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Identities in Transition
theorising race and multicultural success in school contexts in Britain

Dissertation submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Jacqueline June Stanford
Clare College
University of Cambridge
September 2001
... some of the dominant stories in Britain need to be changed ...
(Parekh Report, 2000)

It is true -
I've always loved
the daring
ones
Like the black young
man
Who tried
to crash
All barriers
at once,
wanting to
swim
At a white
beach (in Alabama)
Nude.

Alice Walker (1968) Once
Declaration

I provide a bibliography of the works that have been used in making the argument in this thesis; otherwise, I confirm that this dissertation is my own original work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. It does not exceed ninety-eight thousand words.
Revised Abstract

The field of race and schooling has now turned its focus on success. This study seeks to further that project by answering the following questions:

1. What is the state of contemporary blackness?
2. How is race handled in successful school contexts?

The study, therefore, begins with a review of the literature of the history of race and schooling in Britain. This develops a critical reading of the shift from a focus on investigating general school failure to investigating success. I, then, review the literature on the experiences and identity of black students who are academically successful and the literature on the ways in which teachers work successfully, that is harmoniously, with black children. I expand my exploration of black students' identity by drawing upon and combining Moscovici's theory of social representations, along with Kristeva's theory of the abject and abjection and Lacan's Mirror Stage to explore and theorise contemporary blackness. These theorists also inform my analysis of the narratives of teachers at the empirical part of the study.

The study is an interpretive one in which I develop a methodology that allows me to use a Lacanian post-structuralist approach to the analysis of data. This approach to analysis provided the means whereby I could look behind the narratives of my research participants to unarticulated meanings in developing an understanding of their realities. Therefore, while my findings are grounded in what they said, the report does not seek to re-present or reproduce what they said. The impetus in this report, rather, is on theorising what they said.

Data analysis is based on unstructured interviews with four academically successful black students discussing blackness. Nineteen teachers, sixteen white and three black, who taught in two multicultural, co-educational secondary schools with a reputation for harmonious teacher-student relations also participated in unstructured interviews, sharing their experiences of their work in the
schools. The teachers were also observed in classes and supplementary information was obtained from documents produced and held in each school. The schools were selected on the basis of outsider-reports, from Ofsted, parent networks and the local community each school served, attesting to the schools' reputation for creating and sustaining harmonious relations between a predominantly white staff and a predominantly black and Asian student population.

The study underscores the finding that teachers are racially positioned within multicultural school contexts, that they are aware of this positioning and of its impact on them as professionals. Race complicates their professional role as teachers, with the potential to introduce uncertainty about fulfilling their responsibilities. Perhaps of more significance to them, race also has the potential to mount a challenge on their personal identities as good people, that is, as people who are not racist or do not perpetrate racist practices. The evidence in this study suggests that race poses a challenge on teachers' identities as competent professionals and as good people.

Consequently, there is an impetus for teachers to discount race as a factor within their contexts. Where issues of race are resistant to this general strategy, teachers anchor their responses to race within established - and non-racial - discourses and techniques; they do not respond to issues of race as issues of race. In this way, teachers recover their identity as competent professionals. They are seen to be less successful at developing a strategy for recovering their identities as good people. The study indicates that unresolved tensions around whiteness persist and serve to undermine what teachers recover of their professional identities.

The study points to the new ways in which race is being played out in society; both black students and black and white teachers are seen seeking different framing to discuss the ways in which they imagine themselves as racial. The study, therefore, finds that there is a pressing need to develop the language used for discussing issues of race such that contemporary discourses take account of the development in contemporary racial identities and realities.
Acknowledgement

This study would not have been possible without the help of people I cannot name. I acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to the teachers and students who provided the contexts for this investigation.

I am somewhat anonymous, too, to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). They have me as a number on their records. So poignant, so easily it could have represented someone else - so glad it has represented me. I have so thoroughly enjoyed the study it facilitated - the award of a PhD will be but a bonus.

Therefore, I have Dr. Madeleine Arnot to thank for giving me her time and expertise when I prepared my application for the ESRC competition. Thank you for looking out for me then and throughout my studentship - that kitchen table makes an apt symbol of your feminist commitment.

Dr. Susan Hart also helped to secure the ESRC studentship and, along with Dr. Paul Cooper, continued as the supervisor of my thesis; thank you. I am particularly grateful that I had the opportunity to work freely at developing my ideas; that was fundamental to what I have produced.

I am grateful to other staff in the School of Education; the secretaries, the librarians, for the support they provided over the years. Sue (Sadler) and Dale (Curry), your evening matters kept me civil.

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Mary and Leslie Beckett, opened their home and hearts so fully, I don’t think I could ever truly leave. Thank you, in particular, for keeping me during data collection.

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(...Nina Simone put a spell on me; Bob Marley rocked my boat...)

Mrs Lucinda Peart, quietly working a world away at Bethlehem Teachers’ College in Jamaica, might never know the extent of her influence…

My mother’s dexterity with the richness and subtleties of Jamaican patois might have found some expression here …my sister Michelle would have managed it iridescently… I hope my nieces and nephews do.
to the unborn
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Introduction

It is 2101 in Britain. End of the summer holidays, children are returning to school. Look at them walking down the street. See their faces light up as they regale each other with stories of their summer exploits. Listen to their (delighted) moans about returning to school; listen, too, to their expectations for the coming academic year. What did you see? What did you hear? Where did you locate your adaptation of this brief story line? Britain in the twenty-second century, what will that be like? What will people notice then? See, hear, think important to talk about? What, also, will constitute topics for conversation amongst people in education - students, teachers and other professionals? All answers are clearly our projections into the future, perhaps our hopes, perhaps our fears.

What we imagine is in every way linked to our understanding of the past and present. One of the things that has been fervently discussed in Britain at the present time, is its status as a multicultural society. The Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain in their report (The Runnymede Trust, 2000 – henceforth the Parekh Report) would argue that its multicultural status is fact. Nevertheless, as some commissioners felt constrained to highlight, their suggestion met with ‘so much fury’ and ‘torrents of misquotation and abuse’ (Alibhai-Brown, 2000; Hall, 2000), that this episode highlighted the difficulty of imagining Britain as a multicultural space without also imagining disruption and disharmony.

Schools operate within this climate; however, at present, the discussions arising within the field of race and schooling are striking a more optimistic note. Increasingly, there is talk of success within multicultural school contexts. This is of signal importance, not only in its potential to offer possibilities to society, but especially because the discussions on race and schooling have long reflected discussions within the wider society; educational discussions used to also consistently report disruption and disharmony of varied kinds. Of note, black children, in particular, their schools and their teachers, were more often than not, reported as
having varied kinds of examples of disruption and disharmony. If discussions on race and schooling can now be reflecting on success, what are the lessons to be learned from this shift? More importantly, what are the secrets of successful multicultural schools? Why should they be so well-kept from the rest of society given their promise of a vision of a future that might hold, perhaps, our hopes? They could rewrite our present history – and, in fact, are.

This study seeks to further the project of understanding what makes for successful multicultural schools through an investigation that focuses, first, on the identity of successful black students, and second, on how race is handled in successful multicultural schools. While the interconnection between these two sets of issues may not be immediately apparent, the need to investigate both, and in conversation with each other, will emerge more clearly as the analysis unfolds. Indeed, the ways of understanding that I invoke in order to make sense of contemporary black identity, also, I shall maintain, provide a new means of understanding the ‘levels of success’ in multicultural schools, and open up a new set of possibilities for the development of successful multicultural practice.

Drawing Attention to the Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in parts, a very important decision to the exercise. Each part is crucially linked to the next and together leads to the possible answers to the study’s questions; however, each part also has been given the task of specifically addressing fundamental tenets of the argument. Further, each part is sub-divided into many sections in laying out the argument in such a way so as to reveal its building blocks as well as its construction. Section headings are used to help the reader follow the flow of the argument.

Having said that, I would like to acknowledge and highlight that the structure of the thesis is unusual. The following details will suggest how. In Part One, I explore the politics of
underachievement and the new politics of success within the field of race and schooling. This exploration examines the shift from the one to the other highlighting the need to remain critical of both. I resist the impetus to receive the turn to success simplistically, and this is aided by investigating what happens to the issues of race as the shift occurs. As I hope to demonstrate, I maintain these emphases because while the academic and political debate has shifted to that of achievement, success is not a widespread reality. Further, a sense of illegitimacy - at least uncertainty - surrounds the identity of black students who do achieve. Additionally, little is actually known about teachers and schools that are considered successful; of note, in particular, there has been little interest in white teachers’ accounts of working within any multiracial context. Part One raises and explores these issues; and ends with a discussion for the amount of reporting I provide on individual studies reviewed.

In Part Two, I begin to assemble the theoretical resources, and to construct the theoretical framework, that will support my investigation. I also actively use these resources to help me address my first question about the state of contemporary blackness. Drawing on Moscovici’s theory of social representations in support of the decision to explore contemporary blackness in the way that I do, I use Kristeva’s notions of the abject and abjection, and Lacan’s theory of identity formation to interpret and articulate the tensions and illegitimacy of contemporary blackness, and the possibilities for moving beyond them.

Part Three furthers the argument for the approach taken in this study. Dealing also with the wider issues of methodology, I raise and discuss questions of epistemology with their implication for research and race before I address questions of the research design of the empirical part of the study.

Part Four presents my findings arising from the two case study schools in respect to my second question. Through a detailed analysis of the transcripts and coded extracts, I try to
unravel how race is handled so as to constitute these schools as successful. I discover that the 'secrets' are very different in each case, yet there is also an underlying unity to 'how race is handled' which decided me to present the findings together, in one extended chapter, rather than presenting them separately.

In Part Five I draw together the two stages of analysis, and elaborate the key themes arising from the study as a whole, integrating the theoretical frameworks with the philosophical and empirical explorations taken to answer the study's questions. I also summarise details of the methodology developed by means of and within this study; and suggest possibilities for future research.

While the structure of the thesis may be seen as unorthodox, or more precisely, unexpected, it seemed to me to be dictated by the very nature of the project. To participate in the exciting venture of rewriting the present, that is, of exploring new possibilities for understanding and representing of reality, required that I was willing to think and work, really, in impossible ways. I want to ask the reader to join me in the spirit of this venture. I want to promise that it will, if nothing else, be a journey to a special space, the place of possibility.

**Working Definitions**

When I speak of 'race', 'blackness' and 'whiteness' I use the terms broadly, in their generic forms, to accommodate the variety of meanings associated with them. With race, for example, I include associations arising out of phenotypic characteristics and those, for example, cultural dimensions, that transcend them. I deliberately have not placed the term, 'race' within quotations marks as has become customary, because I wish to underscore the sense of race being a reality beyond phenotypic associations, and that it exists, really, only in the construction of people's lived experiences. When I speak of black children, unless otherwise stated. I refer to British children who also have Caribbean lineage.
Pt.1 Rewriting the Present: shifting positions on race and schooling

1.1 From Underachievement to Achievement

By the close of the 1980s, there was general consensus in Britain on one thing in the field of race and schooling. And yes, as people like Troya (1984) and Reeves and Chevannes (1988) argued, it was not irrefutable fact. It could be explained, and was perhaps understandable. Nevertheless, whatever the explanation given and the position assumed on the matter, sympathetic or otherwise, it was part of common knowledge that black children underachieved.

Any review of the literature in the field up to the 1980s necessarily rehearsed arguments that explored the part played by black students or their schools, or both in this situation. Both black children and schools, with emphasis on the whiteness of staff and structures of the institutions, at one time or another, were implicated in the conflict and failure that led to black underachievement and black children’s disproportionate exclusion from school. (See for example, Taylor, 1981; Tomlinson, 1983; Fuller, 1984; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Nehaul, 1996).

During the period up to the 1980s, there also seemed a consensus amongst academics and policy makers in their approach to the issue of race. The government, for example, commissioned researchers to identify black underachievement, (a point Carby, (1999) strongly makes), or to explain it, as in the case of the influential Swann Report (DES, 1985). In each case, the researchers duly produced the information sought, or provided information that accorded to the brief they received. Carby (1999) further maintains that this approach to race and schooling served to construct and entrench the notion that black students were problems to normal schooling.
The government obviously did not commission all the research of the period. It is certainly necessary to highlight that there were researchers whose standing, commitment and/or work allowed that they genuinely sought to understand and represent the realities of the black students (Barry Troyna, for example, 1984; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1990; 1992). In time, there were also black researchers whose work became strongly associated with exposing racist practices in schools (for example, Wright, 1985; 1986; 1992). Nevertheless, such was the state of affairs that nearing the completion of the 1980s,

black people …[were] very angry at being constantly counted with no consultation and no black input into the decision-making process. It seem[ed] daily that new research findings by the government, academics, the CRE, and reputable voluntary organisations confirm[ed] that if you are black you are at the bottom of every sphere, and that they may be in the same boat as poor whites but on different decks (Ohri, 1988, p. 26).

The impetus to investigate and understand 'the blacks', and the problems with which they were associated, held sway. Research not only confirmed impressions at large in the public imagination, which as Hall (1978) argues, was rooted in the moral panic orchestrated by political leaders who charged a black presence with societal problems; research in education served to reinforce the sense that blacks did indeed present problems (see, for example, Nehaul’s (1996) review of literature). The construction of black students as presenting problems itself failed to be problematised for decades. It was simply accepted and investigated, thereby colluding, whether intentionally or not, with popular politics while also, significantly, precluding other ways of conceptualising and investigating race and schooling.

But in the 1990s, things took a decisive turn. And again, government policy, and government partnership with academics documented the change. The new Labour government stance to
race and schooling came in their *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997) and *Excellence in Cities* (DfEE, 1999) documents. Three major research studies of the decade, which were commissioned by the government1 were, Gillborn and Gipps' (1996) *Recent Research on the Achievements of Ethnic Minority Pupils*, Blair and Bourne's (1998) *Making a Difference: Teaching and Learning in Successful Multi-ethnic Schools* and Ofsted's (1999) *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils*.

Without becoming closely engaged with the content of any of these, even the casual reader would be able to spot a pattern that links all of them. There is a basic concern with 'achievement' or 'attainment' or 'success' of the 'ethnic pupil' along with a general notion of 'excellence'. There is little if any allusion to the underachieving, problem-causing black – or as they were previously known, immigrant, West Indian or African-Caribbean – pupils. Two major shifts have occurred, one away from talk of underachievement to talk of achievement, the other from talk of the black or West Indian to the ethnic pupil.

It might be expected that blacks, at least, would welcome this change. There is no longer a commitment to the construction of blacks as a problem to normal schooling. Finally, the interest is on success. And consistent with this change in emphasis, by the close of the 1990s, the Secretary for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, could declare: 'There is a lot of good being done, things are improving and the gap in achievement is being narrowed' (Blunkett, 1999a).

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1 The Labour government came into power in the middle of the 1990s. Whilst in power the Conservatives commissioned what turned out to be *Recent Research and Making a Difference*. Blair and Bourne (1998) revealed that upon assuming power, the Labour government endorsed *Making a Difference*. As Blair and Bourne acknowledged *Recent Research* as an antecedent to *Making a Difference*, there is, perhaps, implicit endorsement by the Labour government of *Recent Research*. Whilst Labour's endorsement of *Recent Research* may remain speculative, it is the case that Labour commissioned *Raising Attainment*. Amongst the many interpretations that might be gathered from this, I highlight the following: despite a change in government, there was continuity in the approach to race and schooling at the level of government. The continuity pointed to a fundamental change and an emerging consensus, that crossed even a political divide, on the issue of race and schooling.
"Making a Difference," a book-length report on schools with practices that are successful for black children would endorse that view. It makes reading that is like a balm on the eyes, heart and mind made sore by a history of conflict and failure. Blair and Bourne (1998) in fact bring instruction and succour for black and white readers, teachers and students, parents as well as government. They describe heads and teachers, black, Asian and white, responding to the multicultural space, taking on sensitive issues and creating dynamic learning contexts. They equally show, given these environments, black children shining through academically, and as reasonable, responsive students enjoying and loyal to their schools and to education. Perhaps things have improved.

School effectiveness research influenced "Making a Difference." It was premised on the assumption that schools make a difference. This was consistent with the researchers’ brief to generate ‘positive and practical insights into the characteristics and strategies of successful multi-ethnic schools ... and to try to identify which features of good practice might be transferable between schools’ (p. 1). The researchers, therefore, set about seeking schools that did make a difference for black children – and just as soon found that to be a difficult task. The national search for schools that had over 10% black children and were achieving the national average (5 A* - C in GCSEs grades) resulted in seven schools. Within these, the researchers found that the overall performance of some schools often masked the fact that black students did not participate in the achievement levels; further, no boys’ or co-educational secondary school suggested itself as clearly excellent for their black students. Forced to change their selection criteria, they decided to investigate ‘schools which were doing better than like schools’ (p. 25) and in this way found three primary schools which could be regarded as ‘clearly successful’ (p. 26) and two secondary schools that had ‘won the trust and support of minority group parents and students’ (p.26) and were striving to raise attainment.
Nevertheless, the researchers reported that *Making a Difference* drew on ‘the exemplar materials’ (p. 5) of nine primary and twelve secondary in making their argument. They chose ‘to deal with different aspects in each school, which together [with] the five brief case studies… help to create a composite picture of some things schools might do to enhance the achievement of the minority ethnic groups within them’ (p. 27).

Northern Catholic impressed the researchers. This secondary school performed below the national average consistently but was steadily improving each year. The researchers concluded that ‘the important point for [Northern Catholic was] that a crucial change in the culture [had] occurred and that this enable[d] the serious business of teaching and of raising the achievement of all students to occur’ (p. 198). It was a change in culture that started with genuine respect for black students and their concerns. There was, as was the case for other successful schools, ‘a recognition of group (historical, cultural and linguistic) needs, strengths, disadvantages and perceptions’ (p. 169). Coupled with clear leadership, high expectations and whole school organisation, the performance of the lowest achieving group, black boys, improved and the whole school seemed transformed.

It seemed important that improvement started with the appointment of black Head teacher, but her success was dependent on being able to secure the support of white teachers in effecting the change within the school. White teachers’ commitment was only secured after they felt they could take issue with the Head and engage discussions on sensitive issues. Within this context, white teachers’ major fear of being accused of being racist, that otherwise inhibited them from reprimanding black students, gave way to white teachers confidently challenging black students both intellectually and behaviourally. The teachers

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2 This is seen when one compares the percentages given by Blair and Bourne, (1998, p.178) with published school performance figures for the same period.
subsequently grew confident in their practice and their commitment to the change in ethos introduced by the Head. Eventually talk of black failure was replaced by teachers concentrating on finding ways of improving their practice for all children.

Black children also grew confident as students. They had high expectations of teachers and expected respectful behaviour from them. In this context the students were willing to accept fault and apologise when challenged, even for (mis)representing an incident as racist, as they were confident to report teachers whom the students thought behaved inappropriately towards them because they were black. This removed the pressure for them to prove themselves within classrooms, helped them to avoid the cycle of conflict and allowed them to concentrate on learning.

Blair and Bourne (1998), therefore, provided evidence of black students and white teachers both enjoying school success. The researchers' signal contribution was in revealing that successful schools fostered a climate in which neither students nor teachers felt disenfranchised or vulnerable because of race. Black children could expect to be treated fairly and respectfully, with the opportunity for having unacceptable practice towards them addressed should it occur. Teachers could feel confident in undertaking their full duties to black children, with the knowledge that accusations of racism made against them by students would be dealt with in a way with which the teachers felt satisfied.

However, as the details of Blair and Bourne's methodology revealed, such success is far from being widespread occurrence. Making a Difference sought, elicited and described elements of success. The five case study schools were not unequivocally successful places; and the focus on Northern Catholic, for example, was not able either to fully represent what happened in the other twenty-one schools on which the report based its general findings, or even to represent the full life within Northern Catholic. Further, though these did not receive any
attention, the researchers stated that black parents and students across all the schools in the study expressed concerns about racism; about low expectations; unfair practices by teachers; poor communication; lack of understanding and missed opportunities for effective partnership between parents and schools (Blair and Bourne, 1998, p. 6). The age-old problems remained. The difference was that the researchers chose to focus and report on elements of successful practice, and on the successful practice of Northern Catholic.

Despite its potential and their justification of it, it was noticeable that the researchers seemed to have a sense of unease with their project. Making the point that the age-old problems remained, if only in passing, was one way in which they suggested their unease. In stating that they ‘make no apology for the essentially descriptive nature of the report’ (p. 21), they highlighted that unease. Why should they be defensive about ‘rich description’? Perhaps, part of the unease resides in them only describing success. For it is they who establish that no school achieves unequivocal success for their black children. The way forward, may not, after all, reside in rich description of success; that shrouds persistent failure as well as the extent to which success is limited.

Ultimately, therefore, such rich description of success undermines the possibility to realise and sustain the same. Subsequently, perhaps, it may prove more beneficial to explore in greater detail, how the few contexts that do, create and sustain what success they achieve. In being like other schools, that is, having elements of failure even if they also achieve some success, such examples under study might prove beneficial in suggesting what other schools might do to achieve success; at any rate, it could provide hope and inspiration. Importantly, it retains the fact that if things are improving, it is not yet possible to speak unequivocally of success. Notwithstanding, Making a Difference has shown itself an invaluable document in making forthright recommendations that the government, policy makers and educators should adopt should they want to improve the attainment of black children. In particular, Blair and
Bourne were quite clear in their position that race should be made a central feature of education training, practice and discourse.

It was curious, therefore, that the government commissioned another study by Ofsted, when three of the four research questions that the Ofsted team investigated were quite clearly answered by Blair and Bourne (1998). Apart from repeating and directly influencing the use of the term ‘raising attainment’, perhaps this was done in the interest of replicating findings. Interestingly, however, the Ofsted study did not mention the Blair and Bourne (1998) as one might have expected, given they are of the same family. Instead, the Ofsted team returned to Gillborn and Gipps (1996). Curiously again, Ofsted’s first research question asked: ‘What evidence do schools have on the relative performance of pupils from different ethnic groups?’ (Ofsted, 1999, p. 5). The Gillborn and Gipps (1996) study was a review of many significant research studies in the field of race and schooling. While they dispensed with the term ‘black underachievement’ in favour of ‘the relative achievement of black students’, a point conceded by Ofsted (1999), Gillborn and Gipps (1996) stated that the data base on attainment by ethnicity was poor because of poor ethnic monitoring procedures throughout the system.

That Ofsted (1999) asks the question again seems important. What evidence do schools have on the relative performance of pupils from different ethnic groups? Well, the answer from a number of studies to date (Troya, 1984; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Blair and Bourne, 1998) is a resounding: ‘Not much’. This logically leads to asking: ‘Where then is the evidence to support the widespread belief that particular groups are not achieving as well as others?’ Where is the evidence to justify race as a category within educational training, practice and discourse? The commissioning of another report, covering to a large degree, the same ground as one recently conducted might not have been undertaken to replicate findings. It could be seen as some sort of rejection of the Blair and Bourne (1998) study. It could be
argued that the DfE sought alternative recommendations to those that called for placing race at the centre of policy and practice in education. We will come to that in more detail shortly.

Here let us note that the finding by Ofsted (1999) that ethnic monitoring in schools was in shambles led to the researchers strongly calling for actions of correction. Like Blair and Bourne (1998), the Ofsted team called for the creation of a reliable and consistent system of ethnic monitoring to raise awareness of and tackle black underachievement in schools. For despite all the talk of success and improvement in achievement, Ofsted (1999) found that schools' and teachers' practices relied on 'hunches, impressions and stereotypes' (p. 7) when dealing with black children. And even though both reports showed teachers persisting in the notion that they treated all students the same, there remained general uncertainty about notions of improvement in black attainment as well as what might be efficacious in securing it.

Still David Blunkett would insist that there is 'a welcome improvement in the attainment of black pupils, who along with pupils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, have narrowed the gap with white children' (Blunkett, 1999b). This actually contradicts Gillborn and Gipps' (1996, p. 78) finding that, 'the gap is growing between the highest and lowest achieving ethnic groups [with] African Caribbean young people, especially boys, not [sharing] equally in the increasing rates of achievement; in some areas their performance has actually worsened.'

The discrepancy may be explained by the fact that when Blunkett spoke of an increase in attainment, he declined to state that he was referring to students' performance in GNVQs together with GCSEs. It is a most significant detail. Blunkett referred to the Youth Cohort Study (Government Statistical Service, 1999), another research study commissioned by government. In this study, unlike the past studies within the series, and unlike Gillborn and
Gipps (1996) and a number of other researchers, the measure for attainment was not only GCSEs.

The measure had been changed. It is a change that a reader of the report might miss, given as it was, as a discreet footnote (see Government Statistical Service, 1999, p. 9). The scrutiny that this provoked in Stanford (2001) revealed that the change in measure and its subsequent use by Blunkett was, at least, questionable. The Youth Cohort Study did indeed show that the gap between blacks and whites reduced, rather than increased, in 1998. However, the ratio (0.6) between the performance of black and white students was exactly the same as it was a decade ago (see Government Statistical Service, 1999, p. 9). Further, intriguingly, the addition of GNVQs to the measure did not appear to affect whites' performance. They made no gains in performance in 1998, while black and Pakistani children made the biggest gains of the decade and in 1998. The only other group to have made comparable gains in the decade was girls back in 1990 who also did not make any in 1998.

My scrutiny of other claims made by the government in that paper (Stanford, 2001) highlighted that in his analysis of the Labour government's policies for education, Excellence in Schools (EIS) (DfEE, 1997), Gillborn (1998) noted that two paragraphs of an eighty-page text attended to the question of race. He argued that where it did, the document actually named only Gypsy Travellers within an otherwise undifferentiated use of the term ethnic minority. Therefore, despite the fact that blacks and Asians comprise up to eighty per cent of the minority population, the ethnic minority the government chose to identify were white, albeit, Gypsy Travellers with their own specific cultural practices. The Labour government, therefore, might be seen signalling an intention to give little attention to race in general and to blacks and Asians in particular.

A year later, Excellence in Cities (EIC) was published. A complementary document to the
EIS, EIC focused, as its title suggests, schools in cities. By virtue of the demographics of the
major cities alone, one might expect that EIC would provide some detail on race. The
document, in fact, featured a smiling black boy at the centre of its cover holding the delighted
attention of his teacher and classmate as they apparently discussed his completed exercise.
The government did acknowledge that the school 'population is so diverse. Children bring
different qualities and experiences to school. Each boy and girl has different needs (p.
7)...[therefore] our aim is to offer equality of opportunity...diversity of provision...[to
achieve] excellence through diversity. Where necessary cut through cultural resistance (p.
23)... to shape the pattern of diversity across all areas' (p. 26). However, 'diversity' actually
concerned itself with 'extending the opportunity for the gifted and talented' (p. 21).
'Diversity' was not operationalised to mean blacks and Asians and whites. EIC provided no
specific detail for black or other non-white students. It, in fact, only once used the term
'African-Caribbean' (DfEE, 1999, p. 16) and that was only in passing as the government
argued for its commitment to raising teacher performance.

The government seemed quite purposeful in not actually naming blacks, although throughout
the document there was practice of invoking blacks through the use of the term 'ethnic
minority' or a persistent use of a metonymic 'minority'. So, for example, there was the
concern that 'lessons may be disrupted by a disaffected minority' (p. 4, my emphasis).
Elsewhere this disaffected minority is, 'a vocal and disruptive disaffected minority' (p. 10).
This diction alludes to research literature that easily generates images of black students.

Considerations like these, along with other examples I presented, (Stanford, 2001)
particularly Labour's exploitation of the momentum generated by the Lawrence Report,
supported my argument that the Labour government's response to race was

to cash in on the currency of race whilst dispensing with the person and concerns of
the black subject. There is a retention and exploitation of the associations (and also ascribed negativity of which blacks have struggled to rid themselves) without any attention or intention to address their particular concerns. It seems we are witnessing a throwing out of the baby while keeping the bath water. It really is a case of race, race everywhere and not a black in sight (Stanford, 2001, p. 96).

1.2 Focus in Race and Schooling Research of the 1990s

Still, research studies in the 1990s, not directly associated with the government, were also concerned with the issue of school success. However, against the government’s lead, there was an interest in focussing on blackness or the black persona, within and in addition to, investigating the context of successful schools and teachers.

Nehaul’s (1996) study stands as a landmark exemplifying a shift to investigating successful school contexts. Beginning with a survey of race and schooling studies, Nehaul (1996) argued that the survey revealed that the history of underachievement was inadequate because it served more to attribute blame than to increasing understanding of black students’ progress and achievement. She, therefore, attempted a study that would accommodate racism as well as antiracist teachers, good practice in schools and academic success amongst black children. Importantly, Nehaul (1996) explicitly stated her assumption that white teachers in Britain today are likely to hold a wide range of attitudes to racial and cultural differences that may be positive and/or negative.

Certainly, the weight of research evidence over the years suggests that white teachers and black children have experienced sustained negative experiences (Cuard, 1971; James and Jeffcoate, 1981; Cashmore and Troyna, 1982; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Gillborn, 1990; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Blythe and Milner, 1996; Sewell, 1997; Wright, 1986, 1987, 1992; Wright,
Weekes and McGlaughlin, 2000). However, it may be the case that evidence of success was not actively sought before. There were teachers who tried to engage, indeed, fought to improve black and other minority children’s schooling (Scott, 1971; Gaine, 1979; Dhondy, 1981). Nehaul’s study, therefore, marked a somewhat symbolic return, even an ‘official acknowledgement’ of white teachers’ place in black children’s schooling, after years of attack and ostracism.

Her approach to teachers was coupled with a willingness to critique evidence of rebellious behaviour amongst black children. Nehaul’s (1996) project was not to castigate black children. On the contrary, she saw herself facilitating their success by resisting the somewhat privileging stance afforded the ‘culture of resistance’ theory (Mac an Ghaill, 1988) in explaining their response to school. She critiqued the tendency to defend their behaviour simply because it operationalised cultural characteristics, especially if children intended to cause negative results by the behaviour, and if it would meet with disapproval within the cultural group. She concluded that a ‘culture of resistance’ could be explained; it need not be condoned.

Nehaul (1996) sought and researched what she saw as ‘positive schools’, those which served black children well. Her selection criteria meant that she was highly likely to find ‘positive teachers’. She did, and for the most part, explored their ‘positive attitudes’. Subsequently, the study lost the dimension of reflecting ‘the positive and/or negative’ amongst teachers. Insight into teachers’ attitude was further curtailed by Nehaul’s methodology as she relied upon participant observation supplemented by structured interviews. She explicitly stated wanting to form an independent view of what was happening in teachers’ classrooms (p. 134). So Nehaul observed teachers without attempting to enter into their realities as they might have experienced and constructed them. Where that opportunity might have arisen with interviews, it was restricted as the interviews were structured and mostly used to gather more information.
on children. So, although a groundbreaking study, more, perhaps, remains to be heard from white teachers in successful school contexts.

Callender (1997) joined Nehaul (1996) in the shift to examining successful contexts for black students and their teachers. However, Callender (1997) focused on black teachers arguing that theirs is a teaching style that is informed by black culture and is distinctly black. She implied that this style worked particularly well with Black children; therefore, the study focussed on delineating the blackness of the black teaching style by examining the practice and philosophy of black teachers. This was intended to lead to acknowledgement of black teachers’ particular contribution and to suggest particular practices that enhanced the educational attainment of Black children.

What began as a well-meaning intention to celebrate black teachers’ work, nonetheless, changed into a non-committed uneasiness by the end of the study. The impetus to establish a black subject led to an essentialising argument that undermined the project. Blacks and whites were positioned as polar opposites as Callender operationalised monolithic ideas of black and white culture, which spanned and ignored nationalities, class, gender and individual positionings. So Callender was content, for example, that the white teachers in her study were white although one was a New Zealander and one was British. Similarly, she was content that the black teachers were black although one was Nigerian, one British, two Jamaican, one Guyanese and one Trinidadian.

Callender (1997) did not convincingly establish that there is a Black teaching style. Close examination revealed that many examples put forward were neither necessarily black nor white responses. Nevertheless, in the interest of establishing a black difference, as even Callender (1997) herself owned, some practices that ‘would disturb people who read the book’ and that ‘black teachers educated in the UK would find unpalatable’ were used to
exemplify a black teaching style. A case in point was the practice of one male (Jamaican) teacher. He was reported to believe that it was necessary to knock students down to build them up. He, supposedly, playfully threatened to hit children to keep them in line. He quite openly embarrassed one child who wanted to go to the toilet. Especially since the children were young primary school children, these examples seem to constitute, at the least, bullying behaviour.

More than this, Callender (1997) reported, positively, what could be seen as a discriminating practice amongst black teachers that favoured black and not white students. She argued that there is a degree of sensitivity between black teachers and black children, which is less developed for white children, because of their cultural backgrounds. This situation works to black students' advantage supporting their performance within the classroom. While one can see the plausibility of this argument, one is not unaware that British teachers and children would be able to claim sensitivities that Jamaicans andBritons, for example, might not share despite being black. Further, one would expect that black teachers, as professionals, would work at developing their sensitivity with white children, if lacking, not see the situation as constituting good practice. It cannot be good simply because blacks benefit instead of whites. It harbours a discriminatory practice that the black community rightly criticises when reversed. Taken to its logical conclusion, it would be legitimate for white parents to insist that white teachers teach their children.

It is the case that what was presented was Callender's analysis of the teachers' practice in her quest to establish a black teaching style, not necessarily the teachers' explanations of their practice. It is also important to note that no claim Callender (1997) made regarding a distinctive black style seemed to have the support of more than three of the six black teachers. The Nigerian provided most of the evidence regarding African retained features that Callender (1997) argued was evident in a black response. A Jamaican male teacher
exemplified many other examples. The only black British teacher was very rarely mentioned, and when she was, she was seen to be deviating from the black norm. Callender (1997) actually spoke disapprovingly of this teacher. Dismissing her practice as 'unusual', being like that of white teachers, Callender seemed to think herself justified in excluding this teacher from analysis within the study.

It could be argued that since Callender’s focus was on black teachers to uncover black practice she might be excused for dismissing the black Briton whose practice Callender regarded as white. However, Callender’s notion of a black teaching style was premised on the black teacher, that is, the teacher who was biologically black. The black Briton’s practice had its place in Callender’s analysis, especially since she was studying the British context. The dismissal of the Briton, therefore, suggests that Callender either did not know how to respond to a teacher who was biologically black but had what seemed a white practice, or that Callender would not allow, what seemed an anomaly to her, to disrupt the concept of blackness with which she was working.

Callender (1997) also failed to show that the educational attainment of black children was higher or better with black teachers. In fact, black children, particularly boys, were subjected to greater degrees of control and criticism than white, a pattern reported of white teachers’ classrooms (see, for example, Gillborn, 1990). And although Callender argued that the children responded positively to this because they ‘culturally connected’ with the teachers, she also admitted that some black children disliked their black teachers and their teaching style premised on cultural connection.

Unlike Nehaul’s (1996) project, Callender’s (1997) ended on a disappointing note, a situation of which she was not unaware. It arguably did not take the debate on race and schooling forward. If anything it threw into sharp relief the tension around claiming a black identity.
Indeed, it inadvertently warned of the dangers that might result from a purist sense of a black and white divide. Ironically, the essentialist project running through Callender’s (1997) work seemed to restrict and undermine it.

However, Callender (1997) is not alone in her approach to race and schooling. In his 1997 study, Sewell attempted to delineate blackness in explaining how black male students ‘survived schooling’. Notwithstanding his focus, he also reported the teachers’ interaction with the boys, producing rough categories to indicate teachers who were supportive of, irritated by or antagonistic towards black boys in the context investigated. Interestingly, Sewell’s analysis revealed that more white teachers than black were supportive of black boys (pp. 33-34). The overwhelming majority of black staff were categorised as being either irritated by or antagonistic towards black students. One white teacher was irritated by black boys, although, the majority were antagonistic. Significantly, the Head and deputy Head, who were black, were amongst those labelled antagonistic.

These findings are surprising. Certainly, they challenge Callender’s (1996) thesis that there is some kind of natural cultural chemistry that smooths the way for success between black teachers and students. However, one might also be suspicious of Sewell’s notion of support; evidence of ‘the supportive teacher’ was in one teacher defending the persistent late arrival of students for lessons. That teacher ‘could not see what all the fuss was about’ (p. 34). Along with another white teacher, that same teacher’s supportiveness was evidenced in running a basketball team, and having “informed” discussions with groups of African-Caribbean boys on topics of their interest … [doing this] at the beginning or end of lessons’ (p. 34).

The findings are also surprising because Sewell’s classification of the boys suggested that the boys were, largely, what he called, conformists. He argued that the boys’ response to school could be classified into five categories. At one extreme were those Sewell labelled
conformists, at the other. those labelled rebels. Sewell did not state this explicitly, but the conformsists seemed to achieve academic success, while the rebels did not. He did highlight that the conformists sought to identify with black consciousness in the form of literature and black friends outside of school, but actively disassociated themselves from what was regarded as characteristically black behaviour within school. In contrast, the rebels were seen to be in deliberate contention with school processes. They emphasised what was regarded as black in 'music, hair, dress and attitudes' (Sewell, 1997, p. 33) and castigated the conformists for not participating.

In conclusion, Sewell argued that the conformists' distancing of themselves from stereotypically black behaviour in school was evidence of them operating racist discourses. He laid a similar charge on the Head emphasising that the Head endorsed what was considered conventional hairstyles, simply shaven heads, while banning, what Sewell argued was considered a particular black style, decorating the head with shaven images. This one act was used to instil the sense that the Head perpetuated a racist discourse against his students.

Sewell’s study was about delineating blackness. The way he argued for his thesis suggested that he was not merely investigating how black boys survived. He was interested in how blackness itself survived schooling. And throughout his text Sewell gave implicit support to the rebels’ behaviour, and the teachers who tolerated that rebellion. The conformists, Head and other irritated and antagonistic teachers did not appear to help the survival of Sewell’s notion of blackness.

Nevertheless, although Sewell (1997) appeared to approve of the rebels’ blackness, even they did not escape his analysis unscathed. In a damning conclusion Sewell (1997) declared:

Surviving modern schooling has indeed become an art form for these boys. Some
have chiselled out the craven image of Conformity and have sold their souls [presumably to the white devils on p. 109] in the process. Others have cut out a rebel phallus that has lost touch with their minds and inner selves (Sewell, 1997, p. 220).

In the end, (especially given Sewell's presentation of himself as a black researcher, something we discuss later) it appeared that Sewell had reservations. After all, by his very position as the researcher, he might have had candidacy as a student to receive the rebels' castigation. In the end, he seems to reject blackness if it asks that he lose touch with his mind and inner self. Presumably, he would not count himself amongst those who sell their souls to white devils. This justifies Mirza's (1999, p. 144) charge against Sewell of 'buying straight into a pathologised view of black masculinity' and being unable to suggest 'an alternative third way to theorise black masculinity'.

1:3 Blackness and Schooling Through A Feminist Lens

Working within the field of masculinity, Wright, Weekes, McLaughlin and Webb (1998) turned to feminist theory to defend a notion that race is a masculinised category that conditions a particular understanding of blacks. This understanding is assessed as restrictive. For black boys, this has led to their masculinity being necessarily presented as a macho response in the face of being denied access to white male identities.

Wright et al (1998) argued that the concept of masculinity is theorised in terms of competitiveness and aggression. White boys are given access to kinds of masculinity based on these traits but which are also recognised as prestigious. Black boys are denied access to prestigious forms of masculinity. Nevertheless, they retain the notion of aggression and

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3 Sewell (1997) also seems to confuse behaviour typical of the culture of resistance theory with black culture. A culture of resistance has been shown to be a sub-culture that both black and white children engage (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1992; Connell, 1995). It has become firmly associated with black
competitiveness, the latter transmuting into the contemporary, 'confrontation', inherent in the concept of black masculinity.

The researchers presented the argument that, as students, black boys are then expected by schools to reproduce behaviour identified as stereotypical of black masculinity, and/or are channelled into sports. Where the boys seek to resist the reproduction of given stereotypical behaviour and respond in ways that undermine the ascribed stereotype, they find that that alternate behaviour is not encouraged. Where they refuse to be channelled into sports, their masculinity seems to float untethered, unnamed because it does not fit into any recognisable, acceptable expressions of masculinity. So black masculinity is confirmed to be illegitimate. Wright et al (1998) argue that it is this state of affairs that leads to black boys' poor academic results and exclusion.

Wright et al (1998) conclude that 'race' acts to position black masculinities as illegitimate, rather than merely subordinate' (p. 84, italics in the original). They thereby posed a direct challenge to previous analyses of black masculinity that have failed to theorise expressions that did not conform with established thought. Importantly, they redeemed it from pathological explanation of black male behaviour in identifying male behaviour, in general, as the source that suggests pathology. Further, in the world of masculinity, black masculinity is not subordinate. It is illegitimate.

There is a tension in their argument that merits some consideration. They establish that masculinity, black and white, is constructed as aggressive and competitive. Whites are allowed to express this masculinity in ways that mask their aggression and competitiveness, or render them acceptable. Blacks however are denied such expression. Aggression and confrontation become equated with black masculinity rather than seen as a masculine thing.
Implicitly, therefore, precisely because they argue that black expression of masculinity has been made illegitimate, Wright et al (1998) suggest that black masculinity is, in fact, the same as white masculinity. The difference is that masculinity is seen as illegitimate when expressed by black boys. This tension is compounded by their omission to establish what they perceive to be the distinctive black masculinity that they are arguing is illegitimate.

Heidi Mirza, by nature of her project, has long worked with the idea of successful black children as her project concerned itself with the experiences of female students. Her earlier work (Mirza, 1992) provided the scaffolding upon which she has sought lately to theorise the experiences of the feminine. Like Wright et al (1998), Mirza (1997) argued that explanations of race and social change privilege particular masculine responses such that discourses of race and social change have become masculine.

She presented the idea of ‘community’ in black discourse as an example that readily draws on the arena of the street as the site of political struggle, involving antagonism and oppositionality. However, drawing on Hill Collins (1990), a feminist theorist, Mirza (1997) maintained that the community identity of black women activists is located within a different political site. It is a more private space of self-evaluation and self-reliance and self-expression fuelling and being fuelled by group survival. This look inwards counters the relational. Further, rather than being antagonistic, it is inclusive of the mainstream.

In their study of the women who created and maintained the growing industry of Saturday schools, Reay and Mirza (1998) revealed that the schools grew out of women’s own world with different meanings, values, codes, and understandings that did not exist in resistance, but in refusal of the gaze of the other. Saturday schools were contexts that displaced whiteness, and privileged blackness as the unspoken norm (Mirza, 1997, p. 273) providing an
alternative world for black children as students. Nevertheless, the women operated ‘within and between, under, and alongside the mainstream educational and labour market structures, subverting, renaming and reclaiming opportunities for their children through their transformative pedagogy, that ironically appears conservative on the surface with its focus on inclusion and dialogue with the mainstream’ (Mirza, 1997).

1:4 Race and School Success: lessons from America

Both Sewell’s (1997) and Callender’s (1996) work hold traces of studies conducted by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Fordham (1988). The latter studies were set against the backdrop of changes in the conception of blackness within the American society. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) argued that blacks who would perpetuate the black identity of the 70s actively ‘police the boundaries’ of blackness and punish those blacks who transgress them.

This has consequences for black students. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) report that conforming to schooling and succeeding academically are considered as boundary crossing by those who police blackness, indeed, according to their report, by the black community in America. Because only whites had the privilege of succeeding historically, the two became coupled, that is, whiteness and success. If individual blacks showed signs of succeeding or wanting to succeed their actions were viewed as disloyal, as ‘acting white’, and would be punished by

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1 Baker, Best and Lindeborg (1996) highlight distinctions in the British and American social and academic response to blackness. They argue that while both politicised the term ‘black’, the American project arising out of the politics of 1970s America, proved more successful in generating a sense of common identity amongst blacks in America. It led in fact to the emergence of a resilient monolithic or essentialist notion of blackness within America, and by virtue of its success, throughout the world. However, Barker et al (1996) credit the British academic tradition with ushering the new black politics of knowledge of the future. In Britain, Hall (1996a) argued that though the essential black subject was, perhaps, necessary and useful in the past, the essentialising moment had passed. He called for ‘new ethnicities’, which would take account of issues of parentage, class, gender, nationality, modernity and sexuality. Nevertheless, I would maintain that the two traditions can be seen as complementing each other. The black American politics, particularly of the 1970s, documents blacks as a community establishing their persons and presence within a context where they were denied. The black British tradition developed in Hall’s work focused on the members of that black community assuming individual positioning where that is denied.
the collective. Apart from the punishment from the collective, the individual is faced with the choice of choosing to fail or succeed, and the concomitant psychology of acting black or acting white. The individual has to resolve the issue of succeeding and acting white.

Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) study gives insight into this crisis amongst some black secondary-age students in America. Students were aware of the code. Those who decided to succeed faced the choice of ostracism or finding a strategy that would mask their commitment to success. This Fordham and Ogbu (1986) theorised as 'the burden of acting white'. Some students rejected that burden, adopted an oppositional stance to schooling and experienced general school failure. Those who chose success and did not create a cover were duly victimised. Others who chose success camouflaged their efforts by choosing and emphasising their participation in a range of activities regarded as black.

'Acting white' gestated. Two years later it developed into the theory of 'racelessness' as a factor in black students school success' (Fordham, 1988, p. 54). In this model Fordham argued that successful black students consciously or unconsciously, resolved the conflict of wanting to succeed and remain within the black collective by appearing raceless. These students maximise their potential for success by refusing to participate in establishing a distinctive sense of blackness within the school and disassociating themselves from the negativity often ascribed to blacks. This is one interpretation of Fordham's argument anyway. She argues that,

those students who minimise their connection to the indigenous culture and assimilate into the school culture improve their chances of succeeding in school.

Unlike the students who seek to maintain their identification and affiliation with the indigenous culture, students who assimilate seek to maximise their success potential by minimising their relationship to the black community and to the stigma attached to
'blackness'. These students attempt to develop a raceless persona to succeed in school and in life. Racelessness then is the desired and eventual outcome of developing a raceless persona, and is either a conscious or unconscious effort on the part of students to disaffiliate themselves from the fictive-kinship system (Fordham, 1988, pp. 57-8).

It seems Fordham (1988) regards racelessness as an unacceptable thing. In conclusion, she questioned whether it was a pragmatic strategy or a Pyrrhic victory. She argued that if blacks were to accept a lack of connectedness to the black community from their young people then racelessness would be a pragmatic strategy that would secure academic achievement for black students. According to Fordham it was imperative that blacks made a decision on the matter and also made their relationship with the wider society explicit.

In the data presented by Fordham (1988), the voices of the children were interesting; they also served to undermine Fordham's seemingly negative analysis of their strategies and the identities that they inhabited. For example, by exploring the gender specific strategies, it was noticeable that high achieving males found it more difficult than girls to present a raceless persona. They were more torn by the burden of acting white; finding it more difficult, they actively sought very public performances of being black. Girls for whom there seemed to be less pressure about being black and academically successful, were less concerned about public performances. However both had goals and determinedly work towards them. School success was used to make a positive political statement about blacks, as well as secure personal rewards. Black peers were important to them and it is for this reason that those who did, employed (black) tactics to allay peers' suspicion of racelessness.

What becomes clear from the study is that these students knew how to act white and black. With 'acting white' and 'acting black', it could be argued that it was in this way that they...
became 'raceless'. Considering that race was and still is a disqualifying ideology for blacks (Tiainen-Antilla, 1994), to reject the idea altogether deconstructs the 'naturalness' of the 'human races', and dismantles, if only ideologically, the hierarchy of races. It underscores the fact that 'black' and 'white' are constructed categories. Rather than being a Pyrrhic victory or just a pragmatic strategy, it could be seen as a quite a revolutionary redefinition of their realities, an attempt at defining themselves in relation to the two concepts, an attempt at owning the two worlds.

1: 5 An Anthropology of Contemporary Blackness

The study by Wright et al (1998) was directly influenced by Claire Alexander’s, The Art of Being Black. In her anthropological study, Alexander (1996) took up Hall’s theoretical project (see footnote on p. 26) to look inwards at the black experience. She explored it at the substantive level delving beneath stereotypical notions of blackness to reveal the making of black men, with the emphasis on investigating the making of 'black' as opposed to the sense of a pre-determined 'black man'.

Alexander argued against equating black identity with race, that is, biology, to reveal that blackness finds its commonality in response. In particular, she held black masculinity in a skilful analytic framework to show it as an extension of masculinity rather than an alternative to social status. ‘It is... an articulated response to structural inequality, enacting and subverting dominant definitions of power and control, rather than substituting for them’ (pp. 136-137).

She maintained that the response is not necessarily fixed. It is contextualised and dependent on the particular outcomes the individual may wish to obtain within the given context. However, importantly, it is in actively choosing to act in particular ways from available
possibilities that sustains the continuity of being black. The suggestion is that blacks have honed a particular way of responding that informs, or more correctly, can inform their behaviour. For the point is that a black identity is assent, conscious, political assent. It is an imperative that is both obeyed and performed (Hall, 1996b, p. vi).

Alexander decided against theorising her findings as she felt that a theory would fail to capture the complexities of the lived experience. She opted to conclude by reporting that being black was ‘at once fluid and transiently rigid... What may seem from an external standpoint an impossibly contradictory stance ... [was] inhabited without reservation ... [by informants who] both eschewed essentialism and enacted it, constructed themselves and were constructed, won and lost imaginative space – sometimes at the same time’ (pp. 194 - 5).

It seems, then, that Alexander has brought the American and British academic explication of blackness within one framework showing where each still finds relevance for blacks. Studies like Callender (1997) and Sewell (1997) suggest that this has significance for research in race and schooling. Her influence is now finding its way into thinking in education, influencing work like that of Mirza (1997) and Wright et al (1998) in the explication of blackness outside essentialist or oppositional notions.

1:6 An Unsp +akable Thing: contemporary blackness

Fordham (1988) argued that black achievement is bound up with black students' identity. Her study, along with studies like Sewell (1997) Gillborn (1990), Mac an Ghaill (1988) and

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1 The tensions in Callender's (1997) and Sewell's (1997) studies seem to arise in part from their adapting influences from the American tradition. The argument here is not that they should have applied a British theory to a British context. It is more that their studies might have benefited from taking account of the different purposes that the two academic traditions serve. The American tradition documents the emergence of a monolithic or essentialist sense of blackness arising out the particular politics of 1970s black America. The essentialist framework of the 1970s, however, fails to hold the tensions or to adequately explain black politics and identity in the 1990s. The British academic tradition of the comparable period attempts to deconstruct the monolith, providing a frame that allows for the
Fuller (1982), firmly support that view. Fordham (1988) has argued that the black community should decide whether it would accept a loss of connectedness to the black community in order to raise the achievement of black children.

Clearly, it is no mean thing that she asks. For her theory of racelessness confirms that black students are not simply/only/purely black. What Fordham regards as a ‘loss of connectedness to the black community’ is already a reality whether blacks accept it or not. Certainly, it is the case that the studies concerned with race and school success reviewed in this chapter, forcefully suggest that blackness is inclusive of the mainstream that is, of whiteness. And like Fordham, it would seem that all the researchers stopped just short of actually saying, blacks, well, are black and white. The black subject is black and white. When Fordham asked the black community to make its relationship to the wider society explicit, she perhaps was both declining the opportunity to state this and also indirectly provoke an admission. It would seem as if the writers have arrived at a statement that is at the moment, simply unspeakable.

1:7 A Summary: Research into Race and School Success

If it is true that black children’s achievement is bound up with their identity, perhaps it behoves those interested in raising their achievement to explore this unspeakable thing, that the black subject is black and white. It does seem the case that successful black* students are seen as having transgressed the boundaries of blackness – and are duly punished (Fordham and Ogbu, 1988; Mac an Ghaill, 1992; Sewell, 1997).

We also note that the general impetus in research at the moment is to uncover success, and that within this focus there is a lead by the government not to not to focus on race. The

* tensions inherent in contemporary blackness.

6 Fordham and Ogbu (1986); Fordham (1988); Alexander (1996); Mirza (1997); Sewell (1997); Callender (1997); Wright et al (1998).
government's lead on research has been an important influence in the history of race and schooling, and it continues to influence the conception and results of research. We know from the argument presented here that there is good reason to maintain some scepticism about the government's present attitude to race and schooling. The change from responding to blacks as problems and failures might be welcomed. However, one must remain mindful that talk of school success is not synonymous with actual school success.

We have also seen how the partnership between the government and researchers can lead to the exclusion of research interests that do not immediately serve government interests. While, such a partnership may continue for the foreseeable future, and while it is the case that researchers like the rest of society will be influenced by the activities of their society, it might also be incumbent on researchers to investigate things that do not serve the politics of the day.

There is some sign that while the government would like to promote a deracialised discourse on race and schooling, researchers have an interest in coming to terms with race in new ways. If these researchers are influenced by the general lead by government, they also want to know about white teachers, black teachers and black children as well as their successful contexts. Further, there is a resistance to representing schools as unequivocally successful. Researchers reveal sufficient information that subverts the lead by government, even where government has commissioned the research. Despite government intention and influence, there is a present reminder that old (dare I say it?) problems exist, and that race should not only remain part of race and schooling discourse, but that it, perhaps, should be a central part of it.

As researchers become engaged with race and schooling in new ways we see that the impetus to investigate success might become restricted by a narrow interpretation of both school success and issues of race. We might recall, for example, that Nehal's (1996) work was
important in acknowledging the place that white teachers have in black children’s schooling. It was also of significance that she premised her study on the belief that white teachers are likely to hold a wide range of attitudes to racial and cultural differences, which may be positive and/or negative.

However, Nehaul focussed on the positive dimension in her report, reporting on those things, she decided by observation, that were important in these contexts. As has been discussed, hers was an important shift in the way race and schooling is conceptualised. Perhaps, it can be built upon if research is able to access and hold within a framework the full(er) experiences of white teachers. Perhaps, it might prove beneficial to consider the complexity of being a white teacher working within successful school contexts with black children. Roman (1993), for one, makes the argument (and request) in declaring ‘white is colour!’ and that this needs to be taken into research consideration. Certainly, white teachers’ fear of being called racist and their claim to treat all students the same are persistent themes that have not been responded to – except in being dismissed or attacked.

Also, like the other research studies reviewed, Nehaul was interested in delineating the characteristics of success. This interest may have been influenced by the legacy of the school improvement movement, something Blair and Bourne (1998) explicitly acknowledged in their study. Consistent with the government agenda, the wish is to know the distinctive features of successful school contexts so that these can be applied to other contexts. While there are undoubtedly benefits to be had from this, as was seen in the studies of Blair and Bourne and Nehaul, this approach limits a fuller understanding of success. It supports a representation of a fairy-tale notion of successful school contexts where everything is very good, or everything is horrid.

Callender’s (1996) attempt at delineating a particular black style falls within this impetus to
identify the characteristic of success. In addition to that thrust, we saw that there was also a further danger in her tendency to working with limiting notions of race and schooling. On the one hand, her work looked to black teachers as a source for success, privileging the notion that black teachers’ blackness made them better equipped for teaching black children. Whatever the truth of this assumption, it is clear that the vast majority of black children will be taught by white teachers. And if Callender’s argument is premised on the blackness of the successful characteristics that she elicits from her analysis of her black teachers’ practice, then by virtue of the project, it will have limited application. Her thesis is that a black style is different from a white style.

On the other hand, the tendency to a limiting exclusionary impulse continues in Callender’s work to affect black teachers as well. In Callender’s work (as well as Sewell, 1997; Fordham and Ogba, 1986 and Fordham, 1988) we saw, for example, that there was a tendency to apply monolithic or essentialist understanding of blackness (and whiteness) in research on race and schooling. One can understand the legitimacy of applying understanding consistent with what remains a dominant discourse on blackness to the study of race. It was noticeable, however, that in their studies the researchers would dismiss, denounce, or at the least be wary of, blacks who did not conform to the researchers’ notion of blackness.

There is some evidence (Mirza, 1997 and Wright et al., 1998), that working outside the dominant discourse on blackness avoids both a pathological explanation of blackness and the possibility to accommodate broader interpretations of blackness. Work in the fields of cultural studies and anthropology certainly suggests another, perhaps, more appropriate approach to the study of race in contemporary society. And since it seems the case that research in the field of race and schooling has come to an impasse on the identity of black students, perhaps, another look outside the field might provide some insight into speaking that seems unspeakable.
1:8 Statement and Discussion of Research Questions and Related Issues

I would place this research study amongst those necessarily located within time and space; I would also investigate race and school success. These are the questions that this study seeks to answer:

1. What is the state of contemporary blackness?
2. How is race handled in successful school contexts?

The first question seeks ways of reconceptualising, literally putting into words, the unspeakable within contemporary black identity, namely, the seemingly impossible suggestion, that one can be black and white. I seek to understand, interpret and articulate blackness as it is revealing itself at present, that is, as a composite, even contradictory, identity. This question urgently needs attention, I believe, if black students are to be allowed to enjoy academic success, that is, to actively seek it and to do so without fear of or actual reprisal. I raise and answer this question because I see it as important, and necessarily important to blacks. I am cognisant that if contemporary blackness is an ‘unspeakable’ thing it may have remained so because it poses a question that is difficult to answer. Accordingly, raising the question instates the need not only to suggest an answer, but also to find a way within which – by which – an answer can be suggested. As will become clear in Part Two, it thereby, necessarily forces a new way, or more complex, way of conceptualising and conducting this research into race and schooling.

Raising the second question, and raising it together with the first, furthers the project of generating new ways of conceptualising and conducting research within the field of race and schooling. For to ask: ‘How is race handled in successful school contexts?’ is to make ‘race’

\[1\] I discuss my definition of success in the research design; see p. 122
the focus of research. This is an important shift away from foci of past research, specifically, from a focus on, for example, ‘black underachievement’, ‘racism’, ‘anti-racism’, and ‘multiculturalism’. The focus in this study necessarily takes account of such issues; however, it places its focus on (the more fundamental, or generic, issue of) ‘race’, and how teachers organise a response and respond to it. Subsequently, this brings the added dimension of harnessing teachers’ accounts, particularly that of white teachers – and that without an attempt to apportion blame, but to listen and recover, discover, lost voice.

