Multiculturalism in question : a study of inter-ethnic relations in the city of Leicester

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Abstract

This thesis examines the social phenomenon of urban multiculturalism and the manner in which young people from a range of racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds relate to each other through their experiences of the city of Leicester, England. While this city has often been held up as a beacon of multicultural success, it is argued that such an image needs to be considered in relation to the multiple positionings of individuals that highlight significant tensions but also inter-cultural negotiations. Conceptually it is contended that these socio-spatial dynamics are best understood through the theoretical and methodological lens of the 'everyday'. In this way, the thesis concentrates upon everyday spaces as productive of social relations; particularly highlighting how everyday geographies variously enable and restrict socio-spatial mobility vis-à-vis differentiated 'others'.

Initially there is an emphasis upon the importance of place; an understanding of the unique circumstances through which relations operate and those key influences which may contribute to such a specificity. In this regard the study illustrates how everyday knowledge and practice may contribute to specific understandings and interpretations of place and placed relations. The thesis then moves on to elucidate the importance of multiple urban spaces in the reproduction of relations, both in an exclusionary sense as well as in the form of more progressive negotiations. This is specifically achieved through attention to the relational geographies of segregation and experiences of inter-cultural encounter in this city. In coming to an improved understanding of the conditioning of relations within multicultural urban areas, it is argued that there is a need to appreciate the role of 'common sense' geographies which are

used to account for, understand and re-produce notions of difference and sameness.

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Acknowledgements

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Declaration

The thesis is based on research solely undertaken by the author. No part of the thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at Durham University or any other university.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without their prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

1. Introducing multiculturalism: national questions/placed experiences

1.1. Reconciling national questions and placed experiences

'Multiculturalism' is a term which has become well-used within the contemporary period, being as it is at the heart of a number of contentious debates and acting as a definition in a variety of respects (Bennett, 1998). It appears mostly as a set of normative and abstract theories which juggle notions of equality, fairness and justice but which also incorporate ideas of racial, cultural and religious diversity in an attempt to adequately provide for populations with varying needs and requirements (Kymlicka, 1995; Kymlicka and Norman, 1995; Bryant, 1997; Young, 1999; Parekh, 2000a, 2000b; Mitchell, 2004). However, as Goldberg (1994) indicates and as I wish to stress here, whilst recognition of 'diversity' forms the basis for 'community' representation and provision, multiculturalism must also be considered as a social fact which entails that, 'living with difference', as an 'everyday' phenomenon, is inevitable (Amin, 2002a).[1]

In what follows I outline the way in which this multicultural condition (and responses to it) has been discussed in the public realm and the manner in which solutions to the 'problems' of a differentiated society have been posited. In so doing I highlight increasingly vocal calls for a shared sense of national belonging, a tendency which has arguably exacerbated growing fears of racial, cultural and religious 'difference'. In recognising the uneasy manner in which Britain has come to terms with its alterity I suggest that several broad questions present themselves: How might it be possible to deal with forms of racialised exclusion thrown up by a society defined by its divisions? How

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[1] It is recognised that in order to accept racial diversity as a social fact there is a danger of entering into raciological thinking which relies upon false assumptions concerning the absolute nature of racial and ethnic divisions, ultimately tied into the colonial project and the historic assembly of racial hierarchies (Gilroy, 2004). However, to deny the effects of this form of thinking, its social relevance and its consequences, is to leave forms racial and ethnic closure unexamined, unquestioned and firmly in place.

might it be possible to challenge discourses of cultural demonisation and ethno-national assimilation based upon majority 'white' assumptions of belonging? What might it take to dilute a fear of racial and cultural difference? And what hope might there be for a multicultural Britain which can live more comfortably with itself?

These are clearly big questions, but what this thesis looks to do is offer a contribution in two significant ways. By introducing the case of the city of Leicester,[2] I indicate that answers depend upon the diverse experiences of specific places which feed into and re-interpret national issues in various ways. While not wishing to attribute essential features to place and emphasising the complex intersections of progressive dialogue and damaging racisms, I look here to examine a city which *appears* to have grown out of its historical struggles with overt expressions of racism. In so doing I point towards both the lessons that this city might hold and their limitations. Importantly I also contend that place matters not just because inter-ethnic relations are played out differently in specific locations, but because forms of identification and differentiation are enacted differentially *through* space.

Secondly in looking to tackle these broad pressing questions, I present a particular conceptual vantage point. As Gilroy (2004:3) argues, a large part of addressing post-colonial challenges lies in the way in which issues are conceived and the sort of critical reflections offered:

> *"We need to know what sorts of insight and reflection might actually help increasingly differentiated societies and anxious individuals to cope successfully with the challenges involved in dwelling comfortably in proximity to the unfamiliar without becoming fearful or hostile."*

An attempt to understand how certain localities have managed to foster multicultural accommodation, while others have struggled to avoid inter-ethnic conflict, is an invitation, I contend, to address the ways in which 'race relations' and 'racisms' are actually conducted, practised and experienced. This thesis

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[2] Which is analysed in more detail in chapter four.

then offers a particular focus on the experiential and the lived, namely 'the everyday'. It seeks a way of viewing cultural complexity not through the obvious and the extraordinary but through the very condition of living with, alongside and between forms of 'difference'. I thus emphasise how through 'the everyday' it is possible to see how urban space is used to construct knowledges and practices of identification and differentiation.

In line with work which argues that 'race' is not self-evident and 'already there', but performed and thus re-produced (Back, 1996), the aim of this thesis is to examine how relations within and amongst a specific diverse urban population are mediated, shaped and negotiated through the experience of the lived environment. This general aim is to be addressed through the following research questions (Fig.1):

Figure 1 Key research questions

1. Which influences impact upon and (re)produce inter-cultural relations in a given place?
- What are the key factors at work in specific multicultural places?
- Why might inter-cultural relations and the notion of multiculturalism be different in different places?

2. What is the role of the relationship between the everyday lived environment and inter-cultural relations?
- How might lived experiences of multicultural places be influenced by and in turn influence inter-cultural relations and notions of inclusion and exclusion?
- What aspects of the everyday are significant in the conditioning of these relations?
- What others influences feed into the everyday experience of multiculturalism?

3. How do personal geographies relate to the public culture of place?
- How do everyday situated experiences influence attitudes and practices towards the notion of multiculturalism understood as a local phenomenon?
- How far beyond the formal realm do forms of civic multiculturalism stretch?

4. What are the relative roles of everyday spaces in shaping inter-cultural relations?
- Which experiences are drawn upon and practiced in making sense of multicultural life?
- How do these spaces of the everyday work to both reinforce and/or disrupt racial, ethnic, religious and cultural differences?
- Upon what basis do inter-cultural negotiations take place?

In relation to policy implications the primary aim is to appreciate the nuanced character of prosaic forms of inter-cultural negotiations through experiences of the city. In particular I consider the manner in which forms of inter-ethnicity relate to the experiences of individuals variously positioned by ethnicity, but also class and geographical locations. I also look to establish an understanding of the relationship between the outlooks and practices of a plural public and the public culture of place established through a range of formal and informal mechanisms. In doing so I attempt to unpack the ramifications this may have for other multicultural urban localities in the facilitation of more progressive

relations. This includes an assessment of the relative importance of a variety of private and public spaces, the importance of spatial mobility and immobility and the variety of influences which contribute to the experience of inter-ethnic openness and closure. This is a shift away from static terms of citizenship, legislative devices and legal frameworks which increasingly suggest that a common national identity and a shared vision are integral to a successful multicultural society (CARF, 2002; McGhee, 2003), towards an examination of what it may mean to actively live in a place defined by a specific multicultural public culture.

In order to set the very public debate of 'multiculturalism' in context and to expand upon the challenges which frame my research questions, I wish to briefly consider the manner in which the UK has distanced itself[3] from notions of diversity, difference and plurality, before introducing the case study city of this study.

1.2. Multiculturalism and 'Britishness'

While it would be a myth to say that Britain has ever been a homogeneous nation, more than ever, ethnic diversity has become one of its defining features. Of a population now estimated to be over 59 million, at least 7.9 per cent, that is, 4,635,296, identify as belonging to 'non-white' groups.[4] This fact has resulted in the vibrant, creative and progressive clash of cultural forms and practices, particularly in urban areas of the UK. As Gilroy (2004) shows, for example, elements of a post-colonial 'convivial multi-culture' are clearly evident in the eclectic influences and multicultural realities which have given rise to the evolving contemporary British urban music scene.

However, it is also the case that complex matrices of injustice, ignorance and intolerance are at work alongside these emergent sub-cultures, ensuring what Back (1996) refers to as the 'urban paradox' of simultaneous multiculturalism

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[3] In a popular and formal political sense.
[4] National Statistics Online, 2001 UK census

and multi-racism (Cohen, 1988). Britain is it seems a nation where at all levels of society "...new knowledge jostles with old fears" (Adebayo, 2001).[5] Such fears can be seen, for instance, through increasing levels of antagonism directed towards religiously 'alien' groups,[6] heightened suspicion against those who might 'look like terrorists' following recent London bombings and the subsequent government crackdown on the rights of 'suspected terrorists'[7], as well as the relative success of the far-right in the guise of the British National Party (BNP) (Renton, 2003).

One major contribution to the debate over multiculturalism and 'Britishness', was the study conducted by the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (Parekh, 2000a).[8] Through its vision of a 'community of communities', this was an attempt to steer national identity away from an inward looking past towards an accepting, pluralistic and socially just future. Its key principles were based upon a balance of equality and difference incorporated into all policy agendas, the need to confront various racisms head on, a recognition of the role of material inequalities in the development of cultures of racism, the call for an end to diversity blindness and the need for improved minority public representation. All of which, it was argued, should be ethically and legally founded upon a basis of 'human rights', rather than an ethno-national cultural code.[9] This was certainly one of the most progressive policy documents to be produced in years. Yet much of what was put forward has been disregarded, largely I would argue, because of a call for the recognition of various 'differences' in a political environment focussed upon a unified and coherent national identity.

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[5] For example as *The Economist* (09/12/04) recently reported, public opinion in Britain recognises the country as open and multicultural at the same time as displaying hardening attitudes towards the issue of immigration.

[6] In the aftermath of 09/11/01, four out of five Muslims surveyed reported experiences of discrimination, a figure which has risen from 45 per cent in 2000. Survey conducted by the Islamic Human Rights Commission. *The Independent* (16/12/04)

[7] As the shooting of Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes so brutally illustrated, this approach has not been without its casualties.

[8] The report is entitled: 'The future of multi-ethnic Britain: The Parekh Report'

[9] The recommendations were also comprehensive and wide ranging, covering many areas of public life including the police, the criminal justice system through to government leadership and organisational change.

In response to this report and a largely negative media reaction, particularly as regards the suggestion that 'Britishness' may have racial connotations,[10] the government leapt quickly and vocally to the defence of "an imagined ethno-cultural nation", as Robins (2001:85) notes:

> *"...by 'standing up for Britain', standing up for 'patriotism', standing up for 'pride in our country', and standing up for the 'enduring' British values of fairness, tolerance and decency."*

Fekete (2001) contends that such forms of 'national defence' are illustrative of the xeno-racism which operates through the machinery of government, whereby a threatened national identity is protected to the exclusion of those imaginatively and physically beyond its borders. She particularly argues that the centralisation of immigration and asylum policies devised by the previous government has deterred mobile populations rather than protecting their needs and rights. A tough talking approach adopted by the current government, with an emphasis upon restriction, removal and meagre forms of assistance, has done little to quell public anxieties.[11] There are, it seems, despite the rhetoric surrounding social inclusion, limits in terms of a political commitment toward 'diversity' (Schuster and Solomos, 2004).

Popular deliberations over questions of 'race', national identity, belonging and rights of asylum, mediated by a sensationalist press, have at times reached states of panic.[12] Many of these deliberations, questioning the presence and role of ethnic minority 'communities' in Britain, have followed on from overt expressions of hostility, more often framed as 'race riots'.[13] In the spring and

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[10] The report was also portrayed by some sections of the national press as a manifesto for the 'politically correct', constructing their arguments in the form of what Neal (2003:61) calls an 'anti-anti-racist discourse'. Also see Gilroy (2004) for commentary on reactions to this report.
[11] This is a reference to the Immigration and Asylum Act (2002) but also something which was evident in the run up to the 2005 general election. For example; Gaby Hinsliff, 'Howard raises fears of race riots', *The Observer*, (23/01/05) p. 2
[12] The role of the British media in the maintenance and circulation of racist discourses has been well documented (Van Dijk, 1991; Kundnani, 2001; Neal, 2003)
[13] I choose to focus here upon the 'race riots' of 2001 as opposed to more recent terrorist incidents because I believe these have to be carefully distinguished. The disturbances of 2001 have far more to tell us about the problems, tensions and challenges of Britain's urban areas as

summer of 2001, urban areas of Lancashire and West Yorkshire saw violent disturbances focussed mainly around Burnley, Bradford and Oldham. These disturbances which took place between young, disenfranchised British Muslims, far-right groups and the police, now act as a national marker for the state and geography of inter-ethnic relations, concentrated as they were in urban areas suffering from multiple deprivation and the growth of the BNP as an active political force.

Official responses came in the form of a number of reports, focussing upon the circumstances surrounding the eruption of brief conflicts in each of these localities.[14] In addition to these, the Cantle Report took a more holistic view, looking at the broader, national issues to emerge from the disturbances and "...the lessons for national policy and practice." (Cantle, 2001:5) The key message transmitted through this report was the importance of 'social cohesion' as the backbone of positive inter-ethnic relations. A lack of commonality exhibited by communities in these towns, and the existence of 'parallel lives' was then identified as the basis of violent conflict. This language emphasises the importance of common values, social order, solidarity, interaction and a shared sense of belonging as key to the development of more harmonious relations (as outlined below in Fig. 2).[15]

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experienced by 'communities', which on the occasions outlined due to specific circumstances and wider frustrations spilled out into overt violent conflict.

[14] For example, the Clarke Report studied Burnley, the Ritchie Report looked at the situation in Oldham, while Denham concentrated upon Bradford.

[15] These draw upon a definition of community cohesion as outlined by Forrest and Kearns (2000).

Figure 2 The domains of community cohesion

Common values and a civic culture

- Common aims and objectives
- Common moral principles and codes of behaviour
- Support for political institutions and participation in politics

Social order and social control

- Absence of general conflict and threat to existing order
- Absence of incivility
- Effective informal social control
- Tolerance, respect for differences, inter-group co-operation

Social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities

- Harmonious economic and social development and common standards
- Redistribution of public finances and of opportunity
- Equal access to service and welfare benefits
- Reaching acknowledgement of social obligation and willingness to assist others

Social networks and social capital

- High degree of social interaction within communities and families
- Civic engagement and associational activity
- Easy reduction of collective action problems

Place attachment and identity

- Strong attachment to place
- Inter-twining of personal and place identity

Source: Cantle (2001:13)

These responses are illustrative of a contemporary fascination with a shared and more importantly an imposed sense of 'Britishness' as a solution to the 'challenges' of multiculturalism[16]. Whilst there is recognition in Fig. 2 that

16 Ideas which have been at the forefront of a growing New Labour emphasis on citizenship, within, for example the national curriculum, and which continue to dominate their agenda as

problems are exacerbated by disparities in wealth, the importance of material deprivation and pervasive forms of racism and discrimination from which these places suffer is often underplayed. Rather, responsibility is shifted onto marginalised communities (Amin, 2005) by focussing upon the behaviour and culture of minority groups and their commitment and 'rootedness' to place as the problem (Amin, 2002a; Kalra, 2002).[17] The cartoon in Fig. 3, depicting the then Home Secretary David Blunkett, illustrates this emphasis upon competencies such as speaking and writing 'proper English', and the mismatch of these 'solutions' with more pressing realities facing ethnic minority communities in these deprived areas.

Figure 3 Dave Brown, The Independent, 12/12/01

Source: Computer catalogue of the Centre for the Study of Cartoons and Caricature, record 59957

As Burnett (2004:13) argues, there appears an assumption that the disturbances were essentially an 'Asian problem', one which can only be resolved through "...the adoption of an identity that incorporates a stained nationalism". What

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recent speeches delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister in waiting, Gordon Brown illustrate.

[17] Following on from this there has been a growing demand placed upon minority communities to aspire to a common set of values, evident in the recent introduction of citizenship tests and ceremonies

we can then see are responses to the challenge of 'living with difference' which narrow the terms of belonging by focussing upon an abstract and definite national culture as a desired end point,[18] an agenda which has arguably contributed towards a fear of racial, ethnic, religious and cultural 'difference' as a threat to the coherence of 'the nation'.

I want to now indicate why attention to the spatial imperatives of multiculturalism, might offer one way of addressing the challenges and questions set out. I do this through some brief snapshots of the placed experience of the city of Leicester.

1.3. A tale of two cities?

One of the last public appearances for the founder of the BNP, John Tyndall, was in a recent BBC documentary, in which the overt racism of the party was publicly exposed.[19] During a speech made by Tyndall in this programme he was shown addressing the party's members in the Lancashire town of Burnley, now an established focus for far-right activity, evident in both the build up to and aftermath of the 2001 disturbances.[20] While such a form of extremist politics has become a recognised characteristic of the deprived former mill towns of this region, the views expressed by Tyndall and the parties with which he has been associated have not always been confined to this part of the country.

Looking back to an era when the predecessor to the BNP, the National Front (NF), was at its zenith, one of the primary targets for far-right politics was the city of Leicester in the East Midlands of England. In particular, the early 1970s

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18 In line with this approach, politicians from other major parties (Cable, 2005) as well the head of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) have also backed a charge towards an integrated sense of Britishness. *The Guardian*, (28/05/04)

19 *'The Secret Agent'*, BBC 1, 2100BST, (15/07/04).

20 The then leader of the Conservative party Michael Howard, also chose Burnley as the location for a key speech (19/02/2004), in which he set out his party's policies on immigration and asylum, as well as attacking the BNP (*The Guardian*, Matthew Tempest, 'Howard attacks BNP 'thugs' in Burnley', 19/02/04). Burnley has subsequently witnessed considerable political success for the BNP in local elections, currently holding 6 seats on the town council.

witnessed the height of their activities here, as they seized upon the fears of a city experiencing distinct changes. The year 1969 witnessed not only the inauguration of the first Hindu temple in this city but also the establishment of the Leicester branch of the NF. By 1976 the popularity of the party almost led to electoral success, coming within 62 votes of securing a seat in the St. Margaret's ward. From that time on the party never regained its formal political potency, but as the photograph below (Fig. 4) illustrates, the late 1970s continued to witness concerted NF action as they took to the streets, in a performance of exclusionary 'white Britishness'.

Figure 4 John Tyndall leads the National Front through Leicester 21/04/79

Source:http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/programmes/2001/bnp_special/roots/1979.stm

At about 3.00pm on 21st April 1979 Leicestershire police, in consultation with the NF selected one of four possible routes which would take their supporters from the Welford Road recreation ground (later to be re-named as 'Nelson Mandela Park'),[21] to Wyggeston Collegiate School,[22] located adjacent to Leicester University and surrounded by Victoria Park. The march would end in

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[21] In 1984 Leicester Rugby Football Club was banned from using Welford Road Recreation Ground for 12 months in response to some of the clubs players travelling to South Africa as part of an England Rugby Union tour. In 1982 Leicester City Council had decided to boycott South African goods and cut sporting ties in order to make a stance against apartheid as part of it's commitment to racial equality.
(http://www.lexisnexis.co.uk/lawcampus/student/Lev3/weblinked_books/loveland/dataitem.asp?ID=12716&tid=7)

[22] This building now forms part of Queen Elizabeth and Wyggeston College of further education, a college with one of the largest 'Asian' student bodies of all further education establishments in the city.

an election meeting at the school, but arguably it was the visibility of the 'procession' which became the most significant aspect of this occasion, in a manner through which the NF sought to claim the streets of the city as their own, two days before St. George's Day.

The march received an endorsement from the local authority, the police and the local newspaper. In its aftermath the Chief Constable argued in its favour stating that: "We have fought wars for freedom and the National Front were exercising one of those freedoms." (*Leicester Mercury*, 23/04/79: 1). The local newspaper in its editorial piece spoke of the NF march as a reason to be proud of Leicester because "...the National Front were able to march through the streets in exercise of the right of free speech and assembly." (*Leicester Mercury*, 23/04/79: 22). Most of the paper's coverage of the event chose not to concentrate upon the activities of the far-right, but was rather devoted to a chastisement of the dangerous anti-NF 'hooligans' and 'extremists' who that day "...roamed the city streets" (Leicester Mercury, 23/04/79: 15).

Figure 5 Police and anti-NF protestors clash on De Montfort Street as NF marchers make their way to Victoria Park

Source: *Leicester Mercury*, (23/04/79: 14)

While there were reports that clashes occurred all over the city as the police attempted to keep away "break away anti-NF supporters" from NF marchers,

Victoria Park and the surrounding area in particular played host to violent clashes, as Fig. 5, a photograph which portrays a stand-off between the police (drafted in from all over the country) and anti-NF protestors, illustrates.[23]

This can certainly be viewed as an expression of a wider political dispute between the NF on one side and the Community Relations Council, Socialist Unity Group and Socialist Workers Party on the other, mobilised in a physical and ideological battle. As such, it appears as a clash of ideas which has been played out in many places and at many times across the post-war urban landscape of Britain. However, the significance of the setting, both in terms of the context of Leicester and the employment of specific city spaces, should not be lost, and it is this which I emphasise in opening up this thesis.

As I have already indicated, issues surrounding 'race' and cultural difference remain relevant and highly charged. However, in the case of Leicester there is a notable absence today of the organised far-right activists who posed such a direct threat during the 1970s and at present represent a potent force in towns such as Burnley. The same site, Victoria Park, which in 1979 was the arena for pitched battles, has been able to hold a quite different symbolic significance in the contemporary period through its use as a location of 'multicultural celebration'. Where once bottles and paving stones had been thrown, now once a year[24] the area becomes host to a carnival atmosphere, through which the multicultural character of the city is celebrated and forms of 'Black' identity are openly enacted.

However, I would also contend that the procession of 1979 and the Carnival have significant parallels. Both, terminated in Victoria Park, both operated through a very public, visible and overt expression, both were a manifestation of a particular set of knowledges and performances of identity and belonging, and both were endorsed by the local authority, the county constabulary and the influential local newspaper. The streets are once again employed in order

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[23] Bonney (2003:9) estimates that 2000 NF marchers took part that day, confronted by approximately 1500 anti NF demonstrators, "...while 5000 police officers tried to keep the peace."

[24] Usually on the first Saturday of August

to make specific claims, but there is an absence on the occasion of the carnival of the violence of 1979. Rather than marching in military fashion, most of the movement is through dance or via the decorated 'floats' (See Fig. 6). This is a non-confrontational identity performance which occupies and transforms public space, offering a response to a legacy of white racism and marginalisation (Connor and Farrar, 2004).

Figure 6 The Caribbean Carnival procession starting from Victoria Park on its way to the Highfields neighbourhood

The dancing troupes take a different route from that of the marchers.[25] The procession starts at Victoria Park before moving through Highfields, historically the home of the African Caribbean 'community'[26]. In the same way that the police and anti-NF protestors from across the country lined the streets in 1979, spectators come to gaze at and take an active part in the spectacle which travels through the city centre before heading back toward the park. The carnival, like several other festivals[27] has come to be indicative of the

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[25] Although, historically the route of the procession has changed at least five times, the general area covered has remained the same.

[26] And over the years successive immigrant 'communities'

[27] Other festivals in the city include the popular Asian Mela (situated in Abbey Park), and Diwali celebrations (where official celebrations take place in the widely recognised 'Hindu' area of the city: Belgrave). The Diwali celebrations are the largest and best attended celebrations of this Hindu and Sikh religious festival outside of the Indian sub-continent.

multicultural character of Leicester and linked with a public culture of place which exhibits positive and harmonious inter-ethnic relations'.

These vignettes suggest that the very culture of this city has changed from one which openly welcomed the presence of the far right and endorsed their freedom to express inherently racist ideas, to a place which promotes the acceptance and celebration of racial and cultural differences. Indeed, it also suggests a shifting dynamic between the attitudes and practices of those in positions of authority and the diverse practices and outlooks of the 'local' population.

This is not however to argue that Leicester has emerged as some kind of multicultural utopia, removed from wider discussions and discourses of belonging, where the remnants of racial exclusiveness have evaporated. As I will show, the histories of inter-ethnic negotiation and accommodation in this place are more complex and nuanced. Rather, this portrayal fits into a now widely accepted image of Leicester as a relatively 'successful' example of how positive inter-ethnic and inter-cultural relations may be established and maintained.

These illustrations, however, do more than provide an indicative historical comparison. Firstly, they point towards an emerging geography of inter-ethnic relations and racism, illustrating that relations evolve upon an uneven terrain. Such changes cannot then be seen as a reflection of national trend, whereby Britain has begun to no longer view it heterogeneity as threatening. This requires a closer examination of the dynamics operating through place. Secondly, these illustrations open up a number of questions concerning the mechanisms which drive inter-ethnic relations in place. Thirdly these illustrations show that the urban arena may not solely be a back-drop for wider conflicts surrounding issues of 'race', 'difference' and belonging, but may play an active role in the (re)formation of forms of identity and inclusion. Finally, they raise the question of the *form* of relations between those positioned by

specific racial and ethnic identities. Are they only to be found on such irregular and organised occasions and in such striking ways as 'the march', or 'the carnival'? And what is it that provides the impetus for these identity performances? By offering detailed responses to the key research questions outlined above, I look to address the role of 'place' and 'space' in relation to experiences of multiculturalism.

1.4. Thesis outline

I begin to address these questions and issues in chapter two by arguing that there is a need to re-conceptualise 'relations' conceived of in static and abstract terms. In light of an approach which stresses the everyday constitution and negotiation of identity and 'difference' through lived experience, I show how such theorisations require a particular understanding of space as relational and productive. In so doing, I address the question of what influences inter-cultural relations by outlining several core elements. These include the importance of national cultures of belonging, the 'placed' character of relations, the character of the urban form and the mobility/immobility of identities through urban space, all of which I contend are essential to a comprehension of the ability of individuals to more comfortably 'live with difference'. The chapter then indicates how such elements feed into everyday experiences, by expanding upon what the relationality of 'the lived experience' might entail with regard to 'ethnicity'.

Chapter three moves on to discuss the way in which this study of everyday relations in Leicester, was conducted through empirical work. In justifying the fieldwork approach adopted I contend that by attending to 'the everyday' it is necessary to both engage in the daily life of the city and with the experiences and articulations of those for whom the city is a significant place. This chapter provides an account of the successes and pitfalls of the research process by highlighting the techniques, locations and participants involved in the fieldwork process, with a particular emphasis upon accessing the views and practices of young people. This chapter also looks to introduce the idea of the

'research encounter' which both provides significant methodological challenges but also empirically grounded understandings of the contexts of everyday life in relation to multicultural 'realities'.

I then begin in chapter four to enter into a more thorough account of place, place specificity and its central role within the conditioning of inter-cultural relations. I do this by introducing, in greater detail, the 'case study area' of the city of Leicester. In particular, I demonstrate how the city has transformed itself and become established as a model of 'multicultural success'. I argue that Leicester has been marked out as 'harmonious' through specific, tangible and historical developments in relation to local politics and economics, initiated both formally and more informally and enabled through specific histories of immigration. The idea of this reputation is then opened up by showing that while an image of inter-ethnic harmony, community representation and multicultural provision is in some ways a reliable picture, it does not account for the more nuanced tensions and challenges of a plural and contested city.

This idea is then carried through into the following chapter through which I stress how both the city and a discourse of multicultural success is differentially viewed and experienced by a population characterised by similarities and differences. Drawing upon fieldwork conducted with young people in the city, chapter five shows how the idea of a multicultural city means different things to those positioned through specific ethnic identities, patterns of mobility/immobility and material circumstances. In particular I focus upon the experiences of 'white' working class young people and racially marked 'new arrivals' in the city to show how they might feel marginalised from the notion of Leicester as a successful multicultural place on the basis of local racisms and socio-economic realities. This chapter, therefore, addresses the question of the manner in which individuals relate to the public culture of place and how they cope with the strangeness and familiarities of the multicultural city through 'community' formations.

Through chapter six I then argue that understandings both of 'the city' and of relations between a plural public are constructed through racially and culturally coded everyday spaces. I show the ways in which knowledge of the city employs both a language and practice of difference caught up in everyday spatial registers which re-construct forms of identification. This is specifically illustrated through the territory of 'the neighbourhood' and the way in which this relates to both spatialised cultures of marginalisation and a dynamic of mobility/immobility. Rather than a multicultural mosaic of homogenous and static neighbourhoods, I show the need to consider both the manner in which 'segregated' areas of this city are relationally constructed through forms inter-cultural knowledge and contact, as well as the importance of negotiations which take place, over time in situ. In so doing I address both the relation between the everyday and inter-cultural relations, but also move onto address the significance of everyday spaces and inter-cultural negotiations by suggesting that forms of everyday inclusion are constituted through various forms of territory, framed both by ethnic affiliations, but also by familiarity and material circumstance.

Chapter seven looks in more detail at how identification and differentiation operates in Leicester, through various forms of inter-cultural exposure, encounter and engagement. It addresses how direct experiences of 'difference' enabled through the urban environment, might influence inter-cultural relations and the performances of racisms. By paying closer attention to the mobility of the lives of young people I contend that while the bounded territories of the city provide an important reference point, the formation and negotiation of identity does not stop (t)here. I therefore look at the ways in which the spaces of the city, work to bring those from diverse backgrounds together, and offer an outline of the various qualities of such encounters and the basis upon which progressive negotiations might take place. In particular I stress that attention to such details reveals that co-presence does not necessarily entail the disruption of damaging racialised boundaries. I then argue that such encounters need to be seen as identity performances, through which certain

forms of sentiment may or may not be articulated dependent upon specific social and power relations, and suggest how this might be important in the institution of difference as 'the norm'.

The concluding chapter ties together the main arguments developed by theoretically reflecting upon the contribution of an approach which highlights the role of the everyday and particular take on 'space'. It then seeks to build on some of the issues raised by providing some normative suggestions in relation to the policy aims set out. In particular this contributes to the appreciation of the nuanced and spatially uneven character of inter-cultural relations within Leicester, the importance of a variety of experiential spaces in the formation of identification and differentiation, the way in which such experiences feed into one another, the role of everyday social space in both re-producing and unsettling the character of inter-cultural relations, and the possibilities for the facilitation of inter-cultural engagement. The focus here will particularly fall upon the potential for moments of cultural transgression but also the need for forms of engagement which are instituted as habitual, whereby difference might become less problematic and threatening. I use this to then briefly return to the implications this might have for conceptions of national belonging and 'Britishness' in the contemporary era.

2. Towards everyday multiculturalism: a conceptual framework

2.1. Introduction

Intense discussions of the 'multicultural condition' within the British context have not been confined to the political and popular realms alone, but have also spilled into and from considerable attention within academic circles, encompassing input from a variety of disciplines. Whilst acknowledging this vast and valuable bank of research, the issues presented and questions raised require an examination of the contribution of discussions which highlight the productivity and nuances of everyday inter-cultural relations in place.

Through this chapter I argue that a failure to move debates of multiculturalism on from nationally framed, abstract accounts is also a failure to recognise a range of complexities, incongruities and possibilities, driven by influences caught up in a variety of spatial registers. By moving towards a theorisation of ordinary forms of multiculturalism as they are lived out, I offer an approach which highlights both the importance of the spatially uneven manifestations of relations and the manner in which they may actually take place *through* such spatial forms. With this in mind, the chapter presents a conceptual framework upon which I base the empirical chapters which follow. This framework relies upon a relational and non-scalar version of space and develops those key influences seen to both position individuals and through which individuals may position themselves as regards inter-cultural openness and closure. I conclude that the relative mobility and immobility of identification and differentiation, and the forms of inter-cultural negotiation which result, must be tied into a number of spatially inflected influences which coalesce through variegated everyday experiences.

2.2. Framing 'race' nationally and abstractly

A substantial proportion of 'race' related research within the British academic context, has emerged through sociological routes, which from the 1960s has mainly focussed upon the salience of 'race' in terms of a 'race relations problematic' (Banton, 1991) or what Mac an Ghaill (1999) labels a 'culturalist perspective'. This approach largely concerned with the incorporation of New Commonwealth immigrants into mainstream British society, developed in response to the recognition of a growing and increasingly established 'ethnic minority' population in the UK (Banton, 1967).

A widespread shift in academic thought, which blossomed during the following decade, looked to offer greater explanatory clout to these forms of enquiry, both in terms of international migratory patterns and in recognition of the disadvantaged positions of minority communities within Britain. The study of 'race relations' thus highlighted the ways in which specific and identifiable 'communities' were excluded, on the basis of their racialised and class position, from mainstream society. For instance, this saw an emphasis upon forms of exploitation which ensured the maintenance of a racial underclass in major urban centres. The integration of minority communities into national space was therefore increasingly addressed through the structural nature of racial disadvantage and approaches influenced by the oeuvre of Marx (Rex, 1970; Miles, 1982).

In recent years, a body of work has emerged as a consequence of these earlier contributions but also in line with a growing emphasis upon the relationship between nation-states and the adoption of 'multicultural' political philosophies (Kymlicka, 1995; Bryant, 1997; Parekh, 2000a; Parekh, 2000b; Kymlicka and Norman, 2000). Among other key issues this literature has focussed upon the persistence of institutional racism as a social problem, the socio-economic positions of specific ethnic groups, efforts employed to confront such disadvantage as well as the ability of the nation-state to adequately

accommodate minority interests in public life through legislative devices and institutional efforts (Anwar, 1991; Modood, Beishan and Virdee 1994; Skellington, 1996; Law, 1996; Goulbourne, 1998; Blackstone, Parekh and Sanders, 1998; Mason, 2000; Pilkington, 2003).

Although this literature addresses vital contemporary challenges, it largely limits itself to 'race relations' and racism conceived of at the politicised scale of the nation, and in doing so neglects consideration of geographical variation, the specificity of place as well as what it may actually mean to 'live with diversity' in such contexts. Whilst key sociological studies have highlighted the importance of, for example, the urban as a key site of inter-ethnic accommodation and racialisation (Keith, 1993; Back, 1996; Eade, 1997; Alexander, 2000; Werbner, 2002), there remains a tendency to focus upon abstract notions of citizenship and belonging, to the neglect of specific expressions of racial and cultural differentiation across and through space. However, as I contend below, it is also the case that this abstract focus is not confined to these strands of thought.

In conversation with this work and in response to changes in the direction of the social sciences,[28] other significant theoretical developments have emerged. Such thinking has both complicated and enhanced an understanding of the dynamics of 'race' and ethnicity by questioning assumptions about the characteristics of ethnic groups, often unproblematically viewed as coherent and 'natural' communities with inherent biological and cultural traits. In particular the work of Hall (1991; 1992; 1995) and Gilroy (1990; 1991; 2004) has enriched critical theoretical threads, through a growing recognition of the multi-faceted, contested and politically constructed character of racial and ethnic identity,[29] with a particular focus upon the story of the African-

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[28] Particularly the reappraisal of the role of the political-economy in relation to the 'cultural' realm.

[29] It should be recognised that Rex (1970) and Miles (1982) referenced above, made important early contributions to these ways of theorising race by identifying the politically constructed nature of 'race', seen to mask the existence of class-based inequalities as well as highlighting the importance of political ideology in the process of racialisation.

Caribbean diaspora in Britain. The pioneering work of these scholars in relation to those working through postcolonial paradigms within cultural studies (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994; Chambers, 1994) has been integral in shifting attention towards the non-essential subject, the syncretic character of cultural formations and the importance of emerging or 'hybrid' cultural identities. These attacks upon presumptions of 'fixed' racial identities is, for instance, highlighted through what Bhabha (1994) calls a condition of 'liminality', that is, the manner in which individuals are always in states of in-betweeness and ambiguity, constantly on the threshold of other forms of identification. There is thus a recognised potential for those who are racially fixed to negotiate the terms of sameness and difference.[30]

These insights have resulted in a greater emphasis upon 'cultural difference' alongside ideas of 'race' (Alexander and Alleyne, 2002: 543), in an attempt to destabilise the false (biological) basis of raciological thinking and critically assess the construction of racial categorisation (Bonnett, 1997). This does not mean that 'race' has been disregarded as a useful conceptual tool or that the very real effects of thinking through 'race' are no longer seen to be relevant, but that identities are incomplete, relational, selective and contingent (Mac an Ghaill, 1999; Dwyer and Jones III, 2000). Racial essentialism may be mobilised as a defensive and politically empowering tactic, for instance, a unified 'Black' identity in situations of marginalisation (Westwood, 1991), or as a form of normalised everyday ethnic identification (Tate, 2001: Campbell and McLean, 2002) but is not seen as inherent or given. In other words it is recognised that racialised identities and the relations which constitute them, should not be conceived of outside of the power relations which (re)construct them.

As well as shifting the ontological status of 'race' these developments have informed prevailing explanations, historically in favour of the 'political economy' as an overarching determining factor of 'race relations', by

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[30] One must be aware that discussions of hybridity can be accused of reinforcing the idea that cultural inter-mixture implies 'pure cultures' once existed. As Lavie and Swedenberg (1996:10) argue "...all cultures in various ways, turn out to be hybrid."

addressing inter-subjective agency and 'cultural' dimensions. This has not resulted in the complete abandonment of 'the political' as some critics, have argued (Modood, 1998; Bourne, 1999).[31] Rather as Jackson (1989) indicates, recognition of the cultural domain highlights that meanings are not just imposed through a hegemonic political ideology or dominant economic systems, but are also resisted, contested and re-negotiated. In a similar fashion Cohen (1997) argues that forms of racism and the discourses through which such ideas circulate are not *solely* tied to the repercussions of an economically determined environment. In this way racialised experiences cannot be seen merely to reflect the 'external' conditions in which they are set, but may themselves play an integral role in the formation of ideas of the 'self' and the 'other' (Hubbard, 2002).

Whilst theoretical approaches, which aid an understanding of the constructed, relational and non-essential character of ethnic identities, are vital to an appreciation of the dynamics of inter-cultural relations, there remains a tendency to ignore the actual performances of such identities in favour of general abstractions of post-modern, global 'realities'. As Eade (1997:148) argues:

> *"...while the analyses of different scapes, hybridity and new ethnicities have encouraged recent rethinking of essentialist formulations, they have not produced much detailed substantive information about how the different 'imagined worlds' are constructed by individuals in local situations."*

For some, talk of cultural hybridity, borrowings and crossovers, emphasised in the work of Bhabha (1994) and Chambers (1994), make distinctions between ethnic groups increasingly problematic. Modood (1998) argues that there are serious negative repercussions to this mode of thinking insofar as the very idea of 'diverse communities' is in danger of denial. For others, such as Creswell (forthcoming), the employment of universally applicable and undifferentiated

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[31] Bourne (1999), in defence of a class based analysis, argues that such 'new approaches' do not take the problem of racism seriously enough and thus abandon the oppressed, in, for example, her critique of the work of Cohen (1997).

figures such the 'migrant' or 'nomad' in the celebratory language of post-modern metamorphosis, neglects the power relations which construct the realities of diverse societies.

With these crucial, but also limited theoretical developments in mind, I now look to move away from national and abstract discussions of multiculturalism and 'race relations'. In what follows I explore how a geographical imagination might assist an understanding of inter-cultural relations by emphasising the importance of 'space as productive' rather than merely being a responsive outcome. I therefore argue for a need to recognise that the spatial contexts through which relations are experienced are significant in constructing ideas of the 'self' and of those identified as racially, ethnically and culturally 'different'.

2.3. Thinking geographically: Productive space

Research which has valued differing geographic perspectives, particularly as regards the relationship between 'race' and cities, has sought to emphasise the spatial effects of racial 'difference' as played out upon the urban environment, what Nasser (2003) in his examination of the changing character of British cities, refers to as urban 'ethnocscapes'.[32] Work based around various manifestations of these 'scapes' has both continued to incorporate an empiricist slant and rely upon territorial interpretations of space, whilst also developing new insights which emphasise the relational construction of racial and cultural identities through space (Peake and Schein, 2000). I contend that an understanding of space which is *relational* and *productive* of 'differences', rather than merely an expression or reflection of them is critical to an appreciation of the importance of geography as regards the everyday negotiation of difference.

In a recent discussion of the social and cultural geographies of 'race', Peach (2002) reinforces a line between what he sees as a more traditional and established social geography of 'race', which in his words, involves a 'real'

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32 This draws upon terminology used by Appadurai (1990) in his examination of the processes and the outcomes of globalization.

engagement with the world, and increasingly influential cultural perspectives which emphasise the non-essential character of racial identity. The form of enquiry endorsed by Peach involves the mapping of ethnic minority communities within urban areas, the measurement of levels of ethnic segregation and isolation, analysis of census data and the examination of the processes through which patterns of race and residence emerge (Peach, 1975; Clarke, Ley and Peach, 1984; Phillips and Kairn, 1991; Phillips, 1998; Peach, Clarke and Vertovec, 1990; Rees, Phillips and Medway, 1995; Peach, 1996; Johnston, Forrest and Poulsen, 2002; Poulsen, Johnston and Forrest, 2002; Johnston, Poulsen and Forrest, 2005). In so doing, it has been crucial in highlighting the relation between space and 'race', particularly through its emphasis upon the residentially divided geographies of multicultural cities as a result of positions of inequality, discrimination and 'community' formation.

However, in line with the current discourse of 'community cohesion', the assumptions of much of this research seem to suggest that segregation in itself represents a moral and social ill. 'Ethnic concentration' is posited as inherently problematic, something to be assimilated (Dunn, 1998; Young 2000). It also offers a very restricted sense of what an examination of 'geography' in relation to issues of 'multiculturalism', might entail. For instance, Bagguley and Hussain (2003) in opposition to this fascination with 'race' and residence argue that:

> *"One of the central features of contemporary post-industrial cities is precisely that residence, employment and leisure are not spatially coterminous."*

It is also contended that 'race' and ethnicity as constructed categorisations cannot be reduced to straightforward cartographic patterns whereby meanings, histories, symbolic significance, and connections beyond conventional boundaries are neglected.

Developments in cultural geography have responded to new theories of identity, as part of an accepted 'cultural turn' within the discipline (Jackson, 2003), departing from approaches content with counting and mapping. Emerging avenues of research have included the effects of transnational commodity cultures which re-produce but also create new forms of ethnicized identities (Jackson, 2000; Crang, 1996; May, 1996a), the socio-spatial construction of minority and 'white' ethnicities, particularly in terms of youth sub-cultures through which cross-cultural exchange generate new forms of identity (Back, 1996; Bonnett, 1997; Jackson, 1998, Nayak, 2003), racialised representations of place through which powerful meanings ascribed to places work to reinforce specific interpretations of 'race' (Anderson, 1987, 1993; Keith, 1993), as well as contemporary nationalised racisms whereby new forms of closure are expressed in relation to cultural rather than biological differences (Pred, 2000; Wren, 2001). In particular these studies have been successful in opening up the importance of place, cities and urban sites as powerful elements within processes of socialisation and racialisation (Bonnett, 2002).

These approaches show how the use of strict racial categories reinforces the idea of natural distinction, but also that the ramifications of ethnic diversity cannot be reduced to quantitative analysis, when the significance of the lived experience is recognised. Most importantly I would argue, such approaches flag up the propensity to treat space as an *outcome* of other processes.

In his explanation of the role of the geographer Johnston (1981: 212) argues that:

> *"Within the social sciences, the role of the geographer is that of accounting for the patterns on the ground, the actual realizations of the processes being modelled by the various theories of capital and the state."*

However, there is disagreement here. Not all geographers seem to base their work on this same premise. As Massey (1992), among others (e.g. Smith, 1993; Low, 1996; Sundstrum, 2003), shows, the spatial must be considered not only as

a result of other processes, but as a vital aspect of these very processes, with a capacity to condition the social.

> *"...there is no getting away from the fact that the social is inexorably also spatial...'Space' is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global."* (Massey, 1992:80)

Social relations are thus constituted, constrained and mediated by space and experiences through it. Delaney (2002) contends that recent developments within geography have highlighted the vital relationship between 'race' and space, particularly through the re-examination of space as a physical and symbolic *resource,* as opposed to a conception of space as containing the results of externally imposed forces. He states that:

> *"This engagement with race has enriched our understanding of how space works to condition the operation of power and the constitution of relational identities."* (Delaney, 2002:6)

Rather than thinking of space as a surface upon which relations are played out, we might better conceptualise it as a coming together of diverse and relational trajectories where its contours are defined by the character of this meeting (Massey, 2005). Thinking in terms of space as the constantly emerging result of various *relations* between peoples, things and ideas, *through* particular places, is key to an understanding of the everyday character of inter-cultural relations.

2.4. A conceptual framework for studying inter-cultural relations

What then does a recognition of the spatially constructed character of identification have on our understanding of inter-cultural relations in multicultural places? If the terms of identity are not straightforwardly given, but *worked at,* and if these identities do not just take place, but in their arrangements also *make place,* then there is a need to understand the way in which such relations may be the emerging outcome of a number of influences. I argue here that several elements need to be considered as contributing to the experience of what it may mean to live within a multicultural environment,

resulting in the (re)construction of boundaries between individuals and racially/culturally differentiated 'others'.

Through the remainder of this chapter I explore the dynamics at work in and through multicultural cities which define the terms of inter-cultural openness and closure. The key contention is that there is a need to focus upon the way in which relations are actually lived, experienced and enacted. In particular the significance of a specific version of *everyday relationality* is opened up as the realm through which ethnic identities and solidarities are constructed, contested and negotiated. Within this framework, I work from 'the nation' through to the 'everyday', not in order to emphasise the importance of certain spatial scales over others, but in order to illustrate the significance of the relationality of inter-cultural relations; what Marston, Jones III and Woodward (2005) refer to as a 'flat ontology'. In so doing, the 'the everyday' is seen as an appropriate way of conceiving the intersection of these inherently spatial contributory influences.

2.4.1. Racisms and national cultures of belonging

As I have argued, 'race relations' are often seen to operate in and upon the territorial unit of the nation, with, for example, different nation states exhibiting specific patterns of social diversity and adopting particular policies in relation to these unique patterns. However, I wish to point here towards the significance of the nation through its powerful capacity to influence a distinction between an 'us' and 'them' in a relational and experiential sense. I therefore look to explore the idea that cultures of belonging are constructed and maintained through the everyday employment of the nation as a common-sensical resource and through the practice of a national 'we', defining those who belong and those who are 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996).

One of the most potent vehicles for a distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' has historically been the discursive, imaginary and material

construct of the nation (Hobsbawm, 1992), what Anderson (1991) calls an 'imagined community'. The uniting and also divisive qualities of 'the nation' come from the fact that its homogeneity is treated as if it were natural. Thus in a similar fashion to constructed ideas of 'race', the power of thinking and acting through 'the nation' comes to make sense. The nation then is essentially a social formation, a processual construct whereby inclusion within a collective national 'we' is in constant re-formation, taking place through instituted everyday practices which re-nationalize society, producing the 'effect of unity' (Balibar, 1991). While we may be able to locate those versions of history, institutions, codes and practices which help to achieve this, we cannot ignore the very 'real' phenomena of national identity and the more damaging forms of nationalism.

