

Racism, Anti-Racism and the Theory – Practice  
Problematic in Social Work. A Study of Practice  
Teaching and Learning Outcomes in Liverpool.

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Wainwright.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Aims of the Research**

The subject of this thesis is 'race', racism and social work. This subject is explored by means of an examination of a particular aspect of social work education, namely that of practice teaching that is, the process by which social work students are taught in the field by practitioners to apply theory learned in the college setting to practice (Shardlow and Doel 1993). Emphasis is placed on how practice teachers are trained with regard to anti-racist theories and approaches and on how they in turn teach students to work in an anti-racist way with service users (Williams 1999).

The thesis' central concerns are, first, to examine the different ways of theorising 'race' and racism, second to consider the way in which social work as a profession has addressed 'race' discrimination and developed its own approach to anti-racist practice (Williams 1999), and, third, to examine how these ideas have been filtered into practice by the mechanism of practice teaching.

The first and second of these concerns are addressed by a critical examination of a wide range of literature derived from the fields of sociology, social policy and social work practice. The third of these concerns is addressed by an empirical study of practice teacher training in social work and of the way in which that teaching was translated through to social work students while on practice placements as part of their professional training.

## **The Changing Context in which the Research was conducted**

As with many part-time doctorate research projects, this research has spanned several years during which time there have been considerable changes and developments in relation to social work, social work training and anti-racist theorising and practice. In what follows, I will briefly outline these changes so that the research to be presented can be seen in the light of this changing context.

### **The Diploma in Social Work**

In 1994/95 at the inception of this research project, social work training was carried out under regulations introduced in 1991 by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) for the Diploma in Social Work. Key features of this relatively new form of social work training were :-

- a) that it was centred around practice competencies and the application of theory to practice, and
- b) that at the core of its value base was a commitment to anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice.

With regard to the first of these features, the (then) new Diploma in Social Work was very much in line with other professional training trends because of its emphasis on use of practice competencies to measure individuals' abilities to perform social work tasks (CCETSW 1991b Dominelli 1996). The emphasis on practice competencies led to the provision of a systematic vehicle of practice assessment for qualifying social workers and raised the

practice teaching element of social work courses to a much higher level of importance than before. This was evidenced by the development of a post-qualifying award for practice teachers (Feery and Wainwright 1997). The new emphasis on competency also fitted well with emerging forms of training below full professional level in social work, particularly those leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). These qualifications were more competency focused than the Dip/SW and were used as the training qualification for residential and day care staff (Care Sector Consortium 1992). In respect of competencies, therefore, developments in the Dip/SW moved forwards relatively smoothly, despite some resistance from social work academics (see Jones 1996, Phillips 1993).

Developments in relation to the second key feature of the Dip/SW – anti-racism and anti-oppression – have not been as smooth. Social work training and practice gained the tag of “political correctness” in the early 1990s from the Conservative government (Dominelli 1996), and the media, and to some extent the public perceived social work as a waste of public money (Pinker 1993). In 1995 as a result of the Conservative government’s frustration with the prominent position held within the Dip/SW of anti-racist and anti-oppressive theory and practice, CCETSW was required to review the Dip/SW. In the revised Dip/SW (mark 2), the notion of competency as a key to assessment strengthened its position. However, the issue of ‘race’ and anti-racism were given far less prominence in their own right and placed more in the context of discrimination and poverty in delivering the social work task. The practice teaching award was also amended (CCETSW 1995a) with a similar outcome, reducing the influence of anti-racist practice as a key social work value, whilst emphasising the social work task and competence.

However, notwithstanding the review of the Dip/SW and the practice teaching award, 'race' has still been a national and local focal point for debate, within social work. More recent developments in the wider social policy field since the formation of the new Labour government in 1997 – particularly in relation to the police and policing (Macpherson 1999) – have provided backing for the maintenance of focus on 'race' and racism in social work (see for example Dominelli 1997, Race Relations {Amendment} Act 2000)

### **'Race' and Racism in Liverpool**

Another key contextual area to bear in mind in relation to this research is that of the politics of 'race' in the particular locality where this research was carried out i.e. the city of Liverpool. Liverpool has a distinctive racial history, shared to some extent with other ports such as Bristol and Cardiff. There is a long-standing Black<sup>1</sup> community in Liverpool deriving initially from the effects of the slave trade and the settlement in the dockland areas of the city of African merchant seamen in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Black community in Liverpool has up to the present time remained largely confined to these areas of the city (Frost 1992). There has been a good deal of trans-racial marriage resulting in the development of a substantial population of people with a dual heritage, but up to the 1990s there was little evidence of the Liverpool 8 community, as it was called, being integrated socially and economically in the wider environment of the

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<sup>1</sup> A discussion concerning the Liverpool particularities of the term 'Black' appear later on in the thesis. However, the term is used generically within the thesis to describe people of African and Indian subcontinent heritage. This in itself can be theoretically problematic, some of these difficulties will be explored in the chapter addressing post modernity and 'race', but it is a useful political description that is universally understood.

city (Ben-Tovim et al 1986). Liverpool City Council commissioned the Gifford report (Gifford et al 1989) which documented the extent and causes of racism in the city. In addition to the Black community described above, Liverpool has a large Chinese population, again deriving primarily from its seafaring history. This community has also been confined mainly to the dockland and immediately surrounding areas. In the 1990s Liverpool has also been a city that has attracted political refugees from Somalia and other areas where Black people have been oppressed, and is currently involved in making provision for asylum seekers from Kosova (Stone 1998, Kundnani 2002).

Issues of 'race' have been fiercely contested in Liverpool over the past twenty years (see Ben Tovim et al 1986, Rooney 1987) and as a result, the local 'race' debate has figured highly in the delivery of social work in a range of areas, including community services for the elderly and residential and Looked After Children.

### **'Race', Poverty and Social Work – the Modern Agenda**

This then is the changing context in which the research for this project was carried out. There are currently many more changes taking place within social work with the advent of the Labour government. While much of the research for this project predates its election, it is worth noting the tenor of their approach to social work, racism and social oppression. There is much more openness about the existence of poverty in our society than existed under the Conservative administration that it succeeded, and, as noted above, there has been a considerable resurgence of focus and interest on 'race' and anti-racism following the Stephen

Lawrence inquiry (MacPherson 1999). However, New Labour's approach to these issues is essentially pragmatic, driven by targeting and measurement of outcomes. It places much emphasis on waged work as a means of combating poverty and is keen to open up opportunities for developing work opportunities for individuals who have traditionally been hampered by the poverty trap of poor child care facilities outside the family. The focus then, has been on a completely new agenda for social work and social welfare which is focused on delivering services for the individual, social inclusion, tackling poverty, and opening up opportunities in society (SEU 1998). In terms of style of operation, a key element of New Labour thinking is that of breaking down barriers to dealing with social problems

There is particular emphasis on 'joined up' agendas, redefining and reconfiguring the way in which education, health and social care organisations, including the voluntary sector, provide services (DoH 1998b, DoH/DfEE1999).

This clearly has had some impact on social work, its accountability, its delivery and the debate around 'race', both nationally and locally. Changes in social work education under New Labour, have been rapid and radical. The swift abolition of CCETSW as the regulating and awarding body for social work qualifications, and the transfer of powers to occupationally specific National Training Organisations illustrate the government's determination to overhaul social work education (DoH 1998b). This change agenda is underpinned by a fundamental review of the Dip/SW and the Practice Teaching Award and the establishment of a General Social Care Council (GSCC) (DoH 1998b) a body which will regulate the



provision of social care providers and the professionals that deliver the service.

As noted above these developments post-dated the empirical data collection for this project. However, it is clearly important, particularly when we come to consider the implications of this research for future policy and practice in relation to social work education and training on 'race' and racism, to set any recommendations in the modern context.

### **Racism as a Persisting Problem – the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry**

Finally in this introduction, I would like to reaffirm the key importance of the core subject of this thesis, anti-racist practice, despite all the fits and starts outlined above. The issue is just as pertinent, if not more, than it was at the beginning of this research. The one name that tragically cements this point is Stephen Lawrence. This young man's murder and the subsequent government inquiry, again under the New Labour government, have redefined the 'race' debate nationally and established the new definition of '*institutional racism*' (Macpherson 1999:28). This has reinforced the importance of understanding racism within a social work context and delivering anti-racist practice outcomes. It has also brought about the introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) placing a duty on local authorities to combat discrimination, promote equal opportunities and promote racial equality within the workplace (RRA 2000). Although the Macpherson report has been the focal point of debates concerning racism within public sector organisations recently, the twenty one murders of Black people that have occurred in the period between Stephen Lawrence's death and the production of the final Macpherson

report are a chilling constant reminder of the importance of anti-racist practice (Guardian 24<sup>th</sup> February 1999). The language may change - racial awareness, to anti-racist practice, to racial equality, to services for Black and ethnic minority people - but the messages remain the same. They include the recognition of the existence of racism, its endemic nature in British society (CCETSW 1993), its devastating consequences and, most importantly, the imperative to challenge and combat it.

## **Summary**

This thesis then, is about racism and anti-racist practice and the outcomes for social work, particularly in relation to how social workers, practice teachers and Dip/SW students address racism and the anti-racist debate. It is about the local arena in Liverpool, which I have argued is unique and specific. A significant part of this thesis will be devoted to working towards a theoretical understanding and a critique of racism and anti-racist practice because these are heavily contested concepts often used in a variety of ways. Without a clearer understanding of what we mean by these terms it is almost impossible to make progress. The empirical part of the research will use this analysis to examine the way in which these terms are applied in social work training. In particular, I aim to throw light on certain critiques of social work, for instance, that it is uncritical and simplistic in its adoption of anti-racist and anti-oppressive thinking (see Sibeon 1991a).

Criticisms such as these lay at the heart of my reasons for carrying out this research. I wish to establish - locally at least - whether they have any empirical foundation. These questions are particularly important to me – a Black professional with a particular remit for social work training. Another key question that I wish to explore is related to outcomes. There is a good



deal of rhetoric surrounding the notion of anti-racism in social work and in social work education. Much of the language is about commitment to change and the righting of wrongs. My concern is to find out whether anti-racist ideas do have any impact on the delivery of social work and services to the service users and communities it purports to enhance. My initial stance on this was one of scepticism. As a Black social work professional, involved initially in practice and latterly in the delivery and policy making of training, I had experienced over a period of years what appeared to be relentless in- fighting between anti-racist groups in local government and indeed social work, with very little clear outcomes for Black people. Put simply, I want to know whether training social workers were developing realistic ideas about racism and anti-racist that they can translate into practice. It should be acknowledged, however, that due to the exigencies of time, it has not been possible to measure the impact on service users per se. Instead the focus has been on the experiences of practice teachers and social work trainees and on the way in which their thinking has developed during the course of their training. It of course remains a leap of faith to assume that there is a straight connection between attitudes and values and action and behaviour.

