skin deep', and that the primary indicator of a progressive non-racist society is inter-racial marriage. The danger of such celebration is that it can lead to a kind of fetishism in which mixed race people are seen as exotic. One might also argue that the 'mixed race celebration' can be seen in the advent of the 'mixed race celebrity'; some famous men are Lenny Kravitz, Prince, Tiger Woods and Keanu Reeves, and women are Alicia Keys, Nora Jones, Mariah Carey, Jennifer Lopez and Halle Berry.

As Mahtani (2002) has noted, this cultural celebration effectively de-races racial power dynamics (or to use her term 'e-races'). At the same time, however, the discourse of 'race thinking' remains dominant. In Britain, the discourses of individualism and universalism have marked a gradual rhetorical shift towards the 'de-racing' of British society and the notion that we are 'all just human beings'. In this sense, the 'celebration' of mixed race people, and the wider celebration of diversity, deflects the focus away from categorisation onto individualism, and in so doing, de-institutionalises racism and renders people 'free' from the effects of discrimination and differentiation. The main tenet is that race is not an issue. Thus, 'race thinking', discrimination, racism may all still exist, but this becomes the individual responsibility of the persons affected.

In the previous section I explored some of the issues around the salience of race and the difficulties involved in holding on to the concept of race for political purposes; in this section I have discussed some concerns about the individualist discourse of personhood which attempts to construct mixed race people as 'celebrated' for their culture, and in which 'race' has done a spurious vanishing act. This, I argue, has deflected the attention away from the race-related problems which affect many mixed race people. It is therefore imperative to continue analytical work on mixed race identity to show how race as a

concept and mixed race identities are constructed in a variety of ways through language/discourse. 'Race' is *experienced* as real in many people's lives, but without a process of deconstruction it would be hard not to refer to 'race' (as an object which has been elaborated in discourse, see Parker, 1992, 5, cited above) as something which is actually real, which may have problematic consequences. This deconstructive approach to discourse enables researchers to understand how race is socially constructed and how mixed race people construct their identities and experiences - whether these are articulated in pluralist, essentialist or individualist terms – and potentially provides a starting point for the reconstruction of counter-discourses. The tension between essentialist, universalist and pluralist concepts of personhood discussed in this chapter will be explored with reference to the interview findings in Chapter Six: Discussion.

The next chapter examines the research methodology. Part One sets the context for the study and explores different approaches to educational research, especially key issues around qualitative research in education, and why the investigation focussed on mixed race women and Further Education. Part Two examines the different approaches to analysing the policy documents and fieldwork data, and Part Three considers the issues involved in the research process itself.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I examine the research methodology. The empirical investigation involved identifying discourses of personhood and equity in a selection of British post compulsory education policy texts, and analysing data collected from mixed race women in semi-structured interviews on their constructions of self, their experiences of education, and on their opinions around prevailing government discourses on education. My sample consisted of 40 mixed race women, including five women with whom I piloted the questions. The three main criteria for selection were that the respondent had to be female, identify herself as mixed race, and currently be studying, or recently (in the last five years) have been studying, at a Further Education college in London. I adopted a mainly qualitative and interpretive approach to data collection and analysis: this involved conducting semi-structured interviews, identifying and analysing discourses in a selection of post compulsory education policy texts and in the interview texts, and some numerical counting. Instead of formulating a hypothesis prior to investigation and testing it in a linear fashion, my research design evolved cyclically as data were collected. The results of the research are interpretations of meanings based on natural groups as opposed to statistical sampling and quantification based on taxonomic groups. This type of approach is appropriate for investigating normative discourses around identity and post compulsory education, and for collecting data in the form of personal accounts of mixed race women's perceptions of identity and experiences of education. I draw largely on poststructuralist and feminist approaches to educational research.

Chapter Three focuses on dominant discourses in education and examines how these are reflected in the selected policy texts. Chapter Four examines respondents' discourses around selfhood in relation to theories of personhood. Chapter Five discusses respondents' articulations on their educational experiences and their opinions on education policy discourses, and examines these in relation to the policy discourses examined in Chapter Three. Chapter Six looks at the 'fit' between the two sets of data, and attempts to bring the

discussions on identity and education together. In so doing, I follow Ozga's view that it is crucial to 'bring together structural, macro-level analysis of education systems and education policies and micro level investigation, especially that which takes account of people's perception and experiences' (Ozga, 1990, 359). Ultimately, the research asks whether universalist policy formulations are compatible with the experiences of mixed race respondents. Some examples of questions posed in the analysis were:

- 1) Did the respondents' perceptions of themselves correspond with normative concepts of personhood, as these were represented in the theory and policy documents?
- 2) Was there a correlate between the policy concepts around education and the respondents' views on education discourse and experiences of education? How have we as a population been taught to think about what a 'good' education is?
- 3) Did the respondents experience discrimination in their daily lives and in education? Are these experiences paralleled in the literature and do they reflect what we know about contemporary British society today?

PART ONE: SETTING THE CONTEXT

Positivist and interpretive approaches

There are two main methodological paradigms, or approaches to research, which are determined by philosophical assumptions about the way in which the world works and ways in which knowledge about the social world can be produced. These methodologies are methods of investigation in relation to theories, problems, processes and procedures (Burgess, 1984). They may be described as positivist and qualitative/interpretive (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). Positivists claim that the social world, like the natural world, works in measurable ways. The purpose of the positivist model is to demonstrate objective knowledge about the world by using hypotheses which are tested rigorously in controlled environments, and utilises mainly quantitative principles and methods to try

and establish patterns and regularities in human behaviour. Positivists believe that the basis of good research/science is its falsifiability: a theory or hypothesis must exist prior to observation, and refutation of this theory must be possible (Popper, 1959).

Kuhn (1970), a critic of Popper, believed that there is an interpretive dimension to all science: knowledge is not cumulative and linear in the modernist sense of the world being an objectively knowable place, and that we get progressively closer to knowing the truth about it, but rather, that objective and subjective worlds interlink in the sense that facts and phenomena are interpreted and 'truths' defined by researchers according to their paradigmatic frameworks. He asserted that even when a theory is proven falsifiable, replacing one set of ideas with another takes a long time. He believed that science works in paradigm shifts which are developed through normative consensus derived from 'the entire constellation of beliefs, values and techniques shared by members of a given scientific community' (Kuhn, 1970, 75). Kuhn's theory is useful in showing how normative ethnic categories are both invoked and maintained by specific dominant communities.

The development of the interpretive approach draws on several criticisms of positivism. Whilst positivism uses a scientific model of rationality in an attempt to address the problem of how to create universal statements about the world in which we live, focussing on variables within specific contexts which constitute particular outcomes and correlations per se, the interpretive model concentrates on discovering how meaning is made and social practices are constituted within historical and cultural contexts. This approach is concerned with multiple realities which are in constant flux, as opposed to the study of parts making up a finite whole. Moreover, the positivist research model, which requires an assumption of a determinate world in which closure is imposed, raises questions around the objectivity of knowledge claims, and the relationship between the observer and the observed (Usher, 1996). Interpretivists have argued that our understandings of the world are subjectively constructed, and that participation in the research process is the only way of interpreting these constructions (Manis and Meltzer (1967). The type of data, however, whether quantifiable or comparative qualitative, should not make any difference as to

whether the falsifiability criterion should be applied; the point is whether the theory or hypothesis under investigation can be disconfirmed, regardless of how results are obtained (King et al., 1994).

Research in education

In educational research, although positivist research is still widely used, some researchers have argued that it has been unsatisfactory in making predictions and generalisations about education (Usher, 1996): education policy intentions rarely correlate directly with policy outcomes (Whitty et al., 1997) and qualitative research has been important in examining which variables might contribute to discrepancies. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) claim that the complexity of education demands the use of different research techniques, and have found the distinction between positivism and interpretivism a useful one in advocating a qualitative orientation to educational research: qualitative methodology, they claim, allows for a focus on the processes of education, teaching and learning, as opposed to quantitative methods which stress the importance of 'cause and effect, products, outcomes or correlations in research on schools', which they maintain is of limited value (1995, 25). The main preoccupations within these debates around positivism and interpretivism have been about how to achieve validity and reliability in educational research, and the appropriateness of using different methods in different settings.

Qualitative methods have been especially useful in comparative studies which have tested the validity and reliability of traditional studies of white schooling, and have been widely used to explore how class, gender and ethnicity impact upon educational outcomes (Spender, 1982; Verma, 1987; Smith and Tomlinson, 1989; Walkerdine, 1990; Mac an Ghail, 1993; Reay, 1998). Such studies have shown how the education system is part of the wider system of societal constraints which maintains the subordination of marginalized groups of people. Qualitative data can therefore generate problems for macro theories of social reproduction which frequently ignore or over-simplify the intricacy of social settings. Paul Willis's (1977) ethnographic study of working-class boys in a secondary

school is one study which uses qualitative methods to reveal the complex mechanisms behind education as a tool for reproducing identities.

Validity and reliability in qualitative research

Since the interpretive model has found wider usage, it has become generally accepted that there are different ways of attaining and analysing information about the world. The notion of validity in research has taken on more varied forms, encompassing quantitative and qualitative research methods. Hammersley (1993) has claimed that validity in qualitative research has replaced confidence in the certainty of results, and that accounts of the social world can only ever be representations, not reproductions. Harre and Secord (1972) have shown the link between both methodologies, pointing out that research would have no purpose if enquiries into subjectivity and truth had no validity. It must therefore be possible, they say, to accept people's commentaries as authentic, albeit revisable, reports of phenomena and experiences, which are then subject to empirical criticism. Most qualitative research uses some kind of comparison to achieve validity, and in that sense is not dissimilar to quantitative research. A high level of description can achieve similar results. In ethnography, for example, validity is achieved through a wide sample, the length of time spent in a place, and the use of a variety of techniques which ensures that the phenomenon are understood from a variety of angles. Although open-ended responses - such as in ethnography or in unstructured/ semi-structured interviews - can give important and valuable insights into personal experiences and opinions, responses cannot be compared, coded and categorised as they can with structured methods. Such data cannot form the basis for broader statistical generalisations in the way that quantitative research can, as there is no norm or standard against which results can be measured, and the transferability of such data to a wider population is therefore also limited.

Within positivist paradigms, the researcher and the researched are understood to be separate entities: the positivist aims to stand outside this world, so to speak, and pass as a passive entity who is capable of rational objective thought. The interpretivist, on the other hand, locates the researcher directly within the research process and interpretive

framework (Gadamer, 1975). This location, claims the interpretivist, is crucial in depicting social reality, and the researcher/respondent interaction has an impact on the kind of data elicited: 'The nature, limitations, and possibilities of data can be fully appreciated only when we begin to know how the actors' perceptions of the researcher have influenced what they have and have not said and done' (Ball, 1993a, 36). The researcher/respondent relationship is premised on the symbolic-interactionist model. In this model, behaviour is intentional and premeditated: human beings are not passive agents, reacting to each other in a stimulus-response way, but are constantly involved in defining and interpreting each other's actions (Blumer, 1986). The process of interaction takes the actor's self-perception, as well as the view others have of him or her, into account (Mead, 1934).

The lack of objective bias means that there must be more subjective bias on behalf of the researcher, as qualitative analysis relies on interpretation rather than statistics. The value and quality of qualitative analysis therefore, hinges to a large extent on the experience and sensitivity of the researcher (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and appropriate categories being created and assigned. Cohen et al. (2000) have argued that word-based data cannot be converted to numerical data and that open-ended responses should therefore only be treated and analysed as qualitative, not quantitative data. One argument against this is that even qualitative analysis (other than ethnography) has to be comparative and therefore quantifiable to some extent for it to have validity. A problem of qualitative analysis is that respondents may be selective in the information they give and omit relevant detail, and analysis may be hampered by differentiated levels of articulation of thought in words or on paper.

Researchers have pointed out that power relations and ideological suppositions inherent in cross-categorical research can hinder impartial research relations (Ball, 1993a; Hornsby-Smith, 1993). Some feminist researchers grappling with this problem have sought to destabilise power relations within the interpretive paradigm, and to strive for a more reciprocal relationship with the researched (Stacey, 1988). One of the main methodological problems with this approach is that it is open to the charge of subjectivism, in which the accounts of actors are relativised and power relations are

perceived not to exist. This contextual distancing, argue some critics, diminishes the ability of the researcher to interpret critically and leads to interview bias (Schwandt, 1998). Amongst some feminist researchers, interview bias, rather than being seen as a problem, has come to be understood as a resource. This has led to debates around whether 'background knowledge' is necessary for competent understanding, whether only women can research women (Olesen, 1998), and how ethnic differences can impact upon researcher/researched relationships (Song and Parker, 1995).

Why mixed race women?

Whilst there has been a burgeoning of sociological and educational literature on the complexity of contemporary British ethnic identities (e.g. Hall, 1992, 1996; Gilroy, 1993; Baumann, 1996), and a vast array of feminist, sociological and anthropological literature exists on the experiences of women who identify with mono-cultural or mono-ethnic groups, relatively few British studies exist on mixed race or mixed parentage identity, and those which do have been published in the last few years (see Wilson, 1987; Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993]; Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Song and Parker, 2001; Ali, 2003), and no empirical or theoretical research appears to have been done in relation to the experiences of mixed race people in the Further Education sector. This is despite the prevalence of mixed race people in Britain and in further education. By bringing mixed race to the forefront of discussion I endeavour to open up a space for interrogating normative constructions of personhood in post compulsory education policy, and to provide a source for future policy recommendations which take the experiences of mixed race people into account.

Researchers have struggled with finding the 'correct' term for mixed race people. Not only has the concept of race long been discredited in official discourse, but the term 'mixed race' has been criticised for presuming the existence of distinct and bi-polar races, and for assuming that people automatically identify with two races which are differentiated from each other. Other contemporary variations of mixed race such as mixed-parentage, dual-heritage, mixed-heritage, biracial , etc. I would argue, are as much

dual constructions as is the term mixed race, and premised on the idea that two races/cultures are inherited (for discussions on this see Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Aspinall, 2003). I have chosen to stay with the term 'mixed race' because it is widely understood, but also because the use of established terms simplifies analysis of how respondents' perceptions of self might differ from or reflect socially ascribed categories.

In the analysis, I refer to the term 'mixed race' to describe all the women in the study, as this is how they described themselves in the sample selection. (How they *defined* themselves, and what was important in their notions of self during the interviews was a separate issue). Continuous reference to the respondents' specific racial mixes, however, was problematic in so far as it was not possible to list the mixed racial heritage of each respondent when referring to several women at the same time – largely for reasons of space and time. There is no generic term which is able to encompass the identities and experiences of all women who are not white. I will therefore refer to respondents' heritages as white and *black*, where they have parents or grandparents from Africa, the Caribbean, South America, South Asia, South-East Asia, or Arab countries. Discrimination on account of race, culture or colour was an experience many of these women shared. The term black has frequently been used in the theoretical literature to connote women with one or both parents who descend from Africa, the Caribbean, and in many cases Asia, and is usually used as a political category. On the term 'black', Stuart Hall (1992) has written: '[it was] coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain... [and] came to provide the organising category of a new politics of resistance amongst groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities' (Hall, 1992, 252). I am, however, fully aware that the term is completely inadequate as a generic description for all people who are not white, and *especially* in view of the fact that this study is primarily about self-definition.

The FE Context

The FE context was chosen for study partly because no empirical research could be found on mixed race women in relation to this sector, but also because very few publications

appear to exist on the experiences of FE users *per se*. Only a small amount of empirical work was found to be dedicated to issues around student social identity in relation to the FE sector (eg. Leathwood, 1998; Colley et al., 2003). Given that the FE sector has seen a significant expansion - driven largely by widening participation initiatives - in terms of marketing, student numbers and courses on offer, etc., this gap in the literature is surprising. However, FE as an under-researched area is perhaps not surprising from the point of view that FE remains the 'poor relation' of the education system, and as such does not generate the same academic interest as HE. Indeed, one of the main problems of defining FE in terms of 'everything that does not happen in schools and universities' (Kennedy, 1997, 1) is that there is no clear vision of what the purpose of FE should be (Hyland and Merrill, 2003). This is one of the factors which, despite its size, has resulted in the sector remaining 'in the shadows' (Lucas cited in Hyland and Merrill, 2003, 1) not only in terms of strategic national planning (Hyland and Merrill, 2003, 1), but perhaps in every other sense as well. Indeed, although the government has declared its intention to improve the status of vocational education (Stanton and Bailey, 2004), this has not happened in reality, as can be seen in the recently rejected Tomlinson proposals.

In 1997, New Labour introduced initiatives aimed at increasing participation in post-16 education amongst those under-represented in education, such as some ethnic groups, adults in unskilled occupations, and people with a background of failure in their schooling (Zera and Jupp, 2000). Since 1997, the agenda of lifelong learning has lain at the heart of programmes of educational reform which aim to engage educationally disenfranchised people in learning, and FE colleges have been seen to be the most important part in the implementation of the strategies of widened opportunities, increased participation and social inclusion (see Kennedy, 1997) which underpin this agenda. The government's idea was that lifelong learning as a key theme within its view of the 'learning society' should be advanced through the principles of individual responsibility and self-investment. Underscoring this view was the idea that British people would achieve social, educational and occupational mobility chiefly through individual application and merit. Kennedy's report on education states:

‘Colleges are vital in tackling inequalities within their local communities. They are proving their success in attracting women students and those from ethnic minority backgrounds....Equality of opportunity must be central to everything colleges do.’ (Kennedy, 1997, para. 66)

However, as some educationalists have pointed out, the expansion of participation in post-compulsory education has coincided with the deregulation of education systems in favour of market-led principles (Avis et al., 1996; Maguire et al, 1999). Maguire et al. (1999) have argued that the way in which FE colleges are now funded has generated increased competition, and that consequently marketing and promotional expenditure by many college providers aims to ensure an ‘across the board’ appeal (ie. from pre-vocational through to A levels). This type of marketing, the authors argue, intentionally and unintentionally contributes to the reproduction of social differentiation within post-16 education and the ‘racing’ and ‘classing’ of institutions (Maguire et al., 1999):

‘In all of this social class and ethnicity are strong sub-textual features – both as ‘intended’ in the construction of marketing portfolio and ‘unintended’ in the identification of institutional habituses with certain social groups – Black, White middle-class colleges, etc.’ (306)

Although the philosophy of equality of opportunity is hard to sustain within the current government’s economic agenda and its associated effects of marketisation, individualism and social differentiation along ‘race’ and ‘class’ lines, the Further Education sector still manages to be the most genuinely inclusive education sector. In the last decade, it has seen the expansion of provision for 16-19, vocational education and training (VET), as well as adult and higher education. FE colleges are the largest providers of VET, and they also offer more academic ‘A’ levels than do secondary schools. In the last decade there has been an unprecedented increase in student numbers, and in the academic year 2002/2003 there were more than three times as many full-time and part-time students in FE colleges as in universities (Brown et al., 2004). Moreover, 70% of 16 year olds (with fewer than 5 GCSEs at Grade A*-C) are in FE colleges (Brown et al., 2004), whilst their higher achieving counterparts are in Sixth Forms and Sixth Form Colleges, and 80% of the FE student cohort are adults over 19 years of age.

Recent research has shown that young people often view FE college as a better option than being in low-paid work or at school, and that being treated as an adult is an important reason for studying in further education (Hyland and Merrill, 2003, 90-92). With regard to gender differentiation, disproportionately more young women than men are educated post-16 in colleges than in schools. In terms of ethnic differentiation, Sixth Form and FE colleges provide for 57% of black 16 year olds, whilst schools only provide for 22% (Brown et al., 2004). This research also shows that the less well educated the parents, the more likely their children are to be in FE colleges as opposed to schools or higher education. This supports the prevalent view that FE colleges occupy a lower status than universities.

Phoenix (1997a) has argued that black people and white people occupy different structural positions in society, and that in a public sphere (such as education), white working-class women are privileged over black working-class men and women (Phoenix, 1997a). The difficulty with this view is that people do not fit neatly into homogenous categories in the way that Phoenix might suggest, and privilege or marginalisation does not affect members of 'groups' or 'categories' in exactly the same way. Whilst Hall's assertion that '[...] the black subject cannot be represented without reference to the dimensions of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity' (1992, 255), race, class and gender are not additive, and nor can they be compared cross-culturally (Mirza, 1992). Reay (1996) has pointed out that configurations of power are complex and mean that the reproduction of power and privilege can never be absolute. The 'category' of mixed race is a case in point here in that it 'falls between' traditional race - and therefore also class - categories. New discourses around race, youth and education enable people to define themselves as mixed race, and enable working-class people, who would perhaps previously not have done so, to define themselves as students. Moreover, the increasing numbers of working-class people who take on 'student' identities within FE contexts, inevitably also shifts the discursive parameters of who (can) call/s themselves 'educated'. However, with regard to mixed race women, the environment in which they grow up - for example, whether in mixed, or predominantly white or black households, or whether in working-class or middle-class households - impacts on their 'race', class and gender

positions, the discourses they draw on, the kinds of educational resources and opportunities available to them, and the degrees of marginalisation/privilege they experience.

This study was conducted in ethnically mixed FE colleges in predominantly working-class ethnically mixed areas of London. These locations were chosen because it seemed likely that a significant proportion of the student cohort would self-identify as mixed race, and would have grown-up in working-class households. Most of the women in this study were the first in their families to access any form of post-compulsory education, testament in part at least to the success of widening participation initiatives. Very few respondents referred to themselves as working-class; nor did they refer to themselves as middle-class. Skeggs (1997) found that whilst the working-class women in her study recognised their position within the class hierarchy, they simulated lower middle-class positions in their narratives about who they were. It seems likely that most respondents saw themselves as neither ‘better educated and affluent’ nor as ‘poorer and less educated’ (Beck et al., 2001, 38) but as somewhere in between.

Whilst important research has investigated non-participation in HE by traditionally under-represented groups in HE (Archer et al., 2003; David et al, 2003), my study with FE students suggests a need for similar investigations to be applied to post-16 education more broadly. One of the factors to be borne in mind, for example, is that the mixed race respondents in this study all attended (or had recently attended) FE colleges. Yet there are of course many mixed race people who have never participated, and do not intend to participate, in any form of post-compulsory education.

PART TWO: ANALYTICAL APPROACHES

Documentary analysis

A conventional approach to policy analysis in education, that is to say, comparing policy intentions with policy outcomes through an examination of implementation in practice, is

not adopted here. Rather, I take a text and discourse analytical approach, identifying discourses in the selected policy texts and investigating how these are framed within wider discourses around education (see Burman and Parker, 1993). The documents analysed are *Learning for the Twenty-First Century* (Fryer Report), 1997; *The Learning Age*, 1998 (green paper); and *Learning to Succeed*, 1999 (white paper). Green papers are discussion papers which are published by the government on a specific policy area and are open to public debate. They are usually addressed to interested parties who are invited to participate in a process of consultation and debate, which forms the basis for subsequent legislation. White papers may follow a green paper, and contain official proposals and recommendations for specific policy areas.

The policy reports are briefly contextualised and examined for their broad intentions and rationale. They have been analysed using content and discourse analysis (see Scott, 1990; Burman and Parker, 1993). In large-scale content analysis, the researcher establishes a set of categories and then counts the number of examples in each category; the validity and reliability of methods used are particularly important in this type of analysis to ensure that the same texts examined by different coders would yield comparable results. Content analysis can also be used in small-scale qualitative research to identify participants' categories and to examine how these are used in specific activities (see Gubrium, 1992). In this study, content analysis is used to systematically scan the policy documents for their references to personhood and equality. This involved some numerical counting, and an analysis of how notions of personhood and equality were conceptualised and categorised. Content analysis is useful in the context of this study for identifying how policy concepts of personhood have changed over a short period of time; numerical counting can show proportions, and give a measure of the orientation of a policy argument or intention.

The discourse analytical approach is founded on the premise that 'all the world is text', and is discursively produced. Derrida (1976) proposed a radical 'de-centring of the subject' in which both the subject and text were merely linguistic products; as such, no authentic, privileged or universal meaning could be reached and common understanding could only be achieved within particular 'interpretative communities'. Thus, it was not the

'knowing' subject who should be at the centre of the study of human sciences, but the discursive practices which construct this subject. Foucault (1972) claimed that discourses are practices which 'systematically form the objects of which they speak....they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention' (49). Discourse signifies an array of statements which represent the emergence of particular cultural and political practices, perceptions, and power relationships; discourse constitutes the social relationships of human individuals and their actions as social agents in so far as these are relationships in which positions of knowledge, authority, and subjectivity are formed (Feuchtwang, 1990).

Discourse analysis is useful for showing how policy discourses are produced and perpetuated by dominant discourses which structure the way we think about things and appear to be a reflection of reality. Stephen Ball (2000 [1993b]), drawing on the work of Foucault, has claimed that it is important to remember that all policies are 'ideologically abstract', that is to say, policy as text is never a complete 'thing' but is always in the process of 'becoming':

'we are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows....In these terms we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies....There is little opportunity for obvious adversarial responses to this process of subjugation. And we have to note the de-centring of the state in this, discourse is non-reductionist. The state is here the product of discourse, a point in the diagram of power.' (Ball, 2000 [1993b], 1836)

The transformative process from the 'crude, abstract simplicities of policy texts into interactive and sustainable practices' Ball (2000 [1993b]) argues, is subject to limitations at various discursive and legislative stages of that translatory process; therefore, policies do not tell you what to do, but rather, they 'create circumstances in which the range of options in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed' (1834). Moreover, policy texts never exist within social or institutional vacuums; they build on and are affected by prior social and institutional practices such as existing patterns of inequality and the structure of class relations. Ball has pointed out that the meaning of policy therefore changes as

intentions are re-worked in accordance with the changing interests of the state, and that we 'need to recognise and analyse the existence of 'dominant' discourses – like neo-liberalism and management theory – in social policy' (1837). Ball's distinction between 'first order' effects, which are about changes in structure or practice, and 'second order' effects which are the influence of such changes on social justice, access and opportunity is useful for understanding the distributional implications or outcomes of social policies (1839). A thorough Foucauldian analysis of institutions and relations of power and how these may be inaugurated within policy developments, however, is beyond the remit of this research. In this study, the relevant text is any meaning which is symbolically significant for the reader (Parker, 1999).

Ozga (2000) has disagreed with what she regards as Ball's two different conceptualisations of policy (see Ball, 2000 [1993b]), on the count that text and discourse, like structure and agency, operate in a relational sense: 'Policy as text is the element of policy that can be worked on, interpreted and contextualised, and stands in contradiction to assumptions that policy works in a straight line from formulation to implementation. Policy as discourse understands policy as part of the dominant system of social relations; policy as discourse frames what can be said or thought. Policy as text addresses agency, policy as discourse addresses structure' (Ozga, 2000, 94). Ozga (2000) makes an important distinction between research for policy and research on policy and claims it is just as important to critique policy as it is to analyse it. Research *for* policy assumes the inalienability of globalisation within the policy agenda, in which not only national interests and global competitiveness are deemed synonymous and provide the unequivocal remit of policy, but also private partnership and economisation as solutions to the problem of social exclusion are taken for granted. Research *on* policy, on the other hand, 'is necessary in order to take a critical view of policy in response to globalisation and the economising of education as potential *contributors* to exclusion' (2000, 97, my italics). In the case of research on social exclusion and educational governance, there may be areas of overlap between research for and research on policy (2000, 97). Research on policy is also more likely to be concerned with the future of national state systems generally, and for enquiry into their contributions to the formations of identity and culture.

Whilst acknowledging the inherent discursive and temporal nature of policy, and that its constitution involves a combination of various statutory and social actors, analysts such as Ball and Ozga have pointed out that we still need to recognise and analyse the existence of 'dominant' discourses such as neo-liberalism in social policy, and the fact that interests operate on restricted terrain. Policy provides the location and 'rules of the game' which empower or disempower specific social groups. Moreover, the effects of social policy result from the outcome of conflict and struggle between different interests, resulting in different degrees of 'utility' value of policy for particular groups (Offe, 1984, 106). At the same time we have to take account of the fact that the state is de-centred and is itself a product of discourse, 'a point in the diagram of power' (Ball, 2000 [1993b], 1836). Thus, policy as discourse is policy as part of the dominant system of social relations in which discourse frames what can be said.

Ozga's view is that policy is highly centralist and managerial: she discusses policy texts as a resource for analysis in terms of the messages they convey, or attempt to convey, about the source of policy in terms of whose interests are served and its relationship to global, national and local imperatives, and in terms of what the policy is assumed to be able to do. The re-iteration of phrases and key words, she claims, reveals policy-makers assumptions, whilst the tone of policy indicates how things should happen: an imperative or assured tone may have the effect of leaving little room for debate, whilst omissions may say far more about exclusion and inclusion than what is actually said. Her critique of the policy document 'Excellence in Schools' provides useful guidelines on how to approach my policy analysis. I have selected and adapted a number of questions Ozga (2000) asks in her documentary analysis, and applied them to my investigation of the selected policy texts. The idea behind these questions is to bring out the discourses around personhood and equity in education. These are the questions I posed in relation to the policy analysis:

- 1) What is the story being presented? (How is it different to what went before?) What is the logic/discursive construction of the argument in the text? What assumptions are made, what is the tone of the policy?

2) What ideas and categories are presented regarding social exclusion/inclusion? (If comparative: Are these new? In what ways?) What is absent, excluded, silent? How is my own thinking affected by knowledge that lies outside the text, i.e. the tendency to produce or reproduce disaffected groups and individuals?

3) How does the text construct its subjects? How are learners constructed? Who is excluded by these constructions? What do these texts imply about the relationship between their subjects and the world society/globalisation? (If comparative: Is this new?)

Fieldwork analysis

The discourse analytical approach is usefully applied to the fieldwork because it can show how power and inequality operate, and can reveal how discourse constrains or prioritises what is held as 'true'. Discourses prescribe what is normal or natural; they are actively working practices which position people in particular ways and represent particular relationships as self-evident. Within a dominant discourse, therefore, only certain things can be said. Power within this methodological approach is understood as multi-faceted, contingent and subject to change. It does not 'belong' to oppressors at the expense of the 'oppressed': therefore a person may be positioned as powerful within a gender discourse and powerless within a class discourse in consecutive moments. This approach enables us to identify many taken for granted assumptions, reveal the causes and connections that are hidden, and construct alternative discourses. Therefore subjugated knowledges may determine alternative discourses of subjectivity (albeit some post-structuralists doubt the epistemological bases of such hopes; see for instance the debate between Jones (1997) and Davies (1997)).

Semi-structured interviews composed of set questions and open-ended responses allowed me to probe respondents on precise meanings around self-definitions of identity, whilst retaining a structure to the interview questions. Moreover, semi-structured interviews

generated data which enabled me to identify discourses and key themes, as well as do some numerical counting. Whilst similar discourses may have been identified using questionnaires or surveys as methods, the data may have lacked information and depth. In-depth interviews, on the other hand, would possibly have allowed me to gain deeper insight into the experiences of mixed race women, but would have involved a smaller sample and may have been at the expense of data validity. Conversely, one might also argue that semi-structured interviews can, generally speaking, only 'scratch the surface' in comparison to in-depth interviews which may produce different or additional categories, and so yield a higher level of validity.

As mentioned earlier, the objective of the empirical investigation was to examine the 'fit', or lack of 'fit', between respondents' perceptions of self and theories and discourses around personhood, and between respondents' educational experiences and opinions on education policy, and policy/government constructions of personhood and equity. In the context of education, discourses which formed part of the dominant ideology around education were identified in the policy and interview texts. This involved examining policy constructions, and comparing these with the praxis of language. Francis (1999b) provides an example of a similar approach in which she used semi-structured interviews (and participant observation) in educational research to show how students' constructions of education and the discourses identified in education policy may be linked. In the remainder of this section, I discuss some of the issues around the use of normative categories of identity in relation to my fieldwork.

Tizard and Phoenix (2001[1993]) used semi-structured interviews (and participant observation) to investigate the experiences of mixed race children in one secondary school. They argued that the way the mixed race children in their sample saw themselves was not the way other people believed they saw themselves. The authors used normative categories of ethnicity as standards against which to measure self-definitions of identity. This study is certainly useful in that it reveals how dominant discourses and categories of race, culture and ethnicity are imbued within, or absent from, the self-definitions of mixed race young people. However, in their study, 'positive' racial identities were constructed in

relation to racial norms, whereas 'problematic' identities were described as ones in which people felt different, unhappy, confused about their identity, or as not 'belonging' (2001, 108-109). Despite the advantages of pre-set classifications, *no* categories in Tizard and Phoenix's (2001[1993]) study would have yielded different results, and possibly allowed for definitions of identity to go beyond the limitations of normative categories.

Many researchers would agree with Tizard and Phoenix (2001[1993]) that pre-defined categories are necessary for comparative analysis, as it can show where certain tendencies lie. Indeed, Tizard and Phoenix (2001[1993]) maintain that the more diverse or unorthodox the findings, the greater the need for a normative framework to 'contain' and analyse the data (Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993]). Atkinson (1983), on the other hand, has pointed out that, although content analysis is a useful method of coding in terms of organising and analysing data, it is limiting in that it cannot account for activities and experiences which do not fit neatly into established categories. I would argue that the use of standard categories restricts any 'new' understandings of mixed race identity which are not rooted in the normative realm or understood in terms of homogeneous constructs of race or community (such as 'black', or the bi-polar definition of 'mixed race'). Moreover, the use of pre-set categories underpins the idea that a person's psychological health depends on affiliation to an ethnic community.

My aim in the fieldwork therefore, was to attempt to go beyond the normative limitations described above in Tizard and Phoenix's (2001[1993]) study, and respondents were asked to ascribe themselves, so to speak. The procedures adopted to identify my sample are described in detail in Part Three. Although many respondents defined themselves in accordance with established categories, many others represented themselves in terms of what might be seen as 'conflicting' categories of self. Moreover, the degree to which respondents actually did ascribe themselves was difficult to ascertain, because 'mixed race' as the main criteria of selection, and the normative manner in which questions were phrased, meant that respondents were aware of the main objective of the interviews. This undoubtedly influenced responses and the subsequent identification of discourses and the analysis of the data. Because normative categories were not used, decisions about the

appropriateness and accurate assignment of 'categories' of personhood was therefore one of the main challenges of the research. Whether working within a positivistic or an interpretivist framework, I would argue, the researcher ultimately has to make the decision about how to define 'categories' and themes.

The interview data were summarised, and major discourses and themes were identified (Dey, 1993; Silverman, 1993). Awareness of the degree to which responses may have been influenced by the way in which questions were asked, and normative categories assumed, was taken into account (Sacks cited in Silverman, 1993). One of the main challenges of my research was to ascertain where discourses were being mirrored or reproduced in the data, and where the data 'stood on its own', separate from discourse. This meant not only taking into account how 'discursive practices' positioned respondents, but also how these may have impacted upon respondents' views of themselves and their roles within their community, and how these views influenced their responses and how they defined themselves publicly. Important too, was to look at the ways in which respondents gave alternative meaning to dominant discourses, and the way in which people pushed at the limits of what was socially constructed and actively tried to construct something different (see Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Ball's (2000 [1993b]) assertion, however, that everything is discourse, and discourse 'speaks us' is profoundly problematic as a mode of analysis in that it limits, and perhaps even cancels out any possibility of a demotic discourse. From Ball's perspective, the space which the individual has to act outside the normative remit of discourse is severely restricted.

PART THREE: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Routes of access

Access to four Further Education colleges in the Inner and Outer London areas was negotiated in January 2001. Whereas physical access to the Further Education colleges was relatively unproblematic, social access was much more difficult. This was my first experience of attempting to access a group of people for whom there was no statistical

aggregate, who were not easily identifiable, and who would have to identify themselves. At four of the colleges I was given a contact person, either college administrators or student support officers, with whom I liaised during the initial phase of attempting to access my sample. The initial procedure involved a lot of circuitous e-mailing and phone-calling. Contact persons e-mailed HODs and lecturers in various departments with a synopsis of my proposed research in the anticipation that they would identify mixed race students and provide the contact person with names and contact details of potential interviewees. A response time limit of between two and three weeks, depending on the college, was given; there was no response to the emails from any of the HODs or lecturers at any of the colleges within that time limit, second e-mails were sent out with another two week time limit, but again the same lack of response. After a four to five week period an alternative approach was tried, which again involved sending e-mails to HODs and teaching staff, but this time asking for permission for direct access to classrooms at the beginning or end of lessons. This would enable me to personally introduce my intended research, and allow potential interviewees to come forward and arrange an interview. There was no response to these e-mails either. One interview was arranged through my contact with a 'personal tutor' at Newham College, but the interviewee failed to turn up. In retrospect this lack of response was predictable: staff get inundated with e-mails as this is the main form of intra-college communication, and matters which are not marked priority inevitably get relegated or deleted. It was no surprise to me that staff I subsequently spoke with in person had never heard of me or my proposed fieldwork.

After two months and not a single interview under my belt, I got permission from the colleges to introduce my topic directly to students during their lessons. I did this in about twenty classes which were either chosen randomly, or upon invitation or recommendation by lecturers who assured me they had mixed race women in their class. Despite this, I only secured one interview. Whilst continuing to ask lecturers for permission to introduce my project in their lessons, I also embarked on a 'direct approach' strategy in which I approached students directly in various college locations such as foyers and corridors, IT labs, libraries, canteens, and hairdressing and beauty salons. This direct approach overcame many of the problems I had previously encountered, and was the route to finally

accessing my sample. First, by cutting out the gatekeepers, I had more control over access to potential interviewees, and was less dependent on other people to get the ball rolling. Second, this approach allowed me to discuss my proposed fieldwork with students and staff in person and at their convenience. It gave me the opportunity to clarify any questions on the spot, and to allay any fears or doubts students had about being interviewed. Third, the direct approach allowed me to access the 'correct' sample more quickly than the initial more structured approach would have done. As previously mentioned, it involved women who were not 'easily identifiable', and lecturers often simply did not know whether they had mixed race women in their class. Indeed, some women themselves were concerned that they fitted my definition of the category 'mixed race', and the direct strategy meant that any questions around this could be clarified on the spot. Fourth, whereas in the public space of a classroom, self-identification may be tantamount to an announcement, the direct approach allowed a degree of privacy. Thus, it enabled me to access women who may not have volunteered in a classroom setting. Here is an example of this: I recently entered a classroom in which I knew there were two mixed race women because I had spoken to their class-mates earlier; when the lecturer asked whether there were any mixed race women in the class, neither of the women volunteered, even though they smiled and all their classmates looked at them. This illustrates the significance of the kind of setting and the manner in which potential respondents are approached - the two women in question, if indeed mixed race, would perhaps have volunteered if I had approached them directly in an informal setting.

Finally, the direct approach and style of gathering data suited me: I felt comfortable with the flexibility and freedom I had to manoeuvre within the college, to pace myself, to make contact with staff and students personally, and to negotiate meeting times and places. I could move speedily between places, talk to lots of people, and could follow my own feeling about being in the right place at the right time. The disadvantage of this lack of structure and *ad hoc* approach meant that, although I set time limits for gathering data, there was no guarantee that my goals would be achieved, and this was unnerving but also motivating. Success in accessing and interviewing my sample was dependent to some extent on luck, but also on taking quick action and perseverance.

The college setting

I spent a considerable amount of time in one college (College A). Informal conversations with lecturers there revealed that many of them considered 'race' to be a sensitive issue (see Skeggs, 1994). Although these discussions were not framed within a formal context, and the information received should not in any way be considered authoritative data, they did enable me to gain some insight into some of the ideas and opinions of some staff on the subject of race. From these discussions, I gleaned that the college space, and those who worked and studied within it, had become 'neutralised' in ethnic or racial terms in some way. This was perhaps simply a reflection of Britain's public climate which demands a high degree of neutrality and 'political correctness', not least in social and educational fields. There must certainly also have been an awareness that the repercussions of stepping outside the accepted norms within such public institutions could carry high costs. It is hard to know whether this dominant ethos of universality and neutrality was one of the reasons why lecturers seemed to find concepts such as 'ethnicity', 'race' and even 'culture' both confusing and interesting. I felt, and this was perhaps precisely because of the public silence around race issues, that some lecturers wanted to draw these issues out from under the carpet, but weren't sure of how to do it 'properly'. Other than the standard equal opportunities policies, there seemed to be no guidelines on how staff should manage the issues of race, ethnicity and culture, and as such, these issues were not 'issues' at all in the official sense.

In my conversations with staff, I observed an unofficial discourse of personhood which looked beyond colour (and possibly culture), and was concerned with the person *per se*. It was a discourse which was purported to be non-judgmental, non-assuming, and which did not categorise. Although many of the lecturers I spoke with claimed that they saw their students as 'equal', there was simultaneously a kind of abstract awareness of racial and cultural difference, but a lack of understanding of what that actually meant. It is interesting to note that the dilemma which exists at ground level, that is to say, how universal equality can co-exist with difference, is the same one preoccupying many sociologists, educationalists and political philosophers today.

In some sense, I was confronting lecturers on a subject they normally were not expected to have to think about. Many lecturers simply did not know whether there were mixed race women in their lessons, and those who did hazard guesses were often totally off the mark. Here is an account of a phenomenon observed time and time again in conversations with lecturers about mixed race women in their classes. Initially, the lecturer would say “yes, there are several” mixed race students in their classes; then, after a minute or so of mentally trying to locate these women, they would say, “well actually, there are only a few”; another minute and they would admit there were “perhaps only one or two”; and finally, I would be told, “well actually, come to think of it, no, there aren’t any.” I soon learnt not to raise my expectations, and rather cynically began to predict the outcome of any conversation with a lecturer which began “Yes, I’ve got several mixed race women in my class.....” This suggests that these lecturers had either possibly never given mixed race identity much thought, or that they really did believe they had mixed race women in their classes, or for some reason thought they had. This, as I have argued in Chapter One, may be indicative of a general trend towards the celebration of cultural diversity, where mixed race is emblematic of such diversity, without having a real understanding of what being mixed race actually means.