To facilitate the kind of research I wanted to conduct, it seemed important to me to make active decisions, not simply about what studies I would review, but more importantly, the purpose I wanted all the literature used in this study to serve. My ‘literature review’ would not end at a ‘chapter one’. It would not just be concerned with what has been written in the field of race and schooling. It would not, even, be content simply with reviewing what has already been written within the field. It needed to do more, and therefore, it forced the need to, perhaps, do it differently. I will explain.

To begin, there is a body of literature on race and schooling. I understand that there is a particular history. I understand the substantive details of that history. They have been rehearsed and confirmed with much consistency over the last three decades (see, for example, the reference to various literature reviews on page 5). This pattern, in fact, of rehearsing and returning to rehearse this history, seemed to signal an attempt to do more than just rehearse it. Troyna (1984) started to make that critique. He suggested that research into race and schooling was not only repeating the story it tells itself; it was also failing to be critical of what it repeated. He underscored the fact that though so-and-so said this-and-that, reviews of literature failed to take (sufficient) account of weaknesses in the conception, methodology, analysis and findings of individual studies reviewed – and their collective impact, which up the time of his writing, was the construction of black underachievement.
I would maintain, as I discussed in Part One, that the very history of research into race and schooling had long maintained a focus on the problems associated with schooling black students, and that this focus, additionally, precluded other ways of conceptualising and investigating the field. As a shift to success is beginning to take place, I have seen the importance of being critical of the shift even if I want to participate in furthering it. I, therefore, see the present impulse as an opportunity, quite literally, to open up the field: to explore new ways of conceptualising and investigating race and schooling; and to take a close-up look at the conception, methodology, analysis and findings of research within the field.

Moreover, such steps are required to facilitate the shift to investigating the present, new, notion of success within schools. If schooling in multicultural contexts is unlike what it has been in the past, investigating such contexts may require an openness that allows for the past, but also seeks to understand the present. There is a need for an allowance that, perhaps, the present, and research into the present, require a new notebook, even, perhaps, an old one, but one that offers the possibility of recording new observations and understandings.

All of the foregoing influenced the way I have engaged with existing literature in this study. The coverage is far-ranging. By this I mean, firstly, that I introduce and apply ideas, literature, that others have previously generated at every stage of this study – not just in Part One. Secondly, I draw on literature from various disciplines, for example, anthropology, linguistics, social psychology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, literary writing, literary criticism, sociology as well the specific body of literature on race and schooling.

In this way, additionally, I have been able to bring ideas from within and outside the field of race and schooling together to create new understandings. The latter demanded that I made
further decisions about how I would work with all the literature the study would use and that of race and schooling in particular. I decided to perform meta-analysis to maximise the use of existing literature where it took my argument forward. I can see the tension that this generates – acceptance as opposed to critique of the idea; however, as I hope I demonstrate, I am critical of what I am using and the way in which I use what I do. I also accept and agree with some of the ideas used.

I decided to use the literature on race and schooling such that it covered years of research, but also afforded a close-up look at the conception, methodology, analysis and findings of research within the field. Consequently, the discussion is both, quite detailed in some places, and in others brief. I have weighted my discussion in this way because I think I better serve the purpose both of exploring new ways of conceptualising and investigating race and schooling; and of taking a close-up look at the conception, methodology, analysis and findings of research within the field. It was not possible to do so with more texts within this study – notwithstanding my attempt to present this study in such a way as to make its conception, methodology, analysis and findings subject to extensive and sustained critique and transparency.

At this point, I will also make some further (final) comments on the structure and content of Parts Two and Three. It would not be unreasonable, if after reading the discussion of the central research questions, the reader expects to move directly on to my methodology chapter. This is quite established practice; however, (as the reader might also now expect) there is a difference in this study. In Part Two, I begin my methodological argument, as I explain and justify my approach to addressing the first question: 'What is the state of

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8 These were conscious decisions. In Part One, for example, I use the reports of reviews of literature to support my statements on some of the salient findings of research done on race and schooling. As such, I implicitly cover a significant number of studies without actually reporting on them in any detail. In Part Two (and Three) I develop my discussion of one study, Sewell (1997), mentioned in Part One. My examination of Sewell’s study, therefore, sustains an extensive and intensive discussion.
contemporary blackness? I begin to assemble the theoretical resources that provide the framework for the study as a whole, and use them to recover and re-analyse previously collected data in such a way as to open up new understanding. The first of my two questions is thus examined theoretically rather than empirically; my justification for this constitutes part of the theoretical argument.

In Part Three, I continue to elaborate the theoretical framework for the study and, in particular, to explain and justify the methodological approach chosen to investigate my second question: How is race handled in successful multicultural schools? I undertake a thorough-going critique of doing research on race and work at developing an original method for conducting and evaluating such research – the present in particular. I close by presenting the design of the empirical study conducted in answering the second question of the overall study.
Pt. 2 Speaking the Unspeakable

In Part One, I argued that research into race and achievement appeared to have arrived at an impasse, the seemingly, contradictory and unspeakable possibility, that black students are black and white. I suggested that, since this is implicated in black students’ achievement, it behoves those interested in raising their achievement to explore this unspeakable thing, that the black subject is black and white. This is the central purpose of this chapter.

2:1 Pausing for Thought: considerations for research

Working within a psychoanalytic framework, Smith (1998, p. 96) would maintain that ‘silence is part of survival and must be broken gently and never totally. Bringing the silences of the past or of the unconscious into language is a delicate activity.’ The seeming reluctance and apprehension in acknowledging what seems the state of contemporary blackness suggests that this might be an instance where what is unspeakable behaves ‘delicate activity’. Since this silence might be ensuring the survival of those who keep it, it might be imperative to find a gentle way of breaking it.

Moscovici’s (1984) theory of social representations provides an explanation of how inchoate or new ideas become established within the mainstream. His argument also suggests a way of reading the apprehension and tension that obtains on the state of contemporary blackness, and how one might respond it.

2:2 Moscovici’s Theory of Social Representation

Moscovici posits that ‘social thinking owes more to convention and memory than reason, to traditional structures rather than to current intellectual or perceptive structures’ (p. 26). This social thinking goes on within what Moscovici calls a consensual universe. A consensual universe is important to society because it provides a safe space where individuals and groups...
can exist without friction and uncertainty.

Members rehearse and affirm their conventions or representations in daily conversation, in agreement on the topics that are raised and discussed and those that are not. The context avoids contradictions and tolerates change only in as far as that rejuvenates what members already uphold. However, avoidance is not synonymous with an absence of contradictions, and where allowed, change is processed in a way that prevents or limits disruption.

A consensual universe is not actually free of contradictions. 'Rather, it is more the case that representations embody a form of co-existence between ideas, values and practices drawn from inconsistent or even contradictory elements' (Duveen, 2001, p. 11). However, this state, described as cognitive polyphasia, is managed such that 'each representation is locally consistent, and... [contradictions] are not simultaneously expressed in discourse' (Wagner, 1994 in Wagner, Duveen, Verma and Themel, 2000, p. 303). In this way, the representations that constitute a consensual universe contain and maintain conventions and ambiguities.

'Representations are not primarily, more or less, veridical reproduction of facts in the world, but, above all, they are elaborations for social groups, serving to maintain the stability of their particular life-world' (Wagner et al, 2000, p. 303, italics in original).

To introduce a new idea into this consensual universe would threaten it, make it less safe. Moscovici (1984, p. 26) argues that the 'the dread of losing customary landmarks, of losing touch with what provides a sense of continuity, of mutual understanding is an unbearable dread. And when other-ness is thrust upon us in the form of something "not quite" as it should be, we instinctively reject it, because it threatens the established order.' He explains that representations therefore serve to conventionalise and establish something that is 'unfamiliar or unfamiliarity itself' (p. 24) within our consensual universe, such that it becomes familiar. Basically, quite literally, social representations re-present something that is

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frightening, unusual or unknown, to present it in such a way that it no longer is.

This is accomplished by anchoring and objectifying the unfamiliar. Anchoring involves classifying and naming. The unknown is compared with something, an image, idea, or paradigm, that already exists within our consensual universe. In this way it is drawn within an existing category. By being drawn within an existing category the unknown takes on the salient features of the thing with which it is compared so that it is no longer thought of as unknown. Having established what the unknown is like, it is given a name. The name may be the duplication of something that already exists or a properly new name.

The previously unknown is not only given name; it is also simultaneously ‘located in the identity matrix of our culture’ (Moscovici, 1984, p. 35), given a history as well as a beginning. Once the representation has been accepted and becomes part of the repetition people use within the consensual universe, its trajectory is forgotten and the word or paradigm that refers to the idea is regarded as a unified reality in itself. It has been objectified.

If contemporary blacks are electing to define themselves unlike blacks of the past, changing the politics of identity, seemingly displacing race within the politics of identity - and against an essentialist and dominant discourse on blackness - then it seems that some anxiety at least might be expected. It would seem reasonable not to expect that another understanding of the world would simply be privileged as the next step, even the next logical step, in blacks’ trajectory. Perhaps, no one should expect that it can smoothly glide into popular discourse, or worse, that blacks should be brought up to date, kicking and screaming if needs be, into the new world of blackness. It is understandably a threatening thing.
A Case in Point: Speaking the Unsayable in Sewell 1997

Sewell (1997) broke the silence that obtains around black masculinity without the sensitivity that Smith (1998) recommends. As Mirza (1999) argues in her review essay of Sewell’s book, black masculinity as a metaphor for race and racist ideology, serves as a holding ground par excellence for the things people do not discuss. Sewell (1997), she thought, was 'straightforward and unpretentious', 'open and honest' in 'lifting the lid off the racialised gremlins that live under the surface of our PC consciousness' (Mirza 1999, p. 140). She endorsed this, and her support for Sewell’s work seemed to be clinched when she decided that he had called for ‘the healing process of decolonising the mind’ (p. 145), something Mirza supports as important.

Nevertheless, Mirza (1999) was seemingly unable or unwilling to give full support to Sewell. There was a noticeable tension in her position that served to compromise what support she gave. While she endorsed his work she also noted that he achieved his intentions by ‘toying with our prejudices’ and ‘playing up to what seem, at times, to be crass stereotypes’ (Mirza, 1999, p. 140). Ultimately, she revealed that she was ‘uncomfortable’ (Mirza, 1999, p. 143) with Sewell’s (1997) work.

It was a discomfort rooted in the feeling that in revealing their lives, the boys [were] open[ed] up to the gaze of the ‘other’. They became ‘known’, and we the reader, the ‘knower’ (Mirza, 1999, p.143). She seemed equally uncomfortable with Sewell’s ‘unforgiving analysis’ (p. 140), his judgement of the headteacher as ‘racist and classist’ (p.140), and his harsh judgement of teachers (p. 141). In wondering out-loud about the type of teacher Sewell would make, she registered, in the end, her disapproval of the way he went about his project – even if she supported his aim. What seemed ‘straightforward and unpretentious’, ‘open and honest’ to begin with, resulted in being ‘harsh’, ‘judgmental’, and ‘unforgiving’. Toying with our prejudices in clever ways’ and ‘playing-up to crass stereotypes'
seemingly brought betrayal.

Whereas there is no mistaking that Sewell (1997) raised important issues that need to be raised, perhaps they should not have been handled in the way he handled them. He was not just writing about some abstract thought he named black masculinities. He was dealing with the very lived experiences of his research participants, and by extension, possibly other blacks. Further, his argument, as he clearly expected, went far beyond the gates of Township. It literally played up the long trajectory, issues and insecurities that exist between blacks and Britain. Disappointingly, Sewell (1997) failed to show an appreciation for this history, for breaking the silence gently and never totally.

The entire book was framed in a pub-like raunchiness. There was something, for example, particularly provoking – and trifling – about asking whether ‘black boys are too sexy for school?’ (Sewell, 1997, p. ix). In answering the question, Sewell’s expose assumed the feel of a belly-slapping discussion as he exposed, overexposed, the very underbelly of the boys’ vulnerability.

If it was an attempt at being subversive by deliberately drawing on a ‘crass stereotype’, it failed in that Sewell was not able to supplant the established sense of the association. Indeed he did not try. The reiteration that black boys are too sexy for school is virtually the last thing he says. If he had no intention to supplant the crass stereotypes he was playing up to, then, it could be argued that he used (some might say abused) his position as a black person, as a researcher and as a man in handling the subject the way he did.

In claiming his status as a then ‘35 year black man’ (Sewell, 1997, p. xvi), for example, it appeared as if Sewell called upon his blackness to validate the authenticity and trustworthiness of his argument and conclusions. He declared he could ‘chill’ with the boys,
even had to guard against simply becoming their mouthpiece (p. xvi). He therefore claimed the authority and/or relied upon being seen as having the authority, to argue in the way he did. Indeed, he argued as only a black man could. Mirza (1999, p. 141; 145) has already raised questions about his treatment of women and feminist scholarship. How few whites would presume the temerity to write what Sewell wrote. Fewer, if any, would have had the dust settle if they did.

To be sure, Sewell (1997) has every right to claim his black identity. It could even be seen as evidence of some rigour in his research. However, one did not learn about him being critical about his 'advantage' as a black male researcher. Instead, Sewell thought it appropriate to introduce himself as 'a black male (aged 35 at the time of writing [his] book' (p. xvi) immediately after recounting James Baldwin's (1991) observation of living in, being alien to and controlled by a white world. Sewell marshalled Baldwin's thought to imply that (white) sociologists have not really managed to access the perspective of the black student (Sewell, 1997, p. xv-xvi). Since he assumed and declared the privilege of writing as a black man, and asked that his position as a black man be counted in revealing the black male student perspective, he automatically opened questions around the place of his black identity in his writing. He left these unanswered.

It would seem that stating that he was writing his book at age thirty-five was of significance in a book exploring how black boys survive modern schooling. Not only is he a black male. He is the black, male, researcher and author who has survived modern schooling. Sewell would have been a child in the 1960s, and a teenager of the 1970s. These were periods of overt hostility towards blacks in Britain and a particularly difficult period for black students (Fryer, 1984; Coard, 1971; Taylor, 1981; Carby, 1999). How did those students survive? Sewell is correct in suggesting that their stories have not been, and perhaps should be heard. He suggests that surviving schooling comes at great cost to black boys.
The unspoken message here would seem to be that somebody, everybody ought to care. However, Sewell’s approach damned rather than showed care for anyone - including himself. Maybe this was not his intention. Nevertheless, it supports Smith’s (1998) position. Silences might need to be broken gently, brought into language delicately, with deference for those who must survive it, if the breaking of those silences is undertaken for the collective – even the personal – good. Perhaps blacks’ – and whites’, personal and collective past and unconscious cannot quite yet accommodate flippant and unthoughtful handling. As Sewell makes frighteningly obvious, there is too great a danger that this could too easily shade off to damning us all.

So, unlike Mirza (1999) I do not believe that Sewell’s ‘straightforward talk’ and ‘contradictory conclusion’ was ‘brave and independent’ (Mirza, 1999, p. 145). I do not find Sewell’s ‘characteristically provocative, journalistic style’ to be ‘refreshing (for an academic text)’ (Mirza, 1999, p. 139). For that is the point: it is an academic text. At the least, he presented it as such, indeed as academic research, detailing, as brief as it was, a research methodology (Sewell, 1997, p. xvi). His work was not presented as a newspaper article, as a script for a movie or as a transcript of a night in the pub.

In fact, when I read Black Masculinities, more than four years ago, it angered me literally beyond words. The foregoing analysis comes after this delay, weathered by the seasons I ranted over the book. The analysis is not the diatribe it might have been had I been able to articulate in written form or otherwise, my earlier response. However, this analysis is not wholly satisfying to me. And it is not that I regret not having written a diatribe. On the contrary, though I was not favourably disposed to the text, I recognised, increasingly, that it was not insignificant. There was a feeling that what Sewell (1997) attempted was important, although at the time I could not decide on its significance. He may have handled it badly in
my judgement, but the book could not be cursorily dismissed.

It is, as Mirza (1999) writes, ‘difficult to read … lacks clear-cut organisation … reads like a work in progress rather than a finished text … is rough and ready in production’ (Mirza, 1999, p. 145). Ironically, these were the very reasons that made me unable to simply walk away from it. I would regard my own analysis as incomplete if I did not elicit the suggestive order in the chaos of his book. I found I had to go beyond what Sewell actually wrote, well beyond the text, to hear what he did not articulate, but what, perhaps, he was trying to.

**Black Masculinities: the reconnaissance**

As Mirza (1999) stated, one does get the sense that one is being privy to Sewell’s (1997) thoughts in process. It strikes one that he literally has a ‘gut feeling’ about contemporary blackness, and that he believes himself to be correct. He sets out to explore it; and this is where he approached breaking new ground. Designing his study to explain how blackness survived modern schooling was a radical conception of race in race and schooling research. One sees him struggling to find a way to express what he thinks, but the ideas that he is groping for, grappling with, remain elusive. This, perhaps, is what merited Mirza’s observation that it was difficult to pinpoint the issues in his argument as it lacked a singular theoretical thread with themes criss-crossing in a stream of consciousness (p. 145). Nevertheless, apparently convinced that he had hit upon something important, and its need to be disseminated Sewell (1997) went ahead and expressed himself. It resulted in a ‘rough and ready’ production (Mirza, 1999, p. 145) that was noticeably chaotic.

This is arguably because he simply did not find the words or the structure, a language, through which he could communicate his gut feelings. He was, therefore, perhaps, more
successful in giving purchase to his feelings or emotions rather than his ideas on the issue of contemporary blackness. One knows that he disapproves of what he thinks contemporary blackness is. Ultimately, the potential for Sewell’s study was curtailed because, failing a language, he was unable to suggest ‘an alternative third way to theorise black masculinity’, and resorted instead to ‘buying straight into a pathologised view of black masculinity’ (Mirza, 1999, p.144).

**Emotion and Horror: Reading Sewell through Kristeva**

That Sewell (1997) gave greater purchase to his emotions is particularly helpful to this thesis. In her analysis of the literature by the French writer, Celine, Kristeva (1982) showed that one can imbue the written language with the essence of spoken language and in this way bring the reader back to the emotion of language. Her argument is based on the idea that words are born of emotions and drives, that is, it is in trying to communicate emotions or drives felt within the body that words and language are born.

However, formal and written language is bereft of emotion that gave rise to it. At the point that emotions turn into sound, ‘on that articulation between body and language’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 191) something of the emotion escapes the word. Something dissolves into melody – later found in music and dance. Furthermore, with written language, grammar or logic takes precedence over the emotionality of the word to render meaning. According to Kristeva, Celine attempted to tap the emotion of the word to return the fullness of emotion to language.

Hence Celine wrote in a way to recapture the sound or melody of spoken language in written language. To recapture the sound is to recapture that which could not be spoken. When language is made to serve the essence of that melody or sound that disappeared as the word to describe the emotion was uttered, then language enters the void of the unnamed thing that
was felt in the body. Language is made to return to the preverbal, to the unsigned. In this way, paradoxically, language can be made to express that which originally escaped it.

Kristeva (1982) argues that to achieve this, emotion is expressed in colloquial speech or slang, aided by the graphic and liberal uses of exclamation marks and elliptical dots, in Celine’s work. Colloquial speech is considered choice because it displaces the grammatical or logical importance of written language. It interferes with the props normally relied upon for meaning. The reader is thus shifted back into the unfamiliar and so drawn back into the unsigned emotion within the body. Kristeva shows that for Celine, it is a highly developed, careful manoeuvre supported by a deep understanding of linguistics. For Kristeva, acknowledges that everyday colloquial speech may not be consciously directed at subverting language to return it to the body, that is, primal emotion.

With this framework Sewell’s (1997) work possibly can take on new dimensions. For Sewell’s text is actually suffused with the colloquial (of which ‘the sexy question’ is a prime example) and emotion (graphic, for example, in his appraisal of the students,10). He also achieves an emotional response in his (possibly black) readers. Mirza (1999) is made uncomfortable in empathy with the boys. I had a less restrained response.

With this evidence, one could argue that Sewell’s (1997) project took his readers to a place of emotion. If he brought us to emotion, then he also brought us to the place where emotion prefigures an idea. I do not claim that this is what Sewell undertook to do – nor does he. Celine crafted an art out of everyday colloquial speech and used it in a way that it is not consciously, ordinarily, used – even if they achieve similar ends. This provides a parallel that could suggest that Sewell forcefully took us to the emotion that might be involved in contemporary blackness, even if that was unintentional.

10 quoted earlier on pp. 22-23
It would now seem that Sewell’s (1997) book angered me, and beyond words, for two reasons. Firstly, he provoked an emotional response such that I could not just walk away from it. (Was this book a masterpiece after all?) He made me feel rather than know. I could also feel that something was wrong, but I was unable to explain what. I knew that I did not approve of the insensitive treatment he afforded quite sensitive matters. Now I can provide an explanation that honours Sewell’s contribution but, perhaps, also takes us beyond it. For what was wrong, it would seem, was that Sewell did not go far enough. This brings me to the second reason I was lost for words. It is precisely to do with the fact that Sewell’s text is imbued with emotion.

Mirza (1999) stated that Sewell (1997) used a provocative, journalistic style. If he has succeeded in allowing us to step inside the emotion involved in being a contemporary black (Briton), it would also support the notion that he was operating at the stage before emotions become words, language. He has also, therefore, taken us to the void or the place where contemporary black (British) identity exists unsigned. We arrived with him at a point where there is not yet a language with which to talk about what is felt.

Meeting at the emotional, as we did, it becomes arguable that we both lacked a language with which to communicate. Mirza’s (1999) comments are choice at this point. Recall that she was frustrated by the lack of a singular theoretical thread and clear-cut organisation, with themes criss-crossing in a stream of consciousness and having difficulty pinpointing issues. The book for her reads like work in progress (p. 145). Now I would argue that that is exactly what it is: a work in progress. All of the above is true, and the fault is not all Sewell’s. If he was working with the emotion that prefigures the concept of contemporary blackness, then he was operating where contemporary blackness exists unnamed. It seems fair to say that Sewell (1997) was unaware that he was doing this. Perhaps, he did not recognise that his subject
matter was in itself elusive by virtue of the route he had taken to arrive at it. One cannot talk easily about something that does not have a name. 11

Further, Sewell (1997) seemed unaware that what he was attempting to talk about has the constituency of floating smoke, elusive ideas swirling around, not yet (fully) articulated amongst many blacks and whites. Nehaul (1996), for example, certainly comes close to Sewell in the issues that she raised in her study (although she differs in that she did not denounce the children, choosing instead to argue that certain behaviours be questioned. Nevertheless, they both questioned received notions of black students' cultural identity within schools). Still, both did not offer alternatives. Sewell (1997) and Nehaul (1996) can be seen as attempting to give voice to something that is felt but as yet is not really articulated, does not exist as a reasoned position.

If Alexander's (1996) work described what gives basis for the agitation, she also stopped short of theorising about it. Mirza (1999) in her essay (which reviewed both Alexander's 1996 and Sewell's 1997 books) attempted to apply a corrective to Sewell's position regarding the boys. Rather than seeing them as acting white she suggested instead that they should be regarded as 'simply being strategic' (Mirza, 1999, p. 143), the same strategy attributed to black girls. Whereas Mirza's might be a correct reading, it seems that more than a simple phrase is needed to articulate what seems to be a mushrooming of an idea trying to find its way into mainstream discourse. What Sewell was dealing with seems to constitute one of the ambiguities that the consensual universe contains, but bans. It is not rehearsed and affirmed; as such it does not reside in the consensual universe. The very idea that the black is black and white is in itself contradictory. It would not find acceptance within the consensual universe

11 By comparison, the black American tradition has always fought its politics around the act of naming. In the work of Gina Phileogene (1999) we are now able to see the black American tradition moving on to theorising its history of naming. Phileogene traces the various social representations that black, or as they would now prefer, African Americans have used to represent themselves and suggests arguments for the importance of the act of naming for African American politics.
of blackness. As Sewell (1997) amply shows, it is not tolerated even if it accidentally pops up. As Epstein (1993) would argue, there seems a clear need here for the development of explicit theories.

Perhaps the unspeakable remains unspeakable because there is no language that is at yet established that can accommodate or articulate what resides inside the body as emotion or need. The unspeakable may be unspeakable precisely because it cannot be spoken about.

Sewell (1997) showed us the void when he stepped back into the terrain of emotion. Almost his entire book was devoted to that. When on the last page he attempted to give finally a word for the emotion, to say what contemporary blackness is, he found that he was quite literally at a loss for words. He resorted to the figurative. The black who is black and white had sold his soul. Sewell did not have a word, a name for this.

The issues Sewell (1997) attempted to expose arguably have not really entered mainstream discourse in Britain, and as Smith (1998) had warned, there is a reason for the silence: survival. For, it would seem, if it were left to Sewell (1997), as he broke the silence, he would throw out the pieces of blackness he found. Sewell condemned what he found and by extension himself. He filled the silence with fulmination; an outcry that resounded in my ear as a scream of horror. For his seemed the reaction of one who unknowingly, unwillingly, brought on his own terrible death. Blacks, and that would include me, could not say 'Amen' to Sewell’s delivery either, unless it was as mourners at their own funeral. I have an explanation for the Sewell-effect. He lifted the lid without cover. He preached irredeemable damnation.

Sewell’s (1997) work makes it clear that for, at the least, some Britons it is the emotion involved in talking about the personal and collective identity of contemporary blacks that might render communication difficult. This emotion seems to merit thoughtful handling.

Sacks (1990, p. 44) argues that
language permits us to deal with things at a distance. [It allows us] to manipulate symbols in ways impossible with the things they stand for, and so we arrive at novel even creative versions of reality ... We can verbally rearrange situations which in themselves would resist rearrangement.... We can isolate features which in fact cannot be isolated... We can juxtapose objects and events separated by time and space ... we can if we will turn the universe symbolically inside out.

Sewell brought us to the emotion, to the place without language. He has also left us there. This place that he has caused us to inhabit is threatening. It is not a place where we can remain. A shift from emotion to language would not just be an academic nicety; it could prove a way to get beyond this point that Sewell has forcefully brought us.

2:4 In Search of a Language for the Unspeakable: Abjection and the Abject

Comparing his work to apocalyptic writings, Kristeva (1982) argues that Celine wrote to lay bare the end. However, his is an apocalypse without god, that is, what he finds he does not handle in judgement. Celine’s interest lies in investigating and revealing dissolution, or the coming to the end of a word, an idea, self. Coming to the end, or the dissolution, of self is usually posited as a situation of nihilist horror. However, Kristeva (1982) maintains that as a writer Celine assumes both the subject and victim position in the revelation of the horror, and in this way as writer is able to reveal horror, look at it and survive it.

It seems to me that Kristeva (1982) has developed a framework, working as a literary critic within a Freudian, psychoanalytic and linguistic tradition that could be used as a lever that could enable the shift from emotion to language in contemporary blackness. Perhaps her idea could furnish a language that might allow us to look at the emotionality of contemporary
blackness, make it abstract and so, perhaps, help us to be able to talk about it and hopefully move beyond apprehension, tension and condemnation.

The theory of abjection and the abject underpins Kristeva’s (1982) analysis of Celine’s work. To arrive at the end of an idea or self is to experience abjection. Abjection is the recognition by the self that something, which it does not accept within its notion of itself, exists within it. This occasions the threat of the dissolution of self. For that which was constructed as other dwells within. It is therefore a frightening situation of horror entailing ‘a composite of judgement and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives’ (p. 10).

One would not ordinarily choose to experience abjection. It happens when there is a dissolution of identity, system or order. One is denied the subject position that was taken in the establishment of one’s sense of self. It becomes ‘brutish suffering’ because the self is simultaneously fascinated and repelled by that which has disrupted its identity, system or order. The person is fascinated because s/he finds that the non-assimilable thing resides within and is already part of her/his identity or system. That which s/he would like to regard as alien is not. S/he is consequently repelled since s/he has then transgressed ‘laws, connections and even structures of meaning that govern and condition’ (p. 10) him or her.

The subject of abjection suffers because the self fails to recognise that that which it rejects as being alien actually predates the self and in fact causes it to be. ‘A primal repression prior to the advent of the ego secure[d] a space that separate[d] the abject from what will be a subject and its objects’ (p. 11). That which is considered alien is the abject. It can be seen as anything that ‘disturbs identity, system, order. [That] does not respect borders, positions, rules. [It is] the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite’ (p. 4). This is possibly because the abject, although it remained non-object, unsigned and forgotten, it nevertheless, remained. When abjection occurs one is taken back to ‘the pre-objectal relationship’ where
all things are possible (p. 10).

By this reasoning, everyone experiences or can experience abjection. In a literary critique of Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, Angella Burton (1998) argues for Kristeva's theory as a means of theorising race. We will use it as a framework with which to think about Sewell's (1997) findings on contemporary black identity. We have noted that, by returning to the emotion involved in being black in contemporary British society, he returned us to where that identity is unnamed. He tried to name it. That is arguably what he attempted in the various models he offered of the black male student. Simultaneously, it became apparent that there was not a consistent or monolithic black response.

In Sewell's (1997) analysis the rebels formed the only group that consistently sought to maintain the monolithic notion of blackness. They stood in opposition to teachers, school processes and students who did not join them, in opposition to whiteness. In this way they operationalised the principles of the dominant discourse on blackness. Sewell more or less lumped the other three groups he had identified together with the Conformists. So, possibly by default, Sewell revealed that he was measuring blackness in terms of the monolith. For in his conclusion when Sewell (1997) seemed to attempt narrowing the range he had produced, one notices, though, that the boys' 'response is varied and complex. Surviving modern schooling has indeed become an art for these boys. Some have chiselled out the craven image of Conformity and have sold their souls in the process. Others have cut out a rebel phallus that has lost touch with their minds and their inner selves' (p. 220). Accordingly, the boys were or they were not black.

12 Burton presents abjection as a means whereby 'race' can be examined as 'the desire for absolute physical racial separateness ... [which] involves a fear of "pollution" of one racial group by another.' 'Race', and importantly, in Burton's work, the 'mixed-race' persona, can be, and is, deconstructed and reconstructed.

13 see pp. 21-22 for reminder
Even before this exercise, the rebels formed the smaller of the two groups; afterwards the
Conformist group grew even larger. Sewell’s main finding is that the overwhelming majority
of his cohort was not black in the strict meaning he was using. Most of his black students
were black and white. They were abject. But it is through Sewell’s reaction that the abjection
that this might cause is witnessed.

That the black subject is heterogeneous became apparent through the five categories he
constructed. This finding disrupted the dominant notion of blacks, and the construct with
which Sewell was working. So he arguably tried to reduce the heterogeneity, almost as if to
expel what caused the disruption. Still, he could not get away from the finding that the
essentialist black category was no more. What would be considered black contains both
blackness and whiteness. His last resort seemed an attempt to reinstate the essentialist notion.
So whatever is contaminated is not black.

Nevertheless, he castigated both the rebels and the Conformists. It was surprising that Sewell
(1997) did this to the rebels. Throughout the book he gave them implicit support. They were
the true black. That he castigated them in the end suggests that he was both fascinated and
repelled by them. He wanted them both to continue and discontinue what he found them
doing. It is as if, having returned to the emotion involved in being black, he had come to the
dissolution, the end of the black subject, and he did not know what to do. He could not go
beyond that point; he can only yearn for and condemn the black subject. He experiences
abjection.

The rebels, those who did not ‘sell their souls’, ‘lost touch with their minds and their inner
selves’. The die-hard black essentialist failing to recognise self in the other, not thinking that
the other is the self, quite literally lost that self. It is moot which of the two groups might be
considered to have lost more. It could be argued that he recognised that the option of an
essentialist black identity is a false and unreasonably costly thing. Occupying the place where everything remains unsigned, Sewell may have glimpsed that any and everything was possible.

It is important that the charge for the two groups is different. The Conformists had sold their souls. Again Sewell (1997) may not have thought of this as his diction is rooted in the emotional. Because it is, Sewell reveals that he considers that the boys who conform have dispensed with the very essence of themselves. In black American identity politics 'soul' was used as a primary distinction between blacks and whites. Blacks had soul; whites did not (Dubey, 1994). Soul became a metaphor for the cultural disposition of blacks and a recurring reiteration of their own humanity. Whites were inhuman, consistent outcome of the history of the two groups. Consistent with the emotional stance of Sewell's project, blacks were cool. Blacks were sexy. This was a space blacks wrested for themselves and could occupy unrivalled. It becomes apparent then since Sewell seemingly strongly disapproves of the boys dispensing with their souls, that he wishes to see the notion of the pure black subject retained.

By the time of his conclusion, according to a Kristevan analysis, Sewell (1997) was writing abjection. As he wrote in abjection, another interesting and powerful thing is revealed in his statement that those who sold their souls had 'chiselled out the craven image of conformity'. His use of 'craven' is electrifying because it is a word that has meaning both in a British and Jamaican sense. He had riled against 'Caribbean idealism' throughout his book, and established quite clearly the sense that the black Briton and Jamaican were different. He had assumed the subject position of a black Briton. But by the end of his book, as he arrived at the point of dissolution, one sees him, admittedly perhaps unconsciously, tapping into his own Jamaican heritage, going himself beyond the black Briton position he assumed in his writing.
The Oxford dictionary defines ‘craven’ as an adjective that means cowardly and abject. Abject is defined as ‘miserable, wretched, degraded, self-abasing, humble, despicable’. It is arguable that Sewell (1997) was drawing upon the strict meaning of ‘craven’ from the dictionary when he used the word. Nevertheless, this stands as an almost eerie suggestion that Sewell had hit upon something he could not quite articulate. He was talking about the abject without articulating his argument as such.

The choice of the word ‘craven’ becomes further electrifying because ‘craven’ is also used in Jamaican parlance, if with a different meaning. Britons are in the habit of regarding Jamaican local language as improper English, a dialect. As such the inclusion of this word in a book written in the Queen’s English understood in its Jamaican sense is positioned at the end of (the English) language. In Jamaica, ‘craven’ is also at the end of language because it is colloquial, proper slang, used to disparage somebody or something considered to exhibit insatiable greed. This seems to underscore the idea of dissolution, kind of at the end of the end.

Chances are only Jamaicans could discern this nuance, and even they would be returned to the emotion of the word for its full meaning and impact. They too would understand that the Jamaican sense of the word renders the charge even more grave. For the image of ‘Conformity’ itself is vilified, or disparaged as having insatiable greed. Conformity then can not be satisfied. This perhaps is the root of the fear: there is no return from the road to conformity. The end of the black subject is ultimately revealed.

Will blackness really disappear? What will that mean? Can it continue like this? Kristeva (1982) writes that literature represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most serious and intimate apocalypses … not a resistance to the abject [but] an elaboration, a discharge,
and a hollowing out of abjection through the Crisis of the word’ (p. 208). Writing becomes a kind of purification of the abject, not so as to get rid of it. One cannot. It is essential to maintaining selfhood. One writes to reintroduce it with an understanding of what it is. It is in this way that we reveal the abject, look at it and get beyond it. Kristeva maintains that whereas abjection causes ‘brutish suffering’ it can also lead to a sublimating discourse. That is the step beyond abjection where the abject itself disintegrates into new possibilities rather than just the horrible death or end of oneself. _Black Masculinities_, particularly its conclusion, can be seen as cathartic or perhaps, more precisely, paroxysmal. It certainly seems the encoding of a most serious and intimate apocalypse.

This is not (just) to do with Sewell personally. In the works of McCarthy and Crichlow (1993), Hall (1992) Gilroy (1992) Diawara (1992), for example, sustained arguments are made about the tensions and strains that individual positioning place on the dominant notion of blackness. Reading Sewell through Kristeva has revealed the horror of the situation. What Sewell did was to say, as Celine would write it: ‘Look! It mash up!’ But Sewell stopped at the abjection he encountered. The abject did not collapse into new possibilities. What now...

**Transforming Abjection: black women writers**

African-American women’s writing has been a major, compelling articulation of blackness over the past three decades. Their work suggests a way of moving beyond the point where Sewell stopped. Dubey (1994) and McDowell (1995) maintain that black women writers aimed at applying a corrective to the dominant discourses of the Black Nationalist Aesthetic and Women’s Liberation movements of the 1960s and the 1970s. They resisted these believing that ‘all the women were white and all the blacks were men’. Further, these black activists resisted the stance of the Black Nationalist Aesthetic movement in its insistence that ‘black is beautiful’. It was resistance against the implicit tendency to render a simplistic and inauthentic depiction of black reality (Dubey, 1994).
Christian (1997), McDowell (1995) and Dubey (1994) reveal that black women literary critics deliberately responded to black women novelists, and in this way placed a black feminist interpretation of reality within the mainstream. This political activity was necessary not only because black women’s novels were being ignored by the mainstream and denounced by leading black nationalists. It was also felt that particular insights, interpretations and analyses, even new ones, were needed to be able to fully appreciate black women’s writing.

The resultant combination of the writings of black women novelists and black feminist literary criticism has led to a subversive yet loyal exploration and articulation of blackness. They have problematised the notion of difference and blackness in ways which challenge essentialist notions of blackness. The commitment to keeping the notion of blackness and difference open and problematic is maintained by writers like Lorde (1996) and Carby (1989) who insist on the issues of class, parentage and individual history having legitimacy within notions of blackness.

Though also the recipient of harsh critique, and intermittent expulsion from the black community (Walker, 1998), Alice Walker remains at the heart of writings on the black experience. Her work can be seen as being crucial to anchoring the perspective amongst black feminists. On the face of it, her work seemingly undermines blackness, and it is for this appearance that she has been harshly critiqued. Nevertheless, Walker locates herself firmly within a black frame of reference. She places her vision of blackness within the existing black paradigm that aims to promote and perpetuate blackness. From within that black paradigm she deconstructs and modifies, even supplants its original sense.

According to Christian (1997), Walker addresses black women in her fiction while admitting
and exposing the contradictions and contrariness of being a black woman (in America’s South). Christian argues that Walker’s implicit aim in her writing is to interpret black women’s contrariness as healthy and to explore them coming to terms with that reality. Walker privileges contrariness as an appropriate response for black women, fully explainable by the circumstances of history and society’s prevailing conventions. So, she acknowledges the state of black women. Unflinchingly, she describes the truth of it as she understands it to be. Then makes sense of it within a black aesthetics, that is, outside established conventions. She thus gives it new meaning and legitimacy.

Therefore, Christian continues, Walker approaches the forbidden as a possible route to truth. She takes blacks to a place of dissolution, and from that place where nothing is predetermined, shows as available unlimited possibilities, chief of which is the possibility for the individual to define herself, be and become who and what she wants to be. Ultimately, Walker reinforces her position that blacks, not just women, understand the reality of and also take responsibility for their own lives while holding on to self-love.

As part of her argument, Christian (1997) reported the reaction of one of her students, a young woman, as they studied Walker’s oeuvre. It is an account that is worthy of full inclusion here. As the young woman stood as an example of many other of Christian’s students, the report sustains Christian’s analysis and actualises Walker’s intention as argued by Christian. As an artefact, the excerpt reveals black women in three different subject positions coming to terms with blackness, each driven to explore and know it in new ways. It gives an insight into the cost of doing that: the cost the black collective and individual blacks pay. It shows that exploring blackness is not (possibly cannot be) purely, an academic exercise.

Christian believes that Walker maintains that blacks necessarily experience pain and psychic
violence as they come to understand the realities of their identities. Walker is said to provide an explanation for the pain and psychic violence she explores such that they are realised as part of a process of becoming whole and being true to oneself. Certainly, Christian demonstrates vis-à-vis Walker that the contradictions contained within blackness can and perhaps, must be approached delicately, maybe even imaginatively, precisely because the exploration of blackness exposes vulnerability, insecurities, pain. It would seem that Walker’s fictions provide a distance that enables blacks to engage with the painful realities of being black.

We have read and discussed *Once … The Third Life of Grange Copeland*.... The tension in the class has steadily risen. Now we are approaching *In Love and Trouble*. There is a moment of silence as the class starts. Then one of the black women, as if bursting from an inexplicable anger says: "Why is there so much pain in these books, especially in this book?" I know this student; her life has much pain in it. She is going to school against the odds, in opposition to everything and everyone, it would seem. She is conscious of being black; she is struggling, trying to figure out why her relationship as a woman is so confused, often painful. She repeats her comment – "what kind of images are these to expose to – (pause)? To whom she will not say. “I don’t want to see this, know this.” There is more anger, then silence. But she is riveted by the stories in this and other class sessions and insists on staying in this class. She seems, by all appearances, to be together, well-dressed, even stylish, a strong voice and body, an almost arrogant, usually composed face. But now she is angry, resistant, yet obsessed by these stories (Christian, 1997, pp. 32-3).

From all accounts a perfectly well-adjusted young woman loses it while reading stories about some fictional characters. This young woman seemingly felt that something which she thought belonged only amongst blacks was being exposed. Outsiders were being made privy
to the private pain and insecurities with which she herself was struggling. She seemed quite unforgiving of that although in the end she seemed far more interested in coming to terms with herself and pain through the vicarious experience of literature. If it exposed her to others, it also exposed her to herself. It seemed as if she came face to face with her own pain, with her own self and there she sees herself through Walker’s lens, at the end of herself. So she is angry; she is also simultaneously resistant and obsessed, in the very grips of abjection. She must know yet she does not want to know. She is able at least to attempt coming to know something that strikes her as deeply personal and painful, but which is also removed from her.

2:5 Considerations for This Research

The passage from Christian’s *Black Feminist Criticism* resonated with me. Certainly, it was my belief that the experience of my masters degree (Stanford, 1997) was permeated with pain. ‘I found that schooling for Afro-Caribbean boys could be a painful encounter which was exacerbated by being ignored or ill-understood.’ That their pain ‘was the “elusive dimension” that research seems to have been missing,’ and that I wanted to ‘give voice to their experience, to that pain so nobly borne’ (p. 20). However, I also found it necessary to report that: ‘The data upset me emotionally.’ That ‘I left the data (for more than two months) [giving myself] time to work through the pain I felt when I began to look out at the world through the boys’ eyes’ (Stanford, 1997, p. 20).

I did try to capture and reflect the ‘intensely upsetting incidences of racial harassment, particularly name-calling’ (p. 34), but the focus of the study then inhibited an exploration of the ‘elusive dimension’. More truthfully, however, it must be said, I did not know what exactly to do with this finding that beckoned to me for articulation. I could not talk about what I had found because I did not know what it was – apart from pain. I realise now that
what I attempted was to talk about what exacerbated the pain, and not the pain itself. The boys' accounts, including those of their experiences of racist incidents, suggested that there were other issues arising from, but also more fundamental than racist incidents. Research was needed to explore them.

I wanted to conduct such research, but was faced with the ethical question raised by Cohen and Manion (1994) of involving other children in a procedure that could produce high, or simply, unacceptable levels, of anxiety for them. It is true that I did not anticipate at the design stage of my masters thesis that the exploration of blackness would have generated a painful experience. It would seem that the pain discovered was located in the attempt at exploring the complex realities of blackness. Especially given my background, a Jamaican, new to the country, also new to research and limited by a reliance on the knowledge within the field of race and schooling, maybe I could not have known then. However, it is now my certain belief that an exploration of blackness may produce unacceptable levels of anxiety in children.

This posed the further ethical question of informed consent. It is fair to say that black children are amongst those Cohen and Manion (1994) describe as the least powerful and, consequently, the over-researched in the sociology of race and schooling. Sewell, for example, might be seen as the latest of those, to return to Mirza (1999), who 'over-expose', even betray, the tensions inherent in blackness. It seems that, as the least powerful, it has been all too easy to involve black children in research of which, perhaps, well-informed parents might object.

Cohen and Manion (1994) argue that researchers have a responsibility to consider the personal cost to the research participants of research against the generation of knowledge. They suggest that researchers seek a balance, but in doing so to give greater consideration to
research participants. I side with Cohen and Manion on this. I believe that engaging children
to articulate what I seek to understand would be asking too much of them at this present
juncture in time. They should not be exposed to the risk of the pressures involved in
understanding contemporary blackness, not for the creation of knowledge, or research, or
anything.

It is clear that I was just as involved in the painful experience that the study generated. My
own angst, in addition to feeling with the boys, was founded on articulation, or more
precisely, a lack of articulation. I did not know the questions to ask, let alone attempting the
answers. To Cohen and Manion's (1994) argument on the cost of research, it might be added,
either that the cost to the researcher should be put into the equation and/or that the cost to
research participants should also be evaluated in terms of the researcher's ability to carry out a
particular study. The fact that a person may want to carry out an investigation does not mean
that s/he automatically can or should. It seems to me that this too is an ethical question that
researchers should explore in research design.

Certainly, research into blackness or race demands this. At the time of designing this study, I
did not think that sufficient understanding on contemporary blackness existed that could help
frame the questions that one might ask about it. It is my belief that understanding about the
black and white identity has not been objectified. That identity remains censored. Political
activity over two decades, at least, of black feminist literary critics deliberating responding to
black women novelists may have anchored the work and ideas of black women writers like
Alice Walker. However, this, possibly the most concerted challenge to the dominant notion
on blackness, cannot be truly argued as having been objectified. Certainly, it is not within
mainstream thinking in the field of race and schooling in Britain.¹⁴

¹⁴ I might add that this study makes no pretence about objectifying such ideas. Consistent with
Moscovici's theory neither I nor any one study, could.
I remained committed to exploring and articulating the 'elusive dimension', that is the pain, and the 'relatively unexplored dimension', the black and white identity. I thought it was of importance to black students and the black community on a whole (and possibly the wider community) that these issues received attention within research. In the same breath, I realised that thoughtful decisions needed to be made about how further research might be conducted. Of primary importance, I needed to find a way to approach and conduct the task, that is the exploration itself, so as to reveal it, look at it and survive it. By this I mean that I needed an approach that would first actually allow me to get close to the subject despite its potential for emotional impact. Secondly, it needed to be an approach that could hold the inherent tensions within a framework that would generate understanding rather than moral judgement.

This underpins the reason for my excursion into the literature of black women writers. The literature of African-American women writers suggested them as undertaking the task of 'encoding of our crises' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 208), not resisting but elaborating the abject and transforming abjection into something survivable. Smith (1998, p. 20) writing on Kristeva's work broadens the notion of literature to include academic inquiry. And it is the case that in Christian's elaboration of Walker's work we saw the novelist and the academic working together, as well as a glimpse of how it was possible to contemplate the painful realities of blackness. Through the vicarious experience of literature we saw that literature, in its strict and broader meanings, provides a vantage point and, perhaps, a necessary distance from which to look critically at blackness. I had found an approach.

I turned to academic literature with the approach used in black feminist literary work, art and criticism. I assumed the critics' political stance in the orientation for my study. That is, I chose to respond to the works produced by blacks writing about the black experience with an attempt to understand and articulate blackness from within a framework sympathetic to its
Further, I assumed this approach because in the work of black women writers, it had established itself as method when dealing with blackness. I am anchoring my approach in theirs.

Ultimately, and most importantly, I turned to literature and subsequently theory, so as to render the investigation of blackness as an abstract activity that did not involve questioning children about it. Using Sewell’s (1997) work, I have attempted to classify and name what could be considered the state of blackness amongst the young black students. In presenting the explanatory framework that I have, I have sought to articulate something about blackness that, perhaps, has been a difficult thing to articulate. As will be seen shortly, I have also chosen to revisit the transcripts of the boys in my earlier study, (Stanford, 1997), and conduct an analysis based on what was said to me then. In this way I attempt to look closely at the tensions involved in the composite black and white identity.

I offer a theoretical or philosophical exploration. To me this approach seems more appropriate than an empirical investigation. I feel it is a gentle way, or a more gentle way, of breaking the silence that obtains on contemporary blackness. As theory, what I have presented necessarily invites critique. Hopefully, it will meet with rigorous critique. Little black children might be spared this time. My strategy has been deliberate.

2:6 The Unspeakable in Stanford 1997

I did not recognise it at the time, but I had an opportunity to speak the unspeakable. In my masters thesis I was investigating the circumstances most conducive for school success as described by secondary school black boys. They were aged between fourteen and fifteen and came from two mixed-sex state schools; one was regarded as an ‘all-white’ school and the

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15 So, for example, all the studies that I have reviewed on race and school success were produced by
other was regarded as multiracial with a high percentage of Asians. I had asked teachers to identify boys who were black and successful for the study, and found that four of the six boys identified had black and white parents. I argued then that I had been presented with 'an exciting opportunity to investigate a relatively unexplored dimension' (Stanford, 1997, p. 19). I was excited about having chanced upon the black Briton, who might have 'drawn from two cultural references, black and white, in the formation of their identities' (p. 19) and who would describe school success to me. In retrospect, however, I think the 'relatively unexplored dimension' was left relatively unexplored or under-developed in my study.

I reported that the successful students inhabited that identity, of the successful student, without the tensions suggested by Fordham and Ogbu (1986). They were not seen negotiating any dilemma to do with needing to choose to fail or to succeed because of blackness. They did not attempt to justify their wish to succeed. What explanations they provided were located within their own personal reasons for desiring success. Success was seen as legitimate. In some cases, it was seen as necessarily available to them as black children; they would succeed because they were black. This supported, in part, my argument that the successful students had a strong sense of personhood, meaning they knew what they wanted and worked determinedly towards their goals.

As such I reported that the boys did not find adapting to school as problematic, and that the aims of schooling did not appear to come in conflict with their wishes. They wanted to achieve and complied with the schools' expectations of themselves as students. They responded to the school's expectations as reasonable. Where they found some things disagreeable, they acquiesced or appeared to acquiesce to authority. They indicated that they were aware of how the dynamics of race could and did operate against them in their schooling, but that they focussed on developing a strategy that enabled them to avoid being blacks or by those who have identified themselves with the black experience and/or understanding it.
caught in a cycle of conflict.

I reported the mismatch between the teachers and the students' perception of the students' identity. The four boys mentioned above would not categorically identify themselves as black, and all the boys did not perceive their identities as oppositional to a white identity. Further, it was highlighted that all the boys seemingly both rejected and claimed blackness. I argued that they rejected the use of the term by others in relation to themselves, suspicious of unexpressed racist intentions, and also that they would reject blackness if they felt as if they were being asked to be black and nothing else. I maintained that their stance was not synonymous with a rejection of a black heritage, but a refusal to reject any of the influences of their experiences. They wanted and preferred to embrace all that was available to them in the construction of their identities and realities.

The final words of the thesis discussed the implications for those who work with and research black students, or students regarded as black. I argued that such professionals might need to take account of the possibility that their conception of blackness and that of the students in question might be different. With that said, and having reported how these students regarded as black discussed success, the thesis was concluded. I would maintain that the report was consistent with the accounts the boys provided and that the findings were significant.

One finding I held to be particularly important was that the students were not seen to be responding to school as black students, but were seen to be actively redefining themselves as ordinary students. It is a strategy that seems to de-politicise race, or, one that transforms the politics of race into something else. It actively seeks to displacce race. As such, it is also a response that could be seen as consistent with Fordham's (1988) theory of racelessness.
However, Fordham’s racelessness does not capture the insights contained within the boys’ response. Certainly, of far more importance to me by the end of the study, was the finding that ‘schooling for Afro-Caribbean boys could be a painful encounter which was exacerbated by being ignored or ill-understood … [That their pain] was the ‘elusive dimension’ that research seems to have been missing … I [wanted to] give voice to their experience, to that pain so nobly borne’ (Stanford, 1997, p. 20).

However, the boys did not want to speak about their identities. Because the study was designed to report from the boys’ perspective, I subsequently reported on the ‘ordinary student’ who happened to be (arguably, biologically at least, partly) black: the emphasis the boys established. While it may have been the correct approach to take in that study, the unexplored dimension of the black and white identity was not explored, or, rather, it was explored at the level of the ‘ordinary student’. This emphasis buried extra-ordinary insights I did not explore. Therefore, the ‘relatively unexplored dimension’ and its ‘elusive dimension’ eluded me. The unspeakable remained unspoken.

Exploring the insights the boys provided necessitated a departure from only reporting their descriptions to reporting what their descriptions revealed. It is a shift from reporting what they said to theorising about meanings embedded in what they said. Here I would like to explore what the boys revealed but perhaps did not articulate.

*Re-evaluating Blackness in Stanford 1997*

The constraints of my circumstances when conducting the study were such that I spent three days in each of the two schools from which the boys were drawn. I spent a day with each student. The interviews lasted between twenty and forty-five minutes and focussed on their

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*16* I intend that Part Two justifies this re-evaluation. Please see, in particular, pp. 59 - 67.
learning experience at school. I allowed them to lead the discussion, and used talk about the
classes we had shared together as an inroad into the discussion. If toward the end of the
interview they did not mention race, I did. I asked them whether they identified themselves,
or thought of themselves as black, and whether they liked being identified as black.

The conditions, therefore, were not ideal for exploring the delicate subject that blackness
revealed itself to be for the boys. It is possible that the students responded to me as a stranger
when we met for the interviews, this therefore, impacting on what and how much they would
reveal about themselves. Further, the questions on identity and their timing during the
interviews may have impacted on the boys' response to them. I highlight these as having
limitations on what I can claim here.

Without meaning to dismiss the foregoing, however, I would maintain that on the whole the
boys seemed comfortable with me. They spoke freely and lengthily during the interviews up
to the point of the questions on identity. Their individual responses to the questions, which
we will examine shortly, also suggest that the boys' response to them may have arisen from
reasons not necessarily associated with the process of the research.

Finally, here I analyse what these boys said about blackness as at a personal level, as opposed
to treating what they said as abstract notions about blackness in general. I am aware that this
is against their resistance of the use of the term to describe themselves. I do not mean to
overturn the boys' stance. Instead I seek to come to an understanding about their response to
blackness given their situation of having blackness and whiteness necessarily available as
identities to assume.

I will present our discussion on blackness from each boy's interview, with an accompanying
preliminary analysis. Using ideas from Lacanian theory of identity formation, a more detailed
discussion will ensue from the final interview presented. 17

I begin with Peter.

17 Tizard and Phoenix (1993) undertook a ground-breaking psychological study of adolescents of black and white parentage. To answer questions for social work policy on adoption, the researchers investigated whether the children had a black identity and whether if they did not, if they had serious identity problems. They interviewed fifty-eight young people, who happened to be students, in a wide variety of settings. 72% were girls. 73% were aged between fifteen or sixteen. 55% attended independent schools, where in all but one school about 75% of the students were white; the remaining 45% went to multiracial state schools which varied in their ethnic make-up. 66% of the students attended single-sex schools or schools with majority male students. The young people were asked specific questions about their racial identity including whether they regarded people of mixed parentage, including themselves, as black. Tizard and Phoenix reported that ‘... a substantial proportion of our sample in both racially mixed and predominantly white schools, had no sense of black-white boundaries, that is, of black and white people having distinct characteristics and cultures’ (p.165). 39% maintained that they thought of themselves as black, 10% said they did in some contexts, whilst 49% said they did not think of themselves as black.

Tizard and Phoenix’s findings are important to this study. Their findings arise from a greater number of students, of both sexes, in varying circumstances. In my re-evaluation I will closely investigate the views of four boys. The reader will also come to recognise that the findings of my masters’ study replicates some of the salient findings of Tizard and Phoenix with respect to the students’ discussion of their identities. To assist the reader, and because I think it is important, I include some of the verbatim data Tizard and Phoenix presented. The young people’s comments come from pp. 47 - 48.

‘One girl, for example, … answered … “No, not really, but I don’t think of myself as white, either.”’

Another answered: ‘Yes, society treats me as black … [n]o, I don’t think of myself as black, exactly, I think of myself as half-British, half-Jamaican, though essentially I feel British, because I was born here.’

Another: ‘I wouldn’t call myself black. I mean, lots of people have said if you are mixed race you might as well call yourself black, but I feel that is denying the fact that my mother is white, and I am not going to do that.’

And yet another: ‘No. Yes. Yeah, mainly because I am conditioned to do that [call myself black]. I mean I am half, and most of my friends have been white, so they call me black, but nowadays I am thinking more towards, well I’m half black, but then I’m half white.’

The researchers concluded that many young people have a very positive dual identity, as both black and white, and resist being told what kind of identity they should inhabit. Let us now turn to closely analysing similar statements made by four boys.
Peter

j: Do you think of yourself as black?

Peter: Yer, I don't class myself as white. I don't class myself as half cast. That's what I used to say, and Miss Astille\textsuperscript{18} say, you, you do not like, half. You can't be half and half, if you know what I mean. You just take one side that you think you are.

j: What side do you think you are?

Peter: Black, I think. 'Cos, er, let me think. I, there's black which is dark and no other colour is like it, but then white you get all these different mixtures and that, but I think of myself as black, like to be black.


Peter: I don't know really [pause].

j: Do you like to be identified as black?

Peter: Yes, prefer it, erm, to saying that I am white. 'Cos, if some people, they say, 'You're not white. You're,' right, erm. Like white people are racist to black people most of all people sometimes and that, so I don't really like say, 'Oh I'm white,' and then they can say, 'Oh you're not white.' So that's why I take on the black side. I say that I'm black.

Denial permeates Peter's experience of assuming an identity. It is introduced by those with whom he associates, seemingly also from the wider society, and finally by Peter himself. So we notice that when asked about his identity, he first says, twice, what he is not: 'I don't class myself as ...' He finds that he cannot say 'I am...' because what that was, 'half-cast', has been taken away from him. Miss Astille serves the function of performing the act of denial, but it is arguable that that is exactly what she does; she operates as an identifiable source of denial. Denial also seems to be a wider issue.

Peter brings into relief the issue of assuming an identity from amongst those available within society. He indicates that, what might be seen as essentialist or purist conceptions of black and white identities are the ones available: there are blacks and whites. A person is one or the other, being 'half-and-half', or, therefore both, is not an available option. But Peter does not

\textsuperscript{18} Miss Astille, his Form Tutor, was a significant adult in Peter's life. He spoke highly of her.
appear to want to be one, that is, black, and does not seem to think that he can assume the
other, that is, white.

We see that while he makes an argument for claiming a black identity, he claims not to
‘really know’ what it means to be black. He thinks that he is black, but despite the advantages
that this brings, he does not seem convinced of it. In fact, his argument provides an
explanation that would seemingly make him more white than black: ‘Black ... is dark and no
other colour is like it, but then white you get all these different mixtures.’ He thereby
arguably reverses existing notions, going all the way back to Long (1772), that there are
different shades of blackness because of the mixing of blacks and whites, while whiteness
remains impervious to shades. Peter reverses the notion that: ‘White is white and no other
colour is like it.’