The structure of the thesis is as follows :-

Chapter 1 reviews theoretical and policy developments concerned with racism and anti-racism and how this effects social work.

Chapter 2 explores the theory-practice debate within social work and how radical influences have led to the development of anti-racist practice.

Chapter 3 takes a critical look at anti-racist discourse through post-modernity with a particular focus on diversity within anti-racism.

Chapter 4 looks at the role of a practice teacher and outlines the development of a Black practice teacher project in Merseyside and how this cohort contributed significantly to the qualitative research.

Chapter 5 Discusses the methods used, the process involved and some contextual concerns for the research.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 look at the research findings and some of the key themes and ideas the practice teachers and students identified concerning anti-racism and social work practice.

Chapter 9 Provides the conclusions drawn from the research and some recommendations for practice learning and anti-racism.

# CHAPTER 1 - RACISM, ANTI-RACISM, AND LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL WORK

## Introduction

This chapter explores some of the main paradigms of 'race', anti-racism and anti-racist practice. It will primarily be concerned with 1) the need for clarity in understanding the definition of racism and 2) the way in which understanding of racism has informed and been used to shape the concept of anti-racism, particularly with reference to social work.

## Pseudo Scientific Racism

In order to make sense of the discourses around 'race' in social work education today, it is necessary to be aware of the history of ideas that have nurtured the notion of 'race' as a distinct method of categorising people and of racism as an oppressive phenomenon. Many of our modern ideas about 'race' and racism stem from pre-18th century ideas about slavery and the exploitation of Black people (see for instance hooks 1981, Ramdin 1986, Robinson 1983, Yeboah 1997). To rationalise the exploitation of Black people in the form of slavery and colonialism, pseudo-scientific theories were created by various 'scientists' of European powers in the 18th and 19th centuries. The deterministic assumption that the shape of an African's skull pointed to a smaller brain and low intelligence underpinned these theories (Walvin 1982). Sexual promiscuity and animal-like characteristics were themes initiated in the colonialist era, and some contest that they are still evident today in the pathologising of the Black family (hooks 1981, Lawrence 1983, Walvin 1982). Proponents of social Darwinism developed theories whereby African people were deemed as being an earlier link in the chain of evolution towards the ideal finished

product of a European. Darwinian theories explicitly linked African people to apes in terms of intelligence as well as looks (Husband 1982, Walvin 1982). Based on theories such as these African people during much of the colonial period were taught to accept their alleged cultural and intellectual inferiority (Fanon 1952). Thus, these pseudo biological deterministic theories lay the foundations of modern racism.

While some commentators (Ely and Denny 1987) argue that biological racism is not a factor in the construction of racism today, there is much evidence to suggest that its legacy still has a significant impact on social policy in Britain, and on attitudes to under-developed areas of the world (hooks 1981, Lawrence 1983).

This is evident in the following ways. Firstly, there are well-documented views among social policy makers that Black people are more sexually promiscuous than their white counterparts, that this has a detrimental effect on the stability of family life (hooks 1981, Lawrence 1983, Solomos et al 1983,) and is the determining factor in the break up of Black families (Smith 1994). The contrary view that it is the crushing, debilitating experience of racism that accounts for greater family instability is less well voiced. As can be seen, ideas derived from historical oppression and underpinned by racist beliefs become 'common sense' assumptions (Lawrence 1983, Solomos et al 1983). By this means we derive distorted images of Africans (i.e., that they are incapable of sustaining productive family structures) and, based on the power of dominant discourse, they become defined by difference or 'otherness' (Miles 1989, hooks 1991).

Alongside this notion of promiscuity and the social disorganisation of Black community life is the view still widely held by right wing educationalists

today, that African/Caribbean children underachieve in schools because of genetically determined lower intelligence (Eysenk 1971, Eysenck v Kamin 1981). The discrimination and underachievement that partly result from these negative views of Black school pupils can lead to a dislocation of Black people's experience in the economy (Modood 1997b), by their not being able to gain financially rewarding employment (Yeboah 1997).

It is clear, therefore, that residual values regarding people of African descent, deriving particularly from the notion of biological determinism, still permeate social welfare policy thinking (Francis 1991a, Jones A. 1993, Solomos et al 1983), even though they have been scientifically and sociologically discredited for a long time (Banton 1977, Ely and Denny 1987, Rex 1979, DES 1985).

### **'Race', Class and Capital**

The importance of understanding Marxist paradigms of analysis of 'race' and racism should not be under-estimated. The link between the social construction of 'race' (Gilroy 1987, Solomos et al 1983) class, capital and the modes of production and reproduction (Corrigan and Leonard 1981, Miles 1989, Miles and Phizacklea 1979, Sivanandan 1982, 1992a, amongst others) needs to be acknowledged to a greater or lesser extent by any serious anti-racist strategist within social work or the local state. However, the anti-racist's dilemma arises when asking the question 'how much are explanations of 'race' reliant on a class analysis?' and 'how much is racism the symptom or consequence of the modes of production and capital?' The responses to these questions should impinge greatly on the strategies deployed to challenge racism within the local state.

## **'Race' as a Tool of Capitalism**

Sivanandan (1982) provides an analysis of racism combining class/capital with a Black perspective. The argument put forward is one of a direct correlation between capital and racism, linked to the post war period of British history, when the economy had a massive shortfall of labour and people from the Caribbean and New Commonwealth were encouraged to enter the country as British citizens (Harris C. 1993). This period of laissez faire immigration was brief. Once job vacancies were filled, and the economy had acquired its labour, Black people from the Commonwealth were no longer needed. By 1963 there emerged a political consensus around the issue of 'race' and both administrations of that period - Conservative and Labour - embarked on a period of strict immigration control of Black people at the extreme justified by racist ideologies embodied by Powell's 'rivers of blood speech' (Sivanandan 1982). As a consequence, the recipients of racism became the problem (Fryer 1984, Ramdin 1986, Rex 1979 Solomos et al 1983). Hence, the disturbances in London and other cities, arising as a consequence of unwelcoming behaviour by the host community, as evidenced by discrimination in employment and the housing market and racist attacks, were blamed on Black people (Ramdin 1986, Sivanandan 1982).

As Black migrants were working-class, there was a distinct merging of experiences of 'race' and class. Most of the migrants were single men attracted to this country by work opportunities. They were in turn seen as needed solely for their labour with little attention paid to the needs of families and the financial and resource implications that follow, particularly housing and schooling. The urban disturbances of this time were evidence

that the crude notion of viewing immigrant workers as cheap sources of labour without any other social needs was inadequate. As Sivanandan points out:-

*'Racism though economically useful, was becoming socially counter productive.'* (Sivanandan 1982:105)

Sivanandan's class/capital analysis locates the primary reason for the exploitation of Black people and the fostering of an ideology of racism as capital. As the British economy contracted, and Black labour became surplus, both political parties adopted strategies to restrict entry into this country and control the 'problem' within (Husband 1982, Sivanandan 1982). This debacle in British immigration policy culminated in Thatcher's infamous 'swamping' statement in 1978 (Barker 1981). Sivanandan's position on the interplay between racism and class capitalism is as follows :-

*'capital requires racism not for racism's sake, but for the sake of capital.'*  
(Sivanandan 1982:124)

This paradigm is useful, because it makes the clinical connection between modes of production and reproduction, the ideology or as Solomos et al (1983) state, 'hegemony' of a materialist culture, with capital as the ultimate prize, alongside the exploitation and oppression of Black people.

## **Capitalism and Black Professionals**

Another important point raised by this analysis, which has particular resonance for the subject matter of this thesis, is that Black people's response to racism has most effectively come from the streets and Black community groups. Those that take work within the local state in welfare or 'race' related industries are seen as 'Black collaborators', i.e. middle class Black professionals who wittingly or not, have dislocated themselves from the experience of Black people in the ghetto and in the community. Even more pertinently, it is argued that these Black professionals have watered down the experience of Black anger and outrage in a trade off for career enhancement. (Sivanandan 1982, 1991).

Although Sivanandan was talking about Black professionals in the 1960s and 70s, it still has relevance to contemporary Black employment in the welfare and 'race' related industries. This is an issue that will be picked up later on in the thesis when the connection between anti-racism and social work education and practice values are critically examined.

### ***Capitalism and 'Race' - A Reductionist View***

Sivanandan's analysis of the link between class, capital and racism, while useful in many respects, still fails to answer important questions about how and why 'race' and class issues converge at different times and places, and there is a tendency in his work to see 'race' as a white person's issue. Nevertheless, it does suggest that the connections between capitalism and 'race' are relatively complex. This is in contrast to some of the cruder analyses of the links between 'race' and class. Cox (1960), for instance also sees racism as a manifestation of the consequence of capitalism, and the



struggle against racism as a fight against the exploitation of the proletariat class,

*'racial exploitation and race prejudice developed among the Europeans with the rise of capitalism and nationalism, and that because of the world wide ramification of capitalism, all racial antagonism can be traced to the policies and attitudes of leading capitalist people, the white people of Europe and North America.'* (Cox 1960:322)

This classic piece of sociological work is too simplistic because it merges the notion of racism with that of capitalism until they are almost indistinguishable. Capitalism is seen as being synonymous with 'the white people of Europe' and is reduced to one simple cause, white hegemony. In the process, any other possible causes or contributions to the understanding of the dynamics of racism are lost. This type of reductionist thinking has a familiar ring about it. It is not unusual in contemporary debates around social work to hear white people per se, being blamed for racism. As Katz stated in her analysis that racism was a white person's problem that they created themselves (Katz 1978).

### **Racism and the Competition for Jobs**

Yet another position in this debate is taken by Miles and Phizacklea (1979). They are less concerned with the broader workings of capital, but more with the connections between 'race' and economic factors. They argue that racism in Britain is rooted in two things, the colonial stereotypes outlined earlier and competition from Black people in jobs and housing. In a study in a North West London council estate they found,

*'racism has a specific impetus generated in the nature of working class experience of material decline.'* (Miles and Phizacklea 1979:290 )

In other words, when Britain's economy took a down turn and there was reduced chance of employment, Black people took the brunt of the blame.