Whilst some lecturers were over-confident, others were far more cautious and non-committal about whether they had mixed race women in their classes. Here are some comments made by white lecturers: “I really don’t know what they are, it’s not the sort of thing we ask”; and: “It’s not the sort of thing we normally know”; and: “We treat everyone the same, race doesn’t really come into it.” In situations where lecturers were introducing me and my topic to classes, some white lecturers were concerned about “how to put it.” Although I was frank in my use of the term ‘mixed race’, I could appreciate that people unfamiliar with racial terms and concepts might be concerned about ‘sticking their foot in it’, and appearing too race conscious and therefore politically *incorrect*. In contrast to white lecturers, black and mixed race lecturers, and there were only a few, were generally less anxious in talking about race issues. One mixed race lecturer, following my explanation of my project to her, strode into the classroom and asked the students straight up: “Is there anybody here who is mixed race, from mixed parentage? No? Okay then.

Thanks.” It would seem that the less race conscious a lecturer wanted to *appear*, the more race conscious s/he might have actually been.

Here is an example of the way in which one college tried to demonstrate its commitment to religious tolerance in an area of London which had a comparatively large number of Muslims. In this college, there was a prayer room for Muslims, but not for Christians or any other faiths. According to one administrator this prayer room was mere tokenism: the directors and governors of the college had deemed these facilities essential, but ultimately very few people used the prayer room because “without parents looking over their shoulders” many students simply did not pray. As she put it: “It’s a lot to do with appearances - ignorantly people think they can pick a Muslim from the street or a Sikh, because they just assume that most Asian-looking people are Muslims.” Also, at this college a GCSE in Islamic Studies was offered, but not a GCSE in Religious Studies or Christian Studies.

The respondents

The research involved purposive sampling even though women were rarely approached on the absolute knowledge that they were mixed race, and I did not know until I had spoken to them that their self-definition as mixed race made them relevant to my purpose. Perhaps surprisingly, the ‘snowball’ approach, where the researcher is led to potential respondents through existing respondents, did not work. Only one respondent led me to another respondent, and she made a point of putting considerable effort into attempting to find respondents who might want to be interviewed.

All of the women interviewed identified themselves as mixed race. Eight of the interviewees were second generation mixed race, and the rest were first generation mixed race. At the time of interview all the women were studying or had recently (in the last five years) studied on either a vocational or an academic course, their ages ranged from 16-44, many had dependants, many were in part-time or full-time work, and none had a disability. These details were all recorded.

An important aspect of my investigation was to question the stability of group identities generally, and to identify differences between social ascription and subjective consciousness. Although I used the term 'mixed race' as a distinct category in approaching my sample, my aim was to gain an insight into how women defined themselves as mixed race. It was therefore important to keep the definition of mixed race open and to let the women identify themselves as mixed race rather than impose normative categories, and the sample in terms of racial identity was hence broad ranging and did not discern between different types of racial mixes. Self-ascription as mixed race as a sample criterion, however, presented me with some dilemmas in terms of issues around self-selection and the impact this had on the voices represented. Whilst most of the women I approached were gathered in mixed ethnic groups, many women who defined themselves as mixed race were approached individually on the basis of my assumption that they were mixed race. This is an important point which merits some discussion.

Two main problems presented themselves: one, this 'hunch-based' type of selection crucially challenged the very principle of self-selection on which the research was based (moreover, although there was no guarantee that approaching all women would have yielded more representative results, my sample may have been different); and two, in taking this approach, I resorted to assumptions which challenged my own principles about categorising people according to appearance. Whilst personal perceptions about phenotype, skin colour and hair may give a correct reading of a person's self-defined racial heritage, this approach is problematic from the social constructionist theoretical position I maintain in this thesis.

It was however important to be pragmatic, and to bear the overall purpose of my research in mind in negotiating the ethical difficulties around the identification of mixed race women - in other words, to weigh up the pros and cons of this approach. First of all there were time constraints. Second, and linked to this, accessing the respondents had been impossible via procedural methods. Yet the research could not 'happen' without mixed race respondents, and so a compromise had to be made. Ultimately, if the women I

communicated with had given negative responses to my approaching and asking them if they were mixed race, I may have abandoned the project. However, my experiences of talking with the women I approached to a large extent alleviated the doubts I had in that many women appeared to be happy, and even relieved, to have a platform from which to speak about their experiences as mixed race women. As the data in Chapter Four shows, many of the respondents *wanted* to be recognised as mixed race precisely because they had had a lifetime of mis-recognition.

In my hunch-based selection of potential respondents I approached women who ‘looked’ African/Caribbean and white, and brown people who I thought might be Asian and white, or where I was unsure of what their racial heritage might be. In so doing, I spoke to some women who were not mixed race but who had two parents from, say, the Caribbean, Pakistan, Turkey, Brazil or Algeria. Although College A had a large number of Asian Muslims attending, and I talked with many women who I thought may be Asian-European, there were no mixed race respondents amongst the women I approached. This may in part be explained by the relatively low percentage of South Asian-European partnerships, in comparison to Black African/white and Black-Caribbean/white partnerships (Tizard and Phoenix, 2001[1993]).

I encountered the fuzzy boundaries of mixed race time and time again. In my search I met women who did not fit the traditional definition of mixed race but who self-identified as mixed race because they had two European, two African, or two Asian parents (for example, Turkish-English, Egyptian-Eritrean and Burmese-Mauritian). It is also probable that I spoke with women who were mixed race by standard definitions, but who did not identify themselves as such. Also, some second and third generation mixed race women identified themselves as mixed race, whereas most did not. I was initially tempted to discourage women who did not fit into clearly defined categories of mixed race from being interviewed, such as one woman who was Greek-Rumanian. However, their self-identification as mixed race was a stark reminder to me that self-selection was an important criterion in terms of enabling me to gain access to data on self-ascription, as opposed to data which reflected normative categories.

In allowing self-definition of mixed race as opposed to imposing select categories, I introduced a comparative element between women who were first generation and second generation mixed race, and between those who fitted the normative black/white definition of mixed race (Tizard and Phoenix, 2001 [1993]) and those who fell outside that norm. In my analysis some comparison was made between the significant number of first generation black/white women and all other respondents, between first and second generation respondents, and between intra-continental respondents and all other respondents. The differences between first, second and intra-continental respondents, however, did not merit an analysis on the basis of distinct categories. The findings were analysed in the context of the theoretical concepts of personhood discussed in the literature review, recent literature on mixed race identity, and the review of education policy.

The interviews

Because of the dearth in academic literature on mixed race at the time that I began the fieldwork in 2001 (since then, there have been several publications on mixed race identity) there was little opportunity for direct comparison with other research on mixed race identity. The interview questions were therefore based on issues which had arisen out of my preliminary study of theories of personhood which focussed on feminist and post structuralist critiques of the subject and some general theories around race, culture and ethnicity (see Chapter One), and on themes which related to the discourses around personhood and equity in education identified in the policy documents. The interviews consisted of introductory questions, around ten questions on perceptions of identity and ten questions on experiences of education. The interviews were between 30 minutes and 100 minutes long and all of them were recorded on tapes. The data were subsequently summarised.

Although the original intention had been to draw the same number of respondents from each of the four colleges, around half the respondents were drawn from College A. It was important to keep the overall project in mind when making decisions about how best to

gain access to my sample: given time limitations, obtaining access *per se* overrode the desirability of getting a sample which was drawn equally from the four colleges. Spending a considerable amount of time in this college, I became acquainted with several students and members of staff. The informal set-up and the ease with which I could move around College A meant that I was able to access my sample relatively quickly.

I introduced myself to the women I approached on site as a researcher in the college, and briefly explained my research topic and that I was looking to interview mixed race women. Most women responded positively to being approached, and provided they did not have other commitments, those who identified as mixed race were usually willing to be interviewed there and then. I tried to make alternative arrangements, and where possible took contact details from those who had other commitments. Arranging an interview for a future time, however, rarely worked in practice: respondents invariably forgot arranged meeting times, or did not inform me that they could not make it, and I ended up feeling like I was hounding them. Although I did not experience any overtly negative reactions from women who were not mixed race, I did occasionally feel uncomfortable about the implicit assumption on my part that they were mixed race, and the possible effect this might have on them. However, I had no intention of bluffing it, and I followed a personal policy of maximum honesty and integrity.

The interviews, with three exceptions, took place in FE colleges. They were conducted in public places such as canteens, libraries, computer rooms and hair salons, or in empty classrooms. In College A, I had regular access to a small room at the back of the library. The unstructured approach meant that the interviews were invariably influenced by external forces – respondents were often interviewed during lunchtimes, or before or after classes, and may have had little time available. This inevitably had an impact on the length and depth of the interview. The effect the type of location had on the interviews is difficult to assess: noisy public environments, for example, rather than being distracting, often set the scene for stimulating interviews. In the interview setting, I stressed that there were no ‘right’ answers to the questions. However, the education context within which the interviews were held may have affected responses (see Francis, 1999b). I also guaranteed

confidentiality and anonymity, and at the end of each interview gave the respondent the option to contact me if she wanted anything in the interview retracted.

For my part, the ethical issue around anonymity was paramount. However, in view of the fact that the outcome of my research would be to effectively parade people's lifestyles and opinions in front of an audience - and that the work may at some point appear in book form - I was surprised that only two respondents chose a pseudonym. Was this an indication that they wanted their individual voices to be heard, and if so, did this arise out of a sense of marginalisation in public discourse, or was it a bid for individuality, or even celebrity? Or was it simply a reflection of our times in which privacy and anonymity are less and less important, and everything is everyone's business?

One difficulty I encountered concerned the question of how much I should steer situations or let myself be guided by respondents in the interview situation, that is to say, how to strike the balance between letting the women 'talk' and simultaneously remain focused on the information I required. The opposite problem was getting some women to talk. With some women I had to be wary not to fall into the role of teacher or 'therapist'; thus it was also a matter of striking a balance between my privileged position as listener, and the responsibility I had as the 'caretaker' of information. Reflecting on the interview recordings, I noted how my voice changed in different settings and with different respondents. This was a stark reminder to me that neutrality is impossible, and that everyone (I think), has their own personal irritations and prejudices, whether these are voiced or not. It also caused me to reflect on the fine balancing act of being 'who you are' and showing your feelings - both positive and negative - and keeping those feelings under wraps. Although rare, I was sometimes intensely frustrated by respondents from whom getting responses was like 'drawing blood from a stone'. On the other hand, some conversations were intensely dynamic and exciting. In contrast to researchers who advocate striking a conscious balance between the sublimation and assertion of one's own position, how much I should say about myself was never a major dilemma.

My role as researcher

Ascribed characteristics based on presumed or essentialist ideas may limit or enhance research possibilities, and the impact my role as a mixed race researcher had on the research process was an important area of scrutiny. Although standpoint theory contradicts the notion of multi-dimensional identities, it is also important in that it reflects categorisation and prevalent discourses around racialisation which need to be acknowledged. Ethical issues around 'self' and 'other', which were to a small extent problematised by early ethnographers such as Malinowski (1935) and Radcliffe-Brown (1922), have become important issues for researchers generally in recent years. Ball (1993a) has observed that ethnographers endeavour to 'be all things to all people and sublimate their own personalities, commitments and beliefs as far as is humanly and ethically possible' (42). For Ball, researchers should 'make themselves acceptable to all parties in the field, [and] if possible, to take on a research role that allows maximum flexibility in forms of social relations and social interaction' (Ball, 1993a, 40). Klatch (1987) has referred to a similar condition, but is less self-effacing and argues that finding 'common threads' is important to the research process. She describes the researcher/respondent relationship as a 'delicate balancing act between building trust and gaining acceptance while not misrepresenting my own position' (77-82). Although ultimately the value and quality of qualitative analysis hinges on the experience of the researcher, interview data is also determined by the selection and omission of specific information by the respondents. As Woods has pointed out (cited in Ball, 1993a) students are not one-dimensional people, and show themselves differently in different settings.

In my research, although commonality on the basis of mixed race was perhaps not palpable, gender was an immediate marker of commonality with respondents, as was colour. What was said and how much was withheld was inevitably weighed up by each respondent in accordance with how they saw me over the course of our interaction. Indeed, as a reflexive analyst, Ball (1993a) has pointed out, the researcher must 'weigh the impact and effects of their presence, their *personae* and the respondents' perception of them, for the status, usefulness and limitations of the data recorded' (43). There were

advantages and disadvantages in presenting myself as either a student or a professional to potential respondents. Introducing myself as a teacher or researcher, the veneer of professionalism seemed to carry with it a degree of trust. I noted this especially where lecturers played a mediatory role between myself and respondents, and the trust students conferred onto them was automatically transferred onto me. The students' perceptions of the 'professional/student' relationship could have had an impact on how students answered questions, i.e. giving responses they believed the interviewer wanted to hear.

For me, it was a case of finding a 'workable self' within the various research contexts, one in which, like Klatch (1987), I tried to find common links with the respondents without compromising myself. I attempted to establish 'rapport' with the respondents as quickly as possible, aware that respondents' participation was essential to my research. Often similarities based on our perceived common experiences - such as being mixed race, experiencing racism, or being a student, a parent, or a single parent - were fundamental to creating a comfortable interview situation. At other times, barely any effort was required to generate common links or create 'rapport' with respondents, and the interview just flowed. Whilst superficial commonalities such as gender and colour, I believe, gave me some advantage in accessing my sample, the kind of rapport which existed between myself and each respondent certainly influenced the type and quality of data gathered. One of the reasons I chose not to do a comparative study between mixed race women and mixed race men was because I did not feel equipped to deal with gendered power relations in which my 'unthreatening role' - in terms of gender and ethnicity - may work against me in gaining access to the sample and 'good' data. With members of staff, I was aware of the instrumentalist motivations underlying the research, especially in the initial process of attempting to secure my sample. I therefore sought 'common threads' here too, and depending on the situation, presented myself either as an impartial, politically neutral research student, secondary school teacher and ex-FE lecturer, or as a politically motivated research student and teacher, for whom issues around race and education were integral to my research.

In Chapter Three I analyse the selected policy documents (*Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997), *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998), and *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999)). This chapter aims to identify policy discourses on equity in education and how the policies construct personhood, and to show how these discourses are produced and perpetuated by the wider discourses around education, the economy and social justice which prevail in British society today. The chapter examines how minority ethnic groups – including mixed race women – are positioned in these discourses. The findings from Chapter Three will be discussed in relation to the interview findings on education in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER THREE: POLICY ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

In Part One of this chapter, I examine some major government discourses in education and some critiques of these discourses. First, a background to the concept of the 'liberal' individual, and how this is used in the context of contemporary discourse, is given. Second, the major post-1997 discourses of economic efficiency and social justice/inclusion are examined, in which lifelong learning is a dominant theme; these discourses are discussed with reference to the related discourses of individual responsibility, equality of opportunity and the value of education. Third, I explore some of the main criticisms of the government's position on education since 1997, referring in particular to the 'myth' that enhanced levels of education and qualifications lead to greater economic efficiency and social inclusion.

Part Two of this chapter focuses on a selection of three further education policy documents published in the UK since 1997; namely, *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997), *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998), and *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999). As previously mentioned in the methodology chapter, I have selected and adapted a number of questions asked by Ozga (2000) in the context of her documentary analysis, and applied these to the selected policy texts. The policy investigation will identify key themes relating to the 'stories' being presented, the tone of the policies, how people and categories are presented with regard to social exclusion/inclusion, and how the texts construct their subjects (see Ozga, 2000); the policies will also be examined for their concepts of personhood. These policy themes and concepts will be revisited in the context of the interview data around education in Chapter Five.

PART ONE: MAJOR CONCEPTS, DISCOURSES AND CRITIQUES OF EDUCATION POLICY

Theories of liberalism and the concept of the individual

There are two types of liberalism, political (e.g. Kant, Mill) and economic (eg. Smith, Bentham). Both are committed to an ideology of individualism which privileges the individual in universalist and ahistorical terms as the ultimate unit of analysis. It assumes a society made up of the aggregate of individuals, in which no social force exists beyond that. The individual is a socially and culturally decontextualised self, a coherent unitary ego capable of rational choice. Both types of liberalism have an emphasis on rationality as the exclusive predicate of individual actors. However, whereas political liberalism focuses on Kant's concept of autonomy and the idea of the imperative of formal rights, economic liberalism draws on *Homo economicus*, claiming that people should be treated as rational utility-maximisers in all their behaviour. In constructing individuals as equal and autonomous before the law, universal equality is theoretically possible.

Political liberalism can be understood as a critique of state reason, a political doctrine which is concerned with the limits of the state (Gordon, 1991). It assumes the freedom of the individual as it presumes the ability of the individual to act and make choices independently. Liberty is both the means to secure the rights of the individual as well as the primary element in governmental rationality itself; in this way, liberty ensures the participation of the governed in the creation of a system of law which is the necessary prerequisite for a governed economy (Gordon, 1991). Economic liberalism, as such, is based on the political obligation of the individual to the state in a possessive market society, where everyone is subject to the market and sees the inherent 'rightness' of political authority (Macpherson, 1962). The rights of the individual are framed within the contract between state and individual, and can be understood as normative expectations which specify the relationship between the state and its individual members, and a set of practices which fulfils these expectations. Classical liberal theory has been criticised by communitarian liberals for being too individualistic and a-historical, and ethnocentric in

that its universal laws use only one particular culturally-bound normative principle of equality. Communitarians privilege the idea of community over the individual, where rights should not be treated as transcendent principles, but the person is who he or she is because of the shared values of a particular community.

John Rawls (1971) has claimed that the universe is inhabited and regulated by agents capable of choice where the subject is prior to its ends, free from the contingencies of society; in this view, identity is not tied to attachments but to rational pursuit of the moral good. Rawlsian equality is based on two principles of justice, termed 'primary social goods', which are things which every rational being is supposed to want, including 'rights, liberties and opportunities, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect' (1971, 60-65). Basic liberties have priority over other primary goods, and priority is given to advancing the interests of the most marginal, and where there can be no trade-off between basic liberties and social and economic gain. Rawls's conception of justice is based on an 'original position' which assumes that people would not maximise the utility sum in a condition of *as if* ignorance. One of the main criticisms of this argument is that such a position cannot be truly original as it involves choice which is always biased; moreover, it is questionable whether prudential choice can form an adequate basis for moral judgement in real-life situations (Nagel, 1973).

The concept of liberalism has shifted historically in relation to dominant discourses prevalent in particular political and economic fields at different times. Rather than being understood as a 'natural' entity which requires monitoring by the state from a distance, as classic liberalism was, neo-liberalism has been actively constructed and protected by the state through political, legal and bureaucratic conditions (Burchell, 1993). Whereas in early political liberalism, the limits of government were linked to the rationality of free agents operating within a governmental framework, in neo-liberalism, 'the rational principle for regulating and limiting governmental activity must be determined by reference to *artificially* arranged or contrived forms of the free, *entrepreneurial* and *competitive* conduct of economic-rational individuals' (Burchell, 1993, original italics, 271). The focus of the state is therefore no longer on the individual as an autonomous

rational being *per se*, as in political liberalism, but on his or her role in the global marketplace. This new economic discourse may be understood as a new meta-narrative (Lyotard, 1984) which justifies economic development, founded on the interrelation between science, technology and education.

Within the discourse of neo/new liberalism, the contract between individual and state is based on the idea that both parties are unequivocal beneficiaries: self-interest and the interests of the state are synonymous. Individuals are therefore seen as self-interested rational utility-maximisers who turn themselves into market individuals (Peters, 1996). Using Foucault's analysis of governmentality, Peter's (1996) has argued that neo-liberalism employs a new interpretative strategy in restyling basic principles of liberalism to accommodate new requirements, in which optimising market relations can serve as a principle for both limiting state intervention, and for rationalising government. The system of education is based on market principles in which learning is geared towards 'feeding' the demands of an enterprise culture, resulting in 'commodified' knowledge. Thus, in the 'new liberalism' of New Labour, the emphasis is on a) the right and capability of the individual to secure a future of his or her own choosing, and b) the discourse of competitiveness in which each individual is supposed to serve a function based on state logic (Peters, 1996).

One strand of recent social theory has focussed on the processes and pressures of individualisation within neo/new liberal discourse. Gordon (1991, 44) has argued that neo-liberalism institutionalises enterprise as a general organising principle for society - a 'global re-description of the social as a form of the economic' - which involves an individualism where the individual becomes the 'entrepreneur of himself or herself'. Rose (1992) has made a similar argument:

'Become whole, become what you want, become yourself: The individual is to become, as it were, an entrepreneur of itself, seeking to maximise its own powers, its own happiness, its own quality of life, through enhancing its autonomy and then instrumentalising its autonomous choices in the service of its lifestyle.' (150-151)

Ulrich Beck (2001) has argued that class has been superseded by 'lifestyle'. The central notion here is that race, class, community, family and nation, hitherto defined as 'traditional' identities, have been replaced by what Beck (2001) has termed 'self-culture', a society in which identities are fluid, and individuals are self-consciously concerned with securing a 'life of one's own' (Beck, 2001). Beck has argued that modern society relies on the fact that 'individuals are not integrated but only partly and temporarily involved as they wander between different functional worlds' (2001, 23). The breakdown in traditional lifestyles has initiated a fundamental probing around who we actually are; [people] 'pull themselves up by the roots, to see whether the roots are really healthy' (Beck, 2001, 38). Thus, individualisation is symptomatic of a pluralized and fragmented society, in which people refer to themselves in terms of different versions of themselves existing or operating in different contexts. Condemned to activity, the person seeks 'self-enlightenment and self-liberation', a life of one's own, in the name of a new ethics which Beck has called 'duty to oneself' (2001,38). In contemporary Britain, pro-activity in the field of education is a necessary component of this process of self-discovery, which enables us to tap into and fulfil our potential as individuals. In de-traditionalising and individualising personhood, collective action around old forms of identity such as race and class also becomes theoretically impossible.

Discourses of economic competitiveness and social justice

In this section, some of the main discourses around education are examined in the context of New Labour. The two dominant discourses are economic efficiency and social justice/inclusion, and implicit within these are the discourses of equality of opportunity, individual responsibility, and the value of education (in terms of instrumentalism and personal development).

Since the Education Act of 1988, education policies in Britain have been concerned mainly with reforming UK education systems to conform more closely to the government's perceived need to modernise the traditional structures of British society in order to keep pace with globalisation. Comparative studies between Britain and other

European countries on economic development and the application of new technologies to production have had important implications for understanding links between economic performance and educational development (Finegold and Soskice, 1988; Green and Steedman, 1993). Studies in the last two decades have shown that educational standards in Britain are lower than those of their European counterparts (Sexton, 1987; Green and Steedman, 1993). In comparison to France, Germany, Singapore and the US, countries identified as 'world class standard' (DfEE, 1998, 34), Britain's strengths lie in university education, and its weaknesses lie at basic and intermediary level: 7 million adults have no formal qualification at all, 21 million adults have not reached level 3 (equivalent of 2 A levels) (DfEE, 1998); 1/3 of the British population have had no formal education or training since leaving school (Fryer, 1997) and 40% of 18 year-olds are not in any kind of education or training (NACETT cited in Fryer, 1997). The European Union has explicitly declared its fear of a 'dual society' in which 18 million are unemployed and 52 million live below the poverty line. The European Commission's White Paper on a new Learning Society has stated that 'social exclusion has reached such intolerable proportions that the rift between those who have knowledge and those who do not has to be narrowed' (1995, 30). Giving priority to quality in education and training, therefore, has become vital to Europe's competitiveness and its preservation as a social model, and indeed, its very identity (1995, 30).

The fundamental problem in western democracies such as Britain in recent years has been how best to reconcile an inclusive society based on egalitarian principles and a 'learner-centred' approach which utilises human capital theory and stresses individual rights, with capital accumulation and economic efficiency (Whitty et al., 1997). The New Labour government accepted that justice and equity were inextricably linked to the new economic discourse as there could be no compromise on investment in human capital to ensure the quality of goods and services (Commission on Social Justice, 1994). This move recognised that in the present climate of economic marketisation, alienating those at the bottom end of the market was not the way forward for global competition (Brown and Lauder, 2000).

The ideological and philosophical context in which New Labour's education policies were to be established was already well developed by the mid 1990s: Education and training were to be the primary ways in which Britain would be transformed from a low-skill, low-wage economy to a high-skill, high-wage technological economy (Tomlinson, 2001). The New Labour government made education its main priority, represented by the now well-known mantra 'education, education, education'. Equality and how to ensure that those who are 'disadvantaged' are not excluded from basic rights through market-driven mechanisms has become one of the primary goals in public sector areas such as health and education (Ozga, 2000). The emphasis on post compulsory education and training was central to a vision of a competitive and just society in which education not only contributes to a high value-added economy, but also works towards solving the problem of unemployment. A rhetoric of lifelong learning now underpins programmes of educational reform aimed at supporting marginalised groups and individuals in society, and encouraging them to partake in education to enhance their chances of success in the labour market. These programmes encompassed development strategies designed to bring about widened opportunities and increased participation, and were aimed at overcoming barriers which exclude people from the benefits and pleasures of learning (see Shackleton, 1992; Murphy, 1993; Keep and Mayhew, 1998, 2000 for critiques). The shift in focus from markets *per se* to lifelong learning has been reflected in Further Education policy documents discussed later in this chapter.

Lifelong learning as a major theme within post-16 education and training policies underpinned the government's view that a learning society should be promoted on the principles of individual responsibility, investment in persons themselves, and a progressive learning market (Tomlinson, 2001). Related to this view was the belief that British society was classless, and that individual effort and merit would result in educational, occupational and social mobility. The DfEE consultation document on Lifetime Learning, for example, claimed that 'the balance of responsibility for investment in skills will shift more towards individuals' (DfEE, 1995). Sir Christopher Ball, the Chairman of the National Campaign for Learning, explained his vision of a Learning Society for the UK as follows: '.... the key principle governing provision for and pursuit of

learning in the future must be the primacy of personal responsibility for learning, encouraged and enabled by the support of the whole community....The focus of the campaign will be on individuals rather than on the providers of education and training' (Ball, 1996 cited in Fryer, 1997).

The term 'lifelong learning' can be traced back to the early twentieth century in the work of Dewey, Lindeman and Yeaxlee. Lifelong learning was first implemented as a 'master concept' by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1970 and was premised on the notion that learning is not limited to childhood and early adulthood but is a process which continues throughout life (Lengrand, 1989). Cropley (1980) has identified the following key elements of lifelong education: it lasts the whole lifetime of an individual; it is cumulative in the sense that it involves a systematic acquisition and upgrading of knowledge in response to a continuously changing society, where the self-fulfilment of each individual is the ultimate goal; its success is dependent on people's ability to engage in self-directed learning; and all educational influences, not only formal, are acknowledged. Tight (1998a) has concluded that three important features may be derived from Cropley's identifications: one, that lifelong learning is seen as both building upon and affecting all existing educational providers; two, that it does not confine itself to formal education alone, but extends to any form of learning; and three, that it is founded on the belief that individuals are, or can be, self-directing, and that the value of lifelong learning is apparent to everyone (474).

Lifelong learning has been described by the European Commission as 'all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective' (European Commission, 2001, 9). The central idea here is that lifelong learning is a long-term investment in people, as expressed in the following quote: 'When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade, plant trees. When planning for life, train and educate people' (Chinese proverb: Guanzi, c. 645 B.C, cited in European Commission, 2001). Because of the uncertain economic climate, not only should investment in human capital be central, as 'knowledge and competences are [therefore, also] a powerful engine

for economic growth', but people should also take advantage of the 'vast new opportunities' on offer and actively participate in society (6).

In the next two sections, I examine some critiques of New Labour's education policy and the dominant discourses on education discussed in the previous section. Questions have been raised about the evidence base of policy claims about the contribution of learning to economic competitiveness and social inclusion, and indeed, whether lifelong learning constitutes a form of social exclusion rather than inclusion (Field, 2000).

The seductive myth of education

Education policy assumes an unequivocal relationship between greater economic competitiveness and a more highly educated workforce, an assumption which, according to some authors, is fundamentally flawed (Swift, 1995; Ainley, 1998; Ball, 1999). Swift (1995) has criticised 'the seductive myth of salvation through ever more training' (131), and has argued that investment in education and training is not a sufficient condition for sustained economic prosperity. He has asserted that the problems facing western countries are not simply a result of the mismatch between skills and jobs, that high, structural unemployment is likely to continue even with a high tech, high investment economy, and that a variety of other interconnecting factors contribute to lack of economic growth. The paradox of modern industry, Swift has claimed, is that on the one hand economic success requires a workforce with high level skills, alongside new patterns of production and management strategies, and on the other hand long-term economic growth necessitates a strong manufacturing base, which does not create many jobs. Whilst there is a decreasing number of 'core' workers, which will eventually result in a highly skilled elite, there is an increase in 'peripheral' or casualised workers for most new jobs which tend to require minimum or semi-skills and are in the low-wage, temporary, part-time service sector.

The government has made the assumption that via its drive towards lifelong learning, the level of 'absolute achievement' can be raised for disadvantaged students. In a well-known

interview between PM Tony Blair and Jeremy Paxman, Blair refused to comment on the acceptability of the widening gap between rich and poor and instead claimed that the main objective of government was to 'level up, not level down' (Newsnight, BBC2, 5 June, 2001). There have been several criticisms made of this position, for example, that the economy, education and the prevailing class structure cannot add up to a highly skilled workforce (Brown and Lauder, 1997). Moreover, evidence in both the US and Britain has shown that whilst some companies recognise that human capital investment is crucial to their medium-term success, many others follow the line that extensive profits can be made off the backs of low-waged semi-skilled workers (Brown and Lauder, 1997). The quest to redress power imbalances and socio-economic inequalities have necessarily receded under the new economic discourse of national economic competitiveness (Peters, 1996; Maguire et al., 1999). Avis (1996) has suggested that the social inclusion discourse can only function within a hegemonic discourse of national competitiveness, and that the dictum of equality is unrealistic within a capitalist system.

Fevre et al. (1999) have argued that many of the education and training policies developed in the UK are based on human capital theory, and because they take no account of the real orientations people have, they cannot be successful. The authors have claimed that there are three ideal-type orientations amongst the working population - those who hold the first orientation undertake only the minimum amount of training which their employers insist upon; those with the second approach acquire education and training credentials with the main aim of improving their employment prospects; whilst those who follow the third tendency value knowledge and skill because they value the connection between continuously improving their own performance, that of their company, and national economic prosperity. Fevre et al. (1999) have asserted that policies designed to encourage individuals to invest more in human capital may simply reinforce the first two orientations (which are the predominant ones in the UK) at the expense of the third orientation which is the prerequisite of economic success: thus, higher participation rates may simply lead to increased credentials without greater understanding, or a transference of knowledge and skills into a broader spectrum.

The creation of flexible labour markets in Britain, and especially the expansion of the service sector, has led to a growth in low skilled, low waged service sector jobs, which, although reducing unemployment, have contributed to income inequality, and what Finegold and Soskice (1988) have referred to as 'a self-reinforcing network of societal and state institutions which interact to stifle the demand for improvements in skill levels' (22). The liberal dictate of economic globalisation not only makes New Labour (and other western governments) unaccountable for a polarisation of incomes, but it also 'obscures the social and political choices which are currently being made by nation states in the trade off between high unemployment (exclusion) and lousy jobs (exploitation)' (Brown and Lauder, 2000, 1761). Ainley (1998) has claimed that increased participation in education will inevitably lead to a case of 'qualification inflation', in which the meritocratic link between qualifications gained and employment opportunities will become increasingly untenable. Indeed, a vicious circle of 'certification inflation' may be created through the obligation on individuals to seek more and more education to 'keep up' with the next person and increase their 'marketability'. Thus paradigms of learning such as lifelong learning do not guarantee the desired jobs, and many people will continue to fail within the system (Ainley, 1994). As Beck (1992) has argued, it is incumbent upon individuals to incorporate the anticipation of risk and potential threat to personal security into their lives, and in so doing, entropy is converted into 'useful' experience.

The responsibility to succeed, autonomy, and the denial of inequality

There is growing concern that the pre-occupation with the market principle, competitiveness and the 'culture of self-interest' has confused the social and moral purposes of education, a culture which is overriding the requisite moral underpinnings of an efficient and successful economy (Ball, 1994, 144). As Ball (1994) has argued: 'The majesty of the market is so stridently trumpeted by its advocates that all else is in danger of being drowned out' (144). Individuals are expected to continuously up-date their skills, where lack of skills qualifications are regarded as the primary cause for unemployment (SEU, 1999). Although lifelong learning should undoubtedly be seen as positive, it has been argued that policy is predisposed towards the idea of non-participants as responsible

for changing their own behaviour, and that economic and social exclusion are the inevitable consequences of non-participation (Colley and Hodkinson, 2001).

Critics of New Labour philosophy and policy have argued that the shift in focus from a concern with equality *per se* to equality of opportunity and social inclusion places greater emphasis on individual responsibility (Lister, 2001; Colley and Hodkinson, 2001). This notion of responsibility is linked to the wider discourse in the government policy on promoting a 'balance' between rights and responsibilities within the lifelong learning agenda: in so far as the government makes opportunities available, individuals have a responsibility to take them up. Rose (1992) has pointed out that liberal governments have always been concerned with 'internalising their authority in citizens through inspiring, encouraging and augmenting programmes and techniques that will simultaneously 'autonomize' and 'responsibilize' subjects' (162).

Colley and Hodkinson (2001), in their analysis of the Social Exclusion Unit's report *Bridging the Gap* (1999), have argued that this report 'locates the causes of social exclusion in the deficits of individuals, and aggregates those individuals as generalised, and pathologised, social groupings' (342). Mizen (2003) has claimed that New Labour's 'progressive competitiveness' in policy is likely to exacerbate the problems young people face, whereby 'responsibility for poor educational outcomes, unemployment, low-quality work, meagre earnings, marginality to the social security system, and so on, is further shifted on to the young themselves' (472). Not only is the pay-off for equality of opportunity personal responsibility, but self-responsibility means that the government need not acknowledge trenchant structural inequalities (Lister, 2001). Thus, the issue of how to deal with structural change in society is being transformed into the personal troubles of those individuals without skills. Non-participation in learning becomes located within the individual, where the choice is to learn or be excluded, and where exclusion will be your own fault (Field, 2000). Lister has argued:

'The goal remains the more limited one of raising the social floor and promoting equality of opportunity rather than addressing wider inequalities.....On the one hand the privileged can continue to buy their

children a preferential start in the meritocratic race; on the other hand the poverty of those who fail to succeed, despite the opportunities opened up, is likely to be legitimated by a culture of meritocracy.’ (Lister, 2001, 438)

Another main criticism of the government’s position is that the market appears to give greater autonomy whilst in fact reinforcing inequalities and advantaging some people over others, reproducing a social and technical division of labour along class lines (Ball, 1994). The new market economy and the middle-class policing of class boundaries has not only exacerbated the distinctions of class but has reinforced educational segregation based on class and ethnic divisions (Gewirtz et al. 1995). Hutton (1995) has argued that rather than offering opportunities for all, education exacerbates rather than eliminates class divisions, and that in the 1990s, inequalities had risen in Britain faster than in any other western state. Tomlinson (2001) has argued that whilst the results of market competition benefited the middle-class and aspiring groups, it perpetuated a divided and divisive education system, despite the rhetoric of inclusion. In both secondary and tertiary education, for example, the disparity between the policy rhetoric around access to education and individual choice, and how access and choice actually manifest themselves in practice, continues to grow. Black people, for example, who have proportionally lower socio-economic standing than white people, are much more likely to follow a vocational path, and enter government training and work experience programmes in disproportionate numbers (Mizen, 2003, 471). Moreover, it has been shown that class mobility and status determined by merit are limited and that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds have to demonstrate greater ‘merit’ to enter desirable class positions (Goldthorpe, 1997). Despite this, the higher achievements of those from higher socio-economic groups and the ensuing rewards are – to some extent at least - rationalised and validated by the ‘myth of meritocracy’. It would seem therefore, that universalistic education policies which have as their unreserved objective equality of opportunity, sit uncomfortably alongside the continued ‘segregated’ take-up of education along class and ethnic lines.

The increasing polarisation between middle-class and working-class schools, ‘elite’ and new universities, and academic and vocational education, is in tandem with the introduction of markets in education which increasingly place an emphasis on wealth -

again implicating class and race differentiation - as opposed to a person's abilities and motivations. This has been further exacerbated by the expectation that institutions function according to a competitive market logic within a state system which utilises national performance criteria, and distributes funding according to the merit and status of institutions, and on a per capita basis. This has created a financial relationship between user and provider and a vying for potential students; as such, the survival of educational establishments depends largely on their ability to attract enough and the right kind of students (Burchell, 1993).

PART TWO: POLICY FINDINGS

Background to the Selected Policy Documents

The Kennedy Report (June 1997) - not a report scrutinised here - was important in that it was the first in a series of reports providing recommendations for further education in the UK. It was set up to consider widening participation in further education and emphasised the importance of post-16 education in creating a 'self-perpetuating learning society' (FEFC, 1997, 25). This report was followed in September by a report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (NAGfCELL), set up by the Labour government in 1997 and chaired by Bob Fryer, entitled *Learning for the Twenty-First Century* (Fryer, 1997). The report's main aim was to make the case for the transformation of culture and the development of a culture of lifelong learning to achieve a 'Learning Age' in Britain. It also asserted that proposals for lifelong learning should be in tandem with the new proposals for learning in schools, as set out in the White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (1997). *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) was an advisory report for a Green Paper called *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998) which built on the idea of creating a 'culture of learning' and focused largely on future policy strategies for lifelong learning and education. Four main policy drivers which aim to promote the UK as a viable economic competitor may be identified within these documents - standards and qualifications, relevance and curricula, efficiency and quality, and participation and inclusion (Ainley and Bailey, 2000). These have been incorporated into four major

government lifelong learning initiatives – the New Deal for young people, the University for Industry (later to be taken up in the White Paper *Learning to Succeed*, DfEE, 1999), pilots for Individual Learning Accounts, and the proposals for the National Grid for Learning. *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) and *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998) are similar in that they are both concerned with revealing the extent of the problems of inequity and disadvantage in British society. Whilst these are documents which are idealistic in tone, and reveal the myriad of problems of inequity and disadvantages in British society, *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999) is a policy primarily concerned with pushing for reform; its aim is to drive up standards and qualifications, and emphasise the link between qualifications, the workplace and the broader economy. I turn now to the various preoccupations of these policy documents, and the various discourses underlying these.

Instilling a culture of learning

As mentioned above, the Labour Government has put forward economic competitiveness and social inclusion as central to education policy goals. The policy documents support these general discourses by focussing on economic competitiveness, social inclusion and personal development as the core and organisatory principles around which lifelong learning should be built. The main assumption of all the three policy documents is that education and learning are markers of a ‘good’ society in so far as they give the dual benefits of greater potential for economic competitiveness and of creating happier, self-fulfilled individuals (see Shackleton 1992, Murphy, 1993, Keep and Mayhew, 1998 for critiques of this position). Lifelong learning is presented in the policy documents as being about developing one’s own potential as a social citizen in both economic and personal terms, and developing the skills, knowledge and understanding that are essential for employability and fulfilment. Indeed, in the words of Tony Blair MP, ‘education is the best economic policy we have’ (DfEE, 1998, 9). The modernist imperative of education extends outwards from the individual to the nation, and indeed, spans all of life: learning serves the nation in terms of its position in the global market and in ensuring social cohesion, and is also the exclusive gateway to achieving individual potential, sovereignty,

self-empowerment and success. As such, the function of education is built around the liberal assumption that it can compensate for all of society (Brown et al. 1997).

The main focus of the policy documents involves creating a 'culture of learning' which should be instilled into the population: 'Our vision is to build a new culture of learning which will underpin national competitiveness and personal prosperity, encourage creativity and innovation and help build a cohesive society' (DfEE, 1999, 6). This vision is built on the following principles:

- investing in learning to benefit everyone
- lifting barriers to learning
- putting people first
- sharing responsibility with employers, employees and the community
- achieving world class standards and value for money
- working together as the key to success (DfEE, 1999, 6).

The most important task is for the Government to set out a strategic framework for the promotion of lifelong learning and to win widespread support for it. *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) refers to this as a 'revolution of attitudes' which should signal the beginning of a shift towards a greater sharing of the responsibility for lifelong learning between individuals, employers and the state. The main prerequisite to a successful lifelong learning strategy, claim the reports, is the development of a positive attitude to learning.

'The biggest change of all will be required in the attitudes of individuals and groups, particularly amongst those who are not currently engaged in lifelong learning activities, who demonstrate no inclination to become involved, or enjoy few opportunities to develop their abilities, interests or capacities through learning.' (Fryer, 1997, 4)

To this end, the focus should be on 'people before structures' (Fryer, 1997, 29), on the learners themselves, rather than on the requirements of institutions and organisations, and on ways to make it easier for them to take up and continue lifelong learning: 'A culture of

lifelong learning can act as a resource in the midst of change, helping people both to cope with change and in their strivings to shape it to their own devices, as active citizens' (Fryer, 1997, 3).