In an era of globalization, accelerated mobility and increased population movement, the importance of the nation as a frame of reference and point of identification has arguably increased; particularly in terms of a defensive reaction against the threat of racial and cultural heterogeneity. As Marden (1997:58) comments:

> *"...even though nation states have been compelled to recognise the extent to which their boundaries are porous and the increasing heterogeneity of their national population, it has not led to the global diminution of nationalism or national cultures."*

In Europe this has most clearly manifest itself in terms of the recent success of far-right political parties,[33] testimony to the stumbling block exclusive cultures of belonging pose to the ability of nations to come to terms with difference (Pred, 1998, 2000; Eatwell, 2000; Wren, 2001; Renton, 2003). As Smith (2001) and Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge and Chakrabarty (2000) argue, the manner in which the nation has taken on increased significance can be opposed to much contemporary writing on globalization and global cities, which has contended that this territorial unit has lost the relevance once held (Soysal, 1998; Holston

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[33] For example France, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands have all in recent years witnessed the growth and consolidation of political parties on the far-right of the political spectrum, increasingly establishing an anti-immigration, or rather anti-immigrant consensus (Eatwell, 2000)

and Appadurai, 1999). While it is true that cities increasingly act as hubs of identification through global connectivity[34] (Smith (2001:173) explains that:

> *"Paradoxically, the expansion of transnational migration has resulted in outbursts of entrenched, essentialist nationalism in both sending and receiving locales. In receiving cities and states, movements aimed at recuperating and reifying a mythical national identity are expanding as a way to eliminate the penetration of alien others."*

This recovery of a mythical national identity forms what Hesse (1993) labels the racist logic of 'spacism', whereby tradition and territory are conflated, re-producing the myth that Britain, always was and always should be a 'white' country. The outcome of this can be seen in the reactionary pursuit of a purified national space based upon particular racial and cultural criteria. It can also be seen to form part of what Pred (1998), in his examination of Sweden, shows to be a racism which no longer *just* works through a biological logic, but through what he terms 'cultural incommensurability'. In the case of Britain, this 'cultural racism' is rooted in what Cashmore (2003) sees as an identity crisis, whereby definitions of Britishness remain uneasily vague. In particular the wish to preserve a mythical national heritage has resulted in reactionary attitudes specifically directed towards those labelled as 'immigrants' and 'asylum seekers' (Nash, 2003; Wren, 2001), as I will indicate in relation to experiences of Leicester in chapter five.

However, as Nash (2003) importantly shows, these ideas are not just 'out there', but manifest in and through the lives of 'national subjects':

> *"The persistence of racist discourses of national belonging that shape the lives of national subjects and would-be citizens is evident in alarmist responses to immigration and asylum seekers, in Britain and other places, that eschew overt discussions of race in favour of ideas of cultural heritage and cultural difference."* Nash (2003: 641)

Cultures of national belonging which re-produce specific forms of exclusion and racism, cannot therefore be limited to the realm of ideas alone, they must also be seen as taking on specific material forms with tangible implications. As

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34 As will be shown in more detail in section 2.4.3.

Verkuyten (2004) shows, for all the attention the issue of multiculturalism receives, there remains little focus upon what the actual task of living with cultural diversity might actually involve.

Exclusive forms of national belonging work into ordinary and even mundane practices, experiences and articulations (Billig, 1995, Edensor, 2002, Sharp, 2003). Such discourses expressed through specific versions of 'the nation' are not then just to be seen as the property of extremists, but resources available to individuals as they make sense of their lives in the context of specific locales. In particular, Balibar (1991:93) focuses attention upon the role of nationalised and nationalising institutions in the reproducing such practices:

> *"A social formation only reproduces itself as a nation to the extent that, through a network of apparatuses and daily practices, the individual is instituted as a homo nationalis from cradle to grave, at the same time as he or she is instituted as homo œconomicus, politicus, religiosus"*

Balibar (1991) explains that, in relating to and identifying with fellow nationals, other differences are subordinated to those which mark out a clear difference between 'ourselves' and 'foreigners', particularly through the practices of language and 'race', instituted through spaces of education and those of the family. For Byrne (2002:26), in her work with white mothers in South London, 'the nation' is constructed and imagined not through wider national discourses, but through "...forms of living, through personal histories and everyday routines and consumption."

By emphasising the reconstruction of 'the nation' through experience it is argued that anxieties over racial and cultural differences are re-produced through the sensual fields of the everyday. As Butler (1993) points out, the very act of looking locates danger on the black body, whereby the presence of the 'other' comes to stand for a difference which is always already about to do violence to the integrity of a 'white nation'. What this suggests is that wider discourses of difference, inferiority and incompatibility are often already read onto 'others', in the moment of encountering difference. 'Being seen' and

'seeing', takes on a significant role in the re-production of differences with reference to an accepted, collective 'we'. As Pred (1998:389) explains much of these ordinary experiences influence what is seen to be appropriate and where:

> *"Sightings of the swarthy complexioned, of the olive skinned, of the brown, black or yellow body. Spottings of the alien gate, of the not-from- here hand gesture, of the (uncomfortably) active body language. Hearings of the unintelligible word of the foreign tongue. Overhearings of the unfamiliarly familiar, of more or less accented Swedish, of recognisable but outlandishly animated chatter. Whatever local circumstances have been in the past, reminders of somatic, behavioural and cultural difference, are now almost inescapable, an everyday matter"*

The nation is, then, a vital organising tool employed, but also practised, marking out those who do and do not belong. These forms of cultural racism are instituted in relation to wider political and popular discourses, but we can also see that they come to make sense through the lived experience in unique, contexts, as will be illustrated throughout the later chapters of this thesis.

I now move on to discuss the importance of such contexts, by recognising that ideas of 'difference', while often expressed in relation to a mythical, imagined national 'community', also operate in relation to the placed circumstances in and through which they are expressed.

2.4.2. Placing racisms and inter-ethnic relations

> *"...an understanding of contemporary racism depends on the development of an interpretative framework that is sensitive to the 'historicity' and 'spatiality' of racial conflict"* (Keith, 1995:21)

As Keith (1995) argues, there is an urgent need to conceptualise racism and the power relations which sustain it as contextual, based around relations which intersect in and through specific places. As such, he contends there is no straightforward set of ingredients which lead to inter-ethnic conflict or a standard check list which can ensure harmonious relations. In moving our attention from a strictly national frame yet retaining the importance of the

nation as a reference point of identification, I wish to emphasise here the contributions which a relational understanding of place may provide in conceptualising inter-cultural relations, not just as a geographic backdrop, but as an integral determining influence, as will be further explored through chapters four and five.

The specificity of place, or what Holloway (2000:199) refers to as the 'contingent' or 'contextual embeddedness' of social processes, is significant on the basis of the meanings which 'living with difference' attains in specific locales and the diverse influences which feed into experiences of place. As Modood and Werbner (1997) argue, it is only through attention to particular manifestations of 'multiculturalism' that one can understand the different ways in which this phenomenon operates. This recognises the complex manner in which economic, political and social forces work across space and through place, producing uneven geographies. With reference to processes of globalization, Nayak (2003:5) explains that different places exhibit distinctive features as an outcome of the manner in which the global is transformed and adapted through the "contours of locality and identity":

> *"...globalization has not followed a basic, painting by numbers' schema designed around predictable colour charts and anticipated natural finishes. Closer inspection reveals a gloss that is patchy and spread unevenly by the sweeping roller-brush of change as it comes into direct contact with the unexpected surfaces, ridges and contours of locality and identity."*

Much of the research which has focussed upon these variations has attended to the way in which places are differentially caught up within national and transnational economic circuits and the manner in which this influences relations between those from different racial, cultural and class 'backgrounds'. Kundnani (2001), Kalra (2001) Amin (2002a), and Webster (2003), for instance, in their examinations of the forces at work within the North West of England, emphasise the importance of local economic circumstance, driven by a history dis-investment and the decline of critical industries. The disappearance of large scale textile operations in this part of the country has had severe implications

for the livelihoods of residents and has also put a greater strain on relations between them. Repercussions have included high levels of structural, long-term unemployment, deprivation, deep rooted suspicions, growing generational divides and the proliferation of formal and informal racist activity. The impact upon the material conditions of ethnic minority 'communities' within these areas has been especially harsh as Kalra's (2000) analysis of the relationship between the Miripuri/Pakistani community and the once thriving textile industry of Oldham illustrates.

In his examination of the city of Leicester, Singh (2003) also emphasises the importance of the economic context of place, by showing how favourable local conditions have been vital in conditioning positive inter-ethnic relations, thus offering a contrast to the towns of the North-West. In particular he suggests that the evolution of a relatively prosperous and diverse local economy assisted by the entrepreneurial activities of predominantly middle-class East African Asian immigrant community has been significant in stifling tensions. However, as will be explored in chapter four, this analysis is not confined to economic considerations. He also points towards the local political scene which has witnessed extensive representation from minority 'communities' especially within the ranks of the local Labour group[35] and a pro-active local authority in terms of the provision of essential social services.

Vertovec (1994; 1996) and Semprebon (2004) have also contributed to a discussion of the specific situation found in Leicester. Vertovec emphasises the critical interface and open dialogue between the local authority and minority grassroots groups. He argues that this political culture has been assisted through the presence of minority representatives within the local authority, and in the case of his own research, the ability of Muslim associations in the city to speak with a united voice over sensitive issues. Semprebon (2004), through a comparison of institutional multiculturalism in Leicester and Rotterdam identifies consultation, communication, representation of minorities, diversity

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35 This is something also emphasised by Hahlo (1998) in his examination of the Gujarati immigrant 'community' in Bolton, Lancashire

management, equality opportunities and multicultural education as significant markers of pro-active local leadership. The situation found in Leicester might then be contrasted with the approaches taken by local governments elsewhere, something which I will open up to greater scrutiny in chapter four. As Malik (2002) argues in the case of Burnley, and Lewis (1997) in the case of Bradford, the local state and in particular local leaders can be criticised for their failure to support minority organisations and their neglect of institutionalised discrimination. Indeed, Lewis (1997) goes on to argue that any progress made in Bradford can be seen as the result of the efforts of local voluntary organisations in isolation from official agencies.

In their examination of EU neighbourhoods Allen and Cars (2001) have also pointed towards what they see as the vital relationships between the formal institutions within a given place and those informal networks operating through local populations within the context of the neighbourhood. They argue that the quality of such a relationship holds one of the keys to understanding how it might be possible to come to terms with a differentiated urban society through the formation of formal arenas of conflict resolution.

These links between community agencies and official institutions are seen as central to the incorporation of minority communities into the mainstream, and point towards the significance of ethnic minority mobilisation and institutional provision in the development of progressive relations. For instance, Rogers and Tillie (2001) highlight the ways in which western European cities operate through contrasting stances towards rights afforded to immigrant communities but also in terms of the specific reactions and mobilisations of ethnic minority communities in response to multifaceted positions of exclusion. What these points suggest is that the condition and conditioning of relations in specific places is heavily influenced by the way in which the locale is variously 'connected' in economic, social and cultural terms (Marden, 1997), but also that various ethnic 'groups' are empowered.

While the specific dynamics exhibited in particular locations are clearly influenced by economic circumstance and the efforts of localised formal and informal agencies, I wish to also emphasise here the importance of the 'cultural dynamics' of place (Sandercock, 2003:11) and the more 'informal' histories of conflict and compromise. Place-making processes are not disconnected from the outlooks, experiences and practices of multiple publics, publics which are also variously connected to 'the local'. Places are thus constituted and transformed by the contested everyday ideas and practices, whereby the meaning of place and the rights to it are influenced by the disputes across difference (Jacobs, 1996; May, 1996b). In the light of economic restructuring in the North-West of England, for instance, it is possible to observe 'white' defensiveness which employs specific versions of place and history, or as Watts (1997:493) puts it: "...an irreducible local experience which defends local interest and identity around places."

As I will illustrate in chapter five, a contextual but also relational understanding of place emphasises that experiences between and within places differ in terms of how individuals are positioned, for example, through economic circumstance. But also the ways in which individuals position themselves, for example, through contestations of what places might 'stand for'. The contextual character of place should not then be viewed merely as a backdrop against which relations are played out. Rather I suggest that these 'contexts' are reproduced through a number of intersecting influences and practices and employed in the language of belonging, which does not reduce place either to the product of externally imposed forces or to the free will of a plural public.

I contend in what follows that cities as specific spatial arrangements work to bring together these influences, practices and diversely positioned individuals and thus play an integral role in experiences of openness and closure.

2.4.3. The city-ness of cities

As Pile (1999) notes, cities exhibit distinctive qualities which set them apart from other spatial formations. They are primarily sites of concentration of people, things and institutions. In this way they can also be seen as stages for multiple notions of belonging, ethnic 'mixture' and cultural diversity where encounters with 'difference' are at their most intense as a result of transnational cultural flows (Appadurai, 1990; Allen, Massey and Pryke, 1999; Smith, 2001). Cities have therefore often been conceptualised as porous and open sites of multiculturalism, key nodes within global networks and distanciated spatial trajectories (Massey, Allen and Pile, 1999).[36] It is this sense of global connection upon which a hope of new forms of inter-cultural understanding is based, particularly when cities are contrasted with 'less connected' spatial forms, as Hannerz (1992:199-200) notes:

> *"The openness of cities toward the outside, that is to say, may widen the horizons of their inhabitants beyond what might be common in more closed communities."*

However, experiences of the urban environment are simultaneously one of hope and fear, excitement and danger and progressive cross-cultural engagement alongside some of the most extreme forms of racism, discrimination and exclusion (Back, 1996). Not only are cities in Britain 'home' to free flowing and mobile populations, but also stable and entrenched communities, who in different ways (for example, dependent upon classed positions) openly express hostility towards those seen to threaten the racial and cultural status quo. The city then should be seen as the site through which both forms of openness and closure are practised, or as Massey *et al.* (1999:16) put it: "The fact of cityness creates both opportunities and problems to be addressed".

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[36] In discussing the various 'qualities' of cities, there is a need to bear in mind the cautionary stance set by Thrift (2000). Thrift argues that 'the city' should not be viewed as a globally homogenous concept, something often neglected in an over concentration on particular cities, notably Los Angeles (Davis, 1998; Dear, 2000; Soja, 2000)..

The juxtaposition of various cultural formations and the way in which this 'throwntogetherness' (Massey, 2005) operates through proximity and distance is key, and forms an integral aspect of the arguments put forward in chapters six and seven. This is not just a reference to literal or physical forms of nearness and farness, but also to social distances. It is this interplay between social differentiation and the physical encounters which operate through the spaces of the city which is seen as a vital. As Ahmed and Stacey (2001:7), through their use of 'inter-embodiment', explain: "Inter-embodiment...is a way of thinking through the nearness of other others, but a nearness that involves distanciation and difference." As Morris (1999) also shows in his analysis of inter-racial relations in a mixed inner city neighbourhood of Johannesburg, living within the same 'territory', does not inevitably ensure collective solidarity or the erasure of racism. Affiliations, community formations, forms of differentiation and cultural practices cut across one another and are not merely confined to a narrow view of what may be considered the local, particularly when we take into account the multiple transnational practices of a diverse population at work in multicultural cities.

One way in which the city is seen to bring together socially distanciated strangers in close physical proximities is through the 'forced propinquity' of public spaces; forums such as public buildings, squares, plazas, shopping centres, malls, streets and parks. Some scholars have therefore pointed towards the potential of the urban as the location for some form of a 'politics of difference', whereby the notion of living with diversity is framed as a positive precursor to a democratic form of urbanity (Young, 1990; Sandercock, 1998, Copjec and Sorkin, 1999). For Patel (1998), the greater proliferation of public spaces in the UK is one of the reasons why the stark racial segregation of the US is not so much of an issue on this side of the Atlantic. Others such as Zukin (1998, 2000) have argued that public spaces are key to developing a common culture through the mingling of strangers, decrying their disappearance alongside the growth of privatised spaces driven by the needs of the market.[37]

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[37] Also see Sorkin 1992; Mitchell, 1995; Aurigi and Graham, 1997.

However, as Amin and Thrift (2002) argue, one must be careful not to overstate the importance of conventional and designed 'public' spaces as those of meaningful encounter. There is a need to recognise that these are often spaces of avoidance, reserved individuality and exclusion on the basis of race, class and gender (Ruddick, 1996).

Attention needs to focus not only on the power relations inherent within traditionally conceived 'public' spaces, but also those at work through other arenas of inter-cultural encounter, arenas which may play significant roles in the reinforcement and rearrangement of social boundaries. These might include spaces which involve greater intensities of engagement such as the workplace (Estlund, 2003) and places of education (Gillborn, 1995), which I consider as a space of 'sustained encounter' in chapter seven. However, this is not to say that such spaces are considered uniform or fit neatly into strict typologies. They are differentially experienced, employed as resources in diverse ways and actively constructed. As Wridt (2004) shows in her examination of 'the block', the boundaries of this specific space are marked out not only through the streets corners and built form of the neighbourhood but have been historically re-constructed and successively marked out through the street practices of residents.

This emphasis on the active construction of space may well then draw attention away from officially sanctioned public spaces as the only significant sites of inter-cultural engagement, especially given that the desired outcomes of such spaces are never guaranteed. What it might focus our interest on is the re-creation of a range of 'micro-spaces' through active engagement with the urban environment.[38] Drawing on de Certeau's idea of the city walker and Pratt's notion of 'grids of difference', Secor (2004:358) points towards the active and productive construction of identity and difference:

> *"City walkers traverse interlacing 'grids of difference' and find themselves taking up particular subject positions in relation to the various (religiously,*

[38] This will be opened to empirical examination in chapter seven.

> *ethnically, or class-based) communities and spaces that organize their spatial trajectories. As their footsteps narrate urban stories—fixing, assembling, traversing, and transforming urban boundaries—urban travellers become active participants in the production of difference, identity, and citizenship."*

While it is clear that to a certain extent these 'walkers' are determined by their economic, social and cultural positions and the demands of the various communities in which they are caught up, it is also the case that these positions and trajectories are *actively* (re)created. The boundaries of 'difference' and the boundaries of the city seem to be intimately related and while they are powerful, their borders are not absolute. As Hall (2004) explains the multicultural city, as with forms of differentiation, is far from a neat and tidy entity:

> *"Enclaves merge and overlap at their invisible borders, shift and change across time. The various zones, however distinctive to those who know how to 'read' them, are never uniform in look or homogeneous in social composition. Differences edge, slide, and blur into one another."*

To speak of 'the urban environment' is not just a reference to the physical and material fabric which makes up the sensory experience of the city, but also to its symbolic, metaphoric and imagined properties (Donald, 1999). The way in which cities are coded, holds particular importance. Sibley (1995) discusses the way in which those from 'the city' are judged as being matter out of place when they are seen to be removed from what is considered their 'natural' environment, akin to the presence of 'dirt' within purified spaces. The city then has historically been conceived of as the appropriate location of and for racial and cultural difference, an imaginary which identifies the city as a 'dark and dangerous place' (Bonnett, 2002; Keith, 1993). This manner of coding equates the city with 'the uncivilised' and is woven into a discourse of blight and decline whereby ethnic minorities are directly linked to, or blamed for the conditions within marginalised urban areas. Such discourses have also focussed upon specific neighbourhoods. For example both Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996) in the case of Moss Side in Manchester and Keith (2005: 157) in relation to the coding of South London's 'ghettos', show how urban areas are

defined in racial terms, regardless of the actual 'make up' of the local population, exacerbating negative reputations.

As I will show in chapter six, these powerful imaginaries play a critical role in re-producing the racialised geographies of the city, largely because they do not remain within the realm of the imagination. For instance, they directly influence which areas are deemed to be 'safe' through the association of racialised areas with danger and fear and thus affect the physical and embodied trajectories of individuals (Low, 2003). Webster (1996) shows how these forms of territorialisation contribute to a climate of fear and suspicion among both 'white' and Asian residents, whereby fear of attack reinforces everyday geographies, resulting in the definition of 'no-go areas'. The extent to which such geographies of fear dictate and express notions of difference are also dependent upon the cultural repertoires available to individuals and affected by a variety of significant social axes, particularly race, gender and age (Webster, 2003; Day, 1999; Pain, 2001).

What can be seen to define 'the' city is that it at once separates and brings together both through practices and imaginations. That is, the diverse spaces which feed into the city can been seen to varying extents as fluid or fixed, enabling and constraining. This is a view of cities and moreover a view of spatiality which highlights the role of space in the construction of differentiation and identification. In chapter six and seven I return to these ideas by stressing the importance of the everyday constitution of identity and difference through 'the neighbourhood' as well as encounters beyond places of residence. I will now go on to examine in more detail how a recognition of the relational character of urban identities might influence inter-cultural relations through a focus upon mobility and immobility as expressed in and through multicultural cities.

2.4.4. The mobility and immobility of urban identities

The idea of movement has come to play a significant role in understandings of multicultural urbanism. For Creswell (2001; forthcoming), this interest has emerged through an increasing focus upon a 'nomadic metaphysics' as a recognition of accelerated transnational movements, complex (dis)placements and cultural (re)translations across, within and beyond cities (Chambers, 1994; Clifford, 1997; Vertovec, 2001; Caglar, 2001). I contend here that forms of physical and imagined mobility (but also immobility) in relation to identification and differentiation are crucial to an understanding of multicultural places. Indeed, I argue that these forms of mobility are intimately linked to the discussion above, in that forms of inter-culturalism can be viewed as the outcome of the degree to which identities may become entrenched or modified through varied and situated performances. Identification, interaction and forms of exclusion are all at work through the mobilities and immobilities of the city (Crang, 2002).

As emphasised above, the essentialised subject has come under sustained attack through the now widely accepted argument that individuals' identities are not fixed but liable to re-negotiation through multiple or 'hybrid' influences (Brah, 2000). It is thus possible to view identities as shifting, becoming, or in formation, rather than ever complete (Frankenberg, 1993; Ahmed, 2000). The extent of this 'mobility' can be seen through the tension between the simultaneous bounded-ness and unbounded-ness of identities and ethnically based affiliations. Recognition of this dynamic illustrates, for example, that communities are seen to have social significance, but are not immune from internal disruptions and re-fashioning, as Silk (1999:12) notes[39]:

> *"Boundaries of a community, both in territorial and in social terms, are the subject of ongoing struggle and negotiation. In the discursive or communicative realm, meanings, identities, and loyalties are always in the process of being articulated and are constantly negotiated."*

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[39] This will be touched upon with reference to empirical material in chapter five.

Racial and ethnic groups are thus cross-cut by multiple identities influenced by a range of differences including language, gender, class, age, and religion, often hidden by the proliferation of uncritical categorisation.

For Sennett (2001) the qualities of the contemporary city enables identities to flow beyond pre-determined and fixed definitions, allowing as Robins (2001) argues, individuals to "become anybody":

> *"They are not just bankers or road-sweepers, Afro-Caribbeans or Anglo-Saxons, speakers of English or of Spanish, bourgeois or proletarian: they can be some or all of these things, and more. They are not subject to a fixed scheme of identity. People can develop multiple images of their identities, knowing that who they are shifts, depending upon whom they are with."* (Sennett, 2001)

In this way the city is seen to provide a sense of freedom, enabling identities to become more flexible through the possibilities of drawing upon a diverse range of cultural resources. What this seems to emphasise is the way in which individuals might be able to position themselves and offer different identity performances dependent upon the specific situations in which they find themselves (Baumann, 1996; Eade, 1997).

As Gillespie (1994:46) illustrates in relation to the experiences of young Punjabis in Southall, exposure to and use of a complex matrix of cultural influences, specifically through the medium of television, reveals "...remarkable cultural crossovers, 'borrowings' and convergences" and makes references to unified identities obsolete[40]. Dwyer (2000) and Werbner (2003) both show how young British Muslim women in terms of dress, actively and selectively negotiate between a variety of cultural repertoires, in the expression of assertive and emerging forms of British-Muslim identity, particularly in the context of rising Islamophobia[41]. It is clearly not just racialised minorities who have the ability to re-negotiate their identities. As Back (1996) shows through the experiences of

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40 Also see Cottle (2000).

41 This has been seen publicly, for example, through the case of Shabina Begum, a pupil at Denbeigh High School in Luton, Bedfordshire. Shabina lost her High Court appeal in opposition to her schools decision to prevent her wearing the jilbab.

young 'whites' in the mixed neighbourhoods of South London; style, language and behaviour employs a localised dialect which draws heavily upon African Caribbean cultural references and a 'Black' vernacular. Individuals and social groups then seem to play an active role in shifting terms of identity in the context of strict ethnic categorisation (Mahtani, 2002; McCrone, 2002).

However, emerging forms of identity are rarely intentional moves enacted by un-constrained and completely conscious individuals. Neither is the way in which individuals deviate from the contours of strictly defined 'communities' representative of a purposefully open and accepting stance. As Back and Nayak (1999) show in their examination of the perpetration of local racist acts by both 'white' and Black youths against Asians shows, forms of openness and closure exist alongside each other, and the definition of an 'us' and 'them' deviates. Forms of mobility cannot therefore be directly associated with what we might term 'anti-racist' positions, nor as Heibert (2002) shows, can they necessarily be seen as linear processes of acculturation over time. Of equal importance is the construction of boundaries that continually mark 'difference' (Pratt, 1999).

While the dynamic possibilities of urban identities are clear, the ability to 'become anybody' is restricted by class, gender and 'race' (Nash, 2000). Some, in this sense may have a greater opportunity to become 'otherwise'. In particular the constraining forces of various racisms play a crucial role in fixing and stigmatising the identities of those identified as 'ethnic minorities'. As Skeggs (2004a) argues, the ability to exhibit particular qualities and to perform specific racial identities is uneven. She shows how it might be possible for David Beckham to perform 'Blackness', implying a certain 'coolness', whilst remaining "resolutely white". On the other hand black males are unable to perform 'whiteness' so easily, as their identities are pathologised, fixed and inscribed on the body. This same (in)ability to become mobile can also be seen with reference to the idea of cosmopolitanism, or forms of celebratory multiculturalism which are seen as enriching on certain economic and cultural

terms[42] (Maguire and Hollywood, 2002). In particular, individuals who lack access to appropriate economic and cultural capital may remain excluded. As Binnie and Skeggs (2004) show, the production of cosmopolitan space, is contradictory in that it embraces only those forms of difference which are seen as acceptable in the promotion of a non-antagonistic and economically viable city[43].

It is also contended that an emphasis on mobile identities bears little resemblance to the realities of everyday life for both ethnic minority and majority populations, where for all the talk of cultural cross-over, strict ethnically based allegiances often remain intact (Kumar, 2003). For many social groups, it is not necessarily that their racial and cultural identities are fixed for them, but that they actually play an important role themselves in purposefully essentialising their own identities in an attempt to retain an authentic and traditional sense of 'self' and 'community'. In his examination of an ultra-orthodox Jewish community in Manchester, Valins (2003) for example illustrates the way in which some forms of identification exhibit these stubborn characteristics. In so doing he highlights how individuals draw distinct lines between insiders and outsiders through isolated practices and "...a clear philosophy of life that actively slows down and stabilizes identities" (Valins, 2003:171).

The ways in which identities stick or shift works to define forms of inclusion exclusion, outlooks, orientations, behaviours and practices. Multicultural existence can thus be seen as a negotiation between forms of identity that are relational, constructed in a relationship with social spaces endowed with significance and memories but also constituted through the presence of 'others'. As Massey (2004:5) puts it:

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[42] As I illustrate in chapter four

[43] I look to develop this notion of the *limits* of inter-cultural negotiations through chapter five of the thesis.

> *"...we do not have our beings and then go out and interact, but that to a disputed but none-the-less significant extent our beings, our identities, are constituted in and through those engagements, those practices of interaction."*

This brings us to a consideration of the ways in which experiences of multiculturalism might operate and the ways in which ideas of racial, ethnic and cultural 'difference' might become engrained or disrupted. In doing so and by bringing together those influences discussed above, the chapter now considers in more detail what an emphasis on 'the everyday' might mean for the study of inter-cultural relations within a multicultural urban environment. I begin by outlining the character of what I am calling 'the everyday'.

2.5. The spaces and times of 'the everyday'

The 'everyday', as Felski (2000) shows, has never been a concept with sharp boundaries, a difficulty compounded by its widespread usage and insufficient critical examination. She flags up the problem of defining something which is everywhere and yet nowhere, a concept which often escapes analytical grasp. Highmore (2001) also points out that the relational qualities of the everyday, entail that the ordinary inherently relies upon the extraordinary for its definition and thus presents difficulties when attempting to pin it down. Despite these challenges, I outline here why 'the everyday' might be a useful conceptual tool through which to examine the dynamics of inter-cultural negotiations on the basis of its spatial and temporal character.

Round here nothing seems to change/
At street level/
Same old thing everyday/
That's it, that's it, that's it/
Just as plain and replayed in different ways/...
...At street level/
Real people/
Same repeated sequel/

The Streets, 'Same old thing'[44]

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[44] Taken from the album 'Original Pirate Material' (2002)

These aspects are illustrated above, through the lyrics of Mike Skinner, (also known as the British urban music outfit, 'The Streets'), in his attempt to explain what it means for 'real people' in British cities to live 'at street level'. Both in the use of 'the street' as an ordinary space, (one which does not just make reference to the materiality of the road, but a way of life) and reference to the daily repeated use of the street, he outlines what an urban, inter-ethnic, working class culture might entail[45]. However, I do not stress the everyday in order to present a more 'authentic' or accurate version of multiculturalism, rather I contend that the everyday brings the details, complexities and productivity of multiculturalism 'as lived' under the spotlight.

These elements are particularly apparent in the work of de Certeau (1998) who also brings our attention to 'the street' and the space-times of the everyday by opposing it to the all-encompassing view of the planners and technocrats, a totalizing eye which in the act of viewing removes itself from the bustling liveliness of the urban experience. De Certeau highlights the ways in which the life of the streets is practised and inventively re-created through the ruses and tactics of the 'ordinary man'.[46] In this way the 'ordinary trajectories' of 'ordinary individuals' are seen as vital contributory elements to the character, use and transformation of urban space.[47] As Featherstone (1998) notes, reference to the urban environment in this sense does not merely conceive of it as a valid object of enquiry but also as a metaphorical device, the city and geographies which feed into it, are a resource through which everyday life comes to makes sense.

One of the most significant ways in which the spatial and temporal qualities of everyday experience have been theorised is through the work of time geographers such as Hagerstrand (1982). His work succeeds in opening up

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[45] In Gilroy's (2004:105) examination of the lyrics of this same music outfit, he argues that "Race is essentially insignificant, at least when compared either to the hazards involved in urban survival or to the desperate pleasures of the postcolonial city: "sex and drugs and on the dole"."

[46] For instance, through the practice of walking.

[47] However as Bonnett (1996) contends de Certeau's analysis fails to address the complex forms of identification at work in his ode to the *'common man'*.

more fully what the everyday might mean in relation to a 'geographic imagination'. In doing so he literally illustrates, through space-time diagrams, how the everyday is full of transecting projects which constitute the fabric of daily life. However, everyday experiences do not only mark out a route on a map. They are not static, restricted to 'the local', or straightforwardly represented. Drawing upon de Certeau, Crang and Travlou (2001) indicate how space-times are folded, in that memory plays a critical role in connecting spaces and disturbing any neat compartmentalisation into discrete functional spatial units. In this way we might think of everyday experiences as felt and thought in that they are imagined, remembered and re-interpreted, as well as 'concrete' (Rowles, 1978).

This emphasis upon the relational qualities of everyday space-times can also be seen as a rejection of a strictly scalar form of theorisation. By arguing in favour of an everyday approach, this is not then a call for a strictly localised approach, nor is it to equate the everyday with the local. Rather, relations are re-produced in specific localities through situated experiences, but in relation to influences which are not territorially confined. As Amin (2002b) notes, the everyday is the realm through which various 'near' and 'distant' phenomena intersect and take form. Smith (2001) also tackles a tendency to conflate the everyday with the idea of the local, rather than as the intersection of local and non-local influences, stressing a perspective which emphasises connectivity through *routes*, rather than viewing the everyday as *rooted* (Clifford, 1997).

> *"The 'everyday' needs to be freed from its associations with purely local phenomena. In transnational cities people's everyday urban experiences are affected by a wide variety of phenomena, practices and criss-crossing networks which defy easy boundary setting."* (Smith, 2001: 117)

2.6. The engrained and the possible

For Giddens (1984) the recursive nature of social life provides a form of ontological security, which *seemingly* fixes and reinforces the assumed fabric of existence, including both the personality of individuals and the 'institutions of

society' (Giddens, 1984:60). In emphasising this idea of routine, Felski (2000) also shows how a variety of movements, gestures, speech acts and embodied forms, become engrained and sustained through the space-times of the everyday. In this way everyday life is a form of repetition and normalisation which reproduces the 'hum' of the ordinary:

> *"Everyday life is simply the process of becoming acclimatised to assumptions, behaviours and practices which come to seen self-evident and taken for granted. In other words, everydayness is not an intrinsic quality that adheres itself to particular actions or persons. Rather it is a process of routinisation that all individuals experience."* (Felski, 2000:31)

For scholars writing through Marxist traditions, these routine aspects are often expressed as forms of alienation experienced by oppressed classes within capitalist societies. Experiences are seen to occur beyond the control of subjects, but significantly impact upon their lives as an outcome of the prevailing social, economic and political order. In this sense, routinisation is constructed in negative terms as something which needs to struggled against and overcome. However, as Giddens (1984) argues, engrained routines and practices are not just an un-mediated and direct response to imposed structures, rather they can be seen as the result of individual and collective action, which reproduces the presumed 'structural' context in which such practices take place.

Such a focus allows us to see both the ways in which individuals are positioned, but also actively position themselves. There is then no pre-given 'underlying structure' to speak of, but conventions, which may put constraints on the activities of individuals, are constructed both 'officially' in terms of codes and regulations, but also 'unofficially' through a variety of habitual activities (Burkitt, 2004). I therefore emphasise here the importance of practices that actively create the experience of social life, at the same time acting within but also remaking social contexts. As Smith (1992: 493-494) notes these have significant material impacts:

> *"... everyday practices of ordinary people, their feelings and understandings of their conditions of existence, often modify those very*

conditions and thereby shape rather than merely reflect new modes of urban culture."

Not only do individuals help to construct the social world they come to know, but they also make meaningful sense of this world through their multiple experiences of it. This is to stress the importance of practices and outlooks which develop through direct and mediated *involvement* (Amin and Thrift, 2002) in a 'world of experience' (Eyles, 1989:102). The idea of involvement or immersion with and in the world can be traced back to the work of Heidegger in his critique of abstract and generalised theorisation found at the heart of the modernist project. Heidegger expresses the importance of 'being there' and 'dwelling' as the plane on which one's experience becomes meaningful, making the shift from the Cartesian model of 'absolute space as container' which emphasises objectivity and disengagement, towards conceptions of 'spatiality as involvement and experience' (Peet, 1998). In so doing he dissolves a conceptual separation between objects on space, or in place (including human subjects) and space/place itself.

Everyday involvement with the world, for Giddens (1998) takes the form of both 'discursive' and 'practical consciousness', that is, daily practices are often performed with and without direct motivation by an individual in relation to any internal mental schema. In this sense it may not always be possible for individuals to articulate the meaning or significance of their daily lives, for as Kinser (1992) highlights they are not necessarily 'mental habits' but also physical and embodied routines. The unconscious elements of everyday life highlight the way in which ways of doing become naturalised through social action.

In a similar manner Bourdieu (1977), in his discussion of the habitus and the doxic (or the taken for granted), indicates how ideologies and societal norms are reproduced through practical knowledge, tacit practices and internalised dispositions. Acting in a certain way is seen as a consequence of the consolidation of experience which habitualises individuals' thinking and

behaviour, in relation to struggles over forms of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital (Connolly, 1995). Boundaries of identification and differentiation are thus re-formed through social learning in relation to the environment and positions from which this learning takes place.

A focus on the everyday does not, however, merely highlight the repetitive, routinised and engrained character of social life, but also the dynamic and processual relationship between the spatial and the social, that is the constant re-negotiation operating between the self and the other through social space. As Valentine (1999: 57), as well as Nast and Pile (1998:410), point out:

> *"Throughout our everyday lives we constantly negotiate space, position ourselves, physically, socially, politically and metaphorically in relation to others."*

> *"...we are always everywhere negotiating different worlds and worlds of difference."*

These ideas then offer us a significant tension between the ways in which the order of things becomes fixed and the manner in which this 'order' is susceptible to degrees of deviation. This needs to be explored in order to highlight how ways of life might become engrained and accepted but also disturbed and re-worked. Kinser (1992:77) argues that the very disorder of the everyday, highlighted in the work of de Certeau, is critical to an understanding of the opportunities which that disorder brings forth, opportunities which are both "lethal and life-giving". 'The everyday' then is not only based upon routine, but also upon artfulness through which personalised geographies are pieced together. As Gardiner (2000:6) puts it:

> *"Although everyday life can display routinised, static and unreflexive characteristics, it is also capable of surprising dynamism and moments of penetrating insight and boundless creativity."* (Gardiner, 2000: 6)

2.7. Rethinking ethnicity through the everyday

This thesis takes such a notion of 'the everyday', but moves away from interpretations which rely solely upon theoretical accounts, by recognising that experiences are differentiated and bound up in complex social relations. By utilising the potential of attention to 'the lived' I address the ways in which individuals, through their various involvement with the everyday urban environment, relate to the idea of the 'multicultural city' as well as to 'others' marked by 'race', ethnicity and a range of other social identities. In particular, I want to emphasise how the influences previously outlined come together through everyday experience in a relational sense, forming ideas of difference that are both produced through and re-produce social space, as Tajbakhsh (2001:xiii) in his observations notes:

> *"I saw peoples' lives, networks and identities were patterned geographically and discursively: not only was everyday life patterned across different sites of activity (work, home, community), but these different sites were contexts that transformed the meaning of the actors' identities."*

Ethnicity, in this way, is conceived of as an emergent form of identity, one which is reliant upon the practices, patterns and experiences of everyday life and the multiple spatial contexts in which these lives are set. While it is recognised that ethnic identities are processual and intimately caught up in multiple spatial trajectories, it is also accepted that they are sometimes closed through the repetition of strictly defined community practices, often set in the context of entrenched positions of marginality. As Balibar (1991:99) shows with reference to forms of urban slang shared by young people from different ethnic backgrounds, while in the present a sense of community may be established, other more enduring boundaries of belonging and division often prevent guarantees of further and/or future accommodation.

By concentrating on the 'the everyday' I have attempted to show how experiences of routine spaces may be productive, and may play an integral role

in the re-construction of 'differences'. In particular, 'the everyday' is a useful conceptual tool through which this negotiation between the engrained and the possible may be examined, that is, it illustrates what Secor (2004: 357) calls "...the variously fluid and fortified boundaries of urban space". In the context of this research 'the everyday' can therefore be summarised as the consideration of those outlooks, practices, activities and spaces/places that constitute the rhythms of 'normal' life for research participants. It is the liveliness and sociality of human existence which this focus seeks to illuminate. As Schein (2002:4) notes:

> *"Ideas such as race and racism do not emerge unprompted from individual minds, but are thoroughly embedded in our collective everyday lives and in the very structures of our social, political and economic activities."*

In the following chapter I take the approach outlined here and indicate how it may be applied empirically through the examination of the experiences of young people in the city of Leicester. I then move on to show how the influences presented may be played out in a city which has been marked out as 'different' from other British urban areas with regard to relative 'multicultural success'. I then move on to contend that it is possible through a relational perspective of place to highlight the nuances of such a place image through attention to both the public culture of place and the multiple lived experiences of the city.

3. Engaging with 'everyday multiculturalism': methodology

3.1. Introduction

As Latham (2003) argues, for all the talk of 'the everyday' and its importance in relation to lived and experiential geographies, little consideration has been given to how it might be considered or applied through grounded fieldwork. This chapter highlights how it might be possible to empirically employ those theoretical considerations discussed in the previous chapter and begin to speak of the experience of everyday ethnic relations within a specific locale. I show how through the adoption and adaptation of a qualitative methodological route which draws upon ethnographic and more conventional techniques, it has been possible to address those key research questions outlined in the opening chapter, enabling a greater understanding of "...the construction but also the transcending of boundaries, as well as their strength and permeability" (Lamont and Aksartova, 2002:19) within the context of Leicester.

In what follows, and in line with an argument put forward by Back (1996), I contend that a methodology which seeks to investigate the everyday re-constitution and negotiation of identities, must concentrate upon what is *done*, that is the practical and performative aspects of social life, but also what may be *said* with reference to everyday life. Thus while it is accepted that everyday life is composed of a plethora of physical and embodied 'doings', this does not require a complete abandonment of the 'part-representational' (Thrift, 1996). As such I address a tension between the need to 'give voice' to the experiences and outlooks of young people from a variety of ethnic 'backgrounds', and an appreciation that day-to-day life cannot be reduced to verbal utterances.

I do this by firstly introducing the qualitative basis of the research and then by outlining the justification of the methodological techniques adopted. I then

move on to discuss the development of my own personal methodological route in locating sources of empirical material. Finally I return to the importance of what is said and done by concentrating upon the significance of the 'research encounter'. Here I raise issues of positionality, power relations and the importance of these encounters in both the construction of this thesis, but also as part of everyday life.

3.2. Qualitative research and making claims

This study, as I have suggested, concentrates upon the experiences of the city of Leicester in the East Midlands of England. This geographical focus, as will be developed more fully in chapter four, has been selected on the basis that Leicester has been identified in official circles as a place which has attained a positive, progressive and harmonious reputation as regards 'race relations' and 'multiculturalism'. This provincial city has thus been marked out in opposition to 'racially sensitive' urban areas, seen to hold the key to the 'national' challenges presented in chapter one. Its choice as the 'case study' area is based upon the need to examine the extent to which such a place image might reflect but also mask the experiential elements of a city which is among one of the most ethnically diverse places within the UK.[48]

In examining the experiences of this 'multicultural city', this thesis relies mainly upon empirical materials obtained through various forms of 'qualitative' methodological investigation.[49] This approach has been adopted in order to garner a more advanced *understanding* rather than measurement of the way in which outlooks towards the city, interactions of a multi-ethnic public, and everyday spaces and identities are referenced, re-produced and re-moulded. As was argued in the previous chapter, an approach which seeks to examine the lived aspects of multiculturalism needs to rely upon interpretations which go

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[48] As I show in chapter four the condition of 'living with difference' in the British context is at its most obvious in this city where the ethnic minority 'community' constitutes approximately 36 per cent of the population.

[49] While I have employed some quantitative material in the thesis, I have not generated any primary statistical data myself.

beyond conventional exercises of counting and mapping. Material has therefore been used which in terms of quality and relevance addresses the research questions and conceptual approach previously outlined, what Graham (1997:7) terms 'warranted knowledge'. By employing a selection of qualitative 'sketches' (Amin and Graham, 1997), I do not aim to be representative of the population of Leicester, or of those identified within the bounds of discrete ethnic 'communities'. Rather, this approach looks to be illustrative of the "...the theoretical complexity of ethnicity in people's everyday lives" (Bonnett and Nayak, 2003: 309) in relation to personal, but also often shared realities of place.

I also want to recognise here that such an approach has not involved the collection of materials waiting to be discovered and reported. In so doing I reject the idea that there is a single and objective 'reality' or 'truth' somewhere 'out there'. Rather, I emphasise the inter-subjective constitution of this fieldwork material, constructed through specific socio-spatial contexts. As Whatmore (2003) argues, such material is generated through direct engagements with those who constitute 'the field', and is therefore knowledge which is inherently situated.[50] As I emphasise towards the end of this chapter, my own role in piecing together a narrative is crucial in the production of what Jackson (1985:166) calls a "situated knowledge of local reality".[51] The accounts which form the basis of this research are therefore seen as the outcome of contingent relationships, something which is particularly relevant in light of the character of the fieldwork conducted, to which I now turn.

3.3. Approaching language and action

> *"The main methodological problem is to find an analytical mechanism which can capture the subtlety of lived experience and how that is expressed through language and action or performance."* (Gray, 2003:32)

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50 Also see Cook and Crang (1995)

51 The significance of the relationship between myself and research participants will be addressed in more detail toward the end of this chapter in a brief consideration of the 'research encounter'.

As Gray (2003) notes, the main difficulty in qualitatively investigating the subtlety of lived experience is the employment of appropriate methodological tools which capture the importance of *language* and *action*. I focus upon both of these aspects in an attempt not to leave behind those things which are said whilst simultaneously recognising that much of what occurs in everyday life is not articulated. As Lees (2003) argues much contemporary writing on the everyday urban has left a methodological void due to an over-concentration upon the non-cognitive and the non-representational. While such developments represent an important recognition of the performative elements of the everyday, that is, that actions often speak louder than words, they also neglect the manner in which everyday life is interpreted and made sense of.

For Lees (2003) the main solution to this 'problem' lies in the employment of an approach which "...addresses the richness and complexity of human life and gets us closer to understanding the ways people interpret and experience the world." A focus on the everyday does not therefore necessarily equate to an abandonment of texts and words – but the ways in which performance, practice, speech and words interact within specific contexts. As Nash (2000) argues, the strengths of investigations into questions of 'identity' are to be found not only in the study of practice but also in the symbolic, the imaginary, the meaningful and the 'part-representational', all of which are manifest through various textual and non-textual forms:

> *"Exploring practice, performances, texts, object and images together rather than abandoning the knowable for the unknowable may be less theoretically ambitious than 'non-representational theory' but it also more politically effective in unravelling the certainties of national identity."* Nash (2000:661)

This thesis therefore employs a form of method, which relies upon a level of 'ethnographic' immersion within the locale under consideration, what Bauman (1996) refers to as the tactic of 'being there'. However, in so doing, I have incorporated a hybrid combination of participant observation and what might

be termed more 'conventional' or mainstream methodological techniques (Gray, 2003). In particular I look towards those methods which illustrate how everyday forms of multiculturalism are lived and expressed. As Cook and Crang (1995: 4) state:

> *"The basic purpose in using these methods is to understand parts of the world as they are experienced and understood in the everyday lives of people who actually 'live them out".*

As Jackson (1985), McCracken (1988), Cook and Crang (1995) and Cook (1997) all indicate, ethnographic approaches require the adoption of a range of techniques in order to develop a fuller understanding of those under consideration. As I show below in more detail, I have drawn upon a range of these including: formal semi-structured interviews, group discussions and informal conversations with young people from a variety of ethnic 'backgrounds', observational work with various levels of 'participation', key informant interviews, analysis of secondary material including national and local media, use of locally based research sources, diary work and photo-diaries.

Through these techniques a number of 'fieldwork questions' (whether directly posed or borne in mind) were addressed. These were derived from and based upon those key research questions outlined in chapter one. Initially they focussed upon three main areas; firstly ideas of identity, community and belonging, secondly the condition and conditioning of inter-ethnic relations, and thirdly the use and experience of different city spaces in the everyday lives of research participants. However, for reasons explored below, these questions did not remain static. Due to the nature of the methodology adopted as well as the various dead-ends and openings of the research process, there was a need for flexibility which allowed questions to be variously explored within the context of specific research moments. As the fieldwork proceeded new questions emerged and the line of enquiry shifted in pursuit of emerging and significant issues. For example through one-on-one formal, semi-structured

interviews with college students personal issues were sometimes open for discussion while in the context of group discussions less sensitive issues were more dominant. Importantly, there is a need to stress that in those situations where 'fieldwork questions' were asked, these were directly shaped and influenced by my own experiences of both living in this city and the various contexts of research moments.

3.4. The fieldwork period: routes, sources and techniques

In order to engage with the locality at the core of the research, I moved to the city of Leicester in October 2003, where I spent the next 12 months engaged in various forms of 'fieldwork'. Living here over this extended period enabled me to develop a greater appreciation of local affairs and issues, as well an improved understanding of what everyday life in this city involved. As well as being privy to significant local developments and attending local events, I was also able to note and pay attention to everyday activities in different parts of the city by regularly 'moving around', thus improving my own understandings of the multiple geographies of this place. These forms of 'local immersion' also allowed me, through a process of 'snowballing' to also develop important contacts, and facilitated access to research participants integral to the production of the thesis. By outlining the details of this period, I look here to summarise the thematic, geographic and practical routes taken during my time spent in Leicester.

At an early stage of the research process the decision was made to concentrate upon an understanding of inter-ethnic relations amongst young people from a variety of ethnic 'backgrounds' found within a specific everyday location. This would then allow for an examination of the relationship between experiences of 'everyday environments' and 'everyday inter-ethnic relations'. Initially the plan was to engage on a long term basis with young people within a specific secondary school environment with a diverse student intake, in an attempt to access the diverse experiences of these students within and beyond this institution.