But why do people revert to racist views when their material circumstances take a turn for the worse? Miles and Phizacklea talk about the ideologies of racism and nationalism and Britishness being a white preserve. However, they do not address the historical specificity that others argue as forming the nature of racism (see Banton 1977, Gilroy 1987, Hall 1980, Solomos et al 1983,).

### ***Class, 'Race' and Local Struggles***

A further variation on the Marxist theme is offered by Ben-Tovim and Gabriel (1982). Racism is viewed by these authors as a key element in the process of developing social and political challenges to inequity. Theoretically, 'race' is viewed in these political struggles as separate from class. However, class and culture are also seen as factors in contributing to the development of racism and are part of the ideological formation that perpetuates capitalism and oppression. Thus there are close linkages between racism and class from this perspective. What this analysis offers is a reminder that any 'hegemonic' or political struggle against racism needs to understand that class and poverty (Brown 1993) are major issues for Black communities, and that these will provide a genuine vehicle for change, rather than a specific cultural/identity struggle that denies the poverty and class oppression in Black people's lives.

## **Gender, Class and 'Race'**

One of the key problems with explanations of 'race' and racism that are located within an historical struggle between capital and labour, is that they subsume other social relations that racism is linked to, for instance power and surplus value, in the context of the state, and gender and structural unemployment (Gilroy 1987).

'Race' and racism discourses have, for instance, too often ignored Black women's contributions. This is a cruel irony, in that any explanation of racism should not be separated from the sexual, political and economic exploitation of Black women, whereby Black men, and white women, have colluded in this 'white male patriarchal' (Lorde 1984) construction of racism (Carby 1983, hooks 1981, 1991, Lewis 1996).

## **New Racism and the New Right**

A definition of racism that has evolved over the past couple of decades, is a product of the New Right (Loney 1986, Smith 1994), and is known as 'new racism.' New racism has three main components :-

- 1) the notion of alien peoples and differentness
- 2) fears on the part of 'British' people's that their way of life is being 'swamped' and threatened by this alien culture
- 3) a philosophy of human nature, that people naturally set up protective boundaries to defend their way of life, their family, community and nation.

New racism notions are presented as common-sensical, but in fact they rely heavily on the pseudo-biological culturalism outlined earlier, namely that alien people's (i.e. Black people's) culture is somehow inherently different. This is particularly manifest in their notions of the family unit, something that Black people supposedly don't subscribe to (Barker 1981).

Consequently, because of this difference in culture, the national crisis, and economic decline, unemployment, the 1981 uprisings, and the threat on our streets from 'mugging' (Hall 1980) the New Right created an ideology that pointed the finger of culpability for these crises at Black people (Sivanandan 1982, 1991, Solomos et al 1983). This in turn, created the notion, along with the striking miners in the 1980s, of the 'enemy within' (Hall 1980).

Following this line of thinking, therefore, it is a legitimate response to reclaim control of the nation, and to adopt a crisis-management approach consisting of the repatriation of Black people (Sivanandan 1982), force policing of Black communities, similar to that experienced in Northern Ireland (Scruton 1987) and more coercive national (Gordon 1979, Sivanandan 1982, 1991,) and local state services (Francis 1991a).

New racism theory which is particularly associated with the Conservative party, in and out of office, still retains influence - it is currently in evidence, for example in relation to immigration from Eastern European countries. It is essentially an opportunistic approach based on xenophobic and self-protective attitudes.

## **Black Perspectives**

Another key development in recent years, particularly in social work, has been the emergence of a Black perspective paradigm (Small 1989). This paradigm is characterised, first, by a reluctance to locate racism solely within a class analysis and, second, by a determination to separate it from other forms of oppression such as that of gender. It emphasises first and foremost the commonality in Black people's histories and experience, and is based on a clear understanding that the use of the word 'Black' is as a political term to denote the common exploitation and subjugation that people from Asia and Africa have experienced. Black perspectives are also concerned with identity issues of Black people in a 'white' world, and the emphasis on cultural diversity, especially in local state services (Ahmad 1990, de Souza 1991, Stokes 1993).

There are two major drawbacks to this perspective. First, a definition that accepts 'white' and 'Black' as two real fixed entities, accepts the 'otherness' that Miles (1989) argues Europeans created (see below). Second, it implicitly accepts the idea of 'race' being a reality (Law 1996), other than something that is a social construction. This perspective's reluctance, at times, to acknowledge the fundamental class and poverty elements of racism, denies the majority of Black people's experience of racism in this country (James and Harris 1993), therefore, marginalising the debate regarding Black people's experience in the ghetto, and the urgent need for economic empowerment (Brown 1993). This perspective negates the multiplicity of Black people's experience, and inadvertently turns Black people into one-dimensional characters, e.g. Black first and paramount, gender and sexuality later (hooks 1991 Lewis 1996). The important points

concerning the multiplicity of Black people's experience will be examined further in a later chapter addressing post-modernity, diversity and anti-racism.

Another key feature of Black perspectives is the antipathy held towards anyone but Black people having the credibility and legitimate right to analyse and write about the process and experiences of racism (see Pink 1991 for a good example of this). The Black perspectives paradigm is primarily concerned with people of African and Asian descent defining their own experience. 'White people' are seen as causing the problem, and as beneficiaries of racism. Therefore, Black people are the only ones politically, morally and personally equipped to write about it (Ahmad 1990, Stokes 1993).

To deny that individuals who are not Black can make a contribution to the analysis of racism is reductionist (Sibeon 1991a), and ethically dangerous. It is reductionist because of the misguided logic that only the victims of racism (i.e. Black people) can explain this phenomenon with any authority, because it is they who experience it. However, if racism and its cause is to be attributed to white people/society, surely these same people will have a valuable contribution to make in terms of explaining how they perpetuate racism. Furthermore, it is ethically dangerous to exclude any party from any discourse, especially when the differentiation is one of social construction.

Notwithstanding some of its theoretical weaknesses, the introduction of Black perspectives into the debate on racism has encouraged a proliferation of Black writers, especially in social work. Now, a variety of Black perspectives are being developed, from Black community organisations and

individuals within social work and the community (for instance see Francis 1991b, Phillips and Ferns 1999, Small 1989, Williams 1993).

## **Defining Racism**

So far, therefore, we have looked at some of the central paradigms developed around the social construction of 'race', and discourses on racism. In particular we have looked at biological determinism, the link between racism, capital and the forces of production and reproduction, Black women's perspectives, the notion of New racism and Black perspectives.

It is clear from what has preceded that we need to develop greater clarity of what is meant by the term racism if we are to further our understanding of how it has manifested itself in the British context. Miles (1989) in a comprehensive analysis of the term racism, questions the assertion that there is any clarity around this concept. This viewpoint has important implications for anti-racism in local authority settings, and in particular for social work education and practice. If sociological analysis appears at times to be contradictory and complicated, how can mere 'doers' (practically based social workers) inspired by the exhortations of CCETSW paper 30, have any real idea what they are 'combating' (CCETSW 1989b), or how to go about it?

Miles (1989) introduces key concepts in his explanation of the term racism, and explains how they relate to other structural and political processes. These concepts are :-

- otherness

- conceptual inflation
- signification
- racialisation.

### ***Otherness***

Miles accepts that European colonial definitions of biological differences of 'races' helped create the social notion of otherness. Otherness, in this context relates to Black or non-white 'races', which are assumed to be scientifically proven to be inferior in intelligence and in every other measurable attribute. It is a concept that paves the way for the exclusion of one social group from another. This is a concept that will be explored in greater depth later when analysing post-modern paradigms and racism.

### ***Conceptual Inflation***

The term 'conceptual inflation' is used to criticise other writers' definition of racism. Certain aspects of a definition are sometimes inflated disproportionately to the relevance of a particular concept. For instance, Sivanandan's work is criticised because the definitions of racism, racial discrimination and institutional racism chop and change. Miles argues that Sivanandan's (1982) work is generalised, doesn't address intentionality, and simplifies power relationships by blaming all racism on 'white' people, and explaining social stratification as white people in higher social classes than the Black underclass.



This simplified explanation of racism has a familiar ring to it, one that CCETSW and the social work profession have adopted with great vigour and fervency. Conceptual inflation is used to critique some of the one dimensional views of racism, such as the Black perspective, and is theoretically useful, especially when analysing the ‘all or nothing’ era of anti-racist politics in local government and social services departments i.e. the early 1990s (Rooney 1993).

The central problem of Sivanandan’s explanation of racism is that it is too clear-cut (and Cox’s is even more so). Racism is seen simply as white people oppressing Black people and is, therefore a concept that is inextricable from white people. This Miles argues is absurd and deterministic, and leads to the logical conclusion that the only way to eradicate racism would be to dispense with European peoples. He also notes that Sivanandan and others also assume that there is clarity about the term ‘white’ and its absoluteness, and a non-acceptance of the social construction of ‘race’.

Another example of conceptual inflation is Barker’s (1981) term ‘new racism’, a term which looks at the way in which Black communities can create alien environments for the host community. This notion will be critically examined later in the chapter, but for the purpose of understanding the concept of ‘conceptual inflation’, it should be noted that no distinction is made between African and Asian people in this analysis.

## *Signification and Racialisation*

Miles suggests that once a concept is inflated and a lopsided view or paradigm of 'race' and racism is established signification occurs, constituting :-

*'a central moment in the process of representation, that is, the process of depicting the social world and social processes, of creating a sense of how things really are.'* (Miles 1989:70)

Put simply, meanings are attached to features and objects that give them a special prominence, for instance, dividing social groups into racial categories because of purported somatic and cultural differences, and subsequently inflating them to a crude Black\white dichotomy. This is a process known as racialisation,

*' where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated categories.'* (Miles 1989:75)

Most importantly, in the quest for clarity around the term racism, this has led to a political acceptance of a European notion of the self being white, and 'Other' being Black, a division and labelling process acknowledged as much by the 'other' as by the self (hooks 1991). This process of signification and racialisation can be used to justify the exclusion of whole groups of people from material advantages (Torkington 1991). It is a process that in capitalist economic production manifests itself in different

ways, depending on the particular time. This will then determine the relationship the 'Other' has in class relations.