Learning as an investment for reward

The notion of learning as an investment for reward is produced and perpetuated by the discourses of economic competitiveness, social inclusion, and the related discourses of the value of education, individual responsibility and equality of opportunity via lifelong learning. The beneficiaries of such investment in learning are the economy, the person, and indeed, all of society. In economic terms, the policy documents claim, global forces are exerting enormous influences over people's daily lives, and global competition and the liberalisation of markets are causing some industries to shrink whilst others expand (Fryer, 1997). The principles of lifelong learning provide a rationale for extending learning opportunities throughout the lifespan and to a wide range of participants. Developing the kind of flexibility and responsiveness from which many people and not just the few can benefit, requires, 'a shift from the crude, entirely market-driven and sometimes threatening rhetoric, with its implied lack of alternatives or choice for both individuals and companies.[to] profound changes in our culture and our approach to the world of work' (Fryer, 1997, 13). In creating a change in attitudes towards learning, in the first instance a link between learning and a strong economy is emphasised. This link underpins the government discourse of economic efficiency for national competition. The emphasis is on the development of a culture of lifelong learning and the nurturing of the 'intellectual capital which is now at the centre of a nation's competitive strength' (DfEE, 1998, 10) through which we will 'learn to succeed' and modernise for a 'new Britain'.

'Learning is the key to prosperity – for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole. Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century. This is why the government has put learning at the heart of its ambition. Our first policy paper addressed school standards. This Green Paper sets out for consultation how learning throughout life will build human capital by encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasising

creativity and imagination. The fostering of an enquiring mind and the love of learning are essential to our future success.’ (Foreword by David Blunkett, DfEE, 1998, 7)

Learning for the Twenty-first Century, for example, claims that it is a mistake to equate learning or achievement with qualifications alone, and lifelong learning - which encompasses everything from basic literacy to advanced scholarship - ‘is what people do when they want to make sense of experience’; it also warns against complacency, and ‘the earnest, yet banal, view that education is fundamentally a ‘good thing’ or the assertion that there is a simple and self-evident link between educational attainment and prosperity’ (Fryer, 1997, 2).

In the second instance, learning not only benefits the economy but also benefits society generally, and is key in fostering ‘social cohesion, belonging, responsibility and identity’ (DfEE, 1998, 11). Intrinsic to this idea is that individuals, via their own personal development through learning, have a stake in forging a better society:

‘It makes ours a civilised society, develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. Learning enables people to play a full part in their community. It strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation.’ (DfEE, 1998, 7)

The discourse of self-responsibility is significant. Individuals are not only urged to ‘increasingly accept more control over the development of their own learning throughout life’ (Fryer, 1997, 4), but also to use learning as a resource to affect change more broadly. In this sense, learning may involve an increase of skills, knowledge and understanding, as well as values and the capacity to reflect:

‘If people and organisations are to influence economic and industrial change as well as respond to it, they need a range of skills, capacities and outlooks which will enable them to exercise choice for themselves. Lifelong learning can help people to seize new opportunities, engage critically with change and shape their worlds by asserting some ownership and direction over their lives, in work and beyond.’ (Fryer, 1997, 12)

The link between education and personal development draws on the liberal idea of the 'unfinished' self. It is underpinned by the notion that the person is continuously developing and in the process of realising his or her self-potential, whereby effective learning 'leads to change, development and a desire to learn more...' (Campaign for Learning cited in Fryer, 1997, 16).

'The development of a culture of learning will help to build a united society, assist in the creation of personal independence, and encourage our creativity and innovation. Learning builds self-confidence and independence... Learning offers excitement and the opportunity for discovery. It stimulates enquiring minds and nourishes our souls. It takes us in directions we never expected, sometimes changing our lives.' (DfEE, 1998, 10)

Learning as such has multifarious advantages, and no disadvantages: it is multi-functional, and is implicated in the nation's civility, civic participation, family cohesion, as well as a person's spirituality, independence and creativity, and very zest for life. *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) has described lifelong learning thus:

'[It] should indicate the role of lifelong learning in maintaining the country's *competitiveness* in a global economy and in the *development of new skills, dignity, confidence and opportunities* for all its people. It should also explain the contribution of lifelong learning in securing greater *social cohesion* in this country (Fryer, 1997, 4)....Lifelong learning should be for *all aspects of life* and meet a *variety of needs and objectives*. It should foster *personal and collective development, stimulate achievement, encourage creativity, provide and enhance skills*, contribute to the *enlargement of knowledge* itself, *enhance cultural and leisure pursuits* and *underpin citizenship and independent living*.' (Fryer, 1997, 29, my italics)

The responsibility of the individual to learn

The notion of the individual's responsibility to learn is supported by the discourse of individual responsibility. The creation of a culture of learning is presented in the policy documents as involving both individual choice for individuals, as well as an imperative. From the government's perspective, the imperative for learning arises out of the recognition that we are now in a 'new age' of information and global competition in which

‘familiar certainties and old ways of doing things are disappearing’ (DfEE, 1998, 9). The individual has to recognise that ‘a job for life’ is a thing of the past (Fryer, 1997, 5) and that success and well-being is dependent on continuously upgrading skills. Within this notion of economic and personal progress the needs of the nation and the individual are collapsed:

‘If people are not to be locked into particular jobs with limited life-chances, risking being marooned by change or denied scope for improvement, they need the generic, core and transferable skills which will strengthen their position in the marketplace. The aim should be to make people less vulnerable, at the same time as enhancing the capacities and competitiveness of businesses and other organisations. In this way we can develop the kinds of responsiveness and flexibility in employment from which the many and not just the few can benefit.’ (Fryer, 1997, 12)

The discourse of the responsibility of the person to learn produces the idea that those who do not learn will be responsible for perpetuating the ‘learning divide’, with potentially negative consequences for British society. The ‘uneducated’ pose a particular risk:

‘Social cohesion, whereby a sense of solidarity and common interest binds a healthy society, is best engendered by education. As the economic need for a more highly educated and skilled workforce increases, the undereducated will fall even further behind than they are now. We cannot risk increasing the gap between those with high skills, and those with low skills – or none at all. The uneducated will become disaffected and disenfranchised. Widespread alienation poses a threat to the stability of society. Education is not cheap, but ignorance carries high social and economic costs.’ (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, CVCP, 1996, *Our Universities Our Futures*, cited in Fryer, 1997, 14)

One might argue that the perpetuation of the responsibility for learning discourse is an attempt by the government to reconcile the interests of the individual with the interests of the state. Both parties are represented as beneficiaries and as the ultimate ‘winners’ of the investment in learning: the state benefits in so far as a skilled and educated nation makes Britain a viable economic competitor, and the individual benefits in that greater personal economic prosperity or a higher level of personal/spiritual development can be expected.

Participation in lifelong learning becomes obligatory in the sense that the person, regardless of background or motivation, is expected to conform to this liberal principle of education as a kind of public duty to both self and state (see Tight 1998b; Coffield 1999), and that the person who does not take up the opportunities on offer will be 'left behind'. This supports Peters' (1996) idea that the emphasis on the individual's right and ability to choose occurs within the logic of government.

The discourse of the responsibility of the individual to learn is linked to the government's concern with promoting a balance between rights and responsibilities amongst individuals (evident, for example, in its Education for Citizenship policy); as we have seen earlier in this chapter, in so far as the government makes opportunities available, individuals have a responsibility to make the most of them. The selected policy documents acknowledge that structural mechanisms disadvantage some groups of people, and concede that barriers to access and participation have to be eliminated before equality of opportunity can be achieved. However, whilst acknowledging the responsibility of the government, employers, providers and communities to work in partnership towards eradicating inequity and providing equality of opportunity, the policies nevertheless accentuate the role of individuals in directing their own learning. The following quote illustrates this directive:

'The focus of policy and practice should be learners themselves and the quality and range of learning opportunities made available to them. This would shift attention away from structures and institutions, which should be regarded as more or less efficient mechanisms for the delivery of demonstrably high quality learning in their given spheres.' (DfEE, 1997, 29)

The emphasis in the above quote is on the *learning opportunity* and the *availability* of *high quality* education, and the *efficient mechanisms* which put these in place. Once everything is 'in place', and the government and providers of education have removed all structural obstacles, learning can be instilled and transformation on the level of society, the economy and the individual can occur. As such, responsibility for participation in education, knowledge of the opportunities available, and personal aspirations invariably fall back on the individual. The document *Learning to Succeed* states:

‘In setting the new framework, we look to individuals to take responsibility for their own future assisted by intensive advice and support, to seek opportunities to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills; and to make their own investment in personal success.’ (DfEE, 1999, 15)

The key to societal and individual success, as discussed above, ultimately lies in the ability of the human mind to learn, to take personal responsibility for learning, and so to reap the rewards of investment in learning. This is a notion which is produced by the discourse of individual agency. Whilst this notion places an emphasis on the individual’s power to make autonomous choices, it simultaneously overlooks the fundamental role the state has in defining the parameters of learning which confines those choices within the discourse of national economic competitiveness. This is the inherent contradiction between the discourse of the economy and the discourse of the individual. The needs of the individual are subsumed within the discourses of economic efficiency and social justice which are perpetuated by the state, and whilst depicting the individual as a sovereign entity capable of making independent choices, the onus of responsibility is actually placed firmly on the individual to take up the opportunities available, and to act as the vehicle for overcoming inequality and putting society to right. This responsibility is the imperative, or the ‘duty’ of the individual, where those who do not play by the rules of the game will be ‘left behind’: People are free to make choices, yet are compelled to do so within the framework set out by government, and on pain of being ‘left behind’. The ‘wrong’ choices therefore make people responsible for their own exclusion. Failure to participate, ignorance of opportunities available and low aspirations falls back on the individual, and has resulted in ‘victim-blaming’ (Tight, 1998a).

Inequity in society

This theme draws on the discourse of social inclusion, and is concerned with the ways in which the selected policies represent ideas and categories with regard to exclusion and inclusion. It ties in closely with concepts of personhood discussed later in this chapter. The documents acknowledge that there are widening social and economic inequalities, many of which are ‘multiple and mutually reinforcing, amounting to compound forms of exclusion on the one hand, and the emergence of a virtual ‘super class’ of privilege on the

other' (Fryer, 1997, 14). The consequences of such a 'noticeable and dangerous 'learning divide' is that....'On the one hand, there are those who are already well qualified and who continue to be learners throughout life. On the other hand, there are those who either leave education largely unqualified or who neither engage in learning as adults, nor intend to do so in the future' (Fryer, 1997, 15). The claim is that there is too much focus on successful learners, and too little support for those who lack confidence or believe that education is not for them. The Dearing and Kennedy Reports confirm this, stating that the success of policies on widening and increasing participation and achievement in learning was 'mainly in providing opportunities for those who have already achieved or continue to do so' (Kennedy Report cited in Fryer, 1997, 15).

The main factors affecting participation in education are identified as 'early school leaving, poverty, lack of qualifications and skills, low status, lack of self-esteem and powerlessness' (Fryer, 1997, 16). 80% of people who say they have not participated in learning since school believe that it is unlikely that they will do so in the future (Sargant et al. cited in Fryer, 1997, 15). Moreover, one study showed that whilst 80% of 18 year olds from senior managerial and professional backgrounds went into higher education, only 10% from unskilled backgrounds did so (Dearing cited in Fryer, 1997, 15). Another study cited lists a multitude of negative affects people with poor literacy and numeracy skills may suffer; apart from a greater likelihood of unemployment or low earning capacity, they are also more likely to be in 'poor health or suffer from depression and take less part in community groups and voting in elections' (Basic Skills Agency cited in Fryer, 1997, 15).

Learning is described as a means of harnessing the potential talent of young people otherwise 'wasted in a vicious circle of under-achievement, self-deprecation, and petty crime'. This is a discourse of the dangers of uneducated individuals. The greatest challenge, therefore, is to break the cycle of poverty 'which blights so many communities and widens income inequality' (DfEE, 1998, 11), and to change the culture in the many homes and workplaces where learning is not seen as having any relevance (DfEE, 1998, 13). Learning has the potential of contributing to 'social cohesion, [and fostering] a sense of belonging, responsibility and identity' (DfEE, 1998, 11), but because attitudes are so

deeply entrenched, creating a culture of learning requires a 'quiet and sustained revolution in aspiration and achievement' (DfEE, 1998, 13).

The tone of the selected policy documents displays an unwavering commitment to modernist principles, and asserts that structural inequalities are the main barriers to the take-up of education and to learning. The policies make the assumption that structural problems can be overcome, and that people can be relatively easily motivated to learn. They suggest that once structural barriers are removed and greater access to education becomes available, this will automatically create favourable attitudes to learning, and that people will use the resources available to them to bring about positive change in their lives. An irreprehensible vision of the future is proclaimed; the discourse is universalistic and therefore potentially inclusive of all people and all difference.

Agency and the power to effect change

This theme is constructed from the discourse of individual responsibility, as well as the related discourse of the value of education, and connects with aspects of learning as an investment for reward and the responsibility of the individual to learn. One of the implications of responsibility is that individual responsibility entails agency. I have argued elsewhere in this chapter that people effectively have 'agency without choice' in that choices are impinged upon by the broader economic remit of government. The policies represent agency and individual responsibility in such a way that the interests of the individual and the state are *not* necessarily linked, and conceivably at odds with each other. In this scenario, the state is represented as inherently flexible and society as in need of improvement; the individual, conversely, is cast in a role which makes him or her both responsible for changing society, and also therefore accountable for society. This interplay between society and the individual may be summed up in the following quote:

'The personal and social damage inflicted by inequality, social exclusion and restricted opportunity is now widely recognised. Lifelong learning should represent a resource for people, and whole societies, to help them identify such inequalities, probe their origins and begin to challenge them, using skills,

information and knowledge to achieve change. Learning alone cannot abolish inequality and social divisions, but it can make a real contribution to combating them, not least by eliminating the ways in which social exclusion is reinforced through the very processes and outcomes of education and training.’ (Fryer, 1997, 16)

Learning for the Twenty-first Century (Fryer, 1997) calls upon individuals to use their individual potential to bring about a more equitable and socially just society: ‘Lifelong learning can help people to seize new opportunities, engage critically with change and shape their worlds by asserting some ownership and direction over their own lives, in work and beyond, through both individual and collective activity’ (12). Terms and phrases such as ‘critical reflection’, ‘creative initiative’, ‘new forms of participation in politics’ are used, as well as ‘self-activity, initiative and pluralism’, and the suggestion is that democracy can be strengthened through participation in lifelong learning (Fryer, 1997, 17). The individual’s ability to challenge and transform the government’s mistakes is underpinned by the idea that critical thinking and political activity are embedded within lifelong learning, and that the individual has the ability to exercise choice, and to think and act ‘outside the box’.

Notions of transformation and the possibility of ‘doing things differently’ have interesting implications for understandings of social capital explored in Chapter One through the work of Bourdieu. Bourdieu’s theories do not sit easily with the policy rhetoric. According to Bourdieu, a person’s habitus is an amalgamation of dispositions, attitudes, perceptions and practices which are unconsciously oriented but which nevertheless appear consistent and incline the person to act in particular ways. Practice occurs in the relation between habitus and a particular social context or field, such as for example, education. This relation is determined by those able to act within a specific field, where this depends on the person’s habitus and access to cultural or economic capital. In this view, people are to a large extent bound to their social position: whereas for some this position is experienced as boundless possibility, for others the habitus is limiting in so far as they lack the required social capital to belong to the privileged class. The policy assumes that people are autonomous rational individuals who are capable of taking constructive measures to free

themselves from the structural shackles which have prevented them from being self-directed. As such, the policy presents a vision of society in which capital is convertible, and that in their bid for social mobility, any constraints on people can be relatively easily overcome by the efforts of people themselves. Indeed, the onus of responsibility to overcome their own habitus is especially - rather than exceptionally - on those people the policy describes as belonging to under-represented groups, such as the young 'disadvantaged' or people with learning difficulties. In other words, it is effectively those who are most disadvantaged through structural mechanisms who are expected to change themselves and to 'get over' what ever is bothering them, and indeed, are also by extension ascribed the power to change society itself.

Although encouraging reflexivity, the government, as Greener (2002) has argued, does not want any kind of reflexivity, but a 'reflexivity that accepts the existing rules of the game and attempts to make the best of them, rather than attempting to challenge the rules themselves' (2002, 699). It is therefore likely that the government does not actually expect people to 'think outside the box' and challenge the government's way of doing things, because people, it is assumed, will simply see it as in their interests to make the best of the situation as it is presented to them. This points to the crucial issue of what is actually meant by autonomy or independent choice, and whether creativity, critical thinking and political activity, and any subsequent transformation within society, must concur with the dominant state paradigm. Most significantly, it raises the question of what this says about the (de)politicisation of the individual. It seems that, within the government's framework of universalism which encompasses the discourse of economic efficiency as well as the concepts of universal personhood and equality of opportunity, the notion of 'resistance' or 'emancipation' *from* dominant or universalistic state narratives holds little weight and can only bring about transformation and change at a superficial level. It may therefore only make sense to talk about 'resistance' which challenges the universalist discourse, that is to say, 'the rules of the game', itself.

Concepts of personhood

This section examines how the selected policy documents construct their subjects, and who is excluded by these constructions. Whilst the documents were to a large extent thematically similar, their conceptualisations of personhood revealed both similarities and differences. Despite the general tendency within all the documents to produce the person as rational and autonomous, underpinned by the discourses of individualism and individual responsibility discussed in Part One, there was a marked difference between how the two earlier policy documents - *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) and *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998) - and the most recent one, *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999), constructed personhood. This is despite little more than a year between the latter two documents (February 1998 to June 1999).

Indeed, an overview of education policy over the last two decades reveals that although the proposition of 'education for all' has remained central to education policy in Britain since the mid-1980s (see DES, 1985; Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999), there has been a shift away from the culturally relativist position on personhood evident in the policies of the 1980s (see DES, 1981; DES, 1985), which referred to particular racial and cultural groups as encapsulating a definitive substantive content (for critiques see Rattansi, 1992; Asad, 1993), towards an ever more individualistic discourse of personhood in which the concepts of race, ethnicity and culture have all but disappeared. Education policies explicitly concerned with race and minority issues ceased after 1988, and race became what Apple (1999) has referred to as an 'absent presence' (12). In recent policy therefore, the individual has been conceptualised as culturally neutral, and differences between people are constituted largely in terms of external socio-economic factors which can be overcome.

The two earlier documents (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998) discussed here may be described as representing a 'halfway house' in the transition from the endorsement of culturally relativistic concepts of personhood, evident in the education policies of the 1980s (see DES, 1981; DES, 1985), to a wholly individualistic concept of personhood, evident in the

later policy *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999). The key point is that within all the policy documents the individual is portrayed as an autotelic self in which the person can be understood as having or being an end or purpose in him or herself. This is clearly demonstrated by the discourses and arguments concerning individual responsibility and the idea that the individual has the power to ‘empower’ him or herself. Within this concept of personhood, individuals have the capability to become socially mobile and escape their current circumstances through the take-up of educational opportunities, which are represented as equally accessible to all. The policy presents a vision of the individual able to increase productivity as well as develop personally through ever more learning, training and hard work, and so to move ever closer to a unique and ‘complete’ self. This view of the individual combines elements of both economic and political liberalism in which the person is understood as de-contextualised and sovereign, as well as rational and utility-maximising. This ‘individualist’ notion of the person reflects an Enlightenment model of the self, representing the dominant discourse around personhood in the social sciences and the public sphere.

As we have seen, alongside the general policy conceptualisation of the person as essentially individualistic in the earlier documents *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) and *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998), are references to people as belonging to distinctive sub-categories within the meta-group of ‘under-represented’ people. These policies claim that policy development and lifelong learning strategies need to be targeted at particular under-represented groups and directed towards developing learning aspirations and confidence in these groups. Thus, universalistic notions sit comfortably alongside the particularisms of some socially designated groups. Under-represented groups mentioned in *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) include the following:

- Disaffected young adults, notably young men: more than 10% between 16 and 25 experience high levels of disaffection and exclusion, remaining outside the labour market, education and training.
- Older people: participation of people over 65 is low in adult education programmes,

and people over 50 are not entitled to student loans. Medical evidence shows that continued mental activities can diminish the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, and there is a 'therapeutic benefit of local classes to isolated, lonely and under-confident older people' (Fryer, 1997, 62).

- People with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: 'Adopting inclusive learning as a strategy means that institutions should avoid "the viewpoint which locates the difficulty or deficit with the student and focus instead on the capacity of the educational institution to understand and respond to the learner's requirement"' (Fryer, 1997, 63).
- Minority ethnic and linguistic groups. Black people get less opportunity to study at their employers expense, whilst older people from Black and Asian communities are especially disadvantaged, and 500,000 people for whom English is a second language experience particular difficulties (Basic Skills Agency cited in Fryer, 1997, 63-64).
- Prisoners and ex-offenders.
- Unskilled manual workers, part-time and temporary workers, people without qualifications, unemployed people.
- Some groups of women - notably lone parents, and those on the lowest incomes, and those living in remote or isolated areas.
- People with literacy and/or numeracy difficulties (Fryer, 1997, 16).

A single paragraph in *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) captures the myriad of obstacles experienced by various categories of people traditionally marginalised, where other people's attitudes, the problem of stairs, and institutional regulations are all smoothly juxtaposed in a few short sentences:

'Older people often find the modern drive for certification gets in the way. Unemployed people are regularly deterred by the rigid application of benefit rules. Too often, Black and Asian people still experience institutional and personal racism. Other people's attitudes are a major barrier for people with learning difficulties; stairs too often limit choices for people in wheelchairs; and those with learning difficulties are too often confronted by a lack of suitable facilities or properly trained staff.' (Fryer, 1997, 20)

Learning for the Twenty-first Century (Fryer, 1997) recognises that many black and Asian people are now second and third generation citizens in Britain, that this has implications for the need to recognise different racial and ethnic cultures, religions, traditions and values, and that this change should be reflected in provision for lifelong learning. The report makes general reference to black and Asian people, whereas *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998) distinguishes between different groups of black and Asian people, and acknowledges that there is a need to identify reasons why some people such as Bangladeshi women and Afro-Caribbean men, as well as women in certain academic disciplines remain under-represented (DfEE, 1998, 51). This reflects research which has pointed to the 'under-achievement' of working-class African Caribbean boys (Arnot et al, 1999) - constituting a 'moral panic' in the late 1990s and referred to as a crisis in masculinity (Lucey and Walkerdine, 1999) - and later research findings which showed that Bangladeshi (and Pakistani) women and African Caribbean men were less likely to be studying in university (*Social Trends 30*, 2000: 56 cited in Tomlinson, 2001, 147). It does not, however, take account of data which shows that Asian boys and girls from working-class backgrounds tended to do better than their white and African Caribbean counterparts at A level (Arnot et al, 1999), and that people from ethnic minorities accounted for 13 per cent of students in Higher Education - where most of these were Indian or Chinese - in comparison to 9 per cent of the total population; significantly, however, all minority people were more likely to be studying at 'new' rather than 'old' universities (*Social Trends 30*, 2000: 56 cited in Tomlinson, 2001, 147).

There is limited information about why the named groups are particularly disadvantaged, and what might be undertaken - short of 'creating a culture of learning' - to rectify the problems. What is most striking about the policy conceptualisations of personhood, however, is that readers of the policy may be led to believe that there is something distinctive about being 'Asian', 'black', 'Bangladeshi' or 'Afro-Caribbean' which leads to their under-representation within the education system, rather than it being a problem of discrimination, institutional racism, cultural capital, etc. A similar observation may be made of other under-represented groups such as ex-offenders, lone parents, old people or people with learning difficulties. In all cases, references to such categorisations - read

within the broader context of the policies in which these people are on the 'wrong' side of the learning divide and lack qualifications and skills - carry with them meanings such as disadvantage, dependency and low-self-expectation, 'poverty, low status, lack of self-esteem and powerlessness' (Fryer, 1997, 16).

A word search of the later document *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999) revealed that there was a dearth of any reference to established categories of personhood, apart from 'young people'. This document makes virtually no reference to ethnic minority groups. A word search was done for 'black', 'Asian', 'ethnic minority/minorities', for which *no results* were obtained. The words 'race', 'disability' and 'gender' produced *one result* where this was in the context of 'a targeted action plan setting out the key challenges and objectives covering post-16 education and training' which would amongst other things, involve 'widening access particularly for those people who face disadvantage in the labour market because of their race, disability, gender or age' (DfEE, 1999, 28). In contrast to this, the category 'young people' was referred to *113 times*. The phrase 'older people' was referred to 5 times. The phrase 'learning difficulties' appeared 5 times, 'disabilities' was found 10 times, and 'disabled' 3 times. The term 'culture' gave 4 results in the context of a new of lifelong 'culture of learning', and one result was obtained for 'ethnic groups', which appeared in the appendix and referred to the need to assess the impact of new arrangements on particular ethnic groups (DfEE, 1999, 76). The words 'poverty', 'poor' and 'class' yielded no results in the context of persons.

People as 'disadvantaged' were referred to 11 times, and the term 'disadvantage' was applied to people's situations 5 times. Here are some examples of how *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999) used the term: 'promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that the needs of the most disadvantaged in the labour market are best met' (DfEE, 1999, 24); 'ensure targeted support for the socially disadvantaged' (DfEE, 1999, 34) 'target more specific help on the most disadvantaged where specific financial obstacles act as a real barrier to participation (DfEE, 1999, 50). The 'disadvantaged' were also invariably juxtaposed alongside other 'types' of disadvantage, for example: 'the socially disadvantaged or those who otherwise lack confidence' (DfEE, 1999, 58); 'socially

disadvantaged and disabled people' (DfEE, 1999, 58); the voluntary sector as 'understanding the needs of the disadvantaged and excluded' (DfEE, 1999, 40); 'disadvantaged young people and helping those at most risk of dropping out' (DfEE, 1999, 42); the system as 'failing a significant section of the community, often the most vulnerable and disadvantaged' (DfEE, 1999, 16). The all-encompassing use of the term is summed up in the policy appendix, which states that in measuring success, and identifying areas for improvement 'we will also ensure commitment to equal opportunities. This will include systematic identification, assessment and evaluation....to address significant underachievement by women, men, people from different racial backgrounds, disabled people, or any minority or disadvantaged group' (DfEE, 1999, 77). Within the context of the discourse of individual responsibility discussed in Part One, disadvantage may be understood as deficit or disease which is located within the individual (see Rose, 1992).

The later policy de-categorises, and therefore too, universalises and neutralises the individual, and any differences which might exist between people are constructed in terms of structural differences. It is significant that the only 'traditional' category of personhood which remains trenchant throughout the policy literature is that of learning difficulties. This is perhaps indicative of a general and continuing understanding of personhood in biological terms, as I have argued elsewhere in Chapter Six: Discussion. The policies are therefore far removed from the education research literature which shows that structural factors such as race, class and gender potentially have a profound effect on people's lives and that social capital is unequally distributed (Ball et al., 2000; Archer et al., 2003). The conceptions of personhood within the three policy documents draw attention once again to the dilemma highlighted in Chapter One: Theories of Personhood; namely, how to create an inclusive society (and concept of personhood and education policy) without resorting to either individualism, or essentialist categories. This dilemma will be discussed in Chapter Six.

As discussed in Chapter One, philosophical concepts of identity have been used in two fundamentally different ways, and the policy uses both these conceptions simultaneously. In the earlier post-1997 policies in particular, assumptions around personhood are made

using both essentialist and postmodernist language. References to under-represented people are made in easily identifiable categorical terms, for example, 'minority ethnic and linguistic groups', 'lone mothers', 'young people', 'people with learning difficulties', 'the disadvantaged', which assumes that there is something 'self-same' and distinctive about each group, and that it has a stable and permanent core and is resistant to change. At the same time, whilst these groups possess distinctive features which have a fundamentally unchanging core character, the policy also conceptualises individuals as inherently flexible and adaptable, with a limitless potential for change both within themselves, and in terms of their potential to effect change in society as a whole. This concept reflects the 'fluid' postmodern position on personhood, in which identity has the potential for constant renewal and transformation, and can be understood as constructed through interaction with an 'other'.

Thus, to sum up, a convergence of essentialist, pluralist and individualist conceptions of self, in which the person is perceived to have agency but is also expected to have responsibility, is evident in policy concepts of personhood. The interplay between these positions in the context of theories of personhood and the interview findings are discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

In the next two chapters (Chapters Four and Five) I discuss the interview findings. The interview data comes in two parts – identity and education – where these refer to different sets of literature, theories of personhood and education policy respectively. The aim was to investigate the impact of the concepts of personhood and equity which were reflected in the literature (theory and policy) on the lives of the respondents and to explore similarities and differences between the literature and personal experience. At the time of setting up the interviews there was very little published literature on the subject of mixed race identity and in relation to the FE sector in the UK. The interview questions were therefore based on more general literature and public discourses around race, ethnicity, and on the discourses around education which were identified in the selected policy texts. Ideas underlying feminist philosophy, for example, that women (and many racialised and

classed people) are marginalised in society and that collective political action is required in working towards greater equity, were also crucial in devising the interview questions.

Chapter Four examines the interview data on identity. The interviews included questions on how respondents understood the term mixed race, how they defined themselves, their experiences of adapting in different contexts and how they felt they had changed over time or due to some turning-point in their lives, as well as how they felt they were seen by other people and their experiences of difference and discrimination. The theories, concepts and discourses discussed in Chapter One are used to illuminate the themes and discourses arising from this data. The broader arguments in relation to theories of personhood will be discussed in Chapter Six: Discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR: MIXED RACE PERSONHOOD

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present the interview data on identity. The chapter is divided into four main parts which reflect the dominant themes in the interviews. These are one, general understandings of mixed race and concepts of self; two, respondents' views on how they believed they were perceived or categorised by others; three, articulations on respondents' identity transformations; and four, respondents communications around experiences of discrimination. In discussing the data, my basic premise is that knowledge is historically and culturally specific and that identities are socially constructed through language (eg. Foucault, 1972, 1979). I reject essentialism as a theory and look rather to the role of discourse in constructing social phenomena, ideas, etc. Therefore, respondents' references to essentialist, individualist or postmodernist notions of self should be understood within the context of the discourses which form their identities. However, the words presented here are not representative of 'who the respondents really are' or what they believe, but are articulations which reflect their own versions of reality within given moments. The main discourses and themes arising out of the data are discussed in relation to the theories of personhood and previous research on mixed race explored in Chapter One.

PART ONE: (SELF) CONCEPTS OF MIXED RACE

Understanding/s of the term 'mixed race'

The main difficulty with the terms 'race' and 'mixed race' is that they are based on assumptions about their scientific validity: although it has been widely acknowledged that there is as much genetic variation within as between 'races', the use of the term 'race' nonetheless appears to legitimate and reify distinct biological categories (Miles, 1989). Moreover, the term 'mixed race' suggests that such an identity arises out of two pure or original races, a notion which has also long been discredited. Academics and researchers have grappled with finding the 'correct' term which can encapsulate the true mixed race

experience. In the States, for example, multiracialism (Root, 1996; Chiong, 1998; Winters, 2003), and biracialism (Rockquemore, 2002) have been popular terms to describe people of two or more racial heritages; in the UK, the term 'mixed race' has never been seriously challenged, although some researchers have used alternative terms such as *metise(se)* and *metissage* which attempt to incorporate generational, ethnic and cultural concerns (Ifekwunigwe, 1999).

During my fieldwork too, as discussed in the Chapter Two, concerns were raised by many college lecturers about the term, especially with regard to how they thought students would react to the term being used to describe them. In contrast to the fixation amongst both academic researchers and college lecturers with finding the correct term to describe people of mixed parentage, the respondents in my research were well acquainted with the term 'mixed race', and did not find it problematic or offensive. In response to the question: "How do you feel about the term 'mixed race'?" only two respondents expressed any ambivalence about the term 'mixed race', and in both cases, still used it. Ruby (Punjabi Indian/Irish), for example, saw the issue of mixed race as complex because she did not believe in the concept of race as a biological concept, and although she used the term, felt ambivalent about it and suggested that 'mixed origin' may be a better term. Danielle (English/Jamaican), too, did not like using 'race' to define herself or other people, but conceded:

"It's just something you have to do in order for people to know, basically to identify a person to know what they're talking about - it's a bit derogatory, because there are people who are not white or black, but they have to deal with it because they've been born in to it."

Despite awareness of its pejorative nature, a number of respondents said they preferred the term 'half-caste' to 'mixed race'. Tizard and Phoenix (2001[1993]) in research undertaken in 1990-1991 found that respondents viewed the term 'half-caste' as informal whilst 'mixed race' was kept for formal use. Cathrina (Jamaican/Irish) made a distinction between the way she and people she knew used the term 'half-caste' and the way 'other'

people saw it as a racist term. This suggests that the use of the term 'half-caste' may have been an unpremeditated form of resistance against political correctness around the term 'race' and race issues. Cathrina said:

"I don't use mixed race, I just use half-caste....I've always used it, half-caste, some people think it's racist, but most half-caste people I know don't think it's racist, but other people do. Like my dad says it's not a nice word to use."

Corinne (Jamaican/Irish), on the other hand, volunteered a criticism of the term half-caste, perhaps because it was so common amongst her friends and she wanted to express her dissent:

"I'm happy about the term [mixed race], half-caste is like half-breed – mixed race to me is the nicest term. I never use the tem half-caste but now and then people use it and I find it hurtful."

Despite the recognition of new possibilities for self-defining as mixed race, several respondents expressed their bewilderment that mixed race identity had become such an issue and talked about ethnic monitoring and categorizing or labelling generally as problematic. Tania (West Indian/English) said she felt comfortable with her diversity, yet found the official line on identity confusing, claiming: "On forms I could tick most of the boxes! I don't know where I'm supposed to fit in. I feel black, white, mixed." Similarly, Anabel (Guyanese/Indian-White) saw ethnic monitoring as bewildering and a way of racially differentiating between individuals:

"It was only when I came out here, after filling in these forms and they ask you about ethnic background, that is when I realised how much, how big an issue it actually is, this whole question of identity.....it was really baffling, this differentiation between people."

Bev (African (Cuban-Jamaican)/English) regarded the “simple fact that you have to state your race” as a form of racism because monitoring was not translated into reality, and there was no evidence of racial equality. Nadia (Iraqi/English) also referred to this ‘intrusion’ as racist, and rejected categorisation because employers could not be trusted not to discriminate against people on grounds such as race, sex, age, etc. Nadia said:

“It gets ridiculous with these forms - sometimes I say ‘mixed race’ under other and sometimes I just say oh none of your business - what’s the point, why are they asking these questions, it sort of seems racist in a way even making it an issue. It’s a bit like when you send an application form off for a job - wouldn’t it be much better if they didn’t know how old you were, what sex you were, or what race you were or anything, you know, that you’re just a name.”

Whereas both Bev and Nadia were concerned with race equality, their broader political views on how such equality might be achieved - and whether society or the individual was responsible - were quite different. Their views are discussed later in this chapter.

Chantel (African/English) appeared to reject the obsession with playing around with categories and labels, in the sense of ‘a word is just a word’. Chantel, who used both the terms ‘half-caste’ and ‘mixed race’, remarked:

“If you look up race in the dictionary it tells you what it is. It’s like what is a jumper? Just because you don’t like the word jumper doesn’t mean it’s not a jumper. It’s a jumper, it’s mixed race.”

In response to the question “What does the term mixed race mean to you?”, respondents who used the word ‘two’ or ‘half’ in describing mixed race identity were defined as having a *dual* concept of mixed race, and those who used the words ‘mixture’ or ‘different’ were categorised as having a *non-dual* concept of race. Of the 17 respondents - just under half the sample - who had a dual concept of race, only 2 respondents specifically said that mixed race meant having one black and one white parent, whilst 4

further respondents used the term 'half-caste', which is traditionally used to mean 'half black and half white'. Significantly, the remaining 11 respondents in this category said that a 'combination' of two races could constitute mixed race identity. However, what constituted a race was not consistent amongst the respondents. Corinne (Jamaican/Irish), for example, who as we saw above rejected the term 'half-caste', referred to a dual notion of race where this was defined specifically along the following lines:

"Mixed race is some kind of black and some kind of white - Indian and white, Chinese and white, Indian and Chinese, but Indian and black is coolie."

In the *non-dual* category 21 respondents, just over half the sample, defined mixed race as having a 'mixture of races' or 'different races'.

The key finding, therefore, is that altogether three-quarters of the sample, that is 32 respondents, talked about mixed race identity in ways which transgressed the black/white binary model, and included notions of second generational, intra-continental mix, and intra-continental dual-minority heritage (ie. Indian and Pakistani, or Mauritian and Philippino). The finding reflects a shift towards the dual-ethnic minority or pluralistic concept of mixed race identifiable in recent academic literature (see Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Mahtani and Moreno, 2001; Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Olumide, 2002).

Amongst these 32 respondents, mixed race was described as referring to either race, culture, nationality and religion, or any combination of these. The respondents understood mixed race in a myriad of ways which were in no way consistent with each other. Over a third of these respondents talked about mixed race as being about *race and culture*. All 5 respondents who described their mixed race as intra-continental used this concept. For Paula (Rumanian/Greek), who had grown up believing her parents came from different races "because my mum was very, very dark and my dad white, and my mum did things one way and my dad another", being mixed race was about religion and coming from different countries. As Ella (Burmese/Mauritian) and Soraya (English/Turkish) talked, a considerable amount of uncertainty became apparent about what they actually meant by

the terms they were using. The issue of race became confused with culture, and concepts such as 'country', 'language' or 'religion' became aspects of race or culture. Ella said:

"It's got nothing to do with culture, if you're from two countries in Asia you're one race, and from one country in African and one in Asia then you're mixed race. But Caribbean and African is also mixed race, and Chinese and Indian, I don't know why."

Soraya said that mixed race could be everything from coming from different continental regions, different religions, or languages and traditions, to the way someone looked. Ultimately, Soraya concluded, it was the act of self-definition itself:

[Mixed race means] *"Coming from two different races. Mediterranean - Spain, Greece, Turkey - is a race separate from European. Part of what comes into your race is your religion, like Pakistani and Indian are different races. Cypriot-Turks and Cypriot-Greeks consider themselves different from mainland Turks or Greeks - they speak each other's language, and the traditions are identical, but a Greek is a Greek and a Turk is a Turk. I can tell Greeks and Turks apart. Germans and English are a different race because they look different - I can tell a German a mile away...I think the self-definition is important."*

A further finding showed that all 8 second generation respondents referred to a mixture of *races* to describe mixed race identity. Nichole (¾ Black/¼ White) and Peta (African/West Indian-English), for example, made reference to traditional scientific forms of 'blood mixing' in their assertions of "not being 100% one thing." This finding refers specifically to the traditional idea of race as rooted in the biological realm. The definition of mixed race, whilst in one sense reminiscent of hypodescent (see Root, 1996, on the US at the turn of the century, in which 'one-drop of black blood' made the person black) is interesting in so far as essential race mixes could be multiple and infinite.

Clara (Angolan-Portuguese/Portuguese) referred to this idea of ‘infinite’ races when she said:

[Mixed race is] “*People of different races – there’s Asian, that’s one race from the Indian continent, and another is Oriental, European, South American, White, Eskimos and Siberians...*”

The findings amongst the second generation respondents reflect what David Skinner (2004) in a recent conference paper describes as the ‘new biologism’. Skinner has argued that biology is increasingly being used to answer questions about ‘who we are’, and that there is an increasing willingness to think about differences between people in biological terms. Skinner asserts that biology itself is becoming the bridge between new self-concepts of identity and racial difference, and refers to the ‘Roots for Real’ website and the BBC documentary ‘Motherland – A Genetic Journey’ (cited in Skinner, 2004) to show how people use DNA testing to connect with their historical pasts.

There are two key issues here. First of all, whilst it is important to stress that the findings presented here are communications of ideas in a given moment and not a representation of the ‘postmodern’ position, the findings suggested a lack of satisfaction with a dualistic explanation for mixed race identity and indicated an ease with a *concept* of mixed race identity as pluralistic and diverse. Whilst mixed race was not necessarily seen by respondents in this category as a ‘non-race’, it was seen by many as having infinite possibilities in terms of the kinds of racial, cultural, national and/or religious ‘mixtures’ there could be in one person. Thus, the respondents were reflecting the notion of identities as socially heterogeneous and diverse, as discussed in Chapter One (see Bhabha, 1990; Hall, 1992). Given the number of respondents who saw race and culture as interlinked, it is likely that more respondents, if probed, would have explored the concept of mixed race further to encompass the concept of culture, nationality, religion, etc.

It is also interesting to note that a third of the sample were either second generation mixed race, had dual ethnic minority parentage, or same-continent parents, and as such did not fit

the - up until very recently – official definition of mixed race people as having ‘one black and one white parent’. As such, the self-definitions of these respondents as mixed race reflected the broader shift in public discourse around understandings of mixed race identity. The very act of defining as mixed race amongst these respondents can be understood as an act of individualism, and in some cases an assertion of difference, and as such supported the pluralist and diverse understandings of what mixed race identity meant to them.