The decision to focus upon a range of 'racialised experiences' rather than address those of a specific 'community' was taken for several reasons. Amongst these were an awareness of the dangers of attaching labels to individuals who might define themselves otherwise (McCrone, 2002; Lyon, 1997), the recognition of the potential dynamism of ethnic identities (as discussed in the previous chapter), the need to address forms of inter-culturalism which may go beyond neat forms of categorisation, as well as an attempt to avoid the conflation of terms such as 'hybridity' with non-whiteness; (McGuinness, 2000) a recognition that we all lead racially structured lives (Frankenberg, 1993). As Nash (2003:640) explains:

> *"Limiting attention to race to non-white spaces is a feature of an unreflexive whiteness that only sees race through the visual markers of 'non-white' bodies, thus normalizing both the bodies and spaces of whiteness."* (Nash, 2003: 640)

The 'youth' focus of this study was adopted on the basis that, as Skelton and Valentine (1998) point out, young people are both subject to forms of exclusion not experienced by other groups, but are also able to creatively resist and subvert such exclusions through various sub-cultures. It is also the case that young people are often more receptive to change and to various forms of racial and cultural 'difference' (Back, 1996; Boyle and Sandford, 2004), but are also most likely to be the victims and perpetrators of racial harassment, as has been established in the case of Leicester (Rupra, 2004).[52] This focus is also significant in terms of the manner in which young people have been identified at the heart of popular moral panics associated with the presence and dangers of racial and cultural 'difference', as Alexander (2000) shows with regard to the construction of the 'Asian gang' as the 'new folk devils'. Particularly in relation to the ideas propounded in chapters five and six of this thesis, such an orientation is also relevant in terms identifying negotiations which emerge temporally and across

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[52] This report conducted through the Racial Harassment Action Group Monitoring Project of the Leicester Racial Equality Council was conducted between April 2003 and March 2004. They found that the highest group of perpetrators in terms of acts of racial harassment were aged between 10 and 17.

different generations. However, this is not to say that I wish to separate off these 'youth geographies' from the wider debates presented in chapter one (Skelton and Valentine, 1998:7), or that my fieldwork was completely limited to those who might be identified as young people.[53]

Whilst the decision to focus upon young people from a range of ethnic backgrounds has remained at the heart of this research, the source of this information has been subject to change. Initial plans to engage with young people through a specific secondary school over a long term period failed to materialise due to a lack of feedback. While some schools turned down my requests outright, others expressed interest but then failed to allow access. Such setbacks meant that the research was not conducted along a smooth, linear and straightforward trajectory and practical challenges entailed methodological shifts. Whilst avenues were pursued which ultimately presented dead-ends; at the same time new paths presented themselves. By seizing upon and pursuing these emerging paths I was able to roll with these challenges whilst retaining my core conceptual approach.

Rather than solely relying upon material gathered from one secondary school I therefore looked at other ways into a range of schools located in various neighbourhoods of the city in order to provide comparison. This route which enabled short term contact with a variety city schools was facilitated with the assistance of staff based at the Student Development Support Agency (SDSA). This agency, established in the aftermath of a recent Leicester education authority OFSTED report failure, had been given responsibility as part of its remit to run a variety of community cohesion consultation events on behalf of the city council. Through this process they had involved a number of secondary schools, focussing upon the Year 10 age group, that is, students aged between 14 and 15. Through these gatekeepers I was able to gain access not only to cohesion events, but also to some these students themselves. The

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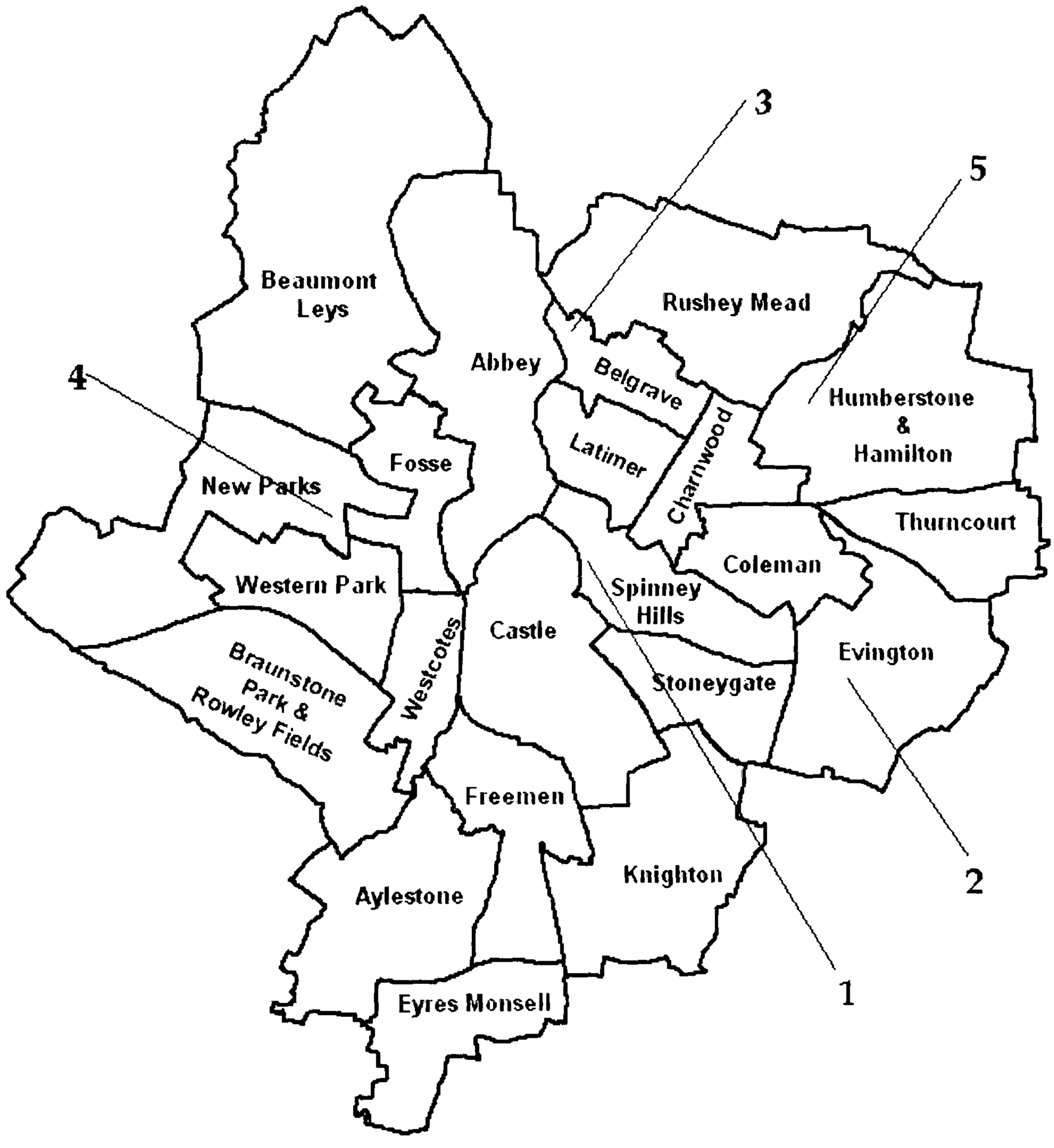
[53] In the case of this thesis the term 'young people' refers to those between the age of 14-25. However, some of those participants interviewed through the college of further education could be described as 'adults',(although the boundaries of these categorises are open to debate). This research also relied upon the accounts of key informants outside of this age cohort.

locations of the schools involved in this initial aspect of the fieldwork, are shown on Fig. 7 below and the names and brief profiles of the school intake is provided in the key in Fig. 8.

Figure 7 Ward map of Leicester indicating the locations of secondary schools used in initial stages of fieldwork



Source: Leicester City Council website (www.leicester.gov.uk)

Figure 8 Key for ward map

1. Moat Community College - Over 90 per cent of students are of minority ethnic origin, 73 per cent having its roots in India, with 6 per cent identified as 'white'. (OFSTED, 1999).

2. St. Paul's Catholic School - Over a third of students are now from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with eight per cent in 1998. (OFSTED, 2004).

3. Rushey Mead School - 90 per cent of students do not speak English as their first language (OFSTED, 2004)

4. New College - Many of the students are drawn from Braunstone, one of the five per cent most socially deprived in the country. The proportions of minority ethnic students in the school and of students whose mother tongue is not English are higher than in most schools (OFSTED, 2003).

5. Hamilton Community College - The majority of students are of white UK heritage, with a significant minority of students from an Indian heritage and small numbers from other ethnic groups (OFSTED, 2002).

These schools, located within different areas of the city and set within a variety of different social, economic and cultural contexts thus provided an interesting and useful contrast. Through each of these schools I was able to access those students selected for the cohesion events, not necessarily upon academic ability or in the knowledge that they would provide appropriate responses, but that they were vocal in their outlooks and about their experiences of life in Leicester. For this aspect of the fieldwork I adopted a group discussion technique. A discussion lasting approximately 60 minutes was held in each of these schools, attended by, on average 6 students in each.[54]

While the intention was to follow up these discussions with individual interviews in order to draw out more detail from the issues raised, this was another methodological avenue I was unable to pursue, largely due to staff and student commitments. However, I overcame these difficulties, by using the material gathered through the schools as a reliable, illustrative and contextual

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54 Two group discussions were held at Moat Community College. Discussions were tape-recorded and later transcribed.

basis and switched my attention to focus upon one specific college of further education.

Not only did this shift allow a useful contrast between those secondary schools which draw upon relatively discrete catchment areas and the college which admits students from across the city, but it also allowed the opportunity to explore in greater depth those issues relating to the everyday experiences of young people raised through school based discussions. Although several possibilities were pursued the specific college selected, was chosen on the basis that it allowed a focus upon a centrally located campus, beyond residential neighbourhoods, therefore enabling an assessment of the importance of the spatial mobility of the students across the city and beyond. The location of the Abbey Park campus, (shown below in Fig. 9) is just to the north of the city centre and to the south of the Belgrave neighbourhood. It is also a significant site in that it represents a microcosm of the city's population, whereby the proportion of 'ethnic minority' and 'ethnic majority' students is approximately equivalent to that of the city as a whole.[55]

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[55] For the whole college including both part-time and full-time students in the 2002-2003 academic year, 68 per cent were identified as 'white' and 28 per cent as 'visible minorities' (College Equality Monitoring, 2002-2003).

Figure 9 Location of primary research site, Abbey Park campus

Source: College Prospectus 2003/2004

Through contact with the Diversity Officer and course co-ordinators at the college, the bulk of empirical material was gathered through engagement with 6 different class groups, each composed of approximately 15-20 students. Through each of these I initiated group discussions in time usually allotted to 'study skills' sessions, which aimed to discuss those broad themes noted above. However, given the context of the group discussions and the difficulties often encountered in establishing a two way dialogue, I chose to concentrate upon the students' positive and negative experiences of living in Leicester, the idea that Leicester might be successful multicultural city and the state of relations in the city. For each of these classes at least 2 discussion sessions of approximately 30 minutes each were organised. Dependent upon the progress of these

discussions, some additional sessions were conducted. A range of disciplines were selected in order to involve participants from a variety of different ethnic groups, class backgrounds, levels of educational attainment and different forms of 'classroom' interaction.[56] The classes involved included: English as Second Language (ESOL), Electrical Installations, two Information Technology (IT) classes, Hair and Beauty and Motor Mechanics.

The ESOL class was composed of those from a variety of 'non-white' national and ethnic backgrounds including those identifying from Somalia, India, Guinea, Portugal, the Philippines and Kenya. The Electrical Installations class, in contrast, was made up entirely of those identifying as 'white' and English. The IT classes were both composed of a range of 'white' and 'non-white' students, with the majority of 'non-white' students identifying as 'British Indians/British Asian' or as 'Indian' who had more recently arrived in Leicester. The Hair and Beauty class group was similarly composed of a 'mix' of 'white' and 'non-white' students, with the majority of 'non-white' students again identifying as 'Asian'. The Motor Mechanics class was once more similar in this regard, composed as it was of both 'white' and 'non-white' students with 'non-white' students variously identifying as 'British-Indian', 'British-Asian', 'Indian' and 'Asian'.

Following discussions with these groups, I invited students to volunteer for one-on-one, informal, semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, lasting on average approximately 60 minutes each were conducted privately with 30 students from various 'ethnic backgrounds' within various parts of the college campus.[57] The structure of questioning in these interviews largely attended to the fieldwork themes outlined above, but the flexibility of the semi-structured interview also allowed these questions to respond to things that were said and done in the context of previous group discussions. In line with

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[56] For instance, some of the groups involved were more often required to engage in forms of group work which required different patterns of socialisation.

[57] Those participants interviewed identified as coming from the following broad ethnic/national groups: 'White' 10, Indian/British Indian 12, Somali 4, Portuguese 1, Guinean 1, Kenyan 1, Philipino 1.

the form of methodology adopted by Dwyer (1999) and Archer and Yamashita (2003), this combination was useful in opening up the experiences, views and attitudes of young people given the pressures and constraints at work with group-based discussions, allowing for alternatively structured performances.[58] In particular, these interviews allowed me to move on to address in more detail the personal opinions and everyday geographies of the research participants, thus enabling a fuller understanding of the details of everyday life such as the use and non-use of various city spaces and more intimate reflections on what it meant to 'live with difference'.

Following on from these interviews I further involved participants, by requesting that they compile their own photo-diaries through which they would document the ordinary events and experiences of their own everyday lives over the course of a week. Seven students in total agreed to take part in this aspect of the fieldwork. The young people, who chose to complete these diaries, were supplied with notebooks and disposable cameras and asked to make both written diary entries for seven days along with photographs to accompany the text and to illustrate significant places, people and events in their lives. These were then used as prompts for further interviews with participants, a technique which more intensively engaged participants and accessed both the textual and the non-textual elements of their everyday lives (Jackson and Nesbitt, 2003; Latham, 2003). Besides the employment of these methodological tools I spent a great deal of time, over the course of approximately 6 months within the college environment as a 'participant observer' allowing me to engage in informal conversation with students, in allowing me to appreciate the details of their experiences which more formal techniques were less capable of grasping.

Following on from the college-based fieldwork, a decision was made to develop new routes into a specific part of the city which seemed to regularly emerge in the discussions of young people as a neighbourhood of deprivation, racism and

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[58] Interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed.

cultural closure. I therefore began to focus upon the Braunstone estate, a predominantly 'working class' neighbourhood racially marked as 'white' and located on the south west edge of Leicester (see Fig. 7) in order to understand the experiences of those young people who appeared to be positioned as marginal to the idea of the 'multicultural city'. Access to young people in this area was achieved through gatekeepers involved in a local youth project established to empower young people as part of New Deal regeneration activities in the area. This allowed me to organise 3 discussion sessions, one of which was based in the youth centre and the other two on the mobile bus used for 'detached' youth work. These discussions were with young people aged between 14 and 18, and on each occasion the number of those involved fluctuated between 3 and 8 participants. My time spent in this area also allowed me to speak on a more informal basis to several young teenage males involved in indoor football sessions ran through this youth project.

Besides these methodological routes, there were a number of other simultaneous lines of enquiry pursued, through which I was able to involve myself with the activities and experiences of young people in the city. In particular, I took on a youth worker role within a youth centre in the Belgrave area of the city for 9 months of the fieldwork period working one evening a week, where I assisted with the running of an MC-DJing workshop. Historically, this centre was established as youth provision for excluded young Asians in the this part of the city, but now attracts young people from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds, particularly drawing on residents of Belgrave, the adjacent St. Marks estate and the surrounding area.[59] Through forms of participation, observation and informal conversation I was better equipped to understand the everyday lives of young people, particularly in terms of sub-cultures based around music and style. This also offered a methodological contrast to the more formal approaches pursued through my time spent within educational establishments. In addition I also assisted on a residential weekend

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[59] Although it was clear that the centre, particularly the MC nights with which I was involved, attracted those from further a field such as Highfields in central Leicester and Beaumont Leys to the north west of the city.

organised by another youth based agency in the city and attended a number of other events organised by local organisations with an emphasis upon young people and the local 'cohesion' agenda, including those ran by Leicester City Council, the SDSA and the local branch of the National Coalition Building Institute.

Secondary material was also obtained courtesy of a city-based arts organisation working with young people in areas relating to community relations. Their consultations and discussions with three youth groups in the city around themes closely relating to my own research questions, further enabled me to access the articulations of young people in the city variously positioned by ethnicity, class and geography. These recordings were based upon discussions with a group of 'white' young people from the Hamilton estate in the north east of the city, a group of Somali students based at an FE college and a group composed of predominantly African-Caribbean and 'dual heritage' young people from Rowlatt's Hill, to the east of the city centre.

An integral aspect of this fieldwork which complemented the experiences and articulations of young people, involved the participation of what I call here 'key informants'. This is not to say that the input of young people should not be considered 'expert' information, but that in order to access details of local histories, contemporary challenges and a clearer picture of the operation of 'formal multiculturalism' in Leicester, a number of informants from a variety of city-based institutions were interviewed. Interviews were conducted with those individuals who had privileged perspectives of local affairs and would be useful in developing a fuller picture of the experience of multiculturalism in this city. 30 semi-structured key informant interviews, lasting approximately 60 minutes each, were conducted with a range of representatives from the following local institutions:

- Braunstone Street Vibe Youth Project
- Ek Awaaj/One Voice Young People's Centre

- Leicester City Council (Councillors and Officers)
- Leicester College
- Leicester Council of Faiths
- Leicester Racial Equality Council
- Leicestershire Constabulary
- National Coalition Building Institute
- Regent College
- Voluntary Action Leicester
- Youth Voice

As with accessing young people, I also had to overcome some difficulties in the recording of fieldwork encounters. In some cases recording by means of tape was either denied permission by facilitators, or was deemed inappropriate by myself. In these situations, material was written up immediately afterwards in attempt to record what had taken place or what was said. For the most part this formed sections of my own 'research diary'. For some of the group discussions identification of individuals was also problematic, particularly in the larger groups where distinguishing voices often proved difficult. In those cases where individuals cannot be directly identified and where 'secondary recordings' are employed, participant details are absent. However, on those occasions, particularly through one-on-one interviews where more personal details could be obtained, names and other significant details are provided. Within the context of these interviews I offered all participants the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym to allow a level of confidentiality as well as a sense of ownership and input. Some participants chose to take this up, while others insisted that their own names to be used. In terms of the use of geographical references, I have decided not to provide alternative labels. For example, where particular neighbourhoods have been referenced, these are the actual names. I have worked in this way due to the vital symbolic significance of such references and their importance in local discourses of 'difference', as will be discussed at length in chapter six.

In the context of the interview where more personal ideas relating to experience and identity formed the focus of much of the discussions, I also asked that participants offer a definition of their own identity. Clearly the idea of ethnic labelling lies at the heart of this research and the dangers associated with such forms of identification are appreciated and implicit in much of the discussion. However, in order to give a clearer indication of the ethnic 'backgrounds' of the research participants and their very real implications, whilst placing the onus on participants to do the naming, I trust that the need for such clarity does not overshadow an emphasis upon the sometimes shifting and ephemeral character of such labels.

3.5. The research encounter

Throughout the fieldwork period it was clear that discussions of inter-ethnic relations and multiculturalism were heavily influenced by the social sensitivity and even controversy attached to these issues. It was not surprising, therefore, that this fieldwork was liable to elicit silences as much as expressions of overt racism. Consideration of the power relations involved in the research process then, or more importantly as I stress here, the actual 'research moment' through which specific identity performances take place, is essential. By way of drawing this chapter to a close I refer here to what Nayak (1999) calls the 'research encounter' to stress the significance of the forms of identity negotiation at work not only in 'everyday life', as if this were removed from my fieldwork activities, but also in the very encounters between myself and research participants.

As I will show in chapter seven with more direct reference to empirical material, the 'research encounter' contains its own unique social dynamics, dynamics which directly influence the outcome of that encounter in terms of the extent, quality and type of information provided. In this sense it is argued that it is not only those things which are articulated that should be seen as significant, but also the silences; what is not said. As Hyams (2004) has illustrated in her examination of adolescent Latina identities through group

discussions, there is a tendency to disregard such silences as meaningless, where in fact they provide significant statements concerning relations of power. For a number of reasons including group dynamics and relationships, a perceived lack of appropriate knowledge, difficulties with language, embarrassment, sensitivity and mistrust, such 'gaps' inform an understanding of inter-cultural relations.

For Burman and Chantler (2004), emotions such as secrecy and shame heavily feature within accounts provided by research participants, emotions which are tied into a sense of security, or lack of, that spaces of the research encounter provide. Through my own fieldwork, the classrooms, interview rooms, 'equal opportunities' rooms, secretaries offices, and youth centres in which discussions and interviews were conducted cannot be considered neutral spaces, just as the streets and public spaces of the city are all caught up in various relations of power. These relations directly influence the material which has been collected. As Day emphasises (1999) in her examination of middle class women and their use of public space:

> *"...most women seemed to find race and fear difficult to discuss; they may have especially uncomfortable when interviewed by someone of a different racial group. All women were anxious not to appear prejudiced."*

My own position in relation to responses supplied by participants is therefore critical here. For instance, in my conversational engagements with those young people identifying as 'white', many were clearly cautious and delicate in their discussions of the issues at hand, at the risk of 'appearing racist'. These responses illustrate the assumptions made on behalf of the research participants as regards my own stance towards the same issues. For all of those involved in the fieldwork process, a certain sense of hesitancy was often apparent on the basis of the perceived motivations of the research, a hesitancy which I would argue reveals the negotiation of similarities and differences. For example, phrases such as 'you know what I mean' expressed in the context of the interview, reveals important tacit assumptions made by participants who, at

some points, are seen to share qualities, characteristics and experiences with myself.

Assumptions made concerning race, ethnicity, gender, class, age and embodied appearance as seemingly obvious markers of distinction or commonality are critical. As part of this, self-presentation was clearly important. For example, prior to organised research encounters, conscious decisions were made in terms of clothing worn, in an attempt to come across as someone who was both serious and professional but also someone who could relate to young people.[60] My own 'whiteness',[61] age, researcher 'status', the sometimes short term extent of engagement with participants and my strange presence within environments of familiarity all feed into these relations in specific ways in each of these moments, ultimately influencing what has been written in these pages.

I do not present these ideas as a form of positionality (McDowell, 1992; Kobayashi, 1994; Rose, 1997; Skelton, 2001) which neatly explains away my position in relation to research participants. There is a tendency to tick the boxes of ethnicity, gender and age before disregarding the importance of the very different relations(hips) of specific research encounters. I do not wish to account for my own influence upon the production of this thesis in order to be able to factor my role out of the research equation. Rather, it is the complex social dynamics of such moments and meetings which needs to be constantly borne in mind if we are to come to some appreciation of the way in which inter-cultural relations might operate. To consider inter-subjectivity in this way is to reinforce one of the main contentions of this thesis, that 'race' and ethnicity is negotiated and experienced differentially and that expressions and articulations of identification and differentiation are socially and spatially contingent.

I now move on in the following chapter to introduce in greater detail the city which forms the empirical focus of this thesis. I do so by examining the

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60 Similar thought processes were also at work prior to interviews with key informants, where the idea of professionalism was given greater emphasis.

61 As Nayak (1999) notes, the interrogation of the whiteness of the researcher has largely been absent from studies dealing with the issues of race and ethnicity.

development of a particular culture of place which has emerged in Leicester over the last 30 years, a culture which has in the contemporary era worked to define the geography of inter-ethnic relations within Britain.

4. Leicester: *the* multicultural city?

4.1. Introduction

> *"Leicester has a reputation and a pride in the fact that it is a multicultural community that works"* (An FE College principal, key informant interview)

> *"Leicester should be an example to other cities – everybody shares each other's values and they respect each other. Leicester is a success and other cities should follow it."* (Leicester Council of Faiths Chairman, *Leicester Mercury*, 26/01/05)

As was outlined in chapter one, the city of Leicester today can be seen as a very different place from the turbulent, hostile and sometimes violent city of the late 1970s. The overt expressions of intolerance which were so blatant in that period no longer seem to hold such significance in a place which has, particularly in a post-2001 environment, come to stand as a multicultural city which works. This chapter considers how relations in place may be accounted for, through a focus upon the historical and geographical specificity of this city. In order to appreciate the specificity of relations in this city we need to understand the economic and political basis of local forms of multicultural accommodation. However, I also show that such mechanisms are not removed from the interests, activities and everyday politics of the diverse population of this city. While Leicester has certainly witnessed a clear municipal attempt to construct a multicultural place, aided by specific patterns of immigration, I recognise that positive inter-ethnic relations might be reproduced but also contested through diverse relationships to the public culture of place.

Initially I show the ways in which the city has been conceived of as a 'model' in terms of the realisation of positive and progressive inter-ethnic relations. After illustrating the importance of this dominant discourse and the way in which it relies upon particular interpretation of multicultural 'success', the chapter explores the dominant explanations offered for exceptionalism, focussing upon

the local formal political arena, the stability of the local economy and contributions of specific ethnic minority 'communities'. I then go on to show that while a definition of 'multicultural success' might describe forms of voluntary and facilitated incorporation, which set Leicester apart from other urban areas, it might not necessarily reflect the experiences of a plurally positioned public.

4.2. What's so special about Leicester?

One of the most important lessons learnt from the recent unrest in the North-West of England, has been that the challenges of a multi-cultural and multi-racist society are not located solely within the major metropolitan heart of Britain. Indeed, alongside the much publicised problems of Bradford, Burnley, Oldham, Stoke and Wrexham in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of racialised forms of exclusion outside of urban areas (Jay, 1992; Neal, 2002; Tyler, 2003). It has become necessary then to address the *shifting* geographies of 'race' and racism and those locations, both 'real' and symbolic, which play critical roles in this constantly emerging picture. Analysis of Leicester, a fairly unremarkable, medium sized,[62] provincial city in the East Midlands of England, forms an essential part of this recognition.

Though it must be acknowledged that influential figures in the city recognise the importance of emerging challenges in the management of diversity,[63] the idea of Leicester as a multicultural 'model' has dominated discussions and representations of the city in recent years. How then has this city entered into the current national debate of 'race', belonging and 'community cohesion' and upon what basis is it regarded as significant?

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[62] The city's population in the 2001 census was 279, 921

[63] This seemed to be the general consensus in my discussions with key informants. Many of these widely accepted challenges were recently brought to light in the Report of the Improvement and Development Agency (2001) entitled 'Taking forward Community Cohesion in Leicester'. This report, commissioned by Leicester City Council, concluded that parallel lives, conflicts over resources along ethnic lines, perceptions of bias and problems of communication remained serious issues of concern in relation to 'community cohesion'.

The East Midlands as a region, does not statistically speaking, exhibit a particularly large or diverse ethnic minority population[64]. The North-West, Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands, London and the South East all have higher proportions of the national 'minority population'.[65] However, Leicester, as a city, does stand out in terms of its ethnic diversity and, more significantly, in terms of the size and proportion of those categorised as 'non-white'. As Fig. 10 shows, those classified as 'white' make up approximately 64 per cent of the city's 279,921 population, with those classified as 'Asian', particularly those identified as Indian, comprising the largest ethnic minority group of just under 26 per cent. In terms of the proportion of the population who identify themselves as Christian, Leicester is also ranked as the second lowest authority[66], while it is ranked third highest in terms of those identifying as Hindu.[67]

Figure 10 Percentage ethnic composition of Leicester population

Ethnic group	Per cent of population
White: British	60.54
White: Irish	1.29
White: Other	2.03
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1.01
Mixed: White and Black African	0.19
Mixed: White and Asian	0.68
Mixed: Other	0.44
Asian or Asian British: Indian	25.73
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	1.53
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.69
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	1.97
Black or Black British: Caribbean	1.65
Black or Black British: African	1.23
Black or Black British: Other	0.2
Chinese	0.51
Other Ethnic Group	0.32

Source: 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics

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[64] This region also includes the cities of Nottingham and Derby
[65] 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics
[66] Behind Tower Hamlets
[67] The unitary authority is also the tenth largest in terms of its Sikh population and seventeenth in terms of the number of Muslims.

In terms of the residential location of different ethnic groups within the city, which as we have seen in chapter two has dominated discussions of the geography of 'race-relations', the extent to which Leicester might be described as 'segregated' is disputed. Using data attained from the 1991 census, Johnston *et al.*, (2002) contend that Leicester is one of only three urban areas in England to exhibit ethnic concentrations that can be described as 'ghettos',[68] indeed they note that "...the largest ghettoisation by far [in their study] is in Leicester" (Johnston *et al.*, 2002:600). In particular they point towards the concentration of 43.4 per cent of Leicester's 'Indians' and 36.2 per cent of the city's 'Pakistanis' in the wards of Latimer and Spinney Hills respectively (see Fig. 11). In contrast, Simpson (2004), using alternative measurements, classifies 19 of the city's 22 wards as 'mixed'.[69]

While there appear to be concentrations of certain ethnic groups in specific neighbourhoods, there is also a high level of mixed residential areas in contrast to other 'multicultural' towns and cities. This is evident, for example, with regard to the residential location of those classified as 'white'. While mostly concentrated in the south and west of the city, in the wards of Eyres Monsell, Aylestone, New Parks, Freeman and Braunstone, they are not restricted to these areas. 73 per cent of those identifying as 'white' live in areas where 80 per cent or more of the local population identifies as 'white', while for Bradford this figure is 87.9 per cent and for Oldham 94.1 per cent.[70]

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[68] The other two being Bradford and Oldham. This definition is based upon those areas exhibiting a high degree of concentration of minority groups, of least 60 per cent of the population and where the minority group constitutes a substantial percentage of the group in the area.

[69] That is, those which have more than one tenth white population and more than one tenth Black and Asian population

[70] 2001 census National Office of Statistics

Figure 11 Ward map of Leicester (after 2003 boundary re-organisation)

Source: Leicester City Council website (www.leicester.gov.uk)

Indeed, Byrne (1996) has established that in Leicester ethnicity alone cannot account for residential location. He shows there is a need to also take into account class as a critical determining factor. For example, the emergence of an increasingly mobile 'Indian' middle class with a tendency to residentially re-locate toward suburban areas, such as Oadby and Wigston to the south, is critical to an understanding of the specificity of this place. What we see in Leicester, Byrne (1998) argues, are classed similarities and differences which transcend straightforward ethnic divisions, a feature not exhibited in places

such as Bradford where deprivation is heavily concentrated amongst a marginalised Pakistani 'community'.[71]

Whilst these patterns do have major implications for the construction of the 'Leicester model', recognition of this status has also developed in response to two recent events, which highlights the distinctive *quality* of relations in this city.[72] Firstly, in the direct aftermath of the disturbances of 2001 in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham through which the racial strife of these towns has been held in sharp relief to the absence of racially inflected violence in Leicester.[73] Secondly, following the dissemination of the forecast that Leicester is to become the first British city, by 2011, to witness a minority 'white' population, seemingly pipping Birmingham to the post (Guthrie, 2000).[74]

In response to these events the city witnessed an increased level of attention from a variety of national and global media, asking how Leicester, a city with a large ethnic minority population had managed to avoid this conflict. This included coverage by the BBC which outlined 'Leicester's lesson in racial harmony' (*BBC website*, 29/05/01), The Guardian which spoke of the 'Side by side' existence and tolerance of communities (*The Guardian*, 01/01/01), The Financial Times which observed that in contrast to other towns and cities 'Leicester simply gets on with life' (*Financial Times*, 27/04/01), The Hindu which outlined 'Why Bradford is not Leicester' (*The Hindu*, 04/08/02) and the New York Times which announced Leicester as *the* 'British city [which] defines diversity and tolerance.' (*New York Times*, 08/02/01). In this sense Leicester has

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[71] As I shall argue in the closing section of this chapter and continue to explore in the following chapters, these distinctive intersections between class and ethnicity have other important consequences in terms of conceptions of difference.

[72] Those areas which alongside Leicester have defined the contemporary geography of race and racism in the UK are not necessarily defined in terms of the number of those identified as 'ethnic minorities'. What then needs to be given greater consideration is the 'quality' of these relations.

[73] It was noted through some key informant interviews that reference to these northern towns is often shortened to the acronym 'BOB' by those in official circles.

[74] It was suggested to me through several key informant interviews that this prediction was a speculative announcement made by a senior city council officer which was not based upon any reliable statistics.

been held up as an alternative to the 'racially sensitive hotspots' of the north, whereby 'racial problems' have been transferred elsewhere (Pred, 1998; 2000).

This idea of 'the model' has also been employed in the official response to the disturbances of 2001, focussing upon Leicester as a city of 'best practice', in particular highlighting the work of key organisations, institutions and agencies as integral to the development of an inter-ethnic settlement (Cantle Report, 2001). As recognition of this Leicester City Council was awarded Beacon status for Promoting Racial Equality in 2002, and awarded Beacon status for Community Cohesion in 2003. In February 2003 the city was also selected as one of 15 national Pathfinder Areas for community cohesion on the basis of the development of strong projects and networks seen to deliver crucial facets of the 'cohesion' agenda.[75]

Before I address in more detail those main influences seen to account for such a reputation, I want to briefly explore this public culture of place, in relation to the manner in which Leicester is now promoted, through the idea that diversity, or certain types of diversity may be valuable economic and cultural assets. I do this to both stress the way in which diversity in Leicester is valued in different ways to other urban areas in the UK, but also to begin to indicate how this form of multiculturalism might be seen as a selective exercise.

> *"A thriving mix of ideas and excitement. Fantastic food, great shopping and vibrant festivals create a dynamic city of energy and colour. Leicester: International City"* (Promotional advertisement, Leicester Railway Station)

> *"...the city council obviously are quite happy to market Leicester as being multicultural, harmonious, you know, come here it's good for tourism, attracting business and all the rest of it, it's good for the economics of the city. But I think that I and other police colleagues and others, other people in other agencies or community groups are not quite always so confident."* (Inspector, Leicestershire Constabulary, key informant interview)

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[75] These illustrations indicate the fine line between the basis or definition of successful multiculturalism and those reasons given in accounting for such success. For example Beacon and Pathfinder status were not awarded on the basis of the peaceful co-existence of communities, but due to the efforts in achieving these ends.

As Hall (1997) indicates, the 'English Midlands' have been marginalised within prevailing popular imaginations of Britain and have thus experienced something of an identity crisis. Arguably, Leicester has suffered more from this than any other city in the region, described, in one national 'broadsheet', as "Flat, grey, featureless" and "England's most boring town" (*The Guardian*, 06/12/00), a city which, even according to the local newspaper has "...something of an identity problem" (Leicester Mercury, 06/11/00). However, in recent years this 'absence' has also allowed for the development of an image which increasingly emphasises presentable diversity and consumable forms of ethnic difference, particularly through the targeting of footloose business and tourist capital (Clayton, 2001).

One of the major ways in which this has been achieved aside from the promotion of Leicester as a festival city (Winstone, 1996) has been through a focus upon specific neighbourhoods as exhibiting the positive aspects of consumable cosmopolitanism. For instance, the Belgrave area of the city directly to the north of the city centre (see Fig. 11), the area in which the East African Gujarati 'community' have most clearly developed a viable social, economic and cultural hub is employed in the following way:

> *"Leicester is a city that celebrates diversity, and nowhere is this more apparent than in Belgrave. Home to many cultures and religions, this community in north Leicester is a place where belief and tradition are respected and enjoyed; a place with a real heart and spirit"* (Leicester Promotions, Belgrave Visitor Guide, 2004:2)

The selective marketing of diversity with this geographical focus allows us to see the importance of 'multicultural success' on specific economic and cultural terms. The acceptable face of diversity is represented through those neighbourhoods considered to be non-threatening. Other areas of the city, home to substantial ethnic minority communities, particularly in more deprived parts of the city remain outside of this promotional drive. For example, the Highfields neighbourhood (located approximately within the Spinney Hills

ward in Fig. 11), home to a large proportion of the city's Muslim 'community,' does not offer the same 'attractiveness' as the largely Hindu neighbourhood of Belgrave.

This is not to dispute the efforts of those in the Belgrave area in regenerating, from below, an exhausted neighbourhood (Seliga, 1996), or to deny that economic problems do not remain. Neither do I suggest that such promotional activities do not reflect a degree of openness to 'difference'. Rather, I emphasise the *selective* commodification of particular *types of difference* as represented through the geographies of the city, related to market(ing) requirements but also acceptable class formations and presentable forms of 'othered' culture (Boyer, 1993; Haylett, 2001; Skeggs, 2004b; Chan, 2004). What we therefore see is a specific version of multicultural incorporation and acceptance in Leicester.

4.3. Accounting for 'the Leicester model'

As I have suggested, whilst having a tangible basis, the establishment of Leicester as a model of inter-ethnic relations has taken place through specific forms of integration. In particular, this has involved the incorporation of certain ethnic groups into the local economy and polity. This section addresses the importance of the development of a specific brand of local politics in the city, and the perceived role of the dominant Labour group, before discussing the importance of other key agencies and the significance of the economic fortunes of the city. I emphasise how these developments relate to the historic arrival of particular ethnic minority groups in the city and their role in establishing Leicester as a leading multicultural location both from 'above' and 'below'.

4.3.1. Local formal politics: incorporation and provision

In the development of Leicester as "...a beacon of hope for race relations and peace"[76] the role of the city's local authority has arguably been key. As Singh (2003) notes, local authorities have become increasingly significant in the implementation of cohesion policies. In the case of Leicester, such commitments appear to have a much longer history. I show here how it is possible to trace the development of a project of managed multiculturalism[77] which has been sensitive to the recognition and needs of identifiable ethnic and religious 'communities'. In terms of the incorporation and the representation of ethnic minority communities as well as policy direction and service provision, critical developments seem to account, in part, for Leicester's exceptionalism.

One of the most significant characteristics of those areas defined as 'racially sensitive' has been local political scenes where major parties have inadequately fulfilled their duties, by offering weak rebuttals against the threat of the BNP. According to Renton (2003), voters in traditional working-class Labour heartlands, such as the North-West of England, have been lured away from mainstream political parties due to irresponsible local reporting, poor policing and the failure of mainstream parties to address 'race'-related issues.

Leicester, however, has not been part of this mini-revival in extremist formal politics. In the 2005 general election, while the Leicester*shire* constituencies of Blaby, Charnwood and Leicestershire North-West all saw BNP candidates standing, there were none in the three city constituencies. The relative absence of this party can be seen as the consequence of both the inability of far-right parties to establish a foot-hold since the NF reached their peak of electoral support in 1976, and the forms of opposition mobilised.

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[76] In his maiden speech to the House of Commons, this is how the then Liberal Democrat MP for Leicester South, Parmjit Singh Gill MP, described the city of Leicester. (*Leicester Mercury*, 24/11/04) p. 15

[77] Clearly in the context of national policy obligations

Following the arrival of East African refugees in the early 1970s, many of those who considered Leicester's mono-culturalism under threat made conscious decisions to move into the surrounding county.[78] The presence and activities of the BNP in such areas today is, in part, testament to such movements.[79] As a result of this, alongside a growing and politically engaged ethnic minority population, this party and versions of it have failed to mobilise the support necessary to achieve political leverage and found itself up against a strongly organised anti-racist opposition not witnessed elsewhere (Chessum, 2000). Forms of localism, which view 'outside' extremist parties with suspicion as well as the efforts of local political parties and locally based movements, must also be recognised as playing an important role in tackling such extremism. As the editor of the Leicester Mercury explains here, while they still represent a threat, the BNP are no longer a significant local issue, something reflected but also aided by the current policy of this newspaper which is to provide no coverage of the BNP.

> *"I genuinely think the BNP had a good hard look at Leicester and thought, it's not going to work here. I'd like to think that Leicester has outgrown the BNP."*

The story of the Labour group in this city over the last 30 years can be seen in sharp contrast to that of the far-right. The often criticised city council which called for a halt to the immigration of Asian refugees from Uganda in 1972 included members of the local Labour group. However, as Marrett (1989) shows, from that time on, the politics of this group entered a period of modification, adjustments which were to have significant implications for the approach adopted towards 'race relations'. Marrett (1989) argues that new and younger councillors responded in a more pro-active and progressive manner to the local and national challenges of 'multiculturalism'.

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[78] As one informant explained to me: "A lot of NF supporters moved physically out of the city to the county. They didn't want to be in an Asian city as they saw it and whole families, racist families, moved out physically to get away from Asians into Eastern Leicestershire or Hinckley."

[79] For example the town of Earl Shilton in rural Leicestershire, is home to the headquarters of the BNP in this part of England.

These changes need to be seen in the context of a number of contributory factors including; the significance of national events and the emerging race relations debate,[80] the conflictual relationship between a Conservative government and active, left-wing Labour councils after 1979, localised political reactions to the electoral threat of the NF, the political necessity to court growing ethnic minority communities, the pressure applied by local grass roots organisations such as 'Unity against Racism',[81] and a rising tide of anti-racist sentiment which united sections of the local population with left-wing politicians. The approaches adopted by more radicalised local politicians, driven by an equality agenda,[82] were therefore influenced by both a wider anti-racist movement and the specific experience of Leicester.

> *"...there was quite a strong sort of working relationship between the council at a formal level and also there were both people in the Labour Party and we did come together I think to fight the sort right wing extremists, and we saw off, I would argue this anyway, we saw off the National Front really at the end of the 70s and they moved, they actually moved."* (Current leader of Labour Group, key informant interview)

This 'multicultural turn' (Singh, 2003:44), initiated the establishment of essential points of contact between mainstream political channels and minority communities, something which Vertovec (1994, 1996) has emphasised with regard to the incorporation of Muslim organisations into key decision-making processes. The result of this was the development of policies and funding priorities directed at the needs of these minority communities. As one senior city council officer commented:

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[80] For example 1976 saw the first Race Relations Act in Britain making it unlawful to discriminate against a person directly or indirectly on racial grounds, in the area of employment and in the provision of goods, facilities or services.

[81] The organised and politically engaged character of the anti-racist movement in the city can, in large part, be attributed to the strong sense of associationalism amongst immigrant communities in Leicester in this period, particularly amongst those Gujarati Indian refugees forced from East Africa on the basis of their previous experiences in countries such as Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

[82] For example, the leader of the Labour Group in the mid-1980s, who is now the MP for Leicester South, Sir Peter Soulsby, played an important role in establishing and maintaining such an agenda as well as mobilising the electoral support of the majority of the city's residents by appealing to the interests of a number of majority and minority ethnic groups.

> *"What I think is significant is that the civic trust here, the council and other key bodies started to engage with the communities that were coming into Leicester to give those communities some sense of empowerment and a voice which then enabled them to be able to play their active part in it."*

In terms of the development of this 'civic multiculturalism', 1979 was a key year. Not only was this the year in which the violent conflict of the NF march took place, it was also the year in which, nationally, the Conservatives took control of central government and locally Labour began its 24 year domination of local politics. During the 1980s, a period of 'constructivist' diversity management (Semprebon, 2004), the Labour group were successful in recruiting a number of ethnic minority 'representatives', particularly those identifying as East African Gujarati Hindus, to the party. As Nash and Reeder (1993:92) put it "Labour had become the focal point of political loyalty for the most socially cohesive group in the city - the Ugandan Asian population", or as one current Labour councillor described the process: "...there was very deliberate work went on to encourage the Asian community to become part of the party and to field candidates."

The party was thus able to secure the support and votes of many 'Asian' families in the city, seen as they were to be the party acting most in the interests of these 'communities'.[83] Along with the traditional support of the working class 'white' population, this helped to constitute an electoral block of approximately 60 per cent and ensured the future of Labour as the ruling party.[84] By 1983 three quarters of the Labour Group were categorised as 'Asian', allowing a system of power-brokering between the 'Asian community' and the Labour Group to exist, particularly at a time when redevelopment funds were largely being targeted at inner-city areas, those neighbourhoods where the majority of ethnic minority families had settled (Nash and Reeder,

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[83] This situation has shifted radically in recent years in the aftermath of the Labour government's decision to go to war in Iraq. As a consequence, particularly due to the reaction of the city's Muslim 'community' and their widespread political shift to either the Liberal Democrats or George Galloway's Respect party in the 2005 General Election, this relationship between minority communities and the Labour Party has been critically altered.

[84] Key informant interview, senior city council officer

1993:108). 'Asian' councillors were thus able to influence and even reverse decisions which were to negatively affect their neighbourhoods such as housing clearances, particularly in the Belgrave area (Stoker and Brindley, 1985). By 1987, 15 'Asian' councillors had been elected to the local council, an 'Asian' Lord Mayor had been appointed and Keith Vaz was elected as the first 'Asian' MP for Leicester East.

While the reception of East African Asians in the early 1970s by the majority 'white' population (Herbert, 2003) as well as those in positions of authority (Marrett, 1989) was certainly not welcoming, the local authority of the 1980s established a much greater commitment to racial equality and service provision. Chessum (2000: 119) refers to this as "...a more systematic and positive approach to racialised disadvantage", seen in the establishment of a Race Relations Unit in 1981, the introduction of race relations committees, the 1983 city survey which assessed the diverse needs of the population and a focus upon the educational needs of ethnic minority groups:

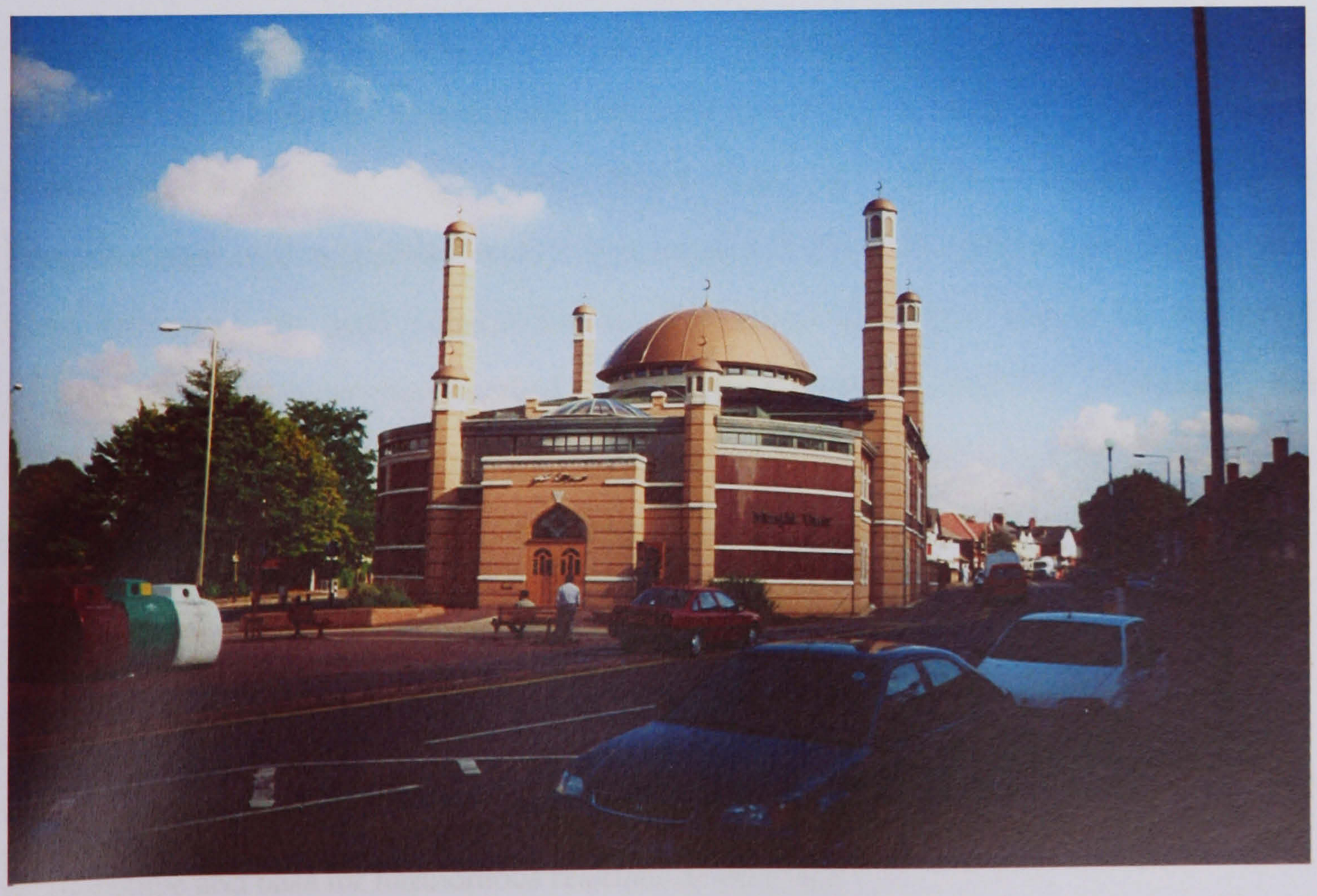
> *"...the council put money into teaching English as a second language and running supplementary schools, opening up community centres, being very, very pro-active, but within the planning laws to allow conversions for Temples and Mosques and Gurdwaras and all that was done very pro-actively, you know it wasn't done as a sort of defensive policy"* (Senior City Council Officer, key informant interview)

In particular, the pro-active stance taken in terms of the provision of places of religious worship for minority faith groups should be noted (Gale and Naylor, 2002). Bonney (2003) emphasises the history of open planning practices, a culture which developed due to ongoing consultation with communities and the unusually high rate of proposal acceptance. For example, between 1969 and 2002 20 Mosques, 6 Gurdwara, 1 Buddhist Temple, 2 Jewish Synagogues, 1 Jain Temple, and at least 18 Hindu Temples were constructed. While many of these have been conversions (such as the Guru Amar Das Gurdwara on Clarendon Park Road, Fig. 12), others have changed the physical fabric of the city (such as Fig. 13 showing the Masjid Umar Mosque on Evington Road, built

in 2000). These examples point toward a strong institutional commitment to serving the needs of specific minority communities through durable ties with ethnic minority group representatives.