### ***Summary***

Hence, the central points are as follows. Firstly, racism, if it is to have any sociological use in an analytical sense, needs to be defined as an ideology, one that shifts and changes, depending on people's interpretation of it, and the material and cultural circumstance that surround it. Secondly, the expression of racism will always be in relation to the current economic and political relations, that is, racism is a part of a wider, complex set of social relations. Thirdly, theoretical explanations must always take account of the historical specificity and multi-dimensionality of racism (Miles 1989).

These explanations are of value when developing anti-racist responses to racism in the local state, where we should be particularly mindful of the importance of carefully defining the term and of the notions of conceptual inflation and the multi-dimensionality of racism.

### **Racism, Historical and Spatial Specificity**

Drawing on the above definitional analysis, therefore, it is clear that racism is historically specific. More than this, it is spatially specific (Gilroy 1987, Solomos et al 1983) which means that the racism that Black people in Liverpool experience for example, at any one time, is markedly different in its construction and effect, from racism experienced in another major city in this country. This diversity in experience, therefore, can obviously be applied in a smaller space. A Black person's experience of racism in one part of the city of Liverpool (see Gifford et al 1989) can differ at any one

moment in time to that of another Black person in a different part of the city. This rather obvious point needs to be made, because individual experience and perceptions of racism seem often to be ignored (Cohen 1992, hooks 1991). Yet, in respect of local state services (Law 1985, 1996), and particularly, in social services (Barclay 1982, Phillips and Ferns 1999), individual provision is of primary concern. However, as we will see later, in terms of social work education (Sibeon 1991b, 1991c, 1993), and its strategies to 'combat racism, (CCETSW 1989b, 1992) this essential fact tends to be overlooked, and crude rather blanket strategies are engaged to challenge racism. A recent example of this is the rigid adherence to 'same race' placements of Black children in the processes of adoption and fostering (Gilroy 1987, 1994, Law 1996, Kirton 2000). These strategies far from empowering Black people, more often than not ignore the structural, economic, political and ideological chains (Gifford et al 1989) that are endured by them, and the individual crushing experience people have of racism. This is because they are generalised, blanket once-and-for-all attempts (Cohen 1992) to tackle a complex and ever changing phenomenon.

## **The Evolution of Anti-Racism**

Now that some of the key ideas about racism have been reviewed, attention will be focused on anti-racism in relation or response to racism. First, I will outline some of the significant events that have shaped social policy towards racism nationally and in local government. Then consideration will be given to how an anti-racist perspective has impacted on local authority services and social work practice in particular. Thirdly, I will return to the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings to anti-racism and address the critique that anti-racism has in fact achieved limited outcomes.

## **Context and Events**

Two major factors in the development of an anti-racist perspective in local authority services were section 71 of the 1976 Race Relations Act, which obliged local authorities to provide relevant and accessible services to Black and ethnic minorities (Ouseley 1990), and the 1980-81 uprisings in the major cities in this country (Fryer 1984, Ramdin 1986, Sivanandan 1991, Solomos et al 1983). In very different, but dovetailing ways, these two factors put Black people's experience of racism and its incumbent response, anti-racism on the agenda.

### ***Scarman Report***

The Scarman report which followed the inquiry set up to examine the causes of the 1981 uprisings (Scarman 1983) was of the view that racism in the police force was one of the key underlying factors. However, unlike the recent Macpherson inquiry (1999), it came to the conclusion that this racism was not institutionalised and thus not pervasive throughout all police forces, but rather was to be found among individual officers. On a broader level, Scarman clearly considered that frustration among Black people about access to jobs and influence was also a key factor in the disturbances and recommended greater emphasis on providing equal opportunities by means of positive discrimination measures. The Swann report (DES 1985) also acknowledged the existence of racism, but recommended a multiculturalist response.

## Race Related Posts in Local Authorities

Alongside these reports a plethora of 'race' related posts emerged in response to the uprisings (Gilroy 1987, Sivanandan 1982). These posts were supposed to be of key importance in the attempt to combat racism in local state services. However, they were largely taken up by better-educated and, therefore, more middle-class Black people who did not necessarily share the same values and understandings as Black people from the more deprived communities in which the uprisings had taken place. According to Sivanandan, they were more likely to view :-

*' the fight against racism as a fight for culture, and the terrain on which it is fought is discourse and representation, which does not speak for the conditions of the poor Blacks.'* (Sivanandan 1994:64)

Thus, from this viewpoint, Black people, who had either no real links with the Black community (Rooney 1987) or quickly lost them (Sivanandan 1994), were placed in organisations to fight racism. The struggle against racism had become a respectable career in mainstream government organisations, whose functions are to consolidate, and fine tune, but definitely not to bring about the sort of radical change that Black communities had aspired for during the uprisings (Ouseley 1990). The immediate discourse around challenging racism was a 'legitimate' one, which was state orchestrated and headed by a new class of Black professionals (Sivanandan 1994).

*'There are two racisms in Britain today, the racism that affects the middle class Blacks, and the one that affects the working class and workless*

*Blacks,- the racism that discriminates, and the racism that kills.'*  
(Sivanandan 1994:64)

The analysis above derives clearly from a 'race' and class paradigm and has little time for the 'gains' made by the creation of a 'race relations industry'. It is clearly of some value in understanding immediate developments in the aftermath of the uprisings, and its critical comments are to that extent justified. However, following on from this period, there have been developments in scale and impact which to some extent negate this critique. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, particularly in social work provision, there was a considerable influx of Black workers (Ahmed 1991, Stokes 1993) bringing about some positive outcomes for Black service users (Phillips and Ferns 1999) and establishing a more challenging perspective about service provision than that provided by their earlier counterparts. Such developments were not confined to social service departments and impacted on local government generally (Gifford et al 1989). Thus, contrary to the tenets of the 'race' and class perspective, it could be argued that professional Black workers within the local authority workforce can have an influence on improving the life-chances of Black people in the community by a strong commitment to anti-racist principles and strategies (Ahmed 1991, Stokes 1993).

### ***'Race' Awareness Training***

I have outlined the state response to racism, in terms of personnel, and post uprisings/Scarman positive action strategies. Alongside the earlier policy developments critiqued by Sivanandan (1982, 1990, 1991) and others came a form of thinking about and responding to racism known as 'Race' Awareness Training (RAT), from an American human relations specialist

Judy Katz. This form of training asserted that racism was a white person's problem, and that, therefore, it was incumbent upon white people to develop strategies to address it. The argument put forward was that, psychologically, racism was damaging white people, and this needed to be challenged by them in their own peer group (Katz 1978). It also followed that if white people who had the power to make decisions in organisations were trained in RAT, these decisions could be challenged and institutionally racist practice could be changed (Satow 1982). Underpinned by these beliefs, this method of combating racism became very popular in the early 1980s in both private and public sector welfare organisations.

However, the failings of RAT are not difficult to pinpoint. The construction of racism and anti-racism is very crude. Most pertinently, it lacks a basic causative theory to explain why white people behave in a racist way. There is no sense of context, either historical or economic. It is pitched at a simplistic psychological level and points to simplistic and individualistic solutions. According to Gurnah (1984) RAT failed in the following ways. It was :-

- a) moralistic,
- b) tokenistic,
- c) unduly focused on the guilt feelings of white middle class individuals,
- d) often ethically dubious, employing Black people to shame white people (Gurnah 1984)
- e) negating of Black people's struggle against oppression depicting them largely as victims, and



- f) deficient in addressing multi-faceted explanations of racism which address social, structural, and political exploitation (Ballard 1989).

### **Anti-Racism - some critiques**

However, as already noted, despite all the retrospective critiques of RAT, it was, at the time, a popular strategy, adopted by many organisations to challenge racism. For some (Gilroy 1987, Sivanandan 1985) it has been seen as the forerunner of anti-racism and the anti-racist strategies that have been adopted in organisations, particularly welfare ones, in the later 1980s and 1990s. Their argument is that, although there has been shift from the individual and psychological to systematic and institutional strategies (see also Cohen 1992), the other criticisms of RAT can just as well be applied to anti-racism. Anti-racism can be simplistic and moralistic. An example of this is the McGoldrick case in Brent, where a school teacher was suspended for allegedly being racist, on spurious grounds (Sivanandan 1988). It is also argued that the allegedly moralistic and simplistic characteristics of anti-racism in some circumstances can contribute to racial tension being heightened, not lessened. This type of reasoning was considered as a partial explanation for the death of an Asian schoolboy in Manchester who was murdered in his own school playground. The Burnage Report that investigated the circumstances surrounding his death (MacDonald 1989) was critical of the fact that staff and white school pupils were required to adopt anti-racist policies with little explanation, training or strategic planning (see also Cohen 1992, John 1991, Sivanandan 1988).

However, whilst linking the experience of RAT to anti-racist practice is useful in examining some of the flaws of anti-racist practice (Sivanandan

1985), it is important, at this early stage to establish a sense of balance about this comparison. It has already been argued that racism has a long ideological, political, social and economic history internationally and within this country. (Robinson 1983, Yeboah 1997) The impact of this has severely damaged the experience of Black people in Britain which has led at best, to individual and institutional discrimination, (Miles and Phizakalea 1979) and at worst, a litany of racist murders (Guardian 24th February 1999). Therefore, there needs to be a constructive response to this brutality. Anti-racism, for all its limitations has been a catalyst for establishing policies and practices within the local and national government arena to tackle this (Ousley 1990, CCETSW 1989b, Williams 1999)

However, the question still remains, why does anti-racism so often get blamed for contributing to the very thing it should be combating? A key problem for anti-racist activists, is that definitions of 'race' and racism are highly complex and transient, and before something like this can be fought, there needs to be clarity about what one is fighting. Several commentators have emphasised this point:-

*'Race is conceptualised as an unstable and decentred complex set of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle.'* (Omi and Winnant 1986:68)

*'There can be no single or homogenous strategy against racism because racism itself is never homogenous. It varies, it changes and it is always uneven,'* (Gilroy 1992:60-61)

Firstly, there is the question of the value of using Black and other fixed definitions as political determinates in the field of anti-racism in local

politics. Often divisions among people of African and Asian descent are assumed not to be there. Real divisions about their political identity, aspirations and representation, social class and gender are also excluded from this discourse (Howe 1984, Jeffers 1993). This point will be expanded further in the chapter on post-modernity, but it is useful to identify that some of the difficulties Black people have in categorising themselves have at times had a confusing and detrimental impact on the design and delivery of anti-racist strategies (Modood 1992, 1994, Sivanandan 1994).