The second key issue is that despite the ease with which pluralist conceptions of race, culture, ethnicity, etc. appeared to sit alongside each other in the respondents’ conceptions of identity, these conceptions were nevertheless depicted as ‘bounded’ in themselves. That is to say, even where Germans were understood to constitute a separate race from English people, as Soraya suggested, each ‘race’ was understood to possess some essence which distinguished it from all others. Thus, notions of difference and multiplicity, even when taken to ‘postmodern extremes’, did not preclude some notion of categorisation and essentialism. This may be referred to as postmodernism with ‘limited versatility’. At the same time, the complexity of conceptions around mixed race indicated both a defiance of any possibility of any coherent form of categorisation, and so too, of any systematic analysis. Nor can it therefore be a viable resource for combating inequality. This issue will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Whilst notions of race, culture and ethnicity were referred to in postmodern pluralistic terms, the respondents used discourses of cultural diversity and race essentialism to talk about their own identities and experiences. The concept of ‘race’ in these personal accounts appeared to be rooted in the biological realm. In the next sections I will look at how respondents used notions of ‘race’ to define themselves in a variety of contexts, in describing their friendships, in how they felt they changed in particular situations, and in how they felt their identities had evolved over time to incorporate both ‘halves’ of themselves, where this was mediated by an understanding of ‘where they were from’. Respondents also talked about how they experienced themselves as ‘raced’ by others. These issues will be discussed later in this chapter.

Self-definition

As we have seen, respondents' articulations of understandings of mixed race were predominantly pluralistic, albeit described in essentialist language, where most had diverse conceptions around what mixed race could mean, and who could 'count' as mixed race. In contrast to this, there was little evidence of pluralism in the respondents' *self*-conceptions of mixed race, which were described mainly in essentialist dual-racial, as well as individualistic, terms. The question asked was the same each time: "What is important to you in how you define who you are?" This appeared to be a difficult first question for many respondents, but the purpose was to get responses which were not influenced by previous talk of 'race' or 'mixed race'. As such no prompts were given, and I allowed respondents time to respond to this question. The most frequent responses to the question were 'being mixed race' (or mixedness) and 'personality'. Almost half the sample's immediate and spontaneous first response to the question was "not by race" and/or "not by colour", and as such disavowed race and colour as dominant aspects of their selfhood. The main themes identified will now be discussed.

The overriding concern amongst these respondents was to be recognised for who they were, where this was invariably described as being seen "just as me", "just as a person", "for the person within", or for their "personality." Other responses were to be seen "as an individual", "as a unique person", "as a human being" or "being a woman with children"; or aspects such as 'self-definition' (3), 'religion' (4), 'what I do' (4), 'knowledge' (2), 'professionalism' (1) were considered most important.

In all, 16 respondents said '*personality*', or some aspect of self which defined personality, was the most important factor in their self-definitions, 14 of whom also said they did not want to be defined by '*race and/or colour*'. For these respondents, the category of race was seen as a separate issue from a sense of self, which may nevertheless be a 'raced' self. For Clara, who had three white grandparents, being black was about feeling black, not looking black: "I don't think how black you are has got anything to do with your skin at all, it's what goes on here [points to her head] and in here [points to her heart]." The

following quotes were typical of respondents in this category, and demonstrated the prioritising of personality over skin colour:

“Not by the colour of my skin at all, never, how I am, how I present myself, how I interact with other people. It’s a matter of common sense, not looking at someone, like they say, not looking at the book and judging it by the cover. You got to get to know a person, you got to get to know me, just like I get to know other people before I can judge them. To look at me and say oh she’s black or she’s white so I don’t like her, that would be plain ignorance.”

(Adriana (Angolan/Portuguese))

“As a human being. Personally I dislike it when people say I’m black, because I will tell them if you look at my bag, that’s black, I’m not black. To be honest, I’m not too keen about this issue of race and colour, I just view myself as a professional woman, and I am just interested in being seen as a professional person and one who is capable of functioning at a very high level of competence.” Anabel (Guyanese/Indian-White)

Danielle (Jamaican/English), drew on the personality discourse in defining herself (and rejected the category ‘race’), but also saw herself as “not really being anything” and “not having a culture” because she was mixed race. Important to her was “just getting myself across and letting people know what I am and what I stand for.” In contrast to respondents who felt they ‘owned’ their mixed race identity, Danielle described mixed race as

“Not having a race to fall back on, because most people are either black or white and it’s sort of like being in the middle and not really being anything, because mixed race can be anything, it’s not determined by a certain race, just sort of in-between.”

Daniel (1996) has argued that a mixed race person who possesses a ‘pluralistic’ (neither black, white or biracial) and ‘integrative’ (the blending of black and white) identity may

produce a 'transcendent' sense of self, in the sense that it transcends 'race'. Rockquemore (2002) has also referred to a 'transcendent identity' to describe respondents in her study who claimed to 'opt out of the categorisation game altogether' (2002, 50). She compares such an identity with Robert Park's notion of the 'marginal man' in which the biracial person has the privileged position of being able to be objective about the social meaning of race, and discount its 'master status' (2002, 51). The implications of the perspectives of both Daniel and Rockquemore are that mixed race people are able to pursue identities which are effectively 'outside' the social realm of race. Whilst these views may to some extent hold in the context of the findings which show that most respondents supported individualistic notions of self, conceptualised mixed race as pluralistic, and explicitly rejected all notions of categorisation, the findings also showed that 'race' was fundamental to how most respondents perceived themselves and others.

Around one quarter of the sample said that both *personality* and being *mixed race* were the most important aspects of self-definition, where this was frequently accompanied by a *rejection of race as a category*. Here, mixed race identity was seen as an intrinsic part of selfhood. Thus, one might argue, essentialist and individualist facets of the person sat comfortably side by side and did not appear to contradict one other. Jennifer (Caribbean/English-Irish) wanted to 'put across' that she was mixed race without defining herself as mixed race, where this appeared to be a rejection of the category 'race' in the act of self-definition. She said: "Mixedness is not important in how I define who I am, although I want to put it across. My personality is important. I feel like a person, not more white or more black, just mixed." Anita (Mauritian/Filipino) said: "I see myself as a fruit salad, as a mixture. It's not important to me how people rate or class me, or where I come from, it's just how I am. I don't put myself in a category like black, Asian or white, don't see the point in that."

As mentioned above, over half the respondents rejected race as a category in their conceptions of self, and yet half of these again (that is one-quarter of the sample) also said that '*being mixed race*' was important to them. Moreover, all of the second-generation respondents vehemently rejected ascription, yet also said their black racial heritage was

important to them. Thus, respondents seemed to have no conceptual difficulty with referring to 'race' in these apparently paradoxical ways. The distinction respondents used may be compared to Gilroy's distinction between 'racialisation' and 'race': respondents were diffident about any imposed classifications and wanted to be free to define themselves. In the attempt to forge a mixed race identity, however, recourse to the language of 'race' was inevitable. Lindsey (Bajan/Scottish) said that mixed race was important precisely because without the recognition of both the black and white sides of mixed race people, one side would always be denied. She said: "Mixed race is very, very important because a lot of white people see only the black in you and the same with black people, they see only the white." Analysis of the discourses outlined above is therefore difficult in so far as they seem to straddle as well as contradict each other: the rejection of race as a category may be a rejection of essentialism, yet the utilisation of mixed race as an intrinsic part of selfhood is simultaneously a recourse to essentialist discourse.

There was little evidence of the claim made by some authors that all mixed race people seek a mixed race category with which they can identify (Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Olumide, 2002; Rockquemore, 2002). Whilst most respondents in my study referred to their mixed race identifications as neither black *nor* white, but as black *and* white, and there was a sense of relief and that mixed race was finally being recognised as an identity, none of the respondents explicitly talk about mixed race as a group or a category. In view of the findings above, it seems possible that they saw their identities in terms of 'individual' identities which were simultaneously racial identities but did not necessarily constitute a racial category to which they could 'belong'. In this sense, the findings reflect what Parekh (2000) has recently referred to as 'a community of citizens'. For many respondents, their racial heritage was an important aspect of self. Ella (Burmese/Mauritian) said:

"It is important to be aware of your roots, your culture, where you're from. Being in England you're with western culture but I think you should never forget your origins in a way. It should be a strong part of you because that's where you're from. It's a part of my identity, part of me."

Peta (African/West Indian-English), who described her culture as 'very English' saw her individuality as strongly connected with being African, where this connection was linked to her closeness with her father. She said:

"I don't look at colour of my skin, colour doesn't come into it - I am me, I am unique and there's nobody else like me. I'm more black African than anything else, who you mix with doesn't influence how you feel inside. If people ask me I'm African, I've got the strongest roots there."

"I was closest to dad which has influenced the way I see myself. I wanted to be like him, so if that meant I had to eat rice then I would do that. Now I cook African food, have pictures on the wall, watch documentaries on Africa."

One quarter of the sample, all of them first generation black/white respondents, specifically said that they wanted both their 'black' and their 'white' sides to be recognised. Tizard and Phoenix (2001[1993]) have pointed out that in their study a positive racial identity was not associated with living with a black parent, but that family ties and the resistance to being seen as *either black or white* frequently overrode any categorisation of them as black by others. In my study, family ties and a sense of 'dual loyalty' (Tizard and Phoenix, 2001 [1993]) appeared to manifest itself in different ways. Both parents' heritages (and in some cases grandparents) were fundamental aspects of self, in the sense that 'where they came from' was 'who they were'. Identity was described in biological/racial terms and also sometimes the culture or places associated with these.

"When people bring it up I have to make sure they know I'm black and white. If people say 'are you black?' I say no, I'm both, my mum's in the picture. I feel mixed race because of the colour of my skin, that's the main reason. And because of my father. I've got to admit he's still there - he brought me into this world, so I can't just say I'm white, I couldn't do that, I don't think it would be right, denying part of my family." Lianne (St. Lucian/English)

“Because that’s where my mum’s from and I’m part of my mum...it’s important, and you know you’re from there so you got to take an insight into what kind of things they do, you can’t forget about something that is part of you.” Petra (Portuguese/black African)

To sum up the findings in this section then, perceptions of identity were individualistic in so far as they were based on self-definition, and ‘personality’ was the most frequent response in how respondents defined themselves. At the same time over half the sample rejected ‘race’ as a concept. Most respondents, including all the second-generation respondents, combined essentialist with individualistic discourses, and saw ‘personality’ and ‘being mixed race’ as compatible aspects of personhood and intrinsic to who they were. Being mixed race, moreover, was inextricably linked with biological/cultural parental heritage, in the sense of ‘where I come from’. The findings in this section as a whole challenge essentialist theory which has always constructed identity in mono-racial and mono-cultural terms; the indication is that an essentialist model which has dual or multiple aspects may be more apt in describing the respondents’ identities. The findings also challenge postmodern theories of identity, and the idea that mixed race identity is something fluid which can be freely chosen; they also to some extent contradict the findings above on more general understandings of mixed race which supported postmodern ‘anything goes’ conceptions of selfhood, although these conceptions were described by the respondents in essentialist ways.

Significantly, the respondents’ rejection of any form of classification by others, yet their simultaneous self-reference as ‘raced’ persons, may have resulted out of the prevalence of mis-categorisation by others, and a subsequent desire to be seen for ‘who they really were’. In the next section on friendship I will examine how some respondents drew on ‘traditional’ dichotomous notions of black and white and a race/personality correlate in the assertion and negotiation of their own mixed race identities. I argue that such assertions of identity were defined *against* homogeneous constructions of race.

Friendship

The findings on friendship gave an indication as to who respondents identified with. The question asked was: “Are you drawn to particular groups of people/ who are your friends?” The data can broadly be divided into a) respondents who were drawn to people from a range of different backgrounds, and who talked about personality as being independent of a person’s race, and b) respondents who were drawn specifically to black, ethnic minority and mixed race people, many of whom made a race/personality correlate in which black people especially had a particular ‘type’ of personality. Like the data discussed above on understandings of mixed race and self-definitions of mixed race, the findings in this section can be split into what one might call a diverse concept of personhood, which focuses on individual personality and downplays the significance of race, and an essentialist concept of personhood in which race is an important part.

Over half the sample (22 respondents) specifically said that they were not drawn to particular groups of people, and replied “not at all” to the question; many said their friends came from ‘mixed’ backgrounds, mentioning any combination of established categories such as black, white and Asian, and many used a ‘personality’ narrative in describing their criteria for friendship. Cathrina, for example said: “People I get along with I get along with no matter what colour they are, it just depends on the person itself.” Danielle said she identified most with Asian culture, especially Islam and Hinduism, where her ‘in-between-ness’, or her sense of exclusion from full association with either of her racial heritages, perhaps contributed to this.

Only two respondents said they were drawn more to white people. Over one third of the sample (15 respondents) said they were drawn to people who were not white: 3 respondents were drawn mainly to mixed race people, and not to black people because they were too racist; 4 were drawn to black people; 3 were drawn to black and mixed race people; 3 to other ethnic minority people; one person said she was drawn to African people, and one to Arab people because of their respective husbands.

Respondents' definitions of themselves as *black and white* was an affirmation of their difference, and a forging of individuality premised on 'insider' knowledge of mixed raceness. However, it was also an act of separation from, defence against, or indeed subversion of the rigid boundaries of racial homogenisation imposed upon them from outside. In asserting their mixed race identities, as both black and white, some respondents distanced themselves from 'blackness' and/or 'whiteness'. This distinction was justified by evoking a race = personality link, in which distinctive ways of behaving were believed to be dependent on a person's race.

Traditional psychology utilises a common-sense notion of personality which can be described as essentialist in that it makes a direct link between personality and behaviour (Burr, 1995, 19). Essentialism is described by Burr as

'a way of understanding the world that sees things (including human beings) as having their own particular essence or nature, something which can be said to belong to them and which explains how they behave (things like chairs, paper and plastic spoons do not 'behave' in the human sense of 'doing something', but they do react differently to different environmental conditions, and these reactions can be explained in terms of the things we know about the 'nature' of plastic or wood).' (1995, 19)

The idea of 'essence' as having a strong influence on 'behaviour' was reflected in the articulations of some respondents. These respondents drew on 'essentialist' notions of blackness and whiteness, etc. where a person's 'attitude' or way of behaving was linked with the biological 'fact' of their race. It is important to stress here that these were articulations made by respondents at a given point in time, and do not necessarily indicate that they made these race/personality/behaviour links more generally. However, their communications on the subject of race and behaviour may also be indicative of the prevalence of 'race thinking' within public discourse, discussed in Chapter One, and the idea - which lies at the heart of racism - that there are 'natural' links between race and behaviour. This type of essentialist thinking is of course also constructed, and therefore does not contradict my own theoretical position which views race as socially constructed.

Keisha (“fully mixed”) distinguished between the supposed difference in the personalities of black and white girls, and recognised and rejected what she saw as the negative ‘black’ personality traits within herself and other black people. She chose not to associate with black girls because of their discriminatory attitudes towards white people, nor with white girls because of their ‘barbie-ness’, in favour of a racially mixed group of boys who just had fun. For Keisha, the gender-specific racial diversity of such a group in which everyone (except girls) was understood to be the same regardless of race or colour, formed a protection against racism. A group of racially mixed girls on the other hand, did not appear so appealing to Keisha. She said:

“To be honest I hardly ever hang around with black girls cos there’s something, I just don’t like their attitude. I do have a temper and everything, but certain things they do I don’t agree, like most things they do I don’t like, their racist comments about white people or mixed people and that. The white girls I hang around with have been called things you wouldn’t like to hear, and they know what it’s like. It’s their personality, it’s about personality - some white girls I won’t hang around with because it’s too like a Barbie, too much like a Barbie, so I’m like you’re not my type of person. Like it depends on the person itself. Black girls I’d call more like a tomboy, more like a tomboy than a Barbie.”

“Mainly I hang around with boys, and it’s just like, I find it so much fun! It’s like when I go out with a group of them it has to be mixed. So you know when you’re in a group and someone passes a racist comment, it affects all of us not just one, cos in a way we’re all different, and it’s not about your culture.”

A number of points may be made about Keisha’s position. She made a distinction between gender difference and all other kinds of difference: whereas being ‘mixed’ and ‘different’ had positive and transformative potential in so far as it could ultimately challenge racism, ‘difference’/transgression of norms of gendered behaviour was seen as problematic (where

girls had 'attitude' or were like 'barbie'). One irony of this position is that whilst allegiance within such a group may have been seen as forming a protection against racism, it was gender-exclusive. Keisha simply distanced herself from what she saw as negative 'female' traits, and so too of any idea of 'girls together', and aligned herself firmly with the boys. She created a tomboy/Barbie dualism in her description of the difference between black and white girls. As such, white girls, according to Keisha, displayed more 'feminine' traits (in so far as 'Barbie' represents the archetypal feminine woman), whilst black girls expressed themselves in more 'tomboy' and therefore more masculine ways. Interestingly, this perceived masculinity in black girls was associated with 'personality', 'attitude', and 'racist comments', whereas Keisha did not represent the boys as expressing these characteristics. Keisha appears to have framed herself within a very specific version of femininity which rejects what she saw as female expressions of masculinity or excessive femininity. In this sense she can be seen as constructing a 'middle position' on gender. The behavioural constraints evoked in her pathologisation of representations of gender among her female contemporaries suggests some of the tensions and psychic costs in maintaining such positions.

It should be noted here that few respondents talked about gender-specific experiences, or indeed, made any reference to gender at all within the context of either personhood or education. The focus was clearly on race; and yet, as Keisha's talk illuminates, their constructions were also clearly gendered. Like Keisha, Cerisse (Scottish-African/Zambian-English) referred to the 'attitude' of black girls, and said: "Most of the black girls here have attitudes, some are aggressive and go round in gangs. I just keep myself to myself and don't get in anyone's way." So here again, black women were being masculinised and hence pathologised in discourse. Zaseena (English/Jamaican), Cathrina (Jamaican/Irish) and Kelly (English/Bajan) did allude to gender differences with reference to bullying and education. Moreover, all the respondents who mentioned boyfriends and dating said they preferred black men, again linking 'race' to an essentialised mode of personhood/ physical type. The ways in which these findings relate to issues around 'post-feminism' is discussed later in this chapter.

In the case of Charlene (Jamaican/White), who identified as mixed race but identified more with black people, the conflict between homogenous constructions of blackness and a dual-racial identity was apparent in her description of how she saw the difference between black and white 'kinds', where this was an explanation for her own preferred racial allegiance to black people. Charlene, therefore, also referred to a biology = personality link. Charlene said:

“They’re my own kind. White is my own kind as well, but I’m more on the black side. I’ve always been more around black people, but I don’t act black, most people say I act white. I get along with them more better. I like white people, yeah, I don’t mind them but, I just get on by my own tack but, well, I’m half and half, so I get on more with black people, I don’t know why.”

Lindsey (Bajan/Scottish) drew on a race/personality correlate in the negotiation of her friendships, but one in which racial 'boundaries' were fuzzy enough to allow people to move across racial groupings. Lindsey's best friend was white – “She always hangs around with us, she fits in, she’s one of us” – and yet Lindsey said she “felt out of place around white people” and was drawn mainly to black people. At the same time she said that she did not herself possess what she perceived as distinctively 'black' personality traits, but rather was “quieter and more self-conscious around black girls cos black people are a lot ruder than white people, a lot ruder, and I’m not like that, I’m not a rude person.”

Two of the three respondents who said that they were particularly drawn to mixed race people did not use a race = personality correlate or racialise others as 'different' to them, and said that with mixed race people they had a common link based on shared experience. Aasha (Indian/white American) said she was drawn to specifically Indian/white mixed race people, where the commonality was about shared cultural similarities, and seeing how people have dealt with these culture experiences:

“I’ve developed friendships with a few people in my life who happen to be half-white half-Indian, and I don’t mean happen to be, because I think there is

a reason, I think that that was the bonding point. I understand what it's like to have different worlds, and one thing I do understand about that is that if you are mixed you are in this place that's in-between."

Ruby (Punjabi Indian/Irish) talked about a 'newer community' made up of mixed race and other marginalised people to which she felt she belonged:

"Most people I feel really close to have felt marginalised or excluded from their own communities, and in a way I feel part of the 'newer community' because of that. Quite a substantial proportion of these people are mixed race. We do gravitate towards each other which isn't random, is more than just luck. I think it's often because I find myself in places searching for things at the same time as other people."

For Dianne (Welsh/Mauritian), who referred specifically to culture rather than race, said that cultural differences were important:

"I get on more with ethnic minorities, mainly Filipinos and Mauritians, and Nigerians as well, because they have more culture to relate to like food...English people don't tend to have a culture, they don't have values, they've only got Sunday lunch."

Adapting

Several researchers have described the experience of being mixed race as the ability to be black, white or mixed race in different situations. Maria Root has referred to this phenomenon as 'fluidity' (in Rockquemore, 2002, 48). Daniel's (1996) idea of an 'integrative identity' is applied to mixed race people who self-reference themselves simultaneously in black and white communities. Daniel makes the distinction between a synthesised integrative identity, in which people feel equally comfortable in black and white locations, and a functional integrative identity, where they can function in either

community, but feel a stronger identification, or feel more comfortable with black or white people.

The respondents were asked whether different sides of their personalities came out when they were together with people who shared a particular parental racial heritage with the respondent. 37 respondents gave responses, of whom 21 said they did adapt themselves in different situations, 14 respondents said that they did not, and 2 respondents' responses were ambiguous. Two dominant narratives around personhood, which reflect those in the previous sections, can be identified: respondents who said they did not adapt tended to use a 'fixed' concept of personhood in which personality always remained the same, whilst those who did adapt in particular settings tended to use a 'fluid' concept of personhood in which awareness of racial/cultural differences within particular settings determined their behaviour or how they felt.

In all, just under two-thirds of the sample said they did adapt in different situations. Respondents talked mainly about adapting with 'black' or 'ethnic minority' people, not with white people. Like in the section on friendship, the race/personality correlate was evident amongst some of those who said they did adapt. Respondents talked about 'putting on an act' especially with regard to their language and behaviour, and said that they talked about different things, or talked or behaved in different ways with black and white people. Sherry (Guyanese/German) illustrated this point: "It's funny how you slip into the way they [black relatives] talk, the patterns and intonations, and then when you leave you become all English again! I try not to do it, but it comes out!" Being able to adapt was also seen as a positive attribute by some respondents. Corinne (Jamaican/Irish) said:

"I can get on with anybody. At home I live in a white culture, and then at my father's house I'm living around a black culture, so I'm seeing two worlds, two cultures, two sets of people.....so I know how to get along with white people very well and I know how to get along with black people very well, so I think it's broadened my mind to just getting along with people as a whole."

Notably, the three respondents who were most drawn to mixed race people said that they adapted in different situations but that mixed race people were the only people they did not adapt with. For Aasha, who said she “playact[ed] Indianess”, the likelihood of some resonance with mixed race people meant that she could be freer with them than with either Indian or white people. Kelly, who talked extensively about bullying and racism from black people at the school she had previously attended, said that she was “totally different around people of different races”; on being with mixed race people, however, she said: “Then I’m just me cos I know they’re just being them and I can say whatever I like.” All of these respondents said that they were drawn mainly to mixed race people (see previous section on friendships), possibly because they were ‘unthreatening’, and felt that they remained the same with them. Aleasha (Grenadian-Scottish/Dominican), who said she was most drawn to black people, but also rejected by them, said that she often adapted herself around black people because she wanted to be accepted, but with mixed race people she was “just myself.” Ruby, although feeling part of a newer community which had many mixed race people in it, said that she still adapted in a generic sense. Her early experiences of having to adapt as a racialised person in a white family and white environment meant that it had become a way of life for her, and her main challenge was to stop adapting *per se*: “I did this as a survival technique from an early age, and part of what’s important in my development is rejecting that. I really check myself now, I still do it, but am much more aware of what I’m doing and why, and I really question myself and it’s really hard work.” These respondents all said they experienced considerable discrimination or non-acceptance at some point in their lives (see section on discrimination).

One quarter of the sample (10 respondents) said that they did not adapt when they were in different racial/cultural environments, most of whom simply said that they “stay[ed] the same.” These respondents had a ‘fixed’ concept of their own personhood, in which personality did not change. Lianne (St.Lucian/English) said: “No, not at all. It’s just me, I can’t explain it but I don’t feel that at all, don’t feel more one way when I’m in a different situation, just feel myself, just the same person, I don’t change, I don’t do things differently with other people.” Danielle said: “If I did [adapt], I would do it without realising, but I think I am always myself.” Adriana said: “No, I am who I am, it doesn’t

matter who I am with. Otherwise you would just be a fake.” Nalia (¾ Black/ ¼ Chinese) said: “If there was a group of all different races I don’t think I would be more inclined to go over to the black people or not, but I would say from past experience it’s more the person.” Other respondents drew on a race/personality link. Jennifer (Caribbean/English-Irish) appeared to contradict herself when she said: “Some people are affected by race and colour and how they act around them but I’m just the same”; however, she also said that she changed around black people, but that this was because of their personality and not their race. Brenda (Afro-Caribbean/Indian-white Jewish) said that she remained very much herself, “I am what I am”, but adapted in so far as she knew “how far I can go with them [African people] culturally.” The implicit assumption here, again, was that a person’s race was inextricably linked to that person’s personality.

Some respondents talked about the negative aspects of adapting in terms of the irritation they felt about the inflexibility of people who adhered to essentialist notions of ‘black’ or ‘ethnic minority’ communities, and the pressure put onto the respondents to conform to these notions. Bev said black people were “often set in their ways, they only listen to particular music, don’t want to hear anything new or are only interested in black people who have done something”, whereas white people were often more open to differences between people. Some respondents talked about both adapting to and resisting notions of essentialism and the pressure to adapt. Nadia felt awkward around Muslims because if they knew she was half-Arab they expected her to behave like a Muslim; Nadia’s challenge was to find a balance between adapting to her father’s culture and rejecting aspects of it. Similarly, Ruby said that she was resigned to Indian people expecting her to know things about Indian culture: “It makes me feel frustrated, and a bit sad. I used to be angry about it, but I’m a bit weary about it now.” For Keisha, who had been brought up as Jamaican, adapting meant denying what she saw as her pluralistic culture:

“My mum doesn’t even understand me when I speak, tells me I’m speaking too much English, stop it! Yes, I get pissed off when she doesn’t understand me, what I’m saying, cos in a way I do have more Jamaican stuff on me, but I don’t feel I’m more Jamaican than anything else.”

Other respondents saw adapting as a positive trait. This was explained by evoking both a the *pluralist* concept of personhood (discussed in the section ‘Understandings of mixed race’), and a *fixed* notion of personhood, in which a person mobilised different aspects of their personality in different situations, including those which concern race and culture, but saw herself as essentially unchanging. Chantel said: “I think I’m a bit of everything, so I don’t just act a certain way”, and although she described her behaviour as slightly different with African or English people, she claimed her personality did not change, and did not think other people would not notice this change. Similarly, Tania said that she did not change, but that there were “different facets of me in one” which found expression in “all different spheres of life, as a mother, a wife, in work, in church.” Tania believed that precisely because she was mixed race, and did not have a ‘race’ or “anywhere to go home to”, she could “fit in most places” without adapting. Zara (Columbian/Polish Jewish-English) saw adapting as a necessary part of everyday life, “not in a way that is compromising or that I’m insincere or lose my integrity, but there’s definitely certain behaviour, certain ways of speaking that in certain environments just don’t make sense and it’s not a big deal.” Zara said that putting on an act was simply showing different sides of her personality and did not make her “feel any different inside.”

To sum up, whilst a quarter of the sample used the ‘personality’ narrative, a significant finding in this section, like in the section on ‘friendship’, was that *a person’s race was inextricably linked to that person’s personality*. If we look again at these last two sections on ‘friendship’ and ‘adapting’, we see that the emphasis was frequently on ‘racial’ differences and correlated ‘personality’ differences which appeared to separate people, and, in the section on adapting especially, on the ways in which respondents negotiated or ‘got round’ those differences in their quest to be accepted for ‘who they are’. The findings in both these sections suggest that identification (and dis-identification) with others and experiences of adapting in particular situations are linked to experiences of categorisation, discrimination and self-acceptance.

One could also claim that the findings which uphold essentialist notions of ‘race’ contradicted those on definitions of self which show that over half the sample specified

that they did not define themselves in racial terms ('not by race' or 'not by race or colour'), and indeed, rejected 'race' as a category. Arguably, this discrepancy resulted out of the kinds of discourses of race which respondents were surrounded by and felt were available to them, for example, their rejection of being 'wrongly' categorised, and their desire to be seen for 'who they really are'. In the respondent's quest to extricate herself from what she perceived as an uncomfortable or discriminatory situation, she draws on a discourse of racialisation in which rejection of others could be justified by evoking the race/personality link. Most respondents readily dismissed the concept of 'race' when talking about definitions of self, yet responses to more indirect questions around identity revealed that the idea of 'race' as a category was not irrelevant, but a trenchant aspect of many respondents' lives, both as a means of identification with others, and possibly as a means of self-preservation. This issue is discussed further in Chapter Six.

PART TWO: CATEGORISATION

How Respondents Believed they were Perceived by Others

In Part One I examined some aspects of how respondents defined and perceived themselves. In Part Two I will examine how respondents believed they were perceived by others. Most of the research done in the field of identity is based on a presumption of the interrelationship between subject and society, in which actors are situated within social environments that designate available categories of identification and set limits on how people are able to understand themselves. Thus, within this perspective, self-perceptions of identity are not constituted within a vacuum. According to Nagel (1996) a person's identity is a mixture of subjectivity and ascription. She states:

'An individual's ethnic identity is a composite of the view one has of oneself and the opinions held by others about one's ethnicity. The result is a volitional, if circumscribed model of ethnicity. Ethnic identity lies at the intersection of individual ethnic self-definition (who I am) and collective ethnic attribution (who they say I am). Ethnic identity is then a dialectic between internal identification and external ascription.' (21)

Similarly, in the context of mixed race identity, Rockquemore (2002) has argued that a social identity can only function effectively where the response of individuals is consistent with the response from others (41). Validated border identities are validated within the interactional sphere and can only have social meaning where self-perception and social ascription are in accordance with one another. Rockquemore (2002) has claimed:

‘If identity is perceived as an interactionally validated self-understanding, then identities can only function effectively where the response of individuals to themselves (as social objects) is consistent with the response of others. In this schema, individuals cannot effectively possess an identity that is not socially typified; there must be no disjuncture between the identity actors appropriate for themselves and the place others assign to them as a social object.’ (41)

Invalidated identities, on the other hand, occur where racial self-understandings do not match the identities ascribed by others. Rockquemore (2002) states:

‘Unvalidated border individuals also consider themselves to be uniquely biracial; however, their program is not validated. Others primarily assume they are black, and therefore, they report experiencing the world as a black person, although they understand themselves as a biracial person. When people’s racial program is not validated by others in their significant social network, they either alter their program or remain in a nebulous, marginal and unresolved state with regard to their racial identity.’ (93)

Some studies have found that the relationship between appearance and racial identification is significant whilst others have found that the relevance of appearance has been eclipsed by social factors. The theme of appearance was frequently alluded to by the respondents who believed that the way they were seen by others was based on how they ‘looked’ The responses supported the finding in Rockquemore’s (2002) study which showed that there was no association between self-perceived skin colour and the way that mixed race people racially understood themselves. In contrast to Rockquemore’s (2002) study, however, which showed that there was a link between respondents’ self-perceptions and how they believed they were seen by others (91), my study showed that there was a profound discrepancy between self-perception as mixed race and how respondents believed they were perceived by others as either black or mono-racial.

The findings showed that in most cases there were considerable differences between the way respondents believed they were seen by others, and the way they defined themselves. Respondents invariably felt ‘incorrectly’ categorised – or possessed an ‘invalidated’ identity - as black or as having some other mono-racial background. It is important to remember, however, that one of the main criteria for being interviewed was self-identification as mixed race – thus the number of respondents who had an ‘invalidated’ border identity (that is to say, the discrepancy between how they saw themselves and how they believed they were seen by others) may have been higher than if I had also interviewed people who were by standard definitions mixed race but had self-identified as black or white (etc). Mixed race identity as an emergent category of identification enables the process of validation in which identity becomes meaningful of the self.

Several of the younger respondents especially talked about the prevalence of mixed race in some parts of London today with a degree of relief. For some, the increased visibility of mixed race in the last few years had correlated with positive changes in attitudes towards mixed race people, and that this had facilitated their own transition from a mono-racial identification to a mixed race identification. This is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. Corinne, 21, illustrated this point:

“When I was younger colour wasn’t really an issue. As I got older, especially when I fill out application forms, some of them have the mixed race box and some of them don’t so you have to put ‘other’ and write it in, and I think as I’ve got older and I’ve seen them little things it’s made me change as I want to be recognised as a mixed race because it’s what I am. I don’t want to be classed as ‘other’, somebody who’s not recognised. I’m not black, I’m not white, I’m mixed race.”

Kelly (English/Bajan, 21) explained that despite the fact that “people stick to their own a lot”, and that there were very few mixed race people when she was at school a few years ago, “5 years down the line, most of my brother’s friends [aged13] are mixed race”, and that most children in primary schools today “had some kind of mix.” For Kelly, this was

one reason for changes in attitudes towards mixed race people in the last five years. Charlene (Jamaican/White, 16) explained how in previous years anything that was ‘in-between’ was not recognized at all, whereas today people recognized differences in skin tone, and that this enabled self-identification as mixed race:

“When I was young you was either black or white, they didn’t really recognize mixed race as an individual colour in itself. But I think people tend to, I think it’s got a lot to do with skin tone. If you’re more dark people will see you as Black, if you’re more lighter people will see you as white, if you’re in-between then they don’t, people didn’t, recognize you at all, but I think now it is being recognized, now you can just say you’re mixed race.”

None of the respondents reported that they felt that they were seen for their ‘personality’ or for ‘who they really are’, yet well over half the sample, as we have seen in the previous section, said that their personality was important in how they defined themselves.

36 respondents gave responses in racial or cultural terms about how they believed they were perceived by others. These responses can be divided into either ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ categorisations, or a mixture of both.

A. There were 7 ‘correct’ categorisations, all from first generation respondents. Here, the respondents said they were ‘probably’, ‘mostly’, or ‘always’ seen as mixed race, and that their primary racial identification was as mixed race. Kelly said: “They always ask who’s black and who’s white, they always see it.” Corinne (Jamaican/Irish, 21) said:

“As mixed race and I hope to think as lucky, I’ve got the best of both worlds, so I’ve never really yeah had, nobody’s ever really said anything to me, so I don’t really know what people’s opinions are, I just hope they see me as mixed race and lucky.”

B. The 29 ‘incorrect’ categorisations can be divided as follows:

In 21 cases of first generation mixed race respondents, assumptions about their heritage were 'incorrect'; here, respondents' perceptions of how others saw them did not correspond with the respondents' racial self-identifications.

(i) 2 respondents felt they were 'incorrectly' seen as white, and 1 respondent as 'quarter-caste'. Sherry (Guyanese/German, 31), who in my opinion was clearly not white, said that she was seen by others as white, even though she thought of herself as dark. As a child she had played mainly with Asian girls and everyone had thought she was white. She found people's curiosity interesting. Charlene (Jamaican/English, 16), on the other hand, found other people's assessment of her as white irritating, and said:

"When they say I'm white it's not that I don't wanna be white, it's just I wanna be called what I am, there's nothing wrong with being white, but just that I wanna be classed what I am."

(ii) In 10 cases 'incorrect' heritages were given, such as Asian, Chinese, Algerian, Turkish, Greek, Egyptian and South African, where these were invariably mono-racial categorisations in which the ascribed category did not correspond with *either* of the respondents' parents heritages. Most respondents in this category were not first generation black-white.

The enduring "what are you?" question commonly posed to people of mixed race (Williams, 1996; Parker and Song, 2001, 7), although experienced by many of the respondents, is perhaps best illustrated by people in category (ii). This is interesting in the context of the research that has been done to date on mixed race in the UK and the US. Williams (1996) found that individuals were frequently asked the question 'What are you?' by strangers and acquaintances who were trying to ascertain the 'correct' categorisation, and that biracial people adapted themselves and projected different selves in different situations. Omi and Winant (1994) have referred to this as a momentary crisis of racial meaning.

Aasha (Indian/white American, 31) felt comfortable with the question, and said:

“I find the more different places I go to, I find the more people ask very early on the ‘where are you from’ question. They know there’s something else about you, so it’s trying to figure out the name, trying to figure out the look, something, so I think that’s a pretty obvious thing, that people just latch on to whatever it is, sometimes guessing what it is. I’m fine about it, it doesn’t really bother me, people are ‘where are you from’ and then you ask them where they’re from and then you start talking about how you grew up and it can be an interesting way of sharing something about yourself.”

Brenda (Afro-Caribbean/Jewish-Indian, 42), a second generation respondent, talked about how the question of her race always hung in the air, initially unvoiced but eventually spoken:

“People often like to clarify where I’m from, even though sometimes they don’t like to ask, but eventually they will ask, you know, where I am from. That is quite important to them. Until people know what I am they will be a bit more reserved with me. I hope they see more than the colour of my skin, that’s quite sad really isn’t it, but you do have some experiences and you do know it’s down to the colour of your skin. I thought you were Italian.”

Aleasha despised the ‘what are you?’ question, and said that she was “constantly being asked what are you, *what are you*, god it’s horrible. It makes me feel different and annoyed, it gives me whole heap of emotions.” Some respondents in this category also disliked other peoples’ curiosity and felt that wrong assumptions were based on stereotypes about their race or culture. Nadia (Iraqi/English, 38) said that she was “a bit cagey about her background because there’s a lot of animosity and that can be quite difficult. People don’t understand the difference between being pro-Iraqi and pro-Saddam Hussein.” She thought she was seen as “European or French or something” and added “these days it’s okay to be French isn’t it?” Tasha (black American/English, 26) was

frequently asked if she was Chinese, and said she had ambivalent feelings about this; Anita (Mauritian/Filipino, 16), found other people's 'double' misconstruction of her racial heritage funny:

“Everyone thinks I’m Indian or Bangladeshi, I think it’s funny cos when I then tell people what I am they get so shocked cos I don’t look Chinese at all!”

Dianne (Welsh/Mauritian) commented on the myriad of racial identities assigned to her, where these were invariably based on appearance. Dianne referred to her own sense of self as a buffer against other people's wrong assumptions about her background. Altogether 7 respondents said that other people's curiosity either did not bother them, or they felt no way about it, or had 'got over' other people's negative attitudes towards them. Amongst these respondents the personality narrative was dominant. Dianne said:

“Some people think I’m white, others think I’m more mixed. Some people think I’m Spanish, or Columbian. Or some people just think I’m Italian or European. Some people have a pre-judgment of a person. Some people think I’m bitchy, I think it’s because of the eyes. I don’t really mind it because at the end of the day I know who I am and I don’t need anyone else to tell me who I am cos I know my own identity...I find it quite funny when people come up with places I have never heard of or places where I think ‘oh wow I’d love to be from there.’”

(iii) 8 first generation black/white respondents 'incorrectly' felt they were seen as black (6 respondents) or Asian (2 respondents). Several respondents were seen as black but simultaneously felt discriminated against because they were not 'black enough'. This will be discussed in greater detail later. Lianne (St. Lucian/English) said: “Even though I look mixed race, a lot of people see me as black and expect me to act and be a certain way, so I have to put the point across that I am mixed race. Black boys often say oh you must like this or like that because you’re black.” Tania (West Indian/English) defined herself as mixed race, believed she was seen as black, and saw her personality as white. She said:

“Yes. I think people see me as black, not mixed, but when they get to know me I’m probably very white. I don’t think it enters people’s minds that my husband might be white, they just see me with a black man. Even now people are surprised when they see my husband, and my kids.”

For Kelly, questions around her identity were not just about being mixed race, but about which parent was black and which parent was white:

“They are always shocked when I say that my mum’s black and my dad’s white, they always assume that it’s the other way round. But once they’ve got past that they don’t normally ask any more questions. It did used to annoy me when I was younger, I used to feel I should walk around with a sign on my head saying ‘my mum’s black and my dad’s white’, but now I’ve got used to it.”

C. All 8 respondents who were either second-generation mixed race or had a multiple mixed heritage were ‘incorrectly’ categorised. In 6 cases, others’ perceptions were ‘incorrect’ in so far as they felt that they were seen primarily as black, but also ‘correct’ in that all of them also identified as black or with black culture. Two respondents, however, despite identifying themselves as mixed race to me, felt black people ‘incorrectly’ categorised them as mixed race. These respondents wanted to be seen as black and to be accepted into the ‘black community’, but this acceptance was contingent on denial of their mixed race heritage. Both respondents expressed the view that other people made negative assumptions about them based on their colour, and emphasised personality as the main antidote to this.

“My black identity is very important, but I’d like people to see the person within rather than the person outside, but that’s very hard for people to understand at the moment. As soon as people see the colour they think you’re this or you’re that.” (Nichole, $\frac{3}{4}$ Black/ $\frac{1}{4}$ White)

For the intra-continental group of respondents, their phenotypical ambiguity gave them an element of choice on a purely superficial level, a choice which did not seem readily available to first generation black/white respondents or second-generation respondents. The issue of 'passing' for white is relevant for this group (see Ali 2003) and in some cases perhaps also for lighter-skinned black/white respondents; this is an issue which is relevant in the context of discrimination – these respondents did not experience less discrimination, but they tended to experience it from white people.

Feelings of 'difference'

Around half the sample (21 respondents) responded affirmatively to the question of whether they had ever felt 'different', where 'difference' was perceived as negative, and the attitudes of other people, and in some cases experiences of discrimination, were given as the main reasons for respondents' feelings of difference. Respondents usually talked about their perceived difference in terms of 'looking different', 'having a foreign accent', 'race as always being an issue for others', and 'being treated differently because of colour'. Around a third of the sample (14 respondents) said they said they had never felt different to other people, or difference was not problematic for them, or were ambivalent about the idea of difference. Respondents in this category occasionally referred to the idea of a universal personhood in which everyone is the same, and in which personality transcends race. Petra (Portuguese/African, 17) said, "I don't think I'm different from black or white people. I'm just a normal person." For Chantel (English/African, 18), 'difference' was a common human experience, and with an air of inevitability said, "We all feel different, we all feel special, we all feel left out sometimes, we all feel lonely, we all feel popular at different times."