Figure 12 Re-inventing the city landscape: Guru Amar Das Gurdwara, Clarendon Park Road

Figure 13 Building the multicultural/multi-faith landscape: Masjid Umar Mosque, Evington Road



However, recent changes to the city's formal political administration, has seen the Labour Group removed from their position of influence and replaced by a Liberal Democrat/Conservative coalition. While for some this change and the threat which it poses for relations in the city is merely a continuation of the constant threat against the self-organisation of communities, for others it represents the beginning of the end for the 'multicultural project' upon which Leicester's reputation has been established.[85] It is clear, for instance, that this new administration has very different ideas of what might allow the continuation of positive relations in Leicester, through the re-assessment of community and voluntary funding and the creation of centralised, short term 'cohesion' projects.

Recent local debates over funding priorities have also highlighted the significant work of other key actors, organisations and agencies who have worked with and often against the actions of the local authority (Boyle and Sandford, 2004; Westwood, 1991). The politics of anti-racism at the core of the local Labour Group, for instance, fed off a significant movement already established by active 'immigrant communities'. As early as 1959 the Indian Workers Association (IWA) had fought for the rights of its members in industrial disputes, a point of confluence between the politics of Labour with its roots in the union movement and the interests of marginalised workers. Multiculturalism, in this sense then, has not been entirely imposed. Programmes and agendas, which have catered for minority needs, have often been initiated by and responded to the vocal demands made by minority groups in the city as they settled. As Vertovec (1994; 1996) has discussed, the role of grass roots minority organisations has been as critical as the response of local government in drawing in necessary resources.

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85 This relates to widespread protests in the city at recent spending reviews and cuts particularly in the community education and voluntary sector, undermining for many the successful relationships and base for harmonious relations in the city.

4.3.2. Key actors, agencies and networks

Before moving on to discuss the importance of the relative stability of the local economy in Leicester in relation to the arrival particular ethnic groups in the city, I want to further emphasise here this issue of who is seen as responsible for the condition and conditioning of relations in the city. It is clear that while the local authority has taken much of the credit, the management of diversity has been influenced by a number of other actors and organisations who have been pro-active in dealing with the needs of distinct communities and sensitive to 'community relations', as a representative from Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL), an umbrella organisation for voluntary work in the city, pointed out:

> *"...the whole issue around community cohesion, cultural diversity is not, it's in spite of the city council, this city works on a much more complex basis than only the city council you know. It's down to local communities, local people, local community organisations, of which there are many. There's the real fabric of the city. The city council can give a high profile lead, but actually it's the people that do it."*

Indeed this idea was stressed in even stronger terms, particularly by those involved with community groups at the brunt of recent spending reviews. One key informant, closely involved with the Highfields Youth and Community Centre, which historically has been at the core of disputes over funding, explained to me: "In my experience, the local authority has been an obstruction, a stumbling block to a number of things." This particularly related to the inadequate funding of community-led organisations. What we see, then, is both contested ideas around the reputation the city has attained, but also a greater level of complexity in terms of how these relations might operate.

For instance, relations in the city have been facilitated through influential figures working with local communities who have both dealt with community tensions and provided for the needs of emerging and often marginalised communities in Leicester. One such case, has been the work of a local Church of England vicar in the Beaumont Leys area of the city. This area, on the north-west edge of the city, has in recent years experienced many tensions over the

provision of accommodation under the national asylum seeker dispersal system. Local reactions to the arrival of asylum seekers in the area have included the burglary of several houses before residents had even moved in, fuelled by resentment and mis-information concerning the treatment of the new arrivals.[86] In response, this key public figure actively addressed tensions through the establishment of a local asylum seeker and refugee forum, allowing some of the fears of the established local population to be assuaged whilst enabling new arrivals to begin to feel a greater sense of inclusion in the neighbourhood.[87] Indeed, a recent report produced for the Leicester Faiths Regeneration Project, highlights the very important contribution such faith-based organisations are playing in this city in terms of meeting the needs of minority faith groups, supporting social regeneration efforts and establishing links across ethnic divides (Ravat, 2004).

The role of institutions outside of the city council can also be seen as one of the reasons why relations in Leicester may be exceptional. In this regard the role of the local newspaper can be seen as particularly significant.[88] Early studies conducted into the editorial position and coverage of 'race' and racism by the sole major news publication across Leicester and Leicestershire, The Leicester Mercury, suggest that historically the paper had done little to improve relations. Parsons (1978:95) shows how throughout the 1970s the paper reinforced the criminalisation of black residents, summarising that "The Mercury's performance during the study would tend to reinforce the view that the devil has a brown face." Troyna's (1981) study came to similar conclusions emphasising the routinised and un-critical coverage of the NF. However, in the contemporary period the paper has taken a lead in demonstrating its commitment to the idea of a multicultural city. The Mercury, among other

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[86] N. Dowling, 'New raids on city's homes for refugees' *Leicester Mercury* (06/06/01)

[87] Most of the information relating to the work of this asylum seeker forum in Beaumont Leys was provided through a Voluntary Action Leicester representative, key informant interview. Also see 'Asylum seekers' forum must not outstay welcome' Rev. Chris Oxley, *Leicester Mercury* (02/09/04) p. 13

[88] The role of the Leicester Mercury as a significant contributor in local discussions of diversity and multiculturalism should not be underestimated. It is the fifth largest regional evening newspaper in the UK, distributed across the county and estimated to be read by 460,000 each week.

agencies, has also been crucial in the establishment of key networks, illustrating the way in which various organisations have recognised the problems of working in isolation rather than consultation.[89] Particularly since the arrival of the current editor, the newspaper has taken on a role not expected of an essentially commercial enterprise:

> *"…you don't often find the situation where the newspaper has decided to step into a community role. It's still a reporter from the side lines, admittedly fighting for it's communities, but not actually saying that we think we now feel we need to get more involved, and so that's the way that our thinking is going"* (Editor, Leicester Mercury, key informant interview)

As the comments below, from a variety of key informants illustrate, the role of the paper as a positive force is widely accepted.

> *"…local papers set the agenda and you know, hats off to Nick Carter at the Leicester Mercury…there's no sensational reporting"* (Labour Councillor, key informant interview)

> *"Now the Leicester Mercury is not the mouth piece of Leicestershire Constabulary or anything other agency, but they will not print something which is going to be inflammatory or be irresponsible just for the sake of a cheap headline"* (Leicestershire Constabulary, key informant interview)

> *"The Leicester Mercury has been playing I think perhaps what is quite an important role really for quite some time now, in terms of what it covers and the way in covers things"* (Student Development Support Agency, key informant interview)

But key organisations and networks are not just those of the major city institutions, and the networks and sharing which take place is also not necessarily of the formal variety. As one representative from a community arts organisation in the city informed me, "There are loads of people who are running the city, those are the people who are making the things happen and

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[89] Amongst these it is possible to cite the development of the Leicester Multicultural Advisory Group (LMAG), established in 2001 and made up of city council representatives, faith leaders, education leaders, representatives from Leicestershire Constabulary and the editor of the Leicester Mercury.

interacting with each other". These included those doing the more mundane jobs in schools, colleges, youth centres and alike, those who deal with issues relating to racial, ethnic and religious difference on an everyday basis. What this all seems to suggest is that there may be more to the politics of this city than the formal politics often presented as the basis of 'successful multiculturalism'. Indeed 'multiculturalism' is not just something which is imposed, but in relation to more official stances, something which also develops 'from below' as I will indicate with reference to the economic fortunes of this city.

4.3.3. Ethnicity and the local economy

As was highlighted in chapter two, the recent disturbances in the North-West of England have illustrated how the declining fortunes of local economies and subsequent conditions of deprivation, disenfranchisement and marginalisation play an integral role in framing inter-ethnic tensions, frustrations and racialised blame cultures (Bagguley and Hussain, 2003). The recent history of the local economy of Leicester has, in contrast, been much more secure and is one of the main ways in which the city has been distinguished, specifically I argue here with regard to the contributions of an 'East African Asian' migrant population. In this way ethnic diversity in Leicester has often been framed as a positive resource. However, it also needs to be emphasised that this relative prosperity is not evenly distributed and I argue that while certain sections of the ethnic minority population have been able to economically incorporate themselves due to particular histories of migration and settlement, many remain outside of 'multicultural success' framed in this way.

The civic motto of the city of Leicester: 'Semper eadem', translated from Latin, as 'Always the same' is indicative of the performance of the local economy in terms of its relative stability within an unsettled national landscape. Indeed, this has been the very reason why so many immigrant groups throughout the centuries have made Leicester their destination (O'Connor, 1995; Ash, 1995;

Wilkinson, 1974; Marrett, 1989). Leicester's economy is historically based upon the boot and shoe and hosiery industries, industries which lasted as significant employers well into the 1980s. However, the city has never solely relied upon this one industry and within the manufacturing sector itself many smaller companies operate alongside each other.[90] Diversification, which was significant from the 1950s through to the 1970s, included among others the growth of light engineering, printing and food processing alongside the presence of more traditional industries. Such an economic base allowed Leicester to retain much of its manufacturing sector. For example, by 1987 manufacturing still accounted for 40 per cent of total employment, while nationally this figure had dropped to 24 per cent (Leicester City Council, 1990). Today the manufacturing sector in the city still remains higher than that of the national average and is still the largest source of employment for the city's workforce.[91]

The diversity of the economy, the proliferation of small firms and the maintenance of a relatively stable manufacturing sector has thus equipped the local economy to deal with many of the problems experienced elsewhere. Arguably this has been key preventing tensions across racial and ethnic lines developing within the city, or at least prevented such tensions from resulting in overt racially inflected violence. I would also contend that an availability of employment has allowed for inter-ethnic contact through 'the workplace', which due to the structure of the local economy has not been strictly divided along ethnic lines. As one key informant suggested it is not the economy in and of itself (outside of experiences of it) which might have significance, both in terms of a personal security, but also in terms of socialisation.

> *"...because a whole generation of Leicester people had then gone to school with Asians, worked with Asians. That's really one of the big differences*

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90 For example, 79.5 per cent of businesses in Leicester employ between 1 and 10 people (NOMIS, 2003). This has generally allowed the city's businesses to operate with greater flexibility and thus allowed them to be better equipped to ride some of the more damaging impacts of national economics slumps.

91 According to the 2001 Census manufacturing accounts for 23.4 per cent of employment in Leicester while nationally this figure is at 14.96 per cent.

> *with Oldham and Bradford is that because of the segregation in schools and the lack of employment, for both poor whites and Asians there are no points of contact."* (Senior city council officer, key informant interview)

In a similar manner to accounts of local politics, much of the explanation for the relative continued prosperity in the city has been attributed to the arrival of educated migrant groups with business experience. This has particularly been attributed to the movement of Gujarati refugees and migrants from East Africa, and the growth of small and medium business enterprises through the transference of trading traditions and business capacities (Bose, 1979; Clark and Rughani, 1983). There is, for instance, an identifiable entrepreneurial tendency amongst those businesses identifying as 'Asian' in Leicester, representing 18.41 per cent of total business start-ups and 25.52 per cent of all 'pre-start ups' (Farish, 2005).

This seems to stand in contrast to narratives of other urban areas, where through the transmission of racist discourses, the decline of local prospects has been associated with and attributed to the presence of ethnic minority groups. Economically speaking then ethnic diversity in Leicester has been posited, in official discourse at least, as a positive resource. For example, according to the Boho Britain Creativity Index of 2003, which measures the potential for economic prosperity based upon its attraction of gay people, inventors and significantly ethnic minorities, Leicester was ranked the second most creative place in Britain (Demos, 2003). In terms of emerging enterprises in the city, specifically in terms of media, the Asian 'community' has also been at the heart of economic development. For example, the headquarters of MATV, the only terrestrial Asian-devoted British based television channel is based within the Belgrave area of the city. The planned development of a 'Cultural Quarter' in the central St. Georges area of the city will also include the opening of a Bollywood film production unit, which will see Leicester as an increasingly integral node in the world's biggest film industry.[92] What we can identify then, is the integration of economically viable forms of difference.

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92 *Leicester Mercury* (28/03/04)

> *"...the secret of our success in Leicester is that we inherited a commercial class from East Africa, that's why we are different from Oldham and Bradford who inherited rural labourers with a low educational base in one industry and when that industry closed they weren't employable."* (Senior City Council Officer, key informant interview)

Unlike earlier forms of migration into the city, which often saw sole males arriving from regions such as the Punjab and Gujarat in India, the movement which followed Africanisation policies allowed whole families of several generations (not motivated by economic necessity) to move together,[93] adding to the impetus for the formation of strong ethnic and religious organisations. While some have argued that the middle class, entrepreneurial status of many of these refugees allowed them to quickly establish their own enterprises in Leicester, often buying their own houses (Nash and Reeder, 1993: 27) and thus pacifying established populations in terms of the strain on resources (Singh, 2003:51), others have argued that many were stripped of all financial resources and that it was an educated background, and detailed business knowledge which allowed for this form of 'incorporation' (Marrett, 1989). Whatever the mechanisms, it is clear that this movement had profound impacts upon the reactions of the already established population, the character of the city, the economic fortunes of the city and of the way in which it has been conceptualised within the wider picture of inter-ethnic relations within the UK.

However, this is not to argue that Leicester has remained outside the effects of a fluctuating national economy. Whilst exhibiting a resilient economic base, assisted by particular migrant groups, the city is still one of the most deprived in the country. For instance Leicester ranks 31st out of 354 local authorities in terms its average score for indices of deprivation and 12th in terms of income scale (ODPM, 2004).[94] Spatial disparities within the city are also critical. According to the Index of multiple deprivation (2000) 13 out of Leicester's 28

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[93] Bhachu (1985) with reference to Sikhs in the UK refers to these communities as 'twice migrants'. The prevailing pattern for the majority of those settling in Leicester at this time was a migration movement initially from the Gujarat region of West India via East African countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and then in the late 1960s and early 1970s onto Britain among other commonwealth countries such as Canada.

[94] That is, when 1 is the most deprived and 354 is the least deprived.

wards,[95] fall within the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the UK. The majority of these wards are found in the inner city, such as Highfields, home to large ethnic minority 'communities'[96] and the more recently constructed 'edge estates' such as Braunstone, New Parks and Mowmacre Hill in the east and Saffron Lane and Eyres Monsell to the south, predominantly home to populations identified as 'white'.

What appears at the centre of this discussion, or as Bose (1979) puts it a "story of worldly success", is then the successful incorporation of a particular minority community. Those who have been able to access cultural and economic capital have been able to integrate themselves into mainstream civic life, and have created a situation in Leicester where class differentiation over ethnic differentiation might be increasingly significant. For those without such access, including a large proportion of the African Caribbean community, many of those who are included in the sweeping categorisation of 'Asian', disenfranchised 'whites' and many racialised new arrivals, tensions exacerbated by positions of marginalisation mean that such forms of positive relations, defined in this way, may not be such a reality.

4.4. Multiculturalism for all?

The dominant conceptualisation of Leicester as a successful multicultural city has emphasised formal mechanisms of political and economic incorporation, the localised inclusion of particular groups in the city and the work of a number of local agencies in the constitution of a model of race relations. I have also argued that this narrative of multicultural success has not evolved separately from the demands and practices of the city's population, which alongside these more formal mechanisms can be viewed as the basis for and consequence of a shifting public culture of place.

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95 Prior to the re-organisation of the ward boundaries in 2003.

96 This neighbourhood largely falls within the Spinney Hills ward found in Fig 4.2.

However, I also suggest there needs to be greater attention paid to the way in which knowledges of, and experiences of this city work in relation to these ideas of an exceptional public culture. As Burkitt (2004) argues, everyday life often conceived of as unofficial practices, cannot be separated off so easily from various 'structural' influences which feed into it. In this way, this discussion has not attempted to focus upon explanations of multicultural success in order to offer a contrast with individuals who may be 'more rooted' in the everyday. Rather, I have attempted to both outline a particular definition of 'successful relations', in order to suggest that individuals might relate to this culture is various ways. This is not to dispute the importance of the ways in which diversity has been managed in the city. There is no intention to negatively frame progressive efforts which have been taken by individuals and agencies in pursuing laudable goals of racial equality and equitable service provision. Rather I look to build upon the idea that the condition and conditioning of inter-cultural relations are not solely imposed, and that 'multicultural success' might be differentially interpreted and experienced.

In terms of a 'white backlash' to a project of multiculturalism, there has been both limited space and a limited basis for dissent, given the economic context of the city, the movement out of those who expressed overtly racist ideas and as Singh (2003) puts it, the limited claims made on public resources by migrant communities from the 1970s. However, this does not mean that opposition to the idea of the 'multicultural city' has disappeared or that new forms of opposition cannot be produced given specific circumstances. It is not necessarily that such outlooks do not exist, but rather that they, as I noted above, and will go on to further examine in the following chapter, are often not given the air to be fanned or the space to be openly performed.[97]

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[97] For example, I certainly witnessed graffiti which could be described as 'racist' in the city. However, on returning to record the graffiti I often found myself looking at blank walls, an indication I would argue of both a public which, in the main, has come to reject these forms of racism but also the pro-active council anti-graffiti team, which seems aware of the importance of clamping down on the expression of such sentiment.

The following chapter opens up an alternative understanding of inter-cultural relations by illustrating some of the tensions at work within the city. It will then go onto to discuss the multiple/plural character of the city's population, a public which might not be so easily defined in terms of static communities or residents with shared ideas of place, due to complex combinations of economic situatedness and social, cultural and spatial trajectories. Thus, in trying to make sense of this city and understand the dynamics of 'race' and racism, rather than asking what's so special, exceptional or extraordinary about this place, I begin to ask, what's so ordinary?

5. The plural and contested multicultural city

5.1. Living the multicultural city

As has been shown, the city of Leicester has attained a certain prominence in contemporary discussions of multiculturalism within the UK context. If one is to define successful and progressive 'multiculturalism' in terms of formal diversity management and the civic incorporation of ethnic minority groups, then we can observe that important strides have been taken in this locality which sets it apart from places identified as 'racially sensitive'. Through this chapter, however, I assess how far this form of 'inclusiveness' might stretch by addressing the importance of everyday experiences and outlooks in relation to such a 'placed' public culture. In so doing I look to build on the idea, as outlined in chapter two that the ordinary spatial trajectories of individuals might be significant in not only reflecting the contextual character of place as regards inter-ethnic relations, but also in differentially interpreting and practicing 'the multicultural city'.

Through an examination of the accounts of research participants from a variety of ethnic 'backgrounds', I argue that everyday forms of inclusion and exclusion deviate from 'formal' local scripts of multicultural accommodation, but also relate to them in various ways. In so doing I show how the notion of an 'open multicultural city' is embraced and/or contested in relation to discourses of belonging but also in relation to specific spatial and historical trajectories. Everyday trajectories might then go some way in accounting for and reinforcing an established reputation, but may also point towards the complexities and contradictions of a 'plural city' (Connolly, 2005) where, for example, anxieties over 'multiculturalism' must be set in the context of the multiple subject positions of everyday life.

I begin by opening up some of the limitations of the dominant discourse surrounding Leicester as previously outlined, before showing how experiences

both within and outside of the bounds of strictly defined communities might be significant as regards an understanding of the character of 'inter-cultural relations' in this city. By exploring the ways in which differentially positioned individuals relate to the ethos of a public culture of place I show how the city is framed positively in terms of the ability to practise forms of 'community' particularly for 'new arrivals' in the city, but then also negatively both in terms of racialised exclusion and the reactions of a established 'local' community to a level of official 'openness'. I therefore proceed to argue that the iconic status of Leicester may in itself contribute towards a sense of exclusion by those who perceive themselves outside of a local multicultural project.

5.2. The uneven and shifting relations of the city

> *"It* [Black Leicester] *is very wary of the view of Leicester as a sleepy, peaceful, provincial city that has, through mutual tolerance, generated racial harmony"* (Westwood, 1991:151)

> *"It's been far from a rosy picture, if anything its been a significantly buried picture…if the promotion of Leicester's image was honest then the reputation would be justified, but I think there's an over-promotion of what's going on."* (LREC representative, key informant interview)

> *"…when you go outside for example, you won't see that much people from two different backgrounds walking together, there are a few, but only just a few. Most people there are from the same background and they are together. So I don't think they really, they are far from a really good society. There are a lot of different backgrounds in Leicester, they are all here, but they don't hang out together. That's a problem."* (Jackie, 17, identifying as Muslim Guinean – College, ESOL class)

As these excerpts illustrate, the status of Leicester as a model of positive inter-ethnic relations has not remained unchallenged by academics, local 'experts' and those who call the city their home. Critiques have questioned the basis upon which the city's much lauded progress has been judged, as well as highlighting the dangers of inaccurate portrayals of everyday life in the city, what Chessum (2000:200-201) calls Leicester's long-standing 'multicultural myth'. In particular, much of this criticism has focussed upon the experiences

of specific minority 'communities' who have neither secured access to networks of political influence nor managed to achieve economic 'advancement'.[98]

Studies by the Pakistani Youth and Community Association (2002), Chessum (2000),[99] Benyon, Garland and Lyle (1996) and Westwood (1991) for example, have shown how many of those categorised within various 'ethnic minority' groups have remained excluded from local mainstream services and neglected in terms of adequate and appropriate resource provision. Specifically there is a focus upon Leicester's relatively small Pakistani and African-Caribbean 'communities' (see Fig. 10), historically concentrated in the deprived central areas of the city.[100] For example, many of those identifying as Pakistani express that they are poorly served by the council, clearly at odds with the idea that this local authority has ensured an environment of 'racial' sensitivity and equality (Pakistani Youth and Community Association (2002). While forms of political incorporation might offer a level of parity and inclusion for some, for others racialised exclusion remains a reality and a basis for informal, everyday political struggle.

As one key informant, representing a community centre in the Highfields neighbourhood communicated to me, the relationship with the local authority over the funding of community facilities has been a source of constant frustration in this area.[101] Such criticisms suggest that the form of civic multiculturalism previously outlined may not be as inclusive as it initially appears, particularly for those on the margins, whereby 'success' might be judged by the ways in which individuals feel they are treated as well as the extent to which their immediate needs are met.

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[98] As Akhtar has argued with regard to the predominantly deprived Pakistani Muslim community living in areas of the country suffering disproportionate levels of unemployment and crime, many have remained outside of a much publicised 'Asian Cool' success story largely experienced by those with familial ties to India and East Africa (*The Observer*, 23/10/05, p.13).

[99] As Chessum (2000) notes, the African Caribbean community, contrasted with the East African Asians, have remained excluded due to their lack of access to economic, social and cultural resources.

[100] Particularly the central Highfields area of the city.

[101] These frustrations with regard to this same centre are also expressed by Samantha Admani in an article published in the *Leicester Mercury*: Lee Marlow, 'Why no one is playing ball' 21/10/04, p.10.

> *"Highfields has been under continuous attack, you know, and right from when we won the Lottery bid to get the centre, it's been a constant fight against the city council to be able to start to get the money through, open up various opportunities and get the place opened. I mean we're talking about 8 years."* (Highfields Youth and Community Centre representative, key informant interview)

Outside of the city, prominent figures have also begun to rely less on Leicester as a useful measure of progressive relations on the basis of 'multicultural policies' which sit uneasily with a national agenda of 'community cohesion'. Support for the 'separate development' of identifiable ethnic communities has thus come to stand for a diluted form of US-style segregationism, with the head of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), initiating a debate around the dangers of segregation exhibited in places such as Leicester. At the heart of this is the idea that 'good relations' come from the development of an assimilated culture, weakened when residential areas are dominated by homogeneous ethnic groups. [102] While an image of the city as a 'multicultural success' is powerful and in many ways 'accurate', there seems to be more at work in this place which involves experiences of economic and cultural division.

It is not my intention here to offer a 'more accurate' impression of what is *actually* going on in. Rather, I wish to show how social relations in an evolving city are both 'on the move' but also become 'stuck'. The emphasis here is upon the everyday contingencies of space and time outlined in chapter two. For instance, various 'city spaces' provide very different experiences for individuals on the basis of their racialised appearance, including for example neighbourhoods conceived of as segregated, but also in relation to other spaces of identity formation. The challenges provided by temporal aspects are also vital, largely with regards to shifting terms of acceptance among an ethnically but also culturally circumscribed majority where re-membering the city may

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[102] These concerns about the dangers of a multicultural policy seen to lead to 'parallel lives' and the reinforcement of divides between communities feeds into and from the continued reliance upon studies of race and residence which wittingly and unwittingly emphasise assimilation as a moral good. For example, see Poulson's (2005) recent work on the ghettoisation of British cities, whereby 'separation' in Leicester is seen to be a particularly acute problem.

speak of a sense of loss. Formal incorporation may go some way towards creating a sense of inclusiveness, but sudden changes at odds with a fragile inter-ethnic settlement, such as the arrival of new ethnic communities, shape forms and expressions of exclusion. By focussing upon a selection of experiences and views expressed by variously positioned young people, I explore how identification and differentiation can be understood through references to place, 'community' and the everyday trajectories of individuals.

5.3. Pluralism and ordinary trajectories

As Grillo (2000:958) notes, plural cities are those places where people to "...varying degrees of consciousness and consequence believe, or are led to believe, that they are different from each other in lifestyle, language, religion, historic identity and so on." This may seem like an obvious statement, but I contend that much of the thinking surrounding discussions of multiculturalism, particularly with regards to the situation found in Leicester, largely ignores this. An understanding of the plural character of the city's population does not just recognise the presence of difference through the lens of stable 'communities', but the potentially shifting character of these differences across time and space. Whilst, as shall be shown, the existence and maintenance of racialised and ethnicised 'communities' is apparent, powerful and often necessary, it is the blurred edges of these attachments, which might allow for the possibility of dynamism between dangerously entrenched positionings (Connolly, 2005).

In what follows I indicate that place perception and cultural attachments vary on the basis of ethnicity, and in relation to experiences of isolation and/or movement. I firstly show how for certain individuals, particularly 'new arrivals' in the city, the maintenance of a transnational sense of belonging is of the utmost personal significance, where the city represents a place based on the existence of supportive community infrastructure within an otherwise uncertain environment. I will then go on to discuss the need to recognise that this is not *just* a city composed of separate and easily identifiable communities even for those who highlight the benefits of everyday 'community life' on

ethnic terms. In light of considerations offered in chapter two one might rather then characterise the city's population through the multiple intersections of differences, similarities and positionings, based upon ethnicity, religion, class, generation, gender, sub-culture and communities of interest all tinged with unique personal histories. These are differences and similarities which emphasise both the significance of communities which are constantly in production (Farrar, 2002), and the limits of 'community' as socially and spatially bounded phenomena.

5.3.1. Multicultural Leicester and the importance of 'community'

> *"I like living in Leicester because Leicester is a small city. 300,000 people live in Leicester. There are small buildings and the people in Leicester are very friendly. There are lots of shopping centres, parks, nice houses, and in Leicester there are quite a few Indians. Leicester is multicultural city. That's why I like living in Leicester and I like Leicester City. I LOVE LEICESTER."* (Entry from Rupa's personal diary, 26/04/04)

As Rupa (17, identifying as Indian – College, ESOL class) through her diary entry suggests, Leicester represents a place, which, for some, falls in line with the promotional rhetoric surrounding the city. She particularly points towards ethnic diversity as one of the positive characteristics of life in the city and the fact that Leicester is home to "...quite a few Indians", a community with which she identifies. In our conversations, she spoke in a similarly upbeat fashion of her neighbourhood, Rushey Mead, where she identified there were "...a lot of Punjabis". However, her ideas were not based upon the advantages offered by the presence of diverse communities as such, but were couched in terms of the importance of communities with which she identified and the benefits which such attachments offered her in her daily life.

The importance of 'community' in this sense, while not simplistically defined, (as can be seen in her identification as Indian, Punjabi, and also later Sikh) must be seen in the context of Rupa's personal situation, particularly her relatively recent arrival in the UK. Having moved to Leicester three years previously

from the Punjab region of India, she was in a position where her experiences of a life in India were still fresh in her memory, speaking fondly of friends and family she had left behind. On moving to the UK the ability to maintain these transnational connections, specifically in relation to the practice of the Sikh faith took on extreme significance. The presence and practice then of an ethnic and religious 'community' with strong connections to her 'homeland' provided a sense of security, support and familiarity and also a re-negotiation of what it means to be Indian, Punjabi and Sikh (Caglar, 2001) within her neighbourhood and daily routine.

For others, who have recently made their home in Leicester, the ability to conduct distinct religious and cultural practices within a relatively permissive environment was an important element of their views of the city. This outlook, emphasising a level of cultural 'freedom' was particularly expressed by those who had knowledge and/or experiences of other places and countries. For example, it emerged that many of those identifying as Somali Muslims, who, as EU citizens had migrated from countries including the Netherlands and Sweden, done so for this very reason.[103] While often vulnerable to increased levels of racial intolerance, (as explored below), official attitudes and regulations, such as those previously discussed, clearly influenced such movements. However, official stances have not been wholly responsible. Indeed, for 'new arrivals' it was not so much a public culture of 'openness' which was referenced, but the identification of those seen as ethnically, religiously and culturally 'similar'.

For Jay Z, (17, who identified as Somali – College, ESOL class) his family's movement from Somalia, due to the civil war, led them firstly to the Netherlands and then to Leicester. He put their decision to move to the UK mainly down to the education system which gave him greater opportunities to reach university than in Holland, and the decision to move to specifically to Leicester "…because of a lot of Somalian communities are here." For Samantha

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103 This pattern emerged from across my interviews with young Somalis and a number of key informants interviews.

(18. who identified as a Muslim born in Somalia, but had lived in Kenya for 15 years – College, ESOL class), it was the presence, not necessarily of an identifiable 'ethnic community' as such, an idea which had been significantly complicated by her own spatial and historical journeys, but of a strong, visible, pan-ethnic 'Muslim community' which was significant. The city is, then, an environment which has allowed her to re-affirm her beliefs and re-enact religious adherence in a new context, surrounded by those who are practicing their Islamic faith.

> Samantha: *"Because in Kenya, all my friends was Christian and I had no friends who was Muslims, so I was like, no if I wear scarf and things like that I'm gonna be different from my other friends. I didn't wear a scarf so my parents accepted that, but when I moved here I wanted to wear because I saw many people who was wearing and it was all right with them, and they would, yeah, so I started to wear a scarf and practise Islam more then."*

This is not to argue that more recent arrivals necessarily conceive of the city solely in positive terms. This is far from the case, since they are some of the most socially marginalised and economically deprived individuals in Leicester. Nor is it to contend that those not categorised as 'ethnic minorities' do not experience the city through the lens of strong communities either (as will be illustrated in section 5.5). However, it is clear that the city provides an important forum for the maintenance of ideas of belonging which are not based upon an established sense of attachment to 'the local' or indeed to the 'nation'. In this sense the symbolic value of Leicester is conceived in terms of 'community' in relation to other places and other experiences.

As Ali (17, who identified as Somali – College, ESOL class) explains, both positive and negative aspects of city life are juggled on a daily basis. In negative terms he compares his life in Leicester to his ten years spent in the Netherlands, explaining how he preferred Arnhem, particularly in terms of relationships with those from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In a more positive sense he also highlights the importance of links to his country of birth, the

presence of his family and of those with common connections, experiences and understandings.

> Ali: "*In Holland, what I'm used to is once, everyone, whoever you see, ask them something, he answers you politely. Even if you don't know him he says hi, he talks to you, he makes some jokes, he walks through, every things okay there, at least where I was living in Holland, Arnhem, yeah. So that's what I hate actually about this place and how do you call it, the mood in England, it's like everyone's angry. It's bad and good, because in here I kind of hate it, but I kind of love it a little bit too because I have here people from my own country, where I can laugh about just our things, you know. How people, how things are in Somalia or things how we eat or we walk or how we laugh or something like that. And my uncle, my brothers, my sisters, my aunties, my family, I am always with them, talking about them, watching movies or, I kind of love it. I hate some things about it and I love some things about it.*"

Ali's version of the 'good city' is not then based upon the idea that Leicester's diverse population necessarily 'get along' (something also indicated by Jackie at the beginning of this chapter), or share uniting and enduring commonalities, but upon connections to those people and places 'closest' to him. This suggests that it is not necessarily an 'openness to difference' which characterises positive experiences of this city, nor is it that Leicester represents a great place to live,[104] but rather that the ability to live with a strong sense of familiarity and belonging routed through transnational affiliations, is crucial.

Omah (18, who identified as Somali – College, ESOL class) explained to me that one of the main reasons his family had decided to move from London, their first home in the UK, (after moving from Somalia and then the Netherlands) was the availability of housing in comparison to a dearth in the capital. But he was also keen to show that such considerations were not separate from knowledge of a significant Somali community in Leicester, information attained though familial networks already established in the city. Omah emphasised the importance of an 'affirmative community'

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[104] For example in the recordings obtained through Soft Touch, one group of young Somalis explained their dislike for the UK in terms of weather, the lack of anything to do and problems of 'trouble' and racism. As one of these participants went onto state: "The UK ain't good to live, I'd rather live in Somalia than live in the UK". It must be remembered that many of these young people did not make the choice to either Britain or to Leicester.

(Ifekwunigwe, 2002) formed through the maintenance of supportive environment for recently settled families.

> Omah: *"We talked to a few Somalian people and some relatives and they said it's better if you go to Leicester, you get housing very fast rather than from London. It's very difficult to get a house, but in Leicester you'll get a house quicker than in London. So that's the main reason, and the Somali community in Leicester is very big and it's a very small city and it's better for the children."*

What we therefore see are the positive aspects of 'community' lived out in the lives of those who require a strong sense of security, both because of and in spite of the development of a specific public culture of place. As Fortier (1999) argues, practices tied to distant places are thus integral to an understanding of both the changing identity of place and the identities of 'migrant communities'.

It is also the case that for those identifying as 'non-white' with experience of other places in the UK, Leicester provides a contrasting environment in terms of the *relative* absence of racism. Although Leicester is not exempt from the circulation of racist sentiment, it is also the case that in the experience of certain individuals the city provides an environment of relative acceptance. As one female 'Asian' participant explained (College, Hair and Beauty discussion group), she spent most of her life growing up in Lancaster in the north-west of England. She spoke of the extreme racist attitudes expressed towards 'Asians' in that town, her own direct experiences of racist abuse and the threatening presence of the NF in the area. In contrast to her experiences of Leicester, forms of racism were openly expressed, particularly through verbal abuse. She offered an example of this when "...on one occasion the bus driver wouldn't let me on the bus, it was that bad!" For this young woman life in Leicester represented a more positive experience and a friendlier place, particularly as it offered less of a sense of isolation. As she put it: "Leicester, I mean its like everybody's here, its no different because you are so used to seeing Asians...where I was born I felt like an alien really". Again it is this sense of security provided by similarity and familiarity which acts as a mode of

reassurance, and works to define more positive characteristics of 'multiculturalism' in this place.

I have briefly outlined here how experiences of Leicester for young people from 'minority' backgrounds, might be framed positively. These experiences are based upon ideas and practices of community which are tenuously linked to a culture based upon institutional support or an image of 'harmonious relations'. What seems to be more important is the presence and practice of similarities as a strategic manoeuvre, through the notion of 'community' in the face of unfamiliarity, socio-economic marginalisation and racialised exclusion. The way in which individuals relate to place with reference to personal, spatial and historical trajectories is what seems to matter. While the practice of 'community' is clearly significant in the construction of a sense of belonging, I now wish to indicate the limitations of conceptualising this city as a place constituted by separate and distinct communities. In particular, I look to illustrate the malleability of identity as a way in introducing the idea of a contested city, one which is not just the outcome of a plurality of 'communities', but also a sense of plurality in the everyday lives of young people.

5.3.2. Plural identifications beyond community?

While we must retain an appreciation of various attachments to place expressed through the language of 'community', it is also necessary to move beyond an understanding of relations solely in terms of static and discrete communities. In order to outline the relative mobility/immobility of identity and the way in which this relates to understandings of place, it is necessary to discuss the plural positionings of individuals through the everyday. I look here to show the manner in which identities are multiple and, as such, are performed differently through the various spatial contexts of everyday life.

As we have seen, definitions of identity and belonging are inherently personal. In the account of Dev (Aged 16, identifying as Portuguese and a Muslim - College, ESOL) it is possible to observe both the complexities of his own sense

of identity which draws upon a number of histories, spatialities and cultural practices and the manner in which boundaries of belonging are also fractured and contested. Dev discussed with me his preference to both define himself in terms of his nationality, that is, Portuguese, but also in terms of his religion, Islam. However, it was also clear that Dev had a number of other 'distant' connections. For example his father was originally from Mozambique and his grandfather from India. Dev spoke of one situation in which an older member of the 'Muslim community' had advised him to identify as 'Asian' when completing official documents due to his familial ties to that continent and to a pan-Asian-Islamic identity. Dev disagreed with the elder, so much so, that he asked him to leave his house, arguing that he saw himself as Portuguese, as European and as a Muslim, even though, as he notes below he is often mistaken as a non-Muslim due to his appearance, choice of clothing and style of haircut. This was not seen as a compromise, but as the consequence of a specific set of geographical and cultural *routes*.

> Dev: *"A lot of people they don't say that I'm Muslim because you know gel and everything, you don't see like, now you can see more people with gel but, you don't see it too much. They're saying that you're not Muslim, you are a Hindu or something like that. I said: 'No! I'm from Portugal and I'm a Muslim.'"*

In the case of Rupa, the cultural practices enacted and resources drawn upon in her everyday life vividly illustrate the 'hybrid' complexities of those with a history of mobility (Ang, 2001). Her experiences of the city draw upon a number of physical, spiritual and mediated spaces and activities with diverse origins and histories. These include the Sikh Gurdwara, city buses, the college, city centre shops, cricket, tea, prayers, 'Eastenders' and Punjabi music. It is therefore not adequate to approach such experiences solely in terms of bounded communities when the 'local' and the 'non-local' are seen to work together in such ways:[105]

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[105] The employment of multiple cultural resources in the construction of a certain 'hybridity' also hit home to me in my conversations with Rupa in terms of clothing. In an interview session whilst discussing her diary entries this was particularly apparent, wearing as she was a t-shirt with 'England' emblazoned across it in conjunction with her 'traditional' Sikh headscarf.

"First I did my prayer in the morning. Then I walked to the Gurdwara. Then I got a bus to college. Then attended my lessons. After my lessons I went to the canteen, I went to the canteen at my college with my friends. Then after that I went to Bede Island College to attend my course interview. Then I bussed it to town then went to the shops in town and got clothes and shoes. Then after that with my class we went to Abbey Park to watch a cricket match. When I got home I made tea, made sandwiches for myself. Then I did my prayer. Then I watched Eastenders and I listened to some Punjabi music on the TV, watched a movie then fell asleep." (Entry from Rupa's personal diary, 21/04/04)

A further illustration of the way in which conceptions of 'community' might be 'open', is presented through the account of Ghopal (17, who identified as Filipino – College, ESOL). My conversations with Ghopal indicated both the importance of a small and close-knit Filipino community to which he articulated a strong sense of attachment, but also the fact that this community could not be easily pinned down geographically, nor separated from relations enacted in other 'everyday' situations. It is usually at the weekends that Ghopal meets up with his Filipino friends established through a Roman Catholic church on the north-west edge of the city. In particular, he noted how on Saturdays they would arrange to meet up in the main shopping mall in the city centre and spend the day together. On Sundays they would then gather at the church in order to worship and socialise, activities which required Ghopal to travel across the city.

> Ghopal: *"Every Saturday and Sunday, every Saturday we are meeting in the Shires, so every Sunday we go in the same church in Anstey so it's quite far from here. So we are going every Sunday, beside the Church there is a hall so every time there sometimes we are having a party"*

However, in addition these important activities he also spoke with fondness and humour of his strongest friendship established with a class mate who was neither Philipino nor a practising Roman Catholic. He was originally from Portugal and a practising Muslim. As Dwyer (1999) has examined in relation to the experiences of young Muslim females, the nature of 'community' and thus senses of belonging to which individuals make reference is open to transition and constantly negotiated in relation to the realities of everyday lives.

Further clarification of this can be seen through the mundane schisms which exist between those who might be conventionally considered as belonging to the same 'ethnic group'. In my conversations with Rupa, for example, this was apparent not only in terms of gender divisions but also in terms of the appearance and embodied style adopted by individuals. She discussed how some young male 'Indians' would cause problems for her close friend by calling her names such as 'freshie', due to her more 'traditional' style of clothing. This seemed to justify her dislike of Indian guys, explaining that she preferred spending her time with Somali male friends, whom she saw as more friendly. Another, younger female 'Asian' participant from one of the school based discussions in the Highfields area, also contested both the fact that relationships are solely within the boundaries of established 'communities', as well as highlighting the gendered power relations and expectations enforced upon young 'Asian' females by young males in the attempted maintenance of these strict divides:

> *"They come up to you and they go: 'You ain't talking to that guy and you ain't doing what I say', and I'm saying, it just does your head in because you think: No! Because you're not ruling over my life. This is my life so you stay out of it, and that's what they do. Like when you make a friend, maybe it's a different colour or different tradition or culture or something, they just are horrible and racist"*

In my conversations with Ali other fractures emerged. In this case between those identifying as Somali on the basis of diverse routes and differing nationalised identities. Ali illustrates how a particular incident which occurred whilst playing football at college, revealed some of these differences:

> Ali: *Somalian people have problems with each other too. Some people from Sweden hate Dutch people. It's not serious, you just say, they just hate their attitude because Dutch people are more confident than Swedish people, that's what they know. Like when we were, we were just playing football right now, some, Jay Z, you know Jay Z?*
> John: *Yeah*
> Ali: *He's Dutch he was actually playing football and another guy, I'm not naming him but he is from Sweden, or, yeah he is from Sweden and the Sweden guy he accidentally kicked him. Jay Z got mad, he just yelled at*

him or something and then he immediately said: 'this is what mean about Dutch attitude!'.

These complexities and plural forms of identification make matters of identity simply along static 'community lines' questionable. This can also be seen with regards to the diverse attitudes and practices of different generations across ethnic groups with regards to 'traditional' cultures and in terms of attitudes towards differentiated 'others'. As the excerpts presented below indicate, identification is not just based around the idea of racial or ethnic distinction *per se*. It is also based upon a sense that the everyday experiences of young people are very different from those of their parents. Nav (18, identifying as British-Asian – Belgrave youth centre) for example, emphasises purposeful rebellion against his family, based upon feelings of mistreatment and resentment, particularly due to the behaviour of certain family members towards him and a sense of distance from traditional Hindu practices. Mo (19, identifying as British-Indian – College, Motor Mechanics) also points here towards a sense of change over successive generations in terms of a firmer belief in standing up for himself in the face of both racism and more general 'trouble' encountered on a day-to-day basis.

Nav: *"I mean like me I can just go out whenever I want because I can give them the finger and that. I'm being rebellious against my parents because of the childhood that I had with them and because I'm in the second generation to come yeah, they're all like traditional and strict right and I'm like laid back"*

Mo: *"My grandparents, my parents, parents, they were scared before, now each person that's growing up in their family, they ain't getting frightened, because they've got that feelings, so that like, my kids will come up, they ain't gonna be scared of no-one like if we see some group of people we'd run away and they are gonna walk through."*

These differences cannot, however, be considered solely in terms of the experiences of those who might be classified as 'ethnic minorities', but also those who identify as 'white'. Such differences illustrate that the fractures of community across a white/black binary make such broad distinctions unsustainable. As I explore in more detail in the following chapter, Emily's

(26, identifying as 'white' – College, Electrical Installations class) experience of growing up on one of the outer estates of the city, coded in terms of its 'whiteness', in contrast to her current central residential location, resulted in the expression of some strong racialised sentiment. This, however, should be set both in the *context* of the attitudes transmitted in her home environment and in *contrast* to the strength of racist sentiment articulated by her parents:

> Emily: *"I can remember when I first started senior school and there was like, I think I had four Asians in my class. And I did become friends with one of them, because I wasn't very good at English and she was, and like I used to help her with Maths and she used to help me with English. And I started to walk home with her and my mum seen me once and she's like: 'Oi! Get away from that fucking Paki, you'll get nits!'…We spoke to each other after that, but it wasn't, the friendship wasn't as good as it was."*

Also in contrast to Emily, Sam (17, who identified as white – College, Electrical Installations class), was extremely frank in discussing his beliefs and philosophies. These were clearly important to him and were ideas he drew upon in the construction of his own Hip-Hop-based MC lyrics. Sam stood out from the rest of his class in that he did not see racial difference as threatening, but something to be embraced, or more often something to be ignored as irrelevant. What one can see here is the ways in which 'white' identities may also be differentially performed. This was the case when his own attitudes and practices were held up against those of his classmates and his family. He explained how his parents exhibited very different 'beliefs', how he had not adopted these and how in a sense he too, like Nav, was rebelling against family traditions, in this case by adopting a style, friendship groups, and a social life which drew heavily upon 'Black' cultural influences:

> Sam: *"My dad, he hates everyone really who's not white, and I don't know, he's got strong feelings like, as much as I try and press my thoughts and views on him, try and show him the truth, he just, he doesn't listen, he has his own way. My mum and my brother are the same but not as strong, really, really strong. My dad's like, if you like start mixing with blacks and all this I'll disown you kind of thing"*

> *"During the night I talked to my mum. She is a racist. I don't like her views or beliefs. But she respects mine and helps me with my problems with my black friends"* (Entry from Sam's personal diary, 10/04/04)

This second excerpt from Sam's diary also seems to suggest the way in which the 'liminality' (Bhabha, 1994) of identity might generate new possibilities and new openings for negotiation in communicative forms, even in terms when these negotiations are seen to take place between those who might identify as belonging to the same 'community'. In this case the commonality of the mother-son relationship overrides other differences in opinion as regards racial differences. What we can see here is a complication of identification within groups often thought of as homogeneous, the emergence of diverse attitudes and practices as regards differentiated 'others', but also the encounters which might take place across these differences.

A recognition of the flexibility of identification does not merely entail the fracturing of bounded ethnic ties, implying a 'reduction' of such affiliations, but must also take into account new forms of identification which include those across 'ethnic groups'. A contemporary, local example of this can be seen as a result of recent cuts to funding witnessed across voluntary and education services in the city. These emerged following changes to the local political administration and the enforcement of spending reviews amidst accusations of financial mis-management by the previous Labour administration and political opportunism by the Liberal Democrat/Conservative coalition.

The reaction to threats posed to a variety of services, upon which many of those in the most deprived areas of the city had come to rely, saw the formation of united protest groups (such as Defend Our Community Services), public meetings held at neighbourhood centres across the city, bringing various interest groups together and the organisation of mass marches on the Leicester City Council offices (as can be seen below in Fig. 14, a flyer distributed by Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL) at one of these events). In this case the idea of 'the local community' superseded any definition of community based upon

strict ethnic allegiances mobilised through political opposition. This illustrates a commonality based upon shared interests and the recognition of a shared future. This event is also indicative of the ways in which the adoption of particular tactics, can 'bind difference'.

Figure 14 Non-racialised coming together: Opposition to Leicester City Council spending reviews

STOP THE CUTS
SAVE SERVICES

Ripping the heart out of local communities

Local people say "NO" to the city council's plans

To find out what you can do:
Email:
corina@voluntaryactionleicester.org.uk

Tel: 0116 258 0666

Source: Flyer produced and distributed by Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL)

Conceptions and practices of 'the multicultural city', while often saturated in notions of plural 'communities', are also practised beyond these boundaries, a flexibility which is indicative of the complex constitution and performance of

identities. Bearing in mind that experience of and beyond the city are diversely orientated both through and beyond community, I look to show in what follows the way in which certain forms of local belonging look to exclude on the basis of cultural difference. I do so in order to indicate the limits of accommodation in this city, but also to show how forms of closure are practised by those positioned by certain forms of 'whiteness', in relation to a public culture of place and cultures of marginalisation.