Secondly, anti-racism has never quite reconciled itself, in a strategic sense, with other anti-oppressive objectives and has often been put forward as the most important oppression to address, as if it existed in isolation from the others (Garrett 1998). Thus anti-racism is rarely designed to be part of an all embracing effective anti-oppressive strategy. As Gilroy puts it,

*'Anti-racism . . . trivialises the struggle against racism, and isolates it from other political antagonisms. . . It suggests that racism can be eliminated on it's own because it is readily extricable from everything else.'* (Gilroy 1992:50)

A third criticism put forward is that anti-racism, though also concerned with institutional racism, has tended to focus more on individual and moralistic solutions to the problem. This links back to the parallel drawn with RAT training, and raises concerns as to whether anti-racist practice is simply a matter of one group of individuals claiming the moral high ground over others.

The central point that needs to be made is that while explanations of racism are complex, multi-faceted and historically and spatially specific, anti-racist responses within the local state, can at times, be simplistic, conceptually inflated and unfinished (Miles 1989, Rooney 1993). For some, anti-racism has taken on a moral, symbolic and doctrinaire form (MacDonald 1989). It has, at times, manifested itself into a monster, that allows anything to be fair game, if the correct words are not spoken, or correct actions not taken (Cohen 1992).

It is worth pursuing this critique further here as these concerns are central to the research project. Because anti-racism lacks clear theoretical underpinnings (Jones A 1993), there is no axis nor frame of reference for anti-racists to relate to and it is danger of becoming ideological, with its adherents convinced that they are acting in the name of justice and equality by ridding the local state of racists. This in turn leads to the adoption of a variety of relatively simple strategies which may in fact have little effect, or even an ill effect, on the desired goal of reducing racism within an organisation. The use of what is deemed to be inappropriate language is a particular target. For instance, the description of Black people as 'coloured' is seen as racist and often blown out of all proportion. Even more trivial is the questioning of words like 'blackboard' and 'black coffee', which do not have negative connotations but simply names of objects. This sort of pre-occupation with what seem to be petty issues can serve to diminish anti-racist initiatives and thinking, and divert attention from the genuine elements of racism that have a daily impact on Black people's lives, such as poverty, poor housing (Law 1985), second rate education (Gifford et al 1989), school exclusion (Phillips and Ferns 1999) and racial harassment (Ben-Tovim et al 1998). This discourse often takes place in local state organisations that are mostly removed from Black people's experiences and

struggles. In fact, rarely are Black community representatives consulted regarding the most appropriate strategies for anti-racist struggles. As Gilroy points out,

*' anti-racists have become a discrete and self contained political formation. Their activism is now able to sustain itself independently of the lives, dreams and aspirations of the majority of Blacks, from whom they derive their authority to speak. '* (Gilroy 1992:51)

Therefore, rather than placing Black people's experience of daily oppression on the mainstream political agenda (Fryer 1984, Gifford et al 1989), it is kept as a politically peripheral debate, that no one organisation or individual has control of, and which successive governments are keen on containing (Gilroy 1992). In fact, critics argue, the only real beneficiaries of this conceptually inflated debate are the middle class moral protagonists, who fill the corridors of local government, and invent the arguments as they go along, whilst simultaneously consolidating their professional (Sibeon 1991c) and financial position. What is really unravelling here in this critique of anti-racism, is a distorted and contorted version of RAT (Sivanandan 1988) and the emergence of a discourse that nobody is in control of, but on which everybody has an opinion.

Over recent years this has enabled the New Right to have a field day, in two ways, firstly, in inhibiting the fight against racism, and secondly, in negating Black people's genuine and legitimate claim for justice and equality. It has also bought the New Labour government time to pick and choose which elements of the racial equality struggle they want to embrace (Bruce 1999).

Media attacks on anti-racists who have encouraged individualising the issue, for example the McGoldrick case (Rattansi 1992), have undermined the fight for racial justice, and in the past, given the New Right greater cause to criticise local government's attempts at racial equality. They have set about this by restricting cash budgets and introducing a market philosophy to local governments, where services are financially rewarded if they can demonstrate that they have jettisoned 'looney left' ideas around class, poverty, racism and collective responsibility, and engaged in such notions as community care, and voluntary housing schemes (Ouseley 1990). Put in a nutshell, this 'race' and class perspective argues that anti-racist activists in local government employment, have failed, on the whole, to deliver anything tangible to the Black communities, because they have missed the point.

It is not that anti-racist initiatives are necessarily a bad thing, nor that all end up in total failure. On the contrary, as Ben-Tovim et al (1986) argue, anti-racism has actually meant uprisings on the street, fighting immigration and deportation policies, and pin-pointing specific bits of institutionalised racism that need to be addressed and need changing (Ben-Tovim et al 1986). But, it does seem that, particularly in local government, a certain type of anti-racism has developed which is at least ineffective and at most damaging. It has been argued that the worst aspects of this form of anti-racism have fed into the hands of the New right, in that they have enabled it to play down the more important issues of racism at a broader and deeper level. As Ben-Tovim argues, it has created a,

*'prevalent tendency within local government to seek to push anti-racist forces away from the centre, towards the periphery of local politics and policy provision.'* (Ben-Tovim et al 1986:100)

The focus of this argument has been anti-racism as a problematic within the last few years under a Conservative government. With the advent of New Labour being swept to power anti-racism has arguably been given another chance. The commissioning of the MacPherson report (1999) into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence and the introduction of a 'Racially Aggravated Offence' as a specific Order within the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) are two examples of the present government's intention of tackling racism on a broader front. However, there are less comforting indicators in this respect if one considers the current government's treatment of immigration and asylum seekers. The ill-thought out dispersal of asylum seekers from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia to all the regions in Britain and the denial of benefit payments is underpinned by a government philosophy of restricting immigration and assuming fraudulent asylum claims from the majority of applicants (Jones A. 2000). There is clearly a fundamental contradiction at the heart of government policy concerning 'race', in that while racial equality is accepted for Black people with British citizenship ('our Black people'), this does not apply to 'Other Black people', those that are not British nationals and who are seeking to come to live in Britain. These developments are key issues for those currently working for the local state and pose important questions for their implementation of anti-racist policies and practices (Jones A. 2000, Ousely 2001).

What is needed is a critical reappraisal of anti-racist initiatives within local government, one that takes stock of race equality initiatives, anti-racist campaigns, and the role of Black workers within local authorities (Ben-Tovim et al 1986, CRE 1995). The need to look more broadly at the inequality that Black people endure daily in the major cities (Ben-Tovim et

al 1998), in spite of anti-racist activities is now a more clearly accepted imperative, as is the need to work much more in conjunction with local Black community organisations, on the basis of a clear analysis concerning racism, and its different manifestations in different times and places.

### **Social Work, The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) and Anti-Racism**

The preceding sections have outlined the anti-racist context in which local authority social work has been operating over the past fifteen years. In the last section of this chapter, I will briefly overview developments in education, training and practice that have helped, within this context, to shape the social work's role in anti-racist practices.

CCETSW has played a major role in influencing the shape of anti-racist practices in social work. One of its first major statements in this respect was made in its documentation for the then new form of social work training, the Diploma in Social Work (Dip/SW) (CCETSW 1989b) which succeeded the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) :-

*'CCETSW believes that racism is endemic in the values, attitudes and structures of British society, including those of social services and social work education. CCETSW recognises the effects of racism on Black people are incompatible with the values of social work and therefore seeks to combat racist practices in all areas of its responsibilities.'* (CCETSW 1989b:4)

Backed up by similar quotes in later publications (see CCETSW papers 30, and 26.3, 1989b), these are strong statements which do take in the broader



aspects of what we might now term structural or institutional racism (MacPherson 1999) and certainly do not delineate racism as the product of individuals. They reflect the contributions of anti-racist activists within local government, social work and social work academics (CCETSW 1992, 1993).

The concern of this research, however, is to examine how these ideals and ideas are implemented on the ground. At first glance, the omens do not seem good. As we shall explore later in the thesis, social workers have a tradition of being practical doers working to help individuals solve personal problems. Their commitment to broader social issues has been varied and social and political issues have been seen by the mainstream of the profession as the context within which personal problems arise. There have been times where “the social and political” have been higher on social work training and practice agendas than others. For instance, the 1970s and early 1980s saw a crop of radical /Marxist publications (Bailey & Brake 1980, Corrigan & Leonard 1981, Jones 1983), but probably they had little influence on practice. CCETSW’s commitment at the beginning of the 1990s to tackling oppression of all kinds, but particularly racism, was a much more influential radical because it was rooted within a Black perspective. During the early 1990s it could be argued that anti-racism made significant gains in social work. Most notably, the profession saw the increasing recruitment of Black people into it (de Souza 1991, Divine 1991). Social work literature saw a much greater focus than before on issues relating to ‘race’ providing practitioners with more sources of information and opportunities for developing awareness. Key contributions include Errol Francis’ excellent analysis of Black people and mental distress (Francis 1989, 1991a, 1991b) Denny's positive contribution to anti-racist probation practice (Denny 1991, 1992) and a plethora of material

from other Black perspective writers (Ahmad 1990, de Souza 1991, Jones A 1993, Singh 1992, Stokes, 1993 amongst others). However, as we saw in the Introduction, this “radicalism” was dampened to some extent in the revised Dip/SW.

There still remains the question, however, of the percolation of these ideas down to practice. Social work has remained a profession where there are tensions between theory and practice, and the notion of learning through experience prevails though more recently evaluative research (i.e. what works) is being taken on board increasingly thanks to central government initiatives. The competence framework referred to in the Introduction both at Dip/SW and NVQs level has to some extent militated against theoretically-informed and also more radical initiatives. There is now much greater emphasis on guidelines and protocols providing a set framework for social workers on how to do the job (see Sibeon 1991a, 1991c for an excellent overview of the theory/ practice problematic in social work.). The problem for anti-racism and the aim of this research, is whether ‘doers’ can actually get to grips with a nebulous and contested concept such as racism, and come up with sophisticated strategies to combat it.