Five respondents said they saw their difference as positive, and that it gave them access to cultures, languages and places which were normally accessible only to white or black people. This supports Tizard and Phoenix's (2001 [1993]) finding that difference was not necessarily seen as something negative and could be regarded as an asset. Olga (25, Italian/Eritrean), for example, said that she was happy to be mixed because it gave her

knowledge about cultures and languages, and made her a more tolerant person. Kelly (English/Bajan) liked the fact that she could fit in anywhere as a mixed race person: “I don’t think I’d want to be any other race for the pure fact that I can walk into a room and feel comfortable no matter what race there is in the room, I feel I can fit in with people no matter what.” It is interesting to note that the respondents quoted here who were either ambivalent or positive about their difference all had white fathers and black mothers. Jennifer described how these days people ‘celebrated’ mixed race identity, and talked about the positive aspects of being mixed race. Her comments were reminiscent of the current public and media discourses around mixed race. Jennifer said:

“When I was little I got called racist names about being black, but now I actually get complimented for being mixed race. Now people like it when you’ve got lots of different cultures in you. It’s not a trend, but it is something that you can be proud of. I’m proud of being white, glad I have Irish and black in me – I can find out about different families and things, it’s just nice to have lots of different things in you.”

Although almost all the respondents felt that they were wrongly categorised by other people and ascribed mono-racial backgrounds, and only five respondents explicitly talked about their difference as positive (over half the respondents talked about their feelings of difference as negative), over a third of the respondents saw other peoples’ curiosity of them as positive (28 respondents said that people/friends were curious about their background, half of whom saw this curiosity as positive). Respondents said that people’s curiosity meant that they could learn about different cultures and religion, and that it made respondents feel good about themselves. This again supports the view that mixed race people are celebrated for their cultural diversity and, to some extent at least, see their role as harbingers of a more culturally aware society. 11 respondents said that people did not show curiosity about their background. Anabel said: “People see that we are all different and all similar”; Chantel said: “Most people don’t care about the race thing”; Lianne said: “So many people nowadays are mixed race. If it was a new thing then they would, obviously.”

Respondents were asked whether the way in which they thought other people categorised or perceived them influenced the way they saw themselves. The purpose of this question, as outlined at the beginning of Part Two, was to attempt to gain some insight into whether respondents felt that their perceptions of self had been influenced by other people's perceptions of, and reactions to them. Of the 30 respondents who gave responses to this question, half said that the way other people saw them did not influence the way they saw themselves, and half said that it did. (The 5 pilot study respondents and 5 other respondents were not asked this question). The respondents who said that categorisation had no impact on how they saw themselves tended to use the 'I am just me' narrative, and a defiant tone was clearly evident. Anabel said: "I stand on firm ground." Yasmine (Pakistani/English) said: "I do what I want to do, when I want to do it, with who I want to do it, I'm a very stubborn and determined person." Peta asserted: "I'm white and I'm black, and I do what I want not what you think I should do. I'm not apologising for who I am. I'm happy about it and if you don't like it – tough." Kelly, who had been bullied during her years at school said: "When I was at college I was determined just to be me – if people didn't like it then that was tough." Corinne said that whilst the way she looked might influence the way other people saw her, their opinions had no affect on her:

"People always say like where's your mum from, where's your dad from – I feel no way about it at all. They're trying to put me in a category, but I'm fine to answer their questions. If I was darker they'd see me as black, if I was lighter they'd see me as white. It would probably influence other people's opinions or feelings or whatever, but mine, no matter if I was dark or I was light, I would still see myself as the same."

Dianne, who was proud of the fact that she was Welsh/Mauritian mixed race because this made her "unique", illustrated the difference between being seen by others in racialised terms, and seeing herself as mixed race where this was an intrinsic part of her personality and individuality. She believed that the way people saw themselves determined how they would be seen by others, but that categorisation by others could be transcended by self-definition. She said:

“How you see yourself is how others will see you, that’s how they’re going to perceive you into their minds...My race is how people see me first, that’s how they build a foundation and they can elaborate from there. I don’t see that race should be an issue: it’s not an issue for me and it’s not an issue amongst my friends. Your identity expresses who you are as a person, it’s very important to just be honest and be yourself and not hide the fact that you’re something.”

Other respondents felt the way they saw themselves was influenced by other people’s perceptions of them. Lindsey said: “People seeing me as black probably influences the way I see myself as black – if I was lighter I might feel more white.” Like Dianne, Danielle distanced herself from racialisation, but also from being mixed race because she felt angry that people did not look beyond this ‘superficial’ fact and constantly compared her with mixed race celebrities because she had curly hair. She said:

“A few people say racist things, like there’s only a few famous people are mixed race, and people come up and say I look like Mel B or Aleasha Keys - just cos I’ve got curly hair people think I look like Mel B - and find it really annoying and derogatory. I felt it was robbing me of my identity and it influenced the way I look at the way people use race to determine who people are. It made me think that we shouldn’t use race to determine how people should be.”

PART THREE: EVOLUTION AND TRANSITION

Personal evolutions

In particular, the findings on how respondents felt their identities had changed or evolved over time further revealed how many respondents felt influenced by the way other people saw them. Whereas the findings discussed in the previous section were pertinent to the present, this section explores what respondents said about their past lives in relation to

how they perceived their identities today. The question asked was: “Do you feel that your sense of self has changed over time or due to some turning point in your life?” Most respondents reacted positively to this question, and did not ask for clarification. The findings supported, and demonstrated on a more profound level than in the previous section, the interplay between perceptions of self and the ways in which many respondents were influenced by others.

Around three-quarters of the sample talked about how their sense of self had changed, and how this related to their feelings of difference. Several respondents talked about how perceptions of their own difference as negative had transformed into acceptance of their difference as positive: whilst negative responses from others had prompted negative self-perceptions, positive responses facilitated positive self-images. These changes were often described as transitions from mono-racial/cultural identifications to mixed race identifications which involved a shift from “pleasing others to pleasing myself” or “seeing myself through others to seeing myself as myself”. Whereas respondents had perhaps previously felt that they had had to ‘fit in’, deny a part of themselves, or adapt in different situations, they now felt less different and more able to be themselves.

In most cases, these ‘personal evolutions’ were concurrent with respondents themselves having more contact with mixed race people and living in increasingly diverse populations such as London. Thus the greater the exposure to ‘difference’, the less the respondent saw her own difference as negative. Personal changes also correlated with an increasing awareness of changing attitudes towards mixed race people generally. Younger respondents especially, frequently commented on the prevalence of mixed race people generally and how ‘normal’ it was to be mixed race in the multicultural areas of East London in which they lived. Personal evolutions were therefore not only talked about by older respondents, but also by 16 and 17 year olds. Clara talked about her identification with one ‘half’ of her racial heritage to acceptance of herself as herself. Corinne’s identification shifted from a black ‘other’ to a mixed race person. Nichole overcame her internalised view that her colour was a barrier to self-achievement. Soraya was bullied as a child until she fought back, and overcame racism within her family. She said:

“When I was younger I wished I was white, so that I wouldn’t have any more problems in life, even my name caused problems....but over time that, if anything, reversed on me. I would get paid compliments for the colour of my skin, compliments for my name because it was unusual, it was different, which made me feel different about myself.”

Jennifer (Caribbean/English-Irish) said that she was accepted at school because she “acted in a certain way, the way they liked it”, and continued:

“But now I’ve grown-up a bit more I feel I’m not white, I’m not black, I’m mixed, I am who I am, I just feel I’m not trying to copy anyone. When I started to hang out with mixed race girls I started to feel more free to act as I want.”

Anabel talked about the shift from conforming to the roles she felt other people expected of her, to discovering what her own needs were, and her own identity was, separate from others.

“Yes, I remember trying to please everybody so more or less adopting different roles to please everybody. The turning point was about 5 years ago when I realised how exhausting it had become, mentally and physically, that’s when I began the journey towards personal wholeness, my identity as a person in my own right where I was pleasing myself and not the whole world as such. Despite what others may do to me or may say to me, nothing could shake that identity of myself that I have now.”

In contrast to the findings above, being amongst mixed race people or in a diverse environment made some respondents feel *more* self-conscious about their own difference. The negative impact of being faced with ‘difference’ for the first time has also been recorded by Tizard and Phoenix (2001[1993]). Cathrina (Jamaican/Irish) grew up thinking that she, her parents and her siblings were all white, and only recently discovered that her real father was black: “When I was young I used to think that I was brought up in Spain

and that I had a tan, cos I never knew that my dad was black. I thought my sister's dad and my brother's dad was mine" [Cathrina's step-father was white]. In the case of Cathrina, one might argue that the saying 'ignorance is bliss' was apt, where lack of knowledge of her mixed race-ness appeared to be a protection against her feeling different. Tasha (black American/English), who grew up and lived in Cambridge until recently, had always classed herself as black "cos I grew up in place predominantly white and the way other people saw me made me feel more black." She said she had never felt different until she moved to London: "In a multicultural place like London you are always asked what you are, whereas in Cambridge if you're a slightly different colour you are classed as black." Tasha remarked that she felt 'different' where she lived now – in a very ethnically mixed area of London – because "cultures tend to stick together", and that even mothers who took their kids to school were "segregated." Tasha said she now defined herself as mixed race because that was how black people saw her. Similarly, Danielle said that she had never been made to feel different in the States where she lived from aged 6-10 even though there were no black, Asian or Oriental people; living in Camden, because of the "culture-overload", she had come to understand "that everyone was different", and that this made her feel different.

For many respondents, difference was overcome through transformation and a sense of self-empowerment, or a new awareness of difference where this no longer carried negative connotations. Like in the previous section which showed how essentialist and individualist discourses could co-exist alongside each other in the respondents' articulations of their own identities, respondents' personal evolutions involved recognition of their mixed raceness alongside recognition of their individuality and autonomy. The suggestion from these findings was that the respondents felt that they were allowed to become the person they 'essentially' believed themselves to be. However, respondents did not feel that they were the gatekeepers of their own freedom and freedom was still contingent on experiences and judgments from outside – that is to say, they did not have the unrestricted freedom to define themselves as mixed race, or 'just as a person', or to behave and be treated as they wished.

Denial and Retrieval

This section focuses in particular on the importance of the family environment, and especially on how respondents perceived themselves in relation to both their parents. I examine what a small number of respondents, who talked in some depth about their lives, said about identity transitions in which they 'retrieved' or 're-claimed' a part, or 'half', of their identity which had previously been denied or lain dormant. This transition was most frequently articulated as a move away from respondents seeing themselves in monoracial terms, and through other people's eyes, to seeing themselves as mixed race. The process may be described as a transition from dis-identification with one 'half' of the self to identification with the 'whole' self. In all cases this 'half' was represented as the father's heritage, which in all cases was also the minority heritage. The re-claiming of identity involved recouping or instating an identity which the respondent essentially believed 'belonged' to her, in which the marginalised culture was no longer rejected, but embraced. In all cases, respondents talked about how this retrieval was an assertion of their mixed race identity, or 'who they really are'. Thus, respondents had in the past conceivably experienced their identities as partial rather than whole precisely because they were not able, officially at least, to claim their 'whole' identity.

As discussed elsewhere, much of the earlier literature in the field of mixed race focused on what might today be considered a pathologisation of mixed race identity (see Stonequist, 1937; Clark and Clark, 1939, 1947), and that problems arose for mixed race people because of their dis-identification with being black. Gibbs (1997) argued that choosing the black culture over the white could result in a negative identity formation which could be associated with the devalued social status of the black parents' culture. Gibbs and several other researchers have also claimed that over-identification with the white parent as the symbol of the dominant culture, could be at the expense of the minority culture. In her study of mixed race children in Britain, Ali (2003) found that identification with parents - 'to be like' a parent - occurred in the context of both gender and race, where understandings of race were closely connected to colour and appearance. However, Ali (2003) also observed that whereas children with one black and one white parent

sometimes identified as black, none of the children with one parent from other minority cultures identified solely with that culture. My data showed that none of the respondents, regardless of ethnic mix or whether they were first or second generation mixed race, identified solely with one side of their heritage. In all cases, respondents acknowledged *both* parents' racial heritages, where these heritages were frequently referred to in terms of 'where they came from', for example, culture, country, nationality. As such, they did not *dis-identify* with either parental heritage. The emphasis on specifically *racial/biological* affiliation in the first instance – and in the second instance cultural affiliation - confounds the postmodernist notion that people are inherently free to choose their identities.

The work of the political philosopher Ernesto Laclau is interesting in this context. Laclau, in writing about universal and particular political identities, has argued that universals are not natural 'givens', nor are they ever 'whole', but rather are always contingent and symbolic of a 'lack, or a 'missing fullness'. This is what makes democratic politics possible: universals are forced to assume a stability which they do not possess, and a series of finite particularities aim to assume universal tasks which surpass them (Laclau, 1996). Laclau states: 'The universal is the symbol of missing fullness....[it] is part of my identity as far as I am penetrated by a constitutive lack....the universal emerges out of the particular not as some principle underlying and explaining the particular, but as an incomplete horizon suturing a dislocated particular identity' (Laclau, 1996, 52). Central to Laclau's argument is the idea that the subject is not a mere subject position within a given structure, as that would prohibit democracy, but that the subject is a 'will' which transcends structure, where this 'will' is formed from the lack within that structure and out of the need to identify with that lack. Thus, it is the conflict between different particularisms which temporarily fills the structural gap. Following Laclau, one could argue that universal categories of racial identification are not only forced to assume a stability which they do not possess – hence the blanket categorisation of mixed race people as black or some other typified mono-racial category - but that emergent and particular identities such as mixed race are what make democratic politics possible. As such, the advent of mixed race as a viable identity may have important implications for how identity is viewed more generally as fluctuating and changeable.

All the respondents discussed in this section said that the way other people categorised or perceived them influenced the way they saw themselves, that this made them feel different to others, and that this difference was the main reason for them re-claiming the part or half that was 'missing'. Zara (Columbian/Polish Jewish-English) and Clara (Angolan-Portuguese/Portuguese) actively sought more knowledge about their backgrounds where access to the culture of one parent had been denied: both had 'invented' their fathers' heritages and incorporated these into their own identities. Aasha (Indian/white American) had rejected her father's Indian heritage and later re-claimed it, whilst Bev (African (Cuban-Jamaican)/English) had switched from deliberately over-stating her mixed raceness, to accepting her mixed race 'self'.

Ruby (Punjabi Indian/Irish) talked about how her family's denial of her Indian and Irish heritage had had the effect of causing her to deny her own difference. Being with people who had also experienced marginalisation had enabled her to start to accept herself, rather than always try to fit in with others. In Part Four, Ruby's articulations around the issue of discrimination within the family will be discussed. Ruby said:

"The way others see me has had a tremendous impact. It's taken me a long time to learn to trust myself and the way I see myself. It was not only important to deny my Indian but also my Irish background - even my mother denied my Irishness [she was Irish] because I was brought up in England, and I was the enemy for her. A few years ago I started meeting people who had been brought up in similar circumstances to my own and that's when I stopped feeling so different, people who had not only had racism outside the home, but also racial prejudice within the home. In trying to be accepted I denied a part of myself, especially my Asian heritage, in my late teens. Then I started to accept myself less as other people saw me, but on positive attitudes rather than seeing myself in negative terms. The change has been more a gradual thing, and in a way it still goes on. I'm not saying I'm sorted, it's still challenging and I still have to....maybe it's made me more acutely aware and vigilant but also stronger and able to know what's real and what isn't."

Zara, who grew up with her Polish Jewish-English mother, and had had a Jewish upbringing, became increasingly interested in her Columbian heritage in her late teens. She described this as a gap, something that had been denied. She did not seek out her father, whom she had never met, but in a sense replaced his presence in her life by 'becoming' Columbian. She learned Spanish and began to have more contact with Latin Americans in her early 20s, and then married a Columbian and had a child with him. Although Zara was against categorising people in terms of race or culture, she wanted to be seen as Latin. As a child people had thought that she was Pakistani, and Zara believed that this perhaps contributed towards her 'inventing' herself as Latin American. For her, the 'wrong' categorisation was less to do with discriminating against Asian people than with the aspiration to be seen for who she felt she 'really' was, which was racially half-Columbian. Categorisation by others, then, not only asserted the respondent's difference but also asserted it as *wrong*, making the respondent doubly different.

"I became much more aware of a Latin, I don't know, something Latin about me, almost like I could put a label on myself sometimes like I'm not Asian, I don't know, it's difficult to explain. In one sense I don't like being categorised or categorising, but there was this phase of me reinventing myself or adding to myself, and that is me purposefully consciously saying I want to make this part of me. I remember as a child they used to take the mickey out of me and call me Paki or whatever, and I'd be like 'look, if you're gonna be racist then just get it right, don't ass...you know, call me what I am!' I don't know, I don't like it, I don't like being put into that, I think cos I feel like I'm not that and I don't relate to that....in one sense it's negative cos I'm putting Asian into a category, but just from my experience of Asian people, I don't want to be categorised like that. On the other hand I don't mind people categorising me as Latin cos I quite like to have that identity to a degree, maybe cos I felt like I didn't have it as a child, and it's almost like in my adulthood I've recreated a part of myself and had links with a whole other world which I didn't really know much about."

Aasha, who grew up with both her parents in an all-white environment in the States, felt extremely unattractive as a child – “I was told by a boy I went to school with that I look like a monkey” - and as a result was very introverted and very into her library books. Questions around her identity from her Indian relatives and children at school gave her a negative image of her Indian heritage.

“My father’s relatives came to stay when I was young and there were always questions about my name and why I looked different, and religion-wise too - all my friends were Christian and went to church and Sunday school and I didn’t know anything about that. Being half Indian I was different and people couldn’t figure out what it was, they thought I must be Italian, that’s as exotic as they could think. I was embarrassed about my father, I thought people would look at him and not understand where he came from and that he spoke funny English.”

Aasha talked about two main turning points in her life, in which she first rejected her racial and cultural heritage and invented herself as ‘white’, and then later accepted her mixed race heritage. The first turning point involved a rejection of her father in the sense that he was the cause of the embarrassment she experienced: “I was embarrassed about my father, I thought people would look at him and not understand where he came from and that he spoke funny English.” At the age of 9 she realised that she could fight back against being constructed as ‘Indian’ by refusing everything Indian:

“It had built up and at that age I realised that I could actually do things that could enable me to reject it, I didn’t just have to be upset about those things, but I could say well I’ve got a second name I can use, I don’t have to eat this food, I can tell people my father is the neighbour, I can make up stories, I don’t have to be this person. I went by my middle name which is Christine, because Aasha was too foreign, because I didn’t want people to know who my father was, I didn’t want to have anything to do with anything that was Indian.”

Aasha recalls the second “real” turning point at around age 14 or 15, when she began meeting new people outside school and started using the name ‘Aasha’ again. Getting over puberty and a physically awkward period was for Aasha the main factor. She believed that, despite the questions and taunts from others as a child and a teenager, she must have been getting some positive signals about her difference and the way she looked, and this helped her to see that being part-Indian was “alright, and even a good thing”:

“I began to feel comfortable about how I looked, and then I realised that the way I looked had to do with where my parents come from, and maybe it’s an advantage to look a bit different, not to look like every blond blue-eyed person around you. I think when I had the reverse, you know, kind of accepting again, I think that was more subtle, I think that happened over time.”

Bev’s experience of denial and invention also had stages – she saw her difference as a disadvantage during childhood and began to utilise her mixed race to her advantage, and later finally accepted herself for who she was. As a teenager, being mixed race prompted positive reactions from other people, especially men, and Bev ‘developed’ her mixed raceness by attempting to see herself through other people’s eyes:

“At 13 I looked like a boy, boys took no interest, they only liked blond blue-eyed girls. Then I grew my hair and older men liked me, I was always told what a nice mix I am, that Jamaican-English was the best mix, got loads of positive feedback from what I looked like. So I went from ugly duckling to what everyone wants and my head got enormous. By 15 I was the best I’d ever looked, but I also realised the only reason men were interested was because of the way I looked - because I was mixed, not black nor white.”

Like Aasha, Bev’s turning point also came around 15, when she realised that she wanted to be classed as “me, as a person who is Bev is Bev, that has nothing to do with the actual race”, and as someone who was mixed race and “lives by a mixed culture.” Bev talked about the development of her own agency in this process of transition where she, like

Ruby, had begun to be able to trust herself, and that acceptance of herself *firstly*, subsequently determined how other people saw her: “Now how I see myself will be how you see me. If I wait for you to make a judgement about how I am, and behave the way you expect me to, then I’m not being myself.” Bev, like many other respondents, used the ‘self as self’ discourse, where personality and being mixed race was considered an important facet of personhood, but ‘race’ was not.

Clara’s mother was white Portuguese and her father mixed race Portuguese-Angolan, and she had mainly white people in her family. Clara, like Aasha and Bev, talked about her identity transition as manifesting itself in two stages: the first stage invoked an ‘invention’ of the dormant minority heritage (similar to Zara), and the second concerned a shift from identifying with one particular culture to “accepting herself as herself” (like Aasha and Bev). On her familial experiences she said:

“My dad has lots of issues with being black - he is black, but will die before telling you he is black. He’s Portuguese and refuses to accept blackness, black men he says are good for two things - breeding women, leaving them, and drugs. They said black is no good, they tried to brainwash me into believing I am white and that white is better than being black. I was desperately looking to him for support and leadership, or him saying it was alright to be black, but my dad didn’t see it. Maybe that pushed me towards the black culture more, because they were so desperately trying to deny its existence.”

For Clara, her parents’ denial of her mixed race identity, and her father’s refusal to acknowledge his own black heritage, triggered a reaction against that denial. Furthermore, Clara also talked about the convent school she attended from age 7-16, where the white girls would scrub her hands with a nailbrush “cos they were trying to get my skin white”, and that experiences of racism had contributed to her “leaning towards black.” Thus one might argue that experiences of racism together with her father’s denial of his black heritage provoked Clara into finding out who she really was. From the age of around 15, her feeling of being ‘black’ overrode any insistence by her parents that she was white

Portuguese: “It’s how I feel inside because my parents would say you’re Portuguese, but I don’t feel in the least bit Portuguese - so I think it comes from within, it’s how I feel within - which is black.” One might also claim that because of her experiences, Clara developed a greater sensitivity to what ‘blackness’ actually meant, and indeed, effectively ‘lived out’ her father’s heritage for him, and that ‘feeling’ black could in turn have influenced how she experienced racism.

“Growing up, over the years, I’ve had a lot of people coming up to me and saying ‘what are you’, and I know what they mean, it’s like, what’s your background, but it’s actually made me ask myself what am I? I used to look at my mum and say I’m not the same as her, and I’m not quite as dark as my dad, and I always really felt as if I didn’t belong anywhere. I wanted to belong, identify with someone, say I’m the same as that person, which means I’m alright.”

Overcoming self-doubt and racism appeared to be the catalysts in Clara’s transition in recent years from a sole identification with her black heritage to a self-definition which also incorporated the notion of ‘self as self’: “People come up to me and say ‘What are you?’ And I’m like, first of all I’m a person before anything else. I’ve only come to the conclusion that I am me regardless of my colour in the last two or three years.” Clara believed that she now possessed a strength which enabled her to recognise how her past experiences had contributed to how she saw her identity today. She was now able to go beyond her previously reactionary stance in her ‘invention’ of her black self to a recognition that her black identity did not stand separately, but was an intrinsic part of her ‘self as self’. Her tone was defiant:

“When I was younger I did have a hell of a lot of issues around colour. I think mainly what its stem was the need to belong and not knowing am I black am I white am I Portuguese am I English am I that am I this?. There were so many questions in my mind and my parents didn’t help me at all, so they probably added to my confusion. Now I’m strong enough to say I’m me, sod you lot,

even though I identify more with black culture the bottom line is I don't give a toss about anyone else, this is me you can either like it or lump it."

To sum up, Aasha and Bev quite consciously 'invented' themselves, albeit in completely different ways. Whilst Aasha denied her minority parental heritage and Bev accentuated it, the effect and intention were similar in that both women sought to define themselves in such ways as to be more acceptable to other people. This was in contrast to Zara and Clara who consciously and deliberately retrieved their marginalized heritages; in the case of Clara this did not make her more acceptable, rather the opposite. In all four cases, the women had a clear idea about who they believed they 'essentially' were and had now become, and in all cases the women had switched from a role they believed was in some sense externally imposed, to one which was self-defining. For Aasha and Bev, the belief in who they now were was different to the 'inventions' of self they had previously been; Clara had partly relinquished her 'invention' of a sole black heritage, whilst Zara still thoroughly lived out what she described as her 'invented' role, where this had ceased to be invented and was now her actual identity. For these respondents, the quest for a sense of 'wholeness' was the driving force behind the denial and invention of identity. It draws on essentialist discourse/theory, and again, in the struggle to become a complete individual, challenges it in a new way.

The respondents in this study articulated the *duality* of their identities, which drew strongly on the 'imagined communities' of their essentialised pasts which were seen as positive and integral parts of themselves. Bakare-Yusuf's (1997), in her investigation of the internal contradictions within the homogeneous construction of the 'black community' and the 'authentic' black female experience in a study of cultural taste, found that black women tried to make sense of the 'plurality of their identities, cultural ethnicity, cultural capital and experience, against the backdrop of some 'essentialising past' which attempts to homogenize the experience of the black (female) subject' (83). In contrast to this, the mixed race respondents in my study were attempting to make sense of their *dual-essentialised* selves against a backdrop of an 'essentialist past' in which their identities were socially ascribed as mono-racial. Arguably, identities were also forged against a

backdrop of the 'pluralist present' in which mixed race identity has often been regarded as the definitive postmodern identity - fragmented, shifting between two or more worlds, and never permitted to be 'whole'. As such, respondents' 'newly discovered' identities were perhaps possible only within such a postmodern world, in which difference and multiplicity were seen, in a superficial sense at least, as the norm. Thus, the formation of respondents' 'whole' identities involved the interplay between essentialist criteria insofar as these drew on knowledge of parental heritages, and pluralist criteria insofar as respondents were able to make personal choices with regard to assertions of their own racially heterogeneous, as opposed to racially homogeneous, identities. In this sense, respondents could declare their identities as static or shifting, and as invented, undone, and re-invented.

PART FOUR: EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION

General experiences of discrimination

Experiences of discrimination of mixed race people have been recognised as different to the discrimination experienced by either people with two white parents or two black parents of account of the discrimination they may experience from both black and white people (Tizard and Phoenix, 2001 [1993]). In some contemporary academic circles there has recently been talk about whether discrimination on the grounds of class may override those on the grounds on race (informal discussions at conferences 2004). This, in my opinion, is another example of the snowballing effect of the de-racing (and de-gendering) of society: Whilst uttering the term 'race' still appears to send shudders down some (white) people's spines, class is discussed openly without impunity. This reflects both public discourse and policy rhetoric which talks about disadvantage and poverty (and disability) where this is still associated to a large extent with white working-classness. What follows is an account of what the respondents said about their experiences of discrimination, and not an analysis about what they meant by what they said. Discrimination was without exception talked about as racial discrimination, and never as gender or class discrimination. The findings refer to experiences of discrimination in their

everyday lives, and not whether they felt they had been discriminated against in education or in terms of life chances, which showed different results. The findings presented here radically contradict the findings on 'inclusion' and having the 'same chances' in education, which revealed that respondents overwhelmingly believed that they and most other people had equality of opportunity, and did not experience discrimination in education.

4 respondents said they had not experienced discrimination. 9 respondents said they had 'not really' or 'generally not' experienced discrimination, and gave examples of minor incidents which they did not describe as discrimination. Aasha (Indian/white American), for example, said "I've been teased and made fun of, but I don't think I've been discriminated against." Chantel (English/African) claimed there was nothing specific about experiences of racial discrimination, and that discrimination on account of gender was just as prevalent. Similarly, Adriana (Angolan-Portuguese/ Angolan) did not see other people's perception of her as the 'odd one out' as anything unusual, and qualified this by saying that discrimination was inevitable and therefore not really discrimination because both black and white people always react negatively to perceived difference.

27 respondents specifically said they had experienced discrimination. The experiences ranged widely in both type and quantity. Some respondents regarded "little things" such as name-calling, or things which "happen all the time" such as queue-jumping as discrimination. Other respondents said, "I could go on for hours" and "tons, absolutely tons." Types of discrimination talked about were bullying at school, rejection, exoticism, institutional racism, and discrimination within the family. Discrimination from white people was usually talked about dismissively, whilst discrimination from black people was described as overt. Anita's (Mauritian/Filipino) quote illustrates how discrimination was normalised by some respondents: "I've been called Paki a few times by someone in a van, but I didn't really mind cos I knew I'm not from there and they're just racist, they are no-one important to me. So it didn't affect me, I started laughing, it doesn't matter." Dianne's quote also indicated how the normality of discrimination had become imbued into her way of thinking, yet just beneath the surface was frustration. Dianne (Welsh/Mauritian)

initially maintained that she had never experienced discrimination and yet within seconds revealed that she had:

“No, not at all, never. Actually my sister looks white although she is half Mauritian. When they see me in Cambridge they look at me as if I’m some sort of alien because down there you won’t find any ethnics and when they do see one they make a judgement of you as if you’re a thug or a bad person. It makes me feel horrible because people judge me because of the colour of my skin or race or cultural background, because I think it is wrong to judge people before you actually know them.”

I will focus more closely on intra-familial experiences of discrimination, and experiences of discrimination from black people, because the data gathered on discrimination was surprisingly extensive and this area of investigation has seldom been documented.

Discrimination within the family

8 respondents talked about discrimination within the family. Yasmine (Pakistani/English) resisted her stepmother’s controlling behaviour by living a ‘double-life’ – “at home I was a quiet obedient little child, when I was out I was WILD.” She said that her stepmother had been abusive, telling her she had “pig’s blood” amongst other things, but Yasmine continued to talk to her “out of respect.” Zaseena and Cathrina, both 16, said they were ridiculed for looking different to other family members. Zaseena (English/Jamaican) resignedly said her mother made fun of her colour: “My mum calls me yellow. She’s just messin’ about but, sometimes that gets on my nerves but, that’s just life.” Cathrina (Jamaican/Irish), whose real parental heritage was kept hidden from her as a child, said:

“When I was young I used to think that I was brought up in Spain and that I had a tan, cos I never knew that my dad was black. I thought my sister’s dad and my brother’s dad was mine [he was white]. We don’t look nothing alike, like when I say that that’s my sister they say no, it’s not.”

Lindsey (Bajan/Scottish) said: "I learnt the truth about my family as I got older." Whereas her white mother's parents (her grandparents) treated the children "no differently", her father was treated "like shit." She said her mother had protected her parents and tried to blame it on them coming from Scotland where there were no black people. Lindsey saw her own hatred of her grandparents, her fury with her mother, and her adamant defense of her father as the reason her mother now says that her family is her children, not her parents.

Ruby, who was adopted by white parents, Ruby recalled an incident in childhood when she brought home a tin of curry powder and her mother had screamed at her and left the house refusing to come back in until Ruby had got the curry powder out of the house. Ruby explains her mother's behaviour in part as the result of the discrimination she herself experienced as being Irish in England in the 1960s. Ruby said that the nuns in the mother and baby home where she was born had told her birth mother that 'keeping her' would be a constant reminder to her of the sin she had committed of being with an Indian man. She says:

"My whole life is predicated on the fact that my parents couldn't, it just wasn't acceptable the relationship that they had, I was not acceptable. It was unacceptable that my birth mother could keep me because I was mixed, and my search for my identity, this experience, is very much woven through this. And equally my up bringing, of being brought up as working-class English - there have been a lot of external influences that have determined what was and was not acceptable. So it wasn't acceptable to be Indian, it wasn't acceptable to be Irish, it wasn't acceptable to be working-class - so I almost removed myself from myself."

She said that these days she had to protect herself from her mother, but had a good relationship with her. Like the respondents discussed in the previous section on denial and retrieval of identity, Ruby's 'removal' of herself from herself was part of the process of bringing her closer to who she really was. She said:

“My search is to be at peace with myself and to be at peace with all these different parts of myself that have caused a great deal of difficulty. It’s reclaiming what was denied, it doesn’t matter about Irish-ness, Asian-ness, regardless of my racial heritage - it’s how to feel good about myself.”

In an attempt to both understand and resist the discrimination they experienced, most of the respondents appeared to have entered into a process of self-examination in which their relationship to close family members, and by extension to larger society, was assessed and re-negotiated. Apart from Clara (discussed earlier in this chapter) who separated physically and emotionally from her family, the respondents dealt with their experiences of discrimination in individual ways. To some extent, however, it seemed that all the respondents attempted to come to terms with their experiences by normalising these and contextualising specific situations in temporal or cultural terms, and in the case of the two 16 year-old respondents, by expressing resignation. Most respondents either said or implied that things were ‘better’ than before. The respondents saw themselves as bridge builders, and even as pedagogues, which involved a negotiation around and bringing together the ‘black’ and ‘white’ parts of the family. Constructing identity in such ways was possibly a form of self-protection against loss of and rejection from family members, but this area of research requires further investigation. This finding supports the data which shows that many respondents wanted to be recognised as mixed race, and indeed, to ‘make peace’ with both sides of their heritages, an option which had not necessarily been available in the past. Dual-loyalty, one could argue, was therefore a requisite for the assertion of a dual-identity, a loyalty which was all the more precious because of its fragility. Lindsey’s observation about her mother protecting her parents, and Ruby’s recognition of the need to protect herself from her mother, are just two examples of how complex issues around family love and loyalty can be.

“Not black enough”

The subject of discrimination of mixed race people by black people, yet it was an important issue for many mixed race people I interviewed. Paul Connolly (1998) has

claimed: 'We cannot assume that racism will always be associated with beliefs about racial inferiority; that it will always be signified by skin colour; that it will only be white people who can be racist' (1998, 10). Gillborn (1996) has remarked that whilst black and Asian people can be said to be relatively powerless in the macro context, they can also exercise power and act in a racist manner towards their peers in micro settings such as the school (170). Several other authors have written about racism as recently fragmented into new composite and often contradictory forms of discrimination, and have suggested that the idea of 'racisms' might be appropriate to explain this condition (Back, 1994; Rattansi, 1995; Mac an Ghail, 1999). One such 'racism' identified in the data was that of 'not being black enough', that is to say, of 'acting too white' and 'selling out' to the white establishment. Clare Gorham (2003) recently wrote: 'Black people see degrees of blackness – and in some cases, the wrong shade of black' (Guardian Weekend, 35). This again, draws on the notion of the one-drop rule mentioned earlier - one drop of 'whiteness' can tarnish a black person.

In Weekes' (1997) study in a US context, 'acceptable' blackness' was defined in terms of an essentialist construction of Black womanhood, determined by the length and texture of a woman's hair, her skin shade, and frequently her parentage. As such, these constructions drew on highly gendered discourses. Weekes (1997) has argued that these perceptions come from the ideas that black women learn within their own communities, and that, seen from their marginal positions in society, a uni-dimensional version of blackness gives them a sense of relative empowerment (113). Creating essentialised identities on the basis of skin colour and hair texture therefore places many mixed parentage individuals on the 'boundaries' of blackness (Weekes, 1997).

Hair, eye and skin colour were often mentioned by the respondents, and three second generation respondents specifically talked about being on the 'boundaries' of blackness because of 'shade' discrimination. Nalia (¾ Black/ ¼ Chinese) said that she was singled out at school because of her "reddish hair", and was often told "you got something in you." Nichole (¾ Black/ ¼ White), who identified herself as mixed race to me, and saw herself as mixed race, chose to hide this fact from black people. She said:

“I have black people coming up to me and asking me if I’m mixed race cos I’ve got green eyes, and I say no I’m not, I deny it. I don’t mention that my mother is half-white – I might say it to a mixed race or a white person, but they usually think I’m black anyway.”

Kelly (English/Bajan), a first generation respondent, who was ‘correctly’ categorised as mixed race, said that she was bullied at school by a group of black girls for ‘not being black enough’ on account of being part of a group of white girls. She also talked to white boys, which the black girls did not like. She described this as “racism in a way, but more kind of a bitchy power thing, you know, you think you’re better than us.” Kelly felt that although she was not accepted by black people, she had an advantage over black people in being accepted by white people because she was mixed race.

“I think that people are more willing to accept mixed race people than what they are to accept like a white person or a black person. If someone doesn’t like black people, sometimes they’ll accept a mixed race person cos they’ve got white in them, but if a black person doesn’t like white people they won’t accept you cos you got white in you.”

Tasha (black American/English) experienced discrimination from black people, and especially from black men when they saw her white children. She said this was because black people were more into the idea of a ‘black community’, a view held by several respondents. Cathrina (Jamaican/Irish) expressed a sense of resignation, contending that there has been little progress in suturing racial divisions:

“Yeah, like some black people yeah, think like, cos know back in the day used to be like blacks on one side and whites on the other, a lot of racism used to be going on, like I was on the bus and I heard someone say that, ah, mixed race people they shouldn’t be made, black people should stay with black people and white people should stay with white people. Like when you listen to [music band], some black people think that half-caste people shouldn’t listen to it, cos

they got a part of white inside.”

Danielle (English/Jamaican), as we have seen earlier, felt ‘robbed’ of her identity in being compared with mixed race celebrities, and talked about feeling ‘in-between’. Danielle threw some light on this sense of ‘in-between-ness’ by talking about what she perceived as other people’s, including her friends’, false categorisation of her as black, and rejection of her as mixed race. She talked about black friends being racist about white people in her presence, where they did not perceive her as white, and about the discomfort she felt with white people who assumed that she was “like black people.”

“They don’t think about half my family being white because it’s part of me, but they [black people] don’t think of me being different to them.”

“I have always felt with some of the white people I’ve met that they think I’m not part of their race, they just brush me off and think oh mixed race people are like black people, they don’t take in that, I don’t like saying this, but that half of me is like them basically.”

As mentioned earlier, for many of the respondents, being seen as ‘me’, or for their ‘personality’, was inextricably tied in with being perceived as mixed race, that is to say, as black *and* as white, or as black with some white, or as Turkish and English, etc. For many first generation black/white respondents especially, this meant defying pressures from outside to ally themselves with their ‘black side’ only, reclaiming their white identity, and standing up for who they felt they really were. In this sense, the ‘I am-ism’ mentioned at the outset of this thesis need not be understood as an expression of a culturally empty liberal humanist position as suggested, but as a signification of individuality personality imbued with racial and cultural experiences, that is to say, ‘I am black and I am white, I am just me’. Lindsey and Jennifer, both categorised as black, felt that they had to ‘defend’ their whiteness. Lindsey (Bajan/Scottish, 19) expressed her anger at black people denying her mixedness:

“It’s mainly young black people talking about white people. They come out with rubbish and say “no offence”, that really bugs me. I have to defend my whiteness in those situations. Sometimes I have to say like, excuse me, my mum’s white you know, and they’ll say but I’m not talking about your mum, something stupid like that, they just don’t get the point. People like that I can’t be bothered to explain myself to.”

However, Lindsey also conveyed her lack of agency in being able to do anything about it, remarking: “It becomes too familiar to me, I defend it and then I forget about it. But I don’t want to let them get away with that, what they just said to me.” For Jennifer (Caribbean-Asian-Portuguese/English-Irish), who asserted “I am not afraid to say I’m mixed”, said the fact of her whiteness – through her white mother - was just as relevant to her as the fact of her blackness – through her black father:

“I’ve had people try and say to me you’re more black because my skin’s dark, but I say to them I’m just as much black as I am white because at the end of the day my mum’s white and my dad’s black so I’m mixed. It doesn’t bother me now because everyone seems to know that everyone has got a bit of something different in them.”

Categorised as ‘black’ by other people, yet self-identifying as mixed race generated problems for many mixed race respondents insofar as they were neither seen as ‘white enough’ (from white people) nor as ‘black enough’ (from black people). It is my contention that exclusionary essentialist politics, both in public discourse and government policy, have emphasised homogeneity, and that this has reinforced ‘black consciousness’ amongst many black people. This has inevitably had considerable consequences for mixed race people who have developed a race consciousness which attempts to ‘go beyond’ blackness. The danger is, that an assertion of mixed race identity draws specifically on essentialist categories of, for example, black and white. As such, thinking around mixed race identity may go ‘beyond black’ but not ‘beyond race’. Respondents were, after all, simply using and reflecting the discourses they knew. I would argue therefore, that the

political processes which surround social relations require further investigation in the context of mixed race people who experience the mismatch between self-perceptions of their own *heterogeneity* and the discourse of black and white homogeneity as exclusionary. The following quote epitomises the notion of ‘going beyond’ the social construction of race, to reveal the concept of the liberal, liberated, and essential ‘I’ which some social constructionist theorists find so threatening. For Chantel (English/African) this assertion of this ‘I’ is in itself the process of ‘becoming’ a person.

“I sometimes hear people say ‘I look in the mirror and I know it’s a black person standing there, know it’s a white person standing there, know it’s a half-caste person standing’. I look in the mirror and I think I know it’s a person standing here who hasn’t achieved everything they need to, who needs to go out today....I don’t think about the colour of my skin, I just never think about them kind of things, not because I never have, I just don’t think it’s important.”