5.4. Local racisms and the unassimilated 'other'

> *"In a place like Leicester, what's happening is, it's several steps beyond the national discussion or the national assumptions about racism, it's far more complex than that."* (Student Development Support Agency representative, key informant interview)

I argue here that for those who would consider themselves as 'more established', and part of a 'local' community, the fact of diversity and its official forms of endorsement may be seen as threatening rather than as beneficial. However, given the importance of a public culture of place which stresses acceptable forms of diversity, (as hinted at in the excerpt above), I do not posit this straightforwardly as a unified 'white backlash'. Rather I attempt to show how forms of local racisms have a distinctive character in relation to a public culture of place, national cultures of belonging and everyday experience. I do so by focussing upon anti-racist dissidence and forms of oppositional 'whiteness' which are practised in relation to positions of relative marginality.

Despite the fact that Leicester has not witnessed the development of a more organised culture of racism as in other areas of the country, it is clear that tensions across racial and ethnic divides remains an issue. As recent research shows such 'racist' incidents are common place for young people in the city, (Rupra, 2004). According to this report, between April 2003 and March 2004, 1089 incidents of racial harassment were reported, a sign both of the willingness of individuals to highlight these incidents but also of the extensive

practice and force of various racisms. The racisms at work in Leicester are importantly framed by a public culture of place, where the absence of organised far-right activity throws light upon other tensions such as those between minority ethnic groups as well as what I would call dominant 'localised' racisms directed at those seen to be culturally unassimilated.

As several key informants, including a senior police officer and city councillor based in the central Highfields area informed me, there is a need to recognise the complex tensions which exist in Leicester, particularly with regard to 'multi-ethnic' neighbourhoods. In Highfields, for example, a triangular tension between African Caribbean, Somali and Asian-Muslim youths has been identified. It is not then possible in the context of Leicester to locate the performance of racisms solely upon those positioned by a 'white' ethnicity. As an 'Asian' taxi driver told me whilst discussing the problems associated with a specific city nightclub largely frequented by a 'Black' clientele: "I'm not prejudiced, but wherever you have Jamaicans you've got trouble."[106] On another occasion in the city centre I observed a group of three young African-Caribbeans leaving a shop, upon which one of them commented: "If anyone classes me as a Somali again!"[107]

These complex arrangements are further illustrated with reference to a key informant who commented that once coherent 'communities', especially those beginning to lose earlier functions of security and economic self-reliance, have become internally differentiated, leading to 'internal conflict' alongside more conventionally recognised forms of discrimination:

> *"...in the old days when Asians first came to Leicester they had such discrimination they had to stick together and now because the communities have become prosperous and self-confident they feel they can have the luxury of turning on each other"* (Senior City Council Officer, key informant interview)

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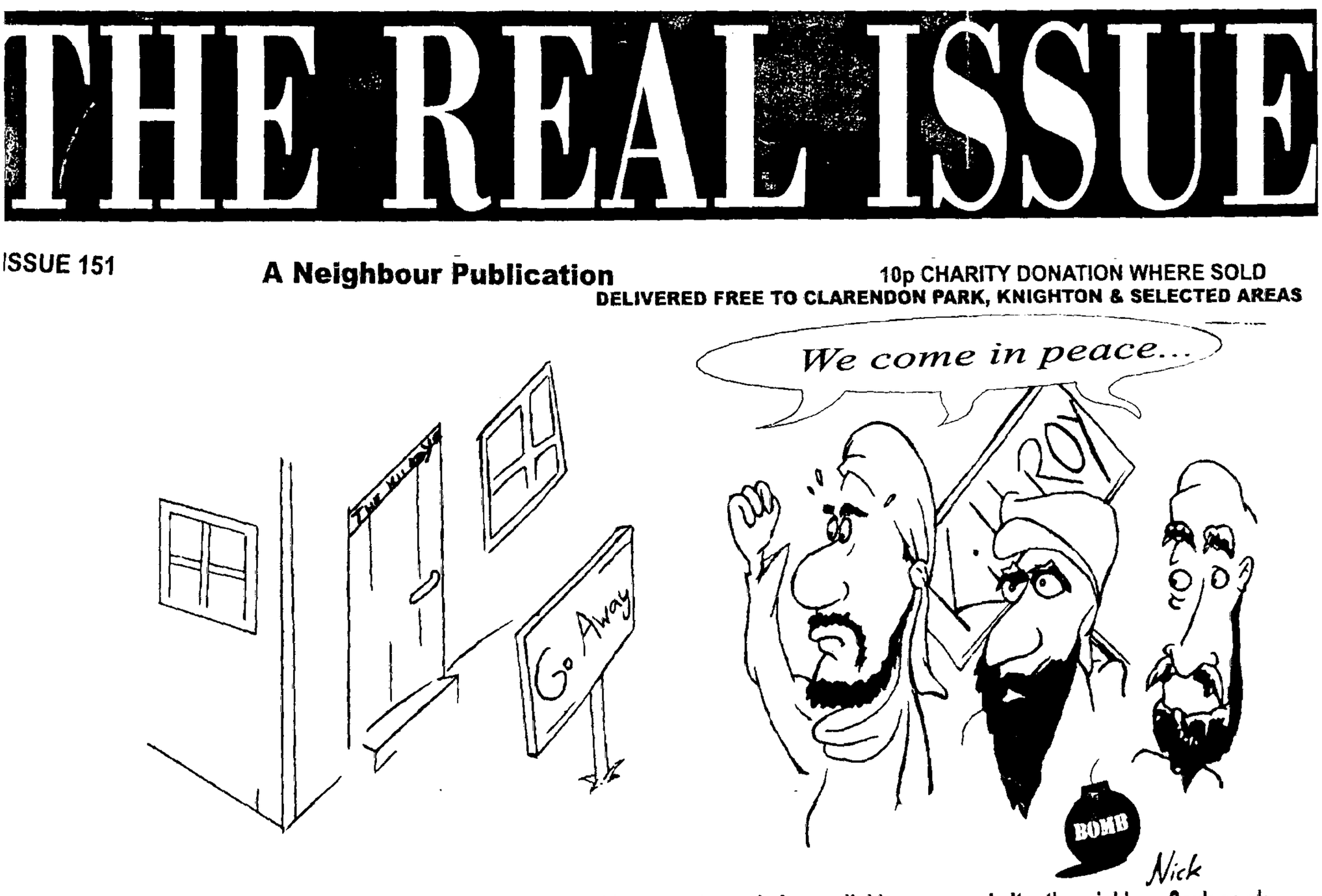
106 Taken from fieldwork diary (04/10/04)
107 Taken from fieldwork diary (13/12/03)

However, it is also clear that much of the racialised and racist discourse in circulation here relies upon a particular definition of who is included in an imagined 'we' of the 'local', which still takes 'whiteness' as the primary form of acceptance. In particular, such sentiments focus attention towards, or rather against, 'immigrants', 'asylum seekers', and 'new arrivals' which, in the case of Leicester, is associated with the presence of specific and identifiable ethnic groups. The *limited* nature of multicultural accommodation in this place therefore exhibits localised features, but features which also cannot be disconnected from dominant stories of national belonging discussed in chapter one and chapter two.

Figure 15 Prevailing racisms in the multicultural city: 'The Real Issue'/'The Neighbour' magazine


THE REAL ISSUE

ISSUE 151 **A Neighbour Publication** 10p CHARITY DONATION WHERE SOLD
DELIVERED FREE TO CLARENDON PARK, KNIGHTON & SELECTED AREAS

TO ADVERTISE CALL 2890912 or Email: theneighbour@btopenworld.com - rate card also available on our website: theneighbour.2cuk.co.uk

Figure 16 Leicester 'under attack'? 'The Real Issue'/'The Neighbour' magazine

While the absence of the BNP as a major political force is notable, the city is certainly not free from the circulation of political sentiment with a racialised logic. Its employment is evident in subtle ways and used to justify alternative ideas of place. The activities of a local publication entitled 'The Neighbour' is noteworthy in that it illustrates local opposition to 'multiculturalism' through a seemingly acceptable form of demonisation. This 'community magazine' which for a time also went under the name 'The Real Issue' (as can be seen in Fig. 15 and Fig. 16) includes local advertisements, un-edited letters from local residents and vitriolic articles submitted by the editor.[108] One of the dominant threads

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[108] An editor, who, as I was informed by one key informant, has strong affiliations with the BNP.

running through the publication is a concentration upon 'asylum' and 'immigration', separated apart from the presence of 'more integrated' ethnic minorities.[109] The overwhelming message presented is both a city and a country under threat, as can be seen with reference to both Fig. 15 and Fig. 16. The first exaggerates reactions towards the outspoken views of Robert Kilroy-Silk,[110] establishing an association between those of a 'non-western' appearance and a culture of violence, and the second responds to efforts made by local Labour councillors against the magazine in a manner which implies a war mentality.

The circulation of this magazine shows that sentiment which demonises particular sections of the local population still has an appeal, but the reaction of residents in a specific part of the city also illustrates how such ideas are contested 'from below' in relation to the idea of Leicester as an open and tolerant place. It was striking to observe, in the Clarendon Park area, the number of notices placed in windows of houses opposing the delivery of this 'newspaper'.[111] These were displayed following a campaign conducted by local Labour councillors in order to raise awareness among the publications' advertisers of links to the BNP and the strong 'anti-immigrant' sentiment articulated in the editorials. Some residents had chosen to display 'do-it-yourself' versions in their support of the boycott and some had altered 'official' notices in line with the temporary change in the name of the publication, illustrating a close awareness of the issues at hand.

The profile of this neighbourhood is significant and illustrates that such dissidence represents a reaction by a section of the local population positioned by specific economic, social and cultural identities. This is an ethnically 'mixed' area with a majority 'white' population largely composed of students,

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109 This is based upon an analysis of 10 editions of this magazine, published on a three-week basis. This seems to feed into and from a more general demonisation of cultural difference as expressed in 'acceptable' and mainstream forms, such as that used in the recent Conservative Party's 2005 general election material; "It's not racist to impose limits on immigration".

110 At this time Robert Kilroy-Silk was the leader of the right wing UK Independence Party before moving on to form his own political party Veritas.

111 The signs read: "'POLITE NOTICE' Please do not deliver the 'neighbour' newspaper".

university employees and young liberal, middle-class professionals, relatively prosperous in contrast to Highfields to the east and Saffron Lane to the west. It is unlikely that the same reaction would have been forthcoming in poorer 'white' working class areas such as Saffron Lane, while the initial distribution of the newspaper in the Highfields area was unsurprisingly short lived[112].

Dominant local racisms seem to be structured against forms of difference which do not exhibit a level of economic achievement and/or cultural integration into specific versions of 'Britishness'. This is given a strong local twist by the fact that some of those from minority backgrounds have been able to emerge as economically successful and/or culturally integrated, thus leaving the most marginalised in the firing line of local expressions of exclusion. As Andrews (1995) shows in his examination of Leicester, those displaying western symbols as markers of acculturation seem to be more readily accepted into the mainstream. These excluded 'groups' are often identified as Somalis, but also seem to include Muslims more generally.[113] What we can identify is a fragile inter-ethnic settlement established over time, but a settlement which has seen to be 'disturbed' by the more recent arrival of 'immigrants', 'refugees' and 'asylum' seekers into Leicester, as one key informant explained:

> *What's happened in this city is, basically you have, this city's got a modus vivendi. People, whether they liked it or not and they didn't like things, basically you had a certain level of OK-ness and tolerance...The whole thing its like throwing a pack of cards in the air, like having carefully built up a house of cards that's got a stability and then something comes in and goes whoosh!* (Student Development Support Agency representative, key informant interview)

The idea that the arrival of new communities in the city has upset the status quo was also expressed by some participants as a justification for their own outlooks. Here Sarah, 15, who identified as 'white' and lives on the Hamilton

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[112] According to one local Labour councillor the newspaper started its circulation in this area of the city, but was only delivered here for one edition.

[113] Since September 11th 2001 there is evidence to show that Muslims in Leicester have disproportionately experienced a growing level of discrimination and racism, part of a wider national trend (Sheridan, 2002).

estate in the east of the city (Hamilton College group discussion), indicates how she does not view those ethnic minorities already living in the city as the source of 'problems'. Rather, it is the more recent arrivals which cause her alarm. Indeed, she went onto draw a sharp distinction between established and culturally similar ethnic groups (with reference to her own step-dad whom she identified as 'Black') and those 'immigrants' regarded as culturally threatening:

> Sarah: *"I don't agree that we should get rid of them but I think they should stop being let in if you know what I mean."*

These ideas also emerged through a recording carried out in the same neighbourhood amongst a group of 'white' young people.[114] Again, those with an historic presence in the city, who have achieved a level of temporal 'acculturation' and who do not represent cultural difference in the form of 'alien' religious practice, are more readily accepted:

> *"Black people make me laugh, Jamaican people make me crease, I think that they have got to be the funniest people alive…I think that black Jamaicans have been here for a long while but it's the Asians and stuff that have just recently come over that are causing all the problems I think"* (Hamilton group discussion, Soft Touch recordings)

However, complex forms of identification and differentiation in the city also illustrate that local opposition to 'new arrivals' may also be employed by those who identify as 'non-white'. As one key informant indicated, the 'Black community', for instance, does not consider Somalis as 'Black', despite skin colour, due to their association with Islam, 'foreign' cultural practices and the threat that they pose to those already hierarchically positioned "at the bottom of the pile":

> *"But then there are tensions then that build up like the black community, who now feel that they're back down at the bottom of the pile again because there are more Somalis here and they don't see the Somalis as black, they*

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114 These recordings were obtained through Soft Touch Community Arts Project based in Leicester

see the Somalis as more akin to Asians because of their religion."
(Community Arts Project representative, key informant interview)

Some participants who identified as 'ethnic minorities', also picked out this particular group for attention. For example, in my discussions with Msoni (19, who moved from Tanzania three years previous, but before that had lived in India), he discussed how 'white' people in the UK thought negatively of Africans. However, he then went on to make the point that Somalis were not included in his definition of what it was to be African, largely due to their religious practices, emphasising them as a group apart.

Msoni: *But the Africans are all right, especially the Africans from East Africa side, but not Somalis, Somalis are different…Because of their religion, because the whole thing that we are Indians, we will guide them wrongly, or even if it's a white guy, he will guide them wrongly, so they might get into trouble.*

Whilst taking part in a residential weekend with a city-based youth initiative I was also able to bear witness to the views expressed by a group of teenagers largely made up of young people identifying as 'Asian'. One of the clearest concerns emphasised by the older members of the group was the threat they felt by the growing presence of 'immigrants' in the city. In particular, the Somali community were highlighted as 'problematic'. One of the girls in this group explained how she and other females felt sexually threatened by Somali males, commenting that "Somalis are perverts, they stare at you and whistle".

Another discussion with a group of young people at the college, all of whom were relatively recent arrivals in the city, highlighted the character of these ideas. In this conversation Omah (18, who identified as Somali) highlights both the negative attitudes of the 'local British' population towards 'immigrants' as well as the definition of this local population, which in his eyes did not rely on a strict definition of race or ethnicity:

Omah: *The British people here, they are fairly mean towards the people who are immigrants, it doesn't matter even if they are white or black whatever you know*

John: *OK, anti-immigrant?*
Omah: *Just because they are immigrants, yeah. So they kind of look at you in a different way you know*
John: *Does it matter about colour or where they come from or just a general…?*
Omah: *No, when they see you that you are an immigrant, they just, they don't really like you*

As we can see the Somali 'community' seem to represent the dangers presented to an established local population. One school-based group (New College, group discussion), for example, seemed particularly vocal in locating the source of problems with a group which was seen to assert itself with too much self-assurance than was expected of an 'immigrant community':

Tony: *They're aggressive, they're aggressive as well.*
Anna: *They just come over and they think that they own the place.*
Bob: *What are the signs of that Anna? What kind of signals get given off?*
Anna: *They get really lary*
Bob: *Can you describe that? What sort of behaviour do you mean by lary?*
Anna: *Like having a go at you for no reason*
Bob: *Does anyone have a go at you?*
Anna: *No*
Stephen: *I was going down the corridor and there were some black, white and there were some Somalians and he walked past and they were like pushing him through and it's like it just gets on your nerves. Kick 'em back down to their country innit and they treat us like that, do you know what I mean?*
(All aged 15, all identifying as 'white')

As a key informant closely involved with the local Somali community indicated to me, forms of violent racism directed at this community were not rare, particularly in areas dominated by 'white' working class populations. One story related to me indicated the extent of such hostilities. I was informed that the council housing department decided to use a house in the Saffron Lane area of the city to accommodate a recently arrived Somali family, even though on a previous occasion this house had been broken into and burnt down due, it would seem, to the 'background' of the tenants. Upon moving another Somali family in, according to this informant "to see what would happen", there was a repeat attack. While 8 children were inside, masked men entered the house and

demanded that the family leave by the same time tomorrow or the house would be destroyed.

Other forms of racism directed towards this 'community' appear to take on less extreme forms, but the significance of this racist violence cannot be dismissed. As Omah commented, while such extreme cases were not common place, they had a significant impact upon his own experience and his ideas of belonging:

> Omah: *It does happen, quite rarely but it did used to happen, once I heard people and talked to people who are Somalian who'd been through this, it definitely happens. I've seen this lady who told me that one time there was a bottle of gas and lighters, like fire lighter, was thrown into their house.*

Omah went on to discuss some of the more common forms of racism he had come across, illustrating both the experience of being part of a racialised group as well as throwing light on the ways in which these racisms might take hold, that is, through a sense of perceived inequality, misinformation and lack of education. On this occasion a 'white' woman directly challenged Omah, recognisable to her as a 'Somalian' on a city bus:

> Omah: *...she said you know: 'You people'. She said: 'You Somalians especially come here for our houses and money'. I can see maybe the way she is angry and she didn't look that, someone who is very, how do you say, educated.*

Ali also spoke of these forms of everyday exclusion and the experience of being on the receiving end of such forms of discrimination. He spoke in some detail of the relationship and contact with his elderly 'white' next-door neighbour and how he had come to learn of the some of the attitudes he would face by those who opposed his presence, a presence which for some stands as a dilution of the city they might have once known. As he explains:

> Ali:"*...we have this British neighbour, she lives between, she lives exactly between two Somalian people, and she's a racist and we all know that. She hates us, but we don't hate her, because we don't care...The woman she lives alone, she's lonely, she has no one, maybe she has one or two friends, but no one ever comes to her, she's always in her house, sometimes she goes*

outside just to buy some bread, she's like in her 60s. She always says like this: 'I bought this house and you rent this house, I'm trying to get one night's sleep and you're always ruining it, you've just messed up my whole, you ruining my whole life.' And I'm like, I'm trying to be polite. I say: 'I'm doing everything to try and keep the children quiet'. 'Kill them!' (laughs) she said."

While a number of steps have been taken in this city which have addressed issues of racism, exclusionary forms of sentiment remain, albeit in less obvious, an even one might say more 'socially acceptable' forms. This is particularly the case in that such sentiment is tied into both nationalised ideas of belonging but also a local culture of limited acceptance, which therefore focuses attention upon cultural differences and the dangers of the un-assimilated 'other'. In the case of Leicester this seems to take on a prevailing form of opposition to the recognisable presence of particular groups, such as 'Somalis'. However, such ideas are not uniformly expressed through a united and homogeneous 'white' community. There is thus a need to attend to the way in which opposition to the idea of an open multicultural city is driven by the everyday positionings and trajectories of individuals in terms of ethnic identity, but also in terms of economic and social marginality.

5.5. 'Multicultural Leicester' and 'local' anxieties

"Despite 40 years as a multicultural city, there remains a lot of people unconvinced." (City council officer, key informant interview)

Toby: *"We celebrate Diwali more than St.George's Day now ain't we."*
(Aged 18, identifying as 'white' – College, Electrical Installations)

The racialised discourses explored above, entered into and articulated largely by those from the position of an established 'local community', form part of an alternative version of the city which opposes, in some incarnations, the idea Leicester as a successful 'multicultural city'. I show here that forms of resentment rely upon interpretations of the public culture of place, but also 'make sense' in relation to experiences and positions of marginality. Those seen to articulate forms of resentment are, in the main, united by forms of

'whiteness' and classed positions which are reinforced through the experiences of specific residential neighbourhoods. Multiculturalism, in this sense, framed both in terms of social phenomena and as public policy is seen as detrimental to a city, routed through a specific sense of the past.[115]

As I have briefly mentioned, the promoted image of Leicester as a harmonious multicultural city is not without its detractors. In my discussions with young people the point that Jackie brought up, in terms of the 'separation' of ethnic groups, was widely evident as the basis for disputing this reputation. Others couched this in different terms, in particular those identifying as 'white' disputed the notion of the successful multicultural city on the basis that it overlooked other problems and conflicts. As Craig (18, identifying as 'white' – college, Electrical Installations class) and Clive (25, identifying as 'white' – college, Motor Mechanics class) indicate, their own critiques focus upon the problems which a positive spin neglects. For Clive such a reputation ignores the spatially uneven basis of 'successful relations', in particular by highlighting the neighbourhoods of Highfields and Braunstone, two of the most deprived areas of the city. Craig's account indicates more of a sense of opposition, one which is based upon the changing character of the city, one which is now over-stretched and over-crowded.

> Clive: *You see the thing is the government have looked at Leicester and said: 'Yeah this is one of the best model places.' But the thing is they have only looked at the best areas, they haven't looked at Braunstone, they haven't looked at Highfields, so they've given it a reputation judged on the areas that look good.*

> Craig:*...especially the council saying Leicester's a multicultural community, it's bloody great, but they tend to oversee the problems, that we've got. They don't tend to advertise that, obviously that's marketing strategy, you want more people to come here, more revenue for them.*
> John: *Yeah?*
> Craig: *But they don't see how crowded it is here, I mean Leicester's only small compared to likes of London*

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115 These viewpoints are not presented here in order to give them a sense of authority or justification but in order to recognise the existence of these forms of sentiment and the manner in which tensions may emerge through the intersections of identification and positions of marginality in the everyday lives of individuals.

This idea of Leicester being overcrowded, despite a fluctuating population, is one of the primary ways in which the idea of 'multiculturalism' is conceived of in negative terms. As Warren (18, identifying as 'white' – Braunstone discussion group) shows here however, this not related to a lack of 'physical space', but to those problems seen to exist because of the continued presence of immigrants within the city, problems which form part of an everyday experience for him and the people he knows. In this case he makes specific reference to the inability to secure housing in the area in which he lives.

> Warren: *Because, to be honest, in Leicester we've got the most multicultural place here and it's overcrowded population in Leicester*
> John: *Yeah*
> Warren: *There's no space, there's nothing to do*
> John: *So you think that the problems are directly related to people coming in?*
> Warren: *Mmm*
> John: *What sort of problems do you think that that's caused?*
> Warren: *Nowhere to live, because they're not thinking about young people like myself and all the young people that have just had kids like 16 year olds. The government ain't thinking about them, they're more bothered about these people that have just come another country and getting them somewhere to live, were the people that are crammed up in a house, that need a, that are in this crammed up small house, needing to go in a big house, they're not bothered about them, the people that live in Leicester, that are from Leicester, born in Leicester, bred in Leicester, they are taking more priority of the new people that are coming into the country*

In Warren's account above we see the way in a collective 'we' is not always defined just in terms of a 'white community', but in terms of those who can lay some historic claim to the city.[116] Speaking through a sense of neglect, Warren also argues that newcomers are seen to negatively influence valuable opportunities for those already established in the area, those seen to be most in need of work. Multiculturalism, in this way, is seen as something which does not contribute to a quality of life, but is seen to rather 'take away'.

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116 As will be discussed in Chapter Seven this sense of the collective 'we' is dependent upon the context in which these ideas are articulated, that is the dynamics of the performance within the 'research moment'.

> Warren: *Where people like ourselves that are poor, haven't got much money, have got to scrimp and save, look for jobs, get jobs. People who I know have been driven out of work because asylum seekers, Somalians are saying ah we'll do it for 60 quid a week, when mates of mine getting a good income off 150 they've been laid back and they've been taking on these other people, because they want to work for cheaper, which is not fair on other people.*

As with ideas of 'community' explored above, this speaks to the importance of the manner in which individuals are positioned not only through ethnic identity, but also through cultures of social and economic marginalisation. As one key informant explained with reference to a group of young people living on the Hamilton estate, the manner in which multiculturalism is perceived and the impressions and experiences of the city which emerge as a consequence, rely upon the classed positions of individuals.

> *"...for people living on the Hamilton estate that's a big problem, these people have come in and taken over their city. You know it's completely ridiculous, but that's what they see...And if we ignore that and just go 'celebrate multiculturalism', these people are gonna go: 'No! We can't celebrate something which has taken something away from us in our view.'"* (Representative from Soft Touch Community Arts Project, key informant interview)

Recognition of the existence of a diverse city, for 'white' young people in such situations does not then mean that these individuals are content about being part of such a city. On one occasion during time spent in Braunstone I asked one 'white' young man whether he felt as though he was living in a multicultural city. He responded "They are everywhere". I then suggested that some people saw Leicester as successful in terms of integrating 'new arrivals' and I wondered what his own thoughts were. He raised his bottom lip and eyebrows as if to suggest a level of degree of ambivalence towards the subject and hesitantly replied: "They are everywhere so I suppose that it must be successful".[117] What came across was both a sense of resentment at the presence of those seen to represent 'multiculturalism' but also a sense of isolation and disengagement from such processes.

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[117] Notes taken from fieldwork diary 11/10/04

While the basis for multicultural success is disputed and variously interpreted, a limited local culture of acceptance is acknowledged even by those who articulate negative impressions of multiculturalism. The level of cultural 'permissiveness' discussed in the previous chapter, is therefore alternatively interpreted to stand for a form of coerciveness in the display and concealment of particular sentiment. For some then, there is a sense that the 'ethnic majority' is *forced* into adopting non-racist attitudes. As can be seen from the excerpt below (taken from the College - Electrical Installations group discussion), it is not that 'racist' views do not exist and are not given expression in specific spatial contexts, but that there is seen to be a limited opportunity for such performances. This speaks volumes both for what is seen as 'acceptable behaviour', both in terms of the locality as a whole and in terms of particular everyday sites. Again we see how a more closed version of the city operates through a direct reference to an experience of multiculturalism one which recognises the specificity of Leicester, but a specificity which is resented as a source of suppression of 'honest', yet racist expressions.

Craig: *Like Oldham, in Oldham, if like Indians move to Oldham they get their house set on fire*
Toby: *Should do that here!*
John: *So you've heard that?*
Craig: *Yeah, we've got a good reputation compared to other places.*
John: *OK. Would you agree with that? Would you say that was true?*
(Group agrees)
Emily: *Well we have to, don't we!*
John: *You have to?*
Emily: *Yeah because otherwise you're racist*

In further conversations with Emily she expanded on this idea by pointing towards the importance of the environment in which certain views could and could not be aired, based upon the appropriateness of these views in relation to those present and in relation to the rules of particular sites. In this sense we might be able to speak of racisms which are both *present and absent* in the context of Leicester, that is, they have not been erased as irrelevant for those looking for someone to 'blame' in relation to daily difficulties, but neither are

they readily forthcoming. This is particularly the case in those situations which place a heavier emphasis upon the surveillance and monitoring of such sentiment.[118]

> Emily: *I think a lot of like white people that come to the college, I think they are quite racist, but you can't really say anything if like you've got a mixed group…I suppose because you are told that if you say anything then you can be done for racism and you have to watch what you say or watch how you say it.*

This idea of resentment both towards 'coercive behaviour' and directly against those seen to represent 'multicultural Leicester' is reinforced for those identifying as 'white' by the possibility, however unlikely, that they may become a minority ethnic group in the city. At a gathering of the Leicester Youth Government Meeting (LYGM) this point was illustrated by one exchange I witnessed. In an open discussion of some of the concerns affecting young people in the city, the issue of 'yob culture' was raised. One male 'Asian' student stood up and told those present: "We have to work doubly hard as the 'natives' as they call themselves round here. A lot of them that wear them baseball caps are yobs." The chair of the session then asked what he had meant by "we". He replied that he referred to those from "ethnic minorities". In response one young 'white' female representing Braunstone responded: "He's saying that whites are racist but whites are going to be a minority in the city by 2007". While this remains an ever more unrealistic projection, the point raised further illustrates of a sense among *some* of those identifying as 'white', that as a 'community' beyond the bounds of local 'multiculturalism', they now are the ones who are neglected.

For some, this perceived 'minority status' and reactions to a local culture of permissiveness is highlighted through the idea of a changing city, one which indicates a movement from monoculturalism to multiculturalism. As de Certeau (1998:108) comments, remembering the city speaks of both what is now

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118 I will return to these argument in chapter seven where I discuss the significance of the spaces in which particular performances of identification and differentiation are practiced.

present, but also what is seen to be absent: "...the places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences. What can be seen designates what is no longer there." This version of the city therefore emphasises a sense of loss, dilution and cultural upheaval, represented through changes to the everyday built environment. As we have seen in the previous chapter the city's appearance, form and function has altered over the last 30 years through the renovation and construction of a number of buildings for religious worship. For those young people who raised this as a concern, it wasn't so much a problem in practical terms, for example the inability for them to practice their own religious beliefs. Rather, through overtly visual form, it represented symbolic change. Churches, a stable point of reference for their identification as English and 'white', are seen to be replaced with buildings that represent an 'alien' way of living, symptomatic of a sense of cultural decline:

> Sarah: *Right, one of the things is, they're knocking down our churches and building temples and I don't like it.*
> Dan: *They don't knock down churches to make temples*
> Sarah: *Yes they do, because more and more temples*
> Jane: *Oh my god!*
> Sarah: *Before you know it they'll be more temples than there was churches*
> (All aged 15, identified as 'white' – Hamilton discussion group)

> Emily:*...it's not just language, they come over here and they do everything their way when this is our country so they should do it our way if they want to do their way*
> John: *What's our way?*
> Emily: *Well it's like they want to have all these churches and everything*
> Toby: *Yeah mosques and stuff*
> Emily: *And then what about us? They knock our churches down to build theirs*

> Toby: *Why should we walk down a road and see all these bloody mosques sticking out all over the bloody place?*
> John: *Because the need's there for it?*
> Toby: *Well, if they have a need then go back home and have a need for it*
> (College, Electrical Installations class)

This perceived 'minority status' also seems caught up in complaints of unfair treatment. The following group, in particular, emphasised the way in which

they viewed the school environment as preferential towards the interests of ethnic minority students over and above their own. In relation to the adherence of uniform regulations those identified as 'they',[119] seemed to get away with wearing hooded tops, whereas the participants, both identifying as 'white' argued that they would have theirs confiscated:

> Jodie: *Hooded tops are supposed to be banned. If you walk down this corridor at dinner time, most of them are wearing hooded tops and they don't get them took off them*
> Sarah: *And we'll get ours confiscated by the second lesson*
> John: *You'll get yours confiscated?*
> Jodie: *Yeah*
> John: *Haven't you got one on there?*
> Sarah: *Yeah, but it'll be confiscated*
> (Hamilton College, group discussion)

With reference to the 'raiding' of homes set aside for refugees in Beaumont Leys, mentioned in the previous chapter, Warren also makes reference to this sense of unfairness. He does so by exhibiting a degree of empathy and solidarity with the perpetrators of these crimes:

> John: *Some people see Leicester as quite a successful place*
> Warren: *I don't, I don't agree, from what you hear around here.*
> John: *What sort of stuff do you hear around here?*
> Warren: *Well, one area I know, asylum seekers, all that lot, got refurbished houses up in Beaumont Leys, the people living opposite that have been scrimping and saving to get a better job, they robbed them, robbed their flats clean. That was to do with the fact that if they are being treated like that, we should be treated like that.*

The concerns and anxieties of those young people who consider themselves to be outside of this local version of multiculturalism, whilst saturated in expressions of exclusiveness, division and racist sentiment, must be seen to matter. They matter because they influence the circulation of exclusionary discourse, although this sentiment is often concealed due to a specific public culture of place. Whilst not justifying such stances, they also matter because

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[119] As shall be explored in further detail in subsequent chapters the definition of 'they' used in this excerpt is complex and contradictory in that the same group identify with a number of ethnic minority students at the same time as setting up this binary distinction.

they are expressions which speak from positions of marginality, positions which must be understood in an appreciation of the everyday dynamics of inter-cultural relations. As the account of Craig shows below, while fears and misunderstandings of the differentiated 'other' used to explain the difficulties and struggles of his own life, may be misinformed, inaccurate and dangerous, these are concerns based upon very 'real', personal and material circumstances, routed in and through specific economic, social, cultural and geographical trajectories:

> Craig: *"I hold down a part-time job, my dad's recovering from a cancer operation, now my mum's working 10 to 14 hour days just to fund us and she's struggling to make by. I asked for funding here because I'm having to use my part-time money to fund myself, to fund college itself, like eating etc, getting here in the morning and I've seen none of the fees that I've paid, be paid back. I've applied for - I think it's EMA - a number of times, they say: 'You can't have it'. But my dad's ill, we're struggling to make by here, I'm struggling to make by, all the part-time money I'm earning is going towards my family. I can't afford to eat myself, because every time I get home, I'm out again. Some days I come into college, and it's a long day! Especially, people think: 'Oh! college is easy'. But when you're in a workshop, for example, you're hauling bloody bricks on your feet, it's tiring. And then my usual scenario is I ain't gotta work tonight, but go to work straight off, then I'm working to 10, 11, don't get in till midnight and what about 14 hour day, 13, 14 hour day, and they wonder why people are getting stressed. And then again it all boils down to people who come here for free, abuse the system and they just think: 'Oh! it's a place to doss'. I've seen some of the people's attitudes here and there are absolutely disgraceful and they shouldn't be here."*

5.6. Summary

Through this chapter I have opened up the previous discussion of multiculturalism in the city of Leicester to greater scrutiny through an approach which has focussed upon what it might mean to live in a place characterised by an image of acceptance and accommodation. I have shown that in consideration of inter-cultural relations in this ever evolving city, it is vital to consider prevailing forms of inclusion and exclusion which operate alongside each other in relation to an over-arching culture of 'positive multiculturalism'.

In showing the various ways in which individuals are both positioned and position themselves in terms of senses of attachment, belonging and community, I have illustrated that inter-ethnic relations are both driven by the manner in which individuals relate to a public culture of place and the multiple identity positions taken up through the everyday. In this sense the public culture of place developed in those ways previously discussed (see chapter four) is critical to the facilitation of progressive relations. However, relations to such a culture are also dependent upon processes of racialised exclusion, material circumstance, historical mobilities and everyday spatial trajectories. The complex make-up and everyday practices of identity formation at work here indicate that rather than conceiving of relations in this city as operating solely through static and geographically bounded communities, it is important to recognise the ways in which a plurality reveals contestations of and over the city, particularly in relation to negotiations over time and the importance of classed distinctions.

I have focussed here upon the experiences of young people, largely considered to be at the margins of local society, both in terms of racial and ethnic difference as well as along economic and social lines. While there appears a fragile consensus within this city, one which as we have seen is based upon a unique local developments, alternative symbolic versions of the city show us both the contested nature of this city, but also various forms of marginalisation from a 'mainstream' public culture. We have seen, for example, that for 'new arrivals' in the city conceptions of locality framed positively relate not necessarily to ideas of inter-cultural understanding or a sense of inclusion, but in terms of the ability and need to form 'community' affiliations. These aspects therefore must be seen within the context of localised racisms, at the heart of which lies strong opposition to the destabilisation of an established and 'integrated' multicultural Leicester. On the other hand, those positioned by 'white' ethnicities and particularly those who are economically and geographically marginalised often feel excluded from the beneficial impacts of a local multicultural society, which do not form parts of their everyday experience.

How individuals are then positioned within the context of a changing city is clearly vital in both the condition and conditioning of inter-cultural relations in this city. These are the main issues to which I will now turn, by considering how tensions between openness and closure are imagined and lived out through the spaces of the everyday. The following two chapters will assess what influences ideas of the ethnic 'other' through the everyday geographies of young people. The first of these examines the importance of 'the neighbourhood' and, in particular, moves on to discuss and the manner in which the city is racially coded, an examination of the power of race-thinking and of ethnic closure as it is imagined and practised. The second moves on to look at the importance of other 'city spaces' in bringing together multiple spatial trajectories and the possibilities of these spaces for alternatively enacting forms of identification and differentiation.

6. Territoriality: the boundaries of racial/cultural exclusion

6.1. Relational territories

> *"The city is for many people not a space of unanticipated encounters, but a space of closure and predictability, encouraged by the circulation of fantasies of threatening otherness."* Sibley (2001:248)

> *"They are part of the meaningful and constantly evolving system for managing our relations with others. They allow individuals to open themselves up to interaction or 'build perceptual walls' around the self. They inform their definitions of the social categories in contact, enabling them to distinguish insiders (those who belong here with us) from outsiders (those who do not). They confer the power to denigrate or exclude or to encompass and connect. Above all, boundary processes confirm their fundamental principle that the relationship between society and space is always 'transactional'"* Dixon (2001:601)

It is Sibley's (2001) contention that while recent theorisations around 'identity' and 'difference' have pushed considerations of 'race' and ethnicity beyond a simplistic binary logic of 'us' and 'them', serious and sometimes harmful divisions remain, whereby the urban experience is premised upon ideas of incompatible difference. The previous chapter has highlighted some of these clashes, by illustrating how variously positioned individuals might relate to the idea of Leicester as the 'model city'. This chapter proceeds by introducing the ways in which negotiations of difference and inter-cultural relations are framed by the "boundary processes" Dixon (2001) refers to above. In so doing I address the ways in which racial and cultural identities are linked to the geographies of everyday life, identifying those processes and practices which racialise space and fix the identities of 'others', as Hall (1992:16) puts it, in order to "secure us 'over here' and them 'over there'".

Drawing upon fieldwork conducted with young people from a variety of ethnic 'backgrounds', this chapter contends that one of the crucial ways in which this is achieved is through practices of 'territoriality', something which is particularly pertinent to those in more deprived and marginalised areas of the

city. While consideration of 'territoriality' in relation to 'the neighbourhood', as has been shown in chapter two, has been dominated by discussions of segregation, isolation and separation, I suggest here how defined spaces are reinforced through everyday knowledge, and situated practices of avoidance and use. 'Segregation' then, is *actively* imagined and experienced *in relation* to inter-cultural knowledge and various forms of 'contact'. As such, experiences of such 'territories' do not just respond to residential patterns but actually condition ideas of difference and similarity.

In terms of the 'mobility of identity', outlined in chapter two, the everyday territories of this city are seen as both constraining and enabling, highlighting both the "the brutalising and emancipatory geographies of young people" Toon (2000:159). They are constraining because identification and differentiation along racial, ethnic and cultural lines are actively reproduced and sedimented relationally through forms of inter-cultural knowledge and contact. But they are also enabling because, as we shall see, the identification of a collective 'we' expressed and practised through micro-territories are not always along strict ethnic lines. There are, I contend, degrees of malleability which these geographies make possible. I thus begin to point towards some of the ways in which the geographies of the city, and thus processes of racialisation, may be 'done otherwise'.

I begin this chapter by introducing some of the most significant territorialisations of the city for research participants, highlighting the distinction between the city and county before discussing the 'racial' and 'racist' coding of various city neighbourhoods and the discernible impacts that these geographies have upon ideas of difference and the condition(ing) of inter-cultural relations. This will then lead onto a discussion of the ways in which such territories are not just articulated as common sense organisers of difference, but also actively practised through the non-use and use of specific city neighbourhoods. It is contended that while the idea of discernible territories is strong and extremely relevant, there are other, more nuanced

connections to consider which might indicate that residential neighbourhoods in this place might, particularly in circumstances of marginality, exhibit some interesting features in relations to definitions of a local 'we'.

6.2. 'Asian city'/'White county'

> *"People, who live in the county live a more mono-cultural existence, tend to look at the city, bloody hell that's a bit strange, that's a bit different isn't it, perhaps a bit intimidating"* (Editor, Leicester Mercury, key informant interview)

> *"Some Asian people refer to Leicestershire as the 'white island', some white people in the county refer to the city as 'Asian city', they are nothing to do with us and they escape the city as quickly as they can."* (Senior Leicester City Council race relations officer, key informant interview)

By way of introducing the racialisation of space in Leicester, outlining the relational constitution of differences and similarities and pointing towards the practices of use and non-use of racialised spaces, I want to show how a binary division between the city and county is reinforced by the sort of popular imaginations outlined above with powerful consequences in terms of who is seen to be appropriately in or out of place (Cresswell, 1996).

Many of the problems associated with overt racism, such as verbal abuse, violent physical assaults, and graffiti, have been pushed out of the city and towards the county towns where the presence of racial and religious difference is still considered unusual, out of place and threatening to the preservation of an imagined 'English' way of life (Tyler, 2003)[120]. As one key informant explained with reference to the county town of Hinckley:

> *"...there is a big racist feeling in Hinckley against black people, where there are hardly any black people there...There is a big difficulty there in gaining acceptance and I think it's no accident that most of the racist graffiti and racist attacks now take place in places like Hinckley."* (Senior city council officer, key informant interview)

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[120] Although towns such as Loughborough and smaller fringe settlements such as Oadby to the south of Leicester now have significant ethnic minority populations.

Whilst, as I have shown, forms of racialised and racist sentiment circulate in the city, most overt material relating to the activities of the BNP is absent. It is clear though that such organisations hold a significant sway in certain parts of the county. For example, one of the main headquarters of the BNP is located in the village of Earl Shilton, in south-west Leicestershire. Their influence is also evident in the number of candidates put forward in the 2005 general election compared to the city[121] and in the 'promotional material' targeted at county towns.[122] Leicester as a territorial entity which is 'not quite right/not quite white' in the heart of this county plays an integral role as a symbolic and experiential resource. I show here how the bounding of the city is reinforced through everyday imaginations which view Leicester from the vantage point of a county normalised by notions of 'whiteness' and 'Englishness'.

For James, (18, identifying as 'white-English' – College, Electrical Installations class) to distinguish between his home town of Hinckley and Leicester, both significant places in his everyday routine, is to point to stark racial differences. This is *the* key distinction.[123] As he explains here, his direct experience of those he identifies as racially 'different' in his home town is importantly limited to interactions and contact within the context of Indian restaurants, related to and contrasted with his own knowledge and experience of Leicester:

> *"I live in Leicestershire, well Hinckley, it's about 20 minutes away and like there's no Asians there and it's just all white pretty much so. It is a bit different coming over here...there's no Asians or anything about, well there's a few Indians and that, like actual restaurants, but you don't really see any about...then you come into Leicester and there's like a whole sort of different, loads of different races ain't there which we don't really see in Hinckley. And you notice them more."*

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[121] In all Leicestershire county seats at the 2005 general election there was a BNP candidate, however in the city's three constituencies no BNP candidates were put forward.
[122] For example a leaflet was recently distributed in the town of Coalville in the North West of the county in the run up to the general election and a targeted leaflet distributed in nearby Whitwick under the title 'Whitwick Patriot'.
[123] One must bear in mind that such an emphasis was a product of the research situation, in that James was fully aware of the context of the interview and of the themes around race and racism that were up for discussion. In a sense then James knew the sort of things I wanted to hear.

James went on to explain the relevance of cultures of racism within his home town, which were more overtly displayed and part of the everyday talk in his social circles. Indicating the importance of his specific sites such as his local pub, James described how interest in and support of Leicester City Football Club had resulted in his close involvement with the Hinckley-based youth wing of Leicester's 'Baby Squad' hooligan firm. He identified that as part of this form of association, far-right politics, in a similar way to certain types of clothing, were worn as a label of affiliation.[124]

The boundaries drawn here between the city and the county are dependent upon the absence and/or presence of 'Asians', as Craig (18, identifying as 'white', Electrical Installations class) also explains. His emphasis is upon the norm of the mainstream 'white' society of the county, where the number of 'whites' is unquestioned to the quantified "loads" of Asians found in the city.

> "*You've got white society such as East Goscote, Syston and then as soon as you go up Melton Road it's Asians, loads of them, and then as you're going out of town, there's loads of Asians, but as soon as you've left Melton Road, white*"

The power to locate racially classified groups in this way may appear as fairly innocuous observations based upon routine experiences of these distinctive places.[125] However, such observations illustrate a conflation of 'race' and space, which does not merely reflect the daily 'reality' of these environments but also re-constructs distinctions and associations. This is achieved through a form of homogenisation which relies upon limited yet crucial forms of inter-cultural knowledge and contact.

Some of the strongest forms of racialised and racist sentiment I was privy to during the fieldwork period came through my experiences of the class to

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[124] As James explained to me, racist stances which went hand in hand with membership of his firm, formed only one element of identification with the hooligan scene. In this way he emphasises the importance of display and the performances of racist outlooks "...part of the uniform".

[125] This FE college is actually located just off of Belgrave Road, the road which continues on from Melton Road (otherwise known as the 'Golden Mile'), the same road which Craig makes reference to in the passage above.

which James and Craig belonged. This was an 'all white' class which provided a particular set of circumstances that allowed such performances to uneasily flourish.[126] Some of the strongest remarks were made by one male, who like James lived outside of the city. This is not to claim that those who lived in the city did not engage in this class 'banter', but that these forms of 'exposure' clearly posed a problem for those who entered the city to attend college. This young male commented that his mono-cultural experiences in Harborough meant that his experiences of Leicester entailed a threat to his ideas of 'normality'.

> Toby: *There's no Asians where I live, I've never seen one Asian in Harborough*
> John: *But does that make a difference?*
> Toby: *Yeah, because when you come here it's completely different*

Toby (18, identifying as 'white', Electrical Installations class) went on to add that living with people he saw as being like himself, that is, characterised by their 'whiteness', made him feel "glad to be English". Another member of the group, Gareth (18, identifying as 'white' – College, Electrical Installations class), then attempted to convey why these views might make sense by indicating that, for some, the city is characterised by strange(r)ness.

> Toby: *It makes you glad to be English*
> Gareth: *So everyone knows everyone, but only a couple of miles up the road is Leicester city centre*
> John: *Yeah?*
> Gareth: *So you know it does make a difference. You find that a lot of people that are racist live a lot further out*

Being 'used to', or more accurately becoming 'used to' difference, was also something which Mary (33, identifying as 'white' – College, Hair and Beauty class) emphasised through the contrast which she offered with her previous home town of Corby in Northamptonshire. She sees her appreciation of the diversity of the city as something which she has *learnt* to recognise and come to

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126 The importance of the 'research encounter' and performances of racism particularly as regards group dynamics will discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

terms with, whereby racial and ethnic diversity has come to mean more than just "an amount" of faces. What these illustrations show is the way in which various forms of inter-cultural contact with a city defined by its diversity, relies upon, reinforces, but also potentially unsettles a divide between a 'white' county and 'non-white' city.

> Mary: *You know, like, because I've been brought up with white people, you recognise people easier don't you?...But now I've recognised people and they, Indian faces have got faces now, they're not just an amount. Do you understand what I mean?...it's like the norm, being here with all the different races.*

Experiences of the 'white' county are also testament to signs of exclusionary cultures which highlight the limits of acceptance on the basis of racialised appearance. On those occasions when 'non-white' participants discussed experiences of 'not belonging' or 'not fitting in', many referred to situations encountered outside of the city. As the two excerpts below illustrate, these negative experiences often revolve around institutions of 'white' rurality, in these cases 'the pub'. These spaces are saturated with specific conceptions of who and who does not belong, enforced through acts of surveillance, the practice of looking and the transmission of embodied signals which indicated to both participants that they found themselves in a place where they were not welcome.

> *"I went to my mates' house and they took me to the family pub because they were watching a match and because it was like mainly white people they were really racist towards me and I didn't understand why because I was the only Asian, it was just really stupid and they just started to be really racist. And sometimes you've got these little areas just full of one group and it's really weird when you enter it because you just feel like everyone's eyes are on you like they've never seen a person like you."*
> (Highfields discussion group, female, Muslim-Asian, 15)

Nitesh, (20, identifying as British-Indian – College, Motor Mechanics class) described a similar experience of displacement on an occasion when he entered a pub near Loughborough, to the north of Leicester. In the same way as the experience of the younger girl above, Nitesh emphasises the importance of

being seen and standing out, comparing his experience to the expected outcome of his 'white' classmate, Clive (26, identifying as 'white'), entering the same establishment. For those who responded to his presence, it seemed as if he and his friends had overstepped some mark by entering into a space which embodied a way of being English and 'white'.