The declaration that he is black is undermined by Peter’s argument in arriving at it. Further,
Peter seems more interested in claiming and being able to claim a white identity, especially if
he cannot claim one that is both black and white. He professes a black identity because he
feels denied a white one. He positions himself as one of the shades of white, but takes on the
black side to avoid being told he is not white.

Tony
j: Yes, and do you think of yourself as being black?
Tony: I don’t know [pause] just
j: You don’t [interrupting him]
Tony: but half
j: Right
Tony: Fifty-fifty

particularly of her role in helping him to achieve the success he desired (Stanford, 1997, pp. 76 & 78).
j: Right, do you feel as if, erm, being black is important to you? That that half is, that half is important to you?

Tony: God gave me the colour.

j: Mm, yes.

Tony: I like, I think, nothing wrong with being black. I like being black.

j: Do you try to bring up your blackness?

Tony: Mm, sometimes [pause].

j: In what way?

Tony: Hmn [pause].

j: And do you try to bring up your white side sometimes as well?

Tony: Yer, I just

j: Ha, ha.

Tony: I just seem to mix it all together.

j: You don't think about it?

Tony: No, I don't. It just comes out of my mouth.

j: Ha, ha.

Tony: It just comes out of my mouth, but I just talk normally. I've got white side and black side somehow.

j: Ok.

Tony: 'Cos I have two halves.

j: Do you like to be identified as a black person.

Tony: Yes.

j: Yes. Why?

Tony: I just I don't mind being identified with, er, anything.

We see that Tony, unlike Peter, retains the notion of the 'half-and-half' identity. We also see that although Tony does not articulate how he mixes the two halves together, that he points out that what he does is normal. Highlighting that what he does is normal stands in
contradistinction to Peter's response. Tony defends his 'fifty-fifty' identity against what it would seem here, unexpressed questions as to whether one can be 'half-and-half'. Tony seems to hold the position that if there is whiteness and blackness, he will maintain that 'I have two halves'.

However, like Peter, Tony responded negatively when asked about blackness in relation to himself: 'I don't know.' Like Peter, Tony also seems to need to make an argument for himself that is reassuring as he claims a black identity. And once again, the process to the claim undermines it: 'Nothing wrong with being black.' Further, it is noticeable that he actually defers saying that being black is important to him: 'God gave me the colour.' It is nothing to do with him, at least not his design. The biological nature of his 'fifty-fifty' identity is given privilege to explain his blackness. He seems to choose to sustain claims about his identity based on a biological argument.

Also, like Peter, Tony claims to like being identified as black. For Peter it was clearly a defensive strategy. With Tony the purpose is less clear. There is a feeling that he was somewhat frustrated at this point in the conversation. His response raises the question of the effect of the research process on receiving a positive answer to the second question, but a negative one to the first. It could have been said for my benefit, or seen as the better, correct, response. Certainly, those little laughs of mine were evidence of my being somewhat nervous and uncomfortable with what was happening. I can be seen as trying, not very well, to lighten the intensity of the moment, at the same time as encouraging him to speak.

Lee

j: Ok, do you identify yourself as black?

Lee: Do what? Erm, I don't know because I have grown up in. Greenwich is pretty much a white area, so I go out with whites all my life basically, right. I've never like, moved out of this area at all, erm, not just moved house. So alright, when I went to Jamaica, I went there for five weeks. Because I. Ok, they was calling me white! So I looked at
myself, and I thought, 'Well,' and I thought, 'I'll get'. I got myself into the culture and that, and it was alright. I enjoyed myself, and so I don't consider myself, I consider myself as being, as being part, being part of the black community, but I like being part of the white communities just as much, 'cos I can I can mix with both races so it doesn't affect, it doesn't affect either way.

j: Do you like being identified as a black person?

Lee: Yes. All the time all the time. I didn't used to. I went. Right, when I was, when I was really small, I used to get on my mum 'cos she was black. You, as you get older, it does, it like everyone thinks, 'Oh, you, you look different, so we have to treat you better,' and I like it that way.

j: Right, um, I think that's just the last question really now. Do you think you should be treated differently by any teachers?

Lee: No. I feel that erm I feel that teachers should treat everyone, as, everyone as equal as each other, whether they're whether they're black, white, fat, thin, whatever. Because the way I see it, if they treat some, if they treat a person differently, then it makes them look an outcast in front of all the other people, and I feel that if you treat people like, person like an outcast then he's going to feel like an outcast, and so you won't get, he won't, try not to communicate with nobody at all, which is which sometime may have sometimes happened, but they sometimes think right the teachers who don't know what they are doing, right, eventually will find out.

j: But your friends think differently, you said.

Lee: Yeah. My friends treat me differently because they know that they will get a smack in the mouth if they muck about with me.

Lee makes an argument for his whiteness, and elects to make his claim based on a cultural/socialisation explanatory framework. He seems to claim that he is not black because he has grown up white, that is, in a white community. He he almost seems surprised by the first question, and like the boys above, answered in negation, and again he also answers the second positively.

Lee's particular response to the second question suggests that perhaps more than research effect was influencing the response. He seems scrupulously honest in saying that he likes to be identified as black now, but did not as a child. He suggests that he made attacks on his mother because she is black. At other points in the interview, Lee had spoken about choosing to fight and getting into trouble that way when he was younger and other students made what
he considered offensive comments about his mother because of her blackness. He fought for her, whilst he would restrain himself when students taunted him about his blackness. So, his comment about his mother, I believe, needs to be understood in light of this.

Nevertheless, it does not undermine the extent to which racist name-calling can traumatise a black child, causing him in this instance, to ‘get on’ his mother because she is black. Her blackness occasioned troubles for him at school. Further, it seems that when blackness occasioned abuse, he rejected it, but when he did not feel that it did, he could enjoy it. We see that he is not averse to becoming involved in black culture, even though it would seem that he does not really regard himself as being part of the black community.

Again the theme of rejection seems to operate on the identity that Lee claims. This time the rejection seems to be placed with blacks in the embodiment of Jamaicans. Their rejection seems to reinforce for Lee the notion that he is white. Notice that he does not actually say that he is white. The claim to a white identity is ascribed; black Jamaicans told him he was white. Notice then, that although he highlights that he has lived and become socialised within a white world, it is not whites who are shown to be doing the ascription. On the contrary, we see that he would identify whites as those who deny him a white identity; other students, whom he identified elsewhere as white, teased him about being black. Whiteness for him is an unstable identity to inhabit. He seems sensitive and defensive about how his identity is regarded, leading to him establishing amongst friends that ‘they’ll get a smack in the mouth if they muck about with me.’

Maybe it is significant then, that he stutters over saying: ‘I don’t consider myself, I consider myself as being, as being part, being part of the black community’. Although he placed the denial of an identity with blacks, he also suggested that he was able to participate in that culture, and with doing so, found ‘it was alright’. He seemed more confident or comfortable.
with stepping in and out of black culture. He seems to think that the choice of doing so remains with him in a way that it does not with white culture. Notwithstanding, he raises the issue of treating a ‘person like an outcast’. One gets the feeling that Lee himself is involved in the issue he raises, if not the subject of it.

Steve

j: Do you think do you think of yourself as black?
Steve: Do I think of myself as black? [pause]
j: Mm.
Steve: Erm, I don’t really.

j: How do you think of yourself?
Steve: I don’t. I don’t really think of myself as colour. I think of myself as Steve, me. ‘Cos, er, at the end of the day I am not really black. I’m not really white. I’m somewhere in the middle so [pause]

j: Do you think you get treated differently?
Steve: What because I’m black?

j: Well, are you black?
Steve: No, but because I’m

j: Do people think you’re black? Are you identified as black?
Steve: Yer, I will. Do. Well, yer, I would think so.

j: You’re identified as black.
Steve: Yer.

j: Do you like being identified as black?
Steve: Erm [pause]

j: Does it matter to you?
Steve: No, it doesn’t really matter to me.

j: Mm.
Steve: Because I’m not really black, but if, obviously, I’m different to both sets of people so... once again, I don’t really think of myself as black so I just think of myself as an
ordinary person, so I don't see why there should be any difference between black or white on how we behave.

As with Lee, we notice a suggestion of surprise at the first question with Steve. Unlike all the others, however, Steve would not say that he likes being identified as black. Steve makes the argument for his individuality as the marker of his identity. We see the insistence and tension around him maintaining that he is not black, at least, that he is 'not really black', but he will be neither black nor white. He maintains that he is different from both, but asserts that he is ordinary. Still, it would appear a somewhat demanding stance to maintain. He claims not to understand, and seems to question the division between black and white. Ultimately, he seemingly attempts to contain the difficulties with which he is presented by refusing to think of himself as colour. He seems to be saying, 'I am not black. I am not white. I am Steve, me.'

2:7 Understanding Blackness Through Lacan

Steve's construction of himself as 'I am Steve, me' is fascinating when understood in Lacanian thought. Lacan developed a theory of identity formation within his exposition of psychoanalysis. His theory of identity arises from his discussion of what he calls the Mirror Stage (Lacan, 1977, p. 1-7). It is within this structural stage of a person's life, at the age between six and eighteen months, that a person begins to assume the status of subject. The individual becomes a subject by assuming suggested identities. It begins with the child accepting an image of itself in the mirror as an image of itself. That image is seen as whole, contrasting with the child’s actual experience of a sense of fragmentation due to a lack of co-ordinating control over itself. The mirror image is therefore pleasing. The child gladly imagines itself to be what the mirror suggests.

Lacan maintains however that the joy of the Mirror Stage gives way to the forever alienation of the person from itself. For the mirror image is not the person. The person imagines...
him/herself to be the image. Though this would seem frustratingly nihilist, Lacan argues that we are necessarily and paradoxically, rendered subjects in this way; the human being becomes a human subject by assuming available identities. In assuming available identities it becomes possible for the human being to say something about him/herself, and thereby assume a subject position.

Nevertheless, Lacan distinguishes between the speaking subject, he calls the je, and the identity, he calls the moi, that that je assumes. The individual is said to claim an identity that is already available within the society, and imagines him/herself as such, that is, whatever s/he claims to be. Hence for example, "I am a christian," is an assertion by the person, as a speaking subject, I am/je, saying something about what s/he imagines himself to be: christian/moi. It is an imaginary identification. Further, it is a meconnaissance, or a misrecognition. The je is not the moi.

The individual has only inscribed him/herself within pre-existing symbolic structures. All identities which the individual can claim, exist within the symbolic structures or culture of society. Language is regarded as the ultimate symbolic structure, and in Lacanian thought, is particularly regarded as that which enables the construction of the speaking subject. It is because of language that the individual can assume a subject position. Further, the individual does not just speak. S/he is spoken. We are fashioned by the symbolic structure of language. We speak because of and about that which the content of language permits. Finally, we remain unaware of this full power of language.

With respect to Lacan’s ideas, Lee (1990) argues that the purpose of psychoanalysis is to bring the analysand, the person undergoing psychoanalysis, to the realisation that his/her identity is ‘essentially illusory, the product of those imaginary identifications and fundamental misrecognitions’ (p. 39). ‘Psychoanalysis aims to help the analysand recognise
the gap between subject and predicate inherent in a statement of the form “I am a loving brother. To ... force him/her to recognise the inevitable discontinuity between one’s imaginary identifications ("loving brother") and what one can say about oneself” (p. 40). Lee maintains that ‘psychoanalysis destroys the analysand’s illusion that his identity can be fully captured in the imaginary construct called the moi, and it does this quite simply by showing how this imaginary identity is riddled with gaps both created and covered over by the variety of the symbolic systems in which [s/]he was born’ (p. 74).

Steve’s construction of himself, ‘I think of myself as Steve, me,’ can be seen as an elaboration of a Lacanian explanation of identity, and that in a most sophisticated manner. For Steve can be seen as spotting and highlighting a gap within the symbolic system, and forcing the creation of an identity at the point at which the system of language reveals itself to have a gap. To begin, it seems that Steve acknowledges blackness and whiteness as available identities from which to choose. He resists them. Nevertheless, he is seen seeking to place himself within the symbolic structure if also negotiating how he will be placed within it. ‘I am not really black. I’m not really white. I am somewhere in the middle’, makes use of the formation (‘I am...’) that enables him to say something about himself in terms of what can be said, what is available.

Here we see that it forces Steve back unto himself. It could be argued that he does not recognise that blackness and whiteness are imaginary identifications. (Steve after all was not an analysand in this interview). In psychoanalytic understanding he could be said not to have overcome his meconnaissance, that identity formation is all about imaginary identifications with and within pre-existing structures. He does not seem to understand that his frustration is born out of the fact that he was cast within a pre-existing system that does not make room for him, that does not accommodate him or acknowledge him. Then again, maybe he does, but does not use this explanatory framework to articulate his position. What is clearer about his
thinking is that what is available does not work for him.

Steve will not say that he is black or that he is white. Instead he states, 'I am not really black, I am not really white. I am somewhere in the middle.' Notice that here he does not say what it is that he is. He describes an identity, but without an actual name for what he describes. That 'somewhere in the middle' which he claims to be does not have a name, at least, not one by which Steve will identify himself. It appears that he does not recognise that 'somewhere in the middle' as an existing identity that he can claim.

Consequently, we see that he comes close to not existing, or losing his subject position, when imagining black and white identities in relation to himself. It would seem that he rationalises that: 'I am not really', if neither of the two available identities. It is arguably a recognition of the need to say something about himself in terms of what is available. Placing oneself outside of what is available seems to threaten a cancelling out of the person. One must work with the symbolic structures even when working against it. So we come to appreciate why Steve states, 'I don't really think of myself as colour. I think of myself as Steve, me.' He seems to insist on his subject position, but he would redefine it. He cannot quite not think of himself as colour. The force of the symbolic is too present. It dictates that he must. Ultimately, Steve gives his name as the noun that describes his identity. That somewhere in the middle is Steve.

It is significant that he does not say, 'I am Steve Brown.' According to Lacanian thought that would be indicative of Steve taking his place within the system of language and social determination. That could be interpreted as Steve saying, 'I belong to the Brown family. I am like the Browns,' in an attempt to identify himself. We find on the contrary, that he suggests

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19 I acknowledge that I may have interrupted him, and thereby prevented him from saying what he is. However, his pauses throughout that stage of the interview, suggest, at least, a hesitancy to state what it is that he believes he is. He had the opportunity at other points to say so as well; and at each of those
that he does not see himself as being like either his mother or father: ‘Obviously, I’m
different to both sets of people.’ He underscores his sense of difference. The emphasis is not
on placing himself within the established symbolic order. It is to establish for himself a place
within that order.

Without being able to describe himself in terms of what is available, his ability to say
something about himself, and assume the position of the speaking subject in this regard, is
limited. Therefore, he inscribes a tautology that provides him with a claim to a subject
position even if it does not inform, or make sense within the existing symbolic structure.
Rather than imagining himself to be like an another identity, he announces himself and makes
of himself the reference: ‘I am Steve, me.’ He makes himself the je and the moi. The impetus
here seems to be for Steve to offer himself as an example of an identity that is not but should
become available.

The formation, ‘I imagine myself as Steve, me’ is powerful in emphasising that that
‘somewhere in the middle’ necessarily suggests itself as an imaginary space. ‘I imagine
myself to be Steve, me,’ can be read as another way of saying, ‘I imagine myself as Steve,
moi,’ ultimately, ‘I imagine myself as an imaginary identification itself.’ Steve resolutely
seems to occupy an imaginary space. Since the symbolic structure, language and society, do
not acknowledge him, or until they take account of the example that ‘Steve’ represents, the
subject who is both black and white, that subject will occupy an imaginary space within and
beyond the pre-existing structures of language and society.

While Steve’s identity seems to be in waiting, that is, yet to be made readily available within
the symbolic structures, we find that Steve’s final words are: ‘I think of myself as an ordinary
person, so I don’t see why there should be any difference between black and white on how

points he declines. Except to say he is ‘Steve, me’, he chooses to say what he is not.

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we behave.' In other words, what he is may not have recognised, stable legitimacy or status, but, the fault is not with him. If he is both black and white and therefore different, that is, a misfit or an odd-fit within the symbolic structures, then it is the structures that are at fault.

According to the logic of those structures, his is an identity constituting blackness and whiteness, with that mixture producing something other than what could be viewed strictly as black or white. Rather than covering over the gaps that his position reveals, for example, by choosing one identity over the other, or even claiming that he is both, he insists on not being either or both. He insists on the gaps. He attempts to use those gaps to create a space that will accommodate him within the symbolic structures of language and culture.

Steve's final words raise the fundamental question about blackness and whiteness: why should there be any difference? The unanswered question underscores the impasse it suggests. Steve's own reasoning ultimately weakens. He would not place himself within black or white categories, but nevertheless, questions the distinction between the two. If the distinction is or should be insignificant, then one might argue that he could place himself in one or both. He chooses to place himself in the difficult position of being neither. It is perhaps the most difficult option for him as an individual, not least because he makes a critique of the structure that gives a subject position and which can be seen as offering him, one or both identity within it. He threatens himself with being cancelled out of the system that gives him symbolic existence.

His position enabled us to look closely at the complexity involved in being a subject who is black and white. Certainly, the extracts from all the other boys' interviews sustain the tensions that are expressed in Steve's. It seems the symbolic structures of language and society do not allow or help all the boys to sustain their identities. There does not seem to be one that they can claim, or one that performs a specific function for them within a system that maintains the distinct categories of blackness and whiteness. On the one hand, 'You can't be
half-and-half. You just take one side you think you are.' On the other, 'but [I am] half, fifty-fifty'. Yet again, 'obviously, I'm different to both sets of people.' They all resisted taking one side over another, but each also attempted different 'solutions' even if their tensions remained unresolved. Peter claimed to 'take the black side'. Lee argued for his 'white side'. Tony held on to both. Steve gave both up. All their decisions seemed to have been forced, and to have been made against themselves. They all seemed to have wanted to find a way of containing both sides within what they would or could call themselves.

Still, they all resisted taking the 'black side'. And though there was apprehension with respect to assuming the 'white side', it arose primarily from a sense of being denied the ability to confidently claim it. There was less sense of them being denied a claim to a black identity; in fact, it seemed as if they felt that a black identity was forcefully available. They resisted the force of this availability. Yet, while they resisted the blanket acceptance of a black identity, most suggested that being identified as black was not always resisted. They found some pleasure or advantage in being identified as black, even if they resisted identifying themselves as such.

Together with their apparent need to reassure themselves when they did identify with a black identity, their response to blackness, perhaps, reflects something of the discourses on and the status of blackness within society. Their response speaks to their absorption and critique of these. Blackness may offer some advantages, but it is also seen to be associated with some negativity. Further, whiteness seemed desirable to them in a way that blackness was not. While they resisted identifying themselves as black so as to resist the denial of their whiteness, it also seems the case that they resisted blackness because of its position in relation to whiteness.

Nevertheless, while this is true, the most consistent struggle for all the boys was finding a
way to hold both blackness and whiteness within what would be themselves. They would insist that they are ‘ordinary’, ‘normal’, even ‘outcast’. Since the symbolic structures do not accommodate them as constituting an identity that is black and white, that identity inhabits an imaginary space. The identity of the subject who is black and white occupies an imaginary space outside the symbolic structures of society and language.

2:8 Speaking the Unspeakable: an opening thought

Modood, Berthoud, Lakey, Nazroo, Smith, Virdee and Beishon (1997), examined self-identification strategies amongst ethnic minorities in Britain. The researchers found that blacks showed a preference for categorising themselves equally in terms of belonging to both minority and majority categories. This seems another way of saying that blacks in that study defined themselves in terms of being black and white. The individual, who is black and white, seems now to be an issue beyond biology – and school children. The individual who is black and white seems to be a social, cultural phenomenon in Britain, perhaps becoming less of a phenomenon, and more of a commonplace occurrence.

However, it also becomes apparent that the shifts within people’s lived experiences have not (yet) become acknowledged, or established within the discourses of society. The choice for an identity of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ culture is not acknowledged, it would seem, as a choice for blackness and whiteness. Therefore, while this choice may obtain in practice, it may not be articulated as such. There does not appear to be an available identity that describes this (new) subject, or one that offers an alternative to the two essentialist notions of black and white identities. We are thrown back onto a silence that obtains both within the society in general and academic activity in particular.

If blacks are choosing to retain notions of being black while also accepting those that might
be considered white, they are re-defining what it means to be black, at least, what blackness means to them. This necessarily forces the question as to whether blackness, and whiteness, will or can remain essentialist notions. A fundamental question is whether the two can remain if not essentialist. Certainly, the Parekh Report (Runnymede Trust, 2000), or the 'fury' (Alibhai-Brown, 2000) and 'torrent of misquotation and abuse' (Hall, 2000) it met, is testament to the resistance to and the difficulties inherent in imagining alternatives.

Hall (1996b) has long argued for the acknowledgement of 'new ethnicities'. The question remains as to whether an identity constituted both by what has been regarded as distinctly black and distinctly white will be legitimised as an acceptable identity for blacks to claim. \(^{20}\) Perhaps, we are beginning to talk about it, and therefore, perhaps, with being spoken about, it might find its way into our consensual universe. For if contemporary blackness can be admitted as black and white then it lays the foundation for black students to actively seek and participate in academic success without fear of or actual reprisal.

\(^{20}\) The question as to whether a notion of whiteness as being constituted both by what has been regarded as distinctly black and distinctly white is not lost. This however constitutes another and perhaps necessarily different exploration from the one that is being pursued here. The focus here is on exploring issues around black identity in contemporary society.
Pt.3 Methodology

3.1 Finding the Appropriate Approach

Following my argument that research into race, and race and school success need to be developed, even be reconceptualised, I attempt two fundamental tasks in this study. I seek, first, to explore new ways of thinking about, or of conceptualising, issues of race, and of race and schooling; and I attempt, second, to conduct this study in light of the exploration I make in the first task. In other words, I explore a framework for doing research on race and also attempt to use that framework to answer the questions this study poses. For reasons given earlier, I have already conducted a theoretical exploration in answering the first question: What is the state of contemporary blackness? I will now move on to an empirical exploration of the second question: How is race handled in successful school contexts?

In conducting the empirical part of the study, I will continue my interest in developing and reconceptualising ways of doing research on race. I review the tenets of feminist epistemology and epistemological theories on black research, in my attempt to understand how my own study may proceed. In this way, I explore some ways in which race and research, and research on race interact, and the demands that their interaction generate. I move towards combining elements of feminist and black epistemological ideas to provide the foundation of my research methodology. The reader will discover that this methodology takes a Signifying(g) standpoint, rooted in an afrocentric feminist epistemology. I suggest how this new method can be seen as part of the philosophical discussions on truth and a contribution to the trajectory of finding ways of doing research. In particular, I situate my methodology within a Lacanian post-structuralist frame and suggest the continuities between that framework and my new approach. Having done this I then turn my attention to the details of

21 In Pt. 2, in particular, pp. 59 - 67
Lessons from Feminist Research

Speaking from within a feminist tradition, Mary Daly captured and articulated the issues with which I thought I was faced when I needed to make decisions about my methodology. In her iconoclastic *Beyond God the Father*\(^{22}\), she begins her critique of the methodology and content of theological knowledge with a critique of what she calls ‘methodolatry’.

One of the false gods of theologians, philosophers and other academics’ she writes, ‘is called Method. It commonly happens that the choice of a problem is determined by method, instead of method being determined by the problem. This means that thought is subjected to an invisible tyranny... the tyranny of methodolatry hinders new discoveries. It prevents us from raising questions never asked before and from being illumined by ideas that do not fit into pre-established boxes and forms... handling data that does not fit into the Respectable Categories of Questions and Answers... as non-data, thereby rendering it invisible...[U]nder patriarchy, Method has wiped out women’s questions so totally that even women have not been able to hear and formulate our own questions to meet our own experiences. Women have been unable even to experience our own experience’ (Daly, 1986, pp. 11-12).

In addition to problematising the notion of school success, this study seeks to recover questions and experiences that might be of more or primary importance to blacks than they might be to the government, say, at the present time. Daly provided for me an example that suggested that I might ask and explore my particular questions, and reassured me that I had to use the methodology that allowed me to do this. I have treated my earlier work (Stanford,

\(^{22}\) First published in 1973
1997) and that of Sewell's (1997) as data in exploring the issues to do with contemporary blackness amongst black students.

I grew in resolve in my project with a thesis of Harding's (1994) that sustained and developed Daly's argument. In a discussion of a feminist methodology aimed at clearing a space for feminist research, Harding defended research by women against the 'masculine voice' of science, pointing out that women's perspective, understandings and experiences were barred or were made illegitimate as opposed to being inherently inadmissible within research.

Further, Harding tackled epistemological issues presenting an argument for a feminist epistemology that instated women as researchers. Women could be knowers. Women's experiences should be used to generate scientific problems, hypotheses and evidence. Women's knowledge before and after research was not inferior. In fact, she highlighted that in accord with standpoint theory, some feminists maintained that it is women's experiences that can furnish research with a fuller, less distorted, more reliable understanding of the social reality. The researcher may and should place her/himself in the same critical plane as the researched, and design research for and that serve the interests of women.

If women could have felt themselves so marginalised in the research process, then theirs made the case for blacks, even more so. It became apparent that the very act of my attempting to conduct my own study would have proved itself sufficiently challenging without the additional claims of conducting it from within a black aesthetic, with a view of answering questions of importance to blacks. For inspiration I scrutinised the methodologies of what have survived as important studies written on the black experience.
Lessons from Black Research

When Franz Fanon investigated 'the psychic alienation of the black man' (Fanon, 1986, p. 49), he found that his study extended beyond his psychological discipline. Further, he found that discipline constraining on 'psychoanalytical, sociological and political lessons' (p. 49) he had learnt in conducting the study. This undermined his intentions of presenting his study as his thesis. He chose to highlight this point in his published text, just as he highlighted that on 'a statement of its [the study's] methodological point of view[,] I shall be derelict' (p. 14). Claiming to 'leave methods to the botanists and mathematicians [since] there is a point at which methods devour themselves' (p. 14), he offered the world his Black Skin, White Masks.

He insisted that he 'would not remain silent about certain things which, however psychological they may be, produce consequences that extend into the domains of other sciences' (Fanon, 1986, p. 48). He would maintain that his 'book is a clinical study' and that 'it is good to introduce a work in psychology with a statement of its methodological point of view' (p. 14). But he resolved that: 'In this work I have made a point to convey the misery of the black man. Physically and affectively. I have not wished to be objective. Besides that would be dishonest: it is not possible for me to be objective' (p. 86). It is implied that Black Skin was not submitted as his thesis.

Yet it is often said that the book is a classic. Indeed, the 1986 publication is presented as a classic by its publishers, a 'Pluto Classic'. History has allowed that Fanon attempted an 'audacious, often impossible transformation of truth and value, the jagged testimony of colonial dislocation, its displacement of time and person and its defilement of culture and territory ... [1]In Black Skin, White Masks, there is the intricate irony of turning the European existentialist and psychoanalytical traditions to face the history of the Negro which they had never contemplated, to face the reality of Fanon himself' (Bhabha, 1986, p. x & xxiv).
From this classic black text then we might note some possible tensions faced by the black academic undertaking academic research on blackness. To begin, Bhabha’s (1986) comment suggests that the black researcher researching blackness must ascertain for him/herself how already existing knowledge will be applied in relation to his/her project. The attempt at generating knowledge seems to come up against knowledge already generated. The knowledge that the black researcher seeks to generate, and the process of generation might not fit neatly into existing categories.

The black researcher researching blackness therefore seems required to negotiate the dictates of methodology and its concomitant demands for objectivity – or forsake them. On the matter of objectivity, there seems a further dilemma. For on the one hand, objectivity presents itself as a choice between honest or accurate description of blackness and the ability to present the findings of the investigation as research, and on the other, as an impossible thing to achieve. Ultimately, it is the question of whether what is produced will be accepted as having met the conditions of knowledge creation within an academic discipline, both in terms of the knowledge generated and its process.

It has been some fifty years since Fanon’s *Black Skins* first appeared. The comparatively more recent works of Ladner (1987) and Ladson-Billings (1994) serve as a spot-check over the decades to suggest that black researchers continued to face the problems that he did. Both Ladson-Billings and Ladner found the need to contest the notion of objectivity. Ladson-Billings redefined it within her study as authenticity, and Ladner seemed to adopt the notion of subjectivity. Ladson-Billings confidently grounded her work, conducted in the 1990s, within the theoretical work of Hill-Collins who had developed an approach to research she called afrocentric feminist methodology (Hill-Collins, 1990). Ladner, working in the 1970s.

23 First published in 1952 in France; first publication in England in 1967
worked more with a sense of dare, cognisant that she was challenging received wisdom on research even as she sought to present her work as such.

Ladner, for instance, found it necessary to critique an orthodoxy of the time that used the framework of deviance versus normalcy in the investigation of race. She observed that blacks’ reality was presumed deviant, and white reality presumed normal. She found this explanatory framework undermining of her knowledge of the world, her position as the generator of knowledge in her capacity of researcher and ultimately, undermining of her position of being a knower in the world. And ultimately, it was this that she rejected.

We have already noted that Sewell (1997) claimed the perspective of a black person in his research. He also revealed that when he came to research, his positioning as a black person conducting research raised concerns over the process of knowledge creation. But Sewell attended to those concerns in a different way from Ladson-Billings and Ladner. It seemed he accepted for example, the principle of objectivity and attempted to show how he managed it despite the concerns that it raised for him.

Since *Black Masculinities*, Sewell has been accused by political leaders in the black community as ‘somebody who gets attention for saying the things that well-meaning white liberals would naturally agree with’ (Hinsliff and Bright, 2000). Ladson-Billings and Ladner’s work in contrast has been received as landmark studies in their contribution to understanding reality from within a black reference. With a Moscovician reading one might say such responses were to be expected. Ladner and Ladson-Billings articulated what is rehearsed amongst blacks. Sewell did not; or, at least, based on the analysis in this study and Mirza’s (1999), the way he rehearsed the censored, ignited a mixed reception, with a greater impetus for rejection. With that said, let us take a final look at Sewell in this exploration of
the black researcher conducting research.

His specific concerns were whether white teachers would reveal as much to him as they would to a white researcher and whether he would be, ‘too sympathetic to the points of view of African Caribbean boys’ (p. xvi). These concerns seem two-fold: for whites it was a question of whether he would be able to access information. For blacks, it seems that he was concerned that he had (would have) too much, sufficient to threaten his objectivity. To address these issues, he introduced what he described as collaboration to reduce a feeling of ‘them’ and ‘me’ (p. xvi) in the research process.

The collaboration attempt was arguably a response directed at the white teachers. For it was the teachers whom Sewell thought would feel themselves threatened and would perhaps withhold information. This strategy does not suggest how he resolved the second issue, that of being ‘too sympathetic to the points of view of African Caribbean boys’. There was instead evidence of him being ambivalent about what stance he should assume in relation to the boys in his research.

A tension came from their [the students’] perception of me as one of them - and yet I was older and part of the teachers’ world. I used this as positive positioning. It gave me enough ‘critical distance’ so that I was not just a mouthpiece for their perspectives. On the other hand the students felt an affinity with me, not just as a Black male but because I would often chill (relax socially) with them or engage them in topics that I knew would be of interest (Sewell, 1997, p. xvi).

It would seem that while Sewell tried to suggest how he got closer to the white teachers' knowledge, he thought he had to reveal that he had chosen to create a ‘critical distance’ between him and the boys. He was making a tacit concession to objectivity. It was critical to
show he had distanced himself. He was being a good researcher. It clearly remains a tenuous philosophical question as to whether he did distance himself. He seemed to enjoy the boys’ company and was reluctant to give up that enjoyment. He seemed unable to maintain the distance he attempted on an intellectual level.

Nevertheless, his orientation can be seen to have fundamentally impacted on how he conducted the research. Sewell reported that it was the boys who saw him as one of them. Sewell defines his positioning differently: he was part of another world, the teachers’.

Ladner, in her investigation of her place in the research declared: ‘I was highly influenced by my Blackness, by the fact that I, on many levels was one of them, and had to deal with their problems on a personal level’ (p. 76, her emphasis).

Her stance made her question the notion of objectivity, and led to her re-inscribing herself as a black knower, with knowledge she needed to find a way of introducing rather than with knowledge that was compromising. The same did not appear to apply for Sewell. Rather, it would seem that because the boys took Sewell into their world he used their affinity to maximise his ability to extract knowledge from the boys. If he had already feared having too much information, then it suggests that what he feared in being ‘too sympathetic’ was how he would synthesise and analyse that information.

The notion of being ‘too sympathetic’ might be interpreted as allowing one’s own understanding and emotions to get in the way of scientific knowledge creation. We have looked at the place of Sewell’s emotions in his study. We have said that he succeeded in describing how he felt about contemporary blackness. It has been argued that his emotions did get in the way of his study. Now we can add, that despite his intellectual orientation towards objectivity, he did not transcend his emotions, not just simply because he did not have a language, but because he disregarded what language he had.
If black researchers are required to, and do, divest themselves of their vantage point, then the fact that they are black would arguably serve more to greatly reinforce rather than challenge existing (white) biases. Sewell might well be angry, and shout damnation. That emotion targeted on what excluded him from his research may have been his redemption. His ‘critical distance’ perhaps explains how he failed to see himself disappearing out of existence in his own analysis.

It is undeniably mind-boggling, that Sewell could write what he did of the boys in his conclusion, and not see that he was part of the dilemma he described. If he did and wrote it anyway, some may call him bold. Nevertheless, surely even he would allow that those who would come after him would have to think long and hard about the nature of the black researchers’ relationship with the research process and the researched, getting close enough to collect the pieces he left behind.

3:2 Problematising the Subject: the black researcher and research

I have used Fanon’s work as an example of a classic black text. Here is the irony of that. Fanon declared at the beginning of his thesis: ‘However painful it is for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white’ (Fanon, 1986, p. 12). In his conclusion he returned to that theme to state: ‘The Negro is not. Any more than the white man.’ Describing himself as ‘the man of color’ he finishes by asking, ‘Superiority? Inferiority? Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?’

Again Fanon raises some important issues. The man of colour, that is to say, the person with black skin, is not necessarily one and the same as the person who claims a political identity of
the black person. If researchers are going to claim to do research as black researchers, more needs to be considered than the colour of the researcher’s skin. Firstly, to claim to be conducting research as a black person seems a political thing. To claim to be conducting research is an academic thing. To claim to be conducting research as a black researcher requires that the politics and academic find a resolution, or that the politics acknowledge the academic.

When researchers with black skin produce research on the black experience, their work does have an implicit appeal to be regarded as more authentic - because the researcher is black. My analysis of some lessons from past black research shows that this is by no means unconditionally true. The enterprise of research may operate such that a black person may also produce the kind of knowledge that a white researcher might. When Fanon declared that the destiny of the black man is white, he was raising this very issue, that of the outcome of a black person socialised in a world controlled by whiteness.

His was the sophisticated argument that people with black skin are socialised white, with or without knowing that they are. And everyone has an unconscious formation of his/her identity. Hence both the Negro and white are not. Society maintains the pretence that black and whites are different for reasons beyond the colour of their skin. It might prove prudent for researchers to keep in mind that blackness and whiteness may be lived experience because they are constructed reality.

Foster, Gomm and Hammersley (1996) maintain that the two should be kept separate. They argue that the politics undermine the research. They make the valid point that in some studies on race and schooling the politics overtake the research process such that research is made to prove the point of politics. Further, they maintain that the issue of discrimination is a difficult thing to prove. They support this point again by a valid observation that in some studies that claim to report on racism fail to substantiate their claims. For these, and admittedly purist notions of research, Foster et al argue that the two, politics and research, should be kept separate. In her review of their work Dillabough (1997) criticised their purist notion of research, reiterating feminist arguments about voice and standpoint. She argued for the coupling of the two precisely because without it some questions would not be raised and
But Fanon also allowed that the lived experiences of blacks in effect constitute a doubling of blacks' understanding of reality, hence the black skin, white mask. There might be issues about identity located within the unconscious, but blacks are also cognisant of the ways in which they are black and different from whites. They use this knowledge to navigate racism, perhaps, amongst other things. As an epistemological issue within research, this lines up with standpoint theorising: it perhaps occasions a fuller view of reality, at least, more than one view. It perhaps positions the black researcher, if s/he will, 'to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself'. Again, this outcome cannot be taken for granted. The impetus of researchers, black and white, too often has been what Fanon again described as the blacks within their world and the whites within theirs.

The present research is as much about doing it as it is about investigating the problem I have selected. I am attempting to raise and answer a question that seems to be of importance to blacks, and maybe others – as research activity. I think I can claim that it is out of my knowledge as a black person that this question arises. Similarly, it is precisely my position as a black person raising a question on blackness that I find it prudent to be concerned with the issue of the research process. If I place myself within a black aesthetic, I am not unaware that within standpoint theorising, this privileges rather than disqualifies me in research activity of the sort I am conducting. For I am attempting a fuller understanding of reality.

I wanted to explore the black and white identity in black students in its complexity, as much as I want to explore the reality of the teachers involved in successful school experiences with black children. It is crucial that all researchers problematise issues for research rather than merely research issues that have been designated problems. Certainly, the history of race and schooling research suggests research into race needs to maintain a spirit of critique, and a refusal to take things for granted. If I were simply to follow the current trend in research, it would not be answered.
might contribute to a project that might not necessarily be advantageous for black students. Whereas talk of success could be seen as an indication of wanting to address the failure of the past, researchers might reserve the right to problematise the issue.

Those who claim to conduct research as blacks need to think about what it is that they might have to contribute to the debate. Researchers, and particularly black researchers, may need to introduce questions about which politicians might not be immediately interested, and consequently not raise. It may rest with black researchers in particular to raise questions that are of interest and importance to blacks, and having raised them, find the means to answer them. Unlike Fanon, I insist on this as a research study, and on conducting it the way I have conducted it, so to my methodology, if I might take leave before to say a final word, on problematising the black researcher and the research process.

3.3 A Word about this Black Researcher

Discussion to this point should suggest to the reader that a black talking about blackness is likely to be emotionally involved in the project. I would like to own that I am involved emotionally with mine. I have shown the limits and usefulness of emotions in Sewell’s work and have argued that his emotion, seemingly unaccounted for, inhibited his ideas. I hope my own words will not account for what I produce. For I see the value in staying in touch with my emotions in this project.

The reader will see that I have established checks and balances, but in the end, the name on the binder is mine. Whatever is here has been filtered through me. As it was filtered, I necessarily experienced what I wrote. If something gnawed at me, angered me, encouraged me, as the reader will note, I gave it attention. Also, I hope that I have established and will continue to show that I am taking care with the emotions of the participants in this study. My
emotions operate as a guide. And I think a useful one.

Further, like Sewell, I am in effect researching myself. I might add at this point that I am Jamaican. This should make a difference. It would challenge the assumption that this dissertation is necessarily being written from an insider position. I am an outsider to native black and white Britons; both could correctly remind me that I am not British, and question my understanding of race in Britain.

I would be the first to acknowledge that it is my Jamaican upbringing that renders my position on blackness. In my experience, I never had to be defensive about being black. It was just a characteristic of mine, like my fingers or lungs are. It is also the case that upon moving to England my orientation to race issues became explicit to me. From never being concerned about it on the day of my arrival, I have devoted the better part of five years researching it. And, by extension, it is certainly the case that the perspective that I bring to my research is influenced by my Jamaican background.

Therefore, it must also be said that the Jamaican who is disinterested in blackness could be regarded as an exemplar of the black who is black and white. It is true that Jamaicans do not construct or explain reality primarily in terms of race. Rather, the reality is that Jamaica has digested and embraced both white British (and increasingly American) and black African traditions. This is not problematised, or even problematic. As far as Jamaicans are concerned, they are Jamaicans. The combination, along with other things, produces the distinctive

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25 Sewell and I do not stand alone either. There is suggestive evidence, for instance, that when Milner (1973) produced his influential study on the self-esteem of blacks in his ostensibly clinical exercise, he too may have been researching himself. In *To Thine Own Self* he wrote a deeply personal, moving and not at all academic account about his circumstance of being 'half-Jewish' and of his coming to terms with the knowledge that he was deliberately brought up without knowledge of his Jewish heritage; he grew up, consequently, as if he were not Jewish when he is. His choosing to reveal this bit of his history, in an academic forum, some twenty-five or so years later is important. At least, it sheds new light on his study of black children.
Finally, I acknowledge Fanon’s argument that blacks are shaped by white influences in the Caribbean possibly without knowing it, and thus believe the myth that they are black. Though I share with Fanon Caribbean origins and the development of a sensitivity to race upon my arrival in Britain, I would not go on to describe myself as consequently being ‘oppressed with the whole weight of [my] blackness’. With certainly no intended disrespect to Fanon, it may be because he grew up under colonial rule. Though also shaped by colonial rule, I grew up in a Jamaica, newly independent and proud, insistent on the motto: ‘Out of many, one people’. I have a feeling Fanon would appreciate this: ‘The tragedy of the man/woman is that [s/]he was once a child’ (Fanon, 1986, p. 231).

I rather side, therefore, with Bhabha’s (1986) reading of the situation. With black skin and white mask, ‘occupying two places at once... the depersonalised, dislocated colonial subject can become an incalculable object, quite literally, difficult to place’.

### 3.4.1 Signifyin(g): a standpoint

Having given thought to the significance of my own role as a black researcher researching race, I now move on to explore the theoretical constituents of the methodological approach that seemed to be required by my research questions and stance. This is rooted in Gates...
(1988) theory of Signifyin(g) which he introduced as an explanatory framework for African American literary criticism. He retrieved the Signifying Monkey tales from African-American mythology to sustain a compelling argument that ‘the Monkey’s language of Signifyin(g) functions as a metaphor for formal revision, or intertextuality, within the Afro-American literary tradition’ (p. xxi). Signifyin(g) is a history of revision, or repetition with a signal difference.

Beginning with texts that comprise slave literature Gates demonstrated how Signifyin(g) as vernacular practice developed into Signifyin(g) as the explicit theme of black literary texts, and the principle that guarded and instructed how those very texts were written. He also demonstrated how Signifyin(g) evolved as the way to critique what was written. Black writers responded to each other’s representation on the black experience, each trying to render his/her experience as an individual one, although each positioned him/herself amongst the collective. This resulted in a literary history of Signifyin(g) whose texts are regarded as the written dimension of the vernacular and as distinctively black texts.

Gates argued that at the beginning of the written tradition, blacks wrote in direct response to the challenge of the age of Reason. The thinkers of the Enlightenment thought that Reason

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27 Gates was also careful to point out that Signifyin(g) was not his theory. He acknowledged the scholarship of Roger D. Abrahams, Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Geneva Smitherman, John Szwed and Bruce Jackson as ‘the truly expert theorists of the Monkey and the language of Signifyin(g)’ (p. xxi), and that his work is an attempt ‘to lift the discourse of Signifyin(g) from the vernacular to the discourse of literary criticism’.

28 Gates claims that it is in African American vernacular tradition that the tales of the Signifying Monkey and the language of Signifyin(g) are to be found. The vernacular tradition developed and served as the repository of blacks’ private yet communal rituals and their survival strategy since the days of slavery. It therefore developed as art and defence. The Monkey’s tales, necessarily capable of various interpretations and renditions, involve three characters: the Monkey, the Lion and the Elephant. The plot is not prescribed as the emphasis of the tales is on the storyteller revealing how the Monkey manages to persuade the Lion that the Elephant has demigated the Lion’s family. This is done to force the Lion to confront the Elephant whom the Monkey is assured will defeat the Lion in battle. In this way the Monkey who wishes to see the Lion dethroned from what the Monkey regards as the Lion’s self-appointment as king of the jungle will obtain his wishes although he himself is physically unable to carry them out. This is why he turns to language. He is the hero because he uses the language of Signifyin(g), the figurative, to accomplish his aims. The Lion is foiled because he fails to understand
was exemplified in the production of literature. The Africans amongst them, who had an oral tradition, were confirmed in their position as, at the least, inferior to whites. Where blacks did appear in literature at the time, it was as the object for classification and explanation, and/or to set-off white superiority in the texts of white writers.

Nevertheless, Gates maintained that blacks were fascinated with the written text, dubbed the Talking Book. He traced this fascination to the captured African, Gronnoisaw of Anglophone history, on the Middle Passage in transition from the world that was taken away and to the one ahead. Gates argued that when blacks took up the pen, they had two intentions: to literally write themselves into existence and to make the book talk to and about them as subjects in the world with a perspective on it. In other words, they turned to literacy to reveal the black subject and also to enjoy literacy.

Gates speculated that in antebellum America, blacks appropriated the term signification,29 divested it of original concepts, and replaced them with their own. He owns that he cannot categorically state the intentions of this renaming act and highlights other words that were also revised. Nevertheless, he maintained that Signification necessarily draws attention to the meaning of meanings, or the way meaning is created so as to make formal pre-existing structures accommodate a black voice.

To revise the term signification is to select a term that represents the nature of the process of meaning-creation and its representation...To revise the received sign...is

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29 Gates (1988) distinguishes between the English language usage of signifying and the black usage Signifying. The difference be highlighted by using an uppercase ‘s’ with the black usage and enclosing the final ‘g’ in brackets. He develops the distinction within a linguistic frame; by arguing that signification, the English usage, denotes the meaning that a term conveys or is intended to convey (p. 46). It depends for order and coherence on the exclusion of unconscious associations which any given word yields at any given time (p. 49). That is, all of the associations that a signifier carries from other contexts must be deleted, ignored or censored so that the meaning of a particular signifier might be obtained (p. 50). Unlike signification, Signification uses and thrives on the associative possibilities of any given word at any given time. It does not require that all associations except one be cancelled out in
to critique the nature of (white) meaning itself, to challenge through a literal critique of the sign the meaning of the meaning...thereby demonstrating that even (or especially) the concepts signified by the signifier are themselves arbitrary...What’s more they undertook this act of self-definition, implicit in the (re)nam ing ritual, within the process of signification that the English language had inscribed for itself (p. 47).

The Significance of Signifyin(g)

By recovering this history, Gates reveals how the attempt to imprint a black voice within a white (con)text so as to represent blackness developed from an outward gaze to an inner one. It reveals what might be considered the blackness of the black text, as having been developed and sustained by an intertextuality arising from the formal revision of black texts by other blacks. It reveals the text as a site of struggle, and as central to blacks’ struggle to realise their subject position. Rooted in the material experiences of blacks’ lives, those texts revealed blackness as also having been constructed. As a construction, it is a complex notion containing apparent contradictions. That the text revealed blackness, it also revealed that blackness incorporated whiteness. While it suggested how blackness differed from whiteness, it meant to suggest, if not explicitly own, that blackness was the same as whiteness.

To compound this, the text speaking of blackness, speaks of collectivity as well as individuality. This is permissible because the text arises from a vernacular practice that values a double-voiced discourse and language itself. Language is recognised as a site for art and political struggle. Both speaker and hearer are important for successful exchange. They know that intended meaning is to be produced between them. So while the speaker appeals to the figurative, s/he suggests how what is said should be received. The hearer needs to be in

order to obtain meaning in a particular instance.
sync with the speaker to produce meaning.

The theory of Signifyin(g), then, reveals the trajectory of blacks finding a voice and giving written expression of it, and in so doing clearing and claiming a space for a representation of the world from within a black aesthetic. This was clearly problematic from the outset. The authors had acquired and used the language that excluded them (except for construction as other) to make it include them. This gave birth to the struggles that would remain as long as the trajectory itself.

3.4.2 Signifyin(g) and Afrocentric Feminist Thought

I have turned to the texts of black women intellectuals as a site for understanding contemporary blackness. Hill Collins (1990) would observe that by doing so I 'implicitly adhere to an Afrocentric feminist epistemology' (p. 232). And accordingly, a black feminist influence is present in my work. However, I would not describe this study as one that either principally seeks to develop feminist thought or one that is solely conducted on Afrocentric feminist principles.

Despite the claim that 'the works of contemporary African-American women intellectuals' take on international issues and global concerns (p. 39), Hill Collins' argument is clear in establishing that Afrocentric feminist thought is of and for black, that is, African-American, women. She did in passing imply that Jamaican, amongst other black women, might find a place within this black (African-American) feminist thought. And her appeal to an Afrocentric worldview did recover ties that link the Black Diaspora — in being influenced by

30 Black feminist thought allows that others can participate in the said project. 'By advocating, refining and disseminating black feminist thought other groups such as Black men, white women and other people of color further its development' (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 35). The contention it would seem, is that others may be incorporated on condition of furthering the black feminist project. Others can take on black feminist thought to develop it, but it does not really expand to take on others.
a retained core of African values and having a similar struggle against oppression.

However, the latter seemed to serve more greatly the cause of laying a sound foundation on which to delineate an Afrocentric feminist epistemology. In black feminist thought one is aware that one is being presented with the African-American woman practice and theory. The focus is on black (African-American) women; they define the reality to be investigated and investigation is into the reality of black (African-American) women.

I do not mean to undermine Hill Collins' scholarship, or the proud tradition of African American women with this critique. On the contrary, it is foundational to my project here. For an afrocentric epistemology, that arises out of black feminist thought, recovers and articulates ways of knowing that are not only distinctive within the realms of epistemology, but are also consistent with the basic project put forward by Gates in his Signifyin(g) theory.

Afrocentric feminist epistemology and Signifyin(g) are similar in their attempt at recovering the black subject as producer of knowledge, defining and revealing the world as from a black standpoint. Both recognise the importance of the text, and the intertextuality of the text, in the development of a black consciousness, and both make, in principle, the same appeal to afrocentricity as a basis for a black consciousness.

In this study, I am using Afrocentric feminist epistemology rooted in a Signifyin(g) standpoint rather than a black (African American) feminist standpoint. I would argue that a Signifyin(g) standpoint is constituted by the experiences of black men and women, and that in a more global way. 31 32 I would suggest that it takes on Alice Walker's notion of a

31 This is not to disregard the tendency within Gates' work to claim Signifyin(g) as American – in opposition to European. This reveals other interesting politics, that over literary canons, (see for example, Gates, 1992), and if anything shows how the black person is not simply black. In the 'culture wars' his American identity is foregrounded to represent those whose literature is subjugated by a
womanist perspective in incorporating the ‘survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female’ (1995, p. xi).

Further, where both standpoints allow an outsider-within perspective, the way that notion is operationalised is different. A black feminist standpoint retains the division of the ‘outsider’ and the ‘insider’. The black looks at the white as other. Signifying (g) recognises that the other constitutes the self. This opens up more experiences, other than that of African-American women as the site for the discovery of knowledge, and knowledge about oneself. It allows male and female, and blacks and whites new possibilities in research.

3.5 An Afrocentric Epistemology

Hill Collins (1990) argued against traditional understanding of epistemology in research for an alternative epistemology to validate knowledge claims. She rejected the principles of distance, absence of emotions, absence of ethics and values and adversarial debates as being inadequate in validating knowledge claims developed within black feminist thought.

Knowledge validation within black feminist thought came in four other ways.

First, concrete experience is used as a criterion of meaning. That is, what is presented as knowledge is regarded as more credible if the speaker has lived the experience as opposed to having only read about it. Black intellectuals are also permitted to draw on their personal realities to negotiate knowledge claims. Secondly, dialogue is central to Afrocentric epistemology. Knowledge claims are not worked out in isolation, but are usually developed in dialogue with others. Thirdly, there is an ethic of caring. Individuals are allowed their

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32 Gates made it clear that it was the Monkey’s Tales which were African-American. Signifying (g) both as vernacular practice and written tradition was recovered as pan-African, beginning as has already been noted with Gronnoisaw of England, also having Caribbean connections, even if the tradition as explicated by Gates developed within the African-American tradition.
uniqueness. Their emotions are seen as appropriate, and if displayed, taken as an indication of commitment to what is being said. The ethic of caring seeks to establish sympathy with those with whom dialogue is attempted. Finally there is an ethic of personal accountability where a person’s position is used in assessing knowledge claims.

This combination of a Signifyin(g) standpoint rooted in Afrocentric epistemology seemed to provide a powerful and appropriate strategy for conducting this research exercise. Ultimately, I choose Gates’ theory, in particular, because it resonates with me and with my understanding of how blacks see the world. Importantly, I feel it gives me, a Jamaican researching black and white Britons, a way of bringing my knowledge to the research task. I gain a subject position in which I feel confident to stand. The advantage of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology is that it articulates, what perhaps remains implicit in Signifyin(g), a system of knowledge production and validation that is consistent with what might be considered a black consciousness. Blacks live with a double vision of the world, fashioned by the constructs, and subsequently, the reality of whiteness and blackness, and have generated particular ways of validating knowledge claims.

I will own that my strategy is expressly political. Consonant with the principles of Gates’ Signifyin(g) theory, I am able to use the structure of research as a palimpsest that will allow the investigation I want to pursue. I attempt to bring new knowledge from other disciplines into race and schooling in a way that it can be accepted and thereby suggest other ways of conceptualising race and schooling.

Another principally advantageous effect of this strategy is that it recovers a black tradition of struggle that privileges literacy, intellectual wrestling and academic success. It reveals the black subject as having an established, even distinct, tradition of presenting and representing him/herself through the production of knowledge while simultaneously showing the black
subject's unending struggle between assimilation and preservation. It also dares to apply a corrective, to posit that blacks take, and have long been taking, a subject position. They see the world and do not come into existence only when looked at by white eyes. We see the world. We read it, react to it and act upon it, sometimes in our struggle with racism and sometimes in places where whiteness does not receive recognition.

Recovering the black subject as knower is tremendously important in this study for another reason. For in Signifyin(g), a black standpoint is also inclusive of the mainstream. It seeks to understand the other and to fashion an understanding of the world informed by the realities of both self and the other, black and whites. It is therefore entirely consistent with this research study that seeks to understand the realities of white teachers as well as black students.

3:6 Situating the Methodology

'But,' I anticipate the protestation, 'where does it fit in the scheme of things?' meaning established knowledge. I think Hill Collins (1990) is correct in her several of her claims, and at this point I would like to highlight three. That Afrocentric epistemology is a contribution to on-going debate in the sociology of knowledge concerning ways of assessing 'truth' (p. 222). That black women intellectuals might expect to have to convince the establishment that they have indeed grasped the tenets of traditional approaches to knowledge and the 'truth'. and defend the challenge in the self-defined standpoint they assume (p. 232). That black women intellectuals who articulate an autonomous self-defined standpoint are in a position to examine the usefulness of coalitions with other groups (p. 35).

Creswell (1994) regards methodology as the entire process of a study, the paradigm and the method type used to frame and conduct it. The theory of Signifyin(g) underpinned by Afrocentric feminist epistemology reveals a theoretical framework, a paradigm, that holds
and explains the conception, design, conduct and analysis in this research study. As such my use of Signifyin(g) suggests itself as a methodology. Creswell (1994, pp. 1 - 3) would allow that this is a qualitative study. Cohen and Manion (1994, pp. 38 - 40) would suggest that it is interpretative. If asked to be more method specific I would suggest that this study links itself with what Sarup (1993) presents as post-structuralist thought.

Post-structuralism ‘involves a critique of metaphysics, of the concepts of causality, of identity, of subject and of truth’ (Sarup, 1993, p. 3). Sarup identifies Foucault, Derrida and Lacan as three of its foremost exponents. He argues, for example, that under Freud’s influence, Derrida and Lacan are interested in (styles of) writing and (ways of) reading. Derrida is said to be doubtful of notions of truth and authenticity, and parts company with Lacan, who Derrida thinks invests the unconscious with the source of truth. Also, while they both make a critique of the Cartesian subject, Sarup maintains that Lacan developed an alternative theory of the subject; Derrida has not.

Post-structuralism stresses the interaction of the reader and text as a productivity. Derrida in particular maintains that ‘there must be an awareness of ambivalence, of discrepancy between meaning and assertion’ (Sarup, 1993, p. 52). This approach is based on Freud’s method of deciphering texts. The verbal text is thought to be constituted by concealment as much as by revelation, and in his interpretations of dreams, Freud looked for evidence of condensation, displacement, considerations of representability and secondary revision. Sarup stated that condensation and displacement may be translated as metaphor and metonymy.

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33 Foucault, Derrida and Lacan have also been categorised as structuralists (Miller, 1981). Sarup maintains that there are continuities that link structuralism and post-structuralism, and that for example, there are more between the two than between the latter and phenomenology. So, while he states, for example, that there is language determinism in Lacan’s work, Sarup suggests that Lacan’s combination of structuralism with a phenomenological subject removes his work from a strict structuralist category. Lacan’s work is regarded as a unique combination of structuralism and phenomenology (Sarup, 1993; Lee, 1990; Caws (1968). On the other hand, would maintain that the centrality of language to Lacan’s work renders it structuralist. I would have to maintain that here is not the place to develop this issue, and ask leave to proceed with describing the connection with this study.
considerations of representability as a technique that re-presents an idea as an image and secondary revision as a psychic force that suggests connectedness by smoothing over contradictions. Sarup maintained that it is Freud’s contention that one should be attentive to points in a text where it is very smooth or very clumsy. Derrida takes this further suggesting that the reader should examine the point where a text ‘transgresses the laws it sets up for itself’. The reader might ‘fasten upon a small but tell-tale moment in the text which harbours the author’s sleight of hand and which cannot be dismissed simply as contradiction…and thus unravel – deconstruct – the very text’ (Sarup, 1993, p. 43).

Lacan also offers a method of interpretation by way of his argument for psychoanalysis. Lacanian ‘understanding of the unconscious is fundamentally an understanding of language, and this means that psychoanalysis is itself a particular way of coming to know a language (that of the analysand)’ (Lee, 1990, p.50). His privileging of language is underpinned by his belief that social science should seek to understand, not explain social phenomena. Focussing on the subject’s narrative of her/himself is regarded as the way to arrive at the truth about that person. No other way of knowing is possible or matters for Lacan.