A consistent theme running through the findings in this chapter has been how many respondents appeared to construct their identities *against* homogeneous constructions of selfhood. Observable too, has been how these constructions were defensive positions, and were frequently rationalized using a ‘race logic’ in which ‘undesirable’ personality traits and/or behavior were depicted as inextricably tied to a person’s race and/or culture. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent these understandings focussed on race specifically, as opposed to culture. Indeed, in her study of mixed race children, Ali (2003) observed that race and racism were not always the most salient in their lives, and that they were more concerned with colourism, culturism and nationalism. The form ideas around race took was often conflated with ideas about culture, religion, etc. In my study, it is certainly possible – as we have seen in the respondents’ articulations on what the term ‘mixed race’ meant to them – that they conflated the concept of race with concepts of culture, colour, religion, nationality, language, accent, etc. The key point here is that notions of *difference* and experiences of *discrimination* were the principal issues talked about by the respondents, and that differences between people were, to some extent at least, seen as

‘natural’. It follows that discrimination against specific people was therefore also seen as natural. In this vein, Malik (1996) has persuasively argued that pluralism and a focus on difference has created a situation in which differentiation and inequalities between people will always exist, and for this reason endorses a universalistic conception of personhood.

‘Race logic’ was also used by some respondents to demonstrate how they should be exempt from discrimination because, in biological and racial terms, they did not belong to the group which was discriminated against. Zara, as we saw in the previous section, felt ‘incorrectly’ discriminated against for being Pakistani when she was actually half-Columbian, and described how she unwittingly became caught up in categorising and stereotyping others in the assertion of her own identity. Corinne’s view was that it was illogical to discriminate against someone with whom one had *biological or racial similarities*, and imputed this common-sense understanding to others. In this sense, Corinne (Jamaican/Irish) had naturalised a ‘race logic’ which made some people the ‘natural’ and logical victims of discrimination, and others, those who had white in them, the ‘wrong’ victims. Therefore, apart from being pushed down the stairs by her Irish uncle when she was aged 6 because she was black, Corinne saw her mixed race identity, her biological make-up, as protecting her from racism. She said:

“That’s the only discrimination I’ve ever had in my life, that was it. I think I’ve been protected from that cos I’m mixed race. I mean obviously it’s not going to stop it, people are always going to be racist and discriminate, but being mixed race I think it does, it shields you because people can’t, if they throw abuse at you, if they’re white they realise that you’ve got some white in you.”

The data in this chapter shows that many of the respondents clearly saw their own identities in terms of their relationships with other people. In general terms, the relevance of relationships with others was talked about in respondents’ articulations around friendship, feelings of difference, how they felt they were perceived by others and whether they adapted in different situations, and the ways in which many of them felt they had

changed over time. More specifically, respondents talked about the impact close relationships had on them in terms of the discrimination they experienced within the family, and the 'turning-point' experiences of self denial and non-acceptance to acceptance of self, where these experiences were invariably linked to intimate relationships such as those with parents. It is probable that a similar study done with mixed race men in further education in London would have yielded different results. 21 out of the 32 respondents who were asked who they were brought up by, grew up in single parent households – 19 with their mothers only (60%), and 2 with their fathers only. Given this finding, it perhaps seems surprising that gender was explicitly raised as an issue so rarely by these respondents. Even in the respondents' articulations around the denial and retrieval of identity and experiences of discrimination, in which parents were often implicated, gender-specificity beyond a mere reference to 'father' and 'mother' was not talked about. One could argue that this is indicative of a post-feminist stance (McRobbie, 2000) in which the dominant discourse of gender equity positions discrimination as a 'thing of the past', and therefore renders any discussion around the issue of gender erroneous and misplaced.

The 1990s saw the 'post-feminist' assertion of 'girl-power', which heralded an assertive femininity and paved the way for considerable new opportunities and freedoms for women (McRobbie, 2000). In terms of education there have certainly been advances for women, many would say largely due to feminism as well as other developments in education and family systems (David, 2003); national results, for example, show that girls perform better than ever before in schools, even in subjects such as maths, science and technology (see Francis, 2000). Post-feminism was a discourse which marginalised feminism, and constructed women as independent, successful, and equal to men. Whelelan (1995) has argued that young women are internalising this post-feminist ideology, and so too that feminist politics is a waste of time. As McRobbie (2000) observes, few young women today identify as feminists. In a study by Volman and Ten Dam (1998), the authors argued that students refused to describe gender differences because inequality was seen as 'old-fashioned', and the students believed that gender differences should not have relevance. Several feminist authors have pointed out that it is still masculinity and the masculine

principles of individualism, and the co-principles of competitiveness and instrumentalism within the context of education, which are valued and furthered over feminist and/or feminine ways of doing things. As McRobbie (2000) has pointed out, this 'assertive' femininity is far from being evidence of feminism. Rather, she argues, it merely shows how far a popular version of feminism 'can be pulled in the direction of the political right, where the values of brutal individualism and the pursuit of wealth and success turn all personal and social relationships into an extension of the market economy' (211).

The respondents' (working) class positions were established from details they gave about their backgrounds, educational trajectories and so on, and in their identity constructions (Skeggs, 1997). However, like gender, the issue of class was absent from the women's talk about their lives. The links between femininity and class have been stressed by some authors, particularly the ways in which young white working-class women are positioned by discourses of the 'right' kind of femininity (Skeggs, 1997). It is likely that the absence of class and gender was partly due to the fact that, unlike the issue of race, I did not specifically ask the respondents about gender and class in the interview questions. However, the infrequency of respondents' allusions to gender and social class does appear to support research showing that these structural issues are understood as less salient to individual lives than might have been the case previously (Volman and Ten Dam, 1998). In the interview questions on experiences of education specifically, issues concerning class and race were alluded to by only a small number of respondents, and gender was absent. Issues around the inter-sections between gender, class and race will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

This chapter has examined how respondents constructed their identities in terms of their own self-perceptions and in relation to others, how they felt their identities had changed over time, and respondents' experiences of discrimination. The data reveal that theories of essentialism, postmodernism or individualism singularly applied are not helpful in understanding the complexity and multiplicity of ways in which the respondents constructed their personhood. Rather, aspects of these different theories and their interplay are useful for understanding the different contexts of the women's lives.

The next chapter, Chapter Five: Experiences and Views of Education, discusses the interview data on the respondents' perceptions and experiences of education, and their opinions on education policy discourses, and considers this data within the context of the government and policy discourses around personhood and equity identified and explored in Chapter Three: Policy Analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE: EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS OF EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I revisit the themes and concepts laid out in Chapter Three: Policy Analysis, and discuss these in relation to the data collected on the respondents' experiences of education and their opinions on government policy around education. To recap, in Chapter Three I examined some of the key discourses in government education policy and some of the critiques of these discourses, and I analysed a selection of three post compulsory education policies (*Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997), *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998), and *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999)) for the 'stories' they presented, how people were represented within the framework of inclusion and exclusion, and how the documents constructed subjecthood (see Ozga, 2000). Chapter Three discussed the theme of lifelong learning, the over-arching instrumentalist, economic and personal development discourses and the related discourses of equality of opportunity, individual responsibility, and the value of education (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999). The questions asked in the interviews arose out of the themes and discourses identified in these documents, and the analysis of the interview findings involves an exploration of how the respondents positioned themselves in relation to the dominant discourses in education policy.

Part One of this chapter examines respondents' experiences of education, namely, what respondents said about their choices of courses and colleges, their plans for the future, and whether they felt they had had the same chances as 'everyone else' in education. Part Two explores respondents opinions on current discourses in further education policy, namely, what they thought a 'good education' was, other people's inclusion, and whether people could 'learn to want to learn'. Part Three explores what a small number of respondents who were critical of government discourses and education policy initiatives said on the subjects of race, class, identity, in/equality and educational aspirations and opportunities.

Recent social theory has focussed on how personhood is influenced by the processes and

pressures of individualisation. I draw on Beck et al.'s (2001) notion of individualisation, which he describes as 'institutionalised individualism', to contextualise respondents' experiences of education and their opinions on current government discourse on education, and how this is mediated by the respondents' perceptions of race, class, rationality, stasis and change. However, whilst Beck et al. (2001) have argued that class has been superseded by 'lifestyle', I take the view that individualism is embedded within structural inequalities and oppressions which are a reflection of class processes (see Reay and Ball, 1997; Ball et al., 2000; Reay, 2000).

PART ONE: EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATION

Respondents' choices and experiences of courses and colleges

There has been increasing interest amongst UK researchers in how working-class people make educational choices in secondary and tertiary education, and the complexity of the process of young people making choices in education has been highlighted by the growing literature in this field (see Maguire et al, 1999; Ball et al., 2000; Foskett and Hemsley Brown, 2001). Research has shown that environmental factors, the family and social context such as culture and class, the institutional context, and the context of the daily experiences are significant (Ball et al., 2000). Several studies have indicated, for example, that Asian students were more likely to follow professional career paths (Mirza, 1992), which may be related to the entrepreneurial concerns of their parents. Recent research has shown that choice is framed by a complex array of interacting factors in which young people take a path of least resistance by either staying on at school or following a course which is the norm for their socio-economic group (Foskett et al., 2003). A recent study on young people's trajectories into post-compulsory education (Croll and Moses, 2003) found that whilst intentions regarding staying on at school were strongly related to parental education, there was a significant minority of children from families with no qualifications who achieved good GCSE results. The study also showed that the orientations to stay on in education amongst school pupils at the age of 11 were strong predictors of the choices they actually made at 16. This supported other recent research which indicated that

continued later involvement in education depends on participation in education immediately post-16 (Gorard and Rees cited in Croll and Moses, 2003).

Choice of college

21 respondents (over half the sample) said they had chosen the college because of its location, where this usually referred to its proximity to home or work. This finding underlines the government policy objective that FE colleges should serve local communities, and gives an indication as to why they have survived as local colleges. Apart from location, social reasons were highly prioritised in their choice of college, and the respondents either had friends there, or friends/relatives had recommended the college, or respondents wanted to meet people from different backgrounds. A few respondents said they wanted to go 'somewhere different': Danielle "wanted to jump in at the deep end", whereas Keisha, who travelled over an hour from north London to east London every day said she chose the college because she "liked the facade." Only one respondent said she had tried other colleges first, one said she chose the college because it had childcare facilities, and one because it was a "good college." Three respondents said that they had chosen the college because it was the only one offering the course they wanted to do, and three students said they had had no choice in coming to that particular college.

Type of course

Nearly all the respondents said that they were doing an academic course, whilst in fact only a few students were doing A Levels, AS Levels or Access courses. The government's recognition of the lower status attached to vocational qualifications by both young people and employers has led to what Mizen has argued are vocational qualifications with an academic 'sheen', such as the new 'vocational A levels' and 'vocational GCSEs' launched in 2002 and 2003 respectively (2003, 460). This pseudo-conflation of the vocational and the academic by the New Labour government has perhaps led to some confusion about the status of qualifications, and it is possible that respondents perhaps viewed any type of qualification as 'much of a muchness', or gave little thought to the differences between

vocational and academic courses/qualifications. This contrasts with a study done in the late 1990s in two secondary schools in southern England, in which Killeen (1999) observed that students had an awareness of the difference between academic and vocational qualifications. The prevailing view, Killeen (1999) argued, was that any kind of degree course, regardless of its content, was seen as better than following a post-19 vocational education and training route. My data would appear to support the universalistic notion depicted in education policy that any kind of learning or education serves a purpose and has value in itself. At the same time, it supports Raggatt and Williams's (1999) argument that some forms of education are valued over others and that in our culture status is attached to academic qualifications as opposed to vocational ones.

Choice of subject/course as positive

Reasons given for choosing particular subjects/courses were diverse and specific. Almost half of the respondents said they had chosen their course as a means to an end, for example, to get a particular job, career or to gain a qualification. 24 respondents specifically said they had experienced no problems with the course/college and gave positive feedback: most said they had learnt many new things or that it was a good course. Around one quarter of the respondents, usually students who were doing hairdressing, beauty, fashion or art courses, used words such as "like", "enjoy" or "interesting" to describe how they felt about their courses.

Other positive aspects of course choice concerned the notion of personal change. Three students said they had wanted a change in direction: Tasha had previously done hairdressing from home, and was now doing an Access to Nursing course; Clara said she needed a complete change from working with mentally handicapped people and was now doing a hairdressing course, "to give me time to myself and catch my breath"; and Dianne, who had originally planned to do a performing arts course and then decided to study law instead "because I wanted to change my whole identity as a person", and it had given her a chance to "find herself." Bev said she now had "routine and order. I haven't had to think, everything is planned for me and I only have to turn up and work."

Around one quarter of the sample clearly viewed their current education as positive and as worthwhile for its own sake, where these respondents tended to be unspecific about why they had chosen particular courses. This finding supports a study by Francis (1999b), in which secondary school students' discussions of post-compulsory education reflected a discourse of the 'importance of being educated' *per se*, without explaining why it was so important. The main theme here was that education provided greater alternatives in the future; it potentially 'opened doors' or 'broadened horizons'. Siham said that her qualification might get her a better job, but the main reason for studying was "because I just wanted to do something." Peta, who had done an NVQ in Childcare, said the course she had done was "another notch in my belt, something to fall back on", even though she was now doing something completely different. Anabel said the computing course she was doing was for her own personal development, and would help her and her work colleagues generally. Chantel, who was doing a Business Studies course which had forced her "to be more intelligent because you have to use your brain", also said:

"I needed a course which would take me onto a career path where I would have more options. There are things I love more than this course but because it opens more doors, this is a money world and I want some of it, and that's about it."

Lack of choice

Four students said they had not had a choice about the courses they were studying. Cerisse had to do a summer course which prepared her for GCSEs. Cathrina said the course had been chosen for her by the school as "they thought the course would be good to help me with my reading and writing, and get me better grades." Zaseena, who was doing a basic level course chosen by her school teacher, said: "I don't want to do anything. After school I wanted to stay at home and look after my brother, and get a Saturday job, but my mum wanted me to have better grades than I did so she said go to college." Lindsey, 19, was doing the only course offered to her [a basic general vocational course] because she had failed the entry test to do GCSEs. She expressed anger at this:

“How the hell do they expect you to improve if they’re going to be like that – I had no preparation and I’d been out of school and not done anything for a year. I didn’t have a choice. I don’t know if I’ll pass [the course]. I don’t know where I’ll be in a year.”

Problems with courses

Only a small number of respondents said they personally had problems with the course, giving reasons such as being too tired after work (Anabel), failing courses (Yasmine), or having difficulties with assignments (Jennifer) or exams (Dianne). Three respondents mentioned problems of management, such as timetables getting mixed up and tutors not turning up (this was referred to by Asha who had to travel some distance to the college), that the college had a “bad attitude to students” (Nadia) and did not keep them informed about changes, that too many people started the course because of the high-drop of level. Lindsey said she had not received the support she needed, and Peta had left her course prematurely because she had had a “weak tutor.” Three respondents referred to the issue of ‘race’ as a problem: Aleasha said that she had problems with the people in her class because she believed they did not like her because of her colour. She said it was “a race thing”, and because she did not talk slang like them “they think I think I’m too good for them.” Nichole, who had expected a totally mixed class said that she was “shocked that the course consisted mainly of white people, and 5 token black, and 5 token Asians!” Zara commented on being troubled by the division she observed between Asian and white students at the college she had attended a few years ago.

The main obstacles to learning outlined in the selected policy documents were not experienced by the women in this study. None of the respondents, for example, expressed any worries concerning the ‘simple physical problems of the time, costs, location, range and accessibility of learning opportunities’ and nor did any of them talk about the ‘absence of childcare, transport arrangements and even course times which may not fit in with collecting children from school make difficulties for parents with school-age children’ (Fryer Report, 1997, 3.3). This finding is perhaps not surprising given that the

respondents were all education users, and it should be borne in mind that a sample of non-users of FE may have yielded very different results. The issue of ‘institutional and personal racism’ referred to in *Learning for the Twenty-first Century* (Fryer, 1997) was talked about by only one respondent in questions around education; this, as discussed elsewhere, was in stark contrast to the responses to questions around identity, in which the issue of racism was frequently acknowledged.

Some education research has shown that an ‘extensively diversified market in post-16 options produces instability and dislocation’ (Fergusson et al, 2000, 283). In a study of 800 16-19 years olds, at least one third engaged in multiple trajectories which were explicable within a language of markets and choice; this is a market, however, which not only fails to translate into the rational discourse of transition from school to employment, or into further or higher education, but also does not allow the possibility of ‘opting out’ (Fergusson et al., 2000). Therefore, being faced with an increasing range of options entails, rather than provides a route out of, dependency. The findings in this section, which show that most respondents were studying in FE because they wanted to, and that comparatively few students - many of them in the 16-19 age range - said they had lack of choice or problems with the courses they were studying, challenges the supposition that top-down educational policies have created ‘an army of reluctant conscripts to post-compulsory education’ amongst 16-19 years olds (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997, 17). The findings are also interesting in the context of Fergusson et al.’s (2000) study which showed that over three-quarters of their sample were there by default or because they were badly informed. The apparent discrepancies between the published research and my findings may provide a useful basis for further investigation into the reasons behind mixed race and black people’s articulations of experiences of FE.

Futures: “As long as you’re happy...”

34 respondents were asked about how they saw their futures in order to gain some insight into whether there was any correlation between course choice and educational and career trajectories. The 5 respondents not asked were ex-students who were now working

(Aasha, Brenda, Peta, Tania and Ruby), none of whom said they had any plans to change their careers, and two of whom had jobs which were unrelated to the qualifications gained. The questions asked were: “How do you see your future? Do you think you will have the skills and qualifications you need to do that/get there/etc?” All the respondents asked said they were working towards some specific objective. 30 of the 34 respondents studying in FE colleges at the time of interview (including Yasmine and Zara who were not in an FE college, but were still involved in education - Yasmine had a place at an FE college to qualify further and Zara was at university) were positive about gaining the qualifications and skills they needed in order to follow their proposed courses of action; these students all responded “yes” or “I hope so” to the second question.

A further finding showed, however, that whilst the majority of respondents were lucid about their aspirations or career plans, related these directly to the course they were (or had recently been) studying, and believed they would have the necessary skills and qualifications to progress on their chosen paths, 19 out of the 34 respondents were simultaneously equivocal about their futures, and did not have a clear vision of where they would be or what they would be doing in the future. This finding contrasts sharply with the findings presented so far on the rational instrumentalist benefits of education, the belief in meritocracy, and respondents’ plans for the future. It would seem that respondents were able to *think* in both the short and long term about their educational and job aspirations, but could not actually *envision* themselves within those projections. The discrepancy between the respondents plans and their perceptions of reality can be described as a state of liminality in which young peoples’ futures in the labour market are perceived as inherently unclear (Bettis, 1996 cited in Archer 2003a).

Many respondents distanced themselves from the idea that their futures (in an educational and labour market context) were predictable, and talked largely in terms of ‘keeping their options open’ with regard to their educational and career aspirations. The discourse of personal development was palpable, and the underlying notion was that something – even if it was not a good job - would come out of education. It seems therefore, that respondents believed that nothing could be taken for granted, but that everything was

'worth striving for' (see Lewis and Maude 1950, 245). Following Beck's (1992) notion of the 'risk society', it is conceivable that this was a rationalisation of how many respondents perceived their futures as risky and peripatetic. Similarly, in a study of working-class people's participation in HE, Archer et al.'s (2003) showed that respondents believed that a university degree would enhance their employment prospects, but that they also believed that there were considerable risks attached to post-graduate employment because the employment market was overcrowded. My findings are also echoed in a study of mature students' participation in Access to HE courses, in which they, perhaps unwittingly, justified going along with the government's agenda by choosing to view education as 'personal insurance' (Warmington, 2002). These findings show how a dominant discourse may become part of a personal narrative which supports and upholds that discourse.

Several respondents described their futures in terms of dreams, and referred to the concept of happiness as something more important than following a particular career path. Nadia, for example, who was studying drawing and painting, said: "As long as you're happy it doesn't matter whether you get a good job at the end of it – I'd rather be happy and pot-less." Dianne said: "I try not to think about the future too much, just let things happen, whatever life brings really. I see my qualification as leading me to something happy, it doesn't matter what I do as long as I'm happy." Adriana said that she was working hard towards becoming a lawyer because she wanted to be "doing something good, something I've worked and qualified on", but that "the main thing is being happy with what you're doing, so I might even change my mind about what I'm doing."

Some respondents made references to their dreams and then commented on how they had done something else. The theme of 'dreams' was also one observed in a recent study by Archer and Yamashita (2003a). Jennifer, who was doing an NVQ in Beauty Therapy, said that the most important thing was to "fulfil your dreams", but because she did not know what she wanted to do, "maybe medicine or science", she had chosen "something enjoyable first." Olga, who was learning English as a second language, said her dream was to be a translator, but also that she just wanted a job - "nothing special just something that can make me independent, and be happy with my daughter." Paula, studying for a

Diploma in Public Services, felt she was settling for less than her dream to be a forensic scientist, but accepted that because she was “not good at science, a police officer will do.” Chantel said: “I have no idea! I dream too much. University would obviously be the ideal, but I can’t know for sure!” In accordance with the dominant discourses around the take up of educational opportunities and individual responsibility, the reference to dreams was perhaps self-protection against the pressure to make a career choice which the respondent felt they might not succeed in and yet were compelled to aspire to nonetheless.

The apparent mismatch between the respondents’ high self-expectations regarding their futures, and the way they talked about their futures as uncertain is borne out by Fergusson et al.’s (2000) study on the unstable trajectories and multiple relocations experienced by 16-19 year olds. The authors claim that: ‘Movement seems opportunistic rather than purposive. It is characterised by ad hoc, multiple and diverse experiences rather than any semblance of ‘career’.... It is a system in which inclusion is assured, but outcome is uncertain’ (Fergusson et al., 2000, 295). The findings also echo Bloomer’s (1997) challenge of the assumption that learning careers accord with rational planning; rather, he argues they ‘happen or ‘unfold’’, and that many young people’s ‘futures are unpredictable to the extent that there is much that is unpredictable about the conditions under which unfoldment and happenstance takes place’ (153).

These uncertainties about the future are also reminiscent of what Bourdieu has referred to as a ‘sense of limits’, in which a person’s habitus constrains choice and action. Hodkinson et al. (2000 [1996]) have argued that choices are formulated within ‘horizons for action’, a concept which allows for the incorporation of both static and fluid elements of a person, and is the interrelationship between ‘pragmatic rational decision-making, choices as interactions within a field, and choices within a life course consisting of inter-linked routines and turning-points’ (358). Within these horizons of action, people take measures to maximise their chances of success and simultaneously minimise their sense of failure. Supporting this view, Archer and Yamashati (2003a) in a recent investigation into inner city school leavers post-16 aspirations observed that young people ‘knew their limits’ in that they tended to choose ‘safe’ options in terms of staying with the subjects and courses

they felt they were 'good at' (58). The issue of class is key within these more generalised observations about post-16 aspirations and choices, and draws on the idea that people are not passive players within dominant discourses, yet still have limited choices (Reay and Ball, 1997).

The idea of a 'sense of limits' does not sit comfortably with the rhetoric around creating a 'learning society' which advocates further education and presents the potential student with a wide range of educational choices. Given the education discourses and policy discourses discussed in Chapter Three, one might expect that more and more people will choose to stay on in education because without qualifications they will be 'unmarketable'. As such, whilst seen as a choice, tertiary education is perhaps not so much an option as an imperative. As we have seen, the majority of respondents, in terms of their intentions at least, transgressed the supposed 'limits' of their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) and talked positively about their aspirations for the future. However, the degree to which respondents believed their 'limits' could be overcome was constrained in so far as they did not appear to be able to realistically envision their futures as they imagined them.

None of the respondents explicitly talked about 'not being good enough', 'knowing their limits' or choosing 'safe options' with respect to course choice or plans for the future. This was in contrast to the findings in Archer and Yamashita's (2003a) study. A few respondents appeared to have what one might call 'excessive aspirations', in so far as they were doing level 1 or 2 qualifications and talked about embarking on long and arduous educational careers. Whilst I do not in any way suggest that these respondents' goals were unattainable, the findings raise the question of whether they were inadvertently setting themselves up to fail in the bid to conform to the government discourse of the 'educated individual'. In two of the three cases below, the respondents put the onus of responsibility for their possible failure not onto themselves, but onto something external to them.

Nichole, who was studying towards a Basic Maths certificate, wanted to be a reception teacher. Nichole's attitude was that if she did not succeed she would not blame herself. She charted her educational route:

“I then need to do GCSEs, A levels, an Access course, then a degree, and then a PGCE. It’s a long, long process. But I need to do this or I’ll stay a nursery nurse for the next 40 years.....If I don’t get anywhere, it won’t be because I’m not good enough, but because competition is so fierce.”

Nichole’s viewpoint may have arisen out of an awareness that education does not guarantee the desired job. Indeed, it also suggests that aspirations may be limitless precisely because personal ‘failure’ can always be disguised within such a ‘no guarantee’ framework. Cathrina, who said she had difficulties with basic numeracy and literacy, was doing an NVQ/Certificate for Skills and Working Life (level 1 qualification). She said she did not know whether she would get the necessary qualifications to become a primary school teacher, but that if she did not, it would be because she had changed her mind: “I don’t know if that’s going to happen cos I might like something else after I do the course.” In contrast to Nichole, Cathrina framed her views within the discourse of ‘eternal choice’. Petra, who was studying for a GNVQ in Foundation Science, wanted to be a doctor or a therapist. She believed that anyone can go to college provided they put their mind to it – “it’s free, and you get enough money to live on” – and that success was down to hard work: “If they want to be here they have to work hard, no-one can force them. If they don’t want to be here it’s because they don’t want to use their brains.”

The findings on respondents’ futures, although limited in scope, reflect the government’s emphasis on individual responsibility to take up the educational opportunities on offer, and so give a people a sense that they are investing in futures of their own choosing (Peters, 1996). In a culture of responsibility to the self, in which education is both a right and a duty, people are expected to become managers of their own biographies on pain of being left behind or economic sanction, and at risk of personal failure. Those who do not become outsiders or ‘status zero’ (see Fergusson et al., 2000, 289). As Beck et al. (2001) have observed, within this schema the interests of the individual and rationalised society are merged, which the authors call the ‘paradox of institutional individualism’ (23). The findings demonstrate that the *appearance* of conforming to the rhetoric of ‘achievement’

and 'self-responsibility' was evident, and any sense of personal limitation was disguised within the government endorsed discourse of education for personal fulfilment. Any ambivalence or uncertainty about respondents' futures - whether articulated in terms of happiness or dreams, or excessive aspirations – were expressed within the government discourses of economic efficiency and personal development central to the policy documents discussed in Chapter Three (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999). Although very few respondents explicitly said that education would not necessarily ensure a 'good job', this understanding was implicit in the way many respondents resorted to a 'quality of life' discourse as a protection against a sense of personal failure. As such, the sense of 'duty to oneself' in taking up educational opportunities available may increasingly co-exist with the idea that education is useful in itself, and following Beck et al. (2001), people may value their 'own time' and happiness over work, status and materialism more and more.

PART TWO: OPINIONS ON POLICY DISCOURSES

The value of education: "Education is better than silver and gold"

Respondents were asked what they thought a 'good education' was in order to evaluate some of the similarities and differences between policy discourses and personal opinions. The responses to some extent corresponded with how the women spoke about their own educational futures. Respondents talked about education as providing a range of different purposes and functions, and as something *good* in itself. The responses strongly underscored the discourses of economic efficiency and the value of education (in terms of instrumentalism and personal development), and the policy discourse of learning as an investment for individual reward. The requisite of a 'good education' was described by around a quarter of the sample as about getting good grades or the right qualifications. Around half the sample referred to the importance of issues of support and access, such as the "good teacher", "good facilities", "good resources", "equality of opportunity" and "access to opportunity", as fundamental to a 'good education'.

Education was in multifarious ways a means for 'self-betterment', in which life-skills such as eclecticism, adaptability and happiness were frequently prioritised over job and career, and a way of gaining access to the 'good life' where this did not necessarily have to mean a high income or material wealth. The narrative manifested itself in two main ways. In the first way, education was described in materialist instrumentalist terms, and was seen as necessary for a "good job" or a "better job" or a "job you want to do", and for "getting somewhere in life." Over half the respondents reflected the policy discourse of meritocracy, and said that the higher the level of education, the better the chances a person had of getting a good job. As Nichole succinctly put it: "If you don't study then you don't get that prize job at the end of it." Not much research has been done into the opinions of young people around the relationship between jobs, education and the economy. Francis's (1999b) study of school students' opinions on post-compulsory education has showed that there was an unproblematic link made between academic success and future job prospects. These instrumentalist findings support the discourses discussed in Chapter Three (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999), in which a direct link is made between (lifelong) learning and education, an economically competitive society, personal success, and individual responsibility.

In the second way, education was seen as crucial to self development. Many respondents combined instrumentalism and personal development in their articulations around the value of education, where a combination of the two constituted the potentially 'better', more 'rounded' individual. My finding contrasts with a study by Killeen (1999), who observed that students adopted a wholly instrumentalist view of education, in which qualifications could be directly exchanged for employment opportunities. Peta said that a good education was a fundamental aspect of the person: "Good job, good prospects and a good life, and being independent and confident, a good grounding basically. It's part of the whole persona, it's very, very important." Keisha referred to a good education as "not only to get a job, but I want to do it for myself, yeah, I think it's important to learn as much as you can while you still have the brainpower, *and* you can still get a good job from it." Emma said that education was about "getting everything that you want, doing everything that you want to do, finding out things for you." Bev, who saw a good

education as something which would enable her to work so that she could get “the house, the car, the holiday”, also said that it was about “stimulating your brain” and about doing things “that will benefit other people and help them be productive.” (The alternative for Bev was being “at the mercy of what telly puts into your head”). This amalgam of the functionalist and personal benefits of education, which hold within them a diversity of possible outcomes, is supported by the discourse of the liberal individual as an ‘unfinished’ self perpetually striving for completion.

Some respondents talked about the relevance of education within the broader spectrum of ‘life’. This may be compared to the way in which the policy documents discussed in Chapter Three saw personal investment in education as a holistic endeavour which not only made the person ‘better’, but benefited society as a whole (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999), Ella said that “it’s not just about getting the grades, it’s about having the understanding and applying it to life because that is the whole point.” In a similar vein Kelly remarked: “Education itself is not the key, it plays a big part in people’s lives but it’s what you do with it that matters.” Paula said: “It’s the most important thing in life, and it should come first before any other thing.” Keira said: “My parents told me that education is something no-one can ever take away from you. That is what it means to me.”

The older and/or ex-further education students tended to emphasise the theme of self-development, and play down the economic function and instrumentalist gains of education. Their narratives strongly reflected a humanist discourse in which a direct link was made between the ‘innate’ value of education and becoming a better person. The responses are to some extent reminiscent of what Foucault has referred to as subjectification, in which the individual becomes constructed as self-surveying acting subject who seeks self-understanding (Rabinow, 1986), ‘invited’, so to speak, to take part in the quest to ‘get to know him or herself better’. Anabel claimed that learning itself was like a key which could ‘unlock’ and ‘liberate’ a person from ignorance:

“Education is better than silver and gold - that is something that has been instilled in me, learning is the key, the only thing that can unlock you from

ignorance. And I mean it's not a case of having an education to earn loads of money, it's that freedom from ignorance, and yes, so, you liberate yourself so that you can grow and sprung in different directions, whereas without an education its just like you are sunk in a pit that you can't come out from. Your inclination could be to be a carpenter, good, it's a humble job, right? But at the same time you have moved from that stage of ignorance to one of knowledge and you grow in that field, and all sorts of qualities will develop as a result of being in that field."

For Ruby, talked about a good education in terms of her own life, and said that it was first and foremost about her search for her identity, where this involved sharing experiences with other people who were also searching for their identity:

"The education I've received in my life has been much more than just about my formal education. I feel I've been very much educated by other people looking for their own identity. It's about sharing experiences, I think that's been a really key thing, and to have access to as many opportunities and as much information, to be well-supported and have people believe in you and your abilities, and to believe that everyone has ability."

Unlike almost all other respondents who talked about the value of education in terms of benefits for themselves only, whether this was in instrumentalist or personal development terms, education for Zara was primarily a source for enabling people to think analytically, and a fundamental prerequisite for the broader political project of equality and justice. A 'good education' was an important aspect of individual identity in that it opened up the possibility of alternative independent modes of thinking which could potentially have an impact on the kinds of choices an individual would feel were available to them. As such, Zara's views reflected the discourse of social inclusion, and she was the only respondent who made any reference to the issue of agency and the power of the individual to effect wider change in society, identified in the policy documents.

“Something that helps you to think, be analytical, be able to act and take decisions that will help you to be independent. It should be able to give you the ability to act in a way that sort of enables you to deepen democracy and make society a fairer place, in the sense that people have more control. Education and control are linked quite a lot, control over one’s life, one’s future, ones decisions. I suppose it’s choice, which doesn’t imply that education actually does that at the present moment, or the education that I’ve had has done that, but that’s what I think is a good education.”

Tania also saw a good education as part of a wider political project, but her articulations were supported by both the discourses of both social inclusion and economic efficiency. Unlike Zara, who believed that independent thinking was essential to creating a more egalitarian society, Tania argued that people should be educated in the trenchant ‘basic values’ espoused by the Tories in the early 1990s, and that a cohesive family structure was the cornerstone of both the ‘rounded individual’ and an economically competitive society.

“A good education would bring out the best in people, would enable a person to know themselves, what their strengths and weaknesses are. People should be educated in morality, relationships, parenting, forgiveness, discipline - if the government wants an economic society it has to deal with the root of the problem which means building a secure society through reviving family structure.”

The findings on the value of education suggest that consumerism was a significant motivation behind getting an education, but that other factors frequently played an equally, and in some cases more important role. These findings are consistent with Beck et al.’s (2001) assertion that material sacrifices are bearable if they are accompanied by a guaranteed increase in self-development, where this has arisen out of a considerable shift in the social perception of what constitutes wealth and poverty in recent years (162). The authors argue that for many, the ‘conventional symbols of success (income, career, status) no longer fulfil their need for self-discovery and self-assertion or their hunger for a ‘fuller

life'' (Beck, et al., 2001, 38). The findings, however, refute their claim that the development of personal capacities is intrinsic to the 'better educated and more affluent younger generation, and that the older, poorer and less educated groups remain clearly tied to the value system of the 1950s' in which people's main goal in life was a 'happy family home, a new car, a good education for their children and a higher standard of living' (Beck et al., 2001, 38). As the authors have pointed out:

'On the contrary, the old and apparently eternal pattern of 'more income, more consumption, more career, more conspicuous consumption' is breaking up and being replaced by a new weighting of priorities, which may often be difficult to decipher, but in which immaterial factors of the quality of life play an outstanding part. Control over a person's 'own time' is valued higher than more income and more career success, because time is the key that opens the door to the treasures promised by the age of self-determined life.' (Beck et al., 2001, 161)

The findings in this section show that education was understood largely in terms of its functional-instrumentalist value and its potential for developing the individual on a personal level. They support the policy discourse of investing in learning for reward discussed in Chapter Three (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999), expressed in the words of David Blunkett: 'Learning is the key to prosperity – for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole' (DfEE, 1998, 7). Learning was seen as something which *in itself* had only advantages, and no disadvantages. Respondents did not talk about benefits of education for the economy or society, but saw education in purely personal terms - as the pathway to the 'good life', where this invariably involved getting a 'good job', and becoming a better or more complete person. Only one respondent said that the act of self-betterment had the potential for creating a better society. In this sense, almost all the respondents appeared to have bought into the idea that the interests of the state and the individual - as the joint beneficiaries of education- could be merged.

Same chances as everyone else?

Only 4 respondents explicitly said that they felt they had not had the same chances as everyone else in education, or that they had not had the education they would have liked,

and *in all cases* these were *second generation* mixed race where their racial heritage was predominantly black. (This, as discussed elsewhere, contrasts with findings on experiences of discrimination generally). This finding suggests that the vast majority of respondents believed that they were the beneficiaries of an egalitarian education system, and as such, is underpinned by the discourse of equality of opportunity in education.

Aleasha was the only respondent emphatic about not having had the same chances as everyone else. She had attended an all-black secondary school, but left because of incessant bullying, and therefore did not sit her GCSEs; the same thing happened at college, where she said she could not concentrate, experienced a lot of fear, and failed her exams as a result. She then got pregnant (she was a single mother) and took two years out before coming to her present college to do a GCSE in Humanities. Anabel, who was a teacher studying a computer course for her own personal development, said that she had “not always” had the same chances; the discrimination she had experienced from lecturers on her degree course “was so overt I really felt that I stuck out like a sore thumb”, and she felt she had had “to work extra hard” to get her degree. Colleagues, in contrast, had always been supportive “even though they were all white.”

Nalia was one of very few respondents who made any reference to class differences and unequal chances in education. She said: “I’ve probably had the same chances as other working-class people, but not the same chances as upper class people.” Nichole too, made reference to class distinctions: “In the beginning, no....I had few advantages in life and had to struggle to become a nursery nurse.” Brenda, also a second generation respondent said that she felt she had had the same chances as everyone else, but made a distinction between her own experiences and those of her siblings:

“I think I have. I did well at school, which helps a lot, so I could make informed choices, and if things went wrong that was my fault. Certainly I had the opportunity to make choices. I was a self-starter, and had a lot of self-motivation. I think racism affected my siblings though, they went back to school and college and did the whole thing again as mature students.”

Three of the four respondents who felt that they had not had a choice about their college courses also implied that they felt they had not had the same chances as everyone else: Cerisse said that she had been forced to do a summer course; Zaseena, as mentioned previously, had not wanted to do anything, but also said she wanted to be a beautician, and gone to college because her mother had told her to. Lindsey recognised that she could have done better at school if she hadn't had 'boy trouble', but also said that being 'on her own' in failing exams was because she was not as clever as her friends who could both 'bunk' and pass exams. At the same time, she felt she should have been given a second chance to do her GCSEs at the college she attended. Her personal narrative therefore shifted from one of self-responsibility, to one of 'innate' intelligence, to one in which the responsibility for a person's education (and future?) lies with the education provider.

"Yes, definitely at school, but I messed up big time, I could have worked better. Some teachers had faith in me but I had a lot of boy trouble. I was on my own - me and my friends we'd bunk lessons and that, but they was a lot cleverer than me, a lot cleverer, and they still got their GCSE's, even though they got a D or a C. Here I haven't had the same chances cos they didn't let me do my GCSE's."

Whilst most respondents said they believed *they* had had the same chances in education as everyone else, the majority of these respondents also said that there were specific groups of people who were not equally included in education. In response to the question: 'Do you think that everyone is equally included in education?', 8 respondents said they thought that everyone was equally included in education and 31 respondents said they did not think everyone was equally included in education. Of those who replied negatively, 8 respondents did not qualify this further, and 9 respondents said "poor people", and 9 respondents said "disabled people" or "people with Special Needs" were not equally included in education; in addition, 5 respondents said race or colour was sometimes a problematic issue with regard to inclusion, and four people answered "yes and no." These findings are supported by the discourse of social inclusion, and the policy discourse of social inequity which is founded on the idea that a sharp 'learning divide' exists within

British society. The data to some extent also reflect the increasingly universalistic policy line on personhood – most clearly in evidence in the latest policy *Learning to Succeed* (1999) – which makes little or no reference to race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and some references to disability and people with ‘learning difficulties’.

Self-responsibility: “It’s there if you want it”

The discourse of self-responsibility for learning was strongly in evidence in the articulations of the respondents around inclusion in education, and underscores the discourses of equality of opportunity, individual responsibility, and the responsibility of the individual to learn. Most respondents in this study, as we have seen in Part One, believed that their choices were largely unfettered. They saw themselves as responsible for the decisions they made about their futures, and believed personal success was down to motivation and commitment. Social background and low self-expectations might impede *other people’s* choices to get an education, but most respondents saw themselves as exempt from such constrictions. The dominant view on education was ‘it’s there if you want it’. Asha put this bluntly: “Yes, if they want it. Everyone has the chance to learn but not everyone wants to take the opportunity to learn, but it is there for everyone.” The implication here was that there were no external barriers to accessing or participating in education, or that these could be overcome. Moreover, not only was education freely available, but it was up to the individual to take, and make the most of, their chances in education. The mass availability of education in Britain was in itself seen as a marker of an equal society, and any inequalities which did exist could be ironed out by education. Thus, education was also seen as a great *equaliser* of difference, and that it was up to the individual to ‘get educated’ in order to ‘get over’ whatever was bothering them.

It was interesting to note that all 4 respondents who did not believe they had had the same chances in education said they did not think other people were equally included in education either. However, they all saw the problem as lying with the individual and not down to external contributing factors. As such, they also used the narrative of ‘it’s there if you want it’ which supported the discourses of equality of opportunity and individual

responsibility. I will examine what 4 women said on the theme of inclusion in education. Aleasha said that whilst not everyone was equally included in education, this was

“not the government’s fault, but the individual’s fault, because people discriminate against each other - the college is very strict on the race thing and stops it to a certain extent. It’s people’s fault why it happens. One of my really big problems is how to be included - inclusivity doesn’t work for me. Everything reverts back to discrimination.”

Like Aleasha, Anabel did not think everyone was equally included in education and also saw the problem as lying with the individual. In contrast to Aleasha, however, who believed the problem of exclusion was down to people’s discriminatory behaviour, Anabel saw the main problem of “denied opportunities” as the choice young people themselves made not to study, where their attitudes were influenced by the prevalent ‘get rich quick’:

“I don’t know why people have been denied opportunities, maybe they themselves have contributed to why those opportunities were not offered to them. It could be to do with attitudes to learning, where it’s all about getting rich quick - every teenager now wants to be a pop-star or a model. So they think why must I go four years and study hard at university and struggle on a grant, and you come out with a debt of how many thousand pounds.”