It could be surmised that there are different factions within social work. First, there may be those who do not want to face the political complexities and difficulties facing social work currently (i.e. tackling racism, sexism, poverty). Their concerns may be to “help” people in a more personally direct way. Second, there may be those who are ethically committed to fighting racism. (It is worth noting that the latter would be more in line with CCETSW’s requirements which is at least a shift from the position before the Diploma in Social Work was established). However, those "committed" to anti-racism may still operate

in different ways. Some may well feel that their best strategy is to draw on experience as their source of anti-oppressive knowledge rather than an in-depth knowledge about racism and its complexities (Gilroy 1992).

There may be those who are keen to engage in a dialogue with the Black community and think creatively about anti-racism (Francis 1991a). There may be others who are more concerned with monitoring the actions of their own and other professions and with making their mark in that way (CRE 1995). However, it is hypothesized that few will be operating with an in-depth knowledge of racism that provides the basis for an informed and flexible approach to working with and providing support for service users of all ethnicities and cultures.

I have outlined some of the main criticisms and challenges facing anti-racism generally and anti-racist practice and its relation with social work (education) specifically. The weaknesses and strengths of social work's engagement with anti-racism have been reviewed in a general way. In the next chapter I will explore the relationship between theory/practice tensions and radical influences - including anti-racism - in social work. Following on from this in chapter 3 racism, ethnicity and social work will be examined making reference to the unique position 'race' holds in Liverpool at various points within the argument.

## **CHAPTER 2 SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE, THE THEORY/PRACTICE PROBLEMATIC AND THE INFLUENCE OF RADICAL IDEAS.**

As can be seen from the previous chapter, social work has over the past ten years been trying to find a way of taking on the challenges of 'race' and racism and developing a means of tackling these issues in practice by means of anti-racist strategies and forms of action. Much of the commentary in that chapter was critical pointing to the complexity and high degree of theoretical dispute about the terms "race" and "racism" and to the relative crudity of the practice espoused by the social work profession. Dealing with this type of complex theory-practice problematic, however, is not by any means a new experience for the social work profession. In particular, it has experienced profound difficulties in incorporating radical critiques of social inequities into its methods of dealing with individuals and groups that, according to these analyses, are the victims of wider forms of oppression.

The aim of this chapter therefore, is to examine this theory/practice problematic that seems to have been a perennial problem for social work and the way in which knowledge within the profession evolves and changes because of this.

The structure of this chapter, therefore, is as follows :-

First, the general theory/practice problematic of what forms of knowledge and types of understanding are considered necessary for the social work profession will be explored using a historical perspective.

Second, the way in which social work has incorporated into practice radical ideas, particularly those relating to class, gender and, latterly, 'race' will be considered. In so doing, reference will be made to the use of anti-reductionist theories as a key source of analysis and critique.

Finally, consideration will be given to the impact of how the notions of competency and occupational standards have impacted on the theory-practice problematic and the incorporation of more radical theorising into social work practice, drawing on the work of CCETSW (Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work) and its successor TOPSS (Training Organisation for Personal Social Services) (DoH 1998b).

As will be seen in what follows, these themes are interconnected and overlap in that the knowledge for practice debate is linked to theorising about social problems and also underlies the current preoccupations with competency and occupational standards. Nevertheless, as far as possible, these issues will be separated out for analytical purposes and the linkages will be more fully discussed in the conclusion to this chapter.

## **Social Work Knowledge - a practice based paradigm.**

### *Setting the parameters –the Charity Organisation Society*

The debate around what constitutes social work knowledge and by implication, what is social work, has continued since the inception of the first recognisable social work organisation, the Charity Organisation Society (COS) in 1870 (Seed 1973). A key concern of the COS was to ensure that charitable help and support was focused on the deserving poor. It concentrated its efforts on those individuals who had made

attempts to be self-sufficient and on ensuring that scarce charitable resources were directed efficiently towards these individuals (Loch 1902). Its emphasis was firmly on the individual as the determinant of his/her fate. To this end, it did its utmost to resist Fabian, collectivistic ideas that were emerging at this period in time (Sibeon 1991a). This early example of social work rejecting structural and collectivist explanations of an individual's vulnerability in society was to be repeated throughout social work's development over the next hundred years and reflects a main theme of the profession to date. For much of this period, while debates continued among those groups that loosely constituted the social work profession about collectivist and individualistic solutions to the problems of their clients, those supporting working with individuals and helping them to adjust to and accommodate their problems and difficulties remained in the ascendancy (Barclay 1982, Davies 1985, 1991).

Another important feature of the work of the COS was its determination to dispense support to the deserving poor in a methodical and scientific way.

From these twin approaches the concept of individual casework developed based on a rudimentary academic knowledge in social science and also experiential wisdom (Loch 1902).

Following this line of thinking, the School of Sociology that the COS established in London at the start of the twentieth century strongly resisted the more intellectually rigorous disciplines of the social sciences, because of what was seen as their artificial bias towards socialist solutions, instead favouring a form of social work knowledge that emphasised a distinct set of practices derived from experience (Sibeon

1991c).

The COS's deliberations about the nature of social work, its purpose, and the contents of its professional knowledge base, as noted above, set the scene for a series of debates that has persisted throughout the twentieth century right up to the present time. The key perennial issue has been whether the goals of social work ( i.e working for the betterment of individuals, groups and communities) are best achieved by working on an individual or collective basis (Sibeon 1991a, 1993). In essence, the COS founded the question that has beset social work activity from its very beginning, namely what exactly is social work and what ideas, values and knowledge should shape its activity?

### *Social Services Departments –the Debate Continues*

These intertwined themes of developing practice competency at an individual practitioner level, and the relationship of social work to the social sciences and, in particular, to radical analyses of the problems and difficulties encountered by the poor and disadvantaged were revisited in the 1970s and 1980s. Following the development of social services departments in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Seebhom 1968) there was a prolonged period in which the new unified profession searched for a clearer identity than before, thus resurrecting similar debates to those first identified by the COS and the first social work training courses that marked the profession's emergence some seventy years before.

For analysis of these “modern” academic debates and discussions about the nature of social work and, therefore, about how those entering the profession should be trained and educated, the works of England (1986),

Butrym (1979), Davies (1981, 1985), Howe (1980, 1991) and others will be examined.

### *The Individualistic Tradition*

The personal individualistic tradition which was established by the COS remains strong in the works of these writers who place much reliance on the individual practitioner's ability and perception of situations.

England, for instance argued in 1986 that the most important facet of social work was to understand the client, and that use of one's intuition was of paramount importance.

*'In practice the knowledge is intuition . . . A pervasive use of self is the crucial centre point of social work.'* (England 1986:35)

This was also the view of Butrym writing a little earlier, though she was more keen than England to stress the contribution that social sciences could offer in addition to intuition. Her view was that social work knowledge was a synthesis between the scientific and the artistic. For her, the use of intuition was still important and social work knowledge included the whole person, sensual perception, cognitive comprehension and affective experience (Butrym 1979).

Davies (1985) placed more emphasis on the following 'essential' ingredients of social work : law, specific skills in social work practice and sensitivity to knowledge and experience of the local conditions in which the agency operated. Nevertheless, the key element of social work practice remained the personal good sense of the social worker tackling problems at the level of the individual :-



*'If these spheres are covered, and, combined with good sense, strength of personality, intelligence, flexibility and experience of human relations in general, then good social work practice will be guaranteed.'* (Davies 1985:223)

None of these writers considered that radical analyses of and responses to the problems of social work clients had much relevance. Davies in particular consistently argued that radical influences, be they Marxist (Corrigan and Leonard 1981), feminist (Hanmer and Statham 1988) or anti-racist (e.g. Denney 1991, Dominelli 1997) were an unnecessary, and irrelevant, diversion from the real business of social work which was essentially concerned with the maintenance and support of vulnerable people in society. With this in mind he has been highly critical of the type of sociological analysis that simply unravels social work practice and theory to expose its many flaws without creating anything in its place (Davies 1985, 1991).

*'Social workers have a job to do, and the way they do it reflects the statutory requirements, agency guidelines and professional office culture, and their own personal style and inclination.'* (Davies 1991:10)

Davies has been particularly concerned with the functional role of social work, one that tends to be devoid of theories and methods and an overall critical structural analysis. From this point of view social workers are expected to unquestioningly accept the statutory guidelines of the job, and these, coupled with local office procedures and policies, are the most important sources of information needed to equip them to practice effectively. He is quite sceptical of what he describes as social workers'

fond expectations and personal ideals which frequently form the value base or motivation for many individuals choosing to practice social work (Davies 1985). Davies' standpoint again highlights the moral/political dilemmas that social work faces as a profession, that is, how to reconcile awareness of political forces which influence the situations of its clients or service users with delivering a service to individuals rather than looking for more collective or radical solutions to their difficulties.

For all the above writers, therefore, the key focus is the individual. The social aspect of their lives is viewed as an environment in which they are placed and with which they interact, but this environment is not viewed critically or in terms of power relations. Based on these premises the case for a socially aware but essentially individual-focused approach was maintained in the period after professional unification (Butrym 1979).

### *The notion of the self*

Another key belief of these writers, as has already been noted, is the importance of the social work practitioner's individual perception and capacity to understand other people:-

*'The social worker's practice knowledge is his understanding of his client; it is this unique understanding which informs and determines his helping.'* (England 1986:34)

As a consequence of this way of thinking, a key aspect of the social worker's knowledge base has been about the 'self', 'self-awareness' and 'self-understanding' (England 1986). From the inauguration of the COS to CCETSW's development of the competency based model, there has

been particular emphasis placed on the notion of individual practitioners bringing their uniqueness to social work practice. This individuality, this self and the use that can be made of the self has become a central part of social work knowledge and training. These developments have had a major influence on the way in which more radical and challenging social issues have been either rejected or adapted to fit around the centrality of individual (Butrym 1979, England 1986, Davies 1985). A good example of this was examined in the previous chapter, that of 'race' awareness training which was readily taken up because it identified racism as within the individual and therefore as amenable to change through focus on the individual rather than on the social.

Arguing that a social worker's knowledge base should be built around individual perception and the understanding of individuals in their social environment can lead at best to inconsistency of practice and at worst to provision of a haphazard service. As individual practitioners will undoubtedly enter social work with a variety of life experiences, value bases and differing abilities to understand people, this can only lead to an extremely generic form of practice wisdom, that is the antithesis of a coherent knowledge base. Furthermore, if a practitioner's knowledge is to a large extent unique to the individual, and this is transferred to practice, service users are likely to receive a disparate, uneven and, most pertinently, unequal service.