He rejects the Cartesian notion that ‘the human being is a unified, autonomous subject, fully present to its own consciousness – indeed, essentially identical with this consciousness…that all human knowledge can be grounded in the clear self-knowledge of this unified subject’ (Lee, 1990, p. 22). He argues that the human subject is alienated from herself by virtue of becoming a subject. That is, to become a human subject, the human being assumes a place within the existing structures of culture and language that existed prior to his consciousness of them. These structures are regarded as symbolic structures that are separate and different from the lived experiences of the human being. When the human being acquires language as a child, s/he enters the symbolic structures and is subsequently shaped by the content that exists in that symbolic structure.
Lacan argues that even before the child acquires language, the symbolic structures of language and culture shape him/her without his/her knowledge. Those ideas that exist within his/her environment constitute an unconscious before s/he has acquired a subject position of consciousness. Rooted in Freudian understanding, the unconscious is understood as ‘neither genuinely individual nor a matter of dispositions or tendencies. It is rather “the censored chapter” of the analysand’s history, and as such the unconscious is the dynamic product of the analysand and his (censoring) environment’ (Lee, 1990, p. 44).

Because the human subject is alienated from her/himself, self-knowledge comes by way of a construction of a narrative about oneself that makes sense of one’s life to oneself. The narrative is more precisely a reconstruction of the events of one’s life. The analysand is encouraged to give an account of her/himself. This account, Lacan would maintain, is a reconstruction of the events within the analysand’s life that helps her/him to grasp the meaning of her/his life. This is how the analysand makes sense of him/herself and his/her life.

Lacan emphasises the importance of the whole narrative, as it is thought that it is the last word, so to speak, that establishes the meaning of the full narrative. It is equally important to note that the history that the analysand is brought to, or brings to him/herself, is not phenomenological. That is, it is not a history that surveys the chronology of his/her development. Rather it is a historical reconstruction that allows the person to accommodate the censored as well as the remembered dimensions of his/her life.

Within the psychoanalytic context, this narrative is produced by the analysand and the analyst working together. It is the interaction between the analyst and the analysand that

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34 See pp. 80 - 81 where I have already explained the process of alienation.
leads to speech becoming meaningful or as Lacan would phrase it, ‘full speech’ (Lacan, 1999, p. 40). As s/he speaks, the analyst is said to ‘punctuate’ the speech with well-phrased questions, or other indications of attentiveness. These confer meaning to the speech that the analysand is making, and facilitates the production of the whole narrative.

The unconscious also contributes significantly to making full speech possible between the analyst and the analysand. The formations of the unconscious use stylistic devices to outwit censorship and reveal itself. Like Derrida, Lacan links the metaphoric and metonymic processes of language to condensation and displacement. As Freud would have it, the unconscious revealed in dreams, jokes, and slips of tongue is harnessed by the analyst who deals with the language of the unconscious as with poetry. S/he uses these as tools to the truth of the analysand’s life.

Lacan insists that the analyst cannot access any notion of reality external to the analysand’s speech. So with respect to truth, that is, whether the narrative that is produced is the truth about the analysand’s life, Lacan would assert that the truth that matters is that which constitutes the analysand’s narration. For the purpose of psychoanalysis is to integrate the events of a person’s life in a meaningful way, and to enable that person to accept the product of that integration as the truth about her/his life. The analyst is guided during the dialogue by attention to the analysand’s linking of her/his je to imaginary moi identities. That is, the analyst is attentive to how the analysand explains him/herself and life and works with him/her to bring those explanations into a narrative. The analysand accepts the narrative as the truth about his/her life. That truth is produced by the dialectic character of the psychoanalytic experience. It is produced by the analyst and analysand working together.

Perhaps ‘truth’ in Lacanian and post-structuralist thought is best understood in Neitzschean terms:
So what is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms— in short an aggregate of human relationships which, poetically and rhetorically heightened, become transposed and elaborated, and which, after protracted popular usage, pose as fixed, canonical, obligatory. Truths are illusions whose illusoriness is overlooked (Nietzsche in Hayman, 1997, p. 22)

In the empirical section of this study, I seek to generate understanding based on teachers’ accounts of their involvement working within successful multicultural school contexts. My intention is neither to deconstruct reality nor to seek to duplicate what my research participants may describe. I seek to explore meanings based on people’s claim of experienced reality, to investigate what they say so as to articulate what they reveal in what they say. The Lacanian blend of phenomenology and structuralism therefore makes itself apparent in this study. For I wish to retain and promote the subject status of research participants in seeking their accounts of reality. However, I do not then claim to re-present, that is, describe and relay their exact account of reality.

I do this for several reasons. First, the experience from my masters thesis suggests that greater understanding of the issues and their complexities can be had by harnessing what is said to understand and articulate what is revealed. This is a looking beneath the surface that is consistent with my Signifyin(g) standpoint. It is attention to ‘the meaning of the meaning’ as it is about how to look for meaning. Attention to the use of the figurative, of metaphors and metonyms, are also consistent between a Signifyin(g) paradigm and a post-structuralist method. In this study, I look at how what is said as much as what is said. Attention is given to metaphors employed in the construction of the narratives that the teachers share.

I see their accounts as narratives. What they tell me is understood as the way they make sense of their worlds. I am not attempting to enter or to access a pristine notion of their reality. I am
not asking whether they are able to access and articulate precisely what they do, whether what they say is actually what happens. The emphasis of this study is not to generate ‘ten characteristic features of success’. It seeks to understand some of the complexities of a successful context. Questions of truth are to do with whether they tell me what they think, and these will be addressed shortly.

I take the position, based on Lacanian alienation, that research participants cannot re-enter pristine reality and therefore, cannot describe it. People do not really know all the details of their actions, why they do what they do. Instead we construct narratives that make sense of what it is that we think we do, of the things that have happened. Our narratives provide an opportunity to hold the complexities of our lives to render them accessible to us. In holding those complexities, what we remember and what have been censored, our narratives literally become a highly sophisticated blend of art and politics. The politics of self-preservation, inherent if only in making one’s life accessible via reconstructed narratives, and the art that that narrative is articulated with the aid of stylistic features. (Please note, too, the continuities again between Signifyin(g) and this Lacanian post-structuralist approach.)

Nevertheless, I recognise that the politics of self-preservation will not only concern itself with simply making one’s life accessible. The question that this research seeks to answer raises other questions of self-preservation for research participants. Here is where the influence of an Afrocentric epistemology makes itself apparent – again – and forges its link with Lacanian post-structuralism. For in this course of knowledge production, looking at what they say to understand what they reveal, I solicit their narratives, emphasising my commitment to rooting the knowledge claims of this study in participants’ concrete experiences.

The ethic of caring also comes to the fore as I allow that participants may become
emotionally engaged during the study. I am mindful that these research participants are people, and also people with professional lives. I am not at liberty to do as I choose. I am not trying to outwit or ‘expose’ individuals. I am not seeking to make moral judgements about them. The emphasis is on understanding how race is handled in successful contexts. The ethic of care guides how this study is conducted, analysed and reported.

This in turn emphasises the centrality of dialogue in this study. Dialogue is used as a means to establish a sympathetic context as well as a tool for data collection. As a tool it acknowledges the importance of both the speaker and hearer. As has been discussed, I am desirous of listening to my research participants. Knowledge will be produced because of the dialogue between us. I place myself within the equation of knowledge production. As such, and also to maintain the principle of care, I treat data as a text that is removed from the speakers.

This perhaps is an opportune time to state that I realise that the dialogue of this study is not that of the psychoanalytic context. I hasten to add that this is not a psychoanalytical study. I do not claim to be psychoanalysing the teachers. Though the research participants kindly consented to the interviews, I went asking them to speak to me. They did not come to me asking that I help them resolve any of the tensions that I have decided are evident in their interviews. I emphasise that I am not psychoanalysing the teachers. I am drawing on Lacanian thought as a ‘method of interpretation’ that seeks to understand social phenomena (Sarup, 1993, p. 6), not explain the teachers as individuals.

Treating their interviews as comprising a text that is rooted in, but separate from, the research participants, serves as a reminder that the findings in this study are what I think of what the teachers said. The verbatim transcripts are regarded as that which constitutes the reality of this research, not the reality of the teachers’ lives. I have already argued that I am not claiming that what is said to me exactly explains what happens; all that is accessible is what
people think happens. Given that what they say is what they actual believe to be truth of the
matter, I approach analysis as that of the teachers’ narratives.

The teachers’ narratives become data. They contribute to and constitute the reality of the
research that I am conducting, to answer the question I have posed. This is yet another step
removed from pristine reality. We are dealing now, not so much with whether the claims I
make are actually what really happen in the classrooms of teachers with whom I spoke, or the
truth of what the teachers told me, or whether the teachers told me what they really believe.
All the data of the disparate interviews constitute a new text, the reality of which was
generated by the activity of this research enterprise. The data as text becomes another reality.

Analysis of data creates another level of reality because it is essentially how I process what
has been said. What I construct of what I have gathered. The claims that result from analysis
can be judged based on their consistency with the data. It eventually becomes a question of
whether the claim I make is supported by the text of the data not whether the claim is exactly
what one or another teacher meant, or said. This might appear to weaken the links between
the claims the study makes and the data actually collected. But it does not.

What has happened here is akin to stripping the layers of an onion. I am attempting to strip
back the layers of the process so that each step becomes transparent as a layer. For I would
argue that research itself is a construct. We say that through research we can arrive at
knowledge about the world (Mouly, 1978). Whether we assume a Cartesian or Lacanian
notion of reality, we follow a template. We pose questions or hypotheses, suggest reasons for
posing these, define or describe and justify how we arrived at answers. The impetus of
research to produce knowledge about the world demands that research, that knowledge
produced, can enter the consensual universe at least of research, and perhaps that of the wider
society. Research follows rules. Researchers know the rules it follows, even if those rules are
subversive of others.

The rules that any given research follows and the system of justification it uses provides the reader of research with the ability to make judgements about the research findings. Questions of truth, hence objectivity, validity and authenticity, seem to sometimes create an opacity that seems to mask this construction and also renders the research activity devoid of the separate if nevertheless sub-texts of reality. The truth of research is constituted in different ways. Understanding and responding to this begin to address the issues of objectivity, validity and authenticity.

We have seen the tensions that arose for black researchers in the past. Fanon felt denied subjectivity, and subsequently acquiesced to not submitting his study to academia. Ladner felt denied a subjectivity and challenged traditional understanding of objectivity to retain her subjectivity, present her findings as valid, and her study as research activity. Ladson-Billings replaced traditional approaches to research to privilege authenticity in her research. We see here the tendency to oppose subjectivity with validity, objectivity with subjectivity and objectivity with authenticity, in deciding on research findings or research itself. What these tensions in fact reveal is a concern with the process and the product of research respectively. I would argue that they demand separate attention in any research activity, and that attention should be given to both.

Creswell’s (1994) argument, for example, suggests that the process of knowledge creation requires that a researcher acknowledges a position for her/himself within an understanding of the nature of reality, that is have an ontological position. The question of epistemology (which I have discussed at length) needs to be addressed. Similarly, the researcher needs to decide on the place of values, or the axiological issues. This requires that the researcher decides on her/his position in research, and on the impact of her/his person and agenda. Researchers tend
to declare subjectivity, suggesting a qualitative position or objectivity suggesting perhaps a positivist understanding of research, or a position that combines the two. All these considerations, I would argue have to do with the process of research, how it is conducted.

The product of research requires other systems. For now it is no longer a question of how the research was conducted, but whether the findings generated are true. The question of truth is no longer a philosophical, metaphysical one; it is more to do with the actual data collected and whether the findings presented are consistent with the data. Here it becomes questions of whether the data the researcher analysed constituted what the research participants believed to be the truth of their context, and whether the findings that the researcher presented actually arose from the data.

Having addressed the issues to do with both the process and product of research activity, the researcher makes her/his design explicit to the reader, at the least, the community that maintains the construct of research. One can then decide on the findings, even the extent to which the findings of a particular study might be useful in understanding a reality outside of that of the individual study. Whatever the outcome of those deliberations, we move from an elusive sense of truth about research findings. We ask, for example, 'Does the study hold together?' Is there a line of argument that is developed, bounded by theoretical frameworks, explored empirically (or theoretically) and finds closure (even if in further questions)?

I would suggest that the following equation might be useful in deciding on the findings of a research exercise.

\[ f = \Sigma e \left( \frac{d/r}{l/r} \right) \]

where

- \( f \) = findings
- \( \Sigma \) = the cumulative operator
or 'f results from the cumulative effect of the variables in the equation (according to their description below)

e = the episteme,

or the historical context within which the study is located. This includes, for example, issues to do with: how reality is perceived; prevailing ideologies, that is, social, political and other kinds of discourses that inform public thinking, and that of those under study; context, that is, for example, UK or USA, as well as details on the actual location where the study was conducted, for example, a school or a church, a primary or a secondary school;

d = the data,

its collection process, that is, the circumstances of its collection: the site of collection; the sources of evidence; the methods used in collecting the evidence; the participants, what is and how they constitute a particular identity or multiple identities important to the study; traversing circumstances that are particular and/or important to understanding the context of the study;

r = researcher

how s/he is positioned within the research, implicating issues of, for example, race, class, age and gender, and other things that might be important within a study – these should also implicate how the person might be positioned by the research participants; how the researcher positions herself in relation to research, what, for instance, is her/his politics whether clearly acknowledged or not; her/his orientation to the conceptualisation through to the analysis of the actual research project;

l = literature

or theoretical framework through and by which the argument is filtered and
Certainly, I invite the reader to bring this equation to the findings of this research, in light of which, I now provide details on how the empirical part of the study was conducted below.

Here is a reminder of the second research question.

How is race handled in successful school contexts?

3.7 The Research Design

*Rationale and Contexts*

To begin, when I speak of a successful school context, I am referring to a context within which there is a sense of harmony amongst its members. The focus, therefore, is on the interaction within the school, particularly between the teachers and their multicultural student population. The focus is not on academic achievement (although the academic performance of the schools investigated was taken into consideration).

I sought to identify possible schools by reading Ofsted Reports available on the internet, looking for schools which were reported as working well within multicultural settings. I also explored possibilities through discussions with colleagues and parent networks. In all instances, I was interested in identifying schools *with a reputation* or record for positive interaction, as this is taken as an indication of a school's success as described here. To establish confidence in the schools that became part of the study, I searched for evidence of those schools' *local reputation* amongst the schools' students and parents, by conducting interviews and reading reports of studies conducted within the schools.

Two secondary schools were investigated. I decided on secondary schools because in the literature on race and schooling, it is at this level that much conflict has been reported.
between white teachers and students, particularly black students, within multicultural settings. A multicultural school that was regarded as having a harmonious interaction for its members, therefore, facilitated the possibility to discover how race was handled. This is why I stipulated that the schools I studied had a reputation or record for positive interaction, and why I interviewed the schools’ students and parents. I wanted schools that had satisfied those they served that they worked well with a multicultural student population.

The schools that became part of the study had such an established reputation. I found one school, through my internet search. It had been subject to two Ofsted Reports that both highlighted the school’s ‘practice for facilitating cultural cohesion and harmony’. I discovered the other through popular knowledge that consistently identified it as being a successful multicultural school. Internal surveys within both schools also sustain the view of them being successful multicultural contexts. In both, but particularly in the latter, there was strong indication that parents actively chose the schools for their children and had a significant degree of trust in the schools' commitment to their children. Students similarly interviewed, expressed general satisfaction with their experiences. Importantly, in both schools, even when they made strong critique of practices in the school, none of the children with whom I spoke, made a charge of racism against the schools. This included students considered by the staff to be the most problematic.

I was interested in studying only one school. This I thought would allow the kind of investigation that would facilitate delving beneath the surface of the things I would discover so as to apply sustained analysis that would uncover their complexities. The emphasis for the findings in this study is not generalisation, not a ten-point list of success. It is, instead, on the generation of theoretical understandings of the complexities of successful multicultural contexts.
However, my study was conducted at the time of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry; many schools were subsequently unwilling to have research conducted within them on race.

Further, one of the two schools that consented, was apprehensive at first about research in general. They simply did not wish to have any research conducted at the school. They agreed in the end because they felt that they should be involved in the project, and like the other school, was reassured of the nature of the study’s positive approach. I was engaged in negotiating access with the less receptive school before approaching the other which proved, despite the Lawrence effect, to be positively receptive. When they both agreed, and with active commitment, I decided to keep both. So though two schools are involved, it is not an attempt to provide a wider sample with a notion of greater generalisability. Having two schools became more an opportunity to see how two different contexts with their own particular circumstances maintained the reputation they enjoyed. I also decided to learn from what happened in the first school to develop my activity in the second.

Both schools served children who came mostly from cities. The schools themselves were located outside these cities, one in the midlands, the other in the north east of Britain. The student population, in both cases, was composed of black, white and Asian students. In each, more than fifty per cent of the students were non-white. The dominant group in the midlands was black; (its Asian students included Chinese). Asians were dominant in the school in the north-east. In both cases, the schools’ administrative records did not enable me to ascertain the exact percentage of the schools’ ethnic composition. The school in the midlands had above national average passes in A*-C GCSE passes; the one in the north east was regarded by Ofsted as providing good value-added, that it did well considering its circumstances, and was moreover, increasing its performance in the school performance tables year on year. Nevertheless, I was unable to ascertain the spread of achievement by ethnic categories. In both schools ethnic monitoring of achievement and exclusion was found wanting.
The staff in both schools were predominantly white, over ninety percent in the school in the north-east; about seventy-five percent in the midlands. Once within these schools, I was interested in knowing who their successful teachers were, though I would also investigate their colleagues who were not regarded as similarly successful. I was also concerned not to cause any offence because of this interest. I gathered information from amongst teachers themselves in their discussions about the school, the Ofsted Reports and internal documents that highlighted individual things and teachers within the schools considered successful, particularly in light of the harmony of the school, but also performance. However, I designed the study such that I would follow one class of students and use its cohort of teachers to create a focal group for interviews. I chose a Year 10 class. I saw Year 10 students as being at an age when they were likely to be exploring their cultural and other identities as they develop into their mid-teens. I believed that the teachers of these children regarded as successful might have a strategy that handles the demands and issues at this time in the students' development.

I also thought it was likely that some of the schools' successful teachers would be amongst those teaching this group as such students begin their preparation for external examinations. Approaching Year 10 students, who were at the beginning of their preparation, was also considered more considerate than asking Year 11 students who would be focussed on pending exams at the time the study was conducted.

In one school, the class was interviewed in two large focus groups discussions, according to how students were streamed, as well as in smaller groups. Between the schools, there were eleven smaller focus groups varying in size from two to five, and nine individual student interviews – according to students' choice. Some students were interviewed twice. The large focus groups were mixed with black, Asian and white students. The smaller discussions varied in composition from only black, black and Asian, black and white, white only.
In each instance, I attempted an unstructured discussion which I introduced by asking the students to talk about the subjects they enjoyed and why, moving onto their experience in the school in general. By discussing subjects, I attempted to make the discussion less of a personal assessment of the teacher from my leading. The children, however, took up the point of individual teachers’ effectiveness and those who they thought were really good at classroom management, teaching and interaction, with a rigor that proved quite revealing. Therefore, in addition to ascertaining their general thoughts about the respective schools, I developed a sense of those teachers who were regarded as particularly successful within each school.

While I created a focal teacher-group, I simultaneously made it known, however, that I welcomed the involvement of others outside this group; thereby, without (necessarily) drawing attention, I was able to approach teachers who were not amongst the focal cohort. I was also able to negotiate observing individual teachers in contexts other than within the Year 10 context. In this way, I obtained varied data on twenty teachers for the study.33 This

33 There was the potential for twenty-two. One (black) teacher requested detailed editing of both her interview and observation transcripts. I will not be detailed about the circumstances, as I have decided not to include her as part of the study’s analysis – in deference to her. I will only say that she was displeased to find that I had recorded things she found disagreeable in the transcripts of her class. She did not dispute that they had happened, but she felt that I would not have recorded them. Similarly, she wanted to delete things in her verbatim transcript that she felt reflected badly on her. In documenting things she felt reflected badly on her, she felt that I had betrayed some tacit understanding and her trust. My attempts at correcting this difficulty were mainly unsuccessful. Initially, foolishly, resisted. She shared her feelings with others, including the head, and was able to effect the possibility of the school’s withdrawal from the project. (This was the school that was apprehensive about research in general). With the support of other staff (black and white) who maintained that their transcripts were fair, if not all flattering, I was able to satisfy the head that I had not done other than what was agreed. The teacher and I compromised on editing some things, but neither she nor I was really satisfied. Above all, she still felt betrayed, I did not accept that I had betrayed her in recording the things that I had recorded. However, I subsequently decided, when I came to analysis, not to include data collected from this teacher. Since she felt betrayed, I did not think it was right to do so.

One other (black) teacher, who was part of the Year 10 cohort, missed two meetings that she arranged with me. She attended the group interview conducted on the last day of data collection after which she expressed regret for missing previous meetings and asked to be interviewed before I left the school. However, it was not possible to do so. This teacher was new and identified by students as a ‘nice but soft’ teacher. (She was also a friend of the teacher who felt betrayed.) I will not know why she missed individual interviews or why she changed her mind. I can see how all three issues together could inhibit her participation. I might also highlight that while this teacher was hesitant, another black teacher
included one head teacher and one deputy head teacher. There were fourteen males and six females, three black teachers and seventeen white. They ranged in age from early twenties to early sixties with between one to forty years of teaching experience, representing eleven subject specialisms.

The students' discussion suggested that they regarded as successful teachers who were fluent in their subject knowledge, were able to pass on that knowledge to the students by keeping them on task and creating environments free from disruption. They were able to distinguish between those they found personable and liked as such, and teachers who were liked because they were considered good practitioners, as just described. Between the schools, eleven teachers in total were thought to be good practitioners; nine were regarded as very good practitioners. Of the nine, five were thought to combine being personable and good practitioners. One was female; she was white. Of the four males, one was black, three white. One female teacher, black, was thought a very good practitioner, but, while she was not disliked, she was not seen as personable. I approached one teacher outside the Year 10 group who was thought to be personable and a good practitioner with the potential for becoming a very good practitioner. She was white.

I approached four teachers in all; each consented. Two teachers, white; male and female, were approached because they were consistently discussed by both black and white students, in both the large focus groups and within the smaller ones. These teachers were not considered good practitioners, but they also were not unequivocally disliked. In general, nevertheless, there was a sense of uncertainty about their behaviour towards black children.

This seemed like an important thing to follow up. I also approached the deputy head teacher because several students and teachers raised the history of their school in their interviews; this teacher's casual conversation with me suggested he was well-positioned to talk about this outside the focal cohort actively sought to be part of the study; she was incorporated.
history. Three teachers volunteered; two were male and white, one was black and female. One of these was a head teacher. I am not at liberty to say why anyone volunteered.

Procedure and Methods

The study was conducted in the Easter and Summer terms in 1999. I followed one school during each term. In initial weeks I observed and made notes on classroom interactions. I also gathered information about the school in general, reading whatever internal documentation that was made available. Towards the middle of my time in each school, I began interviews, beginning with the students then moving to the teachers.

I felt that in order to encourage the teachers to talk to me, I had to create an atmosphere of openness and trust. Especially in light of the impact of the Lawrence Report, I felt it was important to demonstrate that I was being honest about what I was claiming to do. I sought to demonstrate that there was not a hidden agenda of wanting to catch them out, proving them racist, and/or not measuring up. I also wanted to show that I could contain and would be receptive towards what the research participants wanted to share.

I followed Cooper and McIntyre’s (1996) approach of foregrounding the positive nature of this study. I underscored that I was trying to understand how race was handled in their contexts since they were successful, and that I was interested in understanding not evaluating. My full attention was given to creating a positive, relaxed interview context, and methods were combined to this end. I combined participant observation with discussion of documents generated from my observation along with interviews.

I went into the schools every day of the study’s duration in each, even when I was not involved in classroom observations or interviews, because I wanted my regular presence in
the schools to suggest a sense of joining them in their daily routine, that I was truly trying to come to understanding it. I also wanted to allow the teachers access to information about me that they might have felt they needed before talking to me. So, in addition to being present in individual classes, I socialised in the staff room at break times, and I always ate with staff and students at lunch times.36

More pointedly, participant observation entailed my sitting in classrooms and making notes on the interaction between the teachers and the students. Such observation was therefore crucial in generating the transcripts that proved significant in facilitating data collection at other stages in the study. Classroom observations also provided a sense of a shared context as the individual teachers could refer to things with which I would have developed some knowledge, while I could also raise questions about things that had happened. This, therefore, facilitated both the feel and the possibility of an engaged discussion.

Transcripts were made of the observational notes and given to each teacher at least a day before an arranged interview.37 I also gave each teacher verbatim transcripts of our interviews, which were also discussed. The transcripts of classes were strictly descriptive accounts. I recorded instances where either the teacher or the student initiated an exchange with the other. I recorded what was said and done to initiate, sustain and conclude the exchange. I also made general notes about what happened in the classroom. The teachers saw the full account that I produced.

All transcripts were used to engender a feeling of openness and integrity in the research. The

36 I also participated in school events: Sports Day (first aid; marshalling - and, ah, I ran in a race, didn't win); Cake Sale (baking a Jamaican sweet); and the night of culture (helping to prepare the Caribbean presentation).
37 In one school I reported in detail rather than returned the transcripts that I had produced to the teachers, and it was the comment of one teacher that made me decide to return all the actual transcripts to them rather than just provide them with a verbal report. He said he felt better if he actually saw what I had written.
interaction it facilitated was also to indicate to teachers that I welcomed their ideas and would be receptive towards them. They had the opportunity to thrash out, or not, issues with me, while I could clarify issues with them thereby increasing access to their thoughts. A further advantage was that it kept the humanity of the research participants before me constantly. As I prepared for interviews that would draw on transcripts, I necessarily had to think about the participants in light of how what they would have read might have affected them. This developed a sensitivity for my research participants which remained when I came to data analysis.

Interests were the primary source of data collection. All were, in the main, unstructured interviews. I gave myself the role of getting the interview started and of sustaining it for as long as was indicated it should be sustained. I allowed the teachers to direct its development, punctuated by my asking further questions that I thought appropriate. However, I also kept a record of some basic questions at all times (see Appendix 1, p. 305). I thought it important to have these for three reasons.

First, I wanted to ensure that by and towards the end of data collection I had explicitly asked each teacher about her/his experience as a white/black teacher within the school. I tried to avoid introducing race, initially as I wanted to see how it would emerge in our conversation. On the other hand, I also wanted to ensure that, at the beginning of data collection, all teachers were invited into the interview context in a similar way. That is, I sought to begin each first interview in such a way that I intended would indicate to teachers the open-ended nature our conversations would take. I wanted them to realise that I did not have, for example, ten questions that I wanted them to talk about (– just one, which they were likely to have guessed, given they knew why I was in the school, and for which reason I asked it, later rather than sooner). It was crucially important that they felt, at least that I tried to establish.

38 The teacher who felt betrayed, clearly, then, had grounds to feel as she did. I consider the issues and
that in the discussions that were to follow, in particular that first one, they could select the information they wanted to talk about in telling me about their practice.

This approach also facilitated a means by which to investigate the data. So, for example, I was able to consider what each teacher chose for discussion, thereby, additionally, suggesting a range of ideas that each could have talked about. Ultimately, this framed how I investigated what they spoke of as a group, as different kinds of groups, and as individuals. It was in this way, for instance, that I developed an understanding of things that informed the practice of teachers considered successful, and how their discussion compared and contrasted with teachers who were not considered successful. I also developed understandings to do with the operation of teachers' gender, race, age, years of experience and prevailing discourses on pedagogy, race childhood/parenting/social conditioning.

Finally, this is the third reason for keeping a record of basic questions with me during interviews; I needed to know that they were with me – already formulated, readily accessible. I, therefore, had the option and knew I had the option, of using and/or adapting them, as I thought was necessary and could reassure myself of the other reasons for keeping them.

Each interview had a duration of between thirty minutes and two hours. The plan was to interview each teacher, individually, three times. I began the first interview by asking teachers to tell me about being a teacher, to talk about their careers and how they have progressed. From this, the discussion would develop to discussing the school and the teacher’s practice within it. The second (but sometimes, third and fourth; see below) interview discussed transcripts. The final interview was designed to explicitly explore teachers’ thoughts on race and schooling and if needed, their particular experience of teaching as a white/black person.

Implications of this in the final chapter where I reflect on other issues of methodology.
However, the dynamics of the individual interviews meant that the individual teachers and I sometimes arrived at the questions of race at the end of the first interview and because of this and other reasons of convenience, some only had two interviews. Also, while there were teachers who became quite involved in the research exercise, participating in up to five interviews, some teachers, having gathered what happened in the third interviews, displayed some reservation about it. In this school, there was a staff interview to facilitate feelings within the school.

**Validity of the data collected**

I think that I can claim that the data collected reflects what the teachers thought, or more precisely, it reflects the topics about which they wanted to talk. They would not be constrained by notions of a research question. It was as if the research activity tapped on a subject that was bigger than the question itself. Teachers took up the opportunity to discuss issues that concerned them. Some who were outside the focal teacher-group expressed an interest in being interviewed, and were included. Some arranged further interviews for themselves, and a significant number shared quite personal details and critiques of private fears.

Notwithstanding, the 'betrayed teacher' (see discussion in final chapter, pp. 296 - 301), the transcripts were a powerful tool in helping the teachers to trust me sufficiently to participate as they did. The success of the transcripts was in giving teachers an opportunity to talk and to talk at length about what they had to say. Teachers used it to clarify both issues to do with their classes and the research in general. It built trust and it made conversation at a deeper level possible. It was interesting that teachers reported taking the transcripts home and using them as points of discussion with their families. They raised some issues during our discussion of the transcripts because their partners had suggested that the teachers raised
Discussions, including those on the transcripts, generated a range of emotion. Some teachers were cool and collected, but others were animated. Some were clear and direct, others intense and indirect. Some were honest to the point of self-denigration; honesty was a complex matter with some others. Some were angry with me during the interviews (as was the ‘betrayed’ teacher), and there were those who cried in my presence while sharing what were quite personal and difficult stories.

Further, some teachers seemed to use the context of the research as an opportunity to work through issues on race that posed some difficulty for them as individuals and as a school. This was most interesting. For it seemed to me that they sometimes used the interview not so much to speak to me as to speak about the issues they had. While I believe that I did deal sensitively, on the whole, with the emotions with which I was presented, this latter issue posed ethical issues I had not foreseen. In essence they were the concerns of the teacher who felt betrayed. For it became apparent that the teachers wanted to talk, but they were undecided about whether they wanted what they said to be treated as data. For example, they would arrange an interview, give their permission to have it taped, then, at the end say something like: ‘you know if you use that people will know that I said it’. 40

Analysis: the rationale and the procedure

This study seeks to problematise the notion of race and school success. I see this as a complex issue and my approach to analysis was to work with the data to understand the

39 It is noteworthy that the significant interviews of the study, significant for their personal revelations, were arranged by the teachers involved and conducted after the episode with this teacher. I think that the incident with the teacher actually served to build my credibility with the staff. Most of them made a point of saying during their individual interviews that they felt comfortable. (p. 264 provides a good example) and that the transcripts were fair (see, for example, p. 259). It should also be stated, however, that this incident may have been implicated in my feeling the need to work harder in interviews with blacks (see p. 248, footnote 73 and pp. 296-301).

40 See footnote 79, p. 262, where I explain my reporting of teachers’ account of being called racist to
complexity. I seek to make explicit what might be implicit within the context, and to reveal how the complexities constitute the success that the contexts enjoy. Accordingly, I saw it as necessary to note what they shared but also to go beyond what they said to what they revealed in what they said. Further I investigated the successful and unsuccessful details I discovered within each school.

Each school was analysed separately as individual case studies. However, they both went through the same process of analysis. I began by reading each interview to familiarise myself with the data. I noted how the teachers told their stories, that is, the diction used to convey their ideas. As I read I highlighted details that stood out, and also made comments on issues that arrested my attention. At the end of each interview I made detailed summaries in which I retold the story of the interview. These detailed summaries included lengthy excerpts from and cross-referencing to actual interview in addition to my initial thoughts on issues. I noted what the particular teacher talked about, and what s/he revealed in relation to the research question.

The teachers did speak at length. So the detailed summaries proved an effective way to condense what they said, although my summaries were often as long, and more often, longer than the actual interviews. The condensation was important as the teachers would interrupt themselves as they spoke such that the development of a line of thought was criss-crossed by other lines of thought. To get an idea of a particular issue often meant piecing together the bits strewn throughout the whole interview. The reconstruction of their narratives therefore provided a coherent, compact production of individual ideas.

However, I regarded the interruptions as important in themselves. They were a source of

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41 Note that this is influenced by the way I approached the re-analysis of data gathered in my earlier study (p. 70). This continuity of approach sustains the links between the two.
detail that gave insight by default into teachers' thinking. Without being expressly intended, interruptions explained actions and suggested the issues that were of importance to the teachers. Further using the whole of the individual teacher's narrative to piece an idea together sometimes revealed contradictions and inconsistencies within their accounts. The contradictions, inconsistencies and the consistencies were noted in the detailed summaries and were important to later analysis.

I then performed a second reading but this time of my detailed summaries coding them in the computer programme for qualitative data, Nudist. Once they had been coded I could see quite clearly how I was responding to the data, what the patterns were and where they were. I used this information as I browsed categories at the next stage of analysis where I began to synthesise ideas about the data.

Validity of Analysis

Coding all the detailed summaries in Nudist made the summaries interact with each other. It facilitated my understanding of strong and weak themes within the data. Nudist also provided the ability to manipulate the data in a way that allows a rigorous interrogation. As I was privileging my explanations of the data, this rigour provided a check against a biased selection of data upon which to report. That is, it helped in showing that I did not just choose data that I wanted. I worked with the data as themes developed. For instance, the findings of Nudist searches have been provided in full, along with my analysis of them to show that my analysis is rooted in the data.

Another attempt at making analysis transparent was done by making use of case studies that best illustrate the findings. These provide examples of the procedure of analysis and also

\[42\] Please also consider the discussion on pp. 114-118 as further exploration for the validity of my approach to analysis.
reinstate the voice of the researched, creating the link between data and analysis in a clear way. The lengthy examples provided give the reader the opportunity to decide for her/himself, or at least to see, how I arrived at the claims I make.

However, Nudist was a tool in my analysis. If it simplified the task of making the data interact in a reliable way; it also facilitated my approach of treating the data in a complex way. I asked questions about the weak as well as the strong patterns that Nudist revealed. I asked questions about the language in the finds that it generated. Nudist served as a test of my initial reaction to the data, as I used my full knowledge of the summaries to look beyond finds of searches I conducted in Nudist. I would, for example, return to the actual interviews to explore the development of a line of thought as the teachers expressed it, or to look at something that may have been linked in other ways to a particular Nudist find.

I should add, that although I think that Nudist is a highly useful tool for qualitative research in its potential to demonstrate rigour, at the least to make the process of analysis more transparent, I recognise that it is not without weakness. Coding takes place across time. This makes the coding process vulnerable to changes in the ways in which data is understood from one day/week/month to the next. Nudist in itself does not prevent data being miscoded even according to the categories and definitions that the researcher him/herself sets up. I have tried to account for this by the richness of my procedure: familiarising myself with the data, writing detailed summaries and using the finds of Nudist searches as a point of entry back into actual transcripts and my summaries of them.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

I acknowledge that research participants might not have the made the explanations that I have of what they said, (although this does not automatically mean that their explanations would
have been accurate or more accurate than what I have produced. They may have good reasons
to disagree or make other explanations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). I have shown
that I tried to allow them to talk about what they wanted to talk about and that they took up
this opportunity. In that sense what I present is from them; however, it necessarily has been
reduced by what I make of what they say.

I must reiterate that I am NOT seeking generalisation but theoretical understanding of the
complexities of the makings of success. The findings may or not be relevant beyond the
research; however, they should prove things to think about with respect to considering
success in multi-ethnic schools.

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43 See, for example, discussion on Alan at Em, pp. 142-143; 148 - 150. Further, teachers repeatedly
stated that what they did was so second nature to them, they could not quite provide an explanation.
See, for example, pp. 141 & 173.
Pt.4 Em and MC

4.1 Everything in the name

In Part Four, I present my analysis of how race is handled in each of the two contexts investigated. I have called the schools Em and MC respectively; the choice of names is deliberate. Both schools have a reputation for being successful in their work with their multicultural student population. We will see shortly how one school emphasised the importance of its ethnic minority population, and became the institutional version of the group. This is Em; Em stands for ethnic minority. The second school, MC, emphasised its multicultural composition. MC stands for multicultural.

The two names are meant to highlight the similarities between the two schools as well as to indicate their difference. By these pseudonyms, I mean to foreground one of the study's central findings: that the schools chose what they would emphasise within each context, and that their success relied upon this strategy. I report on each school individually to highlight and maintain the similarities and difference between the two.

I also chose the names as particularly suitable pseudonyms to maintain the function, primacy and importance of speech and language when considering the schools. The sound 'm' obtained in pronouncing both names is meant to awaken the homophone 'hem' which signals hesitation in speech. I wish to allude to this homophone as a trace to the feel of the interviews. Imagine the teachers, urgently involved, sometimes animated, and sometimes deeply perplexed by an inability to access and express precisely what they wanted to say. Imagine them saying, 'Say hem', as they think purposefully.

While I seek to recover the teachers' presence by alluding to 'hem', it was also the case that in both schools, there was a tendency to avoid talking about race explicitly. This tendency
was like a hesitation in their interviews, something they deliberated over with themselves in trying to decide whether they should engage the topic and if they did how and what they would reveal. When I came to analysis this pattern attracted my attention because it was so strong. Subsequently, I paid attention to the ways in which race as a topic surfaced in their discussions or where they seemed to deliberately suppress it. In investigating this finding, I operationalised Moscovici’s theory of social representations, in particular, cognitive polyphasia (pp. 41; 279 - 280) to understand their reasons for using this strategy, the issues they discussed, as well as the ways in which they discussed those issues.

This led to the discovery that while within each school teachers would distance themselves from the question of race, when they did engage the subject one could discern three distinct levels of response to the question of race. There was a response at the level of the school, the level of the professional and the level of the person. In each of these responses, nonetheless, the teachers maintained their impetus not to explicitly explore race. They engaged techniques, which were different in each school, but which had the same effect of distancing themselves from what they said. These findings structure my report. I look at each level alongside the techniques employed.

The dictionary includes ‘m’ as an entry in its own right, as an abbreviation of ‘am’ that accompanies the first person pronoun ‘I’. The ‘I’ is lost; ‘m’ stands on its own, but necessarily appeals to be understood as ‘I’m’. The ‘I’ is to be understood to be present in its absence. The choice of names for the schools is to foreground one of the starkest findings in the interviews with teachers, their tendency to be vigilant over their use of the first person pronoun ‘I’. I highlight this to invite the reader to participate in discovering the importance of this strategy within the schools and to be involved in recovering and deciding on the teachers’ absent presence as we proceed in our discussion.
For, finally, the dictionary also includes ‘em’ as a term associated with printing. There is ‘em’ which is the measurement of printed matter on a line. There is also the ‘em rule’ which is a dash used in punctuation. Information that follows such a punctuation mark illuminates what precedes it. These dimensions are highlighted to underscore the sense that what is presented here can be considered my illumination of what teachers said. Their ‘Is’ are also absent in the sense that it is I, the researcher, who presents this report. My illumination should be seen as separate from but rooted in the data. It is the sense I have made of what the teachers told me. As far as that goes, what is here, is written under the particular constraints of my research questions and the word limit of my thesis. I could only write so much, and necessarily with a particular focus. This thesis is also an abbreviation, mine, of the full life at the schools.

Please be reminded, as discussed in Part One, that both case studies are explored together in answering the second research question; I, therefore, suspend a ‘conclusion’ until Part Five.

With no further ado, let us proceed.
4:2 Em Secondary

4:2.1 History and the makings of success at Em Secondary

Alan: Lots of history there, isn’t there?
J: Yes.
Alan: Sometimes I think I ought to write a book about this.
J: It would make a very good text.
Alan: I know. When we first opened I cursed for not writing down copious notes at the time... absolutely staggering looking back at it. It all seems like a dim and distant past now... Good stuff, eh?
J: Very good stuff.
Alan: I could write a book about that.

It was a story about Indians and Chief Inspectors, the rich and the poor, David and Goliath, exposure and cover, stratagem and victory – all set in Em Secondary. I had begun my interview with Alan by asking him to tell me why the school is so successful. Alan has been with Em for over ten years as Deputy Head and Acting Head.

He started out by saying, ‘I find it really quite hard to identify it to be honest...I find it hard to put a finger on exactly why that is.’ More than two hours of talk followed after that.

Though Alan had said much, much needed doing, nevertheless, to arrive at an understanding of the makings of success at Em. Along with his colleagues, he did not put his finger on anything and said, ‘This, this explains our success.’ In fact, Alan seemed to use the interview as an opportunity to explore those ideas he wanted to have written down several years ago.

While Alan did not provide a tightly woven, linear plot, he had identified the school’s history as a site for investigation in answering the question of its success. This was the same in other

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9. Nine white teachers provide the context of my analysis of Em. The staff were almost all white, there were no black teachers. Four teachers, Ann, Sue, Ron and Ed, are regarded as very good practitioners. They were identified as such either by Ofsted reports, by fellow colleagues and/or by students. Each of these four teachers has taught at the school for over ten years and all have been teachers for an average of twenty years. There was a fifth teacher, Pam; she was identified as a good teacher by colleagues and students. She has not taught at the school for a long time and had only recently become a teacher. I was also able to discern what might distinguish the successful teachers from those who did not appear to be as successful based on my analysis of teachers’ discussion of their practice. Notwithstanding, I report from the perspective of the successful teachers.
interviews. Responding to the question, for example, Ed indicated how and why the history was important.

Ed: It is very difficult to actually analyse exactly where it [success] comes from. Maybe it is also something to do with the fact that the school has been under threat for so long. I have been here long enough to remember a number of threats...I suppose over the years that generates both in staff and in students a defence mechanism. We sense that sometimes the outside world doesn’t value us and we value what we are and what we do. 45

We see here the suggestion that the school’s particular history changed the two separate identities of the ‘staff’, or the ‘teacher’, and the ‘student’ into an ‘us’ and a ‘we’ united against threats from the outside world.

I was able to piece the history together based on what Alan shared in particular, since he used most of his interview to recount the school’s history. But snippets from other teachers’ accounts provided some verification and additional perspectives for the history Alan recalled.

I point out, nonetheless, that Alan’s history has been received as an account, 46 not necessarily the absolute truth, but the truth that makes sense of the context to those who occupy it. It is the significance and explanations that were provided, how the history has been written in their minds, the collective memory that informs their consensual universe, that has been taken

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45 Whenever I quote from my detail summaries, I present the text on a shaded background to highlight the ‘grey nature’ of the information, that is, that it is my interpretation and presentation of the teachers’ ideas.

46 When I came to analysis, my first response to Alan’s interview was an acknowledgement that I had been told a story. This was how Alan’s summary began. So what does one say about this interview? It constitutes surely a good example for treating data as a text. It also gives support for my methodological position of questioning the meaning of the meaning. This interview necessarily has to be treated as a text that is one step removed from its source. I felt that the teacher tried to construct a story for me...This is not to suggest that nothing in it was true. That it was all a lie...While the teacher assumed the role, quite actively of a storyteller, one which he thoroughly enjoyed at that[,] he let other things slip. He drew on examples to elucidate his ideas and develop the plot and it [is] these examples that afford the double take, to hear what is said and to see how it develops the story and [to] consider its implication separate from the plot the of the story...
to understand the school’s success. With that, let us turn to the history, or their story, at Em Secondary.

4: 2.2 The Em Story

And it all began under the threat of closure. Em has had a history of fairly consistent turbulence. From its very inception it was threatened with closure. Whether and where it should come into existence was hotly debated. Em was opened in the late 1970s. However, it developed a history of under-recruitment, its low recruitment being cited as the official reason for subsequent closure attacks. There was some evidence of tacit agreement from Em as well that the authority had ‘over provided for the number of students projected for the town... too many spare places. Eventually it becomes uneconomical. You have got empty rooms there and empty rooms there and that is crazy. [However] opening schools is dead easy, but shutting them is extremely difficult.’

Alan fought in at least two of those difficult fights and was amongst the strategists for the school. He revealed that in their major fight against closure Em took the position that, ‘Our main argument was, “Look we are providing for our local community,” whatever the arguments the authority decided to go ahead with.’ We see here that Em’s claim of providing for the local community was regarded as being capable of warding off whatever the opposition brought. They trusted that ‘provision for the local community’ would hold their position.

At a much later stage of the interview, as part of something else, Alan revealed that Em was meant to serve four surrounding villages. Four villages constituted Em’s local community. However, the school actually managed to recruit from primarily one of these, ‘Maxfield which is our main catchment just across the field.’ There is then some tension in their main
argument of protecting local provision. To boot, while the school claimed to be protecting local provision, there were ‘local voices’ campaigning in the highly influential local press against the school. ‘Local voices’ objected to the school.

These were the residents of the ‘affluent’ Em village. They also actively rejected Em’s provision sending their children to other schools. As we see, the school bears the name of Em village. Em secondary is situated within the village. Strictly speaking, the people of Em village could be regarded as the local community. As such, the local community, at the least, a local community rejected the school’s provision. We begin to get some indication that claiming Maxfield as the ‘local community’ might be meaningful beyond a careless slip of the tongue. On the contrary, it suggests careful usage. At the very least, Em redefined or used a definition of ‘local community’ that suited the school’s argument.

Semantically, ‘the local catchment’ was made synonymous with the ‘local community’, and ‘local community’ subsequently replaced ‘local catchment’ in the claim Em made. Since ‘local community’ replaced ‘local catchment’, Em’s claim could more accurately be stated as: the local catchment is the local community for whom we are fighting to provide. This would foreground the absence of the three other villages, thus undermining the force of Em’s argument. The extended version of the claim does not strengthen Em’s position; it makes their claim appear a compromising truth to admit, even a half-truth. The condensed version, which Em used, removed them from such a compromising position.

We now see that Em’s claim can be accepted as true if it is not interpreted literally. The condensation causes ‘the local community’ to stand in the place of the ‘local catchment’. ‘Local community’ begins to act like a metaphor for ‘local catchment’. Since the local community has nothing to do with the literal village of Em or the four surrounding villages that could be said to be the school’s full local community, we might look for other ways in
which the term is being used.

Em highlighted race and class in the story they told me of the school’s victory over closure. It was popular belief amongst the staff that those who shun the school do so because ‘they prefer to go to school out in the countryside where the pupil population is predominantly white, middle class.’ The voices of dissent were identified as the voices of the affluent, white, middle class living in the village of Em. Maxfield itself is a multicultural community highly comprised of Asians in particular, and blacks. It is regarded as the working class community of the area. Several teachers represented the Maxfield villagers as not only wanting the school, but credited the ‘huge united front...especially from our local catchment’ as ‘highly influential’ in the school’s victory over closure.

Class became a crucial thing to highlight when the fight changed from outright closure to a merger. ‘The argument was, “Ok, we don’t mind merging, but we must provide for the kids in this area. Because we are talking about underprivileged kids quite often.... That was always the argument: We are maintaining provision of education for kids in this area”’. Notice that class was not mentioned outright, only strongly implied by ‘underprivileged kids... in this area’. The school to be merged had a grammar school profile and a reputation for obtaining excellent results for its predominantly white, middle class children. It resisted merger. Em’s insistence on ‘this area’ is obviously in reference to Maxfield. While such insistence was an argument for Em remaining in situ if merged, it was also implicitly juxtaposing the social profile of the two schools. A similar strategy occurred with race at the beginning of the fight when Em was faced with closure and not merger.

Alan only once used the word ‘multicultural’ in the story of the school’s victory. This usage was to establish Lord Scarman as an authority who recognised Em’s particular contribution and whose word might be trusted. ‘Lord Scarman ... who knew about multicultural schools
and how successful they could be or not... his response was, "This is an excellent school. It is doing an excellent job.... It is providing for its community." Alan insinuated into this snippet the only indication that we were talking about a 'multicultural school', and perhaps, its local 'multicultural community'.

Alan reported that the presence of the 'mums, dads and past students' at a crucial meeting during the closure battle convinced the authority that Em was 'about provision and ... providing opportunities [for people] to get on with each other'. There was the suggestion that the multicultural composition of Em Secondary and Maxfield was evident in the families present. We know that Maxfield is working class and multicultural. Alan reckoned that the councillors realised that they were no longer only faced with whether a school should remain open. In the presence of the supporters, the authorities were faced with the consequence of closing Em, closing a school that was providing opportunities for people to get on with each other. The implication is that all parties recognised the centrality of race although it was not said outright.

Meaning race and not saying it outright, it would seem the fighters were locked in a psychological battle. A reminder of the quote: 'Our main argument was, "Look we are providing for the local community," whatever the arguments the authority decided to go ahead with.' Em seemed to believe that their argument held sufficient weight to buffer any attack. It seemed that they were daring the authorities to challenge it. On the surface, it does not seem such a watertight argument, 'providing for the local community'. We know Em were not doing that strictly speaking. We know they have had a history of under-recruitment. We know that the authorities wanted the school closed because it thought it had over provided for the area; it is not something that Em denied.

We can now appreciate that what the school might have considered its strongest defence was
that it was not just providing for any old local community. It was the underprivileged, the working class, the immigrant population, the multicultural population. Em were offering multicultural provision to a multicultural community. The unspoken argument may have been, 'If you close this school you are saying that you don’t really care about their provision. That they are not as valuable.' It becomes more clearly a battle that is turning on political struggles.

Further, it would now appear that ‘local community’ not only substituted for ‘local catchment’; ‘local community’ also substituted ‘multicultural community’ in the argument that Em made. As a substitution or metaphor, ‘local community’ carried connotations that remained unspoken but were arguably understood by those involved in the closure fights. The term ‘local community’ was Em’s secret weapon. Their whole argument depended upon and turned on – and was perhaps successful because of the ability of the term ‘local community’ to substitute for both ‘local catchment’ and ‘multicultural community’.

As a phrase ‘local community’ was made up of parts of ‘local catchment’ and ‘multicultural community’: ‘local’ from ‘local catchment’ and ‘community’ from ‘multicultural community’. The metaphor is made up of two metonyms. Metonyms work when a part of a thing successfully represents the whole. Each metonym that constituted the new phrase ‘local community’ provided a trace to its source, provoking an absent presence. ‘Local’ alluded to the class dimension arising between Em village, and the other school, and Maxfield. ‘Community’ alluded to the race dimension in the highly Asian Maxfield multicultural community. Metaphors work when they bring two systems of thought into interaction with each other, and effect an affect that transcends the literal meaning they replace. For this reason, ‘local community’ is a metaphor par excellence. When it came to

47 Langer, 1996
48 Black, 1978
stand for both ‘local catchment’ and ‘multicultural community’ it caused what is known about all three to interact, and that interaction created an understanding which seemed to prove more forceful for being implicit.

In other words, Em’s was a battle fought by suggestion rather than by explicit argument. This strategy seemed to supplant or complicate the argument for closure based on low recruitment numbers at Em and over provision at the town level. Those more pragmatic reasons were placed in tandem with the issues of race and class – by suggestion. This transformed the battle over closure into a more sophisticated, political battle, even a psychological or moral battle, and Em positioned themselves as the occupants of the moral high ground. They were the champions of the underprivileged.

Throughout the closure story, Alan repeatedly mentioned that estate agents were in part responsible for Em’s population and performance. The estate agents were accused of social engineering, guiding particular families into particular areas. He strongly hinted at race and class as the reason for this. At the end of the closure story I asked, “The social engineering that the estate agents were into, would you say that was along racial and class lines?” “Oh, no,” Alan replied. “I sort of read that into it.” Faced with the question squarely, he denied that he was. Rather, he was giving the estate agents’ activities a particular reading where he had mentioned them up to this point in the conversation. There was another explanation for what happened. ‘As people get more established inevitably [they] move up market a bit buy a bigger house...move off.’

To say that he read race and class into the social engineering snippets when he mentioned them was to say that he deliberately insinuated that I should understand the social engineering in terms of race and class. In other words, I was to think race and class, recognise that race and class were being implied and implicated in what he was saying. We know that
Maxfield is multiracial and working class. We know that other areas including Em village is predominantly white and middle class. Alan established this for my benefit. I may not have known without his telling. Further, I certainly would not have had access to the notion of the estate agents' social engineering unless he had established it. Having been clearly successful he then chooses to deny his own intentions. The job had been done.

It is a strange sort of denial. He 'sort of read that into it.' We assume that 'that' refers to him reading racial and class lines into the estate agents' social engineering. So, even an admission did not get him to actually say race and class. He was still in denial. He meant to imply and implicate race and class in the estate agents' social engineering at the point in the story where he mentioned the estate agents. But should I wish to find out about the estate agents practice in the area, 'went along to estate agents, all estate agents ...go out of one shop and into another and they are all doing the same sort of thing...their argument would be that they are just reflecting market forces you know. Lots of people want to move into certain areas because it is popular because certain schools are there. One can see it now because people say, "We want to go to these schools,"...predominantly white, middle class type schools...off-white faces are very much in the minority...it is still happening and the people who engineer it and benefit from it are the estate agents.'

So the teacher can posit an explanation for what happens as a normal activity. All estate agents do it, and all they are doing is 'reflecting market forces'. What they are doing can be explained entirely in a different way even if the activity appears to be along class and race lines. It is just that certain areas are popular, certain schools are popular. From apparently denouncing the social engineering, the teacher mounts a possible defence for the estate agents.

What is one to make of this? Maybe the teacher provided the answer. He continued. We are
His Mum came and there was talk of him being permanently excluded and then it suddenly
died down again at the beginning of term. He was accepted back. It was thought that Simon
argued whether he would have been excluded if he were an Asian student during his
exclusion interviews. Simon is white.

A close look at Sue’s interview showed that despite her strict pedagogic focus when she
talked about her practice, except for one instance, whenever anything to do with race was
mentioned, in passing, it was to do with Simon. Sue noticed that ‘there is an undercurrent
when he is there; he will probably whisper something, say something, usually to the Asian
boys. He will talk about Sukhi’s hair, which he is studying as a topic.’ With Simon, in her
words, there was ‘an undercurrent’ of race.

Simon refused to sit where he was asked partly, it would seem, because he refused to be
isolated. But more happens around Simon’s seating arrangement than is to do only with the
disruption he causes. Elsewhere we learn that, ‘[he will say] “I am not going there because.”’
he won’t articulate it, but I can put those words in for him, “because it is next to one of the
Asian boys or girls.”’ Sue would not find an alternative to him working beside the Asian
students though she thought that he expressly did not want to do so. To use the equipment,
she will have him work beside the Asians; he will not do so, at least he makes an issue of it.

Tim made a curious observation about Em. He said, ‘I think there is a great respect in this
school for all these different people and where they have come from. It is a respect from a
distance. I am not going to upset you. I am not going to interfere with you, but I don’t really
want to get to know you.’ Tim claimed that ‘by moving people around and getting them to
share a piece of paper, getting them to hold a ruler while one measures and marks it, you are
actually breaking down that bit…physically moving people to actually increase that contact,
that intellectual contact, that space contact.’ It is a tactic other teachers seemed to use. For the
most part it seemed to work.

However, Simon, it would seem, broke the code that would be the Em unspoken modus operandi. Sue believed he attacked the Asians verbally. Although he was actively learning about the Asian topknot, he would nevertheless also taunt the Asian boys about it. Sue also reported that, ‘He had all of last week off. I don’t know why. Perhaps, he has changed faith or something. It is the sort of thing he would say. “If they are having it off, I am as well, but I want Christmas off as well”’. Simon made an issue of race.\(^3\)

Faced with a real issue of race and racism, the focus or the response however, remained pedagogic. The race issues only came into the discussion as an aside, an observation that Sue did not quite address, as a topic during the discussion or within her practice. It was thought that Simon caused disruption; further, failing permanent exclusion, he was to be isolated.

We see that both Sue and Ann had problems with boys and that problems with race were associated with boys. Alan admitted that

Occasionally it [issue with race] does come out in disrespect in the way that kids talk to some female staff; I say some because it is not everyone. When it does happen we challenge it basically.

j: How did you challenge it?

Alan: It could be, hopefully not me, because I can’t solve everything for everyone else.

Eventually it has to go back to the teacher in the classroom. Hopefully, and by and large the teacher in the classroom is the one that is able to solve the issue. If something is serious and it is occurring in several different areas then someone other than that teacher naturally gets involved. It wouldn’t necessarily get as high as me in the school…

\(^3\) It also raises the question, if it is true that some Asian boys were disrespectful towards female teachers, whether Simon’s strategy was aimed at also exploiting and exposing this race-related issue.
The rest of this section of the discussion was to restate in different ways the wish that
‘hopefully that is where it would get resolved’. One got the feeling that the female teachers
were on their own with respect to the difficulties presented by race. Their gender was
implicated, but it was the issue of race that seemed to leave them without support. In the
main, it would seem that issues to do explicitly with race were simply not acknowledged by
the school in general and also by individuals.

The result of the matrix index intersection showed us that only Ann and Sue featured under
the race/classroom management intersection. Female teachers seemed to have less room for
avoiding the issues to do with race and discipline. Like the general response from the school,
there was the tendency not to acknowledge race. However, in the female teachers’ response
we had a glimpse of what might happen when a teacher attempted to practice in the face of
race.

They redefined, or defined the issues in terms of what they were confident and
knowledgeable. They defined the space in terms of their codes of behaviour. We saw how
Ann established a symbolic presence that privileged her code. We can accept that Sue, like
Ann, consciously or not, attempted ‘a squaring of a circle’ fitting the demands of race and
gender within existing practice. They implicitly addressed issues of race, while explicitly
addressing pedagogical issues.

If the women did in fact read race as pedagogy, the dynamics of that would be intriguing. Did
the teachers not discuss race because they really, simply did not ‘see’ race when they had to
make decisions about teaching and learning? What happens to race when it disappears? We
will investigate the intersections of race and discourses for some answers.54

54 Please see p. 160 for a reminder of the search finds in Table 2.
4.2.6 Race and Pedagogic Discourses

I am not sure that I am even conscious of some of the things you are trying to get me to talk about, to be honest. May be it is because it is all so familiar here. May be if The person you should be talking to is perhaps somebody who has been here for less time than me. See if they are conscious of having to be conscious of not saying those things. (Ed)

I just don’t see it. (Jerry)

The imperative in the data under all the race/discourses intersections was to argue that ‘kids are kids’. A variation on that theme was to use the converse argument of ‘teacher as reasonable parent’. And in every instance of the race/discourses intersect, teachers’ discourses were fraught with tensions. We saw that Ann and Ed were identified in particular as having difficulties sustaining their arguments. Let us begin with them.