> Nitesh: *I went to this pub, do you know that pub when you go to Loughborough, there's that pub next to the roundabout?*
> Clive: *Yeah*
> Nitesh: *We went in there about 4 or 5 of us, all Indians, all of us Asians yeah? We went in there and there was all white people in there, all like looking at us, giving us dirty looks and stuff.*
> Clive: *I don't know what it's called but it is like that.*
> Nitesh: *Yeah, he would get in (looking at Clive) and no one would even look at him or nothing!*

While this distinction between the city and the county remains a vital aspect of inter-cultural relations for those who live in and around Leicester, I want to now address the way in which such distinctions are made 'within' the city, by examining the views and experiences of young people in relation to the racial and/or cultural coding of areas of the city. In particular, I address the manner in which such coding forms the taken for granted logic for interpreting and making sense of difference in Leicester, directly influencing everyday spatial trajectories, with clear implications for conceptions of 'differences' and racialised exclusion.

6.3. The (racial/cultural) coding of the city

> *"Whenever you see a Muslim you ask them where are they from, where do you live in Leicester? They say: 'Highfields' and they would all say that I live in Belgrave Road, you see?"*
> (Msoni, 18, identifying as Indian, resident of Beaumont Leys – College, IT class)

In what follows I attempt to open up further the way in which notions of the city, both in relation to imagined boundaries and experiences might reinforce the existence of separate areas defined by racial and cultural difference. I wish to further explore the way in which space is racialised and race spatialised

through practices of territoriality, whereby areas of the city are seen to be dominated or controlled by specific, homogeneous 'communities', as the excerpt above illustrates. While a binary division between the 'black inner city' and the 'white outer estates' has significant currency within an everyday understanding of Leicester,[127] there are a number of ways in which this division is disputed and upset by the re-imaginations and everyday practices of young people, particularly when it is taken into account that 'race' may not always have the same purchase. In this sense I contend that everyday territories of identification in this city both constrain and enable negotiations across 'difference'.

From a comprehension of the built environment, assumed levels of poverty and 'roughness', the racial, ethnic and cultural make-up of an area, to stories of danger and memories of 'racialised' experiences, these all work to define territories that reinforce ideas and practices constituting inter-cultural relations. However, the racial coding of the city is more strongly associated with particular neighbourhoods than others. Those areas which feature most heavily and occur most often within local imaginations of difference are those, firstly, which are racially marked as 'not-white', those areas seen to be home to substantial ethnic minority 'communities' and usually caught up in discourses of decline and criminality. Secondly, those areas identified as being 'rough', un-integrated, often labelled as racist areas and seen to be dominated by 'white' working class populations hostile to the incursions of those who are not seen to belong on a number of social and cultural criteria. I will begin here by outlining the significance of the first of these.

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127 This strict division was one of the major findings of the recent IDeA report into community cohesion Leicester commissioned following the disturbances in the north-west of England (IDeA, 2001).

6.3.1. 'Racial' territories

As Craig indicates below, it is common knowledge that there are identifiable areas of the city associated with specific ethnic groups. For this respondent, and many others, such neighbourhoods and ethnic groups are seen to inexorably define one another. The identification of Melton Road to the north of the city centre,[128] Highfields to the east of the centre and St. Matthew's just beyond the city centre are most commonly picked out for attention in way. The circulation of this 'fact' spatially situates 'types' of individuals, leading to ideas of appropriateness as we have seen above. For some 'white' students (in the same class as Craig), this idea of separate and distinct neighbourhoods is a phenomenon whereby ownership of the city has been wrestled out of the hands of 'us', defined in terms of a 'white' majority. Not only is the naming of these areas and their associations with particular groups powerful in terms of dictating where racially and culturally marked individuals should be found, but also in terms of justifying racist stances, as Toby's excerpt below shows, whereby the presence of 'non-whites' is symptomatic of a dilution of 'white' control.

> Craig: *Cos you've got the big estates. Like you've got Melton Road is the whole Asian estate, you've got St. Matthew's is the black estate, you've got Highfields: black estate...St. Matthew's, Rushey Mead, and Hinckley. They've all got different cultures behind them, for example Hinckley whites, St. Matthew's blacks, Melton Road slash Rushey Mead Asians, my area's white.*

> Toby: *Originally Leicester was like a place for us wasn't it? But now it's been like separated off, ain't it? And they think they own certain parts of Leicester don't they?*

Critically, the association of racially marked groups with specific neighbourhoods is based upon some *limited form of contact or experience*. This particularly relates to the visual field, and the ability to identify those areas

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[128] Located in the Belgrave area of the city.

where there is a presence, or absence of racially marked individuals. For the group below this contrast between their own area, (Hamilton/Netherhall towards the eastern edge of the city) where Nick identifies the almost invisible status of 'non-white' subjects, and the more central areas of the city is stark. The manner in which such places are encountered and the forms of inter-cultural contact which takes place, appears relatively disengaged, for example, where the areas in question have been *driven through*. The identification of these areas as 'different', by this group of 'white' young people is also negatively construed through the racist 'game' of 'spot the white man'.[129] Reference to this 'game' can be seen as a powerful device which already makes the assumption of the *white man* as the natural figure to be seen on the street. This figure has then been replaced by someone and something which doesn't quite fit.

> Sarah: *Melton Road and like he said Hamilton are all different*
> Nick: *I hardly ever see anyone in Netherhall, hardly ever see anyone*
> Sarah: *Green Lane Road, Gypsy Lane, St Matthew's*
> Dan: *Yeah Green Lane Road, you drive down there and you don't see no white people.*
> Sarah: *Yeah you don't, it's like spot the white man.*
> (Group: slight laughter)
> Sarah: *I know! It is!*
> Dan: *I agree with her on that one*
> (All aged 15, all identifying as 'white', Hamilton College discussion group)

For those young people who view themselves in opposition to racially marked 'others', specific areas are constructed negatively due to knowledge of the very presence of this difference, knowledge which does not seem to challenge established racialised discourses. Negative conceptions of people and place are seen through a *fear of difference*, a sense of trepidation which is caught up in discourses of criminality and the ideas of 'roughness'. Conceptions of city neighbourhoods are then often judged through the potential for 'trouble', based both upon popular, local reputations and various forms of individual experience. For Sarah, fear of the St. Matthew's estate is based upon the

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[129] The thought of which gave the group some amusement as the 'laughter' illustrates.

presumed violent nature of the area's residents. In justifying her position she draws upon an occasion when she claims to have seen someone there with a baseball bat.

> John: *Have you been to St Matthew's?*
> Dan: *That's where I'm going for work experience, at the St Matthew's centre*
> Sarah: *Be careful!*
> (Group laughs)
> Sarah: *Loads of them have baseball bats. No, I think it's quite scary in there because when you walk past there, they're always sitting in their car parks and garages and that and they'll sit there with like their baseball bats next to them and that.*
> John: *What you see the baseball bats?*
> Sarah: *Like yeah, I've seen 'em. Like my mum had to park near there once because she went to somebody because my mum works for probation. And I was just sitting in the car and I was a bit scared.*

The position of St. Matthew's fits into contemporary local discourses of racism as discussed in the previous chapter. This estate is most often associated with newer arrivals in the city, particularly with the Somali 'community'. As indicated, this 'community' has been caught up both in a rising tide of Islamophobia (Sheridan, forthcoming), as well as implicated in a public panic regarding the presence of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.[130] The manner in which this discourse works through experiences and imaginations of this territory can be seen through the account of Craig.

I requested that Craig record a photo-diary, through which he decided to use some artistic licence. As we had discussed this estate on a previous occasion as somewhere he would purposefully avoid, he decided to use this opportunity to provide "photographic evidence", as he put it, of an area designated as 'dangerous'. Craig had described the estate as a no-go area for 'whites' both by day and night, somewhere he associated particularly with the Somali/Black community and with criminality:

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130 This is despite the fact that most of those originating from Somalia are actually EU citizens on the second leg of migration routes which has taken many of them through countries such as Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands to the UK.

Craig: *There's quite a lot of Somalians slash Black people round there, I've been tried to be mugged round there, a number of times I've got out of it, it's only through self defence really. Town itself, especially like right opposite my work is the St. Matthew's estate, so all they have to do is come over the road and we do get a lot of problems in our work which does end up in racial hatred.*

Following his visit to the estate, Craig wrote the following entry describing his experience:

"Interesting situation this morning, I briefly left work to get some pics. Thought I'd pop over to St. Matthew's to get some. I got there and took my first photo, went to take the second and noticed a group of black people pointing and walking over, wasn't too keen on sticking around so left in a haste".

This demarcated territory continued to represent something of a threat. The images he previously had of the estate, seemed to be reinforced by the presumed hostile reaction of local residents to an invasion of their privacy. This seemed to prove his point and justify his position both of the area and of its inhabitants. This sense of danger, where a racialised population is seen as a threat, was something which other research participants also mentioned.[131] For example, Stephen (aged 15, identifying as 'white', New College discussion group) spoke of this geography of fear in relation to the area of Highfields through which he imagined his presence as something that would draw unwanted attention and the possibility of violence. For Stephen this leads to avoidance of such areas.[132]

John: *You wouldn't go to Highfields? Why is that Stephen?*
Stephen: *I just think, I don't know, because it's mostly say black. How would they feel if a white lad just walked through there? Because I'm not the biggest of people either.*
Bob: *Surely therefore you'll be less noticed?*

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131 It must be emphasised that these reputations were not confined to those positioned by 'white' ethnicities, but they were also often disputed by those who lived in these areas, as Jackie (17, identifying as a Muslim Guinean – College, ESOL class) notes: *"They say that Highfields is very dangerous, that they can kill people and there are prostitutes there, they say all that kind of thing, but I never saw any of it. Sometimes even around 10 o'clock in the night I walk on the street and I never see anything."*

132 As Day (1999) notes in her examination of the use of public space by white middle class females, those areas associated with racial difference are often those areas avoided.

Stephen: *Well, if they just see me walking down the street they'll probably just beat me up or something.*

Mary: *Because, well when I drop him off it's usually like really late at night when we drop him off and you wouldn't want to go down there (Highfields) because you think oh my god! You're going to get stabbed in a minute!*

Emily: *Especially at night time I wouldn't dare walk over St. Matthew's*

As both Emily (25, identifying as 'white' – College, Electrical Installations class) and Mary (33, identifying as 'white' – College, Hair and Beauty class) note, fear of areas such as Highfields and St. Matthew's is associated with the possibility of a distressing negative encounter, particularly seen as an issue under the cover of darkness. Gender, in this sense, is clearly important in terms of dictating those times and places deemed threatening, but also in terms of the expression of this fear. Not only are residents of these areas considered as violently threatening, but also sexually threatening. Such accounts relate to the behaviour and actions of those men identified as 'new arrivals', labelled by some female participants as 'perverts'. For Sarah and Stephanie (15, identifying as 'dual-heritage', Hamilton discussion group) this construction of the 'other' as a threatening 'pervert', operating through the power of the male gaze, plays a key role in relation to the areas in which these men are to be found. In this case the area of Highfields is again constructed as dangerous territory. On this occasion Sarah interjects to help Stephanie out in her description of the 'type' of people they have, and therefore *would* come across in these situations/locations. Although it seemed that Sarah's contribution was based upon speculation, Stephanie's reaction indicated that such strict classification was not necessary, they were just different, not one of 'us'.[133]

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[133] The construction of a 'we' within the research encounter will be discussed in the following chapter. This is particularly interesting and relevant for this group discussion due to the fact that the collective 'we' of the group was, to a certain degree, flexible, both in terms of those they referred to outside of the group and those present in the moment of the research. For example Stephanie identified herself as of dual heritage but firmly rooted herself in the 'we' of the group in opposition to those threatening 'others' identified.

Sarah: *They are very pervy*
Stephanie: *Yeah, they are. I was walking up my grandma's and my grandma lives in Highfields, so I was walking there through town and then I was just walking up and then loads of them just walked down, don't know what they was, they looked liked…*
Sarah: *…Kosovans*
Stephanie: *Kosovans, whatever, and they all just you know you starting looking at me really weird. I was really offended. So that's why I don't feel safe, because I think they've like, they've used, like you know all the war and whatever that goes on in their countries. They see things rape, whatever, and they need to know that when they come over here, they need to start living by, like the way we live.*

This brief look at the significance of gender, something to which I return below, indicates the significance of a number of social positions from which individuals speak, make sense of and experience the multicultural everyday environment. By paying attention to the manner in which specific parts of the city are imagined, it is also possible to see the way in which such imaginations are dependent upon the placed experience of the individuals, that is, the importance of their own neighbourhoods and everyday environments in the construction of identity and difference. Before this chapter moves on to discuss the construction of 'racist' territories, I wish to highlight in more detail how individual experience and memories, which are 'passed on', play a critical role in the formation of the racialised territories of the city which inform social distinctions.

In my conversations with Emily, we began to talk about those areas of the city to which she would travel on a regular basis within Leicester. One of the areas identified was that of Thurmaston on the northern edge of the city. The car journey which takes her there passes along the Belgrave Road/Melton Road, an area which for her retains a number of associations based upon past experiences. Her memory of travelling along this same stretch of road (again in the car) with her parents as a youngster, whom she admitted often articulated overtly racist sentiment,[134] appears as a resource still drawn upon. As above,

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134 For example, Emily informed me that her parents would not shop at the Co-Op "…because they have food from all different countries" she was also "… never allowed to have any

the device of 'spot the white man' appears. This time, however, the area is not likened to an exercise in "spotting the white person" rather she tells how, as a family, they actually used to *play* this 'game'.

> *"I remember when we was younger, my mum and dad like, we'd go out on a Sunday or something and we'd drive up there and my mum and dad would say: 'Right, spot the white person time!' And if like, as many white people as we'd see my mum and dad would give us a pound, but we'd never get more than two."*

This shows how various parts of the city which seem distantly connected, both in terms of distance and culture, are in fact related and intimately caught up in one another. The ideas and practices transmitted through Emily's parents highlight the contrast between the Belgrave area of the city and their own neighbourhood, New Parks, a 'white', working class estate situated on the western edge of the city. Ideas of Belgrave as alien would not have been possible without the everyday experience of a territory of 'normality'. I will return to the practices of territoriality and an examination of how the neighbourhood may come to play an integral role in developing this sense of familiarity below. For now I will briefly indicate how remembering in this way, plays into Emily's present everyday life, living as she now does in one of the central housing areas of the city.

Emily spoke in fairly negative terms regarding her relatively new neighbourhood of St. Andrew's, located in the city centre. In particular, she was critical of the attitude of the majority of her neighbours whom she identified as mostly 'Somalians' and 'Asians'. She specifically highlighted the "ignorant" behaviour of specific groups such as 'Somalians' as a way of explaining her negative feelings about the area. However, she also makes a revealing comparison between her own attitude, that of her son and that of her youngest daughter and their respective, knowledge and experience of different parts of the city. For Emily and to a limited extent her son, memories of New Parks as a 'white area' are recalled in order to make sense of these strange,

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coloured friends and my dad said if I ever had a coloured boyfriend he said he'd break my legs and disown me."

'othered' but increasingly familiar parts of the city, whereby the 'mixed' residential area seems not to form an environment of fruitful inter-cultural engagement.

> Emily *I've only been there 2 years. Like we just came from New Parks*
> John: *Right*
> Emily: *And that was a white area*
> John: *Yeah*
> Emily: *So my lad's a bit more; why's there so many coloured people round here mum? But my little girl she's used to it. She started that school when she was little, so she's been brought up with all colours, so it don't really matter to her.*

6.3.2. 'Racist' territories

> *"Braunstone's ours, it belongs to white people."*
> (Braunstone group discussion, teenage 'white' female)

As was illustrated in section 6.2, there are clearly a different set of imaginations and experiences at work for those who are themselves excluded from space on the basis of being 'not-white'. The second type of area that came through strongly were those neighbourhoods identified as 'racist', in relation to the areas discussed above. These neighbourhoods are identified as home to hostile populations, composed of 'white' working class residents. However, as I will show, it is too simplistic to consider these areas as 'racist territories'. They are also caught up in discourses and cultures of criminality, danger and marginality: areas which are also exclusionary to some young people identifying as 'white'.

As Samantha, 18, identifying as a Muslim of Kenyan nationality (College, ESOL class) explains, the link between 'white' estates and racial intolerance is circulated through frightening stories which map out geographies of acceptance. There is a strong sense that certain parts of the city are viciously defended as 'white areas' as is indicated in the opening excerpt of this section,

where those who are not seen as 'white' are easily identified as out of place with sometimes violent consequences.[135]

> *"My mother told me about two days ago I think, it was a lady, a Somalian lady, she had a council house. They gave her a council house in a white area, its called Gilmorton in Leicester and it is only white people there and when she moved there she had her problems with the neighbours because they throw some stones, they broke her windows and they messed with her children and stuff like that. When she went out and asked them why they are doing this and when the policeman asked them they said: 'This is our area, this is a white area, she shouldn't be here, she should be where she belongs' or something. And I was like: 'Oh my god'!"*

For others, these geographies of intolerance were based upon direct experiences of living in such places. On one occasion myself, a young Somali man aged 15 (identified below as 'A') and a youth worker were discussing experiences of the Beaumont Leys estate in the north-west of the city.[136] However, as Omah (18, identifying as Somali – College, ESOL class) indicates, this sense of being made to feel out of place is not restricted to physical violence or verbal assaults but also comes from a sense of isolation, unease and hyper-visibility at being identified as not 'white' in the Braunstone area of the city.

> Momadu: *So if you as a person who is not white go into Beaumont Leys, what is going to happen?*
> A: *You get bullied and stuff*
> John: *Have you actually been to Beaumont Leys or is that something that you would think would happen*
> Ahmed: *I have been! I used to live there!*
> Momadu: *You tell us what it's like*
> A: *It's a racist place like, little kids and old people swearing at you*
> Momadu: *What kind of stuff do they say to you?*
> A: *They swear at me like: 'You little black bastard go away' and like: 'Go back to your own country'. And that stuff.*

> Omah: *I was the only Somali person on the bus at that time so, I didn't feel that anything might happen to me, but it's just maybe it's the way you feel. I didn't feel that anyone was coming to me or anything to do something to me, but it's just a reaction you get when you see someone, everyone is*

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135 I was also privy to a number of other terrifying stories of racial harassment, particularly of Somali families and particularly in those estates considered to be white working class areas, as was discussed in relation to the Saffron Lane area of the city in the previous chapter.
136 Moat Community College group discussion

different from you. It's very, I don't know, you feel a bit, maybe a little bit outnumbered.

For some such as Ahmed, 18, identifying as Muslim (College, Motor Mechanics class) this racial coding operates on a basis whereby certain accepted areas of the city present a greater risk to those seen to be racially marked in a similar way to an accepted discourse of exclusion presented for 'whites' in other areas. Again the dangers and fears associated with specific neighbourhoods of the city are, especially for male research participants, connected with the possibility of violence and "getting your head kicked in", something which constantly emerged as a problem in terms of stepping over 'common sense' boundaries. What this also indicates is the salience of a commonly accepted idea of 'separation' between the inner areas of the city and the outer estates which are relationally defined.

Ahmed: *Just say if you go to a place like Braunstone yeah? And being an Indian right? You'd probably get your head kicked in.*
John: *OK, yeah we mentioned Braunstone last time didn't we?*
Clive: *Yes we did!*
John: *That seemed to come up quite a lot. So you're saying basically as someone not of a white ethnicity you'd have real problems going somewhere like that?*
Clive: *Yeah, he would definitely!*
Ahmed: *And the same way round, do you understand me?*
John: *OK, so what part of Leicester would be the other way round?*
Ahmed: *Highfields*

Just as areas of the city, such as Highfields and St. Matthew's, come to signify a space of difference, unfamiliarity and fear, there are certain areas which are seen to epitomise geographies of exclusion for 'non-whites'. In particular, the estate of Braunstone emerged in the accounts of young people. As with accounts of exclusion in the 'white county', the manner in which these territories are marked out as un-accepting of difference operates through the act of looking whereby the racially differentiated are picked out as not belonging on the basis of their appearance. As one young 'Asian' female explained (Moat Community College group discussion), the effects of being marked out as different within such contexts have enduring effects, in that

they influence those parts of the city which are not-used, or avoided, therefore influencing patterns of everyday mobility.

> *"It's really weird because Braunstone's more like a sort of white little area. It's really weird because you've just got like people staring at you and sometimes they come up to you...I just got dirties and since then I don't want to go to there cos you like, like even if it's like one person they just give you that look and it's like you think to yourself, and seriously I do, that the rest of them are going to be like that"*
>
> Clive: *I'd say just looking at him and the way he was dressed he was definitely from Braunstone, there's no way that he was from anywhere else.*

However, the identification of these areas is not just expressed by those who identify as belonging to minority ethnic groups. As the excerpt above from Clive illustrates, identification of those from this part of the city is synonymous both with a way of acting and a manner of appearance. Clive was explaining here an occasion when he was approached by a male asking to borrow some money. In this way modes of behaviour and deviousness are tied into this neighbourhood, a place where as one city council officer informed me, the residents "...are regarded as outcasts even among the working class".[137]

The avoidance of particular neighbourhoods and imaginations of 'no-go' areas by 'white' research participants was also seen to be based upon the premise that certain areas, whilst dangerous and threatening, were 'racist' towards 'whites'. As Webster (1996) argues, the defence of territory as a response to the very real threats of racist violence, intimidation and discrimination often lead to accusations of victimisation from 'white' youth. In the following excerpt this idea of danger, expressed through knowledge of the presence of prostitutes and stories of being chased, is combined with the notion that 'whites' and more generally 'locals' are on the receiving end, a feeling of 'unfairness' as was introduced in the previous chapter. This form of defensive territorialisation can be seen as a way of shifting the power relations between minority and majority groups, a tactic adopted by young members of racialised communities, but

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[137] Key informant interview, City Council Officer

construed by young 'whites' as discriminatory acts removed from the context of such relations. As Mo (19, identifying as British-Indian – College, Motor Mechanics class), who lives in Highfields states, more and more young Asians in his area are beginning to fight back as part of an effort to improve their own quality of life. As such these ideas and experiences are more intimately connected than a discourse of 'parallel lives' might suggest.

Lisa: *Victoria Park, Highfields I wouldn't walk round there*
John: *Why wouldn't you go there?*
Calvin: *They're racist!*
Lisa: *The prostitutes*
Calvin: *They're racist!*
John: *You say Highfields is racist?*
Calvin: *That's pure like Indians innit and Muslims...There's a street, I can't remember what the street's called that is really nasty and I don't know what they think of white people anyway*
John: *Is that because you've actually had an experience down there?*
Calvin: *I've been down there like a couple of times in the car and you get really stared out, but I've not been down on my own, but my mates have and they had to run and they got chased*
(Lisa, 22, Calvin, 18, who identified as 'white' – Braunstone group discussion)

> Mo: *Leicester's getting less and less a thing, because like our parents and that, you know how they're scared and that. And like when we grew up we're fighting ourselves and like my sons or my son's sons they won't give a fuck, they'll just go for it straight, cos that's like Highfields. That's how it's cooling down because the people, they're fighting back.*

In coming to terms with the complexities of the multicultural city, the manner in which the everyday environment is organised in these ways helps young people to understand the realities of multiculturalism as 'lived'. Areas of the city are coded through 'race', but not in isolation from issues of poverty, deprivation, crime and fear, hence the significance of deprived areas such as Highfields, St. Matthew's, Beaumont Leys and Braunstone. The reproduction of forms of exclusion operated through such geographies takes place because of the manner in which experiences of such neighbourhoods are related, whereby imaginations of the city directly influence physical spatial trajectories. This tallies with Hubbard's (2003:66) conclusion that "... respondents avoided

making trips that they thought would involve them negotiating threatening, unknown or dangerous areas." However, these geographies need to be seen as the result of some limited form of knowledge and/or inter-cultural contact. Such an appreciation emphasises that identification is something which is acquired, learnt and practised through direct and mediated engagements with forms of 'difference'.

6.4. Territoriality: practising the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion

As a result of the imagination of racialised boundaries and as a consequence of the non-use and use of specific parts of the city, the boundaries between the 'self' and 'other' are reinforced. However, as I have stated above, these boundaries are relationally reproduced. Here I further illustrate this by exploring the ways in which ideas of 'normality' and 'familiarity', set against definitions of 'insiders' and 'outsiders', are constructed through practical 'doings'. Recognition that micro-territories of belonging are enacted and relationally re-constructed thus offers one way of exploring the potential malleability of race, ethnicity and belonging which is constantly reproduced and refashioned.

For many, the 'doing' aspects of occupying and making use of these spaces, comes from the routine of daily life, which often revolves around a few key sites. These include visits to the city centre, journeys to school or college, as well as occasional trips to other parts of the city in order to visit friends or to partake in leisure activities or part-time employment. For the most part the key site is the home and the setting of the neighbourhood. As many participants explained, experiences of Leicester are often limited in these terms. Each had personal geographies which were specific and selective, dictated to a large extent by everyday requirements:

> Jim (15, 'white' - New College group discussion): *If you've got all your friends in New Parks, you don't need to go anywhere different.*

Omah (18, Somali – College, ESOL class): *Yeah. I only go there if I have a reason to go there, I don't just travel somewhere to see the city or what the city looks like you know, it's not, (laughs) I only go there if there is a reason for it.*

Samantha (18, Muslim-Kenyan – College, ESOL class): *No I can't say I wouldn't go there, but I don't, any places where I don't know any people there so I don't need to go. I mean what am I going to do there? (laughs)*

Priyesh (19, Indian – College, IT class): *In Leicester this area is the only area I go, Melton Road area…the college, from Belgrave Road to the college and most of the time I only spend in these areas, Belgrave Road and Melton Road.*

Mick (14, 'white' – Braunstone group discussion): *I only go anywhere around Braunstone…I hardly ever go out of Braunstone and if I do it will be into town or down Beaumont Leys or something, down there*

Ahmed (17, Somali – College, ESOL class): *Yeah I don't go out, I don't go to the city centre, I don't go outside, I just hang around St. Matthew's and play there, that's what I do most of the time.*

These geographically limited routines are further illustrated by the following photos taken from Ahmed's photo-diary. Here his home estate of St. Matthew's forms the backdrop for almost all of his daily activities outside of the college, which relate to religious practice, family life and his favourite pastimes; watching and playing football. Interestingly this is the same estate which, for some, is full of dread, but for Ahmed is part of his accepted, familiar routine.

Figure 17 Ahmed in his St. Matthew's home watching the FA cup final

Figure 18 The mosque in St. Matthew's which Ahmed regularly attends

Figure 19 Ahmed getting ready to play football in St. Matthew's

As we can see, when participants were asked about areas of the city which they would not use, many found it obvious and even amusing that they should visit all the areas of the city. The basis for not going to these areas was often due to that lack of any need, requirement or reason to do so. Conducting your life within the confines of the neighbourhood has a number of advantages. As Reay and Lucy (2000) point out, young people living in more marginalised communities often exhibit a love/hate attitude towards their area. This is certainly something I came across in Leicester, whereby the negative and often 'boring' aspects of living in the more deprived areas of the city were balanced against the positive aspects of living in proximity to friends and family and essential services. Something else which also came through strongly was the security and protection provided by the neighbourhood, especially from those areas perceived as threatening. This is particularly the case for those who are more vulnerable targets of racism.

This security is principally achieved through 'familiarity' with residents and the social learning of the physical environment of use. This idea of 'what you

know' or what you are 'used to', is clear in the following passage through which Dan describes the danger of being 'started on', not in any particular part of the city or by any particular 'group', but importantly outside of his own area:

> Dan: *You can be like just sitting in a park or anything walking down the street and you can't turn round just because there's a big group of other race people and you don't want to get started on. But that can happen with a big group of white people as well though.*
> Sarah: *Yeah it can.*
> Dan: *That you don't know.*
> John: *Yeah, I mean is that where you live or is that more in town or?*
> Dan: *Yeah, not really where I live, you're all right where you live really, it's just when you're out wherever really*
> (Both aged 15, identifying as 'white' – Hamilton College group discussion)

It is clear that to step beyond the bounds of one's own area is to feel more vulnerable and more at risk. Practices of familiarity and security are then enacted in regard and relation to what is not known. In order to deal with senses of displacement, young people adopt particular tactics. For example, when they do find themselves outside areas deemed as 'safe', the importance of travelling in numbers becomes increasingly important. As Mo explains, on those occasions on which he found himself in threatening territories he would ensure that he was not alone, that someone was around to support him.

> Mo: *I would go anywhere in Leicester except Braunstone or Rowlett's Hill. Not alone, only with someone.*
> John: *Where? Braunstone or?*
> Mo: *Rowlett's Hill, I would never walk alone. I would walk with someone. I never walk alone.*

> John: *What's it like in Highfields?*
> Ali: *It's exactly the same as St. Matthew's but they are just a bit friendlier, because when you are walking there it's OK no one threatens you or someone yells at you until you do something wrong yeah, so as long as you keep it OK no one will be trouble.*

> Sarah: *It also depends on what you wear though*
> John: *OK*
> Sarah: *Because you say like people stroll through, the white people stroll through thinking that they're…*

Dan: *...Black!*
Sarah: *Black, then the blacks are going to go for you*

With 'trouble' seen as a real possibility, the advantages of travelling across the territories of the city in numbers is clear. Ali also illustrates how, when moving through environments deemed to be dangerous, it is important to act in specific ways, so as not to be the cause of trouble ensuring, for example, that nothing is said which might start a dispute. For the group from Hamilton above, this also included the importance of style, for instance, by wearing the right clothes in certain neighbourhoods deemed 'black'.[138] As has been seen, for others this geographical displacement is dealt with by not travelling on foot or avoided altogether.

On one trip to an inner city youth centre in Coventry organised through the centre I worked at, this sense of territoriality became particularly clear. Most of those who had made the short trip were younger centre users, so I asked one youth worker why he thought none of the older users had joined us. There was a sense that these older users were big fish in a small pond. Inside their own areas, such as Belgrave and the St. Marks' estate, they were well known and respected, looked up to and sometimes even feared. Importantly they knew where they fitted in within their home environment. To come to another area, let alone another city, meant that they themselves would feel threatened by peers who were more comfortable.[139] What this seems to suggest is the importance not only of the way in which these 'other' areas are negotiated but also the way in which the neighbourhood is constructed as something which is familiar and in situations of relative marginality and isolation, something to be protected. As Mo explains, this sense of familiarity aids the reproduction of this territory as a space to be defended:

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138 Sarah and Dan both informed me that they wore clothes which were deemed to be black. They especially made reference to their Nike Air Force One trainers, for which Sarah had previously received some unwanted attention, from, as she described a group of black lads on one encounter on a city bus.

139 Another youth worker at the centre informed me of the difficulties encountered upon taking these same young people on a trip to London. The sense that they were out of their depth and insecure with the unfamiliarity of a place they had never visited, meant that although they were told they could explore the city on their own they decided to stick with the youth workers.

> Mo: *The whole of my life I've been living in Highfields, so I know my way around Highfields and all the people that are moving in and out from my street and I know the whole location in Highfields and I know everyone and everyone knows that I've been living there for time. If they walk past they know that they can't do nothing because he lives in Highfields.*

The defence of specific areas of the city can be seen through the idea of an exclusive local community, a community which is able to identify those who don't belong through knowledge of the locale and through forms of surveillance. As Emily explains from her experiences of New Parks, there is a sense that people on such estates stick together, repelling the perceived threats of outsiders to their culture, their way of life and also their resources:

> Emily: *When I lived up New Parks, if like any coloured people walked by, I suppose like estates kind of stick together, don't they? Aand they look out for one another. And it's like, I don't know really, if anybody came up the area that was, not just not coloured but like you knew that weren't from like around there, they'd probably get some stick or something…It's like my friends think that with all the people, the coloured people that are coming in, they're kind of being, they think they are being stopped money because it's going to these coloured people.*

In a similar way, while in Braunstone, I asked one young 'white' man (aged 18) if there were any problems between young people on the estate. He informed me that people tended to "get on together". For him the idea of getting along was part of his view that Braunstone was somewhere "not good, not bad, just normal…just somewhere to grow up". This 'getting along' was achieved through a recognition of those who lived in the area, who belonged, and by identifying, isolating and excluding those considered to be outsiders, as he went on to put it: "If you know people and people know you you're all right, but if you don't know people then it might be different."[140] This includes both those seen as racially marked and those not deemed as locals, as the case of Nic demonstrates.

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[140] Taken from fieldwork diary 11/10/04. I also experienced this sense of territorial exclusion as someone identified as a non-local to this area. On one visit to the estate I parked my car, a particularly distinctive vehicle, outside the youth centre. On returning I found a considerable amount of dirt had been deposited on the bonnet and windscreen.

Nic (15, identifying as Sikh-Hindu – Braunstone group discussion) sees himself as one of the only 'Asians' on the Braunstone neighbourhood. While he accepts that many in his area often express racist outlooks, he also indicates that he is rarely on the receiving end. He puts this down to the fact that people know he lives in the area, that he is accepted and recognised as a local despite his 'differences'.

> Nic: *I think some people are racist here. But it's just towards me they don't say anything because they know me, but I don't think just because they know me. They should say it to my face anyway, because they talk about people, it's like my religion and it's like, well, 'why you saying that for?'*

Such a defence of locality can also be seen in the inability of far-right political groups such as the BNP to gain a hold in some of the more disadvantaged areas of the city, areas which would appear to be a prime targets for the circulation of racist bigotry. As was explained to me by community and youth workers in the Braunstone area, due to positions of relative marginality and the manner in which residents are effected by the reputation of their neighbourhood, collective solidarity has repelled such influences. As one of these professionals working in Braunstone informed me:

> *"This woman and her husband were there and she says: 'Oh no! They tried to get in here before and we just stamped them out.' I said: 'That's really good, that's brilliant'. Although they've tried to get in before, if we see anybody like that targeting our young people then we, there's a really good, believe it or not, there's a really good, if you look at the overview of Braunstone, collective solidarity."* (Braunstone youth worker, key informant interview)

For those who live in the poorer and economically 'less connected' parts of the city, such as Braunstone and Highfields, it is understandable how these areas have become implicated within a discourse of decline and insularity. In my discussions with young people living on the Braunstone estate a number of issues were raised, which highlighted the disadvantaged situation faced by young residents. Problems included drug mis-use, burglary, joyriding, arson,

assaults, alcohol abuse, gangs, teenage pregnancy, surveillance, poor standards of policing, lack of decent facilities for young people, lack of job prospects but also the general stigmatisation of the area.[141] For both Lisa and Warren the reputation of Braunstone meant that their own characters were implicated and damaged:

> Lisa: *Even if you say to someone, even if you know them and you are OK with them and they say: 'Oh where you from?' and you say: 'Oh Braunstone' and they're like: 'Oh God!', and it is, they do look at you differently and they think you're bad or and like the same if someone came from Highfields or something you'd be like hmm lovely, great. It is, sometimes, people do have a big problem with you.*

> Warren: *If you're from a different area like, my brother, he had a girlfriend from Oadby, he lives in Braunstone. As soon as the family found it out they didn't want her going out with him.*

In the light of this it is not difficult to appreciate the reasons why the defence of territory might form an integral part of everyday life in these areas.[142] Opposition to the incursion of outsiders is not then just a straight-forward manifestation of common sense racism, but also occurs through positions of relative marginality which maintains particular stances towards those people and places identified as 'different'. Behaviours and outlooks must then be seen as actively constructed on the basis of very real and practical problems experienced by, in this case, young 'white' residents (Fowler, 1997). In a similar sense, the defence of territory in areas of the city which have been racialised, can be seen through Mo's assertion above that young 'Asians' in areas such as Highfields are increasingly staking their claims to the locality and 'fighting back'.

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[141] This stigmatisation can be traced back to the 1930s when the north of the estate became the destination for many of the poor families re-housed following clearances in the city centre. The quality of the houses was seen to be poorer in the north of the estate and the nickname 'Dodge City' emerged to describe the amount of families who found themselves indebted (East Midlands Oral History Archive) www.le.ac.uk/emoha/community/resources/braunstone/nbraunstone.html For some of the young people this stigmatisation of the one part of the estate has, in the eyes of 'outsiders', now expanded to encompass the whole area known as Braunstone.

[142] Which as I explore in greater detail below, takes place both on a 'racial' and 'non-racial' basis.

However, for many young people familiarity doesn't necessarily mean that they are comfortable, beyond surveillance and not immune from danger with their own neighbourhoods. As Wridt (2004) argues, there are problems not only in safely negotiating the territories of others, but also one's own area. As both Nav and Mo explain, there is a balance to be struck between being comfortable and not becoming over-familiar, thus enabling a form of freedom beyond the eyes of those who might monitor their lives:

Nav: *I try to keep myself to myself. Don't want to know everyone because like my dad knows everyone, and because he knows everyone, everyone will try like and notice me in the street and that. And that's why I've got a hoody (he puts the hood up on his top) and I walk around like this, or I normally keep a really big beard on myself.*

Mo: *All this behind your back kind, especially on the back streets there's too many people gossip behind your back and everything.*
John: *What sort of stuff?*
Mo: *I don't know. All about things like they've seen you like you know doing this, doing this, but they won't think what their grandsons was doing. They always talk about other people, gossips and that, talking behind your back, stirring things round.*

However, it did mean that in their encounters with other residents they were often able to 'get by' having the ability and the cultural repertoires to negotiate such encounters 'successfully'. This is most clearly illustrated in those situations where young people were not recognised upon entering 'other' territories of the city. Being known and the notion of recognition plays an integral role in the maintenance and surveillance of the boundaries of these separate territories. In the case of Calvin, he explains how recognition works whereby outsiders are easily 'found out', made more potent in his discussion of Braunstone's neighbouring area of New Parks, an historic territorial 'rival'.

Calvin: *There are certain areas that I wouldn't go on my own*
John: *Yeah, OK*
Calvin: *Like deep into New Parks and Beaumont Leys because you've always got that: 'You're from Braunstone, you're an outsider.'*
John: *How do they know that you're from Braunstone?*
Calvin: *Sometimes if they don't know your face, they're like: 'Where's he from?' and if you say 'oh I live down there' they'll say: 'no you don't!'*

One of the ways through which it was possible for young people to develop a sense of security within their own neighbourhoods was therefore to build up a profile so as not be mistaken as an outsider or as someone to be crossed. As both Nic and Mo emphasise through experiences of their own neighbourhoods, the importance of being visually recognised and therefore accepted is critical, particularly for Nic, who identifying as a Sikh/Hindu living within the Braunstone estate, relied upon this form of identification in coping with his other, racially marked, identities:

> Nic: *I'm always on my bike everywhere and I always, everyone knows me around this area actually.*

> Mo: *While I'm always in Highfields it's all right for me… If someone else came to Highfields and someone knew that he's not from Highfields, they'll go: Let's do him'.*

As Clive, who had previously lived in the Braunstone area for a lengthy period emphasised, it was important to be recognised and develop a reputation as a way of ensuring that you were part of the local scene.

> Clive: *I lived in Braunstone for a bit and I'd never go back there even though I am welcome. It's like if people see me when I had my bike, it's like if I was up in Braunstone and people knew my bike, they'd all wave because I knew 'em. You have to build up a reputation.*

Building up such a reputation did not just mean that it was important to be visible, but also to act in a manner which would make others believe that you could look after yourself physically, through the transmission of a strong masculine image of 'hardness'. Being able to look after yourself in these situations was something which seemed to concern males more than females, indicating that young males live out more territorially based lives as one of the school group discussions below illustrates (New College group discussion):[143]

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[143] The importance of a performance of 'hardness' among some young men in the city was something I was particularly aware of in my time spent within the youth centre in Belgrave. While in the very act of attending the centre many of the young people had transgressed territorial as well as racialised boundaries, many of the lyrics 'spat' by MCs at the centre

Clive: *You've got to get a reputation in places like Braunstone and Highfields, if you're gonna been going through there and you're gonna be living there you've got to get people to know your car, to know that if they're gonna give you shit, you're gonna give it back and you're gonna give it back twice as much, because if they don't think that they're just gonna attack you every time you go through.*

Anna: *It's different for girls, cos I wouldn't really be bothered going anywhere*
Tony: *Maybe it's because boys are a bit more stubborn than girls are*
Wayne: *I think it's some sort of gang culture that's been put into them, so they've got to prove themselves to the, you know, the sort of like primitive you know barbaric piece of human that's still in them, sort of, we've got to go beat all these up and then: 'Yeah, let's all go and have a drink' and 'oh I bashed his brains, oh I poked his eye' and whatever you know. That's what it's about really*
(All aged 15, identifying as 'white')

6.5. Neighbourhood nationalism

What the analysis above seems to show is that territoriality is practised in relation to fearful and threatening imaginations and experiences of racial, but also importantly, cultural 'differences' framed by the everyday geographies of young people in Leicester. By emphasising how forms of identity based on micro-territories are enacted in the context of this relatively 'open' city, I argue that while the city is often categorised in simplistic, racialised terms, there are more complex processes of negotiation at work, which point toward the potential malleability of 'difference' and 'sameness' in this place. As both Cohen (1988) and Back (1996) have shown in their research on working class identities in multicultural neighbourhoods, inclusion into the 'local' neighbourhood - a primary reference point of identification for those living on the margins - is often contingent whilst still retaining limits to acceptance and tolerance. Here I use these ideas to frame the ways in which the everyday geographies of more marginalised areas of this city enable negotiations across difference. Importantly these are negotiations which are not based upon a

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revolved around conflict and competition between areas of the city, illustrated in the following lyrics taken from one of these sessions:
"You better not bring your boys round here/Your boys will get beat up round here."
Taken from fieldwork diary (26/05/04)

purposeful openness to difference as practised and promoted through more formal routes as outlined in chapter four.

As David (15, who identified as of 'dual heritage' – Rushey Mead School group discussion) indicates, particularly in those more disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city, while tensions and problems of conflict were often evident, the manner in which allegiances are formed in the event of such conflicts illustrates important negotiations across strict definitions of 'race' on the basis of localised forms of collectivity:

> David: *You do see though, particularly in the rough areas, that a lot of the time, it's not always necessarily each cultures on it's own, it could be a group of cultures against another group of cultures. Like a lot of the time you see a lot of black and white people and then they might be like troubling some Asians or whatever, might have trouble with some Indian people or whatever if you know what I mean. It's not always just each culture for their own, it could just be a group of people that don't like another culture.*

As was mentioned above in reference to Calvin's experience of negotiating paths between his home estate of Braunstone and New Parks, there appears to exist some serious fault lines between these neighbouring estates, primarily conceived of as 'white'. These 'rivalries' disrupt the notion that conflicts, specifically within the context of Leicester, revolve around strictly racial tensions.[144] As the account of Nic and others above also indicates, the classification of insiders and outsiders within specific neighbourhoods is often not solely based upon racial terms, but also upon being recognised as a 'local'. Conflicts between such estates are illustrated through the following excerpts, the first of which is taken from a group of young people who live in the New Parks area and the next two from conversations with Calvin and Warren, both residents in the Braunstone area:

> John: *So you think there's a tension between Braunstone and New Parks as well?*
> Anna: *Yeah*
> Jim: *I've seen the effects of a lad who did get beat up.*

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144 For example, between the inner city and the outer estates.

Tony: *Yeah I've seen that as well.*
Jim: *Yeah his dad lives near me.*
Bob: *Who was he beaten up by James?*
Jim: *Braunstone. When their fair was over there they walked across to New Parks and chased him*
Matthew: *Smashed his face in*

Calvin: *New Parks and Braunstone, the neutral ground there is Western Park, so the school. Western Park was the neutral ground and the New Parks School and the Wycliffe School in Braunstone used to meet on Western Park and that was where they used to fight*

Warren: *New Parks is a border, which backs off over that end, just at the top there.*
John: *Yeah?*
Warren: *Fights between the two, between Braunstone and them, always. Beaumont Leys, New Parks, always fights.*
Nic: *Yeah*
Warren: *Er Beaumont Leys, Braunstone always fights, between the three there's always fights between them.*
John: *Why do you think that is?*
Warren: *Because they all think that they're harder than the others and they always try and prove a point that they're hard.*

The two sides of the story as far as this divide is concerned are also illustrated with reference to further discussions of the young people from New Parks and the comments of Calvin. Jim and Tony again note how they were scared of walking through the Braunstone estate for fear that they would be identified as 'non-locals' due to the fact that they would stand out as "everyone knows each other". For Calvin, his movements around the city were severely restricted in two significant ways. Firstly on the basis of the colour of his skin, in areas such as Highfields, where he saw his 'whiteness' as the major issue, and secondly, again on the basis of appearance, but in terms of being differently 'white', of not being known and therefore suspected of as an outsider.

Jim: *I'm scared of going down Braunstone. I went through there right? And I was walking through there and it's like 'you're not from Braunstone'.*
Bob: *But how do they know?*
Tony: *It's like everyone knows each other*
James: *I wash!*
John: *Everyone in Braunstone knows each other?*

Tony: *Everyone knows each other, they all just stare at each other.*

Calvin: *Kind of different, New Parks and Beaumont Leys because I'm Braunstone, they might not accept me*
John: *OK*
Calvin: *Down near Victoria cos I'm white and because I've got ginger hair*

What is clear is that 'race', although already present, read off and onto the body as a marker of differentiation, may not always be the primary or only marker of difference. As Nayak (2003) notes, the development of 'neighbourhood nationalism' does not necessarily result in the evaporation of racism, but does point towards the fact that in certain moments 'race' may not always be seen to mark out the 'insider' and 'outsider'. There is then a potential flexibility to a collective 'we'. As the following discussion involving Nic and Rebecca (a young 'white' youth worker on the Braunstone estate) illustrates, the basis of identification and differentiation is principally defined by attachment to specific areas of the city, regardless of religion or 'race'. Importantly, in the context of Leicester, Rebecca puts this down to the fact that neighbourhoods exhibit relative heterogeneity.

Nic: *I think it's areas.*
Rebecca: *I think it's areas based as well, because the areas where you come from are so mixed that it don't really matter.*
Nic: *Yeah it's like area against area, it's not like religion versus religion.*
Rebecca: *It's, yeah, you're right, you're right, it's areas! Because like you'll get a gang of youths from Beaumont Leys say and it's the gang will be totally mixed and then you'll get a gang from Braunstone and that gang will be totally mixed and they're not having a problem with each other through the cultures that they're from, it's just by the area…its territory, innit!*

Indeed, in my time spent within a youth centre environment, it was clear that the names of many of the 'crews', (friendship groups formed around MC collectives) were based upon geographical distinctions, with some of them actually labelled by post-codes, and while often dominated by specific ethnic groups, they were not exclusive on this basis. Areas of the city are not always then solely considered to be the property of distinct and homogeneous racial or ethnic groups. Rebecca went on to explain how these different areas carried

different cultures, cultures which could be told apart. Culture, in this sense, relates to something very different from culture as a way of describing racial and ethnic differences. Rebecca rather refers to modes of behaviour, language and attitude, regardless of ethnicity. In particular, she refers to 'youth cultures', through her reference to the local schools where 'mixture' is seen to take place creating a sense of commonality within the neighbourhood.[145]

> Rebecca: *Braunstone carries different cultures from how people, from people brought up here from how people are brought up in Beaumont Leys…I could tell you if you were from Braunstone or if you were from Beaumont Leys.*

As one young male from the Beaumont Leys area of the city informed me at a youth government conference: "All the wards have beef with each other, I can't have all my friends together because they'd all scrap." He was saying this with regard to the suggestion for a central youth facility in the city. His opinion was that Leicester was not ready for this because there were so many neighbourhood-based conflicts. He added that his own friends didn't 'get on' or socialise because of a feeling of superiority expressed geographically and a rivalry which, for him, had very little to do with 'race' or ethnicity due to the fact that "…all different backgrounds hang around together, so it's more about where you live".

6.6. Summary

> *"Boundaries of a community, both in territorial and in social terms, are the subject of ongoing struggle and negotiation. In the discursive or communicative realm, meanings, identities, and loyalties are always in the process of being articulated and are constantly negotiated."* Silk (1999:12)

This chapter has shown how ideas of territory and territoriality are vital in appreciating the dynamics of inter-cultural relations within the city of Leicester, incorporated into a relational and everyday understanding of the

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[145] In my time at the youth centre a similar informal conversation arose amongst some of the young people who claimed that they could tell which neighbourhood someone was from, not it seemed on the basis of the colour of their skin but in terms of their 'attitude'. As one young woman put it: "It's just the way they are, they are just different, you can just tell." Taken from fieldwork diary (07/04/04)

spatiality of 'multiculturalism as lived'. By drawing upon the accounts, views and experiences of a range of young people resident in the city, I have shown that the coding of various spaces within and beyond the city is *used* to make sense of racial and cultural difference on an everyday basis, thus re-constituting cultures of racism and exclusion. These territories are not seen to solely rely upon racial difference in their construction, but are heavily caught up in the material circumstances of specific areas and associated notions of crime, fear and danger, a fear of difference through which ideas of 'roughness' and difference are implicated in one another and translated into experience through patterns of avoidance and the subsequent immobility of young people.