### ***Practice Wisdom***

Another key notion linked to the importance of individual perception in social work is that of practice wisdom. Practice wisdom stems from a focus on doing and developing patterns of intervention based on previous

experience of cases. It is a concept that has had strong support particularly among practitioners and in the practice elements of education and training. To ignore the importance of practice wisdom as a constituent of social work practice would be foolish - social work is a practical activity and therefore this should be reflected in its theory and knowledge base. However, there is a danger that undue emphasis on practice wisdom could have the effect of reducing critical and theoretical thinking before intervention, and thereby restricting the practitioner from analysing the contribution of structural explanations of the service user's situation e.g. poverty, gender, disability. Such an approach has been described as anti-intellectual (Sibeon 1991c, 1993) and could also be construed as unprofessional in terms of providing a theory-informed service. By prioritising 'doing' above 'theorising', the notion of practice wisdom runs the risk of being equated with common sense which in itself provides an insufficient basis for claims to professional status. Support for practice wisdom and experience is still an important factor in social work education and training as demonstrated by recent developments in the probation service. Based on a view that there were too many single women (and too many Black women) being recruited to the service, the Home Office has been reported as wishing to actively target people with experience in the armed services and police to become probation officers (Fletcher 1994). In other words it was concerned to appoint those with experience of the use of authority and a common-sense understanding of crime and offending. The notion of practice wisdom can also be seen in current preoccupations with 'What Works?'/evidence based practice (Chapman and Hough 1998). While such knowledge has the aura of scientific objectivity because of its research underpinnings, it lacks any underlying theory base and takes no account of the service users' perceptions of their situation either before or after intervention. Its

concern and focus is solely on outcomes (Sibeon 1991b). Because of this it is in danger of being a more sophisticated form of practice wisdom.

The concepts considered in the previous sections have been highly influential in the education of social workers, providing a practical and pragmatic base rather than one based on broader theoretical thinking. The approach advocated by Howe (1980) provides a good example of the type of analysis and thinking that has been used in the training of social workers. He considered that social work can be understood by considering it from three different perspectives, those of role, skill and aim. The role job is a social worker's statutory and procedural responsibility, the skill job is what the social worker needs to undertake the tasks of social work and the aim is the function of social work in society. From this stand-point, social work is a straightforward, practical activity and it is these concepts rather than grand social theories that should be the essence of social work training and education:-

*'To look for skills in human behaviour and build them on the unsettled foundations of social science theory is a precarious business.'* (Howe 1980:332)

Davies (1981) aligned himself with this paradigm. Despite the fact that social work education is based in universities which are traditionally seen as upholding traditions of theory-building and research, he argued that they needed to open themselves up, in order to ensure that the social work curriculum could become more practice based (Davies 1981).

Others have followed a similar line :-

*'theoretical activity needs to have a little more respect for the empirical*

*reality of social work practice.*’ (Smid and Van Kriekan 1984:22)

*‘There is something questionable about the whole exercise of theory building in social work it seems to be an exclusively academic exercise.’*  
(Carew 1979:363)

These views were also been reinforced by social work students. Barbour (1984) in a detailed small-scale survey of post graduate CQSW students found that they identified two main perspectives or value bases influencing their motivation for social work, those of helping and healing. His survey found that the students were unclear about when and how to apply social work theory whilst they were on placement. They were more concerned with issues relating to social work values than with any other facet of their work. Born out of concern for an acceptable level of care for their clients (Barbour 1984). In another study Jordan (1982) found students to be antipathetic to academic discourse and over-reliant on practice experience particularly whilst on practice placements.

### ***Theory-Practice Splits in Practice***

Studies show that reliance on values and practice wisdom remains strong after students have qualified as social workers. Corby (1982) looked at the planning and theory used by social workers in forty-two cases. He found little of either in these cases but a greater reliance on practical reactive help and monitoring of cases.

There has been much written about how to resolve the theory-practice split in itself demonstrating how problematic an issue it is for practitioners. Some take the view that theory should be derived from

practice . Hence the term practice theory (see Carew 1979 and Pinker 1983). Others take the view practice should be derived from theories and hence the term theories of practice (see Bailey and Lee 1982 and Curnock and Hardiker 1979). Whatever way the problem is approached, commentators do argue the importance of not relying solely on practice wisdom:-

*'reciprocal links must be maintained between theory and practice on the basis of systematic evidence if social work knowledge is to develop.'*  
(Curnock and Hardiker 1979:10)

Blythe and Hugman (1982) also argue that social work practitioners must be able to do and theorise (Blythe and Hugman 1982).

However, it is not clear just how practitioners can do both, and this is reinforced by the surveys quoted above. Students and authors acknowledge the existence and to some extent the importance of social work theories of various kinds, but there remains a lack of clear ideas about how to transfer these with regularity and professional consistency into the practice setting. This may well be because of the types of theories advocated and the complexity of service users' situations. Whatever the case, a practicable working model or framework for translating theory to practice has still to be evolved (Jordan 1982, Corby 1982).

### **The influence of radical ideas in social work**

As noted at the start of this chapter, radical ideas have played a part in social work practice and education from its early beginnings albeit at the

fringes. The term *radical social work* can be divided into four main areas. The first of these areas is that relating to class. Concerns about the impact of poverty and deprivation on families and the notion of collectivist solutions were raised at the start of the twentieth century. Similar concerns and solutions were raised again in the late 1960s and a more explicit Marxist analysis became established in social work in the 1970s and early 1980s (Corrigan and Leonard 1981).

The second area of radical social work to be considered is that relating to gender. This form of analysis developed out of feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s. While this was a radical perspective it was to some extent critical of the Marxist analyses because of their neglect of the role of women particularly in light of the fact that they were predominant in the field of social care and also the main direct recipients of welfare services and intervention (Dominelli and McLeod 1989, Hamner and Statham 1988).

The third theme of radical social work is that of Black people and anti-racist practice which rose to prominence in the 1980s in response to the inadequacy of welfare services in terms of meeting Black people's needs and intervening into their lives (Cheetham et al 1987).

The fourth area, one which in many ways is still in a developmental stage, is that of the more generic issue of anti-oppressive practice. In what follows, there will be an examination of all four of these areas of radical social work.



## *Class, Marxism and Social Work*

As noted above in the early stages of the development of the profession of social work in Britain there were elements of a class-based radical perspective used to analyse the position of poor people. However, this analysis saw little role for social work in the challenge to this state of affairs. Indeed, from a Marxist perspective, social work and social welfare could be seen as part of the state apparatus of a capitalist society. Those operating either implicitly or explicitly from a Marxist perspective therefore placed reliance upon union activities and working with community groups or collectivities to raise the political awareness of those living in poverty (Bailey and Brake 1980, Corrigan and Leonard 1981). In other words the solution lay outside social work.

However, the articulation of radical strategies for social workers did not emerge until the 1960s. Those advocating radical and Marxist perspectives in social work at this time viewed the profession's pre-occupation with therapy and 'treating' individuals as misplaced and lacking in an understanding of the nature of the capitalist state and the controlling ideologies of the welfare system (Bailey and Brake 1980, Corrigan and Leonard 1981). Radical writers argued for a different role for social workers, one of decentralising service provision to local communities, building alliances with local community groups and becoming involved in community politics at a local level. At the individual level it was argued that social workers should adopt strategies to raise the consciousness of clients and thereby to empower them. Thus, social work was seen as a political activity, but its focus was on individuals and to some extent communities. It was not the same as political activity at a broader level:

*'It is important to politicise social work, but this is different from being involved in political activist movements.'* (Bailey and Brake 1980:23)

This kind of Marxist social work was about encouraging the service user and the social worker to see the world differently. It located problems outside individuals and identified the need for social workers, informed by a radical analysis, to tackle practical issues such as housing and social security.

*'A radical political framework such as socialism can be used to sensitise the social worker to the actual definition of the situation by the client, and also sensitise the client to the contradiction in the system.'* (Bailey and Brake 1980:23)

By using the terms 'contradiction in the system' these authors were arguing that, although the welfare state and social work appear to be progressive and helpful structures, they can also be seen as tools for meeting the requirements of the capitalist economic system i.e. a system that demands the development of a disciplined and regulated workforce and in which the role of the welfare state (and that of social work) is to 'soft police' the process.

Some radical writers have argued that despite this role and what could be seen as social work's collusion with the welfare state under capital, the social work profession was well-positioned to have a radical impact on the problems besetting poor people in our society (Rojek et al 1988). Others have taken a different view, that instead of critically challenging itself, social work practice has colluded with the coercive power of the

welfare state and the police and used its statutory powers to the detriment of those in poverty (Jones 1983). Thus, far from working to liberate or collaborate with the working class to develop a class consciousness (Langan and Lee 1989) or political hegemony (Corrigan and Leonard 1981), to challenge the existing order, social work was too often about maintenance of the status quo. Whichever position adopted by Marxist social work, the emphasis was clearly on collective class consciousness, the notion of a proletariat and how best to intervene on their behalf (Jones 1983, Langan and Lee 1989). Radical social work, in a Marxist framework, therefore sought a socialist based solution with those it purported to help.

Despite the certainty of its analysis, however, radical social work theorists have struggled with solutions and strategies of action. There have been major disagreements about whether the strategies to be adopted should be ones of collective intervention, of raising individual consciousness, of advocacy or of radical non intervention (Rojek et al 1988, 1989, Langan and Lee 1989, Corrigan & Leonard 1981.). The main thrust of radical social work writers, however, in the 1980s was to try and develop radical social work as a social work method offering practical ways of intervening into families (Curnock and Hardiker 1979, Bailey and Brake 1980, Corrigan and Leonard 1981).

There has been much criticism of these approaches from those taking a more traditional or mainstream view of social work. For them, as we have seen, the business of social work is about supporting vulnerable individuals, not mobilising socialist organisations in the naive hope of somehow usurping the welfare state and encouraging an uprising of the working class. Further, they have argued that those who wish to follow

this kind of radical course of action are not concerned with doing social work essentially an individual-focused activity, but would be better placed in a political party or community group trying to achieve their objectives (Butrym 1979, Davies 1985, 1991).

Radical social work methods have secondly been criticised as impracticable (Davies 1985, Langan and Lee 1989), partly, because the ideas have been seen as vague, if well meaning, and partly because, as with traditional social work methods, it is very difficult to see how they could be transformed from the text book into any consistent framework of practice.