Difficulties/Discourses

You wouldn’t teach here if you were racist, would you? I mean it wouldn’t go, would it? You aren’t actually here for a reason, are you? And you are trying to understand. You fail. You know you don’t necessarily know enough etc, but I think there is a genuine working toward trying for everybody to be treated equally. I think probably a lot of the staff don’t like phrases like multi-ethnic or multicultural. I think, however right or wrong this is, that, I happen to think it is right actually. Most staff are here because these kids are kids and most of the time very genuinely don’t think “that child is Afro-Caribbean, that child is Bangladeshi, that child is that. Is the make up of the group fifty-fifty white or black?” I would have to actually look at the names. You know what I mean. I really think people’s priorities are: kids are kids. I know, yes, you need a certain amount of understanding to know what has gone on.... It is just as important to know about tall, white, good looking Rowan…. I don’t think that it is not necessarily that you need to know the culture of background. It is just to understand children and help them. You need to know background whatever it might be.... In other words you are not going to understand their cultural background because of multiculturalism so much as
you are going to understand their cultural background because that way it is knowing where the kids are coming from and then you can help them.

**Ann: from intersection race/difficulties // pedagogy/discourses**

We notice the insistence that 'these kids are kids'. Against the suggestion that teachers at Em choose to work there instead of somewhere else, this claim becomes less straightforward than it immediately appears. The teachers' presence there itself is not straightforward. It seems it might be regarded in some way as evidence of them not being racist. Further, teachers might remain at Em despite failure and the feeling of inadequacy with respect to the challenges posed by race. That speaks to their commitment as much as it speaks to the challenges that 'these kids' present.

There is the suspicion that teachers choose Em because the kids there are not just kids. These are a particular group of kids, whites, Asians and blacks. Therefore, Ann's insistence might be better stated: Despite their differences, these kids are just/after all/only kids. There is an affirmation of similarity rather than a confirmation of difference. The insistence is that the differences do not matter, will not matter. So the differences that might have been part of the attraction for the teachers to work with 'these kids' are rendered inoperative. Race is neutralised; a socio-academic discourse is operationalised that subsumes race in their practice.

A corollary to 'the kids are kids' difficulties was the 'genuine working toward trying for everybody to be treated equally'. Ed who featured alongside Ann in the difficulties/discourse intersection, also appeared with Pam in the difficulties/teaching intersect. The latter intersection highlighted the unresolved tensions involved in responding to the kids as kids in the face of race. When pressed on the point, both Pam and Ed, new and seasoned teachers, resorted to another discourse for a resolution. They both operationalised a gender discourse,
but Ed’s was submerged within a parental discourse that provided the basis of his practice.

You try to make judgements not just about how you treat young people, but you are actually trying to make judgements as a parent figure about what is appropriate to talk about how to talk about it and teach the students about it. Again I would have thought most teachers are like that.... It is a very difficult thing to do because obviously you have a very broad range of parents; some would not be too perturbed about certain things themselves. I try to keep this idea of what a reasonable parent would do and that is part of my professional control.

Ed: Intersection race/difficulties // pedagogy/discourses

Ed seemed to think he had hit upon a resolution, but the ‘reasonable parent’ is clearly a problematic notion. Like Ed, Jerry used a parental discourse to justify what he does in the face of the challenges presented to him. Jerry, who dominates the race/discourses intersections, expressly stated that he drew on his own parenthood to inform his practice. Ed did not say this expressly, but it is likely that his notion of the reasonable parent would be informed by personal, even race-specific notions. Would he be perturbed about the same thing a reasonable Asian father or mother might be perturbed about? Ed himself did not appear unaware of this difficulty, but maintained the parental discourse because it helped him to ‘make judgements’ in his practice.

Students/Discourses

The students/discourse intersect showed that the actual parents of the students re-established the differences that the parental discourse neutralised. Jerry in an account to substantiate his statement that he was unaware of the high Asian makeup of his class concluded the account stating, ‘I knew them as kids. I didn’t know them as an ethnic group… I was not conscious of
their ethnicity.' I asked him, 'Why is it that that might happen in a situation where it seems race is such an obvious thing?' Jerry would maintain that 'I just don't see it.' To help me understand he provided another example.

A bunch of girls were involved in a fight. Jerry insisted that it had nothing to do with race. It was adolescent fighting over a bloke. He disciplined them and without reference to race, something which pleased him upon reflection afterwards. As the account continued to his preparation for the resultant parent interviews, however, a shift happened in the narrative. The indication was that two of the parents occasioned consternation. There was the need for an interpreter. There was consideration for the best approach to take with the Afro-Caribbean mother because resistance was expected. Having indicated the latter, he hastened to add that it was not a race thing. It was a family thing. Still we see that the question of race was explicitly acknowledged with respect to relating to parents, but denied in relation to their kids.

There was just three kids in here yesterday and it wasn't until they had gone I was exploring what I was going to say to different sets of parents because then you do have to think. Then race and culture does come right up front. I feel myself thinking about how I would react.

This ability to acknowledge race when the context changed from the kids at Em to another context was clearly repeated by other teachers. Ann's account found her commenting on the presence of a black person in a theatre audience, despite maintaining that when she taught she did not see race. I asked her about that.

'J: It is interesting that in that context, that in the theatre you notice race, but in the classroom you don't.

Ann: I think, it is for good or ill, and very much for ill in the context of the theatre. I know
very well the audiences I am going to be sitting with will be, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, white..... I suppose it is the context again, isn’t it? In a classroom I am a teacher and they are kids and that is the scenario.

Similarly, when I asked Alan about the management of behaviour within the school he related the same story that Jerry told about the fight amongst the girls confirming that ‘the number of occasions when say it has been black against white is very rare. It is not usually based on I am having a go at you because you are a black kid. It is usually based on I’m having a go at you because you are looking at the bloke I fancy.’ When I pressed him to speak to racist name calling within his discourse of kids are kids, he responded with an illumination of Em’s practice of equal opportunities. He did not answer the specific question I asked.

Alan: We always emphasise, whatever we are talking about, is that we are talking about equal opportunities. We might not use that phrases, but we are always talking about treating everyone the same, but everyone is unique as well. That is always our philosophy that everyone is treated equally. Whenever we are talking about issues we always say that you have got the same rights to choose to do a certain thing as everybody else, option choice or whatever; there is no difference. If someone chooses to do that course whatever their background, it doesn’t come into it. The fact is you are a child that wants to do this.

I asked about racist name calling. He told me that all have the same rights. Maybe he was answering my question indirectly, just as they talk about equal opportunities without using the phrase. What we see here, again, is the strategy for making race implicit. We see something of the workings of a double vision on race, being aware of it and being committed to neutralising it within the daily running of the school. When I pressed the point of racist name calling, Alan redefined the term, speaking instead, of ‘silly names’, ‘foul names’.
‘stupid name calling’, ‘stupid nastiness’. They do not speak of race. How can there be racist name calling? All the kids are the same. They speak of treating the kids the same and treating them equally.

That all the children are the same, but they are unique is a paradox obvious to Alan. We see him making a movement from ‘treating them the same’ to an explanation of treating them equally. The switch suggests tacit acceptance that they cannot be treated the same because of their differences. So, rather than treating them the same, the claim seems to become: ‘We treat them equally because they are not all the same; but despite their differences we treat them the same, that is, equally’. Confirming the right of all the different kids as having the same choices within the official structures of the institution seems to be taken as the practice of ‘treating them equally’. We see that treating them equally is set up by the category of Em students, that it is the kids’ rights as students that make them equal. We get an extension to the ‘these kids are kids’ discourse: these kids are kids are students.

As Em students they become a group for which Alan believed himself competent to provide.

It activated a knowledge base he felt confident to use. So while he would not speak of racist name calling he confidently spoke about what he ‘will not tolerate’: physical violence.

Students are sent home, and know they will be because the school contract states this and the school practice consistently confirmed it. They treat them equally; all have contracts. Any is sent home if physically violent. The implication is: ‘We address misbehaviour whenever it occurs.’ It is misbehaviour that is attacked not the student. That misbehaviour is seen in purely rational ways. The implication is that all the rules and codes of the school apply to all the students of the school.

The school contract was identified as an important tool used for setting up an understanding between the school and the students. Both the school and the students had responsibilities to
each other. That is what schools in general are premised on. The school also necessarily
provided the opportunity for working with disparate groups in a way that set up
interpretations of relations that could exclude, at least, subsume and make implicit, the
question of race. The different individuals could be grouped as students legitimately. And
students are kids. It appeared that as Em students the kids were regarded as having accepted
and endorsed Em's ability to deliver them a programme of education. Teachers are confirmed
professionals trained to work with kids and students of specific subject knowledge. That is
the scenario. It therefore seemed that Em used the very constitution of schools as the
foundation of their approach.

The teacher/student-kid scenario was firmly in place at Em. It neutralised or contained the
difficulties that race would introduce, if it also sustained the under current of tensions. The
evidence is that there was an awareness of race as an issue for the school. Further, the
evidence is that race was not naively removed from the context of the school. Instead, race
seemed to be subjected to a double vision. The instances when Jerry insisted that 'I just don't
see it,' would perhaps be more correctly read as, 'I just didn't choose to see it.' Race could
become an active part of their consciousness; when the context changed from Em's students,
race was permitted to be active or it escaped the constraints placed on it.

Stereotypes/Discourses

This helps us to understand why 'stereotypes' might have been restricted to 'discourses' in
the race/pedagogy intersection. To begin, we recall that teachers did not volunteer
explorations on race, and that what they said was, for the most part, in response to direct,
insistent questions. So, it might be fair to say that I forced what they said. Nevertheless, even
when forced to speak about race, they did not generally use stereotypes. And that might be a
conscious thing. Alan was amazed that some teaching applicants to the school were
sufficiently inept to actually utter stereotypes during their interviews, and made it very clear
Alan: I wouldn't want them within a million miles of the place.

j: Why would that be a bad thing?

Alan: It would be a concern if it reflected something of a closed mind. There is a danger that there is prejudices built in there which frankly how do you break?

This protectiveness for the school was felt throughout the interviews, and was certainly strongly felt in Alan and Jerry's. While it revealed commitment to the school, it also revealed a strategy to stereotypes. Stereotypes were censored, and appeared to be barred from teachers' practice. When the teachers made general statements about Asians, they would consistently add, 'not all are like that'. (See, for example, Ann's speech on p. 164 and Alan's on p. 171). For the most part there was not evidence of rampant stereotyping to the students' detriment. It was not evident in their practice as a school. This is totally consistent with the finding that 'stereotypes' was restricted to 'discourses' in the race/pedagogy intersect.

Interestingly, the stereotypes that came up in the stereotypes/discourse intersection were about blacks. Black children were virtually an invisible group within the school. Teachers generally focussed on Asians when I investigated race. At management level there was neither a sense of their numbers nor their performance. Jerry was 'half ashamed that I could not tell you the exact number of Afro-Caribbean kids in the school and half quite pleased'. He claimed to be pleased as that was consistent with his kids are kids discourse. Alan

55 Blacks formed a small proportion of the population. I had difficulty ascertaining their percentage; however, this difficulty resulted in a riveting finding. Leafing through the administration forms, I discovered that where black students identified themselves as 'British' or 'English', someone had gone through struck it out and written 'Afro-Caribbean'. I presented the Head with this finding. He told me that the local Section 11 person, who is black, was responsible for this, and asked for my advice as to what might be done. (I told him I would have to consider the full data before I could do that.) That was a tremendous finding, although I was no closer to the students' official number. My head count at breaks with black students naming other black students was perhaps more productive and reliable.
reporting on the kids’ academic performance stated: ‘I am thinking about within the top
group. There was a Bangladeshi boy, some white kids, and I am trying to think about an
Afro-Caribbean. There was definitely several Pakistanis and Indian kids there… It
demonstrates that frankly we are talking about kids… There is representation from all the
groups across the school.’ He did not think of any Afro-Caribbean, and there was also some
difficulty accessing that information for myself.

We return to Jerry’s account of disciplining the group of girls.

I don’t think until they had gone out that I realised they had come from two different racial
groups and I was quite pleased. I think I was perhaps aware of Carla because she has a
culturally characteristic Afro-Caribbean scowl when she feels a little bit threatened…
different cultures respond in different ways when they know they have done something
wrong. If you get an Italian kid here and shout at them they will often cry and they are so
apologetic whereas Carla characteristically was attacked and her first instinct was to attack
back… that anger, this is her way of dealing with it. This is what you know from your
research and your own experience. This is what often gets Afro-Caribbean kids into trouble.
The way they deal with that anger and the way they deal with the rest of it.

Jerry: Intersection race/practice//pedagogy/discourse

This compares with Alan’s opinion when I asked him what advice he might give to London
teachers having difficulties with black kids seeing that Em was a successful multicultural
school.

I don’t know … came out of that hall [in London] and there was stereotype behaviour off
Afro-Caribbean kids, and there was a certain loudness… It must happen in a big way in the
schools. I have not worked in that sort, so I don’t know, with major difficulties. There are
two aspects: one is the inner cityness...there is also another challenge which is about kids
establishing themselves, and I suppose if the staff are all white and the kids are black, that
could be a challenge if they do it the wrong way.

Alan was disturbed by the Londoners’ behaviour. His full account showed that coming across
a group of young, black kids in the streets caused him some anxiety. He did not appear to
have grievances with the black kids in his school; other sections of the interview showed that
he was not really aware of blacks as a group within Em. Still, he spoke about and revealed
some apprehension about the black Londoners’ ‘stereotypical and loud behaviour’. It would
seem reasonable to expect that his actual experience with black kids would undermine his
fear and the stereotypes that might be informing that fear, but it apparently did not.

Jerry’s ‘angry, culturally characteristic scowling Carla’ contrasted with another stereotype
Jerry used of blacks. I had asked him to explain the atmosphere in the school. He did this by
means of a story of an ‘infectious West Indian/negro bus driver’ who transformed the
miserable mood of his passengers by ‘smiling, being pleasant and friendly.’ If the story is
believed, the model for the school’s success is the image of the infectious, smiling black.

He gives them a real, warm, ‘Welcome to’ and does this cheery thing all the way down the
street... the ethical capital of the bus had gone from there to here... I think if you were to
say, ‘What does it mean?’ I think it is something to do with the ethical capital in the school. It
is something to do with smiling at each other.

We recall that Asian children were not generally spoken about in stereotypical ways, and
when a comment might seem stereotypical, a proviso was provided. That approach did not
seem to work with the black kids in these accounts. Indeed research was called upon to
substantiate the stereotype held. This is against the suggestion that the black kids do not provide sufficient cause for the senior management to have developed a strategy to address ‘black kids establishing themselves in the wrong way’. It is, at the least, confusing that such strong stereotypes were uttered about blacks; their presence in the school was virtually overlooked, and there was a practice to resist stereotyping children.

I asked Alan about his stereotypes. Remember, he had highlighted the problems an all white staff would face with black kids establishing themselves.

J: I would talk about here because all except for two staff are white, and most of the children are non-white. How do you deal with the stereotypes that you acquired just growing up as an English person? How did you deal with them?

Alan: I just tried to disregard them.... Some of these stereotypes come from your mum and dad, don’t they? My parents are quite liberal minded, but they are also Victorian because that is when they were brought up.... There are stereotypes which do come because this is based on their perception of people. I actually still challenge some of their stereotypes now. I suppose it is only when you move on and you are bit older and you can establish your own perceptions of things. I do still have to deal with certain things like my mum will say something like, ‘All these Asian kids,’ or something in such a way that I think, ‘Hang on there a minute. It is not right to talk like that’. It is quite hard and we are talking about eighty years old and they have had their perceptions of kids and some of it is probably based on facts about individual people they have met way back. I have not been afraid to challenge what I thought was the right thing because that is what I was brought up to think. I still do it now.

The feeling at the beginning in Alan’s account markedly changed by the end. The flippant bravado winds around very personal, private and delicate crevices. We see that he alludes to his childhood and the formation of himself. We see his protectiveness of his parents...
alongside his strategy of using them to give himself the distance to talk about his stereotypes. We see that he critiques and excuses his parents. He claims to challenge their stereotypes, and claims to do so because they brought him up to do such a thing. He claims their authority to challenge them, endorsing as he does their parenting. He might be suspected of doing as he was brought up to do with respect to stereotypes, but he does not appear cognisant of this.

_Self/Discourses_

As can be seen, this line of enquiry could be a delicate and possibly distressing thing for any teacher. My other attempts to access the teachers’ coming to terms with race in relation to themselves support this. When Ann reflected on the fact that she noticed race in the theatre hall she was absolutely subdued. As we saw she stated that, ‘it was for ill’. There are some things about race that are difficult to attend, and personally coming to terms with race seemed overwhelming, bordering on devastating. Earlier we saw Ann questioning the likelihood that a racist would not work at En (p. 173). She was clearly denouncing racists. Her subsequent exploration was soul-searching, urgent and desperately honest but ironically ended in a denouncing of herself.

J: What do you think gives teachers the confidence to do that [deal with the kids as kids] indeed the confidence? For instance, you say two things, and two questions. You say the teachers here don’t think of themselves as racists.

Ann: I suppose they don’t. Although some of them will actually say to you, ‘Oh god I could turn into a right racist today,’ if you have had a confrontation; especially if you are a woman and you have had to put up with yet again some snide behaviours. It is on that level. You know what I mean? But you don’t actually mean that you are the sort of person who would sign up to a swastika or throw a brick through a window. It is that kind of thing. You know you are going to go on fine, in that sense. I think probably you go way beyond the notion, or whatever it might be, the woolly liberal notion. Don’t you? Sometimes you will get very
angry and you will get very angry about issues that are to do with cultural, race. There is a very real difference because you are getting angry because you care and because you care about a scenario. If I get very angry with an Asian child who is laughing at a Russian woman’s accent in English and round on them and say, ‘You are being racist; you know,’ someone might say to me, ‘How dare you?’ But I think I dare. I need to. I don’t think racism is tiptoeing round the issue of race wherever it comes. I think you have got to confront these things. With a lot of colleagues I would suggest with, like that, that, when you are right in the thick of things and part of things. I still would accept that there is no way I could know what it would feel like if somebody were to attack me or say things to me because of the colour of my skin in the street. I don’t know what that feels like. I can’t even pretend to know what that feels like. I can try to empathise; I can try to understand. I can certainly sense that it feels hurtful because I know that it feels hurtful if a boy resents me if I am a woman. I have got a little bit of a sense of that but equally I do not know what it would feel like. I go to the theatre a lot and I have been in the theatre or in a concert hall when I have noticed that somebody black has come in and you think, ‘God this is the only black person watching this performance, what must that feel like?’ I suppose I have got so far as to imagine it must feel strange, or does it? But I don’t know what that feels like until I was the only white person who walked into a room full of Chinese or whatever. I wouldn’t know, would I? At least I suppose I am conscious of that, conscious of the issues. You can get as conscious as you can. You can get as caring as you can but I think you would be belittling anything to say that I am totally not racist and I know how you feel. You don’t.

All the teachers who attempted to engage race for discussion spoke with uncertainty and perturbation on the subject even when they were attempting to be blasé. In general they did not attempt to be blasé. Every teacher admitted some failure and/or inadequacy when dealing with the issue of race. Their natural tendency was simply to avoid the subject, but when they engaged race it was with some wrestling, questioning and very often self-doubt. That was
evident in little things like one teacher providing a disclaimer of sorts when in passing mentioned the name of a place, ‘another area called Blackside, I am not sure why it is called that, but it is over near...’, and far more searching questions like Ann’s, ‘You wouldn’t teach here if you were a racist, would you? I mean it wouldn’t go. Would it?’

Scrutiny of the self/discourse intersection forcefully sustained what I had already discovered: a resolute discounting of race in deference to ‘a kids are kids’ discourse. Ann who was willing to engage race, and that with rigour and candour, in that intersection was seen like Jerry to be removing ‘self’ from pedagogic discourses. We know that all the teachers did not volunteer a discussion on race. And we have already noted that ‘self’ did not intersect with any other pedagogic category. Considerations of the self as racial or as having a racial stance in relation to pedagogy were restricted to discourses in the race/pedagogy intersection, and ‘discourses’ were restricted to a resolute ‘kids are kids’.

I asked Nudist to perform an index intersection\(^56\) within the category of ‘Race’ on its sub-categories ‘self’, ‘difficulties’, ‘defensiveness’ and ‘whiteness’ (s/d/d/w) to get an insight into their stance. The result astounded me.\(^57\) It provided the details that led to reaching a deeper understanding of why teachers took the stance they did in relation to race and teaching at Em.

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\(^56\) An index intersection search provides the information coded at all the nodes given for a particular search. The information retrieved must be coded at each node given in order to be retrieved. This search is like a mini-matrix intersection; however, they differ in that an index intersection does not compare the sub-nodes of two umbrella nodes. It only retrieves the information coded at specified nodes involved in the search.

\(^57\) I performed three variations to the s/d/d/w intersect to test it. The variations were searches on ‘self’, ‘difficulties’, ‘defensiveness’ (s/d/d); ‘difficulties’, ‘defensiveness’, ‘whiteness’ (d/d/w); and ‘difficulties’ and ‘defensiveness’ (d/d). I was attempting to scrutinise the things implicated in ‘difficulties’ and ‘defensiveness’ and how these were linked to thoughts surrounding ‘self’ and ‘whiteness’. The data retrieved for s/d/d/w was retrieved for each one of the subsequent searches. In fact, the intersection search of s/d/d retrieved exactly the same data as for s/d/d/w. The search for d/d/w produced the additional retrieval: ‘The motivation for her argument seems to be a fear of being overtaken. Why should, indeed if it could, a situation of no blacks change into all black?’ The search for s/d retrieved both the text units of s/d/d/w and d/d/w in addition to: ‘Individual, who is part of a particular group. The emphasis is on the group. The individual is there as far as s/he is part of the group.’ All these finds were cross-referenced to Pam’s interview and detailed summary.
4:2.7 Race/Self/Teaching: a white teacher in a multicultural classroom

The results of s/d/d/w search and its variations, showed that I thought Pam’s discussion on race, and hers rather than others, gave a possible insight into the teachers’ stance. Ed did advise that speaking with someone with a shorter history at the school might be the way to access the information he could not articulate about race. (See p. 173). We recall that Pam figured in all the categories where race intersected with teaching and that while she did not figure at all under race/discourses although she did make use of discourses, she (alone) featured under ‘beliefs’ and ‘concept’.

The implication is that unlike the teachers with long years of service who had decided upon the approach they would take to race, and stuck to it during the interviews, Pam was found in
the process of developing an overall approach to the multicultural classroom. She was seen trying to define race for herself, and coming to terms with her beliefs and their implication for her teaching. Her exploration showed her sorting out how to respond to race in the classroom; the issue of having a sense of self as a good person in relation to racial issues; and concerns for whiteness in a multicultural space. Let us listen to Pam on race and teaching.

The Contradictions: responding to race in the classroom

j: You are saying that you actually differentiate in terms of race and gender and ability. On one hand you say that you cannot treat them all equally. You actually said that, and you are actually saying that you treat them equally. Can you describe what is happening here?

Pam: I know that seems really contradictory, but I don't feel that it is. You have to treat all human beings as they are and that includes where they come from, family background and gender. Gender is treated differently in our society, different expectations between boys and girls. They have come from middle schools, don't forget, and from parents who perhaps treat boys and girls differently and through different cultures. When you are talking to somebody and relating to somebody you have to keep that in mind and that to me is not racial prejudice. That is being aware of people's differences as people. Racial prejudice is to do with race and not ethnicity. I am not seeing a brown girl and saying that is a girl who is not going to talk much because I don't know. Is she is a Sikh, Hindu or a Muslim girl or perhaps Christian within the third or fourth generation? I don't know that. Once you do get to know you have to make allowances for the cultural background. In other words, I wouldn't judge somebody by their colour and think that all coloured people are this, and all white people are that. I would take into account each person as an individual and all the influences that come to bear on them which are cultural. The way we treat women, the cultural expectations, does that make sense now?

j: Is that what you mean when you say you treat them equally?
Pam: When I say I treat them equally what I mean is I wouldn't discriminate on the grounds of race in any way. I wouldn't say that is a brown person, so they can't join in. That is a black person, so they are going to behave like this. We all do it to a certain extent. Does that not make sense?

j: It makes brilliant sense. There is this debate about treating them equally, treating them all the same.

Pam: I just don't agree with it. I think this political correctness where you pretend everybody is the same is a load of rubbish because people are not the same. White people are not the same. White people come from different classes, come from different backgrounds. There is a difference between Scottish, Welsh and Irish, Southern English and Northern English. Experiences are totally different. We have just had a kid come up from Luton; there is an enormous cultural difference when he walked into this school. People aren't all the same; people are different. People are equal in their expectations of how they should be treated but you shouldn't disrespect somebody because of differences. You shouldn't prejudice or relegate them or write them off because of differences. You should acknowledge and celebrate the differences... You are explaining the bible but you have to explain to white kids as well as Muslims, but then I want to encourage Muslims to say do you have parable in your religion. I don't know. I don't know the Koran. It is the matter of acknowledging differences and encouraging people and celebrating the differences rather than pretending we are all the same. Does that make sense?

Notice she began her exploration by declaring: "I know that seems really contradictory but I don't feel that it is." Notice, too, the checks as to whether what she was saying made sense. The suggestion is that she has found a position that allows her to occupy what might seem a contradictory place. Her stance made some sense to her, although she is not absolutely sure about it. She is aware of its contradictory nature.
And her position was revealed in the following way. First she recognises that the people she was talking about are human beings. But this recognition was overtaken by an emphasis on how these human beings should be treated. There was an implied meaning that as human beings all should be treated equally, but this was not allowed to develop. She stated that: “You have to treat human beings as they are and that includes where they come from, family background and gender.” From here she developed an argument for responding to gender. She concluded by saying that: “When you are talking to somebody and relating to somebody you have to keep that in mind and that to me is not racial prejudice, that is being aware of people’s differences as people.”

It was not clear what one should keep in mind. The only thing she expanded upon, despite the questions that she raised, was gender. She may have talked about gender because she felt knowledgeable, comfortable, confident about speaking on it; she had firm opinion about it which she explored. By exploring the gender issue and then saying that this is what one needs to be mindful of one could argue that she equated the other issues with gender. We could say that she attempted to understand the issue of race through gender, and that she responded to race based on how she responds to gender, that is, based on her understanding of how one responds to gender issues.

To return to the development of the argument, there was a tension where she implied that human beings should be treated the same because of their humanity. However, responding to their humanity became complicated by responding to their ethnicity. The argument of responding to the people's humanity actually collapsed into responding to their ethnicity. Responding to their humanity was only hinted at. The argument was about responding to their ethnicity. This seemed to be where the issue was for her: discerning the fine line between racial prejudice and being aware of people’s differences.
We also detect a shift from a concern with the human being and the individual to a concern with people's differences - from individuals to groups. She wants to know how to respond to the individual, any individual, who is part of a particular group. The emphasis is on the group. The individual is considered as far as he is part of a group.

It is at this point that we have her first definite opinion on race: racial prejudice is to do with race and not ethnicity. This seemed a defence and her rationalisation of her own response. Immediately following this statement she described her actions. It appears that she does not equate race with ethnicity. Race in her mind seemed to concern biological features. Her rationalisation here became quite complex. Race, ethnicity and gender fell into a flux. She would not assume that a 'brown girl' would not talk much because she does not know whether the girl is a 'Sikh, Hindu or Muslim girl, or perhaps Christian within the third or fourth generation.' She made an argument that suggested that she acknowledged ethnicity and not race. She seemed to think that to be racist was to respond to people's biological features, their skin colour and deny them what would not be denied a white person.

When she summed up she said: "In other words, I wouldn't judge somebody by their colour and think that all coloured people are this and all white people are that. I would take into account each person as an individual and all the influences that come to bear on them which are cultural. The way we treat women, the cultural expectations." Responding to their ethnicity is seen as good and unproblematic.

The statement: 'When I say I treat them equally what I mean is I would not discriminate on the grounds of race in any way' seemed to serve as a standing refutation of being suspected of being racist. But this is how that statement concluded: 'I would not say that is a brown person so they can't join in. That is a black person so they are going to behave like this. We all do it to a certain extent.' We see that, first of all, she countered her argument.
'wouldn't discriminate on the grounds of race in any way' we found that it was done 'to a certain extent'.

It is also important to note the different ways in which it would be done. She continued her argument of including Asians or not in activity because of religion, but for blacks it was a matter of how they would behave. She revealed that the concern for blacks was with their behaviour and for Asians their participation in class. She had different concepts guiding her thinking of the two groups. We see that she might or did 'to a certain extent' notice race and ethnicity in keeping with stereotypical views about blacks and Asians, although she was seen to be cautioning her response. Her point, nevertheless, seemed another way of saying: 'I am not racist. I try to do the right thing!' The issue is not so much about whether she treats all kids the same, or equally, as she claims. It seems more to establish that she treats them fairly, that, importantly, she is not racist. The statement serves as a defence.

Pam actually regarded treating all children the same as 'a load of rubbish'. She stated that she did not agree with what she sees as the pretence in suggesting that everyone was the same.

She stated: "People aren’t all the same; people are different." She continued: "People are equal in their expectations of how they should be treated, but you shouldn’t disrespect somebody because of differences." There are some interesting twists in this compound sentence joined by 'but'. First of all it brings into tension the simultaneous sub-text that she aimed to treat children the same. We know she reasoned that people cannot be treated the same because they are different. So, as with Alan earlier, (p. 178), we saw a movement to treating different people equally.

Her phrasing of the sentence however raises the question as to where equality of treatment is located. It seemed to be located with treating individuals as people. 'People' here seemed to operate in the place of 'human beings'. Each human being has a right to feel her/himself of
be obeyed.

‘You shouldn’t disrespect...’ suggests that the statement has an addressee, as it clearly has an addressee. We see that the teacher is the speaker; the addressee could be an indefinite plural group of people or a singular unnamed person. The addressee remains an anonymous audience. It could be singular or plural, Joe or Jane Bloggs, or both or neither. The anonymity, ambiguity and plurality of ‘you’ provide a place where the addressee might address her/himself as, or amongst the addressee(s), without fear of being seen to be doing this.

In the instance to hand, the teacher was ostensibly in conversation with me. However, I was not the addressee in ‘you’. If she was not addressing me, then she possibly could be addressing herself in my presence. This amounts to a soliloquy in which the teacher was talking to herself while informing the audience that I provide. She was not just speaking in the second person. She was the second person of this speech act. It is arguable that the addresser and the addressee are the same person assuming two positions. She was instructing herself.

This subtle movement between the addresser and the addressee was echoed in the movement from the general to the specific in the full sentence: ‘People are equal in their expectations of how they should be treated, but you shouldn’t disrespect somebody because of differences.’

The movement from the general to the specific is occasioned by ‘but’. The two are negatively connected. ‘But’ indicates an awareness that there is not a smooth transition from the grand narrative of human dignity to the private practice of respecting it. There is some acknowledgement that the latter does not always happen. She can also be seen as being reprimanding of those instances when someone is treated disrespectfully because of difference. In what seems this dialogue with herself, she extols, confirms and sanctions. We begin to see that coming to terms with difference, that is, in her language, ethnicity, is a
highly fraught thing.

We got a hint in the earlier extract that she thinks that political correctness was not at all helpful. Let us take a closer look at this.

Pam: I don't know. I think this idea of political correctness has been very muddied. I know it has been done for a good reason to try and change people's attitudes but it has almost made the debate not to be closed and not be so open because people are afraid of saying the wrong thing. Afraid of showing their prejudice or afraid of stereotyping. I think there is a lot of hypocrisy about it and through the goodness of people's heart trying to do the right thing. I think it is very difficult when you try and legislate their attitudes. That is what is happening. I agree with race discrimination, the Race Relations Act. I agree with the Sex Discrimination Act. You can't force people to change their attitudes. That is what the Government is trying to do. They had to do something and I know they did their best. The people in the media are trying to do their best the way that they convey it. I say to the children here what is the percentage of ethnic minorities in County, in this area. In this school it is 60%, in County as a whole I think it is 25%. In Luton it is 35-40%. Over the whole country I think it is 4%.

Because of where we live we have a different point of view of ethnic mixing. When you see the television you think it is racist, there are no black people. If you did it percentage wise it probably would be a true reflection of the whole society. You can't have a basically predominant white society showing all black people on the television. I understand the debate that by under representation you are excluding because you have got pockets like this county, like Manchester, like Leeds. That is where, of course, local radio, local television reflect the localities. It is such a good thing, such a good development. There is no point in pretending that we are a multicultural society. Where my mother lives you do not see an Afro Caribbean person, the only people you see is Chinese at the Chinese takeaways and Indians in the Indian takeaways. It is true because she lives in South England. She is not multicultural. I think being too simplistic about the whole debate has made it difficult and made people be very
careful about what they say, very anxious. I know those things seem contradictory but that is what I mean.

j: I think actually we will stop it there.  

Coming to terms with race not only seems a highly fraught thing; it also appeared to be a private thing for her. She seemed very cross with what she described as political correctness occasioned by the governmental intervention to change people’s attitude on race. She seemed to believe that political correctness has taken whites hostage and at the same time has ascribed them guilt. She seemed to think that the present climate made previously held beliefs, which have not gone away, illegitimate and bad. So ‘a lot of hypocrisy’ obtains now. She seemed to think political correctness made them hypocrites.

She suggested that individuals were finding ways to deal with, and needed to have the opportunity to find ways to deal with their prejudice and stereotyping individually, privately.

She regarded government intervention as having denied them these things. Whereas she agreed with intervention to prevent racial discrimination on what seemed an institutional level, she seemed to be against what she saw as an attempt to legislate people’s attitudes.

She castigated political correctness. It tried to force people to change their views. It has simplified, made difficult, and in some sense, closed the debate on race. Where there is some debate, there is hypocrisy; it is not open, and honest. People are very careful about what they say, very anxious. They fear saying something wrong. They fear showing their prejudice.

Notice that I end the conversation. The teacher had become upset. I thought that I should not pursue the issue anymore. Interestingly, at the beginning of the follow up interview we arranged, she asked that it not be recorded. She seemed somewhat unsettled with the occasion as well. I did not pursue these issues again and I have subsequently decided not use to the data collected in our second interview. She was wanting to be involved and be co-operative, but I thought that she had reached a threshold with which she was not comfortable.
They fear showing their stereotypes. Legislation is upsetting and frustrating as people were trying to do the right thing, out of the goodness of their hearts. And were still trying, and wanted to continue trying.

Whereas race relation acts were seen as correct, people should not be forced to change their attitude. The government is doing this. She understood that they had to do something, and that they did their best, but their best was far from good. It was a useless pretence to behave as if this is a multicultural society. It is not. It is a white society. And whites should be considered. Multiculturalism should be addressed locally, not nationally. Prejudice should be addressed, but privately as well as publicly.

Her displeasure at being denied a voice is almost palpable. What does she want to say? What would an open honest debate do, be like? What is at the root of her displeasure? Apart from revealing some displeasure with being forced into change, she reveals that being denied her own solution and participation in finding that solution upsetting. For her, the change in attitude was already happening through 'the goodness of people's heart, trying to do the right thing'. In this preferred way she had an active subject position. It was one that allowed her to position herself as good, as trying to do something about prejudice and stereotyping.

Here she had a subject position. It was as an active agent of change. It positioned her as good. Being positioned as good and being able to position herself as good seemed important to her. We know that she has a clear sense of what she should and should not do with regard to difference. The dialogue with herself suggests that if she got it wrong, she also wanted to get it right and seemed to want the space and the opportunity for this (and to be congratulated; her acts against racism acknowledged).

As long as doing the right thing remained private, the belief in her ability and desire to do it
was affirmed. It seems that she believes that with government intervention there is the belief that she has failed to and will not do the right thing. She must be forced. It is an indictment against her. Further, it is official, public indictment of a private difficulty. She shows some displeasure at being denied the opportunity to show that she wants to do the right thing on the premise that she is a decent human being. She indicates a sense of betrayal on the part of the government in this respect.

4.2.8 Is There White in the Union Jack?: whiteness in multicultural Britain

A sense of betrayal is sustained by Pam’s account. She believed that the present political climate failed to reflect the reality of life in Britain. She stated, after the statistical argument on the ethnic make up of the country that: ‘There is no point in pretending that we are a multicultural society.’ She claimed that in South England where her mother lives Afro Caribbeans are never seen, and Chinese and Asians are only seen in takeaways. She stated that her mother was not ‘multicultural’.

By stating that her mother was not multicultural this teacher perhaps was suggesting that it is a reasonable position to hold. There was evidence that suggests that she thought it was:

‘When you see the television, you think it is racist; there are no black people. If you did it percentage wise it probably would be a true reflection of the whole society. You can’t have a basically predominantly white society showing all black people on the television. I understand the debate that by under representation you are excluding because you’ve got pockets like here, like Manchester, like Leeds. That is where local radio, local television reflect the localities. It is such a good thing, such a good development’.

It was not quite clear what exactly was the good thing. She thought that having ‘no black people [on television] percentage wise probably would be a true reflection of society.’

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clashed with her figure of 4% which immediately preceded this statement. She had raised an argument based on statistics. It was to be seen as an argument going for reason and logic. But what had the making of a rational argument collapsed into a desire for the image of the nation to remain white. Was it good that local television and radio stations are reflecting local cultures, or was it good that local cultures can be localised and therefore removed from the national picture?

The statistical argument is a slippery one. On the one hand it is totally consistent with a popular notion of multiculturalism. There is so much of each group of this and that – we have a multicultural society. However, it seems to carry the logic that those with the majority should have the biggest, final say. Even though she would not accept that society is multicultural, this teacher seemed to think that the logic of multiculturalism privileged the dominance of the majority. Multiculturalism as a concept seemed not to be so much about sharing spaces and becoming a new whole. It is about accommodating what is within.

Although her argument collapsed, one might consider what it is that drives it. She acknowledges in a backhand way that having no blacks on television awakened suspicion of racism. She did not move to explore reasons why having no blacks on television awakened suspicions of racism. She discounted that it was racist, contradicting her own argument in the process, in saying that having no blacks would not be consistent with a true reflection of society.

Her argument is overtaken by what she conceives as the resolution of no blacks on television: no whites. The motivation for her argument seemed to be a fear of being overtaken. Why should, indeed if it could, a situation of no blacks change into all black? There is a thrust throughout her discussion that there is an imbalance in the multicultural approach that disadvantages whites. Immediately after stating 'you should acknowledge and celebrate
difference she refers to Christianity: ‘Christianity is not uppermost anymore in our society.’

It was not clear to what she attributed this, but she made the point that ‘you have to explain the bible to white kids as well as Muslims.’ As she did at other points, she seemed to make an argument that reinstated whiteness. She raised questions about white British culture being sidelined. She attempted to create a counter to the imbalance that exists for whites. In this she is saying white British culture should not be forgotten. It too should be celebrated.

In Pam’s narrative we had an exploration and crystallisation of what seemed the undercurrent of race at Em. She perhaps articulated issues about which the others no longer actively thought, or about which they would not think or talk. Pam’s discussion engaged and elaborated themes that the others raised but discounted. These themes had to do with individuals coming to terms with race as professionals and as professionals who were racially positioned within their context. They maintained a response as a school and as professionals, but their attempt in relation to themselves was less successful. And it was through this that they revealed how brave a front they maintained in sustaining their successful reputation.
4:3 MC Secondary

Teacher 1: I think the parents know that we are a Christian school, and we don’t see black or white, and we treat all the children as individuals. We don’t see colour. We are not supposed to see colour. We are meant to see the individual and we try our best to help them improve in their studies and bring them up in the Christian way of thinking even though they may have other religions and backgrounds.

J: Is it possible to have a school where you have got several races and not have an emphasis on race and [that] is satisfactory for all students?

Teacher 2: Maybe there is a wider issue. Primarily on the list of priorities, you said it was a Christian school. I think no one understands even the ethos of Christianity, even, if you don’t practice it. That [it] covers everything and is inclusive no matter of race or ethnicity.

Teacher 3: Maybe it is possible because of the faith that is here, that sees you’re different but also envelops that.

Teacher 4: I would say it is more than just a temporal [thing]. There is a spiritual thing at work here. If people from the outside can see that, and obviously, they can, it is possible on the strength of that and that is what holds the teachers together and the children.

Teacher 5: The values that we teach are cross-cultural and that is probably the main thing. I don’t know if it would work in a secular school, perhaps it might not. I think the faith and Christianity is stronger. It is not that we have that as a barrier but it is stronger than other dynamics that are operating such as race and class. Maybe that is why it works.

Teacher 6: I don’t know if there is any right or wrong answer but I would say that is a strong thing. Parents themselves can recognise that. I may be Muslim, Hindu or Christian of different denominations but still they are teaching something that I would like my family to be part of.

Teacher 1: Oh yes, especially as a Christian school and coming back to that again, in God’s eyes everybody is equal. So who are we to judge a person on how we feel their race acts or whatever. In this school we just don’t do that.

J: May I ask you, that in terms of this school then, is it because there is a level of trust amongst you that each person does this? Is there an overt practice to do something about it [race] to ensure that an anti-racist element is also prevalent in the school?

Teacher 6: I don’t know if it is a strategy because most of the staff here are practising Christians. It is an assumption that it would be the faith and the morals of the teachers themselves. It is not something that we set out to discuss. It is just part of the way we are and way we operate, and it is just an assumption. I don’t think it is a calculated thing.

(Staff Interview)

That the school was a Christian school was consistently repeated and endorsed by staff within individual interviews and the group discussion indicated above. Most of the teachers stated, others implied, that they chose to be at the school because it was Christian, and upheld particular values with which they identified. Teachers maintained that the school’s entire modus operandi was bounded by Christian values. Christianity, in general, and the doctrines of the denominational faith in particular, were openly acknowledged as forming the basis for
interaction between the teachers and students. And a perusal of the school's administrative
data established, for example, that the children were categorised as being affiliated or not
with the denomination. It did seem that there was an intricate binding of the school with the
church.

The teachers subsequently maintained that while they could accept that issues to do with race
could be an issue in a context such as theirs, that is a multicultural one, their individual
circumstance, a school committed to Christian values, prevented race from becoming an
issue. So unlike the teachers at Em, MC's teachers were prepared to admit race as a topic in
discussion. In fact, the reverse was true at MC. There they wanted to talk about race and not
pedagogy.

There was, however, an intransigent coupling of race and religion. Whenever and wherever
race was mentioned it was accompanied, and overtaken, by religion. Furthermore, the
teachers, in general, thought it was self-evident that religion accounted for the school's ethos
and that that could not, and did not, need further investigation. The simple answer was
religion made the school what it was.

Clearly, I was interested in understanding, if indeed religion was the reason for MC's
success, how and why it was. I wanted to know why things were just the way they are, to
what end. Their stance impeded my task. Further, their refusal to explore 'the way they are'
with me was compounded by the fact that their intransigent coupling of race with religion
was placed within their intricate binding of the school with the church. All four, the school,
the church, race and religion, were intricately, and seemingly, inextricably bound. When I
came to analysis I found their stance, not only unhelpful; I found it too insistent. I allowed
that it might have resulted from a genuine faith in the influence of their beliefs; however,
they also increasingly seemed determined not to talk about how religion operated to produce
the effects they claimed it did in the school. Their intransigence drew attention.

Nudist came into its own here in enabling me to ask questions of the data that investigated the complex flux within the school. One of the programme’s strengths is its assistance to the researcher in ‘teasing themes apart’. The index intersect operation allows one to ‘pull apart and rigorously establish patterns of coding [and] ways of finding only data whose coding exactly fitted your specifications. Intersect will [also] test a hypothesis that can be properly expressed in terms of coding at two or more nodes’ (QSR, 1997, p. 134). The coding of my detailed summaries9, allowed me to perform four index intersection searches that I hoped would prise open the race/religion/school/church matrix, and thereby allow investigations into the fundamental reason(s) and impact of religion within the school. I was also able to investigate my ‘hunch’ (what Nudist expresses as a hypothesis) that their stance and insistence was, at the least, not straightforward. The searches can be expressed by means of the following questions:

9 I retained the categories used in analysing Em (see Appendix 2, p. 306) in my analysis of MC while being open to the possibility of new ones being generated within the MC context. This approach maintained the possibility of identifying continuities between the two schools as well as what might be distinctive about each. In my coding of MC, I found it prudent to group classroom management, teaching and learning which were separate nodes in my analysis of Em as MC teachers spoke little about pedagogy, and when they did, did so in general terms. Therefore, ‘C, T & L’ (classroom management, teaching and learning) appears as one node beneath my parent node of ‘pedagogy’ for MC. In the parent node of race two further categories were generated at MC: conflated, and religion. Texts coded to ‘conflated’ concerned issues that ostensibly addressed one idea but which I thought implicated others. ‘Religion’ coded texts where participants resorted to religious ideas to explain, conclude or justify their response to issues presented by race. I had a parent node for ‘school’ at MC as I had at Em, retaining siblings of ‘history’ and ‘attitude’. I added ‘church’ to this node at MC as it featured as an important dimension within the teachers’ discussion of the school. Texts coded to ‘church’ were those the teachers spoke about the school by means of the church, that is, they used the dynamics within church as a parallel to discuss issues within the school. In the discussion that follows, I use the term ‘religion’ as an umbrella term to refer to their use of religious codes to explain/justify their position on race and their use of the church to discuss the school as resulting into one strategy, the use of religion to deal with issues of race. Texts coded to ‘attitude’ concerned attitudes to and within the school.
1. Why does MC couple issues of race within the school with issues of religion?
2. Why do they insist on their approach to race?
3. What is the actual attitude to race within the school?
4. How does their approach to race impact on practice within the school?

I will address each of these questions in turn as I develop my report on MC from the level of the school, through to the level of the classroom teacher. A further intersection like the one conducted at Em, of the self, difficulties and defensiveness, whiteness/blackness, will be explored at the end to report at the level of the personal.

**4.3.1 The Makings of MC: Struggle and Religion**

*Why does MC couple issues of race within the school with issues of religion?*

An intersection search of race/religion with school/attitude and school/church (RAC) would only retrieve data that was common to all three. The search result would therefore zero in on the salient issue(s) with which their approach is associated and suggest the purpose for the strategy. The result is presented below.\(^6^0\)

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\(^6^0\) This single search identified themes that had suggested themselves to me at the stage of my detailed summaries. (Compare the comments in the following paragraph with my initial analysis retrieved with the verbatim of Joseph’s document.) This result, therefore, bolstered my confidence in conducting the subsequent searches to interrogate the data in such a way that I could explore the themes that I highlight at this point. The retrievals from other searches also consistently included the results of the RAC search, suggesting that they hold what might be considered the heart of the matter at MC. I discuss them here, and as my argument progresses they are understood as forming the background or foundation in the development of my analysis of the school.
He thinks that the belief that things are racially rosy is rubbish (p. 29). There is no integration. On the one hand, the whites have been overtaken, and on the other they have simply fled: 'all the churches in the city suburbs were taken over and changed. That is not integration. There have been and there still are a lot of problems but they are submerged underneath this facade of brotherly acceptance and Christian love. It is not all bad. I think what is happening is that we are pretending it is all good.' He positioned himself as saying things as they are and considers himself as having paid the price: 'I call that saying it as it is.'

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**ON-LINE DOCUMENT: David**

TEACHER: I don't know whether it is the link with the church [that explains the school's success he was describing]. I am not quite clear. I think discrimination and racial awareness and these things, people can retreat, and it is something that can change. Maybe the closeness with the pupils had a positive effect on people's attitudes.

I am not sure for all, but generally. Ignorance breeds discrimination. The lack of communication, the lack of contact, and it is a small school and there is a lot of contact within the church. The church is a black church and there are a lot of black members in Britain with a

**Retrieval for this document: 43 units out of 1360, = 3.2%**

**Text units 745-756:**

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**Retrieval for this document: 10 units out of 205, = 4.9%**

**Text units 129-138:**

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which I will later return. It is retained. (see the footnote following) to address possible questions its absence might raise about the search result itself. The report is otherwise reproduced in its entirety (as a check of the statistics will confirm).
small white contingency. There is racial problems there and there is fears. You are probably better to look at it. (p11)

I think that the whole ethos of the school at the end of the day is that it is a Christian based school. In line with Christian teaching, there is a lot of universalism there and acceptance. I think that perhaps it is like that because the Christian ethos of inclusiveness, love, tolerance, acceptance and whatever probably has permeated in a real sense that I don’t feel I have to push a black agenda and make excuses of why I am here or make excuses for why we are studying this thing.

The retrieval from my detailed summary of Joseph reveals him raising some issues of controversy about life in the church. We see him identifying strains and tensions and making the claim that race causes many problems in the church but that they are ‘submerged underneath a facade of brotherly acceptance and Christian love’. A closer look (footnote 62, p. 207) reveals that he is simultaneously discussing issues in the school with which he is concerned. He seems in fact, to be discussing the school, and his opinions on the school and on race issues, by means of the church.

While Joseph takes a confident position in making his critique of the church, David is tentative. He seems unclear about the church’s own standing in its treatment of race and its subsequent influence on the school. He seems to fear that that influence is suspect, if there is in fact an influence. Nevertheless, he seems to want to retain the notion that the church does influence (good) practice in the school. David seems to want to suggest that the possible tensions that might arise within the school from race are possibly minimised by the influence of religion. His argument, however, is difficult to maintain and he slips in and out of a critique of the church as he thinks about the school. Notice too that he passes the task of
Finally, in Gloria we have what the teachers, including David and Joseph, at other points in their interviews maintained: the belief that religion made a non-issue of race in the school. It was a non-issue because the Christian principles of inclusiveness, tolerance, love and acceptance have influenced what happens in the school. Christianity safeguards the school against the perils of issues of race. Gloria presents this as fairly straightforward. The school is based on Christianity; the Christian ethos constitutes the ethos of the school.

Yet, one of the most obvious things about the RAC search result is that the three documents are in contradiction with each other regarding the interaction of race, religion and their attitudes within and to the school. We see a range of views moving from no critique, to tentative critique, to open critique of the influence of religion in addressing the demands with which race presents the school. Nevertheless, by the same token, all the documents retrieved engage with the role of religion and its influence within the school. There is disagreement on the extent to which religion creates a context that successfully addresses issues of race. However, they also simultaneously identify religion as the place where difficulties concerning race within the school are addressed.

It is significant that a rigorous investigation of their individual documents produced evidence of disagreement. In general, each teacher shared Gloria’s position. Also, there was no dissenting voice amongst them within the staff interview document as seen at the beginning of this chapter. So while individuals might have doubts, and do make some critique, they do so at the personal level, or privately. They do not engage critique publicly or at the level of the school. Joseph openly states this, and it is what Teacher 6 tells us at the beginning of the chapter (p. 203): ‘It is not something that we set out to discuss.’ Further, when they make even a private critique it does not directly assess the school. A critique of race in the school is
So we begin to understand something about the coupling of race with religion; we begin to see how, or why, issues are coupled. MC does have, perhaps existing as an undercurrent, issues to do with race. At the very least, it seems that they do recognise that race does present the school with issues. Problems to do with race are identified in and by means of the church. Difficulties to do with race are not acknowledged within the school – at the level of the school. They do not seem to receive public discussion and exploration. MC, as a school, responds as if they are no issues. They use an association with Christianity to cancel out the very question of race. They do not discuss race for there is nothing to discuss. Therefore, they both ignore and explore race issues by means of religion. We can begin to posit that their strategy of coupling race with religion works to contain, if not silence, tensions and demands with which race presents the school. They couple race with religion to remove issues of race from the school’s public discourse.

It becomes apparent that their position is inherently unstable. For though they use religion to legitimate their stance, that very act provides evidence where religion has not succeeded in cancelling out difficulties with race. While they use religion to set off the school as successful, the church itself is seen as being unsuccessful in its treatment of race. We have become aware, too, that they are not totally ignorant of this situation. There is some feeling within the school that it is not free from the difficulties that the church faces.

My categories of race/religion and school/church coded text where race and the school were spoken about by means of religion and the church respectively. So an intersection of these two nodes would indicate the issues that were common to both and suggest some answers for the following question that I consider important.
Why do they insist on their approach to race?

The religion/church search (RECH) retrieved all the documents of the RAC search (see pp. 206 - 208), in addition to the following.

Q.E.R. MUD.IST Power version, revision 4.0.
Licensed: Cambridge University.

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(12) //Index Searches/Religion/Church
** Definition: Search for (INTERSECT (1 11) (4 3)). No restriction
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*** ON-LINE DOCUMENT: Edith
*** Retrieval for this document: 42 units out of 698, = 6.0%
++ Text units 647-688:
She uses the church to conclude her discussion [on providing for difference in the school]. It [the church] was faced with a moral question when blacks came to worship, in what was before their arrival, all white churches, and the way she sees it: 'Say in the church, because this is what I was very familiar with, we weren't allowed to have a black church and a white church. We couldn't say the black people would go to that church and the white people would go to this church. If you did, you were accused of being racist even though your style of worship might have been totally different. You had to lump it together so that you weren't called racist. The white people had to worship the way the black people wanted to worship or the black people had to worship the way the white people wanted to worship or you had to find some kind of a compromise where nobody was really happy. The majority nearly always won. Suppose instead of being black you had been German speaking or black and German speaking or French speaking. Nobody would have said anything about it because it would have been a language difference. To me that is utterly illogical. I don't know how you would feel about it. Why can't you go where you understand what is being said and done? That is not race. It may not be totally culture, but whatever it is, you are comfortable with it and to me that is the way it ought to be, and that is the way the school ought to be. The kids ought to be in school because they are comfortable in school and they need to be comfortable with the teachers. They need to be comfortable with each other. Then it doesn't matter whether you are black or white or whatever you are.'
Notice the wish for a nice happy world. She does not have all the answers, and cannot quite raise the questions, doesn't have the words for some of her ideas. The past was easy, and it also resembles the utopia longed for. The final question here is, given the changed circumstance whether it will be possible to have a 'lifestyle' where blackness and whiteness are seen as equal. The multiculturalism that the church adapted was rejected by many. The doctrine and actual members clashed. Many walked away. Others resent putting up with it. It is not clear whether they resent not being tolerated themselves, or that they resent having to tolerate. Whiteness is no longer privileged. Does it come down to the style of worship? Don't know. However, it did pose the question of what happens when blackness
We have posited that religion works to contain or silence tensions around race within the school. We suspect that there is some awareness that race presents the school with issues. If we begin our discussion of the RECH results with John’s comments, we see that it is possible for there to be an acknowledgement of the tensions and difficulties inherent in their stance, alongside a refusal to explore those tensions and difficulties. We notice that it was only ‘when seemingly boxed in a corner,’ that he would acknowledge some difficulty, and that even so, he resolutely would not engage a discussion. Instead, religion was called upon at this particular instance of difficulty within the interview to restore the sense of harmony in keeping with the ethos of the school. The introduction of God and religion into the interview settled for John the difficulty. Religion was used to over-ride the difficulty that race introduced.
So we begin to gain more insight into the role of religion in the school; it does seem to set the ethos of the school as Gloria asserted. However, it is not just that ‘the Christian ethos of inclusiveness, love, tolerance, acceptance’ has ‘permeated in a real sense’ at MC, thereby making race a non-issue. Religion does not actually free them from the troubles of race.

Religion works to contain or silence issues of race in the school. This function is assisted by a further role that religion plays, and it is a crucial one. Religion also permits them to ignore the demands that race presents by setting up a syllogism. To articulate their implicit stance, MC holds that: Christianity is inclusive, loving, tolerant, accepting. MC is based on Christianity. Therefore, MC is inclusive, loving, tolerant, accepting.

This syllogism, one might say, is the thriving religion at MC if religion is that which maintains the ethos. They will not deconstruct the syllogism. We see this quite clearly in John’s comment for example: ‘many of the adults have come here with their own background and their own prejudices’ is not resolved with the ‘hope that... as we are a Christian school, [staff] would have that same Christian background. They would be as accepting as Christ was.’ The staff were in fact all Christians, ascribing to the same denominational doctrine; a crucial part of John’s wish is already realised. They do have the same Christian background. Yet they still, at the time of John’s speaking, were suspected of holding prejudices.

Christianity has not had the corrective influence on prejudiced attitudes as John implies it has the power to do. Notwithstanding, we notice that John would not break faith with his colleagues despite possible shortcomings. He removed the threat of discord that became apparent in his admission and restored a sense of harmony in keeping with what is owned as the school’s ethos. He did this by an appeal to religion, to a shared Christian background.

We begin to see that their ascription to a common set of codes, or values, is unifying. They insist on rehearsing that they are first and foremost, Christians, who are committed to maintaining Christian values within the school. They seem to do this not just in response to
the research exercise; they seem to rehearse their stance to establish a sense of trust and commitment amongst themselves. This establishes the feeling that each teacher operates by the same principles; that all know, share and are guided by those principles. Consequently, they create a sense of a common, shared identity within the school that supports the notion that they have a common way of being, a common purpose and a common response to race, that is, that race is not an issue. Let us recall Teacher 6’s comment: ‘most of the teachers here are practising Christians. It is an assumption that it would be the faith and the morals of the teachers themselves [that guides what they do]. It [race or the response to it] is not something we set out to discuss. It [the strategy] is just part of the way we are and the way we operate, and it is an assumption. I don’t think it is a calculated thing.’

It is not simply that MC is a Christian school, and thereby maintains the ethos of inclusiveness, tolerance, love and acceptance in response to race. They maintain that they do not respond to race; they would maintain that MC does not respond to the multicultural space as if it demanded a particular response. Their ascription to Christianity, therefore, has not led to them actively developing good practice, hence a good ethos, as they respond to issues of race with which they are confronted. Rather, it seems, it is their insistence in maintaining that the school is premised on Christianity that maintains the ethos in the school. Their insistence stubbornly sets up the act of syllogism. And it is their common insistent ascription to religion that sets up the syllogism.

The principles of Christianity that they claim to be in operation are in fact revealed as constituting the ideal endorsed by their religion. It is not that MC is a Christian school, and thereby operates by the Christian principles of inclusiveness, tolerance, love and acceptance.