In this sense it has also been contended that much of daily life is seen to be based around sites of familiarity and safety through which spatial transgressions are heavily policed. Whilst fear and avoidance of specific areas which are caught up in discourses of difference, play a major role in dictating the geographies of the city, practices of the neighbourhood are also vital to the development of familiarity and 'local-(national) identification'. Such a focus also suggests that a straightforward coding of city spaces is influenced by both how individuals see themselves and how they are seen by others in specific socio-spatial contexts, dependent upon local knowledge and personal inter-subjective experiences. I therefore contend that ideas of belonging and negotiations of difference are relationally formed through these geographies, in that ideas of 'difference', whether imagined or experienced, are integral to conceptions of identity. Understandings of 'difference' are therefore not necessarily based upon the isolation of 'communities' but the manner in which various forms of contact are enacted and reproduced. What we then need to attend to is the quality of such forms of inter-cultural contact.

A focus on the practices of territoriality also points towards, as Silk (1999) notes above, the fact that the boundaries of the city are subject to ongoing struggle and negotiation, whereby acceptance into a collective but fragile 'we' is often,

but not always, based upon a rigid marker of racial difference. Identity performances therefore shift attention to emerging forms of inside and outside, or inclusion and exclusion. By accepting the fact that territories of belonging and attachment play a vital role in conceptions of difference and similarity in the city of Leicester, it is possible to see how local identification, particularly in those situations where neighbourhoods are seen as something to be defended, might be expanded to include those previously excluded on the basis of racial differences. Importantly these forms of negotiation do not necessarily rely upon formal notions of multicultural promotion or celebration, but rather collectivity instituted through environments of relative marginality in classed and cultural terms. However, these forms of accommodation also take place over time within the context of specific 'racialised' power relations.[146] It is no surprise, therefore, that those seen as newer arrivals appear to be the most stigmatised, marginalised and differentiated in local racist discourse.

The extent and limits of the malleability and performances of a collective 'we' will be the focus of the following chapter which will examine in greater detail the way in which the geographies of the city enable the negotiation of difference through encounter and engagement. As I have suggested, there is a need to focus in greater detail both upon the various qualities of inter-cultural knowledge and encounter as a means of disrupting damaging forms of distinction. I will then focus on the importance of the various forms of inter-cultural encounter in order to assess the dynamics and possibilities of inter-ethnicity through the transgressive and habitual spaces of 'the everyday' in Leicester.

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146 That is the accommodating is done by the more historically powerful 'ethnic groups'.

7. Encounter, engagement and the negotiation of 'difference'

7.1. Inter-ethnicity, transgressions and the habitual

From what we have seen, 'difference' is understood through the cognitive, practical and situated geographies of the city, which fix identities in and through space. The ability and desire of individuals to manoeuvre themselves across racialised boundaries remains both problematic and limited, with clear implications for the development of progressive inter-cultural sensibilities. However, individuals come to understand 'multiculturalism as lived' through everyday practices in relation to attained local knowledge and through limited but critical forms of sensual exposure. In the case of some Leicester neighbourhoods, this has lead to forms of inter-cultural negotiation enacted over time, whereby emerging experiences of inclusion and exclusion are seen to operate simultaneously.

What remains to be considered in more detail is the quality of everyday encounters in this place which might facilitate forms of negotiation which are not strictly confined to the bounds of 'community', whether defined socially or spatially. As has been outlined in chapter two, urban identities are constituted and played out through a plethora of city spaces which are not restricted to residential spaces, as Probyn (2005) notes[147] these are 'contact zones' which bring together plural publics in close proximity through physical co-presence.

> *"The contact zone seems like an abstract idea, but it is continually re-enacted in everyday life: bedrooms can be contact zones, as can be streets, libraries, shops and pubs, classrooms and workplaces. They are the spaces where different people come together – where for various reasons, they are forced into proximity."* Probyn, (2005: 112)

[147] Probyn (2005) draws here upon Pratt's (1992:7) idea of the 'contact zone'.

This chapter indicates how everyday geographies beyond the neighbourhood might bring together those considered as racially and culturally different. In so doing it develops ideas from the previous chapter by suggesting how naturalised notions of 'we'/'us'/'them' might become disturbed in ways which "shift the boundaries of the familiar" (Ahmed, 2000:7). In a similar way to Back (1996) and Bonnett (1996) I contend, that in the context of Leicester, inter-cultural encounters do not always result in the 'transcendence' of difference, but their *selective* negotiation. In this way the chapter illustrates the often conflictual character of such occasions, but also the ways in which spatially contingent situations allow for the performances of identities which may be less exclusive along strict racial and ethnic lines.

The reinforcement or deconstruction of strict boundaries of racial and cultural difference, it is then argued, is dependent upon the *quality, durability* and *performative dynamics* of the encounter in relation to the habitual character of experiences enacted 'elsewhere'. I look to examine the effectiveness of inter-cultural encounters through attention to the transitory encounters of 'public spaces', spaces of limited socio-spatial transgression and those which enable the institution of habitual engagement. I show that in the case of Leicester, inter-ethnic encounter is common place and productive through physical co-presence and visibility, particularly in terms of the opportunity to engage with 'others' across ethnic divides. However, if we are to appreciate that multiple everyday experiences 'travel', physical co-presence alone cannot ensure the development progressive inter-cultural negotiations.

I will now expand on an account of inter-cultural encounter and engagement by illustrating the differential qualities of these situations as experienced by young people. I initially consider the 'brief encounters' of public space, then the importance of spatially transgressive moments alongside those of exclusion, through 'leisure spaces', before moving on to the idea of sustained encounter and the possibilities of spaces which shift definitions of the habitual. By way of conclusion I highlight the importance of considering forms of encounter as

performative, that is, the practice of specific ways of behaving in relation to 'other' everyday spatial contexts, but also the environment in which they are set.

7.2. 'Public spaces': Meetings, brief encounters and conflicts

> *"Town belongs to everybody but you still fight, if you see someone from a different area you end up fighting or whatever."*
> (Rowlatt's Hill group discussion – Soft Touch audio material)

How then do encounters through the 'conventional' public spaces of the city work to disrupt exclusive and damaging forms of differentiation and to what extent might it be possible to talk of these spaces as instituting engagements across difference? I stress that while proscribed public spaces of congregation in Leicester allow for a level of inter-cultural exposure and awareness, spatial proximity in itself does not equate to the establishment of progressive relations, particularly as regards the limited institution of verbal communication. As the account of Emily (25, identifying as white – College, Electrical Installations) in the previous chapter illustrated, moving from monocultural neighbourhoods, normalised by 'whiteness', to those considered racially marked, does not always result in the deconstruction of exclusionary racialised sentiment. Experiences travel. For Emily this movement involved a long term change of address, but what is the significance of the briefer encounters of public spaces brought about by more transitory movements specifically into the central spaces of the city?

As was discussed in chapter two, the city centre and the major public spaces located here seem to hold great potential for the bridging of differences, through the way in which the local population are 'thrown together'. While for some young people, more restricted in their routines on the basis of physical ability or financial resource, the city centre was not considered a significant everyday space, for most, 'town' was an important part of daily life in this relatively small city. In contrast to imaginations and experiences of various neighbourhoods, the centre, through repeated use, offers a level of familiarity

and freedom. As Jackie (17, identifying as Muslim Guinean – College, ESOL class) explains in discussing how she spent the majority of her time:

> Jackie: *Normally I would go to the city centre most of the time. I don't go a lot around, because I don't know all the, most parts of Leicester, apart from the city centre.*

Use of the central spaces of the city varied across the experiences of research participants, particularly in terms of age. However, for all of those involved, the city centre was seen as a place to meet and spend spare time with friends, emphasised in the excerpts below. For these young people the city centre is not just seen as a place of consumption, but also importantly a place to 'spend time', through the acts of 'walking', 'talking', 'meeting' and 'hanging out'. These 'meetings' do not occur incidentally or accidentally but are significantly *pre-arranged* in a location which is seen to be equally accessible to all, especially for those meeting up with friends travelling from different city neighbourhoods.

> Jay Z (17, identifying as Somali – College, ESOL class): *Just at home and in my area and sometimes the city centre, but I go only to the city centre with friends, not I'll only just walk in.*
> John: *So do you go to the city centre to meet people?*
> Jay Z: *Yeah, just walking around with people, talking and joking.*

> Simon (17, identifying as 'white' – College, Electrical Installations class): *We normally we just start hanging out in town for a bit, just talking, catch up, get drunk or something and if we're in town still we just go out in town and do something else.*

> John: *You say you've got a friend in Braunstone, I mean do you find yourself going over there at all?*
> Mark (17, identifying as 'white' – College, IT class): *Sometimes, but normally we meet in town, normally I meet in town. Sometimes he comes round my house or I go down there, it just depends what day it is.*

> John: *What do you do there?*
> Sarah (15, identifying as 'white' – Hamilton College group discussion): *Shop, look round, what do you normally do in the town?! Go bowling, you do what you want, just something to do isn't it?! In town, meet friends.*

> Karl (15, identifying as 'white' – St. Paul's group discussion): *I just hang around with friends because it's an easy place to meet up if you all live in a different area if you know what I mean?*

What is important to emphasise here is that these central spaces appear as significant locations for the reinforcement of relationships established elsewhere. We can see through these accounts that there is very little in the way of cultural and social transgression taking place when the city centre is used as a meeting place. As Andy (16, identifying as 'white' – College, IT class) indicates below when I questioned him on his use of the city centre, largely based upon drinking in a variety of pubs and bars in the week after attending college, and the friends with which he socialised in these situations, he explained that these were acquaintances established through the college:

> Andy: *Well, we normally go up town with my mates and go to the pubs and stuff like that and the bars and just talk and just have a laugh and stuff*
> John: *And is that mates what through college?*
> Andy: *Yeah, that's just mates through the college, through the college, yeah*

Where then does this leave the idea that the central public spaces of the city might be an important neutral ground and 'contact zone' through which it is possible to engage with difference, to encounter the plurality and diversity of the city? The major 'conventional' public spaces of Leicester such as the Town Hall Square (shown in Fig. 20), the area surrounding the central Clock Tower and the major shopping thoroughfares (shown in Fig. 21) are focal points for activity and the most obvious sites through which the diverse population of Leicester are both visually and sonically exposed to one another.

Figure 20 Town Hall Square, central Leicester

Figure 21 Central shopping thoroughfare, Leicester

Through my time in the city and my observations of these public spaces it is clear that they act to attract those from a variety of different 'visible

communities'. They are spaces which at certain times of the day and night become bustling arenas of interaction for the multiple trajectories of the city's residents.[148] For many participants the city centre was seen in a similar way, presented as somewhere which differed from the rest of the city on the basis that it was *the* place which both illustrated and brought together the city's diverse population, which unlike the city's often racially coded neighbourhoods provided an opportunity for 'mixture'.

> Emily: *It's only in the city centre that there's a mix of everybody*
>
> Andy: *It's where everybody goes*
>
> Omah: *The city centre is basically you see everyone*

The city centre represented a space of and for difference for young people identifying as both 'white' and 'non-white' in opposition to residential areas defined as more mono-cultural, as Calvin (18, identifying as 'white' – Braunstone group discussion) explains below. Unlike those neighbourhoods, which often represented a sense of danger and fear and were thus avoided, the centre represented an area which would be actively and regularly used. In this sense, and with regard to physical co-presence, experiences of these spaces incorporate limited transgressional dimensions whereby diversity is directly encountered, albeit through visual fields.

> Calvin: *If you walk off Braunstone into town, as soon as you get onto Hinckley Road there's more mixed multicultural races there, but as you come further back into Braunstone it decreases.*

Exposure to difference in these public places should not be underestimated; indeed it must be seen to play an important part in the willingness for some participants identifying as 'white' to identify such differences as 'normal' or unexceptional. This is, I argue, particularly significant in accounting for the

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[148] While they may 'come alive' at certain points in the day, particularly early morning, lunch times, the end of the working day, in the evening and at the weekends as well as when the weather permits outdoor activity. It is important to note that these conventional public spaces of the city are often empty and vacant spaces.

specificity of the Leicester experience whereby habitual and routinised use of these 'multicultural' and open public spaces allows for the development of sensibilities which do not find embodied racial and ethnic differences, so threateningly 'different'.

For example, those identifying as 'white' in one of the college classes were keen to portray themselves as a 'non-racist' group in the context of the group discussion, using the example of their 'mixed' class to illustrate how well they were able to get along. They argued that the multicultural character of the city, was for them something with which they were used to, something which they had been "brought up with", a character which was most obvious through the public spaces of the city. This was something which Mary (33, identifying as 'white' – College, Hair and Beauty class) emphasised, something which on reflection, she had accepted almost unconsciously:

> Mary: *I'll tell you what was strange, because I go back to my mum and dad's every weekend and at first it was like, we go shopping in Kettering which is the next, the nearest town to my mum and it's got a lot of Indian families in there, about half and half. And I was going round the centre and it felt normal, because all the different colours and I didn't twig until I've seen a Chinese couple and I thought: 'oh!' I've just realised I haven't seen that and that was normal for me at home, meaning home Leicester. And that's the first time it came into my head as: 'oh!'*

However, this notion of what counts as 'normal' does not depend upon experience of these spaces alone. As I have emphasised above, such experiences must always be seen in relation to patterns of socialisation and norms established elsewhere. As the account of James (18, identifying as 'white' – College, Electrical Installations class) shows, the city characterised by its multiculturalism may be seen as 'strange' by those who do not regularly enter into it. Movements into the city are themselves moments of transgression, but the power and effectiveness of such transgressions are restricted due to the dominance of knowledge instituted through monocultural, 'white' and sometimes 'racist' spaces. James, who, as we have seen, lives in the county, expressed a sense of unfamiliarity and unease when in Leicester, explaining

how through the brief encounters of the city's public spaces, he had struggled to come to terms with certain aspects of the city's 'multicultural condition':

> James: *I can't imagine having a good conversation with you know the girls that wear them things (indicating a veil across his face with his hands)*
> John: *Right. You can't?*
> James: *No. I can't grasp, how can they walk round in that, all the time? I know it's their religion, but they're only young. Surely if they want to be like that, do it when they're older or whatever. What a boring life they must lead. It's not as if they get chatted up is it for what they look like, or whatever? I don't know, it's just the way they are I suppose...cos I don't come across that much either, it just seems really weird to me, how they're covered up. And you can only see their eyes and stuff. Just strange.*

However, he also went on to indicate that while certain people in the city remained beyond comprehension due to their 'strange(r)ness', his acceptance of 'difference' as a way of life was *relatively* more open than those of his acquaintances with less sustained experiences of the city. Though James's viewpoints were saturated with racialised notions of difference, a certain level of acceptance had developed through routinised journeys into the city, illustrated by comments such as: "you get on with them, don't you?" and "it's just the way it is". This can be contrasted with the description he offered of his friends' reactions in that he had come to recognise, if not embrace, the normality of 'difference' as part of life in Leicester, while for his friends this is more of an exotic novelty fuelling racisms:

> John: *What are the bad things about coming to Leicester?*
> James: *I don't know really, I don't, I don't er. I could say like the Asians and that but you just get used to them as well. I mean if I come with my friends, they would notice it more because they don't come as often, and they would be like: 'Urgh! Look at the Pakis!' And stuff. I don't mind them.*

For individuals positioned by their 'whiteness', exposure to difference does matter, particularly in the Leicester context, in terms of a greater acceptance of multiculturalism as something 'usual'. However, these forms of encounter are also heavily limited and restricted in that they often fail to initiate communication beyond the non-verbal, leaving intact powerful racialised knowledges. These are often 'close encounters', situations where strangers

brush past each other in the street, or within inches of each other whilst resting on a street bench. These are certainly moments when contact is maximised but there is an absence of engagement or the establishment of forms of communication or sense of momentary commonality and empathy which might act to disrupt those experiences brought into the encounter. As van Houtum and Ernste (2001:101-102), drawing on the work of Simmel, suggest: "...the city forces citizens to repress emotional involvement with others...There is physical presence, yet mental absence."

Most interactions in the city centre which involve a level of verbal communication which are not part of relationships already established, are limited to commercial transactions, and conversations between charity workers, Big Issue sellers, those promoting music events, charity workers and the passing public. As Mary, someone who appeared at ease with the ethnic diversity of the city, explains, when situations do arise which involve a level of engagement with the racialised stranger, it may actually work to reinforce rather than dissolve or overlook such differences due to their confrontational character and the racialised power relations involved:

> Mary: *When I go down town I've got kids, it's like people are so rude, but that's one thing actually I didn't say that before in different nationalities, and I can't sit and think who it is really, but it might just be a communication thing because they can't speak it yet...Like I'll be: 'Excuse me, excuse me', like I've got the pushchair, 'excuse me!' And they'll look at you like you're dirt and I think: Fucking move!'*

While the centre of the city is seen as *the* 'multicultural' space of the city, it might not be as culturally neutral as some may believe. In particular the claim that the centre represents multicultural Leicester is on the whole made by those who identifying as 'white'. In terms of central facilities, services and the ownership of businesses as well as the less routine celebration of festivals these areas remain a very 'white', monocultural space, not one where the diverse

influences at work in Leicester are particularly apparent[149] The city centre then may not operate as an inclusive space, despite the fact that it draws upon the whole of the population of Leicester. I would contend that acts which disrupt established racialised thinking may be more possible through spaces which do not have attached such racialised 'ownership'.

It is also the case that the centre is viewed as a dangerous and threatening place. One of the main reasons identified for this, especially amongst younger participants from a variety of 'ethnic groups', was a fear of violence associated with the drinking culture of the pubs and bars. The city centre is also seen to hold similar threats to those expressed in the previous chapter, particularly for those from predominantly 'white areas' of the city who appeared concerned at the dangers which such a 'mix' of people presented. This again works to reinforce the idea that a sense of security is lost in environments in which individuals are not entirely at ease or comfortable. For Lucy (13, identifying as 'white' – Braunstone group discussion) this threat was seen in the form of gangs, something which the rest of the group then transferred into a discussion of the unruly nature of the centre and the danger which particular ethnic groups might pose. In this sense while the city centre offers an experience of cultural transgression for individuals who live in monocultural areas of the city, this does not mean that imaginations of difference as negative conceived are necessarily disrupted.

> Lucy: *If you are like walking down town and things you just like, you are just walking and they are just and they are just proper following you and staring at your bag and everything*
> Mick: *And barge into you*
> Lucy: *Some man tried to nick my bag before*
> John: *Really?*

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149 *"The city centre is very monocultural. If you look at the amount of black businesses owned in the city centre you can count them on two hands, maybe even one hand. It's an issue we need to deal with. Aesthetically, the city is monocultural."* (Key informant interview, Cultural services, Leicester City Council)
"Diwali lights were switched on in one particular part of the city and when it comes to the Christian festival at the end of the year that will be in the centre of the city and that will close the city down for days and so on and so forth, so there isn't the equality of the celebrations of multi-faith identities" (Key informant interview, LREC)

Caroline: *Three Somalians tried to get to my aunties bag in town*
John: *What was that Caroline?*
Caroline: *My auntie got mugged in town on Saturday night by three Somalians*
(Mick aged 14, Caroline aged 16, both identifying as 'white' – Braunstone group discussion)

For Nitesh (20, identifying as British-Indian – College, Motor Mechanics class) this sense of danger was also apparent but his explanation differed from a fear of racialised difference towards consideration of the contrast between the security he experienced within his own neighbourhood and the way in which this diminished upon entering an area which lacks such strong forms of territorialisation. The friendliness and familiarity of his home neighbourhood, as was explored in the previous chapter, differs from the unpredictability of the city centre. In this way such public spaces may be seen to pose more of a threat than they do an opportunity to engage with strangers, where people are not required to develop relationships as a means of security or companionship, due to the limited time spent within this environment. As Nitesh puts it, people in town "mind their own business".

Nitesh: *In Highfields they know that there's so many people that, let's say somebody is going, some kid is getting bullied or something, someone is going to go there and help them out innit, because it's Highfields.*
John: *So they would act differently in Highfields than they would elsewhere do you think?*
Nitesh: *Yeah. In Highfields like, everyone, everyone's friendly innit.*
John: *Right*
Nitesh: *And there's so many people round there, so no-one, nobody would do it. But in town and that nobody cares innit whatever's happening, they mind their own business and that.*

As Danny (a youth worker based on the Braunstone estate) indicates below experiences of the neighbourhood cannot be 'separated out' from those of the city centre. Notions of the 'other' are transported into moments of disengaged encounter. This concurs with the argument proposed by Ahmed (2002:562) that "...the immediacy of the face to face is affected by broader social processes that also operate elsewhere, and in other times, rather than simply in the present." Danny shows that the conditions of everyday life in particular residential areas

mean that when individuals are brought together through brief encounters, they are often a point of conflict.

> Danny: *The way it is at the moment, there's a mix in the city centre, but there is not everywhere else, it's been divided up outside the city centre, so the city centre is seen as an area where they get together and sort meet each other and that's a point of conflict, whereas if it was more mixed everywhere it would be less.*

What the encounters of central public spaces of the city show is that such spaces undoubtedly act to attract all and that in the case of Leicester acceptance of and familiarity with a diverse population clearly aids forms of inter-cultural negotiation and the development of a unique forms of multiculturalism, what Zukin (1995) refers to as a 'shared social confidence'. However, I have also shown how the limited, brief and disengaged character of such forms of encounter may not be intense enough, particularly with regard to the absence of communicative engagement, to contest those ideas and which are instituted through other everyday space, specifically in terms of the neighbourhood environment.

7.3. Leisure spaces, 'style' and youth identities

If the conventional public spaces of the city provide important but significantly limited 'open environments' through which progressive encounters across 'difference' might take place, through what spatial practices might it be possible to identify more durable forms of engagement? I want to emphasise here the importance of negotiations across difference which are seen to take place through youth cultures and styles, what Keith (2005:10) calls "...the more prosaic realities of cultural flows that subvert ethnic boundary markers", which particularly relate to the use and occupation of specific 'leisure spaces'. As such I show that ideas of simplistic and straightforward racial and ethnic divisions, particularly for young people in this city as often complicated by forms of identity that stretch across established definitions. Consideration of these modes of identification and the spaces which enable them are significant in that they illustrate the power of 'other' forms of commonality, but also the fragile

character of such negotiations due, I contend, to the temporary and short lived and relatively disengaged basis upon which such encounters take place.

I argue then, that these forms of negotiation do not necessarily result in the annihilation of or racialised exclusion or racist sentiment. With reference to the everyday leisure spaces of young people I show how emerging forms of spatial and racial transgression are practiced alongside those of new and established forms of racial exclusion. In so doing I contend that relationships established in such ways provide moments of commonality which allow for forms of communication that may temporarily dissolve previously held ideas of 'difference' and the 'threats' which these differences were seen to pose. While these may have effects which last beyond such moments, they are also often characterised by their ephemeral and fleeting nature, conducted through spaces which do not always institute forms of habitual inter-cultural engagement. Increasingly then our attention is being directed towards the various qualities of such engagements and their potential for initiating more accepting ideas of inclusion and belonging.

As was suggested by a number of participants, one of the main indications of the existence of progressive relations in Leicester was through what we might call 'leisure spaces', spaces which can be both viewed as an expression of and basis for forms of encounter. These spaces provided, it seemed, critical fora of ethnic inter-mixture and socialisation through which urban identities beyond simplistic ethnic affiliations could be performed. This idea is expressed, for example, in relation to the city's 'nightlife', here by a key informant at the college:

> *"I think that's the thing for me, when I go out on the weekend, you go to the bars and everything, there always seems to be a healthy mix of people and there doesn't seem to be any tensions, whereas some cities I've been to, even with quite a big ethnic minority population it's more, for want of a better word, ghettoised."*

However, this same informant went on to offer a caveat, making a point which is key to an understanding of the transgressional possibilities of such spaces. That is, while some of the city's 'leisure spaces', such as bars and clubs, are seen to offer an almost 'representative' mix of the city's population, a sense of exclusivity also remains intact:

> *"...and then there's clubs and pubs where Asian people go to, and Caribbean and white people go to and they haven't got such a healthy mix I don't think."*

This sense of separation, found both in the city centre and beyond, should not be considered merely as a form of voluntary segregation, but also as exclusion which is practically enforced. In early discussions with one college group, Nitesh related an occasion when he was refused admission into one of the major clubs in the city centre. He was told by the door staff that the coat he was wearing was not appropriate, one which presumably did not fit in with their prescribed dress code. However, Nitesh was convinced that on this occasion it was not his choice of clothing which restricted his entry but rather his visible 'Asian-ness'. As Emily also explained, certain clubs are seen to be restrictive in terms of who they admit in an attempt to avoid conflict between those from different ethnic groups. In her account the nightclub remained off limits to 'whites' not accompanied by 'non-whites' as a move employed by staff to prevent trouble[150].

> Emily: *I used to work in Golds, which is an Asian club... a lot of the door-men, if any, like well, groups of white lads wanted to come in on their own they'd get turned away from the door, or if there was group of white girls, then they'd get turned away from the door, unless you was with a coloured person or...*
> John: *Do you know why that was?*
> Emily: *I think it was so there weren't no fighting.*

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[150] What Emily's account also seems to illustrate is her complex attitudes, behaviour and practices in relation to those seen as racially different. The fact that as has been seen she exhibited some strong racialised sentiment, but then revealed that she worked in this club she identified as 'Asian' club.

As is indicated below a number of the research participants reflected that while certain clubs and bars have a mixed clientele. There are also specific venues attended by identifiable ethnic groups, associated with particular styles of music where specific nights are devoted to these styles and scenes. As Simon indicates though this is not just strictly along ethnic lines, but also on a 'classed' basis.

Mo (19, identifying as British-Indian – College, Motor Mechanics class): *'Lounge One' on a Friday that's normally where all the Indians goes and Saturday go '361' and it's all mixed there so it's not really, that's all right. That's about it. We've just been once or twice to 'Creation'.*

Simon: *Like in 'Undecided' you get anyone but it's mainly white people. Creation's anyone, anyone goes there. 'After Dark' it's mainly black and like erm Asian people, it's like a hip-hop and R'n'B club.*
John: *Right*
Simon: *'Zanzibar' you get like lower class people like from Saffron Lane, Braunstone. Basically what I call Scallies. 'Castle Rock' is mainly black, 'Zeus' is mainly black. 'The Charlotte' and that's mainly white, they have different races.*

> Nav: *But there are certain clubs where certain 'ethnics' go to, like Thursday at 'Voodoo' yeah? Nothing racist but there was a load of white people there, yeah? Friday nights at 'Lounge One' yeah? There's a load of Asian people there and 'Soho' yeah? On a Saturday night yeah? Loads of black people go there…on a Thursday night yeah? It's just like there's loads of Asian people that go to 'Creation' and 'Zanzibar' and then on Friday nights yeah? There's like loads of white people in town.*

Nav (18, identifying as British-Indian – Belgrave youth centre) went on to illustrate the way in which these spaces provide opportunities for inter-ethnic socialisation, but also how this didn't prevent a reliance upon racist discourse and practice. In this sense, while experiences of such 'leisure spaces' direct attention away from 'race' and ethnicity as defining features of identification through a musically based form of commonality, they are also sites through which racisms and conflicts are still expressed. As Simon above notes, 'Creation' attracts those from all ethnic backgrounds in the city, but as the account of Nav and that of Msoni illustrates, this does not always ensure a

non-confrontational environment, particularly when actions and reactions are fuelled by alcohol consumption:

> Nav: *Yeah, I went to Creation once yeah? And I was totally pissed*
> John: *Yeah*
> Nav: *And there was this girl yeah? And she was a white girl yeah? And I was dancing with her yeah? After about two minutes yeah? This other white girl comes to her and she goes, she goes to her: 'Why are you dancing with a Paki?'*
> John: *Really?*
> Nav: *Yeah. So I just looked at her and erm she goes: 'Go away you Paki!' for no reason, and so I went like: 'Alright then safe, whatever', cos there was a gang of guys with them as well*

> Msoni (18, identifying as Indian – College, IT class): *If I go with friends* [to Zanzibar nightclub]*, Indian, the white people they see the Indian they go racist, because they might start a fight even if we have not done anything to them.*

However, these environments can provide important moments both of racial and spatial transgression and forms of unity established through a mutual understanding of 'the scene', particularly when these scenes are part of 'exclusive' sub-cultures. They work to confuse the boundaries of identity and offer moments which may be used as a future basis for more progressive forms of inclusion. While distinctions remain on the basis of 'visible' communities, as Nav shows here, they are often considered as insignificant on the basis that attention in these moments is focuses upon the practice of "raving".

> Nav: *But I mean like I went to a rave yeah, on Thursday, and there was like loads of white people, a couple of black people and a couple of Asian people and I was still raving there. There was like one Chinese guy yeah? in like the whole bloody club yeah and he didn't give a fuck, he was still raving and I was as well.*

Gareth (18, identifying as 'white' – College, Electrical Installations class), also points towards the importance of such spaces as confusing the boundaries of group identification, affiliations and interests, blurring the boundaries of 'race' as a suitable mode of distinction. In explaining how racism operates in Leicester, he illustrates the importance of the geography of sub-cultural

identities, youth styles and cultural practices which complicate any straightforward categorisation of individuals. For Gareth both in the case of 'rock clubs' and Creation, a more 'mainstream' dance nightclub, these venues attract a diverse clientele where forms of commonality based upon the music scenes are critical to forms of identity.

> Gareth: *Your racial, what's the right word? values, come down to where you are sometimes not like any old racism, cos like if you walk into a rock club and you'll see black people, Chinese people like at all times, you walk into 'Creation' you'll see black people, white people, Chinese people, Asian people.*

What this indicates is the potential for such spaces, operating in relation to other everyday practices but also distinct from them, to shift identity away from strictly fixed racial terms, and towards culturally based distinctions. However, it is also the case that these such forms of 'commonality', while critical forms of inter-ethnic negotiation, part of broader trends of inter-cultural 'acceptance', need to be recognised as often momentary and non-verbal forms of engagement. While some clubs attract a regular and devoted clientele, the formation of a 'community' as such around these spaces does not extend much further than friendships groups already established.

Culturally-based similarities appear to revolve around, as an examination as the role of the music scenes has shown, the importance of 'style' as another mode of belonging and affiliation, modes which might stretch 'race' as a valid point of distinction. As the following conversation with a college group shows, the definition of 'culture' is at stake here. While for Simon, who looked to distance himself from the rest of the group and strongly associate himself with an ethnically inclusive hip-hop scene, culture is seen as trans-racial 'practised style', for others, such as Chris it is seen as a rigid and ultimately exclusive form of black identity, indicative of a multicultural city which has no place for 'whites'. Here Simon, as someone who identified as 'white' and attended these 'black' clubs, shows how music scenes considered as 'black' might not relate merely to the idea of skin colour, but to the adoption of

embodied markers such as clothing, musical taste and language, or as Simon put it "the stuff you're into".

> Simon: *Some people like Castle Rock and Zoots you can't go in there, somebody won't let you in there unless you are into that culture*
> Gareth: *It's the culture again*
> Simon: *It's the stuff you're into*
> John: *So it's style and things like that?*
> Simon: *Yeah*
> Chris: *That's racial discrimination and all!*
> Simon: *No, it isn't.*

The influence of such stylistic markers as a route of racial transgression, particularly for those positioned by a 'white' ethnic identity, can also be seen to work beyond intentional adoptions. An urban youth culture heavily influenced by 'black' cultural elements forms part of a more generic urban style, an important element of what Gilroy (2004) identifies as the metropolitan convivial culture of a post-colonial Britain. Experiences of such cultural forms, particularly in terms of fashion, was expressed by some research participants with regard to leisure wear such as trainers. As a male participant from one of the Braunstone groups, (13, identifying as 'white') illustrated, wearing the appropriate footwear was part of the pressure to fit into his peer group. The importance of being seen to wear the right and latest trainers was significant in the formation of social relations[151].

> Joe: *Everybody else that I hang around with has got the same trainers on as me, so I bought mine to fit in and to carry on, you know what I mean?…So the people I hang around with, it's either Nike Air or Nike Shocks, that's it. That's all you're allowed.*

Although not always recognised as such there were occasions where through the adoption of such fashions forms of commonality were established between young people from 'white' and 'non-white' ethnic backgrounds. In the

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[151] In my time spent within the youth centre environment the importance of an urban style along these lines was also clear, acting as a critical form of commonality between those from African Caribbean, Asian and 'white' ethnic 'backgrounds'. This particularly applied to the wearing of particular types of leisure wear such as in terms of for example trainers, tracksuits, baseball caps etc.

following example Sarah and Dan joke about the fact that they are 'black' due to the fact that they wear a particular type of trainer; Nike Air Force One. While for Dan this brought difficulties associated with the idea that he was 'faking it', in Sarah's experience this appeared to bridge a gap with those "black guys" she met on the bus. However, given the gender relations involved and the fact that these young 'black' men were apparently 'drugged-up' this clearly wasn't a comfortable experience for her.

Sarah: *Like me and Dan we think we're black don't we, Dan?*
Dan: *Yeah.*
Sarah: *Yeah, we're black, Air Force One's, do you know what they are?*
John: *Trainers aren't they?*
Sarah: *Yeah.*
Dan: *They're what black people wear and you get abuse for wearing them.*
Sarah: *You don't though because I was on a bus once and these black guys, they were a bit drugged-up, they were smoking dope and that, the guys on the bus and one's like: 'Top girl, top girl' and I've sat there on my own and like:* (imitating them) *'Trainers by the truck load, trainers by the tonne, Air Force One!' and I was like that and then they was like: 'Look!, top girl' to everyone on the bus and I was like thinking: 'Leave me alone!'*

As Dan suggests above, the transgression of racialised boundaries in stylistic forms is something which is monitored on all sides. Those who are not seen as acting in an appropriate manner in relation to the colour of their skin are often derided by those who view such behaviour as either inappropriate or inauthentic. For this group there is a fine line between those urban styles which are seen as acceptable and those which are seen to push the boundaries too far, running the risk of offending those to whom these styles are seen to belong. While Sarah and Dan indicated that they could get away with wearing these trainers, this did not extend to other forms clothing, designated as more resolutely 'black'. For James, the over-stepping of such boundaries is exhibited by another member of his class, whose behaviour and practices as a 'white' male he found inappropriate and amusing:

Sarah: *I think it's mainly if they think you're black and then they don't like that*
John: *Like if you try to pretend?*
Juliet: *I don't think they like that!*

Dan: *Like if you wear you cap like…*
Group: *…On the side*
Dan: *Yeah*
Sarah: *Or where one of them straight hats with a bandana underneath or something*

James: *What was the other lad talking about? Black people?*
John: *He was just talking about his friendship groups like you've talked about your mates basically*
James: *Yeah*
John: *You know different experiences though, isn't it?*
James: *He thinks he's a gangster!* (smiling)
John: *Does he?*
James: *It's funny!*

The power of thinking beyond 'race' through styles as a commonality based upon 'something else' is clear through the way in which individuals might be classified stylistically. As some discussions illustrated, young people did not always see themselves primarily in terms of their ethnic 'background' but also in terms of sub-cultural groups such as Townies, Trendies, Goths and Skaters. These are classifications defined in terms of what individuals wear, the music they are into and to some extent their class backgrounds. As Karl shows below there are certain clothes which he wouldn't wear in case he was seen as a 'townie' although he himself, like Claire (15, identifying as 'black') did not claim to belong to any such group.

Karl: *Like TN caps, sometimes Schott's look a bit Townie – ish you know*
Claire: *I don't care what I wear!*
Karl: *No I don't, it's just you get called a townie right, yeah? I get called a townie for what I wear*
(St. Paul's group discussion)

Upon asking this same group how important these forms of distinction might be in comparison to racial and ethnic differences, it was clear that for them these 'cultural' elements were stronger and more important. Whereas 'race' was viewed as something which was imposed, something which you were born with, these other points of identity were seen as those of choice.

Karl: *A lot of the time you won't see townies and skaters mixing but you will see races mixing, so I think it probably is*
Michelle: *Yeah*
Neil: *Yeah*
Claire: *Clothes and all that*
John: *So you think it's often more important in a way?*
Neil: *Yeah, because I think it's harder to get rid of like the way people group each other than it is to get rid racism*
Michelle: *That's like the people you hang around with at school and stuff like that*
Neil: *Yeah, it's more part of the person that you are when you get clusters. Like you can help being that, but you can't help being say Indian or white.*
(St. Paul's group discussion)

These forms of distinction also allowed a sense of freedom for some young people in that, unlike other forms of affiliation which were seen as much more stable and rooted, identification in terms of style meant that on certain occasions and through certain spaces there was an opportunity to transform the self through appearance. This particularly seemed to be the case for Stephanie (15, identifying as of dual-heritage), as described by her friend Sarah in her absence. As Mahtani (2002) argues, dual-heritage females often play an active role in destabilising racist and sexist containment, through the strategic employment of forms of identity, thus bending the rules of racial classification. In this case Sarah indicated the ability that Stephanie, as 'an individual', had to switch between different styles in order to adapt to the differing spatial contexts and different youth cultures whilst moving through the city.

Sarah: *She's like a Trendie some days and like him (pointing to Nick) another. She's quite individual, unique isn't she? She'll come one day in her Converse and all that and another day in her Air Force One. We was going through town and she was in her Air Force One's and that and we was going round the shops, you know like his shops (pointing to Nathan).*
John: *What kind of shops?*
Sarah: *Like RS and places like that and we was going in there looking for things yeah and we was going round and we were just saying 'Shed', 'Shed', all these people that you just know are on their way to Shed and Stephanie says: 'I wish I had come in my skating stuff', well not skating stuff, I don't know what she calls it, all kitted out.*

However, it is also clear that forms of exclusion operate across these alternative identities. While certain boundaries may be dismantled, others replace them. It

is also the case that for some individuals, the ability to make such moves is restricted due to the visibility of their racialised identities. For example, groups which were stylistically defined were mostly composed of those identified as 'white'. Those more racially marked through local discourses of difference remained locked into identification through the lens of 'race'. As Stephanie shows in the following excerpt with reference to 'Somalis', there are limits to acceptance within a shifting version of 'we' that may not be based on race and/or ethnicity per se. Those not alike in terms of dress, language and behaviour often remain outside the boundaries of 'mainstream' acceptance.

> Stephanie: *If you see a Somalian walking down the street, you know like if you see a person, and they like look at you, you know you like smile at them a bit don't you, you?*
> Sarah: *Yeah*
> Stephanie: *You can't smile at them because there's nothing, there's nothing about them.*
> John: *Didn't you say you had some mates who were Somalian?*
> Stephanie: *Yeah, but they're totally normal, they're just like, I'm not saying that Somalians and whatever ain't normal but, but like they dress normal and stuff, they're just like us so.*

> Stephanie: *It's like I don't mind the ones, you know like 'E'*
> Sarah: *Yeah, that's what I mean, they're friendly*
> Stephanie: *Yeah, he's like, he's lived here a while and he's like, he's just like us, you know talks like us and everything, but then you get them other ones who just like spit at yer!*

What these practices of prosaic inter-culturalism point towards is a recognition that progressive relations are negotiated, where it is possible to see that an inclusive 'we' can be stretched beyond narrow and conventional definitions based upon static conceptions of 'race'. What also needs to be recognised though as was suggested in relation to commonalities formed through music, is the fragility of these negotiations. Another example of this was offered by Ali (17, identifying as Somali – College, ESOL class) in his account of 'the cage', a site in his own, multi-ethnic neighbourhood used to play football. Ali described how on a regular basis he, his friends and others from the neighbourhood would congregate there. He shows how it attracted a cross section of the local

population represented by those of a number of different ethnicities around the shared activity of football.

He then goes onto to explain how ownership of 'the cage' is up for grabs, that various groups defined by their ethnicity would make claims on the site as their own and that this weakly marked out territory became a site of contestation. Secondly he shows that when trouble flares up and relationships become fraught due to the competitive nature of encounter that the primary point of distinction is through alliances based upon strict ethnic identities. These distinctions may be forgotten or overlooked, but on other occasions remembered, particularly where blame is looking to be laid.

> Ali: *That's one of the main places because everyone likes to play football down there and last summer, Somalian people, black, white people, all playing together in the cage and if one Somalian people just trips one black guy up or white guy then everyone gets mouthing and they are gonna fight, it's that simple, yeah. And then I, and now it's like this is ours and other days it's yours and sometimes when they both want to play.*

> Ali: *Last Sunday I was playing there football with some Somalian guys and then some Jamaicans came there and they want to play, we didn't care, just say us against you. There was this little kid, 15 years old and the Somalian guy 17 years old, he accidentally tripped him, he did trip him, but he didn't do it on purpose. So some bigger guy, 21 or something came up to him, holding him in front, grabbed him like this (pretending the hold someone's neck) and then threw him backwards at the wall. So the guy got mad and kicked him in his balls and the guy couldn't breathe, some other guys came and they didn't fight but they were the last people, the Somalian people in there, but some of them didn't want to fight at that time so the guy just said: 'I'm sorry' and it's OK but next time they see each other I know they're gonna fight.*

We have thus seen how certain spaces and identities based around culturally distinctive scenes might enable forms of inter-cultural negotiation and engagements which, in terms of the levels of communication and forms of commonality exceed what the conventional public spaces of the city might have to offer. They do so as Amin (2002a) suggests because of their transgressional qualities, in that they remove individuals from the powerful socio-spatial situations that normalise definitions of 'us' and 'them' based on

'race' and ethnicity. I have also shown how stylistic markers might bridge gaps created by the reinforcement of racial and ethnic divisions. However, it is also clear that while emerging culturally based identities emerge through, music, style and momentary but intense moments of encounter, forms of distinction and exclusion are also maintained. These exclusions illustrate the limits of a shifting 'we' in the context of Leicester, but also the fact that commonalities exhibited through youth cultures do not necessarily provide an all encompassing solution to the performance of racisms or harmful distinctions. Whilst not neglecting the importance of forms of acceptance which have developed in Leicester through transgressional moments and identities 'beyond ethnicity', I contend below that one of the most progressive ways in which the negotiation of difference may be observed and seized upon is through those spaces which enable forms engagement where difference is instituted as the 'norm', in ways which minimise the articulation and impact of damaging racialised imaginaries.

7.4. Spaces of sustained encounter

I have thus far emphasised the importance of the *quality* of inter-cultural encounter through the everyday geographies of the city of Leicester, as a way of looking beyond static identities. I have argued that while encounters, enabled and restricted through various forms of 'mobility' and everyday spaces are critical to an understanding of relations which have developed in this place, through, for example, visibility and shared usage, they are often brief and disengaged in character. I now look to appreciate the importance of more sustained versions of encounter, those which do not just involve forms of transgression outside of what is familiar, but those which might institute an engagement with 'multiculturalism' as habitual.

As has been examined in chapter six, residential neighbourhoods certainly provide one limited forum through which difference might become incorporated (but not necessarily accepted) through shifting definitions of who might belong to 'the local'. However, it was also argued that these spaces

exhibit strong territorial claims, unlike, for example those of 'the cage' as outlined by Ali above. One such space which might go beyond such strong territorial claims and produce practices of engagement which are more durable are educational spaces.[152] This is not to argue that such spaces as solely experienced in positive ways, as with examples given above, these are often arenas through which closed identities are reinforced. Rather, I use them as examples of occasions which offer possibilities due to the nature of encounters which often require forms of engagement that become sustained and routinised. What seems to be important as regards progressive inter-cultural relations is the recursive nature of engagement of individuals as equals, the spatial context in which this takes place and the specific dynamics of the encounter including the importance of those individuals present which allows the expression or silencing of racialised and racist sentiment and specific forms of inter-ethnic negotiation.

I want to firstly indicate here, taking the example of secondary schools in the city, how spaces of everyday, sustained encounter with 'difference' might not necessarily bring about progressive results due to various claims made upon these spaces, and the socio-economic contexts in which these schools might be situated. Of the schools involved in the research, some are very much a reflection of the local residential make-up, while others, especially those resulting from agglomeration, attract a more geographically dispersed intake. For some students then, school was located within their own neighbourhoods with which they were familiar, while for others there was a greater sense of displacement. Mick (14, identifying as 'white' – Braunstone group discussion) illustrates this with reference to New College situated in the New Parks area of the city.[153] He shows how the school acts as a mechanism for bringing 'separate areas' and their populations together with the possibility of the development of new friendships. However, he also indicates that alongside this, fights often

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[152] In this case this refers to schools and colleges of further education

[153] This is a poorly performing school under special measures which was formed after the closure of several other schools in the area and thus draws on students from neighbouring Braunstone and beyond.

result, particularly when territorial issues are at stake as they seem to be in these areas[154].

> Mick: *People that go to New College, they are from Braunstone, Beaumont Leys, they can be from around different places, but if you make friends there then people come from say Beaumont Leys to come down to see people there. So all it takes is like the school to keep people together. But then there's times when people meet it ends up in fights.*

This level of conflict is not just seen as operating between those from different neighbourhoods, such as Braunstone, New Parks and Beaumont Leys but is also seen to take on racialised forms. New College students themselves recognised this by arguing that some students, particularly Somali students in the school had a 'lack of respect', an argument which led one of the group to angrily state: 'Kick 'em back down to their country, innit? if they treat us like that'[155]. These outlooks, however, do not necessarily recognise the racialised power relations involved and hence view this as an even contest between 'whites' and 'Somalis'. Such conflicts are made all the more powerful due to the territorial claims made on these areas considered to be 'white', and the fact that many 'non-white' students come to the school from across the city.

> Tony: *Everyone's not always going to get on are they? You're always going to get different opinions*
> John: *In your everyday lives do you come across that?*
> Stephen: *Not everyday. Sometimes in this school*
> Tony: *Yeah sometimes*
> Stephen: *Say like whites and Somalis*
> Bob: *Which communities Tom would you say…*
> Anna: *It's the immigrants*
> (All aged 15, identifying as 'white' – New College group discussion)

Re-asserting this dominant tension more by way of commentary than accusation, Wayne (15, identifying as 'white') another member of this group, spoke of an occasion when this conflict was at its most obvious:

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154 See chapter six for discussions of territoriality in these areas of the city.
155 Again we see one of the dominant tensions within the city coming through, that is the stigmatisation of those seen to be new 'arrivals' and 'immigrants' in particular Somalis.

Wayne: *When I was queuing outside for the bus, year 9 and year 10, there was, what do you say, whites v, versus Somalians outside the bus stop. Trying to get on the bus in some sort of orderly fashion and they're beating the hell out of each other outside the window. In one particular incident one Somali lad nearly got put under the bus wheel.*

Anna: *I think in this school you get on with anyone.*
John: *You do get on with anyone?*
Anna: *You get on with anyone apart from some people, like between white people and Somalis.*

As was also indicated in this same group by Anna, negotiations across difference within the context of this school retain exclusionary aspects and those who are still characterised by their 'otherness'. This needs to be seen both in the context of a neighbourhood characterised by its social and geographical marginality, as discussed in the previous chapter and also in the light of the various forms of displacement experienced by students.

In a similar way to Anna above, Sarah (Hamilton group discussion) recognised, after a particularly strong string of statements against the presence of 'immigrants' in the city, that there actually were fellow students who were not 'like her' in terms of race and ethnicity but 'like her' in other ways. In a similar way to the analysis of 'style' above, the shifting 'we' of these encounters means that while race doesn't remain the only mechanism to distinguish 'us' from 'them', in relation to certain groups who don't qualify on the basis of country of birth or language ability it is still potent.