Nichole, who was studying Basic Maths and wanted to become a reception teacher, and felt she had had “few advantages in life”, also said that she was “determined” to succeed in her aims and suggested that some form of ‘sacrifice’ was necessary in studying, as this was the mark of true commitment:

“It’s up to you. I don’t think there are any barriers, it’s there if you want it, you just got to go and get it. It would be harder if you have dependants but you have to make some sacrifices to get what you want, and some people aren’t prepared to do that.”

Nalia was the only one of the 4 respondents discussed here who believed that other people were not equally included in education where this was *not* solely down to the individual. She talked about the kind of inequities which education research literature has revealed exists around access to and participation in education. She said:

“Not really no. They try but it’s hard. Some people have the ability but they still fall through the net. Attention is mostly given to those that do want to learn, and that’s hard enough, and others just get ignored.”

Ultimate ‘failure’ in education was perceived by over three-quarters of the sample as the individual’s inability to ‘keep up’, where poverty and disability – and notably not class and race - were named as the main markers of disadvantage. The omission of race, gender, class, ethnicity, etc. in respondents’ articulations was again reflected in the policy documents, especially in the latest one *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999) which made only one reference to each of these classifications. Disability as the most frequently mentioned classification also mirrors the policy documents.

Despite acknowledging that some people experience barriers to education, the main idea amongst the respondents was that such disadvantages could be overcome. The findings support the idea discussed in Chapter Three, that individuals are responsible for taking up education in so far as it is made available to them. Dianne asserted that “even disability has special schools, and overseas scholarships give everyone globally the chance to study.” Nadia defended the education system and said: “they [the government] haven’t got the means to make it better and are doing sterling work considering.” Whilst recognising that some people such as mature students and single mothers might find going into further education “quite hard to wangle”, Nadia asserted that the important thing was “to want it enough – it shouldn’t be so easy that anyone can do it willy-nilly and take advantage.” Bev said that of the thirty women who started her course (of whom only two did not have children and most were single mothers), only fifteen women were left. However, according to Bev this was not a problem of childcare, cost, or timetabling, as the course

was designed for people with children, but a problem of personal motivation. As such, the responsibility again lay with the individual:

“Despite the daily problems, it’s down to you to get work done. Not everyone has the same chances, you have to really want to do it, you have to help yourself. But it will be hard, and that scares a lot of people - the government doesn’t tell you that...The only people that won’t be educated are those who can’t be bothered, and have to work in menial jobs.”

Respondents’ frequent references to ‘poor people’ - which was not reflected in the policy documents - as not being equally included in education, was reminiscent of a social exclusion or disaffection discourse, in which people ‘opt out’ or become ‘status zero’ (see Fergusson, 2000). The insuperable benefits of education through equality of opportunity and personal development, evident in the policy documents (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999) discussed in Chapter Three, Francis (1999b) has pointed out, sees those who are uneducated as a problem (see especially DfEE, 1998). By placing the responsibility for learning on the individual, as we have seen in the policy documents (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998; DfEE, 1999), those who do not learn, or choose not to learn, are deemed inadequate persons - a situation of ‘educated’ versus ‘under-educated’. Within this framework, it is possible that respondents were distinguishing themselves from (poor and disabled) others by way of a dependency/independency dichotomy in which respondents saw themselves as independently making choices about their lives and their futures, and posited their own agency against the supposed dependence of those unable (or unwilling) to help themselves. This supports criticisms of government policy, criticisms which hold that the reasons for exclusion are understood as fundamentally located within the (deficit of) individuals themselves, where these individuals may be aggregated into pathologised social groupings (Colley and Hodkinson, 2001, 335).

Education was represented as the panacea for all ills by the respondents, in which getting an education was seen as both a right and a duty, both to the self and the state. This clearly reflects the government/policy discourses of a) learning as an imperative and b) the onus

of responsibility on the individual to take up learning, discussed in Chapter Three. ‘Duty to oneself’ to learn was represented as non-negotiable by the respondents, where the responsibility for that task lay with the individual. The notion of ‘it’s there if you want it’ replicates the government’s policy aim of creating a ‘culture of learning’ within British society, whereby once all external barriers are removed, nothing stops the person from getting him or herself educated. This was expressed through the idea that not only can “anyone can do it”, but also “everyone should do it.”

Learning to learn: “It has to come from within”

The question: “Do you think people can learn to want to learn?” elicited the opinions of 28 respondents (excluding the 5 pilot project respondents, and 7 others) on how they saw other people’s attitudes towards education and learning. This question related to the rhetoric of lifelong learning, and specifically the government’s policy objective of creating a ‘culture of learning’ (Fryer, 1997; DfEE, 1998) discussed in Chapter Three. The impetus behind this question was to gain some insight into how respondents viewed possible constraints on aspirations and participation in education.

The responses correlate with the findings above on self-responsibility in education, that ‘it’s up to the individual’ and that education is ‘there if you want it’. As such, the findings uphold the discourses of equality of opportunity, individual responsibility, and the responsibility of the individual to learn. Personal motivation was specified as the key to learning success, and lack of motivation was identified by most respondents as the main reason why people chose not to learn. The predominant finding was that respondents used a narrative of ‘innate predisposition’. This finding did not correspond directly with any of the discourses around education identified in Chapter Three; it did, however, support the humanist position on selfhood discussed in Chapter One. Many respondents said that people had to be predisposed towards learning, that the will to learn was something which was innate, or “came from within”, and that this “depended on the person”, or was down to individual personality. Referring back to the findings above on respondents’ opinions on inclusivity in education, it would appear that these views are in danger of pathologising

those they identified as ‘poor’ or disabled’ people, in which their ‘inability’ to help themselves may be due to an inherent and predisposed lack of motivation, rather than due to, for example, a failure of resources. The fundamental danger here is that individualisation is discursively linked with individual pathology (Ball et al., 2000; Beck et al., 2001). Social inequalities are explained away by individual disposition and social problems are increasingly understood in terms of personal psychological inadequacies which are no longer seen as being rooted in the social realm (Beck et al., 2001).

Chantel said that the basic resources had to be available, but that after that it was essentially down to the individual: “If you want to learn you will learn. You can help, but it has to come from within.” Similarly, Sherry said:

“Everyone has different ideas and aspirations. It has to come from within, the decision is up to them. It depends on personality and what they really want to do. It depends on where they are in their life, whether they want to do it, or depends on what they want to do, you know, depends on whatever turning point they’re going through.”

All eight respondents who said that everyone was equally included in education used the narrative of personal responsibility and also said that learning could not be forced. Nichole said: “Education is there if you want it, you can’t force people, it just depends on the person”, whilst Adriana said “If I want to do nothing what can you do about it? Some people are just too laid back and don’t put themselves up for it.” Similarly, Petra commented: “At the end of the day it’s their choice to be someone – if they don’t want to do it you can’t force ‘em.” Parents too, according to Asha, were superfluous in this respect: “Some people are forced by their mums but if you’re not interested you’re not going to learn nuffink. Some people they just don’t want to learn nuffink.” Danielle flippantly remarked that nothing could make people want to learn, adding “well, not unless you paid them”, and laughed as she realised that her idea was probably not as disingenuous as it first sounded.

About half of the 28 respondents said that changes in attitudes towards learning were possible over time, where these respondents nevertheless drew strongly on the notion of a predisposed or core positive attitude to learning. As Kelly pointed out: “It has to be there from the beginning, from day one.” Whilst some people would never change, Kelly felt that she was advantaged over others because of her early experiences, where her relationship with her grandmother especially was crucial to her later decision to apply for university to study dance: “My nan’s very educational even though my parents weren’t – I always had her in my ear badgering on. It’s a lot to do with yourself - either you get on or you don’t.” As if to emphasise this point, she drew a parallel with her brother, who, despite the extra support he got at school “just abused it...he got away with so much being dyslexic, and would never change his negative attitude towards education.”

Like Kelly, Bev believed that some people would never change, but saw herself as an exception, not least within her own family, where the birth of her daughter had been a turning point in enabling her to make a ‘different’ decision for herself. Bev contrasted herself with her friends: whilst she was succeeding against all odds through her own personal effort, they were being ‘left behind’, where this was a personal choice and one which Bev perceived as apathy. She said:

“Some people are quite happy to stuff sausages, that’s how they like to live. A lot of my friends love to watch day-time TV, go out for a couple of hours, rave at the weekend. They don’t want their heads in books. Mine was a personal choice and I want letters after my name cos no-one in my family has done that.....People might not think there is anything better for you, and you might be happy with the people that you’ve been with at the tomato packing factory and you don’t want to leave.”

Some respondents talked about the ‘right moment’ or ‘turning point’ which had initiated a transformation within them. Paula said that she believed that people do change but that it “takes time”; Tasha said that “this is the right time”, as her children were now older; and Nadia who, talked about her desperation at being an ‘at home’ mum, said it had taken her

a “long time to get round to it, you have to catch people at the right moment.”

Some respondents talked about the different attitudes to learning of teenage boys and girls. For Zaseena, the predisposition towards learning was inherent and did not change as people, notably boys, got older. She asserted that:

“Even with a ‘second chance’ people would still mess up. I don’t think it could change, it’s just what the boys want, they’re not willing to change themselves. Girls, you can help them, but most girls are just like boys, you can’t change them either.”

Cathrina, on the other hand, claimed that younger and older people had different attitudes to learning. Older people, according to Cathrina, had external pressures which reflected the discourse of individualisation in that people lacked the ability to ‘choose’ whether they wanted to learn or not. ‘Messing up’ for young people was directly related to peer pressure which condemned studying as ‘uncool’, and she gave her opinion on how she saw this impacting on girls. This peer pressure often resulted in bullying which was occasionally about race and “usually boys on boys and girls on girls”, but generally about what people wore, and whether “it’s in fashion or not, if you’ve got the new stuff.” Cathrina said:

“Yeah, cos when you’re young you don’t think that it’s really important to learn, and you get older you realise that you gotta learn, there’s not really a choice.....Young people think that it’s unpopular to go home and study, you should be out with your friends and getting into trouble, yeah, they think that’s good, they might lose their reputation if they’re studying their books a lot.”

Recent research has shown that the manner in which boys’ constructions of racialised and classed masculinities are linked to the ways in which they approach education. Frosh et al. (2002), for example, observed that young men constructed masculinities around being ‘hard’ or ‘cool’ where this involved adopting an anti-school attitude. Similarly, Archer and Yamashita (2003b) have found that constructions of ‘bad boy’ masculinities are

constructed in opposition to education, and are perpetuated because they are a safe option in which their peer status is assured. The social context, in this case the FE college, is an expression of the 'social' life of a person (Ball et al., 2000) and is one of the contexts within which self-esteem and the pressure to establish group identity is found amongst the 16-19 age group. This research is also reflected in the following quote from Cathrina:

“Boys think college is pathetic, they’re either smoking weed or making kids, 16 year-old boys or 15 get a girl pregnant, it’s a sport to them, for them it’s popular to chat about stuff like that, just tell them [the girls], ‘do what you’re doing about it’, and they don’t care, and that just messes up girls’ lives....they forget about the girls, it’s just the next girl innit.”

The data findings in this section give an indication of how respondents believed things 'ought to be'. Many respondents presented a picture of the 'ideal' individual as one who was responsible for her own motivation, success, etc. and one against which all others should be measured. Yet as we have seen, whilst able to articulate a view of the person in positive idealistic terms, most respondents did not see themselves as able to live up to this 'ideal' in real terms.

The findings support the popular contemporary view held by some sociologists that traditional determinants of social relationships, particularly those related to social class, are gradually being replaced by a process of 'individualisation' which emphasises choice, and that identities are based on lifestyle as opposed to socio-economic position (Beck, 2001). They also echo the observation made by Ball et al. (2000) who have asserted that young people see themselves as individuals in a meritocratic setting, and not as classed members of an unequal society. Pakulski and Waters (cited in Reay, 2000, 675) have argued that issues of exploitation and exclusion based on distinctions between class are disappearing within public policy, and that the lack of collective political action is further confirmation of the irrelevance of class. The findings crucially draw attention to the apparent incongruity between the discourse of individualism and any possibility of political action. This is a theme discussed further in Chapter Six.

Conclusion: A homogeneity of discourse

The main government discourses were identified as economic competitiveness, social inclusion and the related discourses, implicit within these, of the value of education, individual responsibility, and equality of opportunity and meritocracy. These discourses legitimised and perpetuated policy movements around instilling a culture of learning into the population, learning as an investment for reward, the onus of responsibility on the individual to learn, and the idea that society is inequitable but that individuals have agency and the power to effect change for the better. The interview data on education reveals, moreover, that the most respondents' views about their own educational experiences and their opinions on education policy discourses to a large extent reflected the discourses of individual responsibility, equality of opportunity and meritocracy. Most respondents believed in the intrinsic value of education, meritocracy and individual responsibility, and that they had benefited from equality opportunity policies, and indeed, saw their own lives as testimonies to the success of government policies and initiatives in education. In summary of the chapter so far then, there was a remarkable uniformity between the broader government and policy discourses, and the discourses communicated by the respondents on the subject of education.

Articulations about their own and other people's educational chances seemed to suggest that the majority of respondents were unaware of (or chose not to talk about) the implications and impact of structural constraints on the kinds of choices and decisions available to themselves and others. Indeed, the discrepancy between, for example, respondents' positive articulations about their educational opportunities and experiences of education, and the governments' concerns about the obstacles to learning currently prevalent in British society, may even suggest that these respondents were one step ahead of the government in their discursive promotion of individual responsibility. Personhood was seen as both a universalised phenomenon, in the sense that everyone was fundamentally equal, and as differentiated, in the sense that some people had drawn the short straw. However, drawing the short straw was down to individual responsibility: most

respondents appeared to believe that when it came to education, structural constraints on the individual were not a problem, and if they were a problem, that it was up to the individual to cast them aside. These findings illustrate the power of the neo-liberal discourses to locate responsibility in the individual, and to pathologise any underachievement as individual failure (Bauman, 2005).

The data show that the ways in which respondents constructed their everyday identities were fundamentally different to the ways in which they constructed their student identities: whereas talk on identity emphasised 'race', talk on education downplayed 'race'. What is of crucial importance here is how discourses of individualisation were drawn upon by the respondents in their talk around experiences of education and their opinions on government discourse around education, in which the effects of class, race and gender were divorced from the effects of equality of opportunity.

PART THREE: RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON RACE, CLASS AND GENDER

In contrast to the apparent lack of reflexivity amongst the majority of respondents on how discourse 'positioned' them in society, a small number of respondents talked about how external factors and structural constraints impacted on their own and other peoples' lives. In the final part of this chapter, I will explore some of the issues around choice and limitations in relation to race and class which were talked about by these respondents. They suggested that the processes of individualisation, to some extent at least, concealed underlying structural inequalities, in which mixed race or black working-class people did not have the same opportunities as everyone else. This supports the idea discussed in much of the educational literature, that structural inequalities circumscribe the kind of choices which are actually available to some people (Ball et al., 2000; Archer et al, 2003). Despite this, however, the respondents who held these views appeared to be no less embroiled within the discourse of individualism than other respondents. Their opinions may be framed within the liberal belief that the individual is a self-directed and distinctive entity affected by external variables such as socialisation and context, but simultaneously separate from these influences (Kitzinger, 1992, 229).

University: 'Breaking the mould'

Reay et al. (2001) have pointed out that the decision to go to university, whilst a routine one for most middle-class people, is an active and rationalised one for people from working-class backgrounds. Eight respondents explicitly talked about going to university (one respondent already had a place), and all would be the first in their families to go. This finding sustains the New Labour government's bid to make school-leaving at age 16 a thing of the past; their stated aim is to ensure that by 2004 80% of 16-19 year olds will be involved in at least another full year of education or training, and by 2010 50% of people under 30 will be entering higher education (see Mizen, 2003, 259). *However*, all of them intended to go to 'new' universities, thus supporting the observation that a much higher proportion of people from ethnic minority backgrounds go to 'new' than 'old' universities (Tomlinson, 2001). This ambivalence around educational choice is a good example of the uneasiness which exists between the policy representation of capital as easily convertible by individuals themselves, underpinned by New Labour discourse, and the reproduction of capital, supported by the theories of Bourdieu.

The theme of 'internalised barriers' to success in education was an important one amongst some of the respondents, especially around choices they felt were available to them with regard to university attendance and employment opportunities. In a study of working-class people's participation in Higher Education, Archer et al. (2002) found that respondents' narratives supported the idea that working-class people occupy a more 'risky' position in society, and that they were more likely to experience disadvantages which prevented them from participating in education. Non-participation in education, the authors suggested, was one way in which respondents rationally 'managed' this risk. The respondents' articulations on going to university were underpinned by the discourses of individual responsibility and equality of opportunity, but also in some cases displayed such a 'sense of limits'. I will examine what two respondents who intended to go to university, Kelly and Bev, said on the subject of Higher Education. Their comments gave an indication of how they saw themselves in terms of social mobility and how they felt class and race impacted on the choices and decisions they made with regard to university education.

Notably, as in the more general findings on identity and education, gender was not mentioned by these respondents as a mediating factor on decisions and choices around education. Race and class inequities, one might argue therefore, were seen to exist by these respondents, whereas gender inequity was invisible. This supports the post-feminist discourse (Whelelan, 1995; Volman and Ten Dam, 1998; McRobbie, 2000) in which any notion of gender inequality is regarded as outdated and insignificant.

Whilst Kelly talked positively about going to university, Bev was critical of what she saw as a two-tier higher education system comprised of elite and other universities because she felt it epitomised the scourge of what she saw as race and class division within British society. Only one other student referred to this two-tier higher education system. Lianne said that elite universities were set apart from other universities: “In Cambridge and Oxford you got to be of a certain class and colour to get into the school. I feel they’re a bit snobbish.” At the same time, Lianne criticised the government for advocating higher education as the guarantee of the desired job: “they’ve got their degree but are working in awful jobs and it hasn’t taken them anywhere” and contended that the government should take responsibility for making false promises and “give you money to pay back loans.” These views are supported by Archer et al.’s (2002) observation that access to ‘better’ universities was regarded by the respondents in their study as the reserve of (usually white) middle-class students with the requisite resources and status. Ruby noted that not everyone was equally included in education and the impact this had on employment opportunities: “even though people deny that – just look at who’s employed in the universities – white middle-class.”

Bev and Kelly were ‘breaking moulds’ in that they were the first in their families to study in further education, and appeared to be ‘moving beyond’ old limitations. In the case of Bev, however, there appeared to be a tension between staying within the limits of her own past experience, and the transgression of those limits and boundaries. Kelly was ‘breaking out of the mould’ in that she had a place at Newcastle University to study Performing Arts. Kelly said that most people were put off going to university because it was too hard, but that she had got where she was today because she had “knuckled down.” She said:

“I couldn’t see myself working in Tesco’s and just being happy working in Tesco’s all the time, it wouldn’t be challenging. Once I’ve learnt how to serve the customers and use the till it ends up boring, so I need something that is always changing, that’s different.”

Kelly, the first in her family to intend to go to university, said that although she was discouraged from going to university by her family, and did not want to burden her parents financially, she “couldn’t see any other avenue to take.” Kelly’s parents may have ‘known their limits’ but Kelly felt she also knew hers where these were different to those of her parents. Initially her parents were not happy but they reached a solution:

“My dad was like, ‘what you going to do when you leave, it’s just a waste of time, you’re going to be stuck back here, you can’t get a job’....but now they’re more kind of proud cos I’ll be the first one to go in the family and the first one that’s wanted to go in the family, and they’re being really supportive. If dad hadn’t saved for my wedding he wouldn’t have had money to give me to go to university and I couldn’t have gone. So I got university instead of a wedding!”

Like Kelly, Bev pushed the limits in so far as she was the first in her family to go to university, but ‘knew her place’ when it came to the choice of university. Bev’s ‘place’ was determined by entrenched class and race norms which she believed could not be personally challenged. For her, personal choice of necessity had to be compromised by the need to be self-protective in a society in which “race underlies everything.” Bev talked about class and race interchangeably, frequently appearing to refer to both race and class when she was talking about *either* race or class. Her reference to ‘we’ was a reference to working-class black, mixed race and minority people who ‘made the most of what they had’. Again, this ‘we’ did not refer to women. Her argument was not only that they [‘we’] would not *be able* to rupture the educational bastion of the middle and upper-classes, but also that they would not *want* to. I have included this rather long quote to allow the reader to engage with Bev’s train of thought.

“Why would you want to put yourself in a racial environment for three years, no sensible person would put themselves somewhere where you could be at harm whether mentally or physically?....Here [at the FE college she was attending] they said if anyone wanted to apply to Cambridge they said they could bring people from Cambridge in to talk about it, and everyone laughed ‘that’s for white people’ and the black and Indian people all laughed. As far as we’re concerned we’re working-class people, always have been. Cambridge is a place where the Queen’s children go, and the Queen is not associated with us! As far as she’s concerned we are the people who pack her food, that’s it! We wouldn’t be able to mingle with people from that class because as far as they’re concerned we are scum. Now to put yourself in an environment where you are considered the lowest of the low when you could be somewhere else, get a degree and have a nice time with it, meet people on your level, you’re not going to put yourself there if you have any sense. A friend Yolanda got a first class degree at Stratford University, and got into UCL but she would not go there for the simple fact that that is not her level of people, as far as she’s concerned even though she’s got her degree she’s not above none of us. I think that’s the difference, the snobbery you would get from people who are classed as higher class than you or have always had money. So for us to get a degree is something special in a sense, to say, even though we’ve not been brought up like you the brain’s are not different, it’s just something you’ve stamped on us cos you want to make yourself look bigger, it’s just the status at the end of the day and that status is what causes the harm. Cos if you think you’re better than someone else you automatically get nastiness.”

“If I got a place at Cambridge tomorrow I wouldn’t go....that’s not my bag at all. If I’m going to go somewhere I want to know that I’m free to learn, that’s it, I don’t want the pressure of class being put on me, or my race, or people telling me I’m beneath them.”

Bev, who was doing an Access to Higher Education course and intended to go to university to study psychology, talked about 'breaking out of the mould', and simultaneously remaining within a 'safe territory' in which she would not experience race or class discrimination. She talked about people taking responsibility for their own learning, and asserted that many black and/or working-class people out of habit, consciously or unconsciously, were restricted by self-perceptions and preferred to stay in familiar 'comfort zones' rather than attempt to eradicate structural and personal barriers. She expounded about race and class segregation and the role of the government in deliberately maintaining these divisions where these were perpetuated along class lines. In her view, the "brain's are not different" but that, within the hierarchical framework which existed in Britain, people were either "classed as higher" or as having something "stamped" on them. In a study on class done thirty years ago, Sennett and Cobb (1972) interviewed working-class people on how class impacted on their sense of self, where personal failings and the belief that middle and upper class people had the right to judge them were dominant themes. The researchers showed how the class system contains a set of pervasive beliefs which are held in place through, and gain strength from their 'naturalness'. In this vein, Bev remarked that the "little people" were kept in their place by a strict social order headed by a government which did not allow for the mixing of classes because it did not serve the interests of a hierarchical society:

"The education system don't like mixing people, they don't even like mixing what they consider normal people with disabled people, so why they going to mix classes? I think they like to keep people down, this country loves to think that they need people above other people to control the little people. The only time you come together is when you bump into each other in the street - they don't want people to be taught to grow up together and to accept each other."

"The problem is, if everyone is educated to a high level who's going to be left to do the crap? The government ain't going to allow that, cos they themselves have nannies, and have people to take their trash away, so they're not going to educate those people."

Bev was clearly putting the onus of responsibility on the government, rather than on the individual, in so far as she saw the experience of exclusion on the grounds of race and class as something fundamental to society, and therefore uncontested. Her articulations may be understood in terms of Bourdieu's (1977) idea of symbolic violence and the unequal distribution of social capital. This concept of symbolic violence has also been drawn on in literature on race. Barker (1981), for example, calls it a theory of 'pseudo-biological culturalism': race exclusion and antagonism are justified because it is 'natural' for the dominant group to defend its interests against outsiders because they are different, where such naturalisation arises out of 'common sense' notions of culture which develop over time. Authors like Gilroy (1993) on the other hand, who build on the work of Barker (1981) show how black people draw on culture to contest and resist dominant forms of personhood.

Bev also saw race and class as underpinning the division between vocational and higher education, and between ordinary and elite universities. Bev was standing both on the inside, in terms of her experience of race and class exclusion, and on the outside looking in, in so far as she had the capacity to analyse and critique the situation. Bev's perspective oscillated between one which can be analysed within the context of Bourdieu's (1977) concept of 'habitus', and Beck et al.'s (2001) individualisation theory. On the one hand, she claimed that people were not themselves responsible for where they were positioned in society, that the dominant culture 'transmitted' to the marginal culture but not the other way round, and that as a black, mixed race and working-class person contestation of hierarchy was extremely limited. On the other hand, she defended her (and her friend's) decision not to go to an elite university from a position of agency, presenting this choice as an autonomous one. This may be understood as a form of resistance against assimilation into what Bev saw as the 'white' racist and classist institution of higher education, in which attendance at such a university could be a scourge rather than a blessing. Bev's comments are reminiscent of the working-class girls in McRobbie's (2000) study who saw the middle-class girls as 'snobs' set apart by their accents and parents' wealth, and saw themselves as able to enjoy themselves as be educated, but where educational competitiveness and their own achievement was a means of exposing the

system as a complete waste of time (57). Beck et al. (2001) have claimed, it is incumbent upon individuals to perceive themselves as at least partly shaping their own lives, and has suggested that a practical indicator of 'living one's own life' theory is the presence of aspects of an individualistic and *active* narrative form in people's own biographies, in which life's events are attributed not to external causes but to elements of the individual's own choices, abilities, capacities, etc. (25).

Internalised barriers to learning

Ruby and Aasha said that many black and mixed race did not reap the benefits of equal opportunities in education because they had been brought up to believe that 'education was for others', where these ideas were firmly entrenched into their way of thinking and could not be easily challenged. Aasha claimed that the root of the problem could not be rectified by simply creating opportunities for black and mixed race because people themselves settled into and maintained particular prescribed roles which they were not even aware of. She said:

"I think it's the way you think about yourself - class is more of a stratifier here than in the States, race is more in the States - the way a lot of young black people grow up thinking that they have a particular set of opportunities that I think is smaller than the way white people are thinking. It's more than just low expectations, because it's not like you desire all those things but you just think oh I'll never make it because I won't have the chances, I think there's also people who don't even desire those things, because if you're not socialised into thinking that you will have this kind of education, you will do this, you will have these professional aspirations, you will go to university, I think it's a totally different way of thinking."

Ruby talked about how some people living in poverty believed that education could not have anything to do with them. Like Aasha, she believed that race was stratified by class in Britain, and said that the government had to look at all the ways in which "especially

young black men get[ting] excluded from early on despite equal opportunities.” For Ruby, individualised attention and support from college staff is a crucial factor in breaking these accepted norms.

“Learning has been very much class-based for long time. It is harder for some people to believe that education or taking a different route can do anything for them. It’s about having the opportunity to do the exploration, and the support and the follow-up and the continuity, to choose to do something else, but that involves the attitudes of the lecturers as well.”

“It’s very hard to learn if you have massive debts, you’re a single mother, you live in poor housing, you have immigration problems. Some people are quite down-trodden and can’t imagine that education could have anything to do with them. I genuinely believe that if people were given individualised attention and support and the work to have those opportunities, to explore, things would be different some people are quite down-trodden and can’t imagine that education could have anything to do with them.”

Ruby described her experiences of school education in the 1970s as a mixture of discrimination, low self-esteem and low self-expectations, and a lack of agency regarding the decisions which were made for her about her schooling. Part of this early education had been in an approved school, a place she believed she had been sent to due to the kind of ignorance which existed at that time around people who were trans-racially adopted. The historical dimension is of importance here. The implementation of assimilation policies, when policies to ‘spread the children’ to avoid high numbers of minority pupils in urban areas, were at their height during the 1970s (see Tomlinson, 2001). Persons were seen less in individualistic and differentiated terms, as in terms of their membership within particular ‘cultural communities’. It was also a time when racism was not widely understood as a political issue, and where it was acknowledged, it was seen to occur at a group rather than an individual level. Ruby said that having the “opportunity to go on to FE was the best thing that ever happened to me.”

Only one respondent, Nichole, talked about having overcome the specifically internalised *racial* barriers to personal achievement referred to by Aasha:

“I used to wonder why I found it hard to get jobs, whether it was the colour of my skin or something else, but now I know I can go out there[now I] think that all I need to do is get on with life and not let the colour barrier come into it because you won't achieve anything.”

Perspectives on assimilation, separatism and discrimination

In this section I will focus on what some respondents said on the subjects of assimilation, separatism and discrimination. Aasha saw the issue of internalised barriers to learning as connected to the issue of assimilation. Amongst the black people she knew, resistance to ‘whiteness’ was the dominant discourse in education, and that many black people had been socialised into believing that ‘being educated’ was tantamount to capitulation to ‘whiteness’. For many black and mixed race people, the pressure to assimilate and keep themselves separate meant a constant search for the middle-ground between these two positions for black and mixed race people. In the past, she had had to negotiate and define her own position as a mixed race person in relation to this discourse, and in relation to what she perceived as the prejudice of black people:

“It's the whole thing of giving in to a mainstream culture, you're making a point by not doing it, you reject all that stuff, cos maybe in part all that stuff rejected you and your people a long time ago, so why buy into that....I find it strong among black friends I have and the peer pressure I get in terms of mixing with whites and doing what white people do. You can choose to become educated, but even within that don't become part of the mainstream white culture, don't be friends with white people, have your own, and I know there was very much, from the other side, discrimination, and it was all self-perpetuating - oh the blacks want to keep separate so we don't want anything to do with them, you know, all these things become a vicious circle.”

The work of Robert Park (1952) is useful for understanding Bev's and Aasha's perspective. Park claimed that in the face of threat from minority groups, the dominant group acts to try and preserve its status through community cohesion. In response to the racial prejudice such conflict engendered, subordinate groups could either assimilate or take a separatist position, whereby assimilation was more likely when the economy was strong, and separatism more likely when it was weak. In Fordham's (1988) study, discussed above, those who took on a raceless persona and assimilated into the 'white' school culture were the most 'successful' students, whilst others tried to juggle allegiances towards their school and their community, thus sacrificing both their cultural integrity, and being cautious about not appearing too 'white'. This study reveals how a race discourse – in this case a discourse of 'whiteness' – may override a class discourse, and underpin official education discourse. Within the context of both Parks' theories and Fordham's research, Aasha's analysis (and Bev's analysis in the previous section) gives some indication as to the kind of tensions possibly faced by some mixed race people *vis a vis* education: On the one hand they try to align themselves with, and assimilate into, the dominant group in order to achieve a certain level of status and acceptance, whilst on the other hand they try to maintain a degree of separatism. In other words, they try to strike a middle-way, as in 'if you can't beat them join them, but don't go the whole way'.

The pressure *from* black and mixed race people *on* black and mixed race people not to assimilate referred to earlier by Aasha, was also talked about in explicit terms by Aleasha. The pressure on Aleasha not to sacrifice her cultural integrity (Fordham, 1988) was a complex issue in so far as she was accused of acting 'too white', but was also not accepted by black people. She said: "It's like who wants to accept you? They don't want to accept you as being black and they really don't want to accept you as being white, so what am I?" Her experience was of "constantly being bullied" and ostracised for "acting too white", where she described this as being this synonymous with being intelligent:

"Black people won't talk to you if you show knowledge or intelligence. The other day I was talking to a boy and he was like you're so white, you act like white people, and I'm like, just because you see an intelligent black person in

front of you that means they're acting white? I'm like, to be black and to be intelligent that means you're trying to act white?"

Aleasha referred to what she saw as the problem of cultural separatism in her class in which black people tended to stay on one side of the room and white people on the other. Her view was that it was the responsibility of the teacher to conciliate the space between black and white, and create a "mixture of cultures in a class." However, whilst conceding that making girls and boys work together in the classroom was, in her experience, successful in breaking down gender divisions, "forcing cultures to mix might not work." Like Aleasha, Anabel emphasised that the teacher was crucial in helping to alleviate this sense of inferiority, and believed that students would be motivated to learn if they could gain a sense of stability and equality with others. However, she also said that teachers were afraid of "getting involved for fear of losing their jobs" over accusations of favouritism or race discrimination.

Universalism as a solution?

Nadia's opinions were controversial in today's context, yet I believe they are indicative of an undercurrent of discontent felt amongst a significant section of the population around the position of ethnic minority people have in Britain today. Nadia was in favour of a universalism in which everyone lived according to their individual/collective inclinations as long as these occurred within a universalist nationalist framework. Whilst free to practice their own customs, minority people should assimilate into the mainstream culture. Nadia viewed non-assimilation as wilful separatism as this was neither in the interests of her children's education, nor of British society generally, and moreover, had resulted in the violation of the rights of the dominant host group. In Nadia's estimation then, and with reference to Park's (1928; 1964) theory of dominant versus subordinate, the dominant group had failed to preserve its status and the minority group were now in control.

In stark contrast to Bev, Ruby and Aasha, who criticised the rhetoric around equal opportunities in education for being divorced from the political and social reality of

people's lives, and favoured a more culturally relativistic, pluralistic and individualistic understanding of persons and cultures, Nadia endorsed the universal equality principle and believed that everyone could and should be equally included in British education and society. Whilst Bev, Ruby and Aasha, focussed on the grey area around the individualistic discourse of 'self-responsibility' in relation to the take-up of education of black/working-class/poor people, Nadia saw the problem, quite literally, in terms of black and white and placed the onus of responsibility squarely onto the (black/working-class/poor) individual, where the individual who did not conform was regarded as the 'problem'. Indeed, Nadia believed that the government had, in all good faith, actually over-stepped the mark in its commitment to equality, and had been duped by the 'problem' people who have had everything offered to them yet refused to take the bait.

"People choose to live in this country and don't behave in a way that is beneficial to this country – like not learning the language, and I get irritated that my children can't understand their accent. I feel this equality thing has gone too far, personally. That sounds very racist doesn't it? I think everybody is entitled to believe in whatever culture, follow whatever culture they want, and have whatever religion, and it is wonderful that children are taught about different religions and different cultures and things. But what I do object to is where it impinges on other people's way of life. They segregate themselves within the society, they close themselves off, refuse to mix with the rest of society. It's a bit of a generalisation I know, I mean I met plenty that proved me wrong, but on the whole it is one of my real irritations, I suppose."

Anabel threw a different light on the issue of assimilation through fluency in the English language, and on the correlation between the lack of assimilation and racial separatism. Whereas Nadia regarded speaking with an accent as unacceptable behaviour, and saw the outcome of this as intentional racial separatism, Anabel remarked that the reason why people "not of here" wanted to lose their accents was in order to assimilate and to minimise their "inherent sense" of inferiority to white culture, but that they could never be successful in this venture. The inability to assimilate and the correlate sense of inferiority

this engendered, according to Anabel reinforced the connection between people who were not white. This again is evocative of Gilroy's (1987) work in which he argues that minority people can never really permeate or belong to the nation due to a lack of shared history (see Barker, 1981), and that "a foreigner would always be a foreigner" (Anabel).

"Everybody who comes here feels that the white culture is superior to their culture. There is this inherent sense that we're inferior and I guess this is why the worldless feel this affinity to any other culture that come here, that is not of here. They say people lose their accents so that this difference won't be so pronounced. But I can tell you from speaking on the phone, and immediately you can tell people's responses to you."

For Nadia, in the same way as an 'accent' was a marker of difference and should be eradicated, race as a visible marker of difference should also be eliminated. She described how monitoring forms devised to gather personal information were inadvertently discriminatory because they were based on a classificatory system in which identities were demarcated and labelled along lines of gender, race, age, etc. Thus one could argue that at the core of Nadia's condemnation of racial separatism was a rejection of the concept of race. She said:

"It gets ridiculous with these forms - sometimes I say 'mixed race' under 'other' and sometimes I just say oh none of your business - what's the point, why are they asking these questions, it sort of seems racist in a way even making it an issue. It's a bit like when you send an application form off for a job - wouldn't it be much better if they didn't know how old you were, what sex you were, or what race you were or anything, you know, that you're just a name."

Nadia boldly insists on 'political *in-correctness*'. She rejects culturalism as the root cause of division within British society, and claims that her views may be misconstrued as racist from the point of view of the average politically correct person who 'embraces' and

'celebrates' all forms of difference. At the same time she sees race and other external markers of identity as precisely the foundations upon which discrimination within the education system and the labour market rests. Without race there would be no discrimination. Nadia's opinions are an unapologetic articulation of what I believe many people - who are tired of the politically correct rhetoric around race, culture and immigration - actually think. I also see Nadia's comments as indicative of a gradual change around what is understood as 'politically correct' in Britain today. The main problem with Nadia's argument, is that like so many 'equal opportunists' she is attempting to by-pass the *very fact of race, gender and class as it is lived in everyday situations*. This is an important area of debate returned to later in the discussion.

The respondents' articulations discussed in this section all refer to race and class and how issues of internalised barriers to achievement, assimilation, separatism, universalism and individualisation impacted on theirs and other people's lives. Their opinions, especially those of Bev and Nadia, show how a myriad of ideas and concepts can appear to sit comfortably side-by-side in someone's mind, but in the context of current theory around these issues, contradict each other. The commentaries all indicated that respondents believed that equal opportunities policies have failed, either in relation to themselves or to other people. Aasha and Ruby talked about the disparity between educational choice and internalised barriers. Aasha moreover made a connection between this and how many black people especially felt education was 'not for them' because of its association with assimilation into white culture, and the pressures from black people not to assimilate because of this. Aleasha's experiences underscored this view in so far as she worked hard at college and said she was discriminated against by black people for doing so. Bev's commentary crucially points to the issue of *whether anti-racist/anti-classist theory and policy are invalidated by discourses of individualisation and the praxis of individualised lifestyles*. Nadia's universalistic assimilatory stance begs the on-going question of *how to account for difference in the context of identity and everyday experience*. Far more attention, in both research and policy, needs to be paid to the apparent discrepancies between contemporary discourses of individualisation, universalism and pluralism, and the actual lived experiences of race, class, and those of 'being an individual'.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, the main themes arising from the research are pulled together and discussed. The aim here is to connect the findings on identity with the findings on education. The chapter is divided into three parts: Part One explores the interplay between postmodernism, essentialism and individualism, relating the theoretical and policy literature to the respondents' constructions of personhood, their experiences of education and their articulations around education policy discourses. Part Two discusses the dominant discourse of individualism evident in the policy analysis and the interview findings on education, and the concomitant absence of 'race'. Part Three examines the research findings within the context of a feminist emancipatory project which has mixed race women in post compulsory education in mind.

PART ONE: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN POSTMODERNISM, ESSENTIALISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

The findings in this study question the appropriateness of current conceptualisations of personhood as *de-racialised* in both the theoretical and policy literature, and in public discourse. Contemporary postmodern/ post-structuralist theories on identity, race, and mixed race accentuate the socially constructed nature of identity. The selected policies, on the other hand, refer to personhood largely in terms of the rational, autonomous and 'unfinished' self. This perception of personhood has been concurrent with a gradual shift towards a universalised notion of the self, evident in public policy and discourse, in which all individuals are considered equal in terms of the opportunities available to them, even though they may be seen as culturally different. The idea of 'race' is understood as a construction with no biological or material value in itself, and has been de-constructed to the extent that it appears to have little relevance to contemporary theoretical and discursive conceptions of personhood.

The interplay between essentialism, pluralism and individualism - where these sometimes appear to be contradictory - in the context of the respondents' articulations around identity

and education is evident in a number of ways: one, the dominant precepts of the self within postmodern theories may to some extent be challenged by respondents' race essentialist conceptualisations of identity; two, the findings indicate the need for a re-appraisal of essentialist theory to incorporate dual-race experience; and three, the idea of individualism is not necessarily at odds with race essentialism. The findings, I argue, expose the paradox of liberalism as articulated by David Goldberg (1993): *race is irrelevant but all is race*. In the light of the findings, an important challenge for mixed race theory appears to be how to successfully integrate the experiences of mixed race people into a comprehensible framework of personhood which recognises their experiences as racialised, individual and dynamic.

Postmodernism: Limited versatility

Theories of postmodernism (discussed in Chapter One) are useful in providing a framework for understanding how identities are variable and subject to change. New ways of thinking around identity as socially constructed, fragmented, multiple and shifting have allowed mixed race people to define themselves in ways which go beyond the rigid essentialism premised on the notion that people possess 'fixed' racial traits, uniting them with those within that 'race' and differentiating them from all others (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Brah, 1996). It has also been helpful for understanding mixed race people's personal accounts and experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Ahmed, 1997; Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Mahtani, 2002) and has challenged the view that mixed race people are black, and that mixed race identity is inherently problematic or pathological. Concomitant with more pluralist and relativist ways of thinking around personhood, has been with an emphasis on individual rights. The introduction of a 'mixed race' category in the 2001 census has formally endorsed self-identification as mixed race: Instead of a bi-polar conception of identity in which mixed race people are thought of as *either* black or white, a space has been created for mixed race people to identify as *both* black and white.