What is in operation at MC seems to be precisely the endorsement of the ideal, and a confirmation amongst themselves that they endorse the ideal. They do not offer any arguments or evidence that they indeed practise those principles. They in fact offer only their
endorsement of the ideal in explaining their ethos. However, endorsement of the ideal does not confirm that its principles are in operation within the school.

Further, the ethos at MC seems to have more to do with the stance that they assume, their intransigent ascription to religion, than the actual religion. The presumed connection with religion within the school has actually been undermined; consequently, so too the presumed influence of religion within the school. There is not a direct transfer. The ideal does not, and is not, confirmed as practice. When they maintain that race is a non-issue, they can do this without an immediate sense of disruption because they have based their claim on the ideal than on the reality. Moreover, they have based the claim on a syllogism that obfuscates the entire process at work. Their use of religion allows them to believe in something that does not exist, that is a multicultural context that is free from issues to do with race. They are allowed to ignore race, without any sense of disruption, in the belief that religion has set them free from the evils of race. Religion provides them with the means by which they ignore the issues of race and not be perturbed by that fact.

So to answer the question of why they insist on their approach, one might posit that at one level they do because it confirms their stance. Their approach rehearses that which binds them and sets the ethos of the school. They insist on their approach because it rehearses what they believe and admit for public utterance only those things that they believe. Consequently, at another level, they do not speak about race because their stance inhibits an exploration of race. An ascription to religion sets up a syllogism that obfuscates what is actually happening in the school. Therefore, on yet another level, they choose to ignore the undercurrent of tensions because exploring them would undermine the link between their claim and actual practice. It could become apparent that the Christian ideals that they endorse are not necessarily operating within the school. At the least, an admission of tensions would challenge the position that race is a non-issue. To admit an exploration of the issues with
which race presents them would challenge what they claim to be, or confirm that that which they so strongly deny constitute their practice. Perhaps, they do not talk race because it threatens the existence they have constructed for themselves. As they have constructed their existence at MC, they simply cannot afford to talk race. They must insist on their approach.

Let us return to the syllogism and investigate it against what is claimed to have happened in the church, and subsequently the school. The first premise is that ‘Christianity is inclusive, loving, tolerant accepting.’ There are those who might argue that the history and tenets of Christianity reveal it to be divisive and intolerant. Questions are always raised against the notion of a loving Father who has his son crucified, then have others thrown into eternal damnation for not accepting his as a loving gesture for their redemption. But I do not intend to explore such arguments for MC provides sufficient material for exploration.

Edith and Joseph hold similar views regarding the interaction of race and religion within the church. They both suggest that there are tensions that are quite visible. The sense of displeasure is identified in whites leaving the church and in the whites remaining behind resenting what they see as an unpleasant, at least uncomfortable existence. Edith and Joseph therefore explicitly reveal that inclusiveness, love, tolerance and acceptance were sorely tried in the church. The other teachers did not in fact disagree with this; they declined to discuss it in as much depth as Joseph and Edith. Still, we notice that even a tentative critique maintains that ‘there is racial problems and there is fears’ in the church because of its composition.

The skeleton of the story, as Edith indicates, is that when the black Caribbeans arrived at white English churches to continue practising their faith, the church where both groups convened was faced with a dilemma. It found that despite claiming common denominational doctrines, the black and white members were regarded as having different styles of worship, sufficiently different to provoke thoughts of separate churches. However, separation was
considered and rejected because to create separate churches was seen as exposing white members to the accusation of being racist. As religious people, there was an imperative to be good, and to be seen as being good, according to the dictates of Christianity, hence being inclusive, tolerant, loving and accepting. They could not be seen to part with their fellow worshipers under the suspicion of racism. Separation was considered then rejected in order to prevent accusation of racism. The members found themselves held in a frustrating bind of race, religion and racism. Cultural and social subtexts posed these religious people with a moral dilemma.

The official decision was to attempt to coexist together, but the actual practice resulted in separation by default. The black and white members did not live together happily. On the one hand, it is thought that the blacks simply supplanted the whites, such that black preferences became dominant. From a position of being asked to be tolerant, the whites ended up seemingly feeling poorly tolerated, perhaps, even resenting the situation of having to be tolerated. On the other, whites left or resented staying. The multicultural project failed; it was rejected in spirit, and failed in practice. At the very least, it brought disruption to the normal order. ‘Race challenged religion and religion in the end could not rise to the challenge.’

The moral of the story is that race tested the very code by which their religion, Christianity, sets itself up: inclusiveness, love, tolerance and acceptance, and undermined the notion that religion is neutral. The scenario undermined the notion that unlike the wider society that might harbour racist prejudices and practices, religion and the church is inclusive, tolerant, loving and accepting. That as it was of God, religion was free from the prejudices and practices associated with the construction of race, and that it also sets its followers free of them.

On the contrary, however, the dilemma that the church faced served to expose the socially
constructed cultural base of its religion. Religion is seen to have responded to the cultural preferences of the people who ascribe to it. Religion maintained and rehearsed those things that suited cultural tastes; blacks and whites were seen to have preferred ways of worshipping. Religion also had an interface with sociological issues; that separation was considered, alongside the reason for its rejection, suggests that racist notions that operated in the wider society impacted on the church—even if the church resisted them. The members, nevertheless, still faced questions about the construction of difference and sameness, whiteness and blackness. How do people with difference live together? What do they do? What happens?

The student population at MC eventually came to mirror the composition of the church. A black majority came to replace a ‘predominantly white and middle class’ one. And it seems that MC looked to the church as the school came to face the issues that this changed circumstance raised for them. Edith’s comments reveal her explicitly using the example of the church to think through issues of race within the school. The church seems to serve as an example to guide practice in the school. We see that based on the example of the church Edith concludes that ‘people need to be comfortable with each other then it doesn’t matter whether you are black or white or whatever you are.’

This seems an easy enough thing to conclude— even without the example of the church. However, we know from the example of the church that being ‘comfortable with each other’ is not an easy thing to achieve and maintain. The example from the church affords several lessons to this end. We learn that an attempt to address the demands of race is demanding and does not necessarily result in something that is seen as successful for all. It might result in an unhappy compromise that is resented. For some whites it is seen in terms of a win/lose situation, where whites lose. The scenario of ‘a lot of black members...with a small white contingency’ has resulted in what is seen as a ‘black church’ because ‘the majority nearly
always won.' The attempt at inclusiveness, tolerance, love and acceptance, resulted in 'racial problems and...fears.' If Christianity teaches inclusiveness, tolerance, love and acceptance, the circumstances of the time meant that the grand ideal was not translated into literal practice within the church. So if MC looks to the church to guide its response to race within the school, we begin to understand why MC refuses even to attempt to address issues of race as issues of race, why they insist on their approach. The example of the church does not recommend it.

It is significant that Edith does not argue that people are comfortable if they have the same religious persuasions. Race would not matter as long as people were comfortable with each other. Edith suggests that in order for people with differences to live together comfortably, they need to have agreed ways of being together. Race would not matter then, for they would have constructed an existence of sameness despite their differences. Edith’s position is entirely consistent with my analysis so far. I will recapitulate and summarise it, attempting to lay out the highly complex activity at work in MC in creating the sense of harmony there.

I have argued that MC has succeeded in creating a sense of harmony because they created a sense of having a common identity within the school. I have argued that religion in and of itself did not achieve the sense of harmony. That is, the Christian principles of inclusiveness, tolerance, love and acceptance did not permeate the school in such a way as to influence its response to race. They in fact used religion to contain and silence issues of race in the school. Similarly, they used religion to establish and create the sense of a common identity and purpose. They used, that is, exploited, made the best use of, religion in creating and maintaining the ethos of the school.

MC achieved this by separate but connected manoeuvres. First, they removed the question of race within the school by identifying issues of race as issues of religion. In this way,
discussion of race was basically obliterated from public discourse. They did not need to
discuss race for there was nothing to discuss. The actual tensions that race nevertheless
generated, despite their stance, were displaced into the church. They explored their concerns
with race by means of the church in their insistence that race was not an issue for the school.
This meant that the church was depicted as being riddled with conflict and tensions, and this
reinforced their strategy of identifying and discussing tensions in the church and not in the
school. It established a sense of difference in the record on race between the two entities. The
school was successful although the church was not. So while MC associated itself with the
principles of Christianity and their particular denomination to cancel out the question of race,
they also distanced themselves from their actual church since it became the holding place for
the school’s difficulties with race.

I have interrogated the claims that MC makes about its treatment of race, that is, why it is that
race is a non-issue for them. I will now report on what their interviews revealed about their
response to race.

4:3.2 Race and Religion in Play: investigating what MC practices

I have argued that the church served as a holding ground for the difficulties with which race
presents the school. If true, an investigation using the node ‘church’, which coded instances
where they used the church to talk about the school, should indicate what the possible
difficulties were. I intersected ‘church’ with ‘attitude’ (CHATT)\(^6\) to identify attitudes in the
school which were associated with the issues that race presented them. I present the result of
that search in an attempt to answer the question below.

\(^6\) The church/attitude (CHATT) search retrieved texts from six documents. All the finds for the RAC
(p. 206 - 208) search were retrieved, along with text units for Edith (p. 211) from the RECH search.
Therefore, CHATT included texts for Joseph, David, Gloria and Edith that I have already presented. I
What is the actual attitude to race within the school?

Joseph saw that the change to multiculturalism is seen as defeat for the whites who think that their needs were not being met in the church. The school however was seen as 'the last outpost of white influence and or perhaps even domination.' Joseph said, 'If you were to look at the question of the racial politics of the church in this country as a whole, the school has, if you like, been one of the last outposts of white influence or perhaps even white domination within the structures of the church. To some extent my presence here has sort of contributed to that.'

So though the population was black, predominantly black, the power or the influence remained, was, white. The church itself is seen as fundamentally a white institution that has been overtaken by blacks, but though the practice of the present church may be seen as pandering to the black makeup of the church it seems to be seen as a 'conservative Christian type of faith. And the fact that there was still a school which was basically still pedalling along middle class white sort of values was a sense of comfort to those who felt overtaken.' When I call him on the link he is making between the church and the school he would maintain that none of the tensions he obtained in the school, 'None of that applies at all.' We see that the church provided the
distance to talk about race in the interview, about the school. "I think internally within the school none of that applies at all. What I was talking about there was the perception of the school by the constituency which owns it, once you come in the gates you find completely different dynamics." (p5)

** Text units 272-282:**

Still what we are looking at is the inside/outside dynamics of the school. for both schools, the public image was not seen as being upheld within the running of the school. 'Because the church is full of people who sit at home and have ideas. We're here. We are actually on the ground dealing with educating kids. We are not about bolstering up peoples' pet ideas or hopes or fantasies which they dream up in leisure at home; this is the real world.' (p6)

We see how the school disassociates with the church, or how Joseph creates the distinction. The school becomes a site for finding a way to deal with the children. And what they do is respond to the individual.

** Text units 297-312:**

We see that he redefines what he does in keeping with where he is at. One takes it that he ministers to the elderly white and teaches the black students, in each case providing what is required or expected. So the roles define his action. The basic questions remain unanswered. The basic questions are about the fights over domination as he sees it. 'there are many demanding expectations from the old church, the present church, the local suburban constituency, non-members, city members, parents from the city membership, members scattered throughout the land, the kids.' The tension between separating out [his] approach as minister falls into a flux. The minister deals with the whites bereaved by the loss of whiteness; the teacher deals in the real [world] after the loss. Nevertheless, when pressed, he speaks about 'partitions in [my] brain who sees my work in the school as a web of relationships.'

** Text units 340-377:**

From Joseph's account it seems that the difference between the church and the school is that the school managed to diffuse the sense of competition. Race is seen as a competition for supremacy. They encourage multiculturalism to 'side step the possibility of anything developing which would be seen as rivalry for supremacy in the school.' It was accidental discovery, but the presence of Orientals and Asians became the thing that saved the school from the fate of the church. Em more or less adapts monoculturalism while MC goes for multiculturalism. Em identifies with the identity of the bulk of its population; MC refuses to identify with the bulk of its population and goes for multiculturalism to be able to maintain their abstinence with multiculturalism it became less obvious that there was a battle for supremacy. 'The thing that some people got upset with was, there was a paragraph in there where I talked about the problems you encounter if you only have two cultures represented in an organisation. J: What was the problem because you have more cultures here?

TEACHER: The problem is if you only have two cultures they stand in
competition with each other for supremacy within the organization. If you have only got the two it is a head to head competition. If you have a multicultural make up it diffuses it and you don't get that same sense of competition and that is just a sociological sort of thing. That is something I picked up from church growth teaching where theorists have observed that anywhere in the world with any cultures if you find a church that has two cultures in it that church does not grow. If you find a church that is monocultural it grows and multicultural churches grow. You can't grow a bicultural church. It just doesn't work. I think that translates into the social dynamics of the school set up here.

J: You are only applying that theory to this context and that was rooted out basically?

TEACHER: Yes. That is why we have encouraged the Asians, Indians and the Orientals and people like that to be a significant part of our context here.

J: To stave off the conflict between the blacks and the whites?

TEACHER: To side step the possibility of anything developing which would be seen as rivalry for supremacy in the school.

** Text units 745-769:

He thinks that the belief that things are racially rosy... 'is rubbish' (p29)

[see p. 207 : text units 745-756 ]

We have seen him throughout using the church to talk about the school and afterwards suggesting that what he said about the church does not apply to the school even though there is the underlying suspicion that it does. Here we have a rather strong statement as he is defending his position. 'When you have just those two cultures there is an inevitable kind of rivalry for pre-eminence between the two. If you can't have a monocultural church then the thing to do is to make it multicultural and diffuse the differences. If there are more than two contestants in the ring, in terms of cultures, then it is not going to be a straight nose to nose fight and everyone will just get on with each other. What I did was I simply transferred and applied that sociology to the school and I think it fits.'

** Text units 815-845

we see that the gates of the school serve as some kind of boundary [see p. 207 , footnote 62]
Except for Gloria’s, all the documents in the CHATT search speak to race presenting MC with difficult issues, and each, including Gloria’s, engages with the school’s response to those issues. We already have said that Gloria’s comments speak more to the syllogism in place at MC; its retrieval here reminds us that this position is present whenever there is an attempt to explore a response to issues of race within the school. But the search has also generated finds that do not maintain the status quo. ‘We see colour because it is there.’ There is an admission here that is usually otherwise denied. And if race does not matter and people at MC live comfortably together having constructed an existence of sameness despite their racial differences, we see how fraught a site ‘sameness’ is. They are all seen to be wrestling with coming to terms with the difficulties with which they are presented.

The results of this search speak strongly to the theme of battle; the ‘two cultures they stand in competition with each other for supremacy within the organisation’. The school as a multicultural space was seen as a site for battle. Multiculturalism was encouraged, it was claimed, but not necessarily because of the Christian principles of inclusiveness, tolerance, love and acceptance. Multiculturalism was championed to protect the whites from another defeat in what was considered ‘the last outpost of whiteness’. At the least, the notion of

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64 It is important to make the point that I cannot claim that the analysis here reflects the widespread view within the school. Two (black) teachers explicitly disassociated themselves from the views Joseph expressed. They did not offer an alternative; they simply refused to be drawn into the discussion. Nevertheless, some of the other (white) teachers simply did not discuss the issue, as opposed to expressly setting themselves apart from it. Some others, again white, stated that they supported Joseph’s view and that his views were factual if difficult things to admit about the school.
multiculturalism diluted the dominance of the black presence at the same time as it diffused the sense of competition.

Further, there is a sense that what happens in the school, their actual attitudes, are influenced by what happened in the church. We are reminded of the problems that have resulted from an attempt at multiculturalism in the church. Things are not ‘racially rosy’: ‘there is problems and there is fears.’ Multiculturalism has not been successful in the church, or it is not seen as having been successful. In particular, it is thought that whites or whiteness was defeated in the church. Consequently, a white backlash seems to be in place. MC as ‘the last outpost of whiteness’ resists blackness – and seems to manage to curtail expressions of what is seen as blackness within the school. Within the school whiteness seems to win if there is a battle for supremacy.

However, this victory is not straightforward. There is a sense of it being a quiet victory. While there is some awareness of a battle for supremacy and safeguarding against blackness taking over, there is also a sense of trying to find a proper solution for the school, one with which they are comfortable. There is some suggestion that there is a search to identify and build interactions on similarities between blacks and whites despite the differences race presents. We see that the fact of their Britishness is identified as a ‘common ground’.

However, their strategy dilutes the British presence in the school. Rather than building on notions of Britishness, multiculturalism is used not to create similarity, but plurality. Where ‘whiteness is no longer privileged’, and its ‘normalcy is questioned’ multiculturalism seems to be used as that which safeguards whiteness. Further, multiculturalism holds or covers over the battle for supremacy that is still nevertheless being fought – even if diffused. The turn to multiculturalism is revealed as not being neutral or good.
We notice that the theme of distancing continues with this search result. ‘We see that the gates of the school serve as some kind of boundary.’ There are many demands on the staff arising from the international nature of the school, the issues peculiar to race within the society, and religion. The response seems to be an attempt to separate out the different demands, and it is the institution of the school itself that becomes an important thing in guiding response. The school is seen to dictate particular kinds of interaction. We are asked to believe that the ‘real world’ of the school overrides some demands that are not prescribed by it.

Nevertheless, we also see quite clearly that separating out the roles is not a wholly successful or easy thing to maintain. To begin, we see, for example, that Joseph likes to think that there are ‘partitions in [his] brain’ that responds to the different demands that are presented. ‘He redefines his role in keeping with where he is at.’ However, his work is also seen as a ‘web of relationships’. There are not really separate, or as separate as he wants to maintain. This makes his position quite a difficult one in fact. For we see that as ‘the last of the Mohicans’ he identifies with the school being ‘the last outpost of white influenced and domination’. He identifies with those who ‘own the school’ and see it as ‘pedalling along middle class white sort of values.’ Yet he makes a harsh response to those very people when he is called to account. He distances himself from them, and denounces them. By shifting his position to that of teacher within the real world, thereby identifying with the school against those he critiqued, he ostensibly protected him from the harsh critique he made.65

65 We get some appreciation of the difficulties in Joseph’s lengthy retrieval; also note the incremental development of his argument. Notice that we are moving through his document from text units 224 to 769. We see that he believes himself to have many expectations from different groups to meet (297-306), and he appears to contradict himself as he decides on his response. He identifies with the school as ‘the last outpost of white influenced or perhaps even white domination’ (224-32), seeing himself as the last of the Mohicans (841), (an interesting metaphor I discuss on pp. 271 - 5), contributing to the white influence. Yet he would also staunchly distance himself from the whites ‘who sit at home and have ideas’ (275); he defensively identifies with the ‘real world’ of the school. He clearly contradicted himself on his use of the church in his discussion of his ideas (compare 247-250 with 757-769). This extract therefore serves as a point of reference for the methodology I have used. Notice that ‘it is at the end of three interviews that we have this declaration’ that was crucial to understanding Joseph (845). It is only with the full document of all his interviews over time, with my own reaction to them that we
Furthermore, as we have said, the teachers at MC used the church to provide them with the distance to talk about the school’s issues with race. Here we see that they also used the school to give them the distance to critique the church’s response to the ‘real world’. It seems as if the context of the research, in particular, gave those who took it, the opportunity to talk about the ‘problems and fears’ within the church. This provides an explanation as to why they implicated the church in failure as they discussed the school. It does not seem that they wanted to implicate the church. They raised the tensions in the church in a bid to talk about the issues of race, and to talk about the unresolved issues in the church ‘that are submerged underneath this façade of brotherly acceptance and Christian love.’ Since this was not being done in the church itself, and to me in particular, there may have been a feeling of distance and protection.

The theme of creating distance to talk certainly repeats itself throughout the documents. They seem to allow themselves to talk about issues of race from a distance only. By doing so, they seem to remove themselves from the suspect situations that they describe, even when that was a difficult thing to execute as we see clearly with Joseph. So as members of the school they identify tension and conflict in the church. When we see them identifying issues in the school, they position themselves with the church. Their strategy therefore seems to be a way for them to talk safely about the issues of race without they themselves being implicated in the suspect things they describe or things about which they are uncertain. Subsequently, their strategy serves two purposes. It protects them from being implicated in the things they discuss while it facilitates their discussion of the issues they have. They gain a way to talk about the issues, as they discount them as part of their reality in the school.

Let us look at how this plays itself out in the school. Text coded to ‘religion’ were instances where they used religion to explain, conclude or justify their position on something to do have arrived at an understanding of his explanation, his narrative and truth.
with race. Therefore, ‘religion’ was where the very real issues of race were submerged. An
intersection with ‘attitudes’ subsequently, would reveal or suggest something of how their
approach to race impacted on the daily running of the school, and help in answering the
following question.

How does their approach to race impact on practice within the school?

Daniel is loosely attached to the school.
we see that the children are regarded as being constrained
in the expression which is rooted in their home backgrounds.
We [see] the tension between religion and race. It is the religion
that is blamed for prohibiting dancing; it is evil. It is
the kids who must reconcile the conservative traditional
faith they have been brought up with, therefore part of
their culture, and their desire for some freedom of
expression. I experienced this close too. The international
evening for children with Caribbean heritage was a little
bit of a trial. The girls wanted to dance for example and
they would not and were not allowed. Instead they presented
a script about the Caribbean (which I helped to create)
against the background of nostalgic folk songs and an
impressive power point presentation by one student. The
image was of the erudite, conservative. The Caribbean stalls
were covered with posters from the Tourist Board promotions, some
of which, ageing, toothless smiling female fruit vendors
the boys in particular, strongly objected to. But
there was still huge goodwill amongst the students and their
parents. They contributed large amounts of food to be sold at
the stall. There was a huge tension over preparing a popular dish
The school banned it on religious grounds. However, some parents
and students, though members of the same church as teachers, expressed
a sense of ridicule at the banning of something which was regularly eaten
in their homes. This occasioned some discussion but the school
would not allow the food on its premises, they maintained, for religious
reasons. But it is interesting how it came at a cost for
the black students. It seemed in essence, that even at
this (one) international evening aimed at celebrating the
diversity of cultures present, the children's Caribbean
culture was kept under control. I do not pretend that it was
easy. It did cause some consternation and thought was given
by at least one teacher as to how they might get around the
issue. Nevertheless, in the end the children with Caribbean
heritage had to do as told not as they wanted with food and dance. I
gathered that the previous year they were allowed to dance and their
performance was thought to have been unacceptable so the
school simply was not taking any chances. It is also
interesting that Joseph who thought that the blacks had
overtaken the whites in the church and in number and
presence had overtaken the school were repressed, and that
it is a bad thing. The religion repressed what he sees as
black cultural expression; where the blacks might be
changing the style of worship in the church, at school they
were repressed. We have a very complex nexus of
religion/culture/race. It also raises the question
nevertheless of the 'rigid, stiff limbed black people' whom
'black people tend to be physical, fluid and mobile and
athletic'. If the kids are brought up with the dictates of
the conservative faith they might not be fluid and mobile
and athletic at worship. However, we know that in the
churches where most attend they are seen to have taken over
that is their style of worship is the norm, the school's
practice therefore stands in tension with the church. It
seems that it maintains the sense that MC is the last
outpost of white influence and domination.
He thinks that the belief that things are racially rosy... is rubbish
[see RAC search, p. 207: Text units 746-756].
** Text units 787-845:
He claims that the black kids at MC are happy and
comfortable there because they are the majority and it is a
non-judgmental Christian caring environment. All the
baggage they might have outside of school about being black
can be left outside the school. And if a child comes here
with a lot of 'black racism' those attitudes are not accepted
by the other kids and they will reject those attitudes and
influence that child not to bring those attitudes into this
school because the ethos here is positive. 'MC does not
allow talk of racism and assume that black kids might have
baggage. It is interesting that he claims that it is other [black]
children who rid fellow blacks students of it. (p32)
So I ask the all important question and the answer shows
that they have the same approach as Em. [That is] it is the school
that sets up the relations and addresses the tensions. They
teach they leave the baggage behind to some extent.
Given that there is so many peripherals, tensions, around, how is it that
this school maintains an atmosphere where children feel safe and
comfortable?
TEACHER: I think it is because of the size of the school and the
intimate relations that we have and the Christian commitment of the
teachers. They treat every child as an individual and give every
individual a fair go. It is a school. It is here for a purpose. We have
a business to do when we are here and to some extent we can leave the
other baggage behind when we come in through the gates. The kids know
that some of the other baggage that they have to carry in their home
environment they don't have to carry here. This is school. It is a
different world. And it is a different social set.
We see that the gates of the school serves as some kind of boundary
[Text units 816-845; RAC search footnotes, p. 207]
**********************************************************************************
*** ON-LINE DOCUMENT: Adam
*** Retrieval for this document: 25 units out of 212, = 12%
** Text units 131-132:
Treat them all the same is about the official system being equally or
consistently applied to all. That is seen as objective, end of story.
** Text units 185-207:
If: You said, and it seems quite obvious as well, that the school seems
do a good job with the sort of relations that you have around here.
How do you think that happens? What makes a school successful at the
sort of relations that you have here?
TEACHER: Again we are a Christian school and we have a basic philosophy
that man is created and therefore all men are created equal; God had
made all men out of one blood. We come from a basic philosophy which is
grounding: each man is morally accountable; there is a God looking down
182
and seeing injustice in the world. We are not simply the result of... 191
random chaotic factors, so that basically, if we were then, this life is... 194
all that you have and if you take that view then of course the injustice... 195
might seem all the greater because this is the only life you have. Of... 196
course the New Testament teaching, the Apostle Paul teaching, regarding... 197
for example, slavery in the ancient world...[words become indiscernible]... 198
We were talking about the... 198
ancient world. Paul is writing to Christians who were converted and who... 199
were in the position of slavery. Paul is able to write, 'serve your... 200
masters, not only the good and gentle but also the, the, as though as though... 201
you were serving Christ. The Christian perspective, this is not all... 202
reality. There will be a day of account and that God does see... 203
injustices. That gives the person a sense of power if you like, a... 204
personal power. It may not be able to influence events directly but he... 205
has a personal power because he looks at things with that view that all... 206
he has done will be accounted for by God. 207

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*** ON-LINE DOCUMENT: David
*** Retrieval for this document: 21 units out of 205, = 10%
** Text units 117-127:
J: At what level if at all do you think race operates? Do you... 117
think race never operates in this context, in this very multiracial... 118
context? 119
TEACHER: I know it operates a lot. It is not difficult if you are not... 120
in contact with a group of people. It is not difficult to start, whatever... 121
the group of people is doing, picking up negatives or if there some [sort... 122
of rivalry or insecurity, to feels signs of defeat and threatened and that... 123
is very common in Ireland. To counteract that by some sort of job... 124
discrimination, school bullying, school teaching, look after your own... 125
sort of feeling. I think there is a lot of that in society; it is very... 126
prevalent in newspapers. 127
J: Why is it not prevalent here do you think? 128
TEACHER: I don't know whether it is the link with the church. I am not... 129
[Text units 129-130, p. 207, RAC search]
******************************************************
*** ON-LINE DOCUMENT: Staff
*** Retrieval for this document: 7 units out of 73, = 9.6%
** Text units 23-24; page 201:
J: Thank you very much for that. 61
I very much feel that they simple have... 61
not thought about the issue, and the religion thing is an easy fall back... 61
position. It holds all sorts of issues for them, and they dont seem to... 61
talk about them. There is no official policy in place. The only public... 61
bond is the ascription to a christian ethos and the subsequent notion... 61
that this makes all things well. There is interesting talk about positive... 61
racism. They believe that they are in sync with parent's wish and they... 61
rejected the notion of seeing blackness, they insisted on seeing the... 61
individual. But it is my belief that is just a fall back position. It was... 61
also interesting that I could not discern which teacher was black or white... 61
from what they said. They responded as the school, and the school is... 61
Christian.
There was definite critique of the mixing of education and religion on them as students. One child found the rules as 'harassing children'. The teacher described as evil; last assessment came for a teacher who suggested that God disapproves of girls who wear their hair in plaits. "He said to him what if God came down from heaven and he saw a girl with plaits in her hair would she be safe? ... He said basically God wouldn't like you but he has not right to judge people and their Christian beliefs." This girl was upset and explained this 'evil' by means of denominational doctrines. However, the plaits that she was referring to was the common way to groom black girls' hair. God basically would not like black girls who groomed their hair in a typically black way of dressing hair that has existed for centuries. This is the way in which race becomes part of a complicated flux. I also got drawn into this without my knowing at first until it was brought to my attention directly.

We notice that all the finds for the RAC search have been retrieved in this RELATT search.

So, one can maintain that the themes discussed earlier, continue. Let us recapitulate. We argued that religion set up a model, a generalised ideal with which the school identifies and claims as its own. They take on to themselves the ideal notions of Christianity in a direct application. Hence, Christianity is inclusive, tolerant, loving and accepting. MC is a based on Christianity. Therefore, MC is inclusive, tolerant, loving and accepting. The ideal is claimed as the lived experience, and through this manoeuvre they release themselves from approaching race as an issue for themselves. Issues to do with race are silenced.

In the CHATT find, we noticed that the gates of the school serve as a kind of boundary between the school and church despite the teachers’ linking of the church with Christianity.
There is in fact, an attempt to establish that the practices of the church differ from those of the school, although the latter is based on the former. Precisely because of the link they establish, the church has been depicted as having been unsuccessful in its handling of the issues of race. Their strategy dumps the school’s tensions onto the church’s site. In doing this, there is consistent assertion that the school is more successful than the church in its dealing with race. They align themselves with the ideals of Christianity to silence questions of race; they distance themselves from the church to displace the actual tensions in the school into the church. The school thereby becomes a race-free zone, or so the teachers would like to maintain.

In the RELATT search we saw the development of the idea of the school’s difference from the church. The school is identified as a place with professional responsibilities that the teachers are required to meet. ‘It is a school. It is here for a purpose. We have a business to do when we are here and to some extent we can leave the other baggage behind when we come through the gates.’ The institution of the school is called upon to seal their position. MC is a school. Its business is to teach. They can legitimately appeal to the institution of the school to leave the baggage of race outside the gates of the school – with the church – and move to complement their religious discourse with a pedagogic one with respect to their practice in the school.

‘The official [school] system being equally or consistently applied to all...is seen as objective, end of story’. The ‘treat them all the same’ policy is claimed. But the RELATT search also indicates that the claim that is maintained is not the end of the story by any means. It is seen that MC’s approach complicates the notion of treating students all the same. We will examine some of these consequences for students, and take a closer look at what was revealed in the teachers’ interviews as opposed to what they wished to maintain about ‘treating them the same’.
4:3.3 'Treating Them All the Same': impact on students

With the help of the RELATT search we see that the religious code of the church/school operated to curtail and control the behavioural and cultural practices of three categories of students: the Cantonese, blacks with Caribbean lineage in general and the girls of this group, in particular. Daniel provides the argument that the Cantonese are forced to attend church and are denied the food they like to eat. Food and religious worship, along with deportment, are also issues for the children with Caribbean lineage. These things were placed under tight control within the school resulting, as we have seen, in feelings of harassment amongst, at least some, children. If the students are treated all the same, the RELATT search forces the question: the same as what, whom?

The teachers who spoke about the overseas presence within MC maintained that the wish of Cantonese and other overseas parents to provide an English education for their children was targeted to bring such students into the school. They were targeted for financial reasons when the school's decrease in enrollment threatened financial crisis. With time, as Joseph indicated, overseas students brought the added benefit of transforming the school into a multicultural context. We recall that this transformation was not strictly benign; multiculturalism was also actively encouraged as it was seen as diffusing the sense of competition between blacks and whites for cultural supremacy within the school. Further, multiculturalism was seen as a safeguarding against the loss of what was considered white cultural values.

The fact that parents were seen as purchasing an English education for their children, was seen as their endorsing the need to promote and maintain white English cultural values in the school. The questions that a black presence may have introduced into this position were answered by the claim that black parents also sent their children to MC to appropriate white cultural attitudes. It is maintained that the parents wish, therefore, coincides with and reinforces the promotion of white English cultural values. Whiteness is privileged and
endorsed as such. Should there be questions, the answer to them is that MC but serves its population well in making white cultural values readily available. This is not seen as an act against the students with non-white, or non-English backgrounds, but as a service to them.

However, again, on the ground in the school, the ideal and the lived experience come into conflict. The service to students is brought under duress. Equally, the students bring the privileged status of whiteness, or notions of Englishness at MC, under duress. The argument for responding to the parents’ wish is challenged by the children’s practice. Let us look at one teacher’s expression of this.

TEACHER: Parents send their children here from abroad because they want them in an English school. I am not sure that too many of them send them because they want them to be in a different culture school. They send them to England because they want them to be in an English school for an English education. I think it [MC or possibly multiculturalism] is working against itself, the proportions. Because now you could basically say we are not an English school. We are in England but the culture of the school, the ethos of the school now, is not English. Is that actually doing what the parents wanted for their children in the first place? I don’t know.

J: What is the culture, do you think?

TEACHER: I think the culture of the school is West Indian [p3]… and it even concerns me that the ones coming from other countries tend to pick up that West Indian culture rather than English. I am not saying that West Indian culture is bad or anything else but I am just saying, is that actually what their parents are sending them here for [p3]… They [black families] chose to live in sort of whiter areas so that their children would get the benefit of the whiter education. They felt that they were in England and they wanted them to grow up with it. I think that is why a lot of them started to send their children through to here [p3]… By too many doing that they have actually lost what they set out to do. That is what started me
thinking about that when I saw it happen. I certainly think it is a good idea for them all to mix
together but I think you have got to have somewhere, a central core, where it all relates. I
don’t think we have got that, and I may be out on a limb and different from everybody else
here but that is what I think\[p3]\... The actual experience if you like of the children
involved, it has become much narrower than it would be had it even had a better balance of
multiculture. It is good for them to learn off each other but it seems as though the West
Indian culture has taken over from the others. Even when it wasn’t quite so numerically on
top they [students] still seemed to gravitate towards it. It was possibly the overall majority,
but there was an equal number of other mixes, English, Chinese, Indian, American. It seemed
a better balance. It is difficult because things change anyway, and I think we are partly
responsible because we didn’t actually make that stand and we let it happen. The boarding
school has a fair number of Chinese in it, but even the Chinese become West Indian. No other
group seems to exert the same influence on the others [p4]... I have stuck to the idea that these
kids are now living in England although they have all come from different cultural
backgrounds and the ones that have been sent from abroad to the boarding school for an
education have been sent to England for assumably an English education. My teaching has
centred around living in England. If they are going to live in England they might as well
know how it works [p7]...

It seems fair to say that while MC encouraged multiculturalism, the multicultural project did
not in itself produce the effect of privileging notions of Englishness or whiteness as it was
hoped. It did not produce the ‘better balance of multiculture’ hoped for. The ‘central core’
was not whiteness. ‘No other group seems to exert the same influence on the others’ as the
black students. Unwittingly, the multicultural project seemed to backfire. The conflict is

\[p3\] While this teacher speculates that she might be alone in her position, individual interviews with other
teachers proved that she was not. We have already seen Joseph expressing a similar logic and we will
come to yet another example when we examine another teacher’s practice shortly. This serves as an
example of the teacher’s having private thoughts about race that are not voiced at the public level.
resolved by MC taking a hard line on what will be maintained. Chinese are forced to go to church. Their gravitation to black culture meets disapproval. Black culture in turn is subjected to noticeable control. The standards of behaviour might be considered ‘white, middle class sort of values’. However, as the result of the RELATT search reveals, a religious code, as opposed to the strict white/English code, is used to enforce standards of behaviour within the school.

The retrieval from the Student document (p. 232) finishes on the note that I was drawn into one of the school’s sensitive issues. Towards the end of my stay at the school, I realised that my wearing of trousers during term time was frowned upon. It was not seen as proper attire for school. Women on the staff did wear trousers; the idea is that it was frowned upon by at least some others within the school. It was not regarded as the proper attire for a professional woman at work. My own knowledge of religion and denominational doctrines inform my view that this is rooted in Old Testament belief that women should not wear men’s clothing—and trousers were such.

Notwithstanding the religious sanction, that this was active at some level in the school and found expression in terms of considerations for female decorum, appeals to constructs of ‘lady-like’ attire, even Victorian codes of propriety. Girls in general seemed to receive a high level of surveillance at MC, but black girls seemed to receive the highest levels of control within the school. As the Student retrieval shows, the Bible was expressly used to suggest appropriate hairstyles for black girls. We see how upset it made one girl that (black) girls who wore their hair in plaits were seen to be in danger of being rejected by God and in danger of hell fire itself. And again, I was caught in this situation. I was explicitly told that my hairstyle identified me as a member of the ‘uneducated’ rather than a respectable professional. 68

68 A black man, middle class and practising Christian told me this. I had engaged the particular
All the black women at the school wore extensions, the addition of Caucasian-like hair that supplants their own, or had had their hair chemically altered resulting in their own hair looking Caucasian. Additionally, the women who wore extensions had those extensions styled into plaits, the very style that is banned. Plaits as extensions were not censored; natural black hair in plaits was. And the censor was maintained by reference to the Bible. Therefore, it seemed to be some evidence that natural black hair was under censor.

Certainly, some girls approached me, questioning my wearing of the hairstyle I did. They wanted to know whether I had been told that it was wrong and/or to inform me that it was not allowed within the school, that they were not allowed to wear it. I believe they were interested in knowing whether I was openly defying the rule on hair, as well as attempting an investigation into the sanction. Therefore, despite themselves, in exploring this space that I had opened up within the school, it was the girls who actually articulated to me that my hairstyle was not allowed in the school. They were not necessarily attempting to bring me into conformity; I believe they were attempting a critique as well as trying to find a way to break the code and get away with it. One girl chose the International Night (of culture) to try out a version of my hairstyle – which she asked me to do. She also subsequently wore this hairstyle afterwards to classes. Our interaction over hair interestingly became an example of the social conditioning that perhaps takes place within the school. The black girls who were themselves subjected to this control, ironically became the agents who would spread its doctrine. Joseph did assert that the black children participated in the maintenance of the school code on behaviour where race is concerned.

While the girls were concerned with issues of censorship, the boys seemed concerned with

conversation merely as an interesting discussion when we had it because we were talking informally over lunch. However, when the issue was raised formally in four interviews afterwards, and raised by interviewees, including the speaker being discussed here without my prompting, black hair became an
celebration. They were openly supportive, at least, endorsed what it appeared that I was
doing. They hailed me in the corridors as 'Lauryn Hill'. She is an acclaimed figure of black
female beauty, who wears her hair in dreadlocks, and expressly aligns herself with
celebrating notions of black beauty. (I think the latter, her politics, was perhaps, the
association that the boys were making.) Characteristically affected shouts of 'Jah-Jah', (also
a play on my name) 'Rastafari' and 'Jah Rastafari' also often trailed behind me. Rastafari,
arising out of an alternative, black, religious background, was an important signifier of mass
black political identity in the 1970s and the 1980s in Britain. It is perhaps less militant today,
but it nevertheless survives and with the basic undercurrent of resistance.

It seems I became a means by which the boys could utter particular statements and sentiments
that succinctly and at once clashed with the religious code, the white code, the middle class
code, and the authority code in the school. It appeared that I was probably seen to be
participating in black culture of the variety celebrated by the young black boys in particular. I
think that I was seen as part of the adult world but nevertheless as an anti-establishment
figure within the school – who was seen to be getting away with being anti-establishment.\footnote{For my own part I did not set out to be an anti-establishment figure within the school. Neither was I
expressly seeking to lay a challenge to any of its various codes. It would be correct to say, however, that
I ultimately acted in concert with notions of resistance. For, though late in the study, when I discovered
the tensions that surrounded my hair in particular, and my attire in general, I was not at all prepared to
alter them. I maintained my position as being outside the school’s codes on these issues. I maintained
what is an implicit rejection of their values. I had these before I entered the school. Having said that, my
hair, and certainly my style of dressing comes down to personal taste. I love the feel and look of my
natural hair. I am not at all unhappy that it is seen as political, but I present myself the way I do, first
and foremost, because it is the way I like to see myself and experience my reality. I might add that my
hair is not worn in either plaits or dreadlocks. Strangely enough, I suppose, it could be seen as a
combination of both. It is what is referred to amongst blacks as 'natural', meaning unchanged by
chemicals. It is natural black hair worn in kinky corkscrews that kick out in every direction around my
face. The style alludes to dreadlocks and plaits but is neither. Finally, I do not, and did not, proselytise
on black hair, that is, that it should remain natural. To the contrary, I am involved in political activism.}

The boys occasioned the school much dissatisfaction, and in quite a complex way. For the
culture that the black boys were thought to exhibit is regarded as black American. It therefore

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seemed an affront to English sensitivities, hitting upon another political struggle over identity. Their identity is seen as an affront not just because it is black, but also because it is American, and ultimately because it is black American. Further, while the black American practices were seen to be originating with black boys, white, Indian and Chinese boys were seen to be actively assuming the same cultural stance. What we also seem to have is youth culture, along with a resistance to it from the adult, white and black teachers.

TEACHER: ... Some of the kids in the boarding school the way they dress is like black Americans. They are Albanian kids and you say to them is that your culture, is that the way you have been brought up. You say to them why are you dressing like a black man as it were. I don't shy away from the issue. I am not going to shy away and say why are you dressing like an Afro-Caribbean... [p8] the Indian kids dressing like the Americans with trousers down to their ankles and all this kind of stuff... [p13] a lot of your black kids are dressing like that in the school. These [other] kids are basically going along with this... [p13] You just say to them, “Do you dress like this back home?”

The girls appeared less problematic for the school. There seemed to be successful control over their expressions of identity extending to their hair and their recreational activities. Religious codes seemed to have a better ability to control female behaviour than male behaviour in regulating dress in particular within the school. Girls spoke about the school harassing children, explaining this by way of the restrictions on their dress and interaction with boys. Black boys found ways to establish and publicly celebrate an identity that was at once outside the strict control of religion and outside teachers’ notions of acceptability and respectability.

...to ensure that all black hairstyles are readily accessible to black women (Stanford, 1999).
Treating Them all the Same: impact on classroom practice

With the question of race silenced the teachers maintained a strict pedagogic discourse regarding practice in their classrooms. There was no case to answer on the question of race. They had a job to do and got on with it. They resolutely maintained that they did not adjust their practice in light of race. This included teachers whom the children and parents identified as good teachers, and black and white teachers. The CTL/REL search above speaks to this. Adam is white and John is black.

Nevertheless, although both black and white teachers maintained that they treated all students the same, scrutiny of their interviews revealed interesting tensions that were also different between the black and white teachers. Of note, (despite their claims) white teachers seemed concerned with finding a way to own being white and having their white values present in the classroom while black teachers seemed concerned with resisting being seen as black and having their black values present in the classroom. Let us see why.
White Teachers

One teacher allowed that the composition of his class demanded that some attention be paid to race. However, his response was that he ensured that he delivered clear and consistent standards of discipline for all children. One other successful teacher, popular with students and parents and new to the profession, like Pam at Em, provided the only account that suggested how he responded to race within his classroom. Further, he used a similar strategy to Pam, including using ideas of gender to guide his thinking about race (pp. 188 - 192). 30

Below is an example.

j: What do you do?

TEACHER: They are all sitting there and what I do is I give them a number. They have got wise to it now and all try and position themselves. It is a minor thing, but it means that no one is last. It means that you split up randomly. You are not discriminating between age, sex, weight, height or whatever. Everyone just gets to work [p3]...

j: [p7]...In the whole conversation there has been no overt allusion to race at all. Why is that?

TEACHER: It is not an issue.

J: Why is it not an issue?

TEACHER: I think people make it an issue.

J: Can you tell me about your position here as a white teacher teaching at MC which is a multiracial school?

TEACHER: I am not racist as long as England gets beat. I have never seen it as a problem. Again it probably comes back to when we talked about the girls. When they come with their problems you address it. You don't shy away. If they have got a period you say fair enough I

30 Interestingly, he was also seen to use Ann's strategy (p. 163) of transforming his actual presence into a symbolic one, and for same basic reason, that is, to receive respect, especially where they felt insecure about their physical presence. He highlighted that he was very close in age to many of his students, that some were as large or larger than he was, that some might think themselves superior in knowledge and
understand. They realise that OK he is human and he understands. It [is] the same sort of 
thing with the black and white situation [p7]... [p8] It is all about knowing the kids. It is all 
about knowing each student individually as a person, not as an Afro-Caribbean or white. It is 
being the person they are. You have got to understand their background and where they are 
coming from which helps you to understand why they are behaving that way, why they are 
good at this or that. Some people are going to be genetically good at some things and not so 
good at other things. It is more meeting each individual where they are at. I would never say 
you are a black kid so you have got to be a good sprinter. You are Asian so you have got to 
be good with computers. I never think about it [p8].

We return to this excerpt in a later discussion (p. 259 - 260). Here let us note that the teacher 
owns adjusting his practice for 'age, sex, weight, height'. As at Em, a socio-academic 
discourse displaced race when acknowledging children's background. Although it seems that 
in this particular exchange 'whatever' may have operated for race; it often did, at MC as well 
as Em. We also see that the things he never thinks about constitute popular notions to do with 
race. He perhaps means to say he resists the things he mentioned. They nevertheless inform 
his thinking. We saw virtually the same thing with Pam (p. 192).

Below I present an abstract from, Jonah, another white teacher.

J: The final question as my ten minutes has run out is how do you feel yourself as a white 
teacher in a mixed school?

TEACHER: I don't. I think it is people of your colour that make more of this. I hardly ever 
consider it. I am a teacher and they are kids. I look at it this way: the only time I know that I 
am not the same colour is if I look at my hands and I don't keep looking at my hands, and I 
would imagine they are the same. They are kids to me. I teach as I have always taught and 
because when I first came here there was one black girl to teach in the entire school and 

practice of the subject, and that he had to work in a context that undermined his physical presence.
gradually the colour has changed until it is now seventy or eighty percent black, coloured.

As I said they are all kids to me, and I don’t think deep down they are any different in their behaviour. I am not really aware of their culture, but then I am not aware of teenage culture whether it is white or black. I am not really aware of it. The songs that they listen to or the music I am not aware of it. Maybe that is all very wrong, and I am supposed to get into what teenage culture is, in black and white teenage culture. I don’t, and I am concerned very narrowly with my subject and trying to get that over to them. I don’t, as it was once suggested, that you must remember this civilisation in Zimbabwe that did this that and the other. I just teach it as I have always sort of taught it, and I have made no accommodation or change. I suppose people say I should do something but again I find there isn’t the time. I don’t know. They are kids to me and that is it. I don’t see them really as any different.

J: Fine.

TEACHER: I don’t know whether they feel that I am biased towards one type of culture or not. I don’t know. I shall bring in the names, in Biology a lot of the names are British names, there is the odd Frenchman and German come in. With the modern stuff there is a few Americans. I suppose the way I teach is very British orientated I would think.

J: What do you mean British orientated?

TEACHER: I have been to Europe and I have been to New Zealand and things of this subject nature. It is quite amazing at how they all look at it from a different angle. For instance, I went to the States and I went through the Smithsonian and there was all about the history of television. There wasn’t a mention of Logie Baird at all there, the man who invented television. Those American kids were growing up and they would never know it was a British invention. They were teaching it from an American slant. I dare say you go to Germany and you will hear all about the famous German Biologists and you go to France and likewise.

Whereas, here I am British, and it is in our books of course and it is the way I have been taught and so you mention this law, and he was a German, but then you go into all the discoveries that Faraday made; he is an Englishman. I teach it from that point of view but that
is the way I have been taught and that is the way I think it still is in the Biology textbooks in this country; it has a British slant. You go to other countries and they plug their national heroes. I think a black child looks upon themselves as British. I was talking to some kids and they were saying I am English and I am this and that. This girl whose roots were obviously in Pakistan, but she said very proudly, much more proudly than the others, I am British. How the Afro-Caribbeans, as they are labelled, how they regard themselves, I am not really sure. I get the impression they regard themselves as English. To hear a black man talk with a brummy accent or a Liverpool accent it is...[indiscernible speech]. If they have been brought up in this country they think of themselves as British, I assume, so they accept the culture. Maybe the people who are very keen on making sure they don’t lose their roots would be horrified. It is all a great big mixture now, with all the travel and the migration it is one great big melting pot now. I am going off in a tangent now. I always think it is a shame when people get too nationalistic or too racialistic. I think it is a shame. We all should be able to move around this world and be treated as human beings and equals and all the rest of it. I wouldn’t want to do away with diversity though. That would be a shame if all the different cultures all merged into one big global village and we were all the same. I don’t know how you mix the two together and keep them separate but I am digressing.

J: Are you stopping?

TEACHER: Yes I have got a class now.71

71 And the teacher would not pick up the topic after that. He declined further interviews on the grounds that he said all that he wanted to say. Here we get the sense that he thought he had said too much or had arrived, by the end of the interview at a point beyond which he might not truly have ventured. In my reaction to his interview I wrote that the teacher had seemed somewhat bemused by the whole thing. He also used humour so as not to answer questions initially. He seemed committed to making me work for answers saying things like ‘you are the one who is thinking up the questions. You are supposed to be stimulating me to give you some answers.’ Therefore, the interview was slow initially, and circumspect. This passage that I have presented here was a marked contrast to the rest of the interview. Notice that he seems to be exploring the issues for himself, as much, if at all, as he is responding to the question. At the point where I gave him an exit with ‘Fine’, he refuses it and carries on his exploration. We see him saying he had digressed, and seemingly when he became aware of the digression closed down. I look caught out, and he resumes his position of distance. He was not pulled on the subject after that. This therefore serves as an example that justifies my methodological approach in as far as I have argued for taking account of the full narrative of the participants. This digression was, for the study, most revealing. One needed also the whole passage here for an appreciation of this ‘digression’. The whole
We see that Jonah explicitly owns that he makes no accommodation or change in his practice in light of the multicultural composition of his classroom. He identifies the syllabus content and unnamed outsiders, as the sources of multicultural demands on the teacher. He is a subject teacher trying to pass on the content of his subject. 'I teach as I have always taught... They are kids to me and that is it. I don't see them as really any different.'

He owns maintaining a British stance, rationalising that with being 'brought up in this country, they think of themselves of British'. The British emphasis he maintains therefore should be appropriate. We notice, however, that Jonah actually highlights their difference; they are 'kids' with 'obvious Pakistani roots' and 'Afro-Caribbeans' who claim British identity. Also, it is the children who might think of themselves as British. Further, Jonah does not seem convinced of blacks' place within a British slant. If black national heroes exist, they are not plugged in the British story. They are, possibly, in Zimbabwe. Jonah thereby shifts or confuses categories of identity, from 'British' to 'blacks'.

Such instances indicate some of the tensions in the position that Jonah takes to his practice, tensions of which he is not totally unaware. Notice that he wonders whether the students find what he does possibly 'biased', and whether others would be 'horrified' by it. Notice too that he sought to critique it – by means of what happens in others' practice. Notice then that his approach to critique also simultaneously distanced and protected him from the critique he applied. He attempted to explain as well as protect himself and his practice.

Note, in particular, that it is his practice to which a critique was ostensibly applied. He passage suggests his response to race, as it helped to modify the rest of his interview, that is, it suggests why he might have been elusive and playful.

2 It should also be highlighted that Jonah also felt overwhelmed by what he saw as the excessive changes teachers have had to accommodate over the past two decades. He highlighted, in particular, demands imposed by accommodating gender differences, and stated that he made those changes against
actively seemed to avoid a critique of himself. Hence we see him identifying the textbooks as having a slant; he was merely following them. Does that make him biased? Is he doing something horrific? If the answer is yes, then, he is simply doing his job. He personally ought not to be implicated. He is not biased.

And should his practice be seen as biased, his is not the only one. If his position harbours 'nationalistic or racist' tones, his position is explicable. Further, if he knows nothing about black culture, he also knows nothing about youth culture, or white youth. He also believes that people should be 'treated as human beings and equals and the rest of it'. If he promotes a British slant, he also would defend diversity, in principle. The only trouble is, he does not 'know how to mix the two together and keep them separate'.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the multicultural space actually presents Jonah with demands, and that they cause him some consternation. He really does not seem to know how to respond to those demands as multicultural demands. When he says 'I suppose people say I should do something, but again...I don't know. They are kids to me and that is it. I don't see them really as any different', we suspect he might mean, 'I don't know what else to do, so I respond to them as kids who I teach a subject. As students I don't see them really as any different.'

We have met this strategy before. He simplifies the issue, and does this by means of what he does know, leaving uncertainty behind. He defines, or redefines it, in a way that makes it solvable, manageable. 'Maybe that is all very wrong, and I am supposed to get into what teenage culture is, in black and white teenage culture. I don't, and I am concerned narrowly with my subject and trying to get that over to them.'

his judgement, because they were legally binding.
Black Teachers

All the black teachers also resolutely maintained that they treated all students in the same manner, and did not make concessions for race in their classrooms. Their reasoning and concerns were different but equally unstable.

J: The last question, and this is not meant to be evaluative or anything at all. I am just going to ask you a question to see your response, whether you see your role as a black teacher impacts on, any way, at all, on your work?

TEACHER: I don't stand in front of the classroom thinking to myself I am a black teacher. I am Hannah Abrahams. And what I portray is what I portray as my character. My blackness is part of me and I can't separate myself from that. As a black teacher I have concerns for all the students, but there are moments, when if amongst the black community of children, I see things going a little awry, in perhaps a situation where I have had to speak to them about behaviour, I may take the opportunity to say, "This is not good enough. You need to put your best in whatever you are doing." You know what the situation can be for some black children when they leave school and you want to try and direct the children. You know why their parents have sent them here, and from my own point of view, I know what my parents expected from me. From that point of view I can see them, trying to empathise a bit with how their parents feel, and what they expect of them and try and portray that to the children.

Because I am black it doesn't mean that I am going to expect any less from you. I expect just as much, and more, as much as you are able to achieve. Hopefully they can look on for themselves, and see that as a black teacher, it is possible to have black teachers and for themselves to think, "Maybe one day I would like to do that, and it is not the realm of one...

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79 Compare the phrasings of the question asked of Hannah and Jonah (p. 243). You will notice that I seem to work harder at posing it with Hannah. This illustrates the argument made in my methodology chapter, (p. 133) and in this chapter, that the black teachers were reluctant to discuss issues of race with me and I consequently had to work harder at getting them to speak. It can be seen that they would share their thoughts, but I felt that I had to buffer questions. From what is said here, it is not absolutely clear that they were reluctant to talk (only) as a consequence of the research process. What is revealed is also quite defensive. We come to a fuller discussion of this defensiveness shortly.
particular race, but anybody, if they put their mind to whatever they want to do, can achieve, whatever their background."

J: What about the interaction with the other students and the way they see you, do you think there is any dynamics going on there when they interact with you?

TEACHER: I don't sense anything, for some students who are not obviously used to having a black teacher for them it might be a cultural shock. In my early days here I wondered if there were some form of tension even from black children who were not used to having a black teacher. I think now that I have been here longer they know you. I think perhaps sometimes the feeling is because you are black you are going to make things easier for me, you are not going to be so hard on me as far as what is expected, so I hope I have managed to make that clear that no I expect just as much and more. As far as other children are concerned, there may be that, but I don't sense that. I cannot think of any individual situation where I have sensed that. If it is there I hope that from what I do they can realise that is nothing to do necessarily with what my colour is. It is what I am able to do for them basically and how to work with them. The colour should not be an issue although you cannot get rid of people's preconceived ideas...[

TEACHER: I don't have a distinct black agenda. I don't think that would be fair to the other students who I teach. I teach Biology and that is not all that I do. I encourage learning of whatever kind, not just here to teach Biology and nothing else. I hope that I instil certain values about behaviour and what is acceptable and what isn't acceptable. There is all that apart from just teaching Biology; that is not all that I am here to do. I am not here with a black agenda and I don't think that would be fair to the mixed variety of students who I teach... I think it would be unfair if I stood here and said I am just here to make the black children succeed. What about the rest of the children in the class?

Hannah

This extract serves an example of the way in which black teachers took a political stance, or
perhaps more precisely, engaged what could be considered political activity. They did things, but also actively seemed to resist an imperative that they should or do have a political agenda. They also saw the things they did as asides that happened outside the classroom. Some owned that they might have a quiet word with a black child if routine intervention failed to achieve a desired outcome. The black teachers, including those who were regarded as very successful, hoped that they inspired the young blacks they taught. Believing they understood the depth of the decision parents made in sending their children to the school, and that they knew what the parents expected because ‘I know what my parents expected from me’ they were seen to be actively maintaining faith with black parents. Black children will not be allowed to under-perform in their classes. They remind black children of the importance to succeed in light of possible discrimination they might face in the society.

Black teachers also guarded against black students ‘feeling that “because you are black you are going to make things easier for me. You are not going to be so hard on me.”’ The response was to make ‘it clear that “no, I expect as much, and more.”’ It is not clear whether for example, the students and Hannah were referring to the same ‘things’. It is equally uncertain whether she was unaware that they may have been speaking about different ‘things’.

Here she defined the ‘things’ as that of the students anticipating easier academic challenges, but it is not clear that this is that which was (only) in motion. It is also unclear how the teacher’s expectation of ‘more’ from black children impacts on her practice. There is a suggestion of making life harder for black students, as there is the suggestion that black children might gain some advantage over other students. It is uncertain which students might benefit. Whichever group benefits or is disadvantaged, the effect is ironic because the teacher assumes her position in order to maintain a ‘neutral’ commitment to all. Still, it seems fair to say that Hannah’s strategy is premised on driving home her position as having distanced
herself from blackness in the politics of her classroom.

4:3.5 Self, Difficulties, Defensiveness and Blackness

There was some acknowledgement that blackness introduced a subtext for the black teacher as a professional. It seemed incumbent on them to decide on their circumstance as the professional who happens to be black. As we have seen throughout with Gloria, she believes that MC is such a context that she does not need to promote a black agenda (see p. 208). Her particular discourse, interestingly, focussed on herself within the space as opposed to the school creating a space for the different children. She compared her childhood experience at school with her present experience as teacher. And for her, MC was a haven. It was a haven because of the influence of Christianity within the school. She could get on with being a teacher. She did not have to have a black agenda. Race did not matter; she was no longer an ‘oddity’, and she would not broach any discussion to the contrary.