Sarah: *But then I suppose in a way I'm wrong because we've to keep some of them, chucking them all out, the ones we like.*
(Group laughs)
John: *Which ones do you like?*
Sarah: *Some that we get to know in the school or whatever*
John: *What is it about those…*
Sarah: *…they're nice, they speak to you. They're like, they want to be your friend or whatever…I don't mean this in a bad way, but you know Indians that are born here and they speak English like us and I know it might sound a bit bad but I think they're all right.*

It is possible to then see in certain circumstances through both a reliance upon local and nationalised discourses of incompatibility and territorial defence in neighbourhoods of marginality, the act of bringing people together alone cannot be considered a progressive move without consideration of the power relations at work in these environments.[156]

I now want to briefly consider another educational space, in the form of the college campus. I would argue that this space differs to that of 'the school' both in terms its central location, whereby territorial claims are not so easily made and its ability to draw on the whole of the city's population. For all of those who use it, but particularly for those who have a limited experience of the city beyond their own neighbourhood and the city centre, this site provides an insight into the cultural character of the city.[157] As a sustained form of encounter this site seems to offer a number of possibilities for progressive inter-cultural engagement. But before I move on to discuss the importance of attention to the specific dynamics of these encounters let me first guard against a spatial fetishism (Massey, 2005)[158] by outlining how the college may also act as a space of division and conflict.[159] While this is an arena of sustained encounter which brings 'strangers' together, an important aspect of the everyday life for students, there are a number of limitations to this.

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[156] However, this is not to ignore the fact that for many of the students in less charged contexts, the school environment provided a more conducive environment through which respect and understanding was allowed to develop, through which difference was not acknowledged as a major or problematic issue.

[157] A point which was recognised and explained by one of the key informants from the college: *"People come here from all over, you know they come from all of the estates, from, from all of the areas of Leicester and some people who have lived in the inner city, multicultural like, they're very much used to integrating with different types of people and understanding different types of people and understanding different people and like just being brought up in Leicester, knowing when Diwali is, when Eid is, when Ramadan. But for other people it's a very new environment and we try to acknowledge that"*

[158] As Massey (2005:101) notes: "...abstract spatial form in itself can guarantee nothing about the social, political or ethical content of the relations which construct that form. What is always at issue is the *content*, not the spatial form, of the *relations through which* space is constructed."

[159] In particular I was informed by a number of key informants in the college that in the last few years they had experienced some serious violent incidents between African Caribbean and Somali youth from the nearby St. Matthew's and St. Mark's estates whereby the college was used as a venue for conflicts between those who were not even enrolled.

Firstly, courses usually only run for a period of one academic year. Secondly there are difficulties in facilitating students to engage outside of the classroom environment, particularly with the pressures on many students to bring in some form of income. Thirdly, it is also clear that not all classes provide forums for encounters across difference, in that they are 'monocultural'. As James (19, identifying as 'white' – College, Electrical Installations class) explains, while the college provides important opportunities for inter-ethnic contact it is not a location of intentional socialisation beyond the bounds of classroom interactions.

> John: *So in college do different groups tend to keep themselves to themselves?*
> James: *Yeah, I'd say so yeah, yeah I suppose because you've got your Black groups and your white people I suppose, your Asians.*
> John: *Do they tend to not interact at all?*
> James: *Err not really, not, no. But I suppose, I suppose when you're on different courses and that, I mean I don't talk to people on other courses, you just knock about with people in your class…Just people in my class, come and do my course and go home, I don't really want to talk to anyone else.*

While attendance at the college for James is then an important aspect of his daily routine, and as has already been discussed, a moment of spatial displacement and transgression, he was not interested in engaging with those outside his class, one composed of those entirely identifying as 'white'. For some individuals then the college remains a comfortable and familiar experience, one which may not challenge previously held notions. In a similar way to the public spaces of the city centre, the congregation of diverse individuals does not necessarily lead to positive manifestations of inter-ethnicity as Simon illustrates through an extract from his diary below:

> *"In the morning I went to the library with James and worked on the computers. The library is full of different races and people with disabilities. You don't really mix there, you just do your work."* (Extract from Simon's personal diary, 11/04/04)

In discussions with Chris from this group it was clear that the college did not offer him the opportunities he found elsewhere to interact with those he considered to be from a different background to himself. For him, these forms of transgression appear to be stronger through his workplace, an environment, which as Estlund (2003) shows often *forces* those from different backgrounds into moments of engagement either through the establishment of relationships between co-workers, as Clive notes, or as Chris explains through the requirement to develop customer service skills, which entailed the need to 'get along' with those from a variety of ethnic backgrounds:

> Clive: *I mean my work place as well, since I started working there, there's a lad there, 'P', I working with him as well, he's a great laugh. We get on really well, so.*

> Chris: *If they are friendly yeah? I'll talk to them, I don't mind, but that state of mind has come strictly from my job that I have to do. I have to talk to people and when you deal with a lot of people on the basis that I do, then you become broader minded. You think: 'Wait a minute why are you thinking these thoughts in the first place?' It makes me think deeper if anything, yeah? I was racist, I do admit that, that's before I started work, then I started to deal with Asians, Black people and then you think, you think to yourself: ' they're not so bad'*

The limits of negotiation and 'accommodation' are not only the case within class groups identified as mono-cultural, but also within those where for one reason or another levels of communication between members of the same group are limited and even confrontational. In some groups, there was clearly little interaction between students in the same class. One 'white' student from such a class, for example, spoke to me informally regarding his thoughts of quitting his IT course due to the fact that he had lost interest in the subject but also that he and his 'white' friends felt "out of place" with respect to the ethnic make-up of their class. This feeling of being out of place 'as a white person' in the college was something which Andy (16, identifying as 'white' – College, IT class) also mentioned in the more formal setting of the interview where he indicated both his relationships with those considered to be outside of his own

'ethnic group' but also how such relations were fraught with tensions and suspicions, expressed through recognition of 'dirty looks':

> Andy: *Sometimes I felt intimidated in college once, because I have got a friend whose black and a lot of his friends are Black as well, but I went to him and started talking to him once and then all his mates started giving me really dirty looks and stuff and I was like I felt a bit intimidated by that. I didn't really have a problem with them, I was just talking to my friend, like, and they just kept giving me dodgy looks and stuff like that and trying to push me out sort of thing, like out of place.*

Other students were also able to point towards the fact that the college was, in fact, a divided environment. This wasn't so much within the context of the classroom, but certainly in other micro-spaces of the institution where specific groups were seen to hang-out together exclusively. For example, Dev (16, identifying as a Muslim of Portuguese nationality – College, ESOL class) explains how in the main block of the campus, it is not usual for those from visually distinguished communities to meet together. He compares this to the situation in his own block devoted to students studying English as a second language where this form of socialisation is more established. Emily also points to another space of socialisation outside of the classroom, that of the canteen through which divides between those seen to belong to similar backgrounds are reinforced.

> Dev: *You can see that if, I don't know if you went to the other block that happens too much if you go into there there's black people with black people, Muslim with Muslim, yeah? you can see some of white people with Muslim people. I think that's quite normal, but you don't, maybe you don't see often, just sometimes, but it's not normal.*

> Emily: *If you go in the canteen, I suppose most of the groups, I'd say probably most of the classes are mixed, but when you go into like the canteen you get all the white people who sit together and then all the coloured people who go and sit together and then that happens.*

While it was certainly recognised that ethnically based alliances were reinforced through the college, it was also recognised by some students that the college remained a 'safe' environment. Largely due to the surveillance

under which college based activities were carried out, overt conflict was often minimised. Here Ali illustrates that when these sorts of 'fights' take place they are usually enacted beyond the college environment.

> Ali: *Actually at college I see some white and black people, or Indian, Asian people but it's OK because nothing happens in college, it's kind of* [a] *safe college. Maybe sometimes I see people, I've seen most of the people fighting afterwards, just yelling at each other and then it is very serious but they don't do it at college you just go always somewhere.*

This, however, is not the complete story of relations within and through these spaces. While I would be cautious to say that progressive inter-cultural relations necessarily entail the development of long term relationships, (as we have seen other briefer 'moments' might have important consequences) the significance of the establishment of friendships across racial and ethnic divides cannot be denied as a way of minimising the damaging effects of racialised exclusion. Importantly, this does not refer to processes of 'integration', whereby ethnic minorities are seen to have adopted or adapted a 'white-British' way of life. Rather, these examples indicate how relationships develop out of a negotiation between, as far as is possible, 'equals' engaged in common activities which are not directly aiming at some form of cohesion as an outcome, and do not necessarily require individuals to surrender important aspects of their own identities. In this regard one group stood out.

This class who described themselves as a 'mixed' group, appeared open in their discussions of sensitive topics, an indication of a level of understanding and respect which had developed principally through the habitual nature of their engagement. One of the reasons, which might be put forward in accounting for this, is the nature of the group based activities of this all-male class, who as mechanics relied upon each other in their practical work, work about which they appeared interested and sometimes passionate. This environment also allowed them to share equally beneficial and important information about

opportunities for employment in the local trade.[160] Members of the group also explained how the balance of the class operated in terms of relative ages of the students. The presence of older students, particularly Clive (aged 25, identifying as 'white') and Vik (aged 36, identifying as Sikh) meant that there were both 'Asian' and 'white' peers who could be looked up to, especially in terms of experience and knowledge of the trade. These were also relations which extended beyond the classroom. On one occasion whilst trying to locate one of the students from this class for the purpose of an interview I found most of this group congregated in the pub next to the college.

As Clive shows here the class is seen as a vital forum through which those from different backgrounds and those with different religious beliefs were able to actually get to know each other as individuals, rather than as representatives of particular ethnicities. Again, it is also clear that we are not necessarily observing the transcendence of ethnic identities or the disappearance of a racialised discourse, exemplified here in the way in which 'Clive equates 'whiteness' with 'normality', but the momentary and also instituted dismantling of dangerous associations which so often prevent encounters from enabling progressive inter-culturalism.

> Clive: *Yeah, I mean the group itself, we all get on really well. I mean surprisingly people like 'M', I mean I've known lads like myself, like 'M', not Asian, but normal lads like me and they've got that gobby and I've just hit 'em, because they just do my head in. But 'M', he's just, there's something about him, he just, he doesn't wind me up, he's great, he's a laugh and we get on, we all get on really well. There's 'A', 'N' and 'S', 'S' is quiet though, 'S' very quiet and then there's 'A' and he just keeps getting picked on.* (laughs)

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[160] This idea of common activities which harnessed the interest of diverse groups, taking the attention away from other differences, was emphasised to me by one youth worker on the Braunstone estate in one of the group discussions held there. With reference to the establishment football sessions in the area, she commented: *"I mean if they were meeting, if they were just meeting probably in a youth centre of something like that and weren't really getting involved in activity then they'd probably have time to think oh who are you and where are you from and not really know that person and not really know how to interact, but then that could cause problems, but because they're actually having to involve each other and then because they're involved in that it works."*

Clive reflected on the fact that had he not attended the college course he would not have got to know any of those in the group, especially since the areas in which many of them lived such as Highfields were those (as we have already seen) imagined to be 'out of bounds'. Two other members of the group, Mo (who identified as a Muslim) and Nitesh (who identified as a Hindu), also attested to the importance of a sustained sense of engagement which extended beyond this one location:

Clive: *I mean I'd have never met any of these, I'd never know any of them, because I wouldn't go to Highfields or anything like that because I know it's reputation, anyway like that, I wouldn't mix...we get on really well, which I was surprised at because it's like until I came to this college I sort of, like, I only stuck with bikers and rockers and things like that and never mixed with races or anything like that.*

John: *What about you two are you quite good mates now?*
Mo: *Yeah*
Nitesh: *Yeah*
Mo: *It started with us chilling at college, but now after college we just chill as well.*

The establishment of such relationships was not confined to this one group. As Mary indicates, their all-female group seemed to operate in a similar way suggesting that the make up of groups along gender lines is significant in influencing the manner in which members of the group act towards each other. Again this was a vocational course which attracted a variety of students of different ages and different ethnic 'backgrounds' and often required students to at least work in pairs on a regular basis. Mary shows here, how although there are divisions in the class, they are based on 'cliques' through which certain students separate themselves out from the rest of the group. This separation, however, was not seen to be along lines of 'race', ethnicity or religion.

John : *Yeah, I mean within the class is there, friendship across those ethnic lines?*
Mary: *Oh yeah there is yeah*
John: *You all get on?*
Mary: *But if you're not in the right cliquey group within the class, or anywhere, there's a cliquishness in there. If you're not in the right clique,*

you're not in the right group, do you know what I mean? Regardless on whatever
John: *And that's regardless of race or ethnicity?*
Mary: *Yeah it just doesn't matter. One half of the room is really cliquey and the other half just gets on with anybody and everybody.*

In the case of Mark (who identified as a Catholic Pilipino) and Dev (who identified as a Muslim of Portuguese nationality) a strong friendship also developed, whereby the question of religion which was clearly of paramount importance in both of these individuals' lives was not seen as a significant barrier. This friendship developed not out of what might seen as their conventional similarities, but out of the similarities enabled by this form of engagement and through the spaces of the college. What seems critical is that these two young people were brought together in very similar situations, in a city and country which was still not completely familiar to either of them, highlighting but also producing commonalities beyond 'race', ethnicity or religion, but commonalities which didn't deny these differences.

Mark: *Yeah, we are giving each other something. Like, if he didn't have that he can borrow that, if I don't have money he's giving me money, if he don't have sometimes and sometimes we share things. We play football together, so.*
John: *What about the fact that you come from different religious backgrounds and different countries, does that ever matter?*
Mark: *Nothing, no, because I'm A Catholic, he's a Muslim, he's from Portugal, I'm from Philippines, it's like normal for us. Then I told him that I never had a friend, a Muslim friend before* (laughs quietly)

7.5. Performing inter-cultural relations

I have looked to show towards the end of this chapter that through a variety of social encounters, made concrete through experiences of various 'city spaces', that the details and circumstances of inter-cultural 'meetings' are significant. In particular I want to argue here that articulations of inclusionary and exclusionary sentiment are often the outcome of 'appropriate behaviour' in relation to those present within specific contexts. As was discussed in chapter three, all fieldwork material is a product of both experiences and knowledges brought into the research encounter (McLeod and Yates, 2003), but also as a

result of relations of power within that encounter. Each situation thus provides a novel environment through which ideas of the 'self' and the 'other' are negotiated, expressed or hidden and not articulated (Burman and Chantler, 2004; Hyams, 2004). However, I want to stress that these encounters do not only selectively reflect and filter 'external' experiences, but they also actively (re)produce forms of inclusion, particularly, as has been argued, when they are instituted as habitual practices. In this sense, I contend that the material gathered is both illustrative of ideas of place and 'difference' as experienced in everyday life, but also illustrative of the dynamics of the research encounter. That is, while in accessing 'the everyday' there are clearly difficulties in knowing what takes place beyond such moments, these moments provide us with vital information about what is concealed and what is displayed in particular everyday contexts and what this might mean in the facilitation of more inclusionary, transgressive and eventually habitual moments.

In my discussions with one of the college groups composed entirely of students identifying as 'white', the importance of who was seen to be present and who was seen to be absent was critical to the expression of heavily racialised and often racist behaviour and language. I want to argue that in this situation a recognition that the group were seen as racially similar meant that the students presumed that 'we' (including myself) all shared tacit assumptions about the racial 'other'. In other words, the make-up of the class, as well the invitation offered to discuss sensitive issues around 'race' and 'multiculturalism', not only allowed previously held ideas to be expressed, but also generated and fuelled such expressions. As both Emily and Simon explain here, the importance of the 'whiteness' of the group meant that they were not afraid to air views which others might have construed as racist:

> Emily: *When you get more white people together then they put their point across because they're not scared of saying anything, like our group. They're not worried about, like, they're gonna go off and say we're being racist.*

> Simon: *Put it this way, if there's a different culture in that class they wouldn't have said all lot. Just because it was all white that's why they said it.*

This is not to say that racialised and racist utterances did not reflect experiences of Leicester beyond this moment, particularly when, as we have seen in chapter six and above, these ideas are conditioned by positions of exclusion and marginality experienced elsewhere[161]. However, recognition of an all-'white' class amongst those present indicates how such situations might sometimes alarmingly reinforce and legitimise such ideas due to a relative lack of dissent. For instance, this recognition was noticeable through the addition of questions of re-affirmation tacked onto the end of statements, such as "Do you know what I mean?" requesting a level of empathy.

In the context of this particular class then it was clear that the make-up of the group affected what was said and done, which I would argue cannot be confined just to the research moment. This was made clearer when I was told by some of the group that this form of discussion would have been very different had their class tutor been present. This was due to the fact that firstly the tutor was seen as a figure of authority but secondly and maybe more importantly because he was identified as 'Asian'. The idea that 'whiteness' emerged within this research situation as a collective form of identification in opposition to racialised 'others' illustrates the power of these dynamics and their influence upon definitions of 'us'/'we' as well as ideas of appropriateness.

This shows the way in which negotiations of identity and difference are often the product or outcome of social experiences and inter-cultural encounters which rely upon a common sense understanding of what should be said and done in specific situations. As Chris, for example, made clear, he was conscious that the outlooks of individuals were not static, but dependent upon the social and spatial context in which they are set. Such outlooks for young

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161 As I have argued we must always bear in mind that knowledges and experiences travel across the spaces of the city and are always brought into future encounters.

people are clearly altered in line with the specificity of individual situations, particularly if these involve a level of engagement with those considered as racially and/or ethnically different:

> Chris: *A lot of people's views tend to change you know? to suit their friends…So your views are going to change on that, not necessarily for the better, but that's how it changes, just because you want to feel socially accepted. So it's not just about people's views, it's about being part of the crew…One person could have been incredibly racist with one group of people and then to a different group, they could be hanging around with black people.*

This is a critical observation in that Chris recognises that people's views are not always coherent, unified and limited to stable definitions of inclusion, but are dependent upon the demands of the everyday contexts in which they set and (re)produced, contexts which particularly in the case of Leicester, often involve some form of inter-cultural 'contact'. It is therefore inaccurate to consider the articulation of racist sentiment, while extremely powerful, as something which is not prone to change nor dependent upon the environment in which it is expressed.

In contrast to the group discussion above, another discussion which took place on the Braunstone estate is also illustrative of the way in which the 'ethnic' make-up of the encounter both reflects and generates ideas of difference and inclusion. In particular this is the case here in terms of what is concealed and what is not said, given the nature of the topic up for discussion and the presumed differences amongst those in the group. This group was composed of young people from the estate, all of whom, except for Nic identified as 'white'. From their body language and non-verbal signals which indicated a level of frustration, it was clear throughout the discussion that two of the girls in particular were keen to contribute to questions such as: 'How well do those from different backgrounds get on in the city and on the Braunstone estate?' However, while they clearly felt strongly on these issues, given the presence of someone whom they identified as racially 'not like them', they saw these as inappropriate views to express in this context. I was only truly aware of this

once the session had ended and the young people were leaving. I asked one of these females if there was anything she had wanted to say during the course of the discussion, but felt she couldn't. She whispered to me: "I'm racist" adding "I couldn't say anything because I was sitting right next to that Indian lad. I'm racist and I admit it!" This is not to argue that the silencing of these views necessarily made a difference to the opinions expressed by this young female outside of this encounter, particularly, as we have seen, given its brief character, but it does point to the power and potential of these moments in influencing the performance of inter-cultural relations.

For example, the dynamics of the interview carried out with Nic (identifying as Hindu-Sikh) and Warren (identifying as 'white English') illustrate the ways through which differences might be negotiated through the encounter and 'beyond'. Before the formal interview Warren discussed in detail with me, in quite strong language, how he "felt like an outsider" in Leicester. In a similar way to some of the views analysed in chapter five, he described through several stories of the 'unfair treatment' of 'whites' in the city and how 'immigrants' were benefiting to the detriment of the established local population. During most of the formal interview Nic and Warren were the only two individuals present. Warren again brought up some of these earlier issues, employing similar sentiment, but on this occasion, given both the more formal line of questioning and the presence of Nic, he did begin to temper some of his language, in particular seeking agreement from Nic on some of those issues, which as established Braunstone residents they might be able to agree upon.

What is therefore interesting is the way in which these two negotiate a sense of common ground during the course of the interview whereby Warren's criticism of 'new arrivals' did not include those such as Nic who had, as we saw in the previous chapter, been incorporated into a definition of 'the local'. On his part Nic did not want to be seen to challenge Warren's opinions too directly, although it was clear that he wanted to dilute some of the ideas expressed. For example, this can be seen below through statements such as "I

don't think we should like say: 'Well, no, you can't come in'". This is a clear example of how the 'we' of the encounter may become flexible and again we see the employment of the local dominant discourse through which Nic and Warren are united in opposition to the threats posed by 'new arrivals'. The passage below is then not only a reference to the way in which young people might 'take sides' with regard to the 'joining together' of 'Asians' and 'whites' against 'Somalians', but also to the flexibility of identity enacted through the encounter.

Warren: *Yeah but it's also if you've got Asians that are offending whites, the Somalians will take sides with both and then usually the Asians and the whites join together, like…*
Nic: *…because new people are coming into Leicester, I think it's like…*
Warren: *It's getting worser ain't it?*
Nic: *Yeah it's getting worser, definitely*
John: *Yeah?*
Warren: *Since they've allowed all the asylum seekers, like Tony Blair's allowed everyone to come in, it's kind of now made this area, well made everywhere feel like a hell hole.*
Nic: *But I don't think because they've let, they've let people in, I don't think we should like say: 'Well no you can't come in'*
Warren: *With the council you walk in there now, there's more (long pause) asylum seekers, foreigners, and all that lot than there is us, there, because they're getting the help they want. People like us ain't.*
Nic: *But if we say that and they turn to us and then it's not fair on asylum seekers. I think it should just be like…*
Warren: *We should all be treated the same, but we're not*
Nic: *All be treated the same, yeah?*
Warren: *Yeah but the problem is Nic, we're not being treated the same, we're being treated, to be honest, like I said to you earlier, I don't know if you feel, but I feel like an outcast*
Nic: *Yeah*

The situatedness and the various dynamics of the encounter thus makes 'difference' differentially visible, and in so doing make critical contributions to the manner in which inter-cultural relations are played out. These examples draw directly upon the fieldwork experience and thus rely upon brief forms of encounter to suggest the possibilities of environments which enable alternative performances to develop. This potential is illustrated here with reference to the experience of Chris and engagements across 'difference', which

importantly have become part of his everyday routine. As the analysis above has suggested, the institution of these forms of habitual engagement may be critical to the development and facilitation of performances which no longer view difference as either strange or threatening.

As Chris remarked above (see section 7.4) in relation to his workplace experience, the fact that his job requires him to enter into a situation where he had no choice but to 'get on' with those he identifies as 'different', plays a significant role in the performance of more inclusive forms of sentiment. These are forms of sentiment which, as he reflected, have had a discernible impact on his more general outlook towards those from 'non-white' ethnic groups. While it would be wrong to argue that this is Chris's 'true' or 'authentic' attitude (for example he openly expressed 'racist' ideas within the context of the group discussion, while remaining more guarded within his one-on-one discussions with me), such performances clearly matter, and directly influence patterns of inter-ethnic and inter-cultural relations and relationships, particularly when they are as habitually practiced.

7.6. Summary

Through this chapter I have shown that the multicultural environment of Leicester is experienced through an exposure to difference, which is arguably more apparent in this city than in other 'more troubled' areas of the UK. The spatial mobility inherent within the everyday lives of young people involves the active use of city spaces which are integral to negotiations of identities and definitions of 'differentiated others'. As was suggested in chapter two, these experiences not only take place within the context of the city, but also play an integral role in actively re-producing ideas of 'difference' and of 'place'. In examining the manner in which various forms of inter-cultural encounter might enable such negotiations I have moved from briefer and more ephemeral, yet significant encounters, through to those sustained through habitual forms of engagement. In doing so I have stress the importance of the quality of the encounter and processes of socialisation between those

identifying as racially and or ethnically 'different', emphasising that co-presence and conventional ideas of geographical proximities do not in themselves result in progressive forms of inter-cultural negotiation and understanding.

We have seen that this 'exposure' takes place through a number of inter-cultural encounters, encounters which vary in terms of in intensity, quality and context. I have argued that many of the encounters which constitute everyday experiences of racial and ethnic 'difference', for those from a variety of 'ethnic' backgrounds, works through the visual field, through the identification of 'visible communities' and the use of shared spaces. With regard to this I especially paid attention to the conventional public spaces of the city located in the central areas of the city. I argued that encounters which take place through those spaces designed and maintained with congregation in mind, are characterised by meetings for those who have established relationships elsewhere. Where encounters with 'strangers' do take place, these are often ephemeral and fleeting and even conflictual due to the manner in which other racialised experiences are brought into the moment of the encounter.

I then indicated how spaces of the city such as leisure spaces may enable both new, but fragile, forms of inter-cultural negotiation, before arguing that more durable and sustained forms of engagement might enable habitual contact which is capable of disrupting the damaging ideas and practices of racial and ethnic distinction established elsewhere. The importance of spaces which did not have attached to them strong territorial claims, as well the significance of entering spaces as equals involved in common ventures, was also introduced. I then went on to indicate how performances of identification and differentiation might be enabled through particular spatial contexts, where the specific dynamics and power relations of the encounter are appreciated. I argue that this teaches us some important lessons regarding the manner in which more inclusive, accepting and open definitions of belonging might be established in multicultural places, particularly in terms of the need to seize upon and develop the role of those sites which act initially as transgressive sites, but then as sites of habitual engagement with difference, where forms of commonality can be

established aside from, but not necessarily permanently beyond the realm of racial, ethnic, religious and cultural distinctions.

8. The spatial arrangements of difference and similarity

"Alliances are not guaranteed by the pre-existing form of a social group or community where that form is understood as commonality. The collective…is not about what we have in common." Ahmed (2000:179)

> *"…we don't need to share cultural traditions with our neighbours in order to live alongside them, but we do need to be able to talk to them, while also accepting that they are and may remain strangers (as will we)."* Sandercock (2003:7)

8.1. Introduction

This final chapter ties together the main theoretical and empirical threads of the thesis by providing an overview of arguments developed and by pointing towards the implications that these might have in terms of normative policy considerations. Rather than a 'conclusion', as such, which suggests a sense of finality, I look to show here how the material gathered and the theoretical angles adopted, might point us in new conceptual as well as practical directions. I do not therefore offer any absolute answers or concrete solutions to the challenges of multi-racism and multi-culturalism in the UK context, but suggestions which might allow us to think and act differently[162] in the pursuit of more accepting, open and progressive inter-cultural relations and ideas of belonging.

Initially I discuss here some of the main 'findings' and substantive issues which have emerged from the research in relation to the broad questions outlined at the outset in chapter one. In particular I emphasise how an appreciation of the spatial dynamics of inter-ethnic relations, offers a vital insight into the everyday experience of 'living with difference', specifically in terms of the negotiation of identities through urban space. In this way the instability of differences and

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162 By 'differently' here I make a contrast with those 'official' approaches outlined in the opening chapter of this thesis, particularly in relation to a 'cohesion' agenda, something I will return to in the final section of this chapter.

similarities is explored with regard to the specificity of place, the role which cultures of marginality and disadvantage play and the various qualities of inter-cultural contact. The importance of spatial practices and knowledges, as productive of such differences and similarities, allows us then to consider how progressive relations in multicultural urban areas may be realised. As both Ahmed (2000) and Sandercock (2003) suggest above, I argue that this may not be achieved through the formation of alliances and commonalities as traditionally conceived, but rather through encounters which allow for shared experiences. I thus explore the potential for facilitating forms of socio-spatial mobility and inter-cultural engagements, through which differences are not denied but may also become less important or relevant. I then show how these ideas illustrate the weakness of policies centred around the concept and implementation of 'community cohesion', and appeal for a more open and fluid sense of national belonging, which does not rely upon static conceptions of commonality, but which also appreciates and addresses the circumstances through which more rigid and stubborn forms of identity become manifest.

8.2. Everyday negotiations and the role of place/space

Through this thesis I have attempted to outline the character, contours and ontology of 'inter-cultural relations' through an examination of those influences which feed-into the diverse experiences of the multicultural city of Leicester. With reference to the experiences of young people from a variety of 'ethnic backgrounds', I have specifically emphasised how these relations have significant spatial qualities. As was outlined in chapter two, the role of space, as regards the social phenomena of urban multiculturalism, has not remained un-examined within the literature, but is largely confined to considerations of space as the outcome of wider economic and social forces. In contrast, I have approached space, and importantly everyday spatial experiences (including embodied practices and knowledges), as inherently productive of social relations, in relation to a civic culture of 'positive multiculturalism'. In this way, I have shown how individuals' ideas of self and of ethnically differentiated 'others', are organised, maintained, and/or shifted through

multiple geographies. By adopting this conceptual basis, it has allowed me to demonstrate the various ways through which, as Hall (2004:2) puts it, "cities both divide and connect" and the ways in which the complex spatial arrangement of difference and similarity (re)produce experiences of this multicultural city.

In line with this spatial appreciation, I also argue that considerations of place are crucial because places inevitably form the context through which relations are conditioned and re-constituted. These are contexts which vary considerably, illustrating that inter-ethnic settlement, accommodation and conflict are never uniform across the space of the nation (and should not be treated as such). While relations in different locations are informed by prevailing ideas of national belonging and governed by the same over-arching regulatory frameworks, the multiple local and distanciated (spatial and temporal) trajectories which weave through places also provides us with unique arenas of multiculturalism. A focus on the everyday aspects of multiculturalism has also crucially shown that places are experienced heterogeneously and made sense of through individual circumstance. Therefore the manner in which individuals relate to places are dependent upon the way in which they are spatially positioned on an everyday basis.

In the case of the city of Leicester there is no denying that many of the problems seen elsewhere in the UK are indeed absent. As we have seen in chapter four, this has largely been due to the presence and role of specific minority groups (from specific national, ethnic and class positions) in actively claiming it as their own through formal and informal political mechanisms, as well as a relatively buoyant local economy, assisted by these same migrants. However, this history of accommodation and incorporation is certainly an uneven process (both in a social and spatial sense) and not a reality for all who call Leicester home. Everyday practices of inclusion and exclusion must then be seen to feed both into and off of such contexts. Whilst forms of inclusion and exclusion are importantly routed through formal commitments to ideals of

diversity and equality and local socio-economic trends, they are not solely imposed, but also worked at on an everyday basis. Where the idea of Leicester as a model for positive 'race relations' seems to fall down is through the accounts of those who see themselves outside of or beyond a discourse of positive multiculturalism. As we have seen, this is the case for both young people identifying as 'white' and living in areas marked out as 'working class' as well as 'non-white' young people who find themselves variously excluded on the basis of racialised thinking and action.

It is clear then that racial 'scripting', as strategically adopted by individuals or as more violently projected onto the bodies of 'others', even in Leicester, is often unavoidable given the strength of 'racial thinking' and exclusionary national cultures of belonging as a tool of distinction in relation to everyday lives. The employment of racialised identities in the everyday language of young people was particularly notable, particularly as expressed in terms of the existence of distinct 'communities' in the city. As illustrated in chapter five, this was particularly the case for both 'white' and 'non-white' young people who considered themselves as marginalised from mainstream ideas of harmonious local relations. However, it is also clear that 'race' takes on different meanings, over time and across space which entail that such distinctions, while commonly employed were not always divisive and damaging, but always often employed to describe the realities of everyday cultural diversity in Leicester. It is this critical link between the relative 'flexibility' or negotiation of difference, and the everyday geographies through which such negotiations are actively practised, that I have sought to highlight.

In particular I have drawn attention to the relationship between two significant forms of 'geographical positionings' and the repercussions these have for social relations. I refer here to both positions of marginality (in economic, cultural and social senses), as well as positions taken up through the relative mobility of everyday life; spatial trajectories which involve various forms of inter-subjective encounter and contact. This focus has allowed me to highlight how

forms of mobility and immobility (both socially and spatially) influence the terms upon which the negotiation of identities takes place.

Crucially, I stress that these positionings cannot and should not be separated out as distinct processes. For instance, in chapter seven (as well as at other points) I have argued that physical co-presence with, and proximity to, those seen as 'different' is no guarantee of progressive relations, particularly when the racialised exclusions reinforced through cultures of marginality remain intact. On the other hand, in some situations, such as the marginal neighbourhoods identified in chapter six, the limited accommodation of ethnic difference (often over time) is identified through the daily reproduction of 'local' neighbourhood loyalties. Knowledge of and physical contact with those considered to be 'different' plays a central role in the construction of inter-subjective identities, but this has to be seen in relation to experiences of marginalisation and isolation (and vice versa). For example we have seen through the accounts of young people living in Leicester that inter-ethnic interactions can often be confrontational given the realities of daily life for those who do not access to the material, experiential or psychological 'capital' (Bordieu, 1986) required to deal with such 'threatening' encounters.

In chapter six the relationality of everyday geographies was further emphasised through an analysis of the ways in which the spatial arrangement of segregation conditions inter-cultural relations. Contrary to much of the work which has been devoted to studies of 'race and residence' (as outlined in chapter two), I argue that the phenomenon of segregation is not significant solely because of the sense of isolation which is produced. Rather, in relation to sources of information concerning differentiated 'others' and the generation of particular knowledges (both through and beyond the space of the neighbourhood), a sense of local belonging is actively re-produced. In the case of more marginalised and disadvantaged neighbourhoods this is achieved through practices of familiarity and defensiveness in relation to the perceived threat of those, not seen to belong. This point then brings our attention to the

manner in which such knowledges might be influenced, not just with reference a static and separated neighbourhoods, but through the inherent complications and inter-relatedness of everyday life in this city.

It is also the case that patterns and practices of tolerance and accommodation are not as straightforward or as static as they may sometimes appear. While racial markers still work to define levels of acceptance, the status of the 'outsider' is open to metamorphosis, whereby an established 'local' community, through everyday shared conceptions and practices of territoriality may come to accept those initially seen as 'different'. Similarity and difference may then not be so distant. As Kristeva (1982) writes, using the notion of abjection and 'the abject', unassimilated threats embodied by certain forms of difference, are not necessarily kept at a distance, but actually "...lies there, quite close". This proximity of the 'other', in both a social sense as well as through the multiple geographies of everyday life, indicates that there exists an active involvement with difference in the construction of identities, which may, but does not always entail, physical co-presence. The importance of the spaces through which such ideas are reinforced or re-formed are therefore vital to an understanding of the condition and conditioning of inter-cultural relations.

The idea of physical co-presence in relation to the contexts in which such 'meetings' are set was further explored in chapter seven. In particular I argued that occasions and situations which bring together those seen to be 'different' are tied to both the character of those sites (relying upon forms of movement and mobility) and knowledges which are brought into such moments. The geographies of everyday life are then 'leaky' spaces which feed into one another (Mahtani, 2002: 431) where ideas of similarities and differences are caught up in the diverse histories, socio-economic circumstances and spatial trajectories of individuals. The spatiality of everyday life thus influences the ability of individuals to become culturally mobile, and deeply affect experiences of inter-cultural encounter.

Spatial proximities do not therefore neatly equate to social proximities. Bringing together individuals from what are perceived to be different 'backgrounds' does not ensure progressive consequences. As has been shown in relation to residential neighbourhoods, neighbourhood nationalism does not always prevent the existence of tensions when certain embodied 'differences' are brought into contact, even if this contact is more or less habitualised. Neither do encounters which involve transgressional moves, such those which upset the racial coding of the city, always result in the demolition of harmful divisions - particularly for those more at risk of becoming victims of racism. In terms of youth cultures it is also possible to see the significance of an urban lifestyle whereby music, clothes, attitude and language all play an important part in both destroying and establishing social boundaries. What this teaches us is the need to address the terms on which such encounters take place. It is the details, social dynamics and power relations involved in such encounters which matter and which allows for more or less inclusive performances.

Progressive examples of inter-culturalism are evident in those situations where there is an engagement with difference which goes beyond a requirement to employ damaging 'race thinking'. They are related to forms of interaction which spark moments of future inclusion and alter performances enacted elsewhere but more importantly I would argue, they are related to engagements which become instituted as habitual. This is not to say, as I suggest above that, the routine character of interaction in itself holds any solutions, but given certain circumstances, progressive inter-cultural sensibilities may be harnessed in this way. While sustained exposure to 'difference' might engender certain forms of acceptance and tolerance, challenges to damaging racialised discourses emerges through transgressional as well habitual engagement that moves the focus away from 'race', 'ethnicity' or indeed cohesion as the primary concern. What seems important is that individuals engage on a equitable basis, which recognises both differences and similarities. In particular, circumstances and situations which require a need to 'get along', either as a defensive coping

mechanism or to achieve common goals, ambitions and interests, is vital to negotiations.

This points us towards the importance of those occasions which lead to the formation of temporary relationships and identity performances that reach across differences, whilst never completing destroying such differences. Therefore I do not suggest that commonalities should be established in a permanent and resolved manner which denies difference as something to be valued. To speak in such terms is to contend that negotiations of and across difference need to come to some ultimate conclusion, that is, at some point they need to be prescribed and dictated. Rather, I stress the role of everyday environments which allow individuals to come to terms with people who may at some point be considered threatening on the basis of racialised assumptions. Such experiences, may only form a small part of the everyday lives of individuals, but such performances may be potent enough to influence practices of inclusion and exclusion played out elsewhere, if some level of trust is inculcated.

Progressive relations, therefore, are not only realised through forms of 'celebratory multiculturalism' as alluded to in chapter four. Negotiations of difference and sameness also take place, in other, more mundane ways through neighbourhood allegiances, friendships established through sites of habitual engagement, shared styles, interests, activities and the use of shard spaces. It is also clear then that such negotiations do not necessarily match the idea of Leicester as a good multicultural city, when this is defined as the selective mainstream incorporation of certain forms of 'acceptable' differences. This is not to say that Leicester's image and reputation as a place which exhibits the signs of progressive civic multiculturalism is not based upon many tangible developments, but that this image means different things to different people, depending upon everyday racialised, classed and geographical positionings.

8.3. Facilitating inter-cultural negotiations

In addressing the policy implications of those substantive issues explored above I must firstly emphasise that any normative suggestions need to be sensitive to the specificity of place. As I have argued throughout, the complex relations, forces, objects, practices and imaginations which constitute places, entails that policies always need to allow for contextualisation and contingency. Suggestions are not equally applicable in different geographical locations and cannot be straightforwardly transported from place to place, without an understanding of often very different contexts. With this in mind I outline here some tentative normative suggestions as to how progressive inter-cultural relations within multicultural urban areas might be enabled. Importantly I stress the facilitation, as opposed to the engineering of progressive relations in recognition that everyday negotiations cannot be entirely imposed. However, opportunities for such negotiations can certainly can be provided, given that individuals have the chance to engage in situations of an intensity, quality and duration that disturbs conceptions of 'difference' re-produced elsewhere. In dealing with damaging everyday performances of differentiation, racism and exclusion then, there is a need to offer possibilities for alternative identity performances which may be instituted as part of the everyday.

The creative potential of inter-cultural encounters, experienced and enabled through everyday spaces, needs to be prioritised as part of a concerted effort to disrupt the damaging images and impressions left by 'others' (Ahmed, 2004). Yet as we have seen, contact alone often does little to repair the damage done by racialised imaginaries, when they remain unchallenged. Recognition of the importance of encounters with difference, therefore, must go hand in hand with recognition of the role of related spaces of acculturation and socialisation; those material and cultural circumstances which fuel racialised exclusions. Individuals require the means or 'capital' (Bordieu, 1986) to engage with 'difference'. This is often something denied for those who live more isolated lives, due to a fear of racism and/or racialised difference, perpetuated through immobility and mistrust. This 'immobility' is further compounded by the lack

of opportunity to work, learn and play and participate. Without the provision of vital social, educational and cultural resources and long term investment in economically, socially and culturally marginalised urban areas, active participation and inclusion within positive and successful multiculturalism will remain limited.

Not only does the socio-economic basis of identity formation need to be addressed at the urban level, but there is also a need to recognise that it is the quality of the encounter which also matters. Knowledges and attitudes towards 'difference' need to be informed through experiences that work to reduce a level of fear, anxiety and trepidation, and to allow individuals to see people in all their differences and similarities. Situations where individuals are given the opportunity to engage in activities with common goals and purpose need to be valued and encouraged. There is then a need to facilitate situations where notions of normality and familiarity are transgressively disrupted and where engagement with 'difference' is instituted as the norm in situations which allow for brief but powerful moments of association. Such experiences will not necessarily form the whole of the everyday urban experience for the majority of urban residents, but that they may be significant enough to inform attitude, outlook and identity performances.

This normative approach may be contrasted with the idea that relations should be improved through special, devoted programmes (which often target young people as an easily accessible cohort). Whilst intentions are often laudable, such schemes (adopted for example in Leicester under the wider banner of 'community cohesion') are often short term and provided with limited public funding. They also have as their primary goal the achievement of some sort of 'cohesion' between ethnic groups, which again appears as a progressive move. However, the danger is that individuals are often brought in as representative of specific communities, reinforcing divides, as well as excluding those both most at risk and most liable to enter into racialised conflict. Positive relations in and of themselves should not, I suggest, be the overt objective of bringing

people together. Rather, they should be an effect and important consequence of beneficial forms of engagement, situations which meet the needs of individuals and social groups whilst engendering forms of co-operation, shared need and joint interests.

Many of the everyday spaces discussed in this thesis can arguably set their sights on achieving such goals, suggesting that investment in community services (when 'community' is employed in an inclusive manner), educational institutions and places of employment should be prioritised. These opportunities need to be seized upon and their potential explored. This is not to say that new and novel ways of developing inter-cultural engagement should not be instigated - indeed creativity and flexibility is vital - but that these also need to address the basic needs of individuals whilst establishing them as something more permanent. In this way the way local authorities and agencies also need to address issues of 'race' and racism, not as some fringe or specialist concern, but as something which feeds into all aspects of service delivery and policy consideration.

Consideration must be given to the steps which can be taken in schools, colleges, the workplace, leisure spaces and so on as integral aspects of the everyday experience. In such 'institutions' those in authority have the ability to directly influence, if not dictate the experience of these environments, which for many make up a large part of 'the everyday'. Their role, as I have suggested above should be one of creative and flexible facilitation. I re-emphasise here that I do not wish to offer a spatial typology, whereby particularly types of everyday sites, automatically exhibit more progressive characteristics. As I have shown, forms of inclusion and exclusion are often simultaneous, the power dynamics, social composition and regulations vary across these sites. This aside, the arenas through which inter-cultural engagements, (to some extent) already take place, are key starting points for the facilitation of greater inter-cultural understanding. The objective within such environments should be to respect difference, identify disadvantage and exclusion but also insist that such differences do not remain an obstacle to

future and further associations amongst individuals. Such work demands that both differences and similarities are confronted by direct, communicative involvement.

It is then through attention to occasions which enable cross-cultural interaction and achievement and where interests and a requirement to complete the task at hand together are necessary, which might foster trans-active associations. In this case of Leicester I would certainly observe that this has in some ways been encouraged, but must be extended as the driving ethos of progressive multiculturalism. For example, I came across various forms of experimentation in terms of the twinning of schools, and visits to various faith environments, but these need to be expanded so that visits to strange people and strange places do not become exoticised or threatening as to form not exceptional experiences but part of the norm. In this sense then one of the primary reasons for the need to enable engagement is the recognition that forms of spatial mobility disturb instituted practices of racialised territoriality. This clearly relates to matters of urban design in physically opening up the city, however, individuals also need to be given reasons as well as the ability to travel across these boundaries.

Whilst this thesis has recognised the dynamics and to some extent unpredictable and thus unmanageable character of everyday relations, I suggest that there does not preclude progressive interventions. In particular, I emphasise the need to facilitate and work with those situations where difference is accepted and respected, but is not the defining feature of identification. This therefore involves a recognition of both differences and similarities as potentially dynamic, but also those conditions which allow for such dynamism to progressively flourish. By highlighting the central role of the negotiation of identities, I do not suggest that we need to necessarily go beyond 'differences'. Rather, we need to value differences[163], whilst avoiding

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163 As Parekh (2000a) notes, equality does necessarily involve dissolving difference and ignoring the fact that individuals and social groups have differing needs and requirements and are locked into various positions of inclusion and exclusion.

both forms of essentialism and the negative associations which maintain racist discourse and practice. Importantly we need to come to an understanding that differences do not and should not prevent other forms of 'coming together'.

8.4. Negotiating national identities

The value of recognising the existence and inter-play of simultaneous differences and similarities can also be seen as a way of addressing the shortcomings of an exclusive national identity, which as was suggested at the outset, increasingly relies upon narrow ethno-cultural values and competencies in the pursuit of some sort of 'cohesion'. Definitions of Englishness and/or Britishness as officially endorsed and as practised on an everyday basis (for the two are clearly inter-related) need to recognise both the legitimacy of forms of difference and the often marginalised positions from which these identities are articulated as well as the possibilities for more fluid identities enabled through 'the everyday'. I therefore stress the importance of both a recognition of diversity and the shifting character of this diversity as fundamental elements of a British identity. A national approach to 'multiculturalism as lived' must acknowledge the routes through which identities take shape, identities which need not aspire to some legislated ideals of belonging and do not relate to the idea of the nation in a uniform fashion.

To fix the terms of identity and belonging, as I would argue is taking place in the current policy environment (exemplified by the introduction of citizenship tests and the encouragement of a shared sense of Britishness for instance), denies the importance of 'difference' and stresses commonality as the basis of our co-habitation. In so doing it also denies the right and freedom to conduct diverse cultural practices and neglects the importance of transnational connections as integral aspects of everyday life. Although I haven't primarily focussed upon national identities through this research, it is clear that the way in which individuals relate to ideas of 'place' is bound up in personal history and circumstance. The same I would suggest also goes for the manner in which individuals connect to 'the nation', which as we have seen is often

routed through and made sense of through experiences of place. The reason why individuals operate beyond and outside of the bounds of a narrow sense of 'Englishness' or 'Britishness' in an orthodox sense is, therefore, related to the way in which everyday trans-national connections and historical/cultural routes are valued, as well as the manner in which they are actively excluded from the mainstream on an everyday basis.

In light of this, as Parekh (2000a) argues, a progressive sense of Britishness needs to be seen, not in terms of some overarching 'cohesive community' through which our similarities should always trump our differences, but rather in terms of a 'community of communities'. However, I would also add that these 'communities' cannot be viewed as static and fixed socio-spatial entities, but social formations constantly in re-formation, adaptation and flux. Laying down rules for belonging in some enduring manner critically neglects the way in which forms of identification and the boundaries of community are emergent in this way. Certainly if an examination of the experiences of the city of Leicester has taught us anything, it is that social relations do not remain static. This is not to deny that certain forms of identity are more strategically essentialised than others through affirmative forms of defensiveness, as well as through the practice of racialised exclusions. We have seen this to be the case for young people in Leicester identifying as both 'white' and 'non-white' where situations seem to require the establishment of strong, bounded communities. However, when static ideas of identity are adopted and promoted as a route out of racialised conflict through formal political mechanisms (although expressed in slightly more rosy and 'inclusive' terms), this irresponsibly re-enforces the idea, and confirms for many, that there is a requirement for England/Britain to stand firm against threatening 'outsiders' found both within and without.

A desire for coherence and cohesion is not then a suitable response to the challenges posed and the problems experienced in this multi-cultural and multi-racist nation. There is a need to move with the multicultural realities of

today's Britain, not suppress them or conceal them. These realities include the complex trans-national connections and sense of belonging of those who live here as well as the harsh everyday conditions of marginalisation experienced by both disadvantaged 'non-white' and 'white' communities. Both of these aspects need to be recognised and incorporated into a more general policy agenda of openness to difference alongside commitments to addressing inequality in all forms. To argue that cultural assimilation is the solution to damaging divisions seems to blame those most at risk of exclusion for these very conditions, and requests that it is those marked by their 'race' who have to make the move to some 'common ground', defined by the norms of the 'ethnic majority' (Hage, 1998; McGhee, 2003;).

There should then be no requirement on behalf of those seen as racially 'different', (which in the British context equates to 'non-whiteness'), to assimilate their differences. Indeed, 'difference' in itself should not be identified as the source of poor inter-ethnic relations, rather it should be seen as the basis upon which new negotiations can take place. The goal of policy should not then be to create uniformity, but to meet the needs of those in environments at risk of division and racism, and by facilitating forms of commonality that do have prescribed visions of commonality as their goal. Progressive relations do not come from complete agreement, they are a result of agonistic engagements (Amin, 2002a), the clash of a plural public and are the consequence of a coming together of multiple positionings. Such clashes may sometimes be divisive and sometimes harmful, but they also offer routes out of racialised conflict on terms which are not stipulated prior to engagement but which make sense to individuals in relation to the realities of their everyday lives. If these negotiations of identity can be facilitated in environments which meet the material and cultural needs of individuals and allow for equality of opportunity alongside a respect for difference, there should be no need to make detailed plans for the future direction of a British identity. These, I suggest, are routes worth pursuing...

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