Considerable discrepancies exist between the findings in my study, which suggest that respondents saw their identities as largely 'fixed', and postmodern accounts of identity as

pluralistic and dynamic. Most respondents' conceptions of mixed race identity were representative of the postmodernist position in so far as they advocated the *idea* of self-definition and the freedom to choose how to define yourself, and expressed what might be called a 'diversity' discourse of mixed race. Some respondents evoked a race=culture equation in their exhortations of cosmopolitan 'anything goes' ideas around mixed race, and rendered concepts of race, culture, nationality, religion, etc. as synonymous with each other. The race = culture alliance, as argued in Chapter One, is symptomatic of tendencies towards a de-racialisation of the person in public discourse, in which the benign concept of 'culture' becomes *the* significant aspect of racial difference in place of 'race'. As Frankenberg (1993) has pointed out, cultural difference is harmless and enriching, whereas race is not. This 'diversity' discourse was also reflected in many respondents' descriptions of their friendships as wide-ranging and diverse rather than race-specific. A further finding showed that although few respondents said that they saw their own 'difference' as an asset, over half the respondents saw other people's curiosity about them as positive. This was perhaps an illustration of respondents' desire for the right to be equal, and the recognition that they were not equal, in which some respondents saw themselves as 'bridge-builders' between today's world and a better future.

Respondents' own constructions of self adhered to the postmodern principles of multiplicity and fluidity in as much as they defined themselves as dual-racial/cultural (and in a few cases as multiply-racial/cultural) (see Tizard and Phoenix, 2001; Aspinall, 2003), and in that many respondents felt that they adapted themselves in different situations and/or talked about transiting between, or amalgamating the two 'halves' of themselves. Contrary to the commonly held idea that mixed race identities epitomise the postmodern subject, respondents saw themselves neither as an amalgam of many different selves, nor as *fundamentally* dynamic. Respondents did not see themselves as 'free-floating' entities in the postmodern sense, but rather, communicated ideas around personhood within a spirit of 'limited versatility'. Thus, one might argue that respondents expressed a pluralist-essentialist position in that they saw their identities as variable, but where this variability was confined within identification with their parents' heritages.

Essentialism: The significance of ‘race’

Whereas the previous section examined how respondents’ articulations around identity reflected postmodernist ideas to a limited extent, and one in which the issue of race was frequently concealed within a language of ‘diversity’, this section looks at the myriad of ways in which race was a trenchant aspect of many respondents’ lives. Structuralist theories are usefully applied to ‘raced’ ways of thinking around identity which concern a notion of the self which is not variable or subject to change. Most respondents made sense of their lives through the lens of ‘race’: for many, race was not an unpalatable or unnameable aspect of life as much literature and public discourse would have us believe, but rather, was a significant aspect of identity and self-understanding, and intrinsic to their experiences of ascription and discrimination.

The concept of ‘race’ manifested itself in a number of ways in the respondents’ articulations around the self. First, almost half the sample emphatically stated that *race and/or colour was not important* in how they defined themselves. As such, they appeared to reject formal classifications based on external visible aspects of the person which distinguished them as ‘raced’. Whilst the assertions in themselves suggest that race was indeed *not* a significant aspect in respondents’ lives, the direct way in which these claims were made indicates that race possibly did have a considerable impact on these respondents.

Second, not only did all the respondents *identify themselves as mixed race* (this was a criterion in the sample selection), but many saw being mixed race as an *important aspect* of their identities. Whilst the second point may appear to contradict the first point, it is my contention that the ‘safety’ and freedom to identify as mixed race lay partly in the fact that it was *not* an established homogeneous category. Arguably too, the discrepancy stemmed from the desire to be seen for ‘who they really are’, where this was first and foremost as a unique individual and as someone who transgressed, or indeed defied, categorisation. Thus for some, it may have been an expression of the right to be *different*, and perhaps also a celebration of their difference. It would, however, be vain to ignore the reasons why

some mixed race people choose *not* to identify themselves as mixed race. The apparent disregard for categories and the implications this has for a feminist political project will be discussed later in this chapter.

Third, self-identification as mixed race, that is to say, as black and as white, was expressed by several respondents as an assertion of *both parents' racial heritages*, where this was understood as literally constituting the respondent's identity. This was evident even where the father was absent or marginal in the respondent's life, and regardless of whether the respondent was brought up in a white or black household. (Two-thirds of the respondents were brought up in one-parent households; only in two cases was the mother absent or marginal). Many respondents were precise about their exact racial mix – traced back to parents and grand-parents – and whilst these articulations appeared to draw on a race biology discourse, it is possible that respondents were also referring to a culture discourse, in which the race=culture alliance was evoked, and race became synonymous with culture.

Fourth, in asserting their mixed race-ness, some respondents defined themselves in relation to homogeneous constructions of race by distancing themselves from what they perceived as 'blackness' and/or 'whiteness'. As such, assertions of self were made *against* others. This tendency could be seen in articulations around friendship and experiences of discrimination, and also more implicitly in the education findings. Racial distinctions were justified by using a race = personality link, in which distinctive attitudes and ways of behaving were dependent on a person's race. As in point three, a race biology (and/or culture) discourse was evident.

Fifth, the data supports the traditional view that mixed race people are seen as black. This suggests that, despite the prevalence of postmodern ideas around hybridity, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism evident in some spheres of public discourse, the dominant discourse around 'race' continues to be one which incorporates the idea of mono-racialism and homogeneity. The persistence of exclusionary politics, I would argue, has emphasised homogeneity and reinforced 'black consciousness' amongst some black people, and this has had considerable consequences for some mixed race people who do

not self-define as black and who have developed a race consciousness which attempts to 'go beyond' blackness. 'Incorrectly' categorised as black (or as belonging to another mono-racial ethnic minority heritage), yet self-identifying as mixed race, caused problems for some mixed race respondents in so far as they were seen as neither 'white enough' (by white people) nor as 'black enough' (by black people). It is possible that many respondents experienced exclusion and misnaming (following the work of Lorde, 1984 and Young, 1990) on account of the mismatch between the discourse of homogeneity, and self-perceptions of their own *heterogeneity*, and that this contributed to the refusal to endorse any form of categorisation, and the assertion of their own mixed race identities.

Sixth, the findings showed that racial discrimination was flagrant. The study focused especially on discrimination within families and from black people. Whilst there has been a general recognition that mixed race people experience racism from white people (see Parker and Song, 2001; Tizard and Phoenix, 2001; Ali, 2003) there is virtual silence on the issue of discrimination from black people. This may in part be due to the long established view that mixed race people are black, and as such, any discrimination directed against them by black people would not be acknowledged as racial discrimination. However, in the same way that it is no longer possible to think of black and white people in terms of binary opposites, racism can also no longer be seen as a unitary process (Rattansi, 1995). As changes occur in the way race and mixed race are thought about, ideas around racialisation have also changed, and new forms of discrimination and racism are coming to light. The findings suggest that further research into the specific nature of the discrimination mixed race people experience needs to be undertaken, and the concept of 'racisms' as dynamic social processes which manifest themselves differently according to context (Brah, 1996) could perhaps be usefully applied in this context. This raises the question of whether a specifically *mixed race* category is needed to counter discrimination specific to mixed race people, and is a question which will be referred to later in this chapter. The interview data to some extent support findings from earlier studies of mixed race identity such as non-acceptance within peer groups, rejection within families, and ostracisation from one cultural heritage.

To sum up so far, most of the respondents did not accept racial designations, and simultaneously felt they were perceived by others in racially designated ways (see Zack, 1992, 9; 1995). This corresponds with post-structuralist theory in so far as respondents felt their identities were to some extent determined by other people's positioning. The 'false' categorisations bestowed upon them from outside co-existed with self-assertions as mixed race, where this usually endorsed parents' racial heritages, and were sometimes invoked in opposition to racially homogenised 'others'. It could be argued that race *as a means of self-definition* – as opposed to race as a means of categorisation - was a powerful aspect of respondents' identities precisely because of the denial of their dual-raciality, and their experiences of categorisation and discrimination. Self-definition as mixed race may in this sense be understood as an act of separation from, defence against, or indeed subversion of the rigid boundaries of racial homogenisation imposed upon them from outside.

The combination of findings in the last two sections demonstrates that competing discourses were at work – the self as to some extent versatile, and the self bound by fixed racial categories, heritages, and experiences of discrimination based on notions of racial homogeneity. Whilst useful for understanding certain aspects of respondents' conceptualisations of identity, postmodernist theories are difficult to sustain in light of the findings which show that 'race' was - in many different ways - a palpable aspect of respondents' lives. The findings also challenge essentialist theory which has traditionally classified identity in mono-racial and mono-cultural terms. An essentialist model which incorporates dual or multiple aspects may therefore be more apt for contextualising the respondents' mixed race identities. Root's (1992) assertion that mixed race identities are both grounded in duality and multiplicity in that they are socially ambiguous and fluid, and yet are contained within typified racial boundaries, is useful for understanding this twin position.

Individualism: mixed race as an aspect of personality

Many respondents appeared to have no conceptual difficulty, as we have seen, in isolating self-definition as mixed race from 'race' as an external phenomenon. In several

respondents' articulations around selfhood, an easy alignment between mixed race identity and personality was also present. In this way, essentialist thinking was refuted by asserting an individualist discourse, as in "I am just me", yet was also present in simultaneously asserting "I am mixed race." These respondents appeared to be concerned about not being seen by others as the unique individuals 'they really are', where being *valued* as mixed race was intrinsic to this sense of self. The different forms of essentialist thinking may be explained by the distinctions respondents made between appearance and personality.

Appearance, usually focusing on hair and skin colour, was frequently mentioned. Yet, respondents were anxious to put across that their identities were not based on the superficial designations of race and/or colour, but on what 'lay beneath' their skin, as in 'I am just me', and in so doing, made distinctions between exterior and interior facets of identity. Respondents, therefore, separated out what they believed were spurious designations of race (categorisation) from a primary sense of self (self-ascription based on parental racial heritage), where the latter only was fundamental to mixed race identity, and so too, was an intrinsic part of 'who they were'. As such, *personality and being mixed race* were compatible aspects of personhood, and central to their sense of self. The juxtaposition of 'I am me' and 'I am mixed race' may be indicative of a belief in both the *right to be a/an (mixed race) individual* and the *right to be equal* to everyone else, and supports the view that a category of mixed race was generally not desired by the respondents. These observations also support the finding discussed above in which respondents drew on a race=personality correlate to distinguish between races, and set themselves apart from black people.

The main theoretical challenge which these findings pose is how to reconcile 'raced' and 'individualist' notions of self. In a recent conference paper, David Skinner (2004) discusses how contemporary biology such as DNA testing is being linked to new notions of 'who we really are', and that biologism is reopening old debates about sameness and difference and providing people with new ways of experiencing and talking about identity. In this context, I would argue that the assertion 'I am just me, I am mixed race' need not be understood as a purely individualistic articulation, but can be read in terms of

biological heritage as a powerful and *unique* part of the individual. As such, perceptions of the self are ultimately seen as rooted in the biological realm. The findings in this section show that not only were elements of postmodernism and essentialism combined, but essentialist and individualist aspects of personhood were integrated in respondents' constructions of self. This perspective may be described as an essentialist-individualist position, in which the idea of a core essential self is reconciled with perceptions of self in race biological terms.

To sum up Part One then, a few main points can be made. Many respondents' articulations of selfhood were largely consistent with a humanist position, and resonate with the theory of biological foundationalism (see Bordo, 1989). They also to some extent reflect the notion that the self is socially constituted (see Butler, 1990). Whilst feminist debates have centred around the *impasse* between biologism and constructionism, sociological debates around ethnicity, race and mixed race have unambiguously focussed on the sociological dimension of race. The findings in this study point to a disparity between respondents' perceptions of self in structuralist terms, and sociological theories of personhood which view the self as fundamentally 'fluid'. The concept of 'race' as a social construction is not disputed. The dominance of race, and the persistence of categorisation, and discriminatory attitudes and practices in the lives of the respondents indicates a need to retain the concept of 'race'. It also indicates an unequivocal need to investigate further the meaning of race in people's lives and within social discourse. As such, I adhere to the assertion made by Parker and Song, that by stripping the term 'race' of all meaning, we are left with an 'uncompromisingly romantic reassertion of liberal individualism' which ignores socially constitutive effects on the person such as racism and racial ascription' (2001, 12).

Weekes (1997) has usefully pointed out that black feminist thought has the potential to theorise and develop an understanding of how Black women – and here she includes mixed race women - come to construct definitions of themselves 'where these are clearly situated in the way they *experience* their social positions and hence their racial identities' (1997, 113). Whilst understanding that the notion of 'race' is a product of discourse

without inherent meaning in itself, it is only through the meanings ascribed to this term that sense can be made out of respondents' articulations around race.

PART TWO: EDUCATION, INDIVIDUALISM AND THE IRRELEVANCE OF RACE

Education models of inclusion have to a large extent assumed that distinctions around racial and cultural difference no longer exist. The focus instead has been on the liberal discourse of individualism, a position which, I would argue, has been marked by a gradual rhetorical shift towards the 'de-racing' of British society and the notion that we are 'all just human beings'. As we have seen in previous sections, this discourse was evident in the communications of many respondents around personhood. However, whilst the findings on identity revealed that respondents frequently combined pluralist, essentialist and individualist perspectives in their constructions of the self, and race was an important theme in these constructions, respondents' invariably reflected the discourse of individualism in their articulations on education, in which race was more or less irrelevant.

Equity in education and individual responsibility

The findings on education displayed a resilient correlate between the respondents' views, and policy articulations and discourses around education and personhood. The concepts of equality of opportunity and individual responsibility were dominant in the respondents' articulations around their own educational experiences, and in their opinions on prevailing government discourses in education, and most respondents believed in the inherent value of education, meritocracy and social inclusion (see Chapter Three for a discussion of education/policy discourses). The mass availability of education was in itself a marker of an equal society and most respondents saw their own lives as testimonies to the success of government initiatives which aimed to provide greater equality of opportunity in education. Most respondents believed that they had had the same chances as everyone else in education, that everyone 'should get an education', but also that their plans and

'dreams' for the future may not translate into reality. The principal idea expressed by the respondents was that in being responsible individuals able to make autonomous decisions within an egalitarian system of governance, people were ultimately responsible for their own success or failure (see Beck, 2001; Colley and Hodkinson, 2001). As such, the onus of responsibility for all of society's ills falls back onto the individual, and inequalities are not seen as the responsibility of government.

Inequalities, rather than being seen as 'big issues', are therefore reduced to the problem of individuals, or the problem of specific groups of people such as lone mothers. This was clearly evident in the articulations of the respondents. The findings on education showed that respondents made a distinction between those who were 'equal' in terms of educational opportunities and life-chances, and those who were 'less equal'. Personal success was down to motivation and commitment, and whilst other people's educational choices may be impeded by poverty or disability, most respondents saw themselves as exempt from such constrictions. Thus, a dependence/ independence dichotomy around freedom of choice and the take-up of education was evoked. However, not only were inequalities attributed to individuals themselves, but some respondents also claimed that personal success and failure "came from within", and that people were either innately predisposed towards learning or not. Inequalities, therefore, were explained in terms of an *inherent lack* within individuals themselves. In light of the findings which showed that several respondents saw their own individuality as inextricably linked to their mixed race/culture, and some respondents perceived themselves as different to black people, and appeared to construct their identities *against* them, it is not inconceivable that a race=personality correlate was manifest in the way in which respondents articulated ideas around predisposition.

The findings show how discourses become imbued within the subject, and, from a Foucauldian perspective, how the individualised subject becomes the 'object' of education. Thus, people are not consciously aware of how they are positioned by the discourse of individualism, and yet it is a discourse in which it is incumbent upon them to have a sense of control over their own lives (Beck, 2001). It seems that authoritarianism

has disappeared in the kind of language used within discourse, ie. the neo-liberal language of freedom of choice and equality of opportunity, and it is precisely this which makes it possible to 'buy into' these discourses. This can be seen, for example, in the ways in which respondents bought into the discourses of inclusion, meritocracy, and responsibility. Critical thinking, therefore, is not to be expected. In this study, any criticisms of government tended to focus on particular elements or effects of discourses, rather than discourses themselves. The small number of respondents who did talk about race, class and structural inequalities nevertheless also claimed that the individual was responsible for his or her own learning, thereby suggesting that any resistance to, or separation from, dominant discourses in education was regarded as extremely limited.

The irrelevance of race

Through the supposedly 'empowering' framework of education for all, equality of opportunity and meritocracy, and the freedom of choice which purportedly goes along with this, each person is expected to see herself/himself as equal to the next person. The interactional mechanisms by which structure and social inequality were generated, were discounted by the respondents. *Any* differences between people, not only those of achievement and failure in education, but also experiences of racial and other forms of discrimination were re-directed back onto the person, rather than being attributed to the effects of dominant/subordinate power relationships.

Explicit articulations around the race were dropped altogether in discussions around education (although in the section above respondents made implicit references to distinctions between people along the lines of race), a finding which stood in stark contrast to the salience of race in the findings on identity discussed in Part One. Respondents' position on race was therefore an ambivalent one: Within the broader context of their everyday experiences, many respondents felt excluded and discriminated against by others; race was not perceived as a marker of disadvantage, and seen as immaterial in terms of the educational choices and opportunities available to people. Within the government framework of inclusion and equality in education, however, most

respondents saw themselves as 'equal to all others'. In an educational context, therefore, it appears that respondents had bought into a discourse of whiteness, and the idea of the person as 'raceless' (Phoenix, 1997b). This notion of the 'raceless' individual may be understood in the context of the postmodernist concept of personhood, in which the self is dynamic and has no biological fundament or material value in itself (and supports the respondents' ideological conceptualisations of mixed race personhood and friendships as diverse, discussed in Part One), and the liberalist concept of the self, in which the individual is capable of making rational, utility-maximising choices within a structural vacuum. The perceived irrelevance of race is symptomatic of what might be referred to as 'colour-blindness' to the reality of race (Ahmed, 1997, Tessman, 1999), in which the *effects* of racialisation are maintained precisely through 'race invisibility'. Race, in other words, is deconstructed to the extent that it *vanishes altogether*, and the *power differential therefore also disappears*.

PART THREE: INDIVIDUALISM AND POLITICAL STRATEGY

A de-politicised subject?

The discourse of individualism, and related discourses of individual responsibility, equality of opportunity and de-racialisation discussed in this chapter and in Chapter Three, are symptomatic of a shift towards a concept of the subject as universalised and de-politicised. The discourse of individualism does not sit well with the respondents' experiences of discrimination and racism, which are fundamentally *political issues*, and the implications for a modernist political project which demands a collective political identity is potentially far-reaching. Two main strands in feminist theory, which are dissociated on the question of the materiality of the body, are central to this discussion: Whilst modernist feminist thinkers such as Bordo (1989) have claimed that we need a unitary concept of womanhood within which to ground a feminist politics, and that the aim of politics should be to resist cultural constructions as they are presented to us, post-structuralist feminists such as Butler (1990, 1993) have asserted that the body is the effect of discourse, a cultural sign from the outset, and that basing feminist politics on the

materiality of the body is therefore misguided. The main criticism of the postmodernist approach is that self-definition and difference leads to political ineffectiveness and dissipates the possibility for any collective liberatory action.

The modernist/ postmodernist debate within 'western' feminist philosophy has been paralleled by a similar debate in black feminism which has focussed on the requisite of race as a social category, as opposed to womanhood, for effective political action. This discussion therefore, has centred around the question of the 'materiality of blackness', and who could or should be called 'black' in the name of politics. From a modernist black feminist perspective, a mixed race category, or a black category which incorporates mixed race experiences, is necessary for countering categorisation and discrimination, and in working towards greater racial equality. This modernist position has been criticised for being a universalistic conception of personhood which results in exclusion and derision (Yuval-Davis, 1992; Brah, 1994). Derision and exclusion were cited by many respondents as intrinsic to their everyday experiences of perceived difference, categorisation and discrimination (but not in education), especially the experience of 'not being black enough'. Bakare-Yusuf (1997), with reference to her research with black women, has stated that the failure to abandon common ideals once a 'coming together' has been achieved

'only serves to show our own complicity in a racist discourse which tries to lock black communities in the fixity of its own construction. It also obscures the way appeals to communitarian ideals or shared experiences can potentially oppress and exclude the very same people it seeks to liberate.' (82)

Latterly, there has been a focus away from the body to political sites of struggle, and the ways in which the subject is constructed – often in a plurality of ways - through social practices (Mouffe, 1995; Nicholson and Seidman, 1995; Ashenden, 1997). Mouffe's (1995) idea that fragmentation enables new constellations of unity in which political collectivities and coalitions are formed out of common interests which cut across specific identifications, has been particularly useful for contemporary feminist philosophy.

Defining a mixed race identity

Ifekwunigwe has put forward a twofold challenge: one, how to create an inclusive space for the construction of complex and multi-layered identities without resorting to essentialist or reified categories, or to what Donovan Chamberlayne refers to as 'I am-ism': 'I am not Black or White, I am just me' (personal communication to Ifekwunigwe); and two, how to forge political and social alliances from shared marginal status (Ifekwunigwe, 2001, 45). Tessman (1999) has argued that there is little consideration of a politics of racial self-identification that goes beyond essentialism and the aim of 'fitting in', and claims that 'not all acts of solidarity consist of casting ones lot, for one can be committed to struggle on behalf of a group to which one does not belong and in whose fate one cannot share' (280). Omi and Winant (1994) have asserted that racially based movements have as their principle task the 'creation of new identities, new racial meanings, and a new collective subjectivity' (1994, 90). This assertion may be usefully applied to the context of mixed race identity in view of its 'newness' and heterogeneity, yet ultimately also sanctions the idea of collectivity.

The ideas put forward by the authors discussed above are laudable in that they attempt to incorporate the diversity of mixed race experience into a conception of personhood which may simultaneously form the basis for a common politics; however, these views are not particularly helpful when applied to the context of the women in this study. As Ali (2003) has pointed out, 'it is the *inadequacy* of 'mixed race' as a single coherent category that makes it so theoretically demanding' (2003, 5). As we have seen, respondents' conceptions of mixed race identity were extremely diverse, and definitions of self encompassed hugely *diverse* and *individual* experiences; therefore it is perhaps not surprising that in contrast to the ideas of some researchers working in the field of mixed race identity, there was no evidence that respondents desired a fixed *category* of mixed race (see Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Olumide, 2002; Rockquemore, 2002). Respondents' ideas around mixed race would indeed not sit comfortably with a definitive category of mixed race in which members either 'fit' into a black/white binary model (see Tizard and Phoenix 1993; Wilson, 1987), or into a binary/diverse ethnic minority model

(Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Mahtani and Moreno, 2001; Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Olumide, 2002).

Whilst there was no evidence of the desire to belong to a category of mixed race, self-definition as mixed race was nevertheless an identification with a formally recognised mixed race identity or category. It was, indeed, perhaps a forging of respondents' own individuality premised on 'insider' knowledge of mixed raceness in which, in the sense of an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), they were united with other mixed race people. Mahtani (2002), for example, has suggested that many mixed race women refer to themselves as mixed race as a way of 'creating their own linguistic 'homes'' (476). In Ali's (2003) study, the part which racism played in respondents' lives to some extent contributed to their understandings of their positions, and family histories were evoked to create links with places and people in the imaginary in order to make sense of respondents' 'racial' identities. Ali has argued that these processes may be described as 'political practices that challenge the constraints of their own identities imposed by hegemonic whiteness' (179). Similarly, in my study, respondents drew on ideas around their perceived racial heritages in their articulations of self. The question of 'belonging', inherent within the question of self-identification, may therefore take primacy over the desire for an essential category of mixed race. The respondents' assertions of themselves as mixed race may also be seen in terms of Bourdieu's (1984) notion of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984), in which the process of distinction has the effect of uniting those who are the product of similar conditions of existence whilst distinguishing them from all others (1984, 56).

Individualism and the question of politics

My data supports McRobbie's (2000) view that feminism has a normalised and legitimised 'popular' version, in which women enjoy greater freedoms than ever before, and a 'political' version which is virtually redundant in the post-feminist climate of today. My main argument here is that the dominant discourse of individualism speaks against the possibility of collective political action, in that power relations are created within discourse which prevent the development of the political subject. This inevitably

has considerable implications for a feminist emancipatory politics: Where people do not feel implicated in power relations, and regard themselves as innocent by-standers, they cannot be politically motivated, and the possibility for emancipatory action becomes blocked or limited. Whilst some individual respondents may have regarded themselves as political, neither politics, nor a political collective identity appeared to be pressing issues for most respondents. This lack of politicisation was evident in a number of ways. One, only one respondent identified as politically black, and nobody explicitly referred to their mixed race identity as a political identity. Two, there was no evidence of a desire for a fixed mixed race category, as mentioned above, a finding which was supported by respondents' blatant rejection of categorisation. Three, inequality was not seen in political terms: respondents either did not believe that structural inequalities existed, or perceived themselves as untouched by these inequalities, or assumed that any existing inequalities which did exist were the problem and responsibility of people themselves, rather than a problem of structure and resources which should be solved by government. Even amongst the few respondents who were reflexive about issues of inequality, the imperative of 'getting an education' was concomitant with 'transcending' inequality; thus, responsibility was ultimately to the 'self', and not to a collective 'other'. In dismissing 'race' as an issue in the context of education, the racial dimension of inequality was also discarded. It seems likely that many respondents not only saw inequality in education, but also personal experiences of discrimination, as the responsibility of individuals themselves. Racism and discrimination as part of everyday life was therefore, literally speaking, a *normal* part of everyday life, and as such were de-politicised issues.

Ruby was the only respondent who identified herself as 'politically black', and also the only respondent who specifically talked about a 'newer' community where this was based on affiliation through shared marginal status (see Omi and Winant, 1994; Mouffe (1995)). She talked about how being politically black was unusual today, and that many mixed race people had 'moved on' in so far as discrimination was not a dominant issue for them. In the quote below, Ruby suggests that the 'different place' which many mixed race people were now in was a de-racialised space, and that it was precisely this feature which made it liberating. This view supports the idea that discrimination has become naturalised. Being

politically black was for Ruby about the trenchant experience of being racialised, and involved a conscious resistance against racialisation and assimilation. She said:

“Being politically black - a lot of mixed race people will not claim that as an identity because they’ve moved on, they’re in a different place from me - and I still am at that place because to me the most distressing experiences of my life have been in the way that I have been rejected because of the colour of my skin. And being able to use that, being able to claim that identity has enabled me to have a voice and explain what it felt like and the effect it’s had on me and to know that people aren’t going to say oh you’re white really and you’ve just got a chip on your shoulder. Sometimes I feel I’m ready to move on to the next stage but there’s a bit of confusion because I am also Irish, and that isn’t included when I take the position of a black person, and I get quite concerned about that - I haven’t worked that out and I feel that’s the next step.”

Two main strands of liberal thinking within the discourse of individualism were discussed in Chapters One and Three: one, the liberal universalist ideology of individualism, in which everybody has the same opportunities and is positioned as ‘equal to the next person’; and two, the liberal particularist ideology of individualism, manifest in the multiculturalist discourse, in which everyone has the same opportunities, but may be culturally different. In recent years, however, as discussed in Chapter Three, the universalist ideology has shifted to subsume the particularist ideology, where the discourse of assimilation appears to be the justification for doing so. Within such a universalistic framework of personhood, the idea that groups of people have a *distinctive set of interests* is seen as problematic, and as such differentiated approaches to policy-making are deemed unnecessary.

The respondents’ articulations underscore these two strands of liberal thought, and suggest that people’s educational needs are generic, and that where differences or inequalities do exist, it is down to the individual to ‘get over’ these. In terms of education, most respondents felt equal to everyone else, and expressed their individual needs and

aspirations in universalistic terms, as the same as everyone else's, and not in terms of mixed race specificity. In terms of everyday experiences, however, many respondents did not feel equal to everyone else and encountered categorisation and discrimination. Here too, the problem was defined not in terms of racial structures, but in terms of personality and behaviour, and how individual people treated each other. These views, which centred around the discourse of individualism, overlapped in Nadia's assertion that the very existence of race was the cause of discrimination, and that assimilation must be justified as it was the only way of ensuring that everyone would behave in a way that did not set themselves apart from others.

Respondents' assertions of their own heterogeneity, and resistance to what they saw as homogeneity, may in fact be described as an *anti-political* stance. Conversely, one might argue that respondents' self-identifications in 'race' terms were in themselves *individual political acts*, or acts of resistance against universal norms. The most explicit political aspect of respondents' articulations, however, appeared to be the distinction they made between daily experiences of race difference, stereotyping, categorisation and discrimination, and a more promising future in which the negative effects of race did not exist, and where the *very presence of mixed race people* would contribute to overcoming such prejudices and inequities in society. As such, respondents perhaps to some extent saw themselves as individually implicated in making the world a better place.

CONCLUSION

The main themes and issues arising from the research, and the connections between the data on identity and the data on education, have been drawn together and discussed in the previous chapter. To conclude, the aims set out at the beginning of the thesis are revisited, and some final points are made. A key aim of the research was to use the case of mixed race women to explore the impact of the concepts of personhood and equity reflected in the theory and the policy on the lives of these women. Normative theories, concepts and discourses underlying constructions of personhood and equity were examined in the theoretical literature on selfhood and in a selection of post-1997 post-compulsory education policy texts, and applied to the women researched. Whilst postmodernism is the dominant philosophy underlying much of the sociological and feminist literature around identity, and stresses the contingent, multiple and 'fluid' nature of identity, government and education policy discourses tend to construct the person as 'fixed', rational and autonomous. The data reveal that respondents' lives were made up of multi-layered and often seemingly inconsistent elements, and that they drew on postmodernist, race essentialist and/or individualist discourses in different contexts.

Respondents' constructions of themselves in mixed/race terms may be understood as expressions of emerging dissent against homogeneous constructions of race, and may signify a desire for heterogeneous understandings of 'race'. The discourse of 'race', however, was also a powerful one amongst many respondents in, for example, their definitions of selfhood, references to 'others', and in their experiences of categorisation and discrimination. The concept of the 'raced' self, therefore, whilst de-stabilising one essentialist discourse (in respondents' rejection of homogeneous constructions of 'race') may uphold another essentialist discourse. Moreover, these constructions of self may represent a demotic or alternative discourse of 'race' which have the effect of de-stabilising the dominant universalistic discourse of personhood in so far as they are anti-assimilatory and assert notions of 'difference'. One might also argue that respondents' constructions of self to some extent challenge the discourse of multiculturalism – which promotes diversity and seeks to downplay the significance of 'race' – and simultaneously

perpetuates the discourse of 'race thinking' which underlies the discourse of multiculturalism. It must be borne in mind that the articulations around mixed race identity were made within the context of the increased visibility of mixed race people, and the official sanctioning of mixed race as an acceptable identity. Self-definition in mixed/ 'race' terms may therefore not be a counter-discourse but rather an example of the way in which the parameters of the dominant discourse of personhood may shift to incorporate different or new elements.

Whilst 'race' in the context of the respondents' everyday lives was a palpable issue, and was talked about in a myriad of ways, 'race' in the context of education did not seem to be a significant issue. In education, the respondents' views about their own educational experiences and their opinions on education policy discourses to a large extent reflected the discourse of individualism which underpins the discourses of the value of education, individual responsibility, equality of opportunity and meritocracy. Class and gender were rarely mentioned in relation to either identity or education. Respondents' exaggerated sense of individual agency appeared to give many of them a feeling of considerable control over their lives. Many expressed the view that people were to a large extent the makers of their own destiny, and that failure was the responsibility of the individual. They saw themselves as 'equal' to others, and any inequalities which did exist were pathologised and re-directed back onto the individual. Respondents who took a critical stance on the government's policies around education, race, class and equality, appeared to be no less embroiled within the discourse of individualism than other respondents.

As the discussion of the theoretical literature has shown, many sociologists and feminist theorists have attempted to find a theoretical middle ground between postmodernism and modernism in which identities (race, class and gender) could be conceived of as multiple and shifting, without losing sight of the reality of social inequalities. As such, the 'deconstructive' dimension of postmodernism has been disregarded by many feminists because the preoccupation with difference and the denial of commonality leaves us with no theoretical or political tools with which to understand how race, class and gender play out in people's lives, and combat oppression (Hartsock, 1990).

From a feminist perspective, for individuals to re-politicise and organise collectively in the quest for a 'better' future, re-essentialisation, to some extent at least, is deemed to be necessary. However, although essentialist discourse was drawn upon in constructions of identity, respondents did not express a desire for a category of mixed race, political or otherwise. Nor did they, apart from a small number, indicate a desire for political or social change. Mixed race as a discourse/identity therefore, was welcomed, but the political dimensions of race, class and gender, and possibilities for reform, were not part of that discourse/identity. Rather, respondents were positioned by the discourse of individualism and individual responsibility both in their public lives as students, and in their everyday personal lives. As such, respondents' articulations on mixed race and education were inherently individualising and a-political.

The findings on identity showed that respondents experienced inequality, racialisation and discrimination in an everyday context. This indicates that further research on mixed race personhood is required to broaden our understanding of the particularities and complexities of the mixed race experience, and that some form of political intervention is needed to overcome such inequalities and combat discrimination against mixed race people. The findings on education, conversely, suggested that there was nothing seemingly identity-specific about the experiences of mixed race women in Further Education, and respondents' communications on the subject of education offered views which may be framed within the government discourses of equality of opportunity and inclusion. The ethos of individualism and the 'post-feminist' (and indeed, the 'post-race' and 'post-class') stance evident in the findings on education especially (although some respondents acknowledged that race and class discrimination/inequality were prevalent and had an impact on some people's educational choices), indicate that the sense amongst many respondents was that responsibility was chiefly to the 'self' and not to the 'other'. In this vein, overcoming discrimination may also have been seen as the problem and responsibility of the individual who is affected by discrimination.

So where does this leave us in terms of a feminist political project which has mixed race women in mind? Whilst the different theoretical approaches to a feminist emancipatory

project are useful in terms of the development of theory itself, they appear to be untenable in relation to the research data. This is due to the incompatibility between the discourse of individualism, a discourse which was dominant in respondents' constructions of self and education, and collective action as the basis for change. Within the present climate of individualism and the de-politicisation of the subject, the question is whether, and to what extent, change can be sought and/or be possible. In terms of mixed race personhood and education, one important question is: What potential for change can exist in this moment in which the subaltern is not politicised?

One answer may be found in the ideas of Foucault. Discourse, as Foucault argued, is never a complete thing, but involves overlapping, contingent and contradictory discourses. As such, it is not possible to capture or control discourse – there is always some part that 'escapes' which may form the basis of the subaltern or alternative discourse and is the potential for change. The subaltern, therefore, is borne out of the dominant discourse, and yet may serve to subvert it. In the present climate of individualism, the person perhaps cannot see how he or she might be implicated in a 'better' future, apart from in an individual self-responsible sense. Thus, what is necessary here is the unravelling of the ways in which personhood is produced through systems of domination, and the discourses upholding these systems, which give people a false sense of control over their lives. It is therefore only through a critical approach to discourse and an attempt to identify the many taken for granted assumptions around 'race' and individualism (and gender and class, and equality of opportunity in education, etc.), that discourses may be subverted and subjugated knowledges can determine alternative discourses of subjectivity which may lead to progressive change. It is requisite therefore, for mixed race people to develop an awareness of how they themselves are positioned by the present discourse of individualism, in order for a politics which has the interests of mixed race women in mind to flourish.

APPENDIX 1: TABLE OF RESPONDENTS

Name	Age	Racial Self-Designation	Course studied	Occupation/Dependants
Aasha	31	Indian/American (MF)	Ex-FE	Development Worker
Adriana	22	Angolan-Portuguese/ Angolan (MF/SG)	Access to HE Law	
Aleasha	19	Grenadian-Scottish/ Dominican (M/SG)	GCSE Humanities	One child (SP)
Anabel	40	Guyanese/Indian-White (SG)	Computer course (PT)	Teacher; Two children
Anita	16	Mauritian/Filipino (MF)	AS Levels Govt. & Politics, Law, English	
Asha	16	Jamaican/Irish- English(M)	B-Tech Beauty Therapy	Youth Worker (PT)
Bev	21	African (Cuban- Jamaican)/English (M)	Access to HE Psychology	One child
Brenda	42	Afro-Caribbean/Indian- white Jewish (SG)	Secretarial course (Ex-FE)	Secretary; Two children
Cathrina	16	Jamaican/Irish (M)	Certificate in Skills for Working Life	
Cerisse	16	Scottish- African/Zambian- English (M/SG)	Summer course in preparation for GCSEs	
Chantel	18	English/African (M)	ABC Advanced Business Studies	
Charlene	16	Jamaican/White (MF)	NVQ Beauty Therapy	
Clara	33	Angolan-Portuguese/ Angolan (MF/SG)	B-Tech Hairdressing (PT)	Work with disabled children (PT)
Corinne	21	Jamaican/Irish (M)	NVQ Beauty Therapy	Sales Assistant (PT)
Danielle	17	English/Jamaican (M)	OCN Fashion & Clothing	
Dianne	17	Welsh/Mauritian (M)	A Level Law, Media, Psychology	Sales Assistant (PT)
Ella	16	Burmese/Mauritian (M)	A Levels Psychology, Biology, Business, Media	Job in retail shop (PT)
Emma	16	Jamaican/English (M)	GNVQ Art & Design	
Jennifer	17	Caribbean-Portuguese- Asian/English-Irish (MF)	NVQ Beauty Therapy	Private clients (PT)
Keira	16	Nigerian/Filipino (MF)	AS Levels Govt. & Politics, Law, History	
Keisha	17	'Fully mixed' Jamaican (Indian-Chinese-Turkish)	NVQ Hairdressing	Job in hairdressing salon (PT)

Kelly	21	English/ Bajan (MF)	B-Tech Performing Arts	Sales Assistant (PT)
Lianne	21	St. Lucian/English (M)	NVQ Catering	MacDonalds Manager
Lindsey	17	Bajan/Scottish (M)	NVQ New Directions	
Nadia	38	Iraqi/English (M)	Art Foundation (PT)	Cleaner; Pub worker; Two children
Nalia	22	¾ Black/ ¼ Chinese (SG)	NVQ Administration	One child
Nichole	32	¾ Black/ ¼ White (SG)	Basic Maths	Nursery Nurse
Olga	25	Italian/Eritrean (M)	EFL	One child (SP)
Paula	16	Romanian/Greek	First Year Diploma Public Services	
Peta	37	African/West Indian- English (MF/SG)	NVQ Childcare (Ex-FE)	Social Worker; Two children
Petra	17	African/Portuguese (MF)	GNVQ Foundation Science	
Ruby	44	Punjabi Indian/Irish (white adoptive parents)	Legal Executive Certificate (Ex-FE)	Mental Health Worker; Writer
Sherry	31	Guyanese/German (F)	NVQ Classroom Assistant (PT)	Teaching Assistant (PT); Three children (SP)
Siham	19	Eritrean/Egyptian (M)	GNVQ Business Studies	Work in shop
Soraya	38	English/Turkish (MF)	Basic Maths and English	Four children
Tania	39	West Indian/English (M)	B-Tech in Support; Foundation in Counsel- ing Skills (Ex-FE)	Learning Support Assistant; Two children
Tasha	26	Black American/English	Access to Nursing (PT)	Two children
Yasmine	22	Pakistani/English (F)	GCSE re-takes	Two children
Zara	30	Columbian/Polish Jewish-English (M)	A Levels Politics, History, English Lit.	One child (SP)
Zaseena	16	English/Jamaican (M)	Certificate in Skills for Working Life	

Abbreviations and notes:

SG – Second generation mixed race respondent, ie. one birth parent was mixed race (Adriana, Aleasha, Anabel, Brenda, Clara, Nalia, Nichole and Peta).

M – Respondent grew up, or mainly grew up, with birth mother.

F – Respondent grew up, or mainly grew up, with birth father.

MF – Respondent grew up, or mainly grew up, with both birth parents.

FT – Full-time (courses and occupations were full-time unless stipulated otherwise).

PT – Part-time.

SP – Respondent is a single parent.

Ex-FE – Respondent was no longer enrolled on an FE course, but had been an FE student in the last 5 years (Aasha, Brenda, Peta, Ruby, Tania).

The racial self-designations show the respondent's father's heritage first, and her mother's heritage second. For example, 'Indian/English' would indicate that the respondent had an Indian father and an English mother.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

- a) name and age
- b) self-description of 'mixed-ness'
- c) autobiographical background: who brought up with, and whether in mixed or mono-racial household; school attended – type, location, gender/ethnic/class mix
- d) course studied, whether full or part-time, academic or vocational
- e) occupation, children/dependants, disability

IDENTITY

1. What is important to you in how you define who you are?
2. Do you feel, or have you ever felt 'different' to other people in any way?
3. Optional (older students): Has your sense of 'self', or who you are, changed over the years? Was there a turning point in your life?
4. How do you think people you don't know see you? If applicable: Does that influence the way you see yourself?
5. What does the term mixed race mean to you? How do you feel about this term?
6. Are acquaintances and friends curious about your background? How does this make you feel? Optional: Do you feel they want to categorise you, or 'put you in one slot'?
7. Is there a difference between your race and your culture?
8. Do you feel drawn to a particular 'community' or group of people, if so, why?
9. Do you feel you belong more to (X) culture or (Y) culture depending on who you are with? Do you feel you need to adapt yourself to different situations?
10. Have you ever experienced discrimination?

EDUCATION

11. Why did you choose this college and the course you are doing?
12. What have the positive aspects of the course been?
13. Have you experienced any problems with the course?
14. How do you see your future?
15. Do you feel you will have the skills and qualifications to be able to do that?
16. What does a 'good' education mean to you?
17. The government talks about 'lifelong learning'. What does this term mean to you, and do you think it is a good thing?
18. Do you feel you have had the same chances as everyone else in getting the education you want?
19. In its Further Education policy the government talks about being 'inclusive' of all people. Do you think everyone is equally included in education?
20. Optional: The government also talks about creating a 'culture of learning'. Do you think people can *learn* to want to learn?
21. How do you think the education system could be better?

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