In the last respect, she made an excellent example of the position that all the black teachers took. None would make a critical assessment of the school. They, like the white teachers as we have said, declined talk of race in general. However, more than the white teachers, the black teachers purged their talk of anything that might be considered negative about the school on the topic of race. All the analysis that has been developed so far, where I have explored the tensions that exist within the school, develop out of interviews with white teachers.

The intersection of ‘self’, ‘difficulties’, ‘defensiveness’ and ‘blackness’ (SDDB) actually

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74 I conducted an intersection search of self, defensiveness, difficulties and whiteness (SDDW) on the MC data because I had found the result of the search at Eim stunning in encapsulating and pinpointing the important issues to do with race there. There were black teachers at MC, and because I recognised a difference between them and whites, with respect to tensions around the issue of race I decided to conduct a search on ‘blackness’ (SDDB) in addition to ‘whiteness’ to investigate those differences.

75 See also footnotes 35 (p. 126); 39 (p. 133); 73 (p. 248) and pp. 296 - 301.
captured the essence of the stance held amongst black teachers. We have come across the text
unit before, but I will reproduce it here nonetheless. Then I will return to the body of the text
from which it was retrieved and engage further discussion.

The opening claim 'I don’t stand in front of the classroom thinking to myself that I am a
black teacher' seems to be subsequently, almost immediately contradicted with, ‘As a black
teacher I have concerns for all students but...’ This apparent contradiction is quite
informative. For through it we realise that when she speaks of the ‘black teacher’ she seems
to be indicating different meanings or emphases. In the first instance there is a feeling of
defiance, resistance or insistence as she replaces both the descriptive categories of ‘black’
and ‘teacher’ and inscribes her personhood: ‘I am Hannah Abrahams.’ This seems a
resistance to a feeling of being made reduced to a category. She indicates her sense of herself
being more than those identities. The fullness of herself is held within the person known as
Hannah Abrahams. She is more than the disparate identities, and she would not be reduced to
any one.

She recognises blackness as constituting her, but also does not see it as the sum total of all
with which she identifies. She seems to be addressing the notion that she should be a black teacher. If we recall the extract on pages 248-9, we see that Hannah acknowledges some consequences of the subtext of blackness that accompanies her professional role. We posited that she could be seen as undertaking political activity around blackness even if she seeks to establish quite clearly her rejection of having a ‘black agenda’. We began to see that while there is evidence of her identifying with the values and codes of the black community, she insists on separating out what she regards as her professional performances.

We will now see that she extends this act of separating out performances beyond the professional. There is a private and public divide, as well as a professional one, all regulated by what she thinks is expected of her.

J: So, yourself as a black woman, you are Hannah Abrahams first as you said. Tell me about your affiliation to black values, black identity, black whatever? Again it is not evaluative. I am not saying this is good or bad. I just want to know what exactly you think as relevant, even of black identity?

TEACHER: Of course I think that everybody needs to have their identity and I do have my black identity. I come from a West Indian family. I go home. We eat West Indian food. We speak freely and I feel that is important for everybody. Yes that is part of me, and that is not something to be separated. People looking at me, just to see an exterior. I feel that you cannot be relaxed and be what you are at home with everybody within your job. You have to maintain a certain, I don’t know what you would call it, not necessarily professionalism, but you have to maintain what is required. Of course, I believe that is important and I feel that children should be made to feel proud of whom they are. I don’t feel that they should be made to knock people over the head with the fact that I am black and this is part of me. To say because I am black I am going to be superior to you and put you down. I wouldn’t view things from that point of view.
At home she indulges her black identity but feels ‘you cannot be relaxed and be what you are home with everybody within your job. You have to maintain a certain, I don’t know what you would call it, not necessarily professionalism, but you have to maintain what is required.’

The word she might be searching for could be ‘distance’ or ‘neutrality’. Notice that she explicitly indicates that this is not necessarily about ‘professionalism’. It is not just to meet professional standards that she assumes her position. She is actually quite confident in her professionalism.

Her inability to articulate what it is that she strives for, if for instance it is ‘distance’ or ‘neutrality’, is significant. It might be seen to openly contradict the very argument she was making, if ‘everybody needs to have their identity... and feel proud of whom they are.’ It could also be that she cannot bring herself to utter the thought, to say that in her job.

blackness is ‘something to be separated’ out. ‘Maintaining what is required’ clearly holds some tensions for her whether acknowledged or expressed or not.

Discipline was one of the most repeated topics of interviews with white teachers. One teacher stated that having black teachers to intervene in disciplinary issues was an important feature of the school’s success. We saw earlier that Hannah owned her role of maintaining discipline; however, this is one source of her tensions. In response to being told that the students unanimously agreed that she is a good teacher she said:

It is nice to hear that. I felt that sometimes in my role, when I came, there are certain things

76 The students find Hannah ‘perfect’. This was a comment intended to acknowledge, in addition to her impeccable accomplishment, the degree of perfection: ‘she’s so strict she makes me laugh at times’. She is thought to ‘have eyes all over the place’, and the wherewithal to correct every misdemeanour. They recognised her as the one who maintained discipline within MC rather than the school in general. The children spoke of her actions as evidence of her caring for them, but they also felt that there was a distance they would not broach.
you have to look out for. My duty is to look at uniform and you know and sometimes you feel you are just saying don’t and you wish you need some opportunity to be positive with these students as well. I hope they realise when I say to them, “What are you doing wearing that here today?” that I care as well. Sometimes you wonder if the message is getting over but I am pleased that at least they perceive that I am just trying to do my job here and trying to do what I feel is best.

She sees what she does as her job and it is the requirements of the job that she always sees herself as fulfilling. Despite the tensions she feels, or in response to them, she upholds what is required of her as a teacher: ‘I teach Biology’; ‘I encourage learning.’ She undercuts her identity as a black teacher and privileges her identity as a Biology teacher and disciplinarian. It would seem that creating this framework is helpful in deciding on what she considers appropriate behaviour and also, importantly, resolving tensions that the subtext of blackness occasions for her.

4.3.6 Blackness, Success and the Acquisition of Whiteness

J: I have come to the end of my time, can I ask you one more question? In the literature now, you see a lot of tension between the idea of being black and successful. How would you respond to that? Something that I was reading about suggests that you cannot be both. Somehow if you are successful you have sold out of the black identity. How do you respond to that?

TEACHER: I think it is wrong for anybody to say that. We are getting a lot of second and third generation blacks now who have never even visited the country which they come from and all they know is what their parents and family teaches them about their culture. Of course they are going to adopt some of the culture around them. I don’t feel it is a matter of selling out. You are here to succeed in whatever way you can and because you succeed it
doesn’t mean you are not truly black. I think being black and successful go hand in hand and can go together. You don’t have to become white or to change your values to white accepted values in order to succeed. You can achieve.

J: How do you think we do that?

TEACHER: That is the ideal. I know it is difficult.

J: Oh yes, how do you think it is a possibility in your case. You are a successful professional black woman and you also still identify with the black identity. Do you think that there is tension and if not why not? Help me to understand how it is that you are comfortable being a highly successful professional woman and a black woman?

TEACHER: I don’t see any division between the two. Why can’t I be a black woman who is successful? Why would I have to be another colour to be successful. I have worked hard. I have studied hard, just as any other person in my group did to achieve whatever I have achieved. Whatever they were capable of having the intelligence I have. I should be capable of achieving what I can. I don’t feel that the two cannot work together at all. It is something that has happened over time. It is not something that I set out necessarily to say well because I am black I am going to do this. At the same time because I am black I feel that I am able to achieve whatever and I don’t feel that my colour should stop me achieving what I want to achieve.

In speaking about the successful black, Hannah attempted to separate the persona from his/her success. She highlights first that the black persona is no longer the ‘Caribbean’ his/her parents were. In speaking to ‘success’, she challenged the notion that one has to ‘become white’ in order to succeed. She argued that blacks could achieve and be black. So there was a huge tension in her argument. She both wanted to suggest that it was not inconsistent that successful blacks were black and white; they were that anyway by virtue of their circumstance. However, she seemed unwilling to let go of what she sees as the ideal: that blacks can succeed as blacks.
From opening remarks that suggested that she was defending the status of contemporary identities amongst blacks, she concluded with a statement that suggested that the acquisition of whiteness was something to be resisted. She then seemed to critique success if that entailed the acquisition of whiteness, though one is not sure what exactly it is that she resists, or resists the most: success if it is achieved by acquiring whiteness, or just the acquisition of whiteness. One can be successful and ‘truly black’ – she seemed to want to maintain.

In trying to understand this difficulty, let us recall from her own example that she privileged her professional identity as a Biology teacher, and actively negated her blackness in the school and classroom – beyond notions of ‘professionalism’. Her activity seemed to do with first, establishing her sense of herself against ideas that would position her as first, foremost only and necessarily always, black, and second resisting subsequent expectations of her because of her black skin. It appeared that she felt that her blackness placed her personhood under threat.

She claimed wider influences in the fashioning of her ‘character’, but still maintained that ‘my blackness is part of me, and I can’t separate myself from that.’ So, that which threatens her personhood or character, constitutes it. It seems that since she accepts that she is part black, blackness must survive or part of her will not. Still, she herself wants to survive, transcend blackness. She is black but more. She wants to own the other part(s) of herself.

However, while she implies that it does, she never actually says that ‘my whiteness is part of me’. That she resists rather than confidently owns. Even though together blackness and whiteness, constitute ‘what she portrays of her character’, she both claims and resists both blackness and whiteness. It is a wonder she could even ask, ‘Why can’t I be a black woman who is successful?’ In resisting the identities she applies to herself, she virtually cancels out
her own symbolic existence. 77

4:3.7 Self, Difficulties, Defensiveness and Whiteness

*** Definition: ***
Search for (INTERSECT (1 2) (1 4) (1 5) (1 6)). No restriction
Margin coding keys for selected nodes:
(1 2) /race/self; (1 4) /race/defensiveness
(1 5) /race/difficulties; (1 6) /race/whiteness

[Text continues...]

77 And here Hannah becomes aligned with the boys discussed earlier in Pt 2 (pp. 80 - 85). Both Hannah's and the boys' attempt to come to terms with blackness are similar despite the differences in their circumstance. The boys' wrestling with the concept of blackness is intimately connected with the facts of their biology, that is, being mixed-race. Hannah's is more explicitly a sociological, or philosophical, concern. The concept of blackness, particularly as an essentialist notion, cannot withstand the challenges being made on it in contemporary society. At the least, an essentialist concept of blackness creates an unstable identity which people who may be considered black cannot easily inhabit.
This search result proved impressive in highlighting the two themes that ran through the interviews with white teachers: the fear of being called racist and concerns with the loss of whiteness. We will look at each in turn beginning with the fear of being called racist.

The Racist Accusation

We recall Daniel saying ‘I am not racist as long as England gets beat’ (see p. 242). When he said this, it was delivered as a joke, but in a follow-up interview I invited him to elaborate.

J: [reviewing the transcript of the previous interview, each with a copy] [I ask] ‘Can you tell me about being a white teacher? You start off by saying I am not racist. Why did you think you needed to start by saying I am not racist?’

TEACHER: As we went on to say, it is a case of you making light of a situation. I can see where you were going with it like, the question. It is a fair question, but as we said, it has never been a problem to me.

J: What I am asking, is why you thought you had to state that you are not a racist? What was the impetus?

TEACHER: I don’t know. As the sentence said I am not racist as long as England get beat; it is just a tongue and cheek humour. In my view, the Welsh thing, we say that it doesn’t matter

Note this example of a subtext beneath the surface of the interview. He is appraising and second-guessing my questions. While he was one of the teachers who spoke at length and with apparent ease during our interview sessions, and who thought that my transcripts of his lessons reflected well on him, he was wary of the question of race. The question of race appears to always have been present in his mind. He was also responding to the subtext.
who gets beat as long as England get beat. Again, that is in good humour as well.

J: Do you think the term being racist has an impact? Do you think it is fair being called racist?

TEACHER: Not for me, it probably ties into the fact that people make things an issue. I know people have been pulled up before for saying a simple thing and the wrong person hears it and they think, ‘Oh, well, this person is a racist.’ There is no way that person is racist. I think it is a fairly strong term. For me there is no fear because there is nothing to fear.

J: So why state it?

TEACHER: Honestly, I don’t know. There is no reason for saying it or not saying it sort of thing. I don’t know.

Daniel could not quite elaborate, but there is the feeling that he said it because it was important to him, or at least, it was something that concerned him. The full question was, ‘Can you tell me about your position here as a white teacher teaching at MC which is a multiracial school?’ Here he suggests that my question awakened fears of being called a racist. It seems that the fear is always present because the possibility of being accused is also always present. So, he can ‘see where you going with … the question’ and he refuses to go with it. He uses humour to curtail the exploration. He attempts to ‘make light of the situation’; he will not make it into an issue or admit it as an issue for discussion. Still, we notice that he is willing to joke about being a racist in terms of a Welsh/English divide, and not about being racist in terms of a black/white divide. On the face of it, he is aware of adverse consequences that might ensue as a result of the latter. There is just simply a sense of disquietude, even though he believes himself to have nothing to fear.

This sense of disquietude was evident amongst all the teachers who attempted to talk about race in relation to themselves. As we have seen with Joseph (p. 258) and Daniel’s (p. 259)
extracts, there is a profound fear of being called racist. It might be part of the collective consciousness too because, as it was reported: ‘We got a couple of people to come and talk to us [Inset session on race and schooling] and they spend the first hour telling us that all people in Britain were racist but didn’t know it. It was just a disgrace and an absolute waste of time.’

Interestingly, however, the fear of this accusation is not always from others. They themselves appeared interested in exploring whether their actions were racist. We see this in the excerpt presented above with Jonah, for example, who after exploring aspects of his practice of which he is uncertain, naming what he suspects might also be called racist, ‘racialistic’ (p. 245). Joseph we find using ‘racially exclusive’ and with him we see, perhaps, the very coining of the phrase. Edith also had difficulty describing aspects of her practice she discussed, and she perhaps, went the furthest: ‘My teaching has centred around living in England because if they are going to live in England they might as well know how it works… [and] that is what I know… I try not to be, sort of, racist, init, to use that word, which isn’t really the word.’

They therefore pointed to a dilemma of sorts: the need, and possibly, even the desire, to critique their own practice, but the fear of accusing themselves. So we see the beginnings of a critique and its abortion because they cannot find the words that they are comfortable using to think through the issues. The problem, it seems with talking race, or a major problem with talking race is that it threatens to denounce them. The threat is inherent in the language of the discourse.

*The Fear of Being Accused*79

79 As can be seen, I deliberately tried to explore this fear of being called racist. In addition to this, a few
The Inset folks told them that they were racist and 'we don’t believe we are racist here.' So I explored the accusation of racism with those who would discuss it with me. Such discussion was quite revealing and I present the abstracts that follow such that they weave a story in the teachers’ own voice as I share their fear of being accused.

J: Let us talk about that accusation of racism, why is that offensive, not that it shouldn’t be, but could you help me to get inside of that? You have certainly spoken of your own experience as being non racist with students.

TEACHER: A racist is a bad and naughty thing to be. Nobody wants to be called bad and naughty. Let’s face it racism is the deadly sin of our age these days. You can be gay. You can be a criminal. You can be a liar, and you be all sorts of a cheap and people will laugh it off but if you are a racist that is not funny.

J: Why isn’t that funny because that is what I am trying to understand? I am not saying it is right but I want you to help me understand why?

TEACHER: It is the media thing. It is because in the British society at the moment, our media have pushed this so much. The two things you would never dare admit to be are being a racist and a child molester because people go out and lynch people like that. That is why it is offensive to be called a racist. To be a racist is, to call someone racist, and it is to say that you, and unfair, and you are treating people badly in a discriminating way. I like to think of myself as a fair and even handed person. It is a direct personal insult if someone calls me that and so obviously I don’t like that. Does that explain why?

So public censure is implicated in the fear of being called a racist. This is similar to Pam at Ems; however, here this teacher is not just critiquing the pressure of being forced into change.

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Teachers arranged interviews within which they spoke to me about the experience of being called racist. These were deeply upsetting experiences, which they saw as threatening to their careers. But far more devastating for them, the experiences threatened their sense of themselves as decent and good. One teacher cried during the interview, others were alternatively agitated and dispirited. Of note too, having set up the interview and given me permission to record it, the point was made at the end of some that if I used the material others would be able to identify the stories, consequently the speaker, and that that would be against their wish. I withhold the stories, but present their reflections on the accusation.
as Pam did. She is highlighting the sense of being made a social pariah, if not an ultimate social pariah. The media rather than the government in this case are blamed, and they are blamed for pushing the racist thing ‘so much’. To be a racist is seen as ‘the deadly sin of our age’, and she does not want to be accused of being guilty of it. Here, it does not seem so much the wrong or rightness of being a racist. The emphasis seems more about being accused of being one.

The Personal Insult

The last teacher wanted to be seen as ‘a fair and even handed person’; therefore, it was a ‘direct personal insult’ to be called a racist. She highlighted this notion. The teacher below explored it.

J: Can you help me to understand why being called racist causes such a problem? Can you help me to understand in your case?

TEACHER: Well, nobody likes being accused of what they aren’t.

[*tape finishes; is turned over]*

J: The question was the accusation of racism, being accused of being a racist. You were telling me about that?

TEACHER: You don’t want to be accused of what you are not. I think also, you view it as an insult, in itself that is, insulting. There are certain things that we can all say and do that are racist that are not bad and not insulting. I think the word has now got a bad connotation. I suppose if you really go back, it probably is just somebody who is proud of being what they are. In that sense we have all got that element amongst us, but the way it is used is an insult. This idea that you would do something towards somebody because of their race, saying it is because of their religion or whatever, is an insult really. Also because it is politically incorrect; therefore, it can get you into trouble. It is one thing to have it flung at you in a

Further, I withhold their names and present all the teachers here as female Biology teachers.
classroom. It is something more if somebody has decided they will carry it further and start reporting you. These things can happen without any real justification both ways round...

Nobody likes it, and you would hardly hurl it at anyone else out of anything other than malice really, see?

J: I don’t know. It depends on the context, of. What do you think?

TEACHER: Well, I wouldn’t go round and call anybody racist even if I thought it. I probably wouldn’t say it. It is the sort of remark that actually escalates and makes it further. I think the kids know that and I think that is why they use it. They are trying to provoke disruption in class. They are trying to provoke trouble. There is quite an element of that nowadays. If they can’t do it physically they will do it with words.

J: I am really very pleased that you talked to me because I know this is a very sensitive issue to talk about. I would like white teachers to talk about how they feel, the sort of things that don’t get heard at all because of voice.

TEACHER: You can’t say it. It is not done. You are not supposed to say things like that. You don’t do it because you don’t know who is listening. You don’t know who is going to pick you up. That in a way actually makes it worse because you can’t be honest.

Unfortunately, I have always been known for speaking my mind and saying what I think. You do have to be careful where you say it. I say it to you because I think you will realise that I don’t have a problem with talking to you. You are a person and that is the important thing. I think it is very unfortunate that the way things have gone in the big cities now that we have got these problems. My partner is very bitter. Yes my partner has developed into a racist, but I don’t think he was five years ago but he lives and works in the city. He has seen a lot of change. I find it very difficult now to cope with him because I am working here.

[Revealing details]…

TEACHER: If somebody called me a racist in a crowd of black people I would probably be feeling quite threatened and quite angry. If you were to call me a racist sitting here now like this I would probably laugh at you and tell you not to be so stupid.
J: What would be the difference?

TEACHER: Because I wouldn't feel threatened, I think, just talking off the top of my head. If I thought you really meant it and you were trying to insult me with it then I wouldn't laugh. I would probably say, 'Well, right, if that is what you think, just do that; there is no point in us continuing the discussion. I don't think you can argue over things like that. If you were to do it in a middle of a classroom with a crowd of large children, then I could feel threatened. I would take it as being designed to threaten me, to insult me and make life difficult for me.

J: Why is it an insult? Not that I don't think it isn't. I am trying to understand.

TEACHER: Because of the way we use it now I think.

J: We use it to suggest what you think?

TEACHER: We use it as an insult. If you accuse somebody of being racist, you use it as an insult.

J: For instance, someone could accuse another person of being incompetent and you would perhaps risk being called incompetent to stand up for what you believe in. Perhaps you teach a different way.

TEACHER: Incompetence is more to do with ability; racism is to do with attitudes. If I was told I was incompetent.

J: No one has said that by the way.

TEACHER: I would probably want to know why and in what areas I was incompetent and then I would probably try and do something about it. I would probably recognise that, 'Yeah, I am probably not one hundred percent.' There is always room for improvement. I wouldn't consider it to be a problem in quite the same way, unless it was meant as an insult. You can usually tell when people say things what they mean by it. To be called a racist is something, which is an attitude thing. It is not an ability that you can improve or whatever. You can change an attitude, but I don't think it is in the same category as talking about anyone being incompetent.

J: You are thinking, 'If you are called a racist there is nothing you can do about it?' Is that
what you are saying?

TEACHER: No, it is because it is hitting at an attitude, which is more an integral part of you. It is bringing into question your ethics or your moral values. If a kid said to me, ‘Oh, you are a lousy teacher I would say, ‘Oh well, too bad you have got to put up with me...

Well, OK, how come I got so many A-Cs in GCSEs last year if I am a lousy teacher with kids that have come into school of low level?’ You can actually demonstrate something on that or you can say, ‘Well yes, I am not doing very well, am I?’ If you are calling into question something which is an integral part of a person, you can’t actually demonstrate it. It is a different thing. It is actually hitting at you.

We see several new themes emerging with this discussion. First of all, actually, literally talking about the matter reveals itself to be a fraught activity. There is suggestion of being unable to talk about the issues that they want to engage, as well as noticeable difficulty given the opportunity. It is noticeable that this teacher reveals herself contradicting herself on the claim that she would not accuse someone of being racist, even if she thought so, and that those who think and call another, racist, do it out of malicious intent. Yet, she subsequently called her partner racist. She did not appear to have malicious intent.

On the contrary, she tried to justify her partner’s position. Although she critiques the position, she protects the partner. Further, the rest of her argument suggests that she is sympathetic with the position, so, perhaps, she is really, also, critiquing herself. Certainly, other teachers in the school (and at Em) spoke about parents and partners possessing attitudes and/or practices that the teachers themselves critiqued in the mentioning. She provides, therefore, an example of the strategy of critiquing the self by means of distance, but a distance that allows a high degree of intimacy, the strategy that MC adopts with respect to its critique of itself by means of the church.

*The Devastating Effect: Students*
We also see that being called a racist or the fear of being called a racist actually also impacts on the dynamics in the classroom, and to the detriment of black students. There is no better way to say this than to reproduce what a teacher said and to note that the extract stands as the only forthright acknowledgement of the entire study of how race impacts on the classroom.

J: You say you skirt round the problem because to discipline you expose yourself to being called a racist. How do you try to handle that?

TEACHER: Well, most of the time you try to avoid the situation in the first place.

Sometimes you can’t avoid it. There are certain pupils in the school that I think quite a few of us do not just get into conflict with because you are on a hiding to nothing. You can’t exclude them because that would only cause a lot more problems. If you punish them, you get the parent up saying you are picking on my child and you are racist. Those children tend to be the worst behaved ones in the school in the end. So some of the time, we just ignore it. That is not really the right thing to do. It is not the best thing to do, but short of sparking off World War Three; it is difficult. Mind you I think some of the black teachers have as bad a job with them as the white ones. They can actually, I suppose go a little bit further than we can because they are not going to get the racist thing thrown at them to the same degree. It makes us feel a little bit threatened at times, a bit apprehensive.

J: What threatens you?

TEACHER: The fact that we can’t actually be natural and normal with them on occasions. They don’t frighten me in that sense, you hold back. There is one or two that I will tread very wary with because I know their reactions. Most of those now aren’t in school, but they have been, and if they don’t do their homework, well, forget it. If they write the wrong things or are rude, forget it. If you can ignore it without it actually affecting the rest of the class, do that. You tend to let it go after a while because you know that you can’t win. The trouble is that they know that you can’t win. It is a form of establishing your [‘your’ meaning, I suggest, the black students’] superiority I suppose.
We will look at one last discussion before we come to a close, for it I believe does manage to sum up all the points. It is from yet another teacher.

Hers was a moving account of being called a racist. It [the account] showed that it [the accusation] undermined her sense of herself and her life. She could not accommodate the thought that she might have done something racist. Not that she may not have made a mistake. She could accept that she makes mistakes; she would not accept that the mistake was racist. That undermined her sense of goodness. Aligned her with people she considered base.

J: I really want to thank you for talking the way you have just now because I know it is very close to you. I can see and understand how the accusation can be upsetting. I am not saying you should justify yourself, but I am asking if you could let me understand why being a called a racist is so upsetting? You could be called a liar and perhaps it wouldn’t be as upsetting. I don’t know. You could be called something else.

TEACHER: A child molester.

J: I wouldn’t say that. I suspect child molesting and race would be the same.

TEACHER: Child molesting is worse. I am sure it is.

J: You could be called something, and perhaps it wouldn’t be as upsetting.

TEACHER: The reason for this is, when you use the word ‘racist’, what comes to your mind? It doesn’t come to mind a teacher showing favourites in the class. That is not the first image that comes to mind. The first image that comes to mind is a series of white youths with crew cut hair and tattoos that are beating up a black boy. They have got six people around him and they are beating him up and possibly even murdering him like the recent case. They have got knives and they attack this boy so he is badly cut about, and he dies or they throw firebombs through your letterbox. Sometimes the Pakistani people are also treated this way. Their shops are broken into and vandalised. People who mindlessly attack other people who are not of the same colour. That picture comes to mind, and when someone
calls me a racist, you line me up alongside all these highly objectionable, villainous people who ought to be taken off the streets, and makes you realise that, perhaps, they ought to bring back the birch again, to help sort them out. Your whole life has been a contradiction of that behaviour, certainly all my teaching life which is the last fifty years, and I accepted Christianity. You try to follow Christian principles and your example is Jesus Christ. How can you say you are a Christian and say you are a racist in the same breath? When somebody accuses you of being a racist and everybody thinks of you as racist you might as well say I am a racist and not a Christian any longer. The last fifty years of my life have been a mockery. You have just been pretending to be a Christian, and really underneath it, you are a racist. You don’t really love people of all colours. You don’t like Buddhist’s, Roman Catholics, Jews, Blacks, Yellows and Browns. You have got all these prejudices inside of you and you have been pretending all this time to be a goody Christian. Your feet are cut from underneath you. Somebody has just come over and knocked you on the back and said you are a fraud and a sham. That is what they are saying when they accuse you of being a racist. A person who is a racist is probably proud of the fact: ‘Yes I am proud of my white forebears and I think that all blacks should be turned out of the country and all browns to follow closely afterwards.’ That is not my attitude. [Shares some personal historical details, including information about parents, life choices and values]… What did I tell you that for? I don’t know… [more personal details] The racist bit, first of all, is a picture you have in your mind of a racist, and secondly it was denying my entire life for the last fifty years and saying the whole thing was a mockery and saying really you have got no business going to church every week. You really ought to be staying at home because your life is a lie. The more you think about it the more upsetting it was…

Ultimately, the accusation ‘is hitting at you’, ‘an integral part of the you’ when there is a sense of helplessness in the face of the accusation. There is the resignation that there is no defence against it. Even if it is unjustly made, it impacts with devastating consequence for the
teachers. It threatens their careers. But more than this, to accept being called racist or even having the accusation levied, results in having ‘your feet are cut from underneath you... your life is a lie.’ It is an absolute attack on the self, which threatens dissolution of the image as good and decent. It provokes introspection that undermines the individual’s belief about him/herself despite the impetus to resist the accusation. The accusation is hard-hitting because it is seen as being rooted in their disavowal of the sacredness of the humanity, the human dignity and equality of others, and on the fickle grounds of ‘their race or religion’. The teachers’ discussion suggests that they understand or have some understanding of how such denial would culminate in the denial of those very things in themselves.

But, finally, the accusation is hard-hitting because it seems to provoke a fear: that which they deny as being part of their identity might constitute it. Racism is an abject feature of identity, and the teachers are brought to the brink of abjection. While there is evidence of them wanting to engage the issue, we see that the very language used to discuss race places them in an extremely vulnerable position. To discuss racism in relation to themselves seems a decision of pushing the self-destruct button, and to do so without a vision of how they could be put back together again. Therefore, they cannot at this time engage an exploration of racism in relation to themselves. They resist abjection and defend their selfhood as constructed by themselves.

Nevertheless, their resistance does not negate their desire for making sense of what is happening in their worlds and to themselves as whites in a multicultural world. Two issues remain for our teachers: coming to terms with the implications for themselves in a world where racism has become outlawed; and the separate but related issue of coming to terms with a world where whites and whiteness are no longer privileged, but are being superseded by a multicultural code.

The RAC search (pp. 206 - 208), which I consider as having encapsulated the core issues at
MC retrieved Joseph's description of himself as the last of the Mohicans. The description was additionally arresting because Joseph elected to describe himself in this way to help me understand his position as a white teacher in a school that was changing from what was considered a white school to a multicultural one. Failing a language that allows an engaged discussion of race, this metaphor takes on singular importance. Let us locate the metaphor and complete our discussion of MC on what was its resilient theme: the loss of whiteness.

4:3.8 The Last of the Mohicans and the Loss of Whiteness

[p4, first interview, up to this point there has been no discussion of race; I introduce it]

J: I would be interested to know how you see your job as a white teacher in this school?

TEACHER: When I came here I cracked a joke with people who would listen saying they were recruiting me to be the last of the Mohicans because it was generally perceived that the number of white students that we had were decreasing... [p5] I suppose if you were to look at the question of the racial politics of the church in this country, as a whole the school has, if you like, been one of the last outposts of white influenced or perhaps even white domination within the structures of the church. To some extent my presence here has sort of contributed to that... because the church has become dominated by the West Indian community there has been the feeling in the white community of the church that they were somehow losing their franchise... [p5] for that group of people the fact that there was still a

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80 The Last of the Mohicans is the title both of a novel and a movie based on the novel. The novel is J. Fenimore Cooper's second tale in his collection the Leatherstocking Tales written in 1826. Mohicans is complete in itself as a narrative, but it is also linked to the other stories in the collection by Natty Bumppo, the central figure of the series. Mohicans is set in the forest of North America during the Seven Years War (1756 - 1763) between Great Britain and France as they fought to settle the frontiers of America. The plot revolves around the efforts of two sisters, Alice and Cora Munro, to join their father who is posted at and is the commander of Fort William Henry. They are being led by Duncan Heyward, at first, a colonial officer loyal to British conventions. Magua, leader of a group of Oneida Indians allied to the French, frustrates the British convoy. To traverse the forest safely, Heyward is dependent on Mohican Indians, Chingachgook, his (natural) son Uncas, and adopted white son, Natty Bumppo. Natty prefers the Indian code to that of whites, and is insistent that he is 'a man without a cross'. He is the main protagonist for much of the story but is replaced as such by Heyward at the end. Heyward gets to marry Alice and is projected as the one to go on to become the progenitor of the new and future America. Cora and Uncas die; Chingachgook's death is foreshadowed, and he along with
school which was basically still pedalling along middle class white sort of values was a sense of comfort to them...[page 22, third interview, about a month later] I don’t see the relationship of black and white people in the community at large as being white chiefs and black Indians. I don’t see it as being a power imbalance. Because I don’t see the basic race relation as being a power relation I don’t look for it here I suppose.

(* emphasis added to highlight the continuity of the metaphor)

The metaphor seems quite insistent in Joseph’s imagination. Something about it seems to crystallise for Joseph the white condition in a (white) world becoming multicultural. I explore this crystal here though I highlight that Joseph’s meaning is far from crystal-clear; I cannot claim to know his intended meaning. We will see that the phrase, the last of the Mohicans, is itself a source of much confusion81, and Joseph’s usage, perhaps, confused if powerfully revealing.

*Why the Last of the Mohicans?*

*Mohicans* is nothing if not about shifting identities. Though white, Natty’s status as leading protagonist for much of the story privileged him to be the last of the Mohicans amongst the Mohican Indians. This white-Indian preferred an Indian code and actively rejected European – British – values along with its Christian code. Nevertheless, in the novel, the American-born, colonial officer, Heyward, succeeds Natty as the main protagonist. Natty is not only supplanted; he is implicated in Uncas and Chingachgook’s death and, subsequently, the end of Indian rule. Though Natty’s alliance with the British was crucial to establishing the new

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81 Notably, Sultzman (2000) claims that, as has been often done, when Cooper wrote of the Mohicans, he unwittingly confused and conflated details of two distinct Indian tribes, the Mahicans and the Mohegans. Cooper meant the Mohegans, but based on the setting of the story, actually wrote about the Mahicans. The spelling variation, ‘Mohicans’, that is often used for both ‘Mohegans’ and ‘Mahicans’ masks Cooper’s mistake and completes the misrepresentation. Furthermore, there are fundamental inconsistencies between the book and the movie. The very Indian-sounding name, ‘Natty Bumppo’, of the book becomes the rather Christian-sounding ‘Nathaniel’ of the movie. *Natty* returns to the forest rejecting the American future where whites replace Indians – as well as racial union between them.
order, his preference for an Indian code precipitated his displacement.

Heyward did not prefer the Indian code, even if he also came to reject European conventions. When he rejected European conventions as irrelevant in the forest, he asked Natty to use his (Indian) knowledge to provide a disguise that would help him, Heyward, survive the dangers of the forest. Consequently, Heyward did not die the misguided persona he did in the movie. With disguise he survived the forest, leaving it behind literally and figuratively, thereby emerging changed, but, importantly, neither Indian nor European. Heyward is the original American. *The Last of the Mohicans* is not so much about the last of the Mohicans as it is about the first of the Americans.

This, Kelly (1983) contends, was precisely Cooper's project. Kelly maintains that Cooper sought to produce an American epic narrative, out of American experience, which would be comparable to the *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, and *Paradise Lost*. This narrative was intended to validate the particularity of an American identity and history so as to establish America as Europe’s cultural equal and as independent from European history.

Cooper's vision of American history, both as 'a departure from and an extension of the past' was designed to establish both difference and equality (Kelly, 1983, pp. 59 & 84).² It was a narrative ploy that would not resolve its inherent inconsistencies (p. 84). And, throughout the centuries, *Mohicans* has been duly criticised for having unresolved inconsistencies. Ironically, however, Kelly would support Rans' (1991) conclusion that *Mohicans’ ‘contradictions ... serve ends that are profoundly critical of American history ... Christian European principles, are shown to be debilitated, betrayed and profoundly misleading’ (Rans 1991, p. 106).

*National* embraces this future – as well as Alice – and is set to people the new America. Heyward dies.

² The reader may now have a feeling of *deja vu*; this is but the strategy that Gates (1988) describes for the African turned slave, turned American citizen – turned African-American. Cooper employed a
Rans’ reading of *Mohicans* problematises Joseph’s use of the last of the Mohicans to describe himself and his changing world. *Mohicans* can be seen as a severe critique of Christian-European – including, importantly, British – principles. Moreover, *Mohicans* can be seen as a representation of Britain as a colonial power in decline, being superseded by the emergence of a new national identity (Kelly, 1983, p. 64). While it is possible to accept that Joseph recognises the changes underway at MC – and in the wider society, his metaphor does not precisely position him within the change.

Joseph cannot be easily aligned with Natty. They could be associated in their rejection of a new (national) identity in favour of a past one. However, Natty is a man without a cross who more strongly rejects a Christian and British code. If the last of the Mohicans, Joseph also cannot quite be aligned with Heyward who survives to privilege whiteness and maintain racial purity. Heyward is also the symbol of an identity that is new and distinctly different from the past. Joseph, perhaps, more easily aligns with ‘Nathaniel’ who in marrying Alice achieves cultural union and maintains racial purity, except that Joseph seems in favour of, at least, cultural purity, perhaps even that whiteness continues to be privileged.

And so to unravel an inconsistency: I contend that while Cooper’s principal objective may have been to establish a new American identity, the tensions generated in the shift were submerged and re-presented as a battle between white soldiers and Indian chiefs on the frontiers of America. Cooper exploited the complexities inherent in race as a concept to dramatic effect. In *Mohicans* racial categories (white/Indian) masked the fiercer battles that were ensuing around the categories of national identity (European versus American) and national culture (Christian versus, supposedly, savage).

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literary and narrative strategy to establish both difference and equality, difference and similarity.
And here, perhaps, is the connection between *The Last of the Mohicans* and Joseph (and, to be fair, as the evidence would support, others at MC and Em). Race, though it would be strictly denied discussion, is in fact a holding place for the tensions generated in coming to terms with shifts emergent in the school’s identity and culture – and British national identity and national culture. Race is the means by which the tensions are processed.

In other words, the implicit stance is: race generates the tensions experienced, and not, for example, Britain’s history, or more precisely, the history of British construction of difference, or again, Britain’s historical, and persistent, construction of national identity and national culture. To imagine a ‘loss of whiteness’ is to misread the deconstruction of the past thereby inhibiting the possibility to imagine ‘multiculturalism’ as the (re)construction of the future in the trajectory of British history. For ultimately, construing ‘race’ as the source of tensions effectively contains the tensions inherent in coming to terms with ‘racism’ in Britain’s present; it inhibits coming to terms with racism as the possible source of the tensions present in coming to terms with Britain as a multicultural place.
Pt. 5 Reconceptualising Race and Multicultural Success...

...Like the black young man
who tried
to crash.
All barriers
at once,
swim
At a white
beach (in Alabama)
Nude
(Walker, 1968)

5:1 The Focus on Race

I made race the focus of this research. I wanted to explore contemporary blackness, what I posited as a black and white identity amongst black students; I also wanted to explore multicultural school contexts which were successful, that is, harmonious. To be specific, I wanted to interpret and articulate blackness as black and white, and to understand how race is handled within a successful multicultural context. These I wanted to explore as they revealed themselves, not what they were not, or what they ought to be – not even what people would say they are.

Notwithstanding, the impetus for this investigation was to understand present reality as fashioning possibly new ways of being, or to see present reality as affording the possibility of generating other understanding of possible ways of being. Since I needed to provide answers to the substantive questions I raised as well as wanting to explore and articulate those answers in the particular way I have described, I came to realise that this study required two things: one, a methodological framework that was, two, premised on a theoretical framework

83 I often think of that black young man of whom Walker writes. Sink or swim, he clearly was compelled to fly into the face of the social conventions of his day – into the face of death itself. I don’t think he wanted to die. On the contrary, there is every evidence that he so wanted to live. I wonder, what happened to him?
within which race at the present time could be understood. I also came to realise that my focus on race necessitated a focus on how race is handled in the research exercise itself. Consequently, this research exercise afforded an investigation on the process of doing research on race while I sought answers to the questions that the study posed. The focus on race was, therefore, multiple, having distinct and interdependent – complex – consequences for this research exercise.

The focus on race generated one main finding: race required complex responses from those who would negotiate the demands it presents. This main finding was true both of the process by which I sought answers to the research questions, and the product of the exercise, that is, the answers to the research questions.

In her literary critique of Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*, Burton (1998) posited that Kristeva’s (1982) theory of the abject and abjection provides a means by which to theorise race. This study supports Burton’s argument – and, providing exploration within a social science discipline, takes it further. The theory of the abject and abjection provided a means by which I approached the complexities of issues to do with race at the present time. For through its lens it was possible to organise a response to and to explore the demands of race within the field of race and schooling and research into race and schooling.

I shall discuss the study’s findings by first introducing the methodology I developed to conduct the investigation. This leads into a discussion of the answers to the research questions, beginning with the second. I complete this section by returning to the methodology introduced at the beginning.
5.2 A Methodology for Research on Race

I believed that, at the present time, the field of race and schooling had arrived both at an impasse and at a new beginning. The focus on black underachievement along with its concomitant corollary of disharmony between black students and their schools and teachers had so dominated research into race and schooling, it long precluded other ways of conceptualising research into the field. In more recent times, however, that focus has given way to one on success within multicultural settings.

As this promising new focus began to make its way into mainstream discourse, it became apparent that talk of success was co-existing with evidence of continued failure on the age-old problems of race and schooling. Therefore, it also became obvious that one could sustain talk of success, despite the fact that old problems remained. Since it was the case that success was being discussed, and that evidence to the same was also being generated, then it was clear that things were changing within the field of race and schooling. However, to focus on success to the exclusion of the problems that still did exist was to deny that everything had not as yet changed. A further issue discernible in the changed focus was an impetus to replace a focus on race, and on the history of underachievement and conflict, with the new focus of success. It seemed that such options stood to undermine the radical potential of the change to focus on success.

In this study, therefore, I sought to participate in furthering the radical potential inherent in the present focus on success by developing a framework that could take account of the history and present of race and schooling so as to investigate what was happening within successful schools. I discovered, quite by accident, it has to be said, that developing this framework achieved the doubled result of allowing me to also investigate what was happening within research on race and schooling. The latter resulted in another finding of
this research: like contemporary blackness, research into race and schooling as well as the field of race and schooling could be seen as existing in a state of abjection. The field of research approached the contradictory elements of impasse and a new beginning; it was beginning to explore success although failure was still prevalent. Schools could be seen as being both successful and failing. Subsequently, a further finding of the research was: to conduct research on race and schooling at the present moment in time, required a methodology that would allow for both an impasse and a new beginning; for a history and a present; that the present may be different from the past, or the same, or both.

In justifying this research, that is, making the argument for questions that I posed and the way I went about answering them, I have laid out the conception, methodology, analysis and findings of this study. With a penultimate draft of the finished text, I have been able to reflect on the methodology, or the overall approach taken within this study. I shall call this overall methodology ‘Boundary methodology’ so as to suggest a summary that delineates some salient features. That summary follows at the end of this section. Now I turn to the answers to my research questions that it helped to generate.

5:3 Responding to Race within Multicultural Schools

‘As social representations theory argues, representations are not primary more or less veridical reproduction of facts in the world, but above all, they are elaborations for social groups, serving to maintain the stability of their particular life-world. In this view, representations are bound to social contexts, that is to groups and their life-worlds, and to situations and events occurring in these life-worlds that demand specific forms of thinking, talking and acting. Apparent contradictions between representations in common-sense thinking can be explained if their situated use is taken into account’ (Wagner, Duveen, Verma and Themel, 2000; italics in original).
How is race handled in successful school contexts? There is every evidence in this research that successful school contexts work at creating and maintaining the stability of their particular life-world. They use specific forms of thinking, talking and acting that are bound to their individual contexts and arising from the situation and events occurring in their life-world. There were many apparent contradictions in their accounts for their contexts, and these contradictions found meaning in the function they performed within the full context of the experience.

First of all, in both schools, there were three responses to the question of race. There was a discernible response at the level of the school, the level of the professional and at the level of the person. And while these three distinct responses were connected in the end result that they served, that is, in determining practice in the school, each response also served a specific purpose. So, for example, at the level of the school the teachers strictly kept race out of their conversation about the school. At the level of the professional, race crept in but was restricted. Exploration of race happened at the level of the personal.

Response at the Level of the School

The school provided or was used to create a language that overrode the differences within it. So, the teachers in both contexts would maintain 'we have a business to do when we are here, and to some extent we can leave the baggage behind when we come through the gates. This is a school. It is a different world.' The context of the school turned the black, Asian and white students into students and the white and black teachers into teachers. It was not that the teachers could and did not see that there were tensions in this position. Instead, they chose to insist on maintaining that representation of their contexts. They affirmed similarity and denied acknowledging difference.
This was an important function in the schools' running. For race in fact presented the teachers with many difficult and unresolved issues. There was an overwhelming, sometimes personal understanding, of the disturbances that race introduced into their context. Some disturbance arose from historical facts, that, for example, the arrival of a black presence changed lifestyle in some localities. Teachers had to come to terms with the event of change, as well as the details of the particular change in their lives.

This triggered philosophical introspection. For a black presence was not just about a change in the demographics – or even the routine – of a locality. A black presence had a history beyond physicality. It was a history that was present to the individual consciousness, and awakened questions of morality and goodness. The individual had a need to locate her/himself in that history and to place her/himself on the right side of morality and goodness. These issues caused considerable tensions, which were at times overwhelming, and ultimately threatened the possibility of the teachers conducting the 'business' of schooling.

The teachers' response was, in effect, to construct a consensual universe. They made of the school a safe space where individuals and groups, not least of all themselves, could exist without friction and uncertainty. They decided on maintaining the legal requirements of schooling: that schools exist for the dissemination of knowledge. They rehearsed and affirmed in the daily running of the school that race was not an issue for the school. In fact, they would limit the use of the nomenclature of race, and speak insistently of 'the kids', 'the students', 'the school contract', 'the business of the school'.

Both schools drew attention to the importance of the gate of the school as a metaphor for the demarcation of how the school is perceived by outsiders and how the school perceives itself in its daily operation. To parents and patrons – and those who did not support them – the schools maintained the notion that race was of significance in the running of the school. The
schools' public image mirrored public expectation. Within the schools, however, the teachers de-robed race of its significance. Race was underplayed, neutralised, transformed. Attracted from their disparate cultural backgrounds, the children arrived in a context where they were ascribed a common identity. They were 'kids' or 'students'.

Furthermore, the students were not only 'students' within the school. In one context, a 'corporateness' arose out the school's history of struggle in the name of the ethnic minority. The school identified with and was identified by others as having a commitment to its ethnic minority status. It saw itself and was seen by the community and its students as having suffered with and because of that status. This transformed the teachers and students into an 'us' against the world. This 'us' was not at all premised on race differences. It necessarily covered those over and each, the teacher and the student, assumed the name of the school. They were, in that case, Em Secondary, 'Emmites'.

In the other school, MC, they were Christians. This was the overriding identity in the school, so much so that it undermined all other identities. Therefore, people who may share similar cultural backgrounds would see themselves as similar or different in light of whether or not they were Christians. By the same token, all who were Christians claimed a common identity. The identity of the Christian worked to silence questions of race by insisting on a syllogism. Christianity is inclusive, loving, tolerant, accepting. MC is based on Christianity. Therefore, MC is inclusive, loving, tolerant, accepting.

In both schools they found a way to effectively silence the question of race within their daily operation. However, rather than not having an appreciation of how race operated within their individual contexts, both schools had a good grasp of and a sophisticated response to race. In both schools, race was in fact a raison d'être in the school's continued existence. Race was necessarily central to its operation. They needed the issue of race to stay in business. Having
secured that position through particular discourses aimed at the intended audience, another set of discourses operated within the daily running of the school. Here issues of race were not acknowledged as such. The schools existed in a state of polyphasia. Their representation of race 'embodied] a form of co-existence between ideas, values and practices drawn from inconsistent or even contradictory elements' (Duveen, 2001, p. 11) that were 'locally consistent, [and where contradictions were] not simultaneously expressed in discourse' (Wagner, 1994).

**Response at the Level of the Professional**

With containing the tensions and the contradictions, their representation of race, that it was a non-issue, created the platform upon which the teachers acted. As the school had a business to do, so too the teachers: 'In the classroom I am a teacher and they are students. That is the scenario.' This very insistent stance persisted amongst the teachers throughout both schools. They repeated the same basic strategy of using their roles to define their actions. As teachers they could identify what was expected of them, and they could also appraise themselves in meeting those demands. They had certain knowledge to pass on and focussed on doing just that.

Closer examination revealed, however, that the question of race was not forgotten. It was silenced, but it remained and did in fact meet with a response. There was evidence that teachers thought about how they might address issues of race within their practice. However, in some cases, the other demands of the classroom – size, spread of ability, actual content to be passed on – compounded, and undermined, the teachers’ attempt at responding to race-specific issues. Race made more work for teachers who saw themselves as already having a heavy workload. There was a little evidence to suggest that teachers might in these circumstances choose to do that which was legally binding.
Further, the teachers showed evidence of feeling less confident and competent in dealing with race-specific details. Where there was a group of students who could, and did switch cultural registers, this served to undermine teachers' confidence, authority and control. The teachers did not feel they understood the cultural codes sufficiently to participate effectively, especially in instances when a switch involved disruption in the classroom. Experienced teachers, in particular, but also newer teachers to the profession, whom students and others regarded as successful, resolved such issues by insisting on receiving standards they set in the classroom context. The teachers relied upon a respect for their presence, and the authority it symbolised in obtaining what they regarded as acceptable behaviour.

They were not unaware that this involved questions of race. In fact, instead, they insisted on allowing that their culture should inform their practice. There was evidence of them insisting that their culture receive recognition and respect in a multicultural space. Where this stance suggested tensions, the teachers also appealed to the notion that their culture was not different from that of the students, as the students were also British, or that the students wanted to learn about Britishness. There was also the suggestion that the curriculum itself was responsible for maintaining a distinctive English/British thrust in schools. Therefore, their response was not suspect. However, the tension in this position was not successfully contained in this argument, even to the teachers who made them. The structures of the school maintained or were maintained by whiteness. In one school, there was an undercurrent of surveillance of expressions of black identity; the black girls in this school received the highest levels of surveillance; in particular, their hairstyles was a significant feature of control which the girls found distressing although they complied with what was expected.

There was however a strong impetus for teachers to identify points of continuity between themselves and the students. Parental discourses surfaced as teachers claimed to draw upon their personal family experiences in deciding on what was appropriate and allowable.
behaviour. They saw themselves as operating in a parental capacity, or saw the students as children acting out teenager identity; students were children in need of guidance. The sense of having a responsibility to guiding the children also took on religious commitment. It was not just as parents that they responded to the students, but as stewards of God in one school. They saw their response as one intended to benefit the students.

This approach to deciding on what was acceptable behaviour found a repeat in the strategy employed in actual teaching. The notion of providing for difference was explored quite explicitly and consistently in terms of gender. They spoke of gender difference although they would insist on denying the need to provide for race differences. They used the category of gender to explore the concept of difference, and of difference to do with race in particular. They used their understanding of gender issues to guide their response to race, and saw themselves as responding to race as they did to gender.

These strategies, of using, for example, parental and gender discourses can be interpreted as the teachers’ attempt at dealing with the demands race occasioned by means of other strategies with which they felt comfortable. While they disallowed that they responded to race, they were seen seeking to address particular issues of race which came up for attention in their classrooms. They interpreted and responded to race-specific issues as pedagogic ones. In effect, they anchored their response to the demands of race within their existing repertoire of classroom techniques.

Response at the Level of the Personal

Their denial of responding to race in their practice was revealed as a defensive strategy. In relation to the argument immediately above, the denial provided them with a space where they could deal with the questions and demands race presented. They could focus on the demands of teaching their particular subjects. Within that focus they accommodated issues of
race. Their intransigence in admitting to responding to race was necessary because race remained a difficult issue for them personally.

One of the difficulties that white teachers faced was in trying to decide on the place of whiteness in a multicultural context. This generated significant personal wrestling. There were feelings of loss with respect to whiteness and teachers were seen trying to come to terms with the loss, the grief of this loss, and the aftermath of the loss. There was confusion over these responses as those who expressed them were also prone to critiquing their sentiments. The very persons who had these sentiments were uncertain about having them even though there was some resentment that the loss suffered has not been acknowledged as a loss. There was a feeling that it should be.

The difficulty of the situation arose from fears that such sentiments were racist, or might be considered racist. They did not want to be seen as racist, and they themselves did not want to see themselves as racist. The fear of being a racist was quite powerful and upsetting for the teachers. There were fears associated with their professional status, because the accusation of being racist could adversely affect their careers. It was an issue that teachers found they necessarily had to confront. Some refused to have their discipline and authority undermined by this fear. They insisted on their standard of acceptable behaviour – informed by their standards – but importantly, they sought to operate this consistently to all students. There was also the response of not risking the accusation and allowing what the teachers considered unacceptable behaviour from black students. Those who took this option also resented it.

Additionally, teachers thought that racist sentiments have become quite censured in contemporary society. It was evident, too, that despite the evidence of those teachers who were seen striving to be good with respect to race, stereotyping and prejudiced thinking were resilient issues that they, nevertheless, needed to completely eradicate. This was a problem
compounded by the almost palpable fear of 'showing their prejudice' in the present climate.
While there is evidence that they eagerly wanted to work through their shortcomings, present censure is inhibiting.

It should, nevertheless, be noted that the present climate is also forcing change. While this is resisted, and in some instances, resented, it has precipitated deep introspection with the potential for unprecedented change in public, if not also private, attitudes to race. Having said that, it must also be noted that censure generates resentment towards multiculturalism, as well as a backlash of white resistance. And, importantly, whiteness could find ways of establishing itself in the midst of the multicultural space. It merely insisted on abiding by the structures of the institution. The structures are recognised as white, but are not expressly acknowledged as such when they are insisted upon. This is firm, polite resistance, presented merely as performing a duty according to what is expected in which performance there is deliberate non-critical acceptance.

This is a resilient strategy, especially where the multicultural space is seen as a site where there is a struggle for supremacy of cultures. Even within the congenial multicultural context, there is agreement on core values and practices. In the schools studied there was an understanding by both teachers and students on what would be the norm, or would have the most forceful presence within the schools.

In one school the teachers identified with the identity of its majority population and actively observed practices that reinforced that commitment. The school took on an Asian presence, and there was general acceptance about this amongst the predominantly white staff. In the other school, whose majority was black, there was a resistance to blackness becoming the norm, or having the privileged status. Despite being dominant in number, the running of the school impacted on or tried to curtail the black influence. Failing the ability to actually
bellow whiteness with a privileged status amongst the students, the school’s practices, mediated by religious codes, performed a controlling influence on the black students, in particular, and on students of non-British affiliations in general. The school could be tolerant of difference as long as the students accepted that the school maintained traditional white/English, Christian values.

But this kind of resistance brought some self-doubt on the part of those who articulated it. They were never quite sure that the position was not racist, and equally resisted the notion that it might be. In the end, they themselves did not want to see themselves as racist, and their position presented the possibility that what they themselves feared and rejected as constituting part of their identity actually did.

In both schools there was the utter demonisation of the National Front persona. That persona served as a holding ground for what was identifiably racist. That persona was racist, bad, barbaric, despicable. In this way, the teachers strove to erect clear differences between themselves and such a persona. However, this seemed exactly what generated some of their own tension. For when they themselves felt themselves vulnerable to the accusation of racism, they thought of themselves in light of the National Front persona. Ultimately, they resisted this because it challenged their construction and image of themselves as good.

They could not accept that they were racist because it posed a serious threat to the way they chose to see themselves. Though they denied race as a factor in their practice, their presence in the schools and/or their claim of Christianity was to count as a sign that they were not racist. They did not see themselves and did not want to be seen as racist. Further, where they wanted to engage a discussion of race, white teachers seemed at risk of slipping under the accusation of racism by their own discussion. They invariably arrived at the point where they actively tried to redefine their opinions so as to present them as other than racist beliefs.
In more instances than not, the teachers simply aborted the exploration that led them to that point, and also attempted to suggest that they were also the victims of race issues, if not racism. The teachers who actively identified with the identity of its Asian children also projected themselves as being the victim of racism. Amongst the teachers who did not identify with their minority children, they felt themselves the victim of race in general, and black culture in particular. While their response appeared defensive, it also seemed they wanted acknowledgement that whites suffer as a consequence of race as well.

Ultimately, while they found strategies that successfully held the tensions race generated at the level of the school and the professional, tensions at the level of the personal remained like debris in their narratives. Nothing it seemed could quite collect and contain them. Lacking the wherewithal to explore the terrain, there was a haunting silence asking to be broken—gently, and with consideration for those who must survive it being broken.

*Blackness and Contemporary Identities*  
Black teachers adopted similar approaches to the question of race and schooling as their white colleagues. They maintained that they treated all children the same and strongly underplayed race as a factor in their practice. The black teachers' response was less out of concern that they should be seen as racist and more to do with countering the impetus for being identified primarily in terms of their blackness. They were concerned to project their sense of personhood, firstly, then their professional roles secondly. Thirdly, there was an impetus for them to situate themselves as British people with British sensibilities.

This tendency was also found amongst the black students who in one school opted to define themselves as British and/or English, against the force from outside the school, to categorise

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64 I undertake a thorough-going discussion of contemporary blackness at the end of Part Two. Here I attempt to bring together the findings on black teachers with the students discussed in Part Two.
them as 'Afro Caribbean'. The student resistance was perhaps articulated by a teacher who maintained that 'second and third generation blacks' were shaped by their British context and less, if at all, by their Caribbean affiliation. There was concern with this change, nevertheless, as it generated tensions around the acquisition of whiteness. The acquisition of whiteness for the black subject remains an uneasy situation. This constituted the unresolved issues for blacks in this study. For while black British identity was revealed as being constituted by blackness and whiteness, blacks were seen to be simultaneously seeking to embrace and to resist its constituent parts.

Blacks in this study seemed to resist the category of blackness in an attempt to undermine the impetus to be defined primarily as blacks – first, foremost and only. With their resistance, they sought, instead, to foreground their sense of personhood. This seemed to generate tensions, however, because if blackness is totally dispensed with, then personhood is also undermined. Blackness, or something of blackness, necessarily needs to survive as a standing refutation to its historical construction as inferior, other. It seems necessary that the person's blackness be acknowledged in the acknowledgement of her/him as a person.

Whiteness also created complications for blacks. While they sought to embrace those things about themselves that are British and white, they were suspicious and apprehensive about inhabiting an identity that was considered white. Their uneasiness was born out of the fear of being actively denied participation in such an identity by whites. There was also personal distrust that one should participate in such an identity. All this is set against the knowledge that they do, nevertheless, participate in identities considered black and white. As for the whites in this study, the language used to describe blacks' realities, as they perceived them, does not, or at present, cannot, do so fully.

5:4 Summary of Research Findings
What is the state of contemporary blackness?

Contemporary blackness, regarded as a black and white identity, can be seen as being abject; as a black and white identity it can be seen as being at once a composite whole and/or the compromised fragment of its imagined whole. Therefore, contemporary blackness can be seen as a site of huge tension. It may be seen as being in a state of abjection.

The tensions may arise in part from failing to take account of the fact that at present, history has generated at least two ways of explicating blackness. Explicating blackness has two distinct academic traditions. There is an American tradition, arising out the particular politics of 1970s black America; it documents the emergence of a monolithic or essentialist sense of blackness. There is also British academic tradition of the comparable period; it attempts to deconstruct the monolith. Articulated in Hall’s (1996b) call for new ethnicities, the British academic tradition acknowledges individual positioning. I would maintain that each is a ‘moment’ (Hall, 1996b) in the trajectory of contemporary blackness. Hall’s (1996b) call for ‘new ethnicities’ may once again be noted and endorsed. I would further maintain, unlike Hall, however, that the essentialising moment (clearly) has not passed. Maybe it does not need to; maybe it can co-exist with a fragmentary moment. Maybe the two fragments can constitute a composite whole. Maybe new ethnicities will, at least for the foreseeable future, combine the two. Maybe blacks can embrace that.

At present, the symbolic structures of language and society resist acknowledging that contemporary blackness is constituted by blackness and whiteness. Contemporary blackness is forced to reside outside the symbolic structures of language and society. It, therefore, occupies an imaginary space outside the symbolic structures of society and language.

Contemporary blackness resides in the imagination – existing as black and white, composite and whole.
How is race handled in successful school contexts?

At the present time, race is contained in successful multicultural school contexts. That is, such contexts silence race in providing spaces that are free from the conflicts and insecurities that arise from race; they thereby arrest the potential for race to cause disruption and disharmony. Those issues of race that prove resilient to the schools’ overall strategy are actively interpreted as issues arising from something other than race. The schools and their teachers in this study articulated such issues of race within other discourses they felt less threatened by and/or felt more competent in maintaining. Teachers operated discourses, for example, of gender difference, religion, parenting and pedagogy, to negotiate the actual demands presented by race. These schools, thereby, developed and operated strategies that transformed the issues of race within their contexts into race-free issues, and their spaces into race-free zones.

This seemed to be related to the fact that the conflicts, tensions and insecurities that race introduce remain – even if silenced. Schools are, therefore, always vulnerable to abjection. To discuss issues of race openly seemed to threaten not just to introduce disruption, but to leave the teachers without the means of responding to either the issues or the disruption. Teachers, therefore, felt the need to contain race so as to be able to prevent the disruption that it introduced into their professional- and personal identities – as competent and good. An exploration of race revealed the abject nature of those identities, in particular, their personal identities. The teachers consequently contained discussion on race to prevent experiencing abjection. The structures of the school were called upon to provide a safe space not just for the student, but for the teachers and students, to enable the teachers to work within them.

Teachers and schools managed the transformation of their contexts into race-free zones by securing commitment amongst all members of the school to a core identity which all could feel they shared or in which all could feel they could participate. In this way they also
privileged and encouraged identities other than racial identities within the schools. Perhaps, the schools' greatest success lay in them obtaining the tacit agreement amongst themselves, students and teachers alike, not to talk about race or the difficulties it introduces – at least not in the public domain.

As part of a double vision that obtained on race, both schools denied race, but also had mediated a response to it such it was part of the public imagination that racism was not condoned – irrespective of whether or not or the extent to which this was so. It was also part of the public consciousness, in the main, that all children were equal and/or had equal rights – again irrespective of the details within the context. For such contexts in the end were neither free from race nor from slipping into questionable practices to do with race. In successful schools it was the feeling of harmony, at least, the feeling that the context was free from racial disharmony that managed to contain race. In such contexts, race is handled to give the appearance that it is being handled successfully – and that appearance is crucial to their successful image.

**Boundary Methodology**

I recognise that boundary methodology can be but in its most initial stages as a system for research. It will benefit from more detailed study of methodological approaches and philosophical engagement on the subjects of epistemology and ontology. I adumbrate its salient features at this stage of its development, referring the reader to whole text for more details.

The theory of abjection underpins boundary methodology. As such, the methodology has been rooted in a Signifying(g) standpoint underpinned by afrocentric feminist epistemology. The approach is further situated within a Lacanian post-structuralist paradigm for knowledge creation. These theoretical underpinnings render boundary methodology as an approach that views truth and reality as constructions. It interprets binary oppositions as suggesting
wholeness; the approach embraces composite identities, and thereby undertakes a dialectic project of explaining self to the other and the other to the self. It privileges a research design that is exploratory and responsive, with a commitment to finding and using appropriate means to investigate answers to the question posed by the research. Interviews, in particular, unstructured interviews, provide a rich source of data. The method would also lend itself to documentary analysis.

At the level of analysis both a phenomenological and a structuralist impulse inform the method of interpretation within this approach. Participants’ description of their world forms the basis of the analysis; however, the researcher is instated as the mediator and creator of knowledge. I, therefore, sustain the Lacanian impulse through to the actual design of the study, arguing for a method of interpretation that applies the phenomenological as well as the structuralist impulses of Lacanian post-structuralism; however, I have also developed this method beyond its origin. I use dialogue as the means of generating the localised knowledge of research participants. However, I instate the researcher as the one who makes meaning of the narratives.

This is, therefore, unlike its Lacanian psychoanalytic origin where the emphasis is on the analysand, or the speaker, to make meaning of the narrative produced. In the psychoanalytic context, the analysand decides on what counts as the truth. In the way I applied the theory, all the narratives collected constitute a new textual reality, one that is removed from the reality of the individual speaker. The researcher is instated as the producer of knowledge; s/he makes meaning of the narrative(s). This is because the way in which the data is filtered to produce knowledge is dependent on the specific theoretical frameworks that are brought to bear on the data. It might not, nor does it need to be the case that research participants share these understandings.
To mediate the knowledge the researcher uses means to deliver the data as being removed from the actual reality of the research participants’ life. In this research there were two distinct stages, making detailed summaries of individual interviews, and focussing analysis on these instead of the actual verbatim transcripts. The use of a computer package, in this case Nudist, is a useful means of working with the data and providing demonstrable rigour. Analysis does not to seek to re-state what the participants say. The emphasis is on articulating possible meanings that the participants may or not recognise and/or accept, hence the need for analysis to be transparent.

I have provided a metaphor in the form of an equation that condenses the research process thereby suggesting a means by which both the researcher and her/his audience have access to a common, perhaps, more readily accessible, means by which the study is conducted and evaluated. The equation is a check on the process and product of research. Fuller details have been provided in Part Three; the equation is as follows:

\[ f = \sum e \left( \frac{d}{r} \times \frac{1}{r} \right) \]

Because of the method of interpretation the researcher must give attention to the building of trust and/or ensure that there is informed consent by explaining the nature of the project and the method of analysis in particular.

**Who Can Use Boundary Methodology?**

Anyone can use this approach, men women, blacks, whites, British, Jamaicans. Moreover, it can be useful in studying other issues besides race. The approach is useful in understanding any composite, seemingly contradictory identity; the study of systems undergoing change and systems that are resistant to change, and change itself. It can, therefore, be used in gender study, class study, for example, to examine composite identities or identities in transition. The impulse is on reconstruction through understanding what constitutes the change, its
tensions and the resultant context. Especially at this multicultural moment, the use of boundary methodology by both blacks and whites together would prove a truly exciting adventure in explaining the self to the other, and the other to the self. It would be interesting to see how it impacts on the field of race and schooling.

5:5 Weakness of the Research Design

However ‘boundary methodology’ study will be received, I thought I might begin the ‘rigorous critique’, that I invited (see p. 67) in response to my methodology. I highlight that I have opted to critique the weaknesses that I have identified now that I have come to the end of the study, rather attempt to rewrite the story of how I have conducted it to mask its shortcomings. And these shortcomings, I believe, have to do with one basic weakness. In reporting my methodology, I highlighted that one teacher felt betrayed. This ‘betrayal incident’ aptly encapsulates what I consider the study’s central weakness.

While I have argued that my decision not to use data collected from the ‘betrayed teacher’ maintained the integrity of the data collected and analysed, I decided against using documents on that teacher primarily because the teacher felt betrayed. Rather than being a powerful tool in helping her to trust me, the transcripts arrested her willingness to participate in the research. It was clear, that the transcripts did not always work in the way I detailed (see pp. 129 - 130). In fact, she adroitly exposed the tension of the design. Returning teachers’ transcripts came in tension with the fact that I saw the data as mine and that I would make meaning of it.

This is what I have painstakingly outlined in developing my methodology. Let’s recapitulate. First, the contract was: there would be dialogue. We would talk, rather, they would talk; I would go away and make meaning of what they said. I planned to treat data as a text that is...
removed from the speakers' (p. 117). Second, 'the verbatim transcripts are regarded as that which constitutes the reality of this research, not the reality of the teachers' lives (p. 117)'. The teachers' narratives become data... to answer the question I have posed' (p. 118). It was not, so much then, that I saw the teacher's request for editing as threatening to undermine the research, although I really did think this at the time. More importantly, however, especially in light of my argument on the ethic of caring, I failed to give sufficient attention to the fact that she saw 'the data' as constituting the reality of her life. My response to her request, trying to convince her of my methodology, was, effectively, merely repeating my desire that she trusts me: 'I am researcher'.

To be sure, I acted in good faith when I decided to return transcripts rather than provide detailed verbal reports to the teachers. It was in response to a teacher's request. A research participant suggested it and it looked like a good idea. If nothing else, I thought it would help reveal my commitment to being open and honest. This would build trust, reassure participants and lead to better quality of data. However, I can see now, (more than a year afterwards, I would add) where my method fell apart. I did not anticipate anyone asking that her/his transcripts be edited. I anticipated that when I returned the transcripts, they could add details, if they wished, that clarified an issue in a way that satisfied them. That was a big part of the rationale – that would provide more data. Returning the transcripts, however, necessarily bound me to being prepared, quite literally, to lose what I was returning. I wanted every last word, remember, (see p. 113) to make sense of the whole narrative.

There was also a fundamental tension with my interpretation of afrocentric feminist epistemology. Ladson-Billings (1994) stressed that she and her research participants met regularly, over the course of years and together arrived at the answers she could have presented in her report. They did not just have an interview, then she went off to make meaning. Dialogue was a central part of the collection and analysis of the study. In my study.
dialogue was also central, but more so at the point of data collection. It was the means to
rooting the analysis in the participants’ reality – that was the purpose it served in my
interpretation of the centrality of dialogue to the research exercise.

Ladyn-Billings research participants also came to know her personally. In keeping with
afrocentric epistemology, participants did not give her blind trust. I failed to take on board
that researchers have little or no control over participants’ trust. I could not compel anyone to
trust me. The other research participants were generous in allowing me to use their data
unchallenged, especially as, even without this incident, trust revealed itself an unstable thing
within the research. While the incident may have been complicated by the things I discuss
next, certainly, the teacher who felt betrayed draws attention to the need for researchers to
give serious thought to the issue of trust within research.

For the ways in which participants identified with or in opposition to me, had already placed
the question of trust under duress. I am black. I was confirmed politically black. I was seen to
be working to improve the conditions of black children schooling. I was, however, to some,
spuriously interested in the experiences of white teachers. Why not racism?
Underachievement? That I was a researcher meant I was an outsider. Further, in a context
where religion was everything, I did not espouse religious views. Additionally, though seen
as a successful black person, at least one person intimated that I was considered to present a
less than perfect image of a respectable (black) professional. This person highlighted that I
looked different from the black female teachers. I may even have been seen as anti-
establishment.

All this influenced the ways in which both black and white identified with and against (that
is, in opposition to) me. In terms of being a researcher, both white and black teachers were
suspicious of my focus on white teachers. However, whatever the possible reasons, the
betrayal incident seemed to provide remarkable reassurance to white teachers in particular that they could trust me. It seemed that if they had any doubt about whether I was really 'on their side', at least I was not on the black side either. Certainly, it was noteworthy, that the significant interviews of the study, significant for the sort of personal revelations white teachers gave, were arranged by the teachers involved and conducted after the episode with the betrayed black teacher.

I regret that I was unable to satisfactorily relieve the teacher of her sense of betrayal. The best that I can do now is remove her whole document from the research, as I should have removed what she asked.\(^\text{85}\) But I have reasons to believe that her sense of betrayal, that is her trust, though possibly unstable, might have been built on the feeling that I would not show her up because we were both committed to improving conditions for black children. Understand her reaction when she receives evidence, recorded by me, of what she agrees is less than perfect practice. Were we not on the same side? Was I not on her side?

This exposes another, for me personally, serious, shortcoming in this exercise. With no intention of excusing myself, it occurred precisely because the focus of my study was on blackness and white teachers. I devoted considerable energy on harnessing the experiences of white teachers; when not doing that, I was investigating blackness as black-and-white, and believing myself to understand the nihilist distressing disruption this could cause, concerned myself with protecting 'little black children'. All important things, I still believe, but all blacks, the adults too, as I so passionately wrote, should not be 'brought kicking and screaming' (p. 42) into this (possibly, my) understanding of reality, especially not the ones

\(^{85}\) I would like to highlight that researchers’ maturity, as researchers, (and possibly otherwise) has consequence for research and research participants. Notice for example that white teachers did share quite detailed and personal stories about themselves; this is in marked contrast to the depth of responses I obtained from the black boys whom I studied in my masters thesis. There betrayal was not a question, I don’t think. Then I did not know that interviewing them on that subject was not the best way to go about generating knowledge on blackness. I would also highlight that while my focus in this study may have been responsible for what happened to this teacher, and while I regret that she felt betrayed, she
who became empirically involved in the study.

Importantly, nonetheless, and this might have helped save the day, while the incident may have influenced the way both black and white teachers participated in the research in the way that they did, it was definitely implicated in the way I did. As researcher, despite my politics, and especially in this research, I could not afford to be seen on either side, and yes, especially not on the black side; (please know I have wrestled over writing that last phrase.) If, however, my research caused disruption – for both the white and black participants, both equally, but especially black teachers, required more than a promise that I could be trusted and that they would co-operate.

Both black and white teachers helped to rescue the research exercise when it was threatened with being shut down as a result of the incident. Individuals saying that their transcripts were fair even when not all complimentary, was crucial to the head deciding to allow the research to continue. Why did the teachers do it? I did not (even think to) ask them that question, not even when black and white teachers alike, made the point of saying during their individual interviews that they felt comfortable, and that the transcripts were fair. (So keen I was on collecting the data). I am unable to say for certain how all this played itself out, but I think I can say I achieved one thing: I did actively discover a way to ‘problematis’ race in research and know, first hand, how problematic doing research on race is. It is something that is worth remembering, and I think needs to be taken forward.

In conclusion, I would say, that while my method of returning the transcripts was not thought through, the crucial error during fieldwork was not to have opted to edit as the teacher requested – upon her request. I would also maintain that because returning the transcript runs the risk of the loss of data, it comes in tension with the method of analysis. I believe there are

was the only teacher who took that position.
ways around this; this reinforces the need to consider the risk. I would maintain, that as a framework, boundary methodology went some way, not only in generating the particular insights it has, but, perhaps, in more ways than I might be able to describe, it is what made the study itself possible at all.

5:6 Implications and Further Research

Despite their public rhetoric, the government seem intent on underplaying race in their policy on race and schooling. The teachers in this study seemed to have the same approach. However, the investigation revealed that race was not a non-issue for them. They maintained a double vision on race so as to contain the tensions, contradictions and threat of inertia that race generated. This strategy was successful in maintaining the schools' reputation for working successfully with a culturally diverse population. However, theirs was not a perfect world. Containment is perhaps, a necessary moment in the trajectory of creating multicultural harmony; but it should not – and need not be the end.

The study draws attention to the ways in which whiteness resists or can resist the multicultural context, through the structures of the institution. Similarly, teachers' strategy of responding to race in terms of their understanding of other discourses is not straightforward. Conflating issues of race with issues of gender, and using religious, gender and parental discourses in deciding on their practice may be holding grounds for tensions, but also generate tensions worthy of further investigation. They have (silenced) consequences for non-white students.

Also, while teachers' strategies were used to contain the tensions sufficient to allow them room to function as professionals, this failed to adequately deal with unresolved, quite important issues for them personally. The strategy therefore, always seemed to threaten to
undermine the space they created for professional conduct. There is evidence that teachers want to explore the tensions, and also to acquire a language with which to engage such exploration. This study suggests that there is a need to develop the language for discussing the new ways in which race is being played out in society.

More research into how teachers are responding to the complexities and demands of the contemporary multicultural classroom would help in the development of such a language. This would include a focus on how teachers are racially positioned within schools. This is true of both white and black teachers. They are both racially positioned in schools, and the effect and consequences of these behave investigation. With respect to black teachers, consideration needs to be given to the implications of them being positioned as the 'natural disciplinarians' of black children, especially in light of the evidence from this study that black teachers privileged their professional identities in their practice.

Researchers need to be vigilant in seeing race as necessarily rendering situations complex realities. The research s/he conducts also needs to be capable of holding the complexities of the lived experiences of the multicultural context. For practice in such schools, even those regarded as successful, holds contradictions, tensions and complexities. There must be a willingness to grasp these. This is in the interest of knowledge creation, but it is also in the interest of engaging the discussion on race that teachers seem to want to explore.

The researcher needs also to take account of the ways his/her own race operates in the research from its conceptualisation, to data collection, to conclusions. Certainly, the evidence from this research shows that the researcher's race necessarily positions her/him within the research process – but in wholly unpredictable ways. Little, if anything, should be taken for granted. Researchers should also give due consideration to their ability to conduct such research: it does make demands other academic ones. S/he is also subject to the multifaceted
demands of race. At the least, I would argue, the researcher’s politics needs to be acknowledged.

Still, researchers need to take on the investigation of race, and race and schooling as their findings are of importance beyond the classroom. Teachers and schools provide an insight into how race is being engaged within the society. This study gives full support to the Parekh Report’s call that Britain re-imagines its past story and present identity. Rather than silencing talk of race, this study underscores the need to focus attention on the very language used to discuss race, to encourage its development, and to use it to further our own.

5.7 The Possibility of Multicultural Success

This study, therefore, supports the move beyond the present strategy of containment into embracing this moment of abjection. This would facilitate the possibility of entering into a new multicultural moment in which race, with all its multifaceted demands, can be actively engaged, not suppressed. This study suggests that within multicultural schools, the way forward lies in realising that success has two component parts. For black students, the black and white identity that has been used to describe the identity of academically successful black students, needs to be legitimated as an identity that black students may inhabit. A black and white identity, as a successful black student, may be legitimated because it is consistent with contemporary blackness; contemporary blackness is black and white. If this composite identity is embraced, then it may release black children to enjoy, that is, actively seek, participate and revel in academic success without the fear of or actual reprisal. To increase the possibility that these students will flourish academically, their teachers and schools need to handle race such that neither the teachers nor the students feel disenfranchised or vulnerable because of their race. Both blacks and whites have a part to play.

This study reveals blacks and whites seeking new ways to discuss their reality of living
together. Therefore, it would seem that there is a willingness to take on the possibility of the present; now seems an opportune moment to begin to work through our colonial past collectively — together — in dialogue with each other. In our abject state, we can see the dissolution of the ways in which we used to imagine our identities as racial. We can experience our abjection as the offering of new possibilities. If we can see that our language is at the end of its usefulness, we can also own our present reality by actively constructing the narrative that tells the story of our time. We can, if we would, imagine a different tomorrow by rewriting today.

This study shows that schools regarded as successful with working with race premise their response on shared feelings of identity and purpose within the school. There is a common identity in which all can participate, and a consensus on what will be seen as the way things are. They create a respite from the difficulties of race, a holding ground where there is some consensus — agreed upon by all — where they exist without friction and uncertainty, and get on with the business of teaching and learning; it is not a perfect world, but, perhaps, this is a beginning.

It is true –
I’ve always loved
the daring
ones…
ADDENDUM

The study which I wrote for the award of the degree of Master of Education generated more issues and questions than it had been designed to answer. These questions and issues were to become fundamental to what became my study for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Primary amongst my concerns was the wish to develop understanding of contemporary activity around blackness.

I wanted to investigate the notion of blackness as black-and-white amongst academically successful black children, and the response blackness received within successful multicultural schools. In particular, I wanted to understand the demand and impact of race on black students and teachers, particularly white teachers, as they created safe spaces to inhabit amidst the difficulties they faced in multicultural settings.

The behaviour of the children in my masters thesis suggested to me that discussing blackness generated anxieties and fears. With further thought, I could also appreciate that teachers were also likely to have anxieties and fears in exploring their response within a multicultural setting. I believed these were important considerations that should guide my study and subsequently sought to conduct research that would be sensitive to and capture the anxieties and fears race generates.

Nevertheless, the comparative finesse with which I have just articulated these thoughts for the PhD study was not possible at the beginning of the study. There was no clear-cut understanding of how I might proceed with the project I had set myself. I did think that the field of race and schooling in which I was located was overwhelmingly defined by the insights generated within sociological studies. And while they provided important and insightful information and developed my thinking in response to my project, I found the literature within the sociology of race and schooling limiting in suggesting a means by which I could achieve the kind of investigation I
sought. I began, therefore, reading around and outside this field in search of theoretical and methodological insights for my study. This led to my discovery and use of various theorists and/or traditions.

I will explain ways in which the ideas used were generally helpful in my research practice with some examples of each of these, and similarly, I will explain and exemplify problems or limitations which I encountered. Next I will introduce three other sets of ideas of which I was made aware subsequent to writing my thesis. I will explain the nature of the problem and limitations which they are intended to overcome, relate these to those I experienced in my own practice, discuss the advantages they might offer, and evaluate the contribution they could make.

*Lacanian Psychoanalysis: a theoretical framework*

Lacan’s (1999) ideas were generally helpful in my research practice in addressing questions about the paradigmatic or general methodological framing of my study. Subsequently, his ideas also helped to address questions of truth and validity and were accordingly influential in my method of data collection and data analysis. To begin, this meant that my study would not be positivist; it would be interpretivist. Further, of the available approaches to interpretivist social science research that I could have chosen, my methodology would combine phenomenological and structuralist impulses.

Subsequently, I sought to elicit and explore my research participant’s accounts of experienced reality. I regarded what they said as the way they made sense of their worlds. I saw their accounts as narratives. And while I wanted them to tell me what they thought, I posited that I would not question whether the research participants were able to access or articulate precisely what they did, or whether what they said was actually what happened. This position was rooted in Lacan’s
assertions that one cannot access any notion of reality external to the analysand’s speech and that
the only truth that matters is that which constitutes the analysand’s narration.

Accordingly, I focussed on the accounts of my research participants. My focus was less on trying
to deconstruct their accounts of reality or to duplicate, that is re-present exactly what they
described. While I paid attention to what they said, throughout the study I also sought to look
beneath the surface of their accounts to arrive at new understandings of the ways in which they
constructed their worlds. I investigated what they said as narratives which gave insight into how
they constructed their reality or how their reality was constructed by them.

I saw this as an application of Lacan’s phenomenological and structuralist approach to the
interpretation of text. Therefore, while Lacan provided a general philosophical framing of the
study, his particular ideas of interpreting text were also influential in my decision to rely on
interviews as the primary source of data collection, to use mainly unstructured interviews and to
take a structuralist approach to analysis.

Further, my approach to making a structuralist analysis relied on attention to stylistic devices
used to counter censorship of the unconscious and reveal what might inform people’s narratives.
Accordingly, metaphors and metonymy were important, as well as jokes, slips of the tongue and
inconsistencies directly influenced analysis. The categories generated during coding in Nudist
(introduced on p. 159 and presented in full on p.306 along with their definitions on pp. 307 – 9)
reflect both the structuralist impulse to analysis and the use of the stylistic devices as inroads to
understanding the teachers’ narratives. In the excerpt below, for example, sub-categories under
‘Race’ and ‘P.O.M’ (Point of Methodology) highlight the direct way in which Lacan’s influence
came to bear on my research exercise.
Appendix 2: Data Coding in Niidit

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<td>beliefs</td>
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<td>attitude</td>
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<td>learning</td>
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Footnote 46 on p. 142 provides a further illustration of the ways in Lacan's ideas influenced my research practice.

When I came to analysis, my first response to Alan's interview was an acknowledgement that I had been told a story. This was how Alan's summary began.

So what does one say about this interview? It constitutes, surely, a good example for treating data as a text. It also gives support for my methodological position of questioning the meaning of the meaning. This interview necessarily has to be treated as a text that is one step removed from its source. I felt that the teacher tried to construct a story for
me... This is not to suggest that nothing in it was true. That it was all a lie... While the
teacher assumed the role, quite actively of a storyteller, one which he thoroughly enjoyed
at that[,] he let other things slip. He drew on examples to elucidate his ideas and develop
the plot and it [is] these examples that afford the double take, to hear what is said and to
see how it develops the story and [to] consider its implication separate from the plot the
of the story...

My use of Lacan's ideas to guide the methodology of the study was inhibited by the fact that my
research participants were not analysands seeking psychoanalysis. Further, I had particular
requirements to meet in my social science discipline. So while Lacan provided a philosophical
framing of the study, I had to develop more specific approaches that would guide the generation
and analysis of data. Therefore, for example, I approached my interview context in different
ways to the a psychoanalytic interview. I had a research question that I wanted answered and
went to the teachers seeking their answers. And while I used unstructured interviews, these were
adapted with my having general questions that I wanted answered. Consequently, I set up the
context within which I hoped the participants would speak freely.

The need for adaptation indicates the source of tensions I did not fully appreciate at the time of
the design of the study; the consequences of this were not necessarily straightforward either.
Consider the following observations I made on pp.132 - 3:

I think that I can claim that the data collected reflects what the teachers thought, or more
precisely, it reflects the topics about which they wanted to talk. They would not be
constrained by notions of a research question. It was as if the research activity tapped on
a subject that was bigger than the question itself. Teachers took up the opportunity to
discuss issues that concerned them... it seemed to me that they sometimes used the

1 Point of Methodology
interview not so much to speak to me as to speak about the issues they had... with emotions... [T]his latter issue posed ethical issues I had not foreseen. In essence they were the concerns of the teacher who felt betrayed [see discussion on pp. 296 – 301]. For it became apparent that the teachers wanted to talk, but they were undecided about whether they wanted what they said to be treated as data. For example, they would arrange an interview; give their permission to have it taped, then, at the end say something like: ‘you know if you use that people will know that I said it’.  

An Afrocentric Epistemology: Signifyin(g) and Afrocentric Feminist Thought

To meet particular methodological requirements which were not addressed by ideas from Lacan, I combined his ideas with those from Hill Collins’ (1990) afrocentric feminist thought and Gates’ (1988) Signifyin(g), a theory of African-American literary criticism. These three theorists provided what seemed an overall and tight methodology, from the philosophical framing of the study, to the data collection, analysis, writing and findings I would uphold. In particular, this combination additionally helped to root my project within a black aesthetic. This seemed important to me because my review of the literature in race and schooling, along with what might be called black literature, led me to believe that significant and necessary insights could be generated by claiming a position as a black knower.

Both Hill Collins’ (1990) theory of afrocentric feminist thought and Gates’ (1988) literary theory of Signifyin(g) appeal to afrocentric epistemology in seeking to establish and protect the subject position of the black person as knower and producer of knowledge. However, I felt excluded from the group and/or context (African-American – women) for which Hill Collins’ ideas seemed to be developed. On the other hand, Gates’ theory of African-American literature literary

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\(^2\) See footnote 79, p. 262, where I explain my reporting of teachers’ account of being called racist to see how this was addressed.
criticism seemed more inclusive of the black diaspora and resonated further with me and with my understanding of how blacks see the world.

Encouraged by the feminist arguments of Daly (1986), Harding (1987) and Hill Collins (1990), that challenges can and should be made on traditional approaches to doing research. I sought to develop an argument for presenting Gates’ literary theory of Signifyin(g) as a black standpoint for research. I believed that Signifyin(g) could offer a black standpoint that would provide me with a confident subject position as a Jamaican who could bring my seemingly distinct consciousness to the task of researching black and white Britons. Equally important, Signifyin(g) as standpoint could be inclusive of the mainstream in seeking to understand the other and to fashion an understanding of the world informed by the realities of both self and other, blacks and whites.

Having argued for this standpoint, I subsequently sought to root the principles of Hill Collins’ afrocentric feminist epistemology that I would use, within a Signifyin(g) standpoint rather than a black (African-American) feminist standpoint. However, mine was an argument for a standpoint. It could not stand on its own as a system for research whereas Hill Collins had delineated how afrocentric epistemology may be used within social science research. Hill Collins’ ideas were also particularly attractive in suggesting methodological considerations for researching sensitive and/or difficult issues. I, therefore, sought to follow the principles that she argued provided a black, alternative and acceptable guide for the research process.

Hill Collins (1990) argued against traditional understanding of epistemology in research for an alternative epistemology to validate knowledge claims. She rejected the principles of distance, absence of emotions, absence of ethics and values and adversarial debates as being inadequate in validating knowledge claims developed within black feminist thought. Knowledge validation within black feminist thought came in four other ways.
First, concrete experience is used as a criterion of meaning. That is, what is presented as knowledge is regarded as more credible if the speaker has lived the experience as opposed to having only read about it. Black intellectuals are also permitted to draw on their personal realities to negotiate knowledge claims. Secondly, dialogue is central to Afrocentric epistemology. Knowledge claims are not worked out in isolation, but are usually developed in dialogue with others. Thirdly, there is an ethic of caring. Individuals are allowed their uniqueness. Their emotions are seen as appropriate, and if displayed, taken as an indication of commitment to what is being said. The ethic of caring seeks to establish sympathy with those with whom dialogue is attempted. Finally there is an ethic of personal accountability where a person’s position is used in assessing knowledge claims.

I turned to the teachers as having concrete experience; they had the expert knowledge I sought to understand and report. I also drew on my personal understanding of reality in a number of ways. A Jamaican consciousness was important in the way I went about my study. Perhaps its most salient influence was in my generation and application of a methodological position in which I saw the racial other as constituting the self and not the binary opposite. This, for example, fashioned the premise of seeking to understand both blackness and white teachers in the way that I did – while additionally responding to Hill Collins’ principle of care.

My exploration of blackness as black-and-white, therefore, perhaps provides the most succinct example of this in my research practice. Returning to previous transcripts was also an attempt to care for black children, that is, I chose not to expose another group of black children to unacceptable levels of anxiety by interviewing them. And while I explored Hannah’s response to blackness with her (see pp 257 – 258) I also had ‘to work harder at posing’ and ‘buffer questions’ I asked her (see p 248, especially footnote73). The decision, ‘to present the [white teachers’]
abstract such that they weave a story in the teachers' own voice as I share their fear of being accused of being racist (p. 262) provides an example of my attempt to hear and be sympathetic towards the responses of the white teachers. And there were times when I stopped interviews, as in the case with Pam at Em (see p. 198, especially footnote 58) because I thought teachers had become upset.

However, while I made an argument for using Hill Collins' ideas I do not think that I transferred all her ideas well in my work. The element of trust and other ties that bind a community, and in particular, the black African-American community, were paramount to Hill Collins' project. My study did not seek to build or maximise trust along ethnic lines, that is, an African-American understanding of blackness or ethnic communal ties. This, therefore, may explain why my research brought disruption and distress for at least one black research participant.

One (black) teacher requested detailed editing of both her interview and observation transcripts... she was displeased to find that I had recorded things she found disagreeable in the transcripts of her class. She did not dispute that they had happened, but she felt that I would not have recorded them. Similarly, she wanted to delete things in her verbatim transcript that she felt reflected badly on her. In documenting things she felt reflected badly on her, she felt that I had betrayed some tacit understanding and her trust (p. 126).

In a detailed discussion at the end of my thesis I expressed my regret for the distress that the research caused the teacher. Nevertheless, this is a weakness in my study that could have been addressed by giving greater thought and application to Hill Collins' ideas. Instead, I compounded my inadequate response to the essence of her theory by also establishing that I would go off on my own and work out knowledge claims in isolation.
And I did. The entire report privileged my understanding of what I thought the data revealed. So while I claimed that dialogue was important to my project, I sought to develop and uphold a methodology that would discount the place of dialogue with others at the stage of data analysis – a most important requirement of Hill Collins’ method. I thought I had developed a methodology that allowed for this, but even so, it was a complete abandonment of Hill Collins’ ideas.

I also failed to fully appreciate or make use of another important principle consonant with Hill Collins’ radical theorising, the ethic of personal accountability. She maintains that a researcher’s position should be used in assessing the knowledge claims of his/her research exercise. Had I given proper consideration to this ethic of personal accountability, I would have given greater consideration to ensuring that my ideas were clear and cogent rather than, for example, trying to suggest that the following equation might be useful in deciding on the findings of a research exercise:

\[ f = \sum c \left( \frac{d}{r} \times \frac{v}{r} \right) \] (pp. 120 – 122)

The fact was that I was a PhD student only beginning to learn about the tenets of research. Another fact was that, in my political strategy of seeking ‘to bring new knowledge from other disciplines into race and schooling in a way that it can be accepted and thereby suggest other ways of conceptualising race and schooling’ (p. 109), my politics overtook my academic discipline. And I attempted too great a task. I could have made better use of Hill Collins’ theory with less thought about my ideas and more thought about hers. And my work would have been better for it.

Similarly, my work would have benefited from greater reflection on my own arguments. For example, with more reflection I may have discerned that ‘using afrocentric feminist epistemology
noted in a Signifyin(g) standpoint rather than a black (African-American) feminist standpoint' (p. 107) was internally unstable. I had argued that

...where both standpoints allow an outsider-within perspective, the way that notion is operationalised is different. A black feminist standpoint retains the division of the 'outsider' and the 'insider'. The black looks at the white as other. Signifyin(g) recognises that the other constitutes the self. This opens up more experiences, other than that of African-American women as the site for the discovery of knowledge, and knowledge about oneself. It allows male and female, and blacks and whites new possibilities in research (p. 108).

The difference between the two could in fact constitute quite fundamentally distinct approaches — and may be worthy of even greater thought than that which is possible here.

*Increasing Analytic Rigour: Moscovici and Kristeva*

Gates, Hill Collins and Lacan's ideas provided a methodological framework and method specific for my research. With Lacan and Hill Collins' ideas I sought to build an argument that maintained the centrality of the individual in the research exercise, that is the phenomenological dimension. The consistency between Gates and Lacan's ideas, in particular, also supported a structuralist investigation of data. Moscovici's (1984) theory of social representation and cognitive polyphasia and Kristeva's (1982) theory of the abject and abjection combined with Lacanian ideas to increase the analytic rigour of the research exercise.

Kristeva's notion of the abject and abjection provided added dimension and depth to the analysis I performed throughout my project and fitted very well with the overall theoretical approach and what I wished to achieve. As I highlighted, Burton (1998) argues for Kristeva's theory as a means by which to understand race at the present time. I agreed with Burton's argument and therefore
returned to Kristeva because of my interest in understanding and theorising contemporary blackness and issues around race at the present time. Contemporary blackness it seemed to me needed to be theorised – it needed to be articulated in a way that explained, or held lived realities as I understood them at the present time. Blackness it seemed to me had undergone a change since the 1970s – important as that era was. The identity politics of the 1970s had been articulated and theorised (see Baker et al. 1996); contemporary blackness now asked for its vernacular and lived experiences to be taken account of theoretically.

Hall’s (1996) project of new ethnicities beckoned for development. With Kristeva’s theory I could posit that blackness had become abject and that this caused abjection in the consensual universe of blackness. Kristeva’s ideas combined with Moscovici’s, helped one to appreciate why blackness defended itself against change, and underscored the necessity to use an approach to the study of blackness that was respectful of the potential friction latent in speaking about things that are banned within that universe. Therefore, Kristeva’s theory also informed the search for a methodology, and was crucial in my decision to explore blackness as I did.

I did not apply Kristeva’s theory to the white teachers in my study because at the time of analysis I wanted to maintain my focus not so much on the construction of their racial identity, but their professional identities as people racially positioned within their contexts. It is clear that Kristeva’s ideas, nonetheless, could have been applied to these teachers’ narratives to explore what seemed the abject nature of whiteness and the resultant abjection this had the potential to occasion. I did begin a tentative exploration when I suggested how white teachers were critiquing and resisting their own critique of white identity as they explored whether racism as an abject feature of white identity constituted their individual identities. I mentioned, but without development, the notion that teachers resisted their exploration because it occasioned a dissolution of their sense of themselves, a situation they were as yet uncertain how to address.
Nevertheless, while Kristeva's theory was not used to explore in detail the teachers' racial identity, it implicitly assisted in explaining their worlds. For I was able to discern that in their state of cognitive polyphasia, the teachers were resisting the possibility that they inhabited abject identities. In fact, I suggested that they clung to their state of cognitive polyphasia so as to avoid the beckoning abjection. The experience of abjection seemed to be feared as a nihilist end. With hindsight, I might even argue that the teachers chose polyphasia over abjection so as to conduct the business of teaching and learning as best as they could.

With the use of Sewell's work, I had attempted to suggest how blackness could take on abjection as the possibility of reconstruction. With the teachers I argued that in resisting abjection, their state of cognitive polyphasia was a moment of containment. I maintained that containment may give way to the stage of abjection. The task remains to suggest how the experience of abjection affords reconstruction for the ways in which we construct ourselves as racial and how we might accordingly overcome some current difficulties.

Moscovici's ideas were part of the drive to find a method that would help me understand how subjects construct their reality, be it the consensual world of the school or that of the individual narrative. His influence was latent at the methodological stage of the thesis as I sought to articulate a specific paradigm and method. Nevertheless, his ideas influenced the primacy I gave to language in the construction of these realities, and also to expect – and, therefore, have a means to hold – the complexities of these constructions.

The notion of consensual universe underpins the overall theory of social representations. Research in the field of social representations tends to investigate the development of a representation over time. It also takes as its focus people's investments in the worlds they create.
for themselves and the mechanisms they use to maintain these worlds. While these are developed methodologies for the investigations into the development of social representations over time, the specific sub-theory of cognitive polyphasia has a less developed tradition. Indeed, it is presented as a hypothesis by Moscovici which his scholars adapt in their application of the idea (see, for example, Wagner, Duveen, Verma and Themel, 2000).

I applied Moscovici’s insights on social representations to understand blackness as black-and-white; the development of a possibly new social representation of blackness. In the second half of the study I wished to concentrate on the multicultural space that black children inhabit. My focus turned specifically to cognitive polyphasia, but, especially since this is a notion without an established methodological tradition, I found the need to generate my own — which I did — as described above. My methodology was also informed by my wish to apply Moscovici’s ideas.

I wanted to take a structuralist approach to analysis; Moscovici ideas became a guide as to how I would actually conduct it. His cognitive polyphasia took primacy in the data chapters as the lens through which I sought to look beneath the surface of teachers’ narratives to unearth the complex construction and maintenance of their particular life worlds. Therefore, for example, as an introduction to the data chapters I argued that

While I seek to recover the teachers’ presence by alluding to ‘them’, it was also the case that in both schools, there was a tendency to avoid talking about race explicitly. This tendency was like a hesitation in their interviews, something they deliberated over with themselves in trying to decide whether they should engage the topic and if they did how and what they would reveal. When I came to analysis this pattern attracted my attention because it was so strong. Subsequently, I paid attention to the ways in which race as a topic surfaced in their discussions or where they seemed to deliberately suppress it. In
investigating this finding, I operationalised Moscovici's theory of social representations.

in particular, cognitive polyphasia to understand their reasons for using this strategy, the
issues they discussed, as well as the ways in which they discussed those issues (p. 139).

I believe Moscovici's ideas provided a powerful framework for understanding the complexities of
the world of the schools I investigated. Nevertheless, my findings may be contested on the
grounds that the claims I make are mine and very possibly not the explanation that teachers
themselves might uphold. I did argue, for example, that

what is presented here [in the data chapters] can be considered my illumination of what
teachers said. Their 'Is' are also absent in the sense that it is I, the researcher, who
presents this report. My illumination should be seen as separate from but rooted in the
data. It is the sense I have made of what the teachers told me. As far as that goes, what is
here, is written under the particular constraints of my research questions and the word
limit of my thesis... This thesis is also an abbreviation, mine, of the full life at the schools
(p.140).

This challenge on the findings of the study would successfully invalidate the study since other
systems of justification, for example that applied to a strict phenomenological study, would not be
met. I cannot assert that the claims made are those that the teachers would make if we had sat
down and worked out knowledge claims together. The teacher being discussed below, for
example, may not agree with my analysis of what he said:

Alan fought in at least two of those difficult fights and was amongst the strategists for the
school. He revealed that in their major fight against closure Em took the position that,

"Our main argument was, "Look we are providing for our local community," whatever
the arguments the authority decided to go ahead with. We see here that Em's claim of providing for the local community was regarded as being capable of warding off whatever the opposition brought. They trusted that 'provision for the local community' would hold their position.

... Semantically, 'the local catchment' was made synonymous with the 'local community', and 'local community' subsequently replaced 'local catchment' in the claim Em made. Since 'local community' replaced 'local catchment', Em's claim could more accurately be stated as: the local catchment is the local community for whom we are fighting to provide.... We now see that Em's claim can be accepted as true if it is not interpreted literally (pp. 144–145).

Alternative Methodological Approaches


Hollway and Jefferson (2000) rank amongst the group of researchers seeking ways change in the ways in which research is conducted. They seek to effect the recovery of the research subject as a psychosocial subject and to develop a methodological strategy that would increase the level of understanding between the researcher and this psychosocial research subject. For Hollway and Jefferson regard research subjects as meaning-making and defended subjects who,

May not hear the question through the same meaning frame as that of the interviewer or other interviewees... are invested in particular positions in discourses to protect vulnerable aspects of themselves... may not know why they experience or feel things in the way that they do... and are motivated, largely unconsciously, to disguise the meaning of at least some of their feelings and actions (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p. 27).
Hollway and Jefferson, therefore, saw the need to do qualitative research differently and turned to psychoanalytic theory so as to achieve their goal because they saw the psychoanalytic interview as offering a model for qualitative research. Using the work of the psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein, Hollway and Jefferson made an argument for using free association as a theoretical foundation for conducting research. And, in transferring the ideas from Klein's work for use within their methodological argument, Hollway and Jefferson identified story-telling as sharing with the psychoanalytic method the all important feature of containing 'significances beyond the teller's intention' (p. 33).

By combining their Kleinian orientation with their adaptation of the German sociological biographical-interpretative tradition, the researchers were able to delineate an arresting argument for accessing, collecting and analysing data so as to generate different types of insights from research. These arguments translated into the method-specific approach of the unstructured interview beginning with very open-ended questions, and developing into a context where stories were elicited. Hollway and Jefferson posited that: the data gathering context needs to be as open as possible; it should avoid asking 'why questions'; it should make use of respondents' ordering and phrasing for probing; and should be a context for story-telling in which research subjects are encouraged to say what comes to mind.

With the researcher eliciting stories the research participant procures the possibility to choose the story s/he wishes to use to respond to the research question. The speaker will additionally be able to indicate the emphases and the morals to be drawn from what is said. The researcher on the other hand gains access to a response that allows her/him to pay attention to what is said, avoided and is contradictory or inconsistent. And consistent with the theory of free association, it is the incoherence of the narrative that provides the researcher with the possibility of an insightful, fuller analysis of an individual response.
I wanted the benefits for the researcher described by Hollway and Jefferson; further, their project of seeking to recover the research subject as a psychosocial subject is useful in articulating what I sought to achieve in my research task. As I have stated, at the outset of the study, I had no clear-cut understanding of how I might proceed. Still, I was driven to find new ways of conducting my research because I thought that the field of race and schooling in which I was located was overwhelmingly defined by the insights generated within sociological studies. Additionally, I found the literature within the sociology of race and schooling limiting in suggesting a means by which I could achieve the kind of investigation I sought.

My reading around and outside the sociological literature of race and schooling was a search for theoretical and methodological insights. The ideas from the various theorists and/or traditions I gravitated towards were in the main social psychological. And accordingly, in effect, I sought to render the contexts and the people I would study as psychosocial subjects. I wanted to investigate them in the manner described by Hollway and Jefferson and like them, even sought to use a psychoanalytic idea to provide the theoretical premise and guide for conducting research. However, while I sought to piece together a methodology from disparate ideas – sufficient to meet the criteria for the award of an academic degree – Hollway and Jefferson had worked out already, and accordingly, made available, a cogent, tested and accepted argument for doing research differently. Their argument could have been a ready-made methodology that I might have adapted or straightforwardly adopted.

Certainly, using Hollway and Jefferson's work would have been advantageous in my study. The following excerpt, for example, virtually elaborates the theorist's argument about defended subjects and, perhaps, underscores Hollway and Jefferson's contention for how such subjects should be investigated, or more precisely, how they should not be. Amongst other things, I
demonstrate, for example, why the researcher should not ask 'why'. As shown, it does not take
the discussion forward and in fact might cause distress to the speaker.

The Racist Accusation

We recall Daniel saying 'I am not racist as long as England gets beat' (see p. 242). When
he said this, it was delivered as a joke, but in a follow-up interview I invited him to
elaborate.

J: [reviewing the transcript of the previous interview, each with a copy] [I ask] 'Can you
tell me about being a white teacher? You start off by saying I am not racist. Why did you
think you needed to start by saying I am not racist?

TEACHER: As we went on to say, it is a case of you making light of a situation. I can
see where you were going with it like, the question. It is a fair question, but as we said, it
has never been a problem to me.

J: What I am asking, is why you thought you had to state that you are not a racist? What
was the impetus?

TEACHER: I don't know. As the sentence said I am not racist as long as England get
beat; it is just a tongue and cheek humour. In my view, the Welsh thing, we say that it
doesn't matter who gets beat as long as England get beat. Again, that is in good humour
as well.

J: Do you think the term being racist has an impact? Do you think it is fair being called
racist?

Note this example of a subtext beneath the surface of the interview. He is appraising and second-guessing
my questions. While he was one of the teachers who spoke at length and with apparent ease during our
interview sessions, and who thought that my transcripts of his lessons reflected well on him, he was wary
of the question of race. The question of race appears to have been always present in his mind. He was also
responding to the subtext.
TEACHER: Not for me, it probably ties into the fact that people make things an issue. I know people have been pulled up before for saying a simple thing and the wrong person hears it and they think, ‘Oh, well, this person is a racist.’ There is no way that person is racist. I think it is a fairly strong term. For me there is no fear because there is nothing to fear.

J: So why state it?

TEACHER: Honestly, I don’t know. There is no reason for saying it or not saying it sort of thing. I don’t know.

Daniel could not quite elaborate, but there is the feeling that he said it because it was important to him, or at least, it was something that concerned him. The full question was, ‘Can you tell me about your position here as a white teacher teaching at MC which is a multiracial school?’ Here he suggests that my question awakened fears of being called a racist. It seems that the fear is always present because the possibility of being accused is also always present. So, he can ‘see where you going with … the question’ and he refuses to go with it. He uses humour to curtail the exploration. He attempts to ‘make light of the situation’; he will not make it into an issue or admit it as an issue for discussion. Still, we notice that he is willing to joke about being a racist in terms of a Welsh/English divide, and not about being racist in terms of a black/white divide. On the face of it, he is aware of adverse consequences that might ensue as a result of the latter. There is just simply a sense of disquietude, even though he believes himself to have nothing to fear (p. 259 – 60).

As I went on to state, this sense of disquietude was evident amongst all the teachers who attempted to talk about race in relation to themselves, and that was no ‘simple’ thing either: there was a profound fear of being seen as racist. Therefore, while the methodology that I developed
give purchase to the notion that people created and maintained consensual universes, it failed to
provide a methodological strategy for increasing the level of understanding between my research
participants and myself. This might better explain why I was not able to explore whiteness as a
racial identity and could only extrapolate that it was under abjection. An exploration might have
been possible with insights from Hollway and Jefferson’s Doing Research Differently.

Further, my methodology failed to offer a method that could take account of people’s investments
in the worlds they create for themselves and, therefore, an approach that would be sensitive to the
subsequent potential for anxiety in research participants. This was what forced my theoretical
exploration of blackness – argued to protect black children from (further) distress. While black
children might have been protected, all teachers, and again, especially the ‘betrayed’ teacher,
were left exposed. Hollway and Jefferson’s method suggested how I might have worked with
these issues. Their ideas delineated a method by which a sensitive subject matter might be
researched in conversation with research participants. Their ideas, therefore, suggested an
alternative and better way that I might have conducted my study.

I had turned to feminist and black epistemological ideas to provide a foundation for my research
(p. 89) because I was interested in doing research in the field of race and schooling differently. I
found the theoretical work of Mary Daly (1986) and Sandra Harding (1987) excellent in arguing
for alternative frames for conducting and justifying research. In addition, I found the work of
Ladson-Billings (1994), Hill Collins (1990) and Ladner (1987) very useful in elaborating Daly
and Harding’s theoretical arguments, while also asserting a particular black standpoint.

I, therefore, relied on the work of all these feminist thinkers to provide theoretical support for my
wish to conduct my study as from an alternative epistemological stance and a black standpoint in
particular. However, while I found their ideas generally supportive, as I have said earlier, I also found some details limiting for my project. I have indicated how being Jamaican complicated my application of Hill Collins’ ideas. I also found a less than perfect resolution of

... the tensions that arose for black researchers in the past. Fanon felt denied subjectivity, and subsequently acquiesced to not submitting his study to academia. Ladner felt denied a subjectivity and challenged traditional understanding of objectivity to retain her subjectivity, present her findings as valid, and her study as research activity. Ladson-Billings replaced traditional approaches to research to privilege authenticity in her research. We see here the tendency to oppose subjectivity with validity, objectivity with subjectivity and objectivity with authenticity, in deciding on research findings or research itself. What these tensions in fact reveal is a concern with the process and the product of research respectively. I would argue that they demand separate attention in any research activity, and that attention should be given to both (p. 118).

Accordingly, I sought to develop and articulate a methodology that would reveal how these concerns might be – and were addressed in my study. I sought to build a systematic argument in, for example, drawing on and combining lessons from feminist and black literature and situating these within a Lacanian post-structuralist frame. I also tried to provide maximum transparency into the actual process of arriving at findings through, for example, my use and detailed presentation of Nudist searches. However, I may not have been as successful as I had hoped. And as I have also argued earlier, my work could have benefited from, for example, greater consideration of Ladson-Billings’ straightforward application of Hill Collins’ afrocentric feminist methodology.
For feminist literature does already offer fully developed systems for conducting research and these ideas continue to be developed by thinkers such as Fine (1994) to maximise the usefulness of feminist thought to the research exercise. Fine’s argument, for example, in ‘Working the Hyphen’ developed ideas that I struggled to articulate and operationalise in my work.

Fine argues that the ‘Self and the Other are knottily entangled’ (p. 72) and suggested why what happens in the between space of the self-other binary is of crucial importance to research. Of importance to my methodological interests, she also posited a working of the hyphen, by which she meant to suggest that

Researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations... [and] invite[d] researchers to see how these “relations between” gets us “better” data, limit what we feel free to say, expand our minds and constrict our mouths, engage us in intimacy and seduce us into complicity, make us quick to interpret and hesitant to write...creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, “happening between,” within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom and with what consequence (Fine, 1994, p. 72)

Fine’s argument, therefore, could have provided an almost seamless continuity with Hollway and Jefferson ideas. A combination of these three thinkers would have generated a methodology that would have allowed me to conduct my study from the epistemological standpoint I sought while also providing a better guide for the actual investigation. For in the quote above, for example, Fine succinctly detailed all that constituted what I came to describe as the weaknesses of my study.
I had also posited that self and other were complementary, that the one constituted the other and were not in fact opposites. I sought to articulate blackness as black-and-white and to understand the other, that is the white (teacher) opposite response to blackness as a complex thing. Really, I was attempting to understand and articulate the shifts in the ways in which we now negotiate the racial self and our interaction with each other. These shifts were things that I saw as resistant of articulation.

The methodology I developed sought to give voice to what was being silenced in each instance. However, it ironically, spuriously maybe, placed my voice right at the centre of meanings, and subsequently, raised questions about whose story was being told, why, for whom and with what consequence. This is the dilemma that the teacher who felt betrayed adroitly exposed as I discuss on pp.296-301.

*Discourse Analysis*

Others, for example, Potter and Wetherell, 1987) have used discourse analysis to explore the ways in which we construct ourselves and our reality as racial. Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001) argue that discourse of analysis is the study of talk and texts and that such 'research offers routes into the study of meanings, a way of investigating the back-and-forth dialogues which constitute social action, along with the patterns and signification and representation which constitute culture' (p. I). This approach to understanding reality, and in particular, the construction of racial reality might have been an option for my research given primacy I afforded the text in my research.

Taylor (2001) states that discourse analysis is a field of research rather than a single practice, although any single piece of discourse analysis research would be a close study of language.
especially a search for patterns in language use. In her essay she delineates four approaches research analysts use to explore these patterns. Researchers may choose to focus on the variation and imperfection of language; on the activity of language (as distinct from the language itself); patterns associated with a particular topic or activity; or patterns in language use which constitute aspects of society and the people within it.

While the focus of my study was not on the patterns within the language of my research participants but on understanding how they negotiated their worlds, I made use of the patterns that appeared in what they said to arrive such understanding. It is clear, therefore, that I used the primary principle of discourse analysis to further my project – and did so with acknowledgement. Certainly, in my analysis of the boys discussion of blackness, each boy is revealed as a ‘language user not as a free agent but as one who is heavily constrained in …his choice language and action, even if these are not fully determined’ (Taylor, 2001, p. 10).

Similarly, my analysis of the both the boys’ discussion of blackness and the teachers’ narratives of their worlds revealed each as ‘the language user [who] is located, immersed in this medium and struggling to take her or his own social and cultural positioning into account’ (Taylor, 2001, p. 10). Therefore, discourse analysis could have been used alongside social representations and cognitive polyphasia to notable effect, for example, in the following context

J: The final question as my ten minutes has run out is how do you feel yourself as a white teacher in a mixed school?

TEACHER: I don’t. I think it is people of your colour that make more of this. I hardly ever consider it. I am a teacher and they are kids. I look at it this way: the only time I know that I am not the same colour is if I look at my hands and I don’t keep looking at my hands, and I would imagine they are the same. They are kids to me. I teach as I have always taught and because when
I first came here there was one black girl to teach in the entire school and gradually the colour has changed until it is now seventy or eighty percent black, coloured. As I said they are all kids to me, and I don’t think deep down they are any different in their behaviour. I am not really aware of their culture, but then I am not aware of teenage culture whether it is white or black. I am not really aware of it. The songs that they listen to or the music I am not aware of it. Maybe that is all very wrong, and I am supposed to get into what teenage culture is, in black and white teenage culture. I don’t, and I am concerned very narrowly with my subject and trying to get that over to them. I don’t, as it was once suggested, that you must remember this civilisation in Zimbabwe that did this and the other. I just teach it as I have always sort of taught it, and I have made no accommodation or change. I suppose people say I should do something but again I find there isn’t the time. I don’t know. They are kids to me and that is it. I don’t see them really as any different.

‘Fine’, the teacher had just communicated his active struggle to take his own social and cultural positioning into account in his practice, and all I could say was, ‘Fine’. It was not ‘fine’ at all; as I went on to state in my further inadequate analysis of my initial inadequate response.

...the teacher seemed committed to making me work for answers saying things like ‘you are the one who is thinking up the questions. You are supposed to be stimulating me to give you some answers’... I gave him an exist with ‘Fine’[::] he refuses it and carries on his exploration...I look caught out, and he [later] resumes his position of distance.

Clearly, lost access to what might have proven invaluable insights. It is reassuring to know, therefore, that the possibility exists for me to learn and make better use of the considerable wealth of knowledge being generated in the field of research methodologies. Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) argument, for example, give me hope. They argue that ‘there have never been so many
paradigms, strategies of inquiry, or methods of analysis for researchers to draw upon and utilize... we are in a moment of discovery and rediscovery, as new ways of looking, interpreting, arguing and writing are debated and discussed... (p. 18). Their argument, at least, gives me hope that where I have got it wrong before, it is possible to make amends.
References


Appendix 1: (Possible) Interview Questions

Interview 1

How long have you been teaching here?
How long have you been teaching?
Tell me about your choice of teaching as a career.
How has your career progressed?
How do you think your particular biography has impacted on the way you teach?
What influenced your choice for this school?
How have you found teaching here?
What would you say is demanding in teaching here?
What would you say is rewarding in teaching here?

Interview 2

(With reference to the transcripts)
Tell me about what was happening when...
Tell me about teaching 10X
What would you say are the demanding aspects of teaching that class?
Tell me what you find rewarding.
How do you go about teaching and learning for 10X?

Interview 3

This is a multicultural school. How do you find teaching here?
What would you say are the demanding aspects of teaching here?
How do you go about responding to those demands?
What influences the way you respond?
How would you describe multicultural teaching?
What do you think about the public debates on teaching and learning in multicultural schools?
What do you consider to be the major issues involved in multicultural classrooms today?
How do you find teaching here as a white/black teacher?
### Em Secondary

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[^30]: Point of Methodology
Appendix 3: Definition of Categories

RACE
Self Things said in relation to themselves in respect to race
Beliefs How they describe anything to do with the concept of race
Students Where they used race in talking about the students
Concepts Definitions they gave to issues of race
Practice Where race was addressed in their practice
Stereotypes Things said that make use of stereotypes rather than actual, personal knowledge or proof
Defensiveness Where there is an attempt to defend one's position with respect to an issue of race
Difficulties Where position on race falls down, the argument is not sustained or is contradicted
Whiteness What teachers say about whiteness
Blackness What is said about blackness
Conflated Where the idea being discussed is clearly complex; it could and could not be due to race or one is unable to decide how race is implicated
Jokes Where jokes were used in talking about race
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<td>Frameworks they used to talk about teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Where ability is acknowledged as a means by which to differentiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Things they highlight as demanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demands</td>
<td>What they say about classroom management, teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.T.L (also c/mgt)</td>
<td>My impression of teachers based on what was shared in interviews and my observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Fundamental conception or approach to teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Where race is handled/approached in terms of other pedagogical issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race as</td>
<td>The story they give of the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCHOOL</td>
<td>The regard/opinion they have of the school and what it does</td>
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<td>History</td>
<td>Where the church is used to talk about the school</td>
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<td>Researcher</td>
<td>When my actions are seen as directly, immediately impacting on the outcome under scrutiny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Where the question or the artifice of research seems to be impacting on outcome</td>
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<td>Where they are actively trying to and/or are impacting on outcome</td>
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<td>Contradiction</td>
<td>Examples where they contradict themselves (and those I want to highlight)</td>
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<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Where honesty is clearly an issue</td>
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<td>Rationalisation</td>
<td>Things that strike me in the way they choose to argue a point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metaphors</td>
<td>Metaphors or euphemisms or other kinds of substitutions for the concept of race</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


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