Thirdly, it has been argued by other groups, that a blinkered emphasis on the class struggle far from liberating most, empowers very few (Hudson 1989). This is because the divisions and quite different experiences of those within the homogenous term 'working class', have been ignored. Feminists have argued that a Marxist analysis of social work has perpetuated patriarchy within the profession, and the exploitation of women in social care generally (Dominelli and McLeod 1989, Hanmer and Statham 1988). This line of argument has some extent been echoed by Black people, who have claimed that a class analysis does not accurately represent or reflect their experience (Cheetham et al 1987, Langan and Lee 1989, Rojek et al 1989). By advancing the rights of those exploited by capitalism and the welfare state, the idea of liberty and equal opportunity for all is threatened. For, if social work is about solely working with those in poverty and the working class, other social collectivities such as Black people, women, gay and lesbians, by definition will be disadvantaged, because resources will not be targeted on them. Rather than acknowledging the multifaceted nature of

oppression (Brittan and Maynard 1984, Knowles and Mercer 1992, Yuval Davis 1994), and the way in which various oppressions are interlinked, radical (Marxist) social work attempts in some ways - very much like social work knowledge itself - to de-contextualise an individual's complex experience, and locate oppression solely within a class analysis.

A fourth criticism of the radical/Marxist social work perspective has been one that can be applied to any social group, e.g. Black people, women, and disabled people, as well as to class. It is based on the view that there is no such thing as a collective consciousness which can be owned by people in poverty or the working class. Rather, any common experience is defined and made sense of by individuals in completely different ways (Sibeon 1993, Yuval Davis 1992), and so class consciousness is an illusion (Rojek et al 1988). From this viewpoint, radical social work's claim to support class consciousness is reductionist, and a fallacy. Individuals may have commonalities in their experience (Dominelli and McCleod 1989), but that does not dispose them to a pre-determined response or interpretation of their reality.

Finally by linking oppression solely within the working class, radical social work has assumed that a social collectivity such as the working class exists, and that local communities are homogenous, fixed and devoid of fluidity and of power (Clegg 1989, Yuval Davis 1992). It also ignores the different positions people hold within the economy, e.g. the employed, unemployed and the never employed, and lumps them together under the umbrella term working class.

Despite these criticisms, it should be acknowledged that the radical perspectives we have been considering were the first attempt that social

work had made at developing a knowledge base that critically looked at itself from the political as well as the personal perspective of the service user (Jones 1983, Rojek et al 1989). Given the social context in which radical social work was first developed, it is not surprising that its focus was initially on class alone, and it could be argued that a radical perspective had to begin somewhere. As will be seen, in the period that followed, the importance and centrality of class disappeared under the emergence of a whole range of different forms of oppression. Only more recently has there been a refocusing on class within the other forms of oppression such as 'race', gender and disability.

### *Gender, Feminism and Social Work*

The second cluster of radical ideas to have influenced social work and its construction of knowledge has been that of gender and feminism. There are three main feminism approaches that have had an impact on social work. The first is that of liberal gradualism, which is based on the belief that change can be achieved within society by reason and persuasion and through the existing social systems. This approach advocates reform rather than revolution, (Dominelli and McLeod 1989, Hamner and Statham 1988, Hudson 1989). Within social work, for instance, it is argued that women can achieve change by acquiring positions of managerial responsibility (Rojek et al 1988).

Secondly, there is what can be termed the socialist activist approach. From this perspective, the oppression of women, both clients and professionals, is located within capitalism and patriarchy, (Hamner and Statham 1988). Collective action is seen as the most appropriate strategy for raising the status of women. One of the key socialist feminist social

work strategies is woman-centred practice (see Hamner and Statham 1988). These writers, along with Dominelli and McCLeod (1989), argue that women in social work should build on their commonalities, and utilise their shared experiences of sexism in a constructive social work cause, and bring about meaningful change in their social priorities. Rather like the main threads of radical social work based on class, feminist collectivism concentrates on structural and general issues of women's oppression in the welfare state, and does not deal closely with women's individual situations (Rojek et al 1988).

The third feminist approach in social work is that of separatism. Here, the cause of women's oppression is located in male power and the patriarchal organisation of society. Based on this analysis, the strategy to be adopted by women in social work should be to organise separately. Clear examples of this are rape crisis centres, or women's refuges. In sites such as these, the emphasis is on empowering the woman client and liberating her from the male oppressor (Firestone 1971).

As in the case of radical social work based on class politics, feminist social work, has been subjected to many forms of criticism. Firstly, the points made above, regarding single-dimensional notions of oppression and the unproven notion of a common consciousness, are as applicable to gender as they are to class.

Secondly, radical social work based on feminism, while posing many useful questions and explanatory analyses, fails to come up with many practical solutions.

Thirdly, Black women have stated that they are not represented in 'white'

feminist discourse (Carby 1983) and therefore, experience this form of feminism within social work as exclusive rather than liberating.

Fourthly, feminist social work lacks a class perspective and falsely assumes 'commonalities' between middle class professionals and working class clients, when in fact there is a considerable gap between women with these two types of social experience.

Fifthly, with regard to the separatist, women centred social work approach which locates men as the oppressors, and encourages women to be independent of men, this ignores areas of social interaction where there is mutual interdependence, whether liked or not. Hence for many women, although cutting all ties with men sounds appealing, it is much more difficult to achieve, because it is contrary to a lifetime of ideological and cultural socialisation that encourages child rearing, motherhood and family life (Oakley 1985).

However, feminism, as a radical influence on social work's knowledge base has made some significant contributions. In terms of local authority policies, an anti-sexist code of practice is now commonplace (Sibeon 1991a), which provides a framework for dealing with unacceptable behaviour such as sexual harassment. In relation to theory and practice, CCETSW has specifically highlighted anti-sexist practice, as one of two (the other being anti-racism) areas of anti-discriminatory practice that must underpin all knowledge, both theoretically and practically taught to NVQ, Dip/SW and post qualifying level (CCETSW 1991a, 1991b). Feminists in social work, have also highlighted the issue of the over-representation of men in managerial posts, in contrast to much of the low paid work carried out by home helps, and basic grade social workers



which is carried out mainly by women (Dominelli and McCleod 1989).

### ***Racism, Anti-Racism and Social Work***

In the early 1980s, a third strand of radicalism emerged on social work's agenda, that relating to 'race' and ethnicity. Up to this time the class and gender politics of radical social work had made little or no reference to the issue of 'race' and Black people in social work (Cheetham et al 1987, Rooney 1987, Shah 1989). Following on from the street uprisings of the early and mid-1980s the issue of 'race' impacted heavily both on local government and on social work. Then for the first time in Britain, the issue of Black representation and participation came on to the local government agenda (Ousley 1990). With regard to social work, there was a sudden shift to the development and adoption of anti-racist strategies.

These strategies initially tended to focus on the development of policies and specific practices to empower Black people (Cain and Yuval Davies 1990). A central claim of those developing such strategies was that traditional social work approaches emphasised Black people's needs in terms of statutory, controlling elements of social work practice (Francis 1991b, Jones 1993), but when it came to helping and providing resources they were either invisible or hard to cater for (Rooney 1987, Small 1989). They claimed therefore, that the effect of this, that is, receiving either a coercive service, or an inappropriate one, or none at all was racist. Based on this analysis, anti-racist strategies were developed to counter traditional social work practices. However, the analysis drew little on broader-based theoretical ideas about 'race' and racism, but rather on a variety of ideas, drawing on the experience of practitioners, invariably Black ones, to create practices thought to be more relevant to the needs of

Black service users (Francis 1991a, Rooney 1987). At this point in time, the central theme raised by radical social work theorists about class and gender, that operating at the personal level on its own was insufficient because of the structural nature of class and sexism, was not applied to the issue of racism.

A key problem with this more personalised form of anti-racist practice was, as I argued in the last chapter, that it tended to take a doctrinaire form, which lent itself as much to being seen as reactionary and controlling, as it did to being liberating (Cohen 1992, Gilroy 1992).

### *Insiders, Outsiders and Empathisers*

A key underpinning theory, though not articulated as such, to much of the early thinking behind anti-racist approaches was that it was the experience of being Black that was important in understanding and responding to racist oppression. From this developed the view that you had to be Black, therefore, to combat oppression. This perspective underpinned the more personalised approach to anti-racism. In this section I propose to use the work of Merton (1973) whom I found useful to critically examine the theoretical validity of anti-oppressive paradigms.

Merton (1973) outlined three distinct areas of knowledge:- that derived from an Insider perspective, that derived from an Outsider perspective and that derived from Empathetic Understanding. For the Insiderist doctrine, self experience is the only form, of knowing :-

*'In this form of solipsism, each group must in the end have a monopoly on knowledge itself. . . one has monopolistic or privileged access to*

*knowledge, or is wholly excluded by it, by virtue of one's group membership or social position.* (Merton 1973:14-15).

Thus to understand one, you have to be one, and group membership means one can legitimately claim monopoly on knowledge about that group. This means that only Black social workers can understand Black service users, only women can understand women service users and so on.

The Outsiderist doctrine, states it is a positive advantage not to be one, in terms of understanding and working with people, because professional filters of socialisation can more accurately perceive what is happening. In this context it is a positive advantage not to be one.

The third area is that of Empathetic understanding, which emphasises that one need not necessarily be one to understand one. In other words, a critical insight into an individual's behaviour is of paramount importance, not group membership.

For many radical social work thinkers about anti-racism, the Insiderist perspective has most validity. Statham, for instance, argues that:-

*'theoretical proficiency is not in itself sufficient: theory has to be based in experiencing.'* (Statham 1978:4)

and

*'If we are not Black, although we might participate in action, we cannot contribute to the analysis of Black oppression, because, however*

*enlightened our views are thought to be, the whites are among the oppressors.* ' (Statham 1978:10)

This perspective is, however, flawed for the following reasons .

Firstly, group membership, just like oppression is not one-dimensional. On the contrary, it is multi-faceted (Lewis 1996, Cain and Yuval Davis 1990). Thus, a Black woman maybe in a group of women who are white, and thus be an Insider through gender group membership, and at the same time be an Outsider through definition of 'race'.

Secondly, an assumption that members of oppressed groups (for instance, women or disabled people) have a monopoly on the knowledge base about their oppressions because as Insiders they know best, negates the very important contribution that Outsiders, such as (male, non-disabled) social workers can make to the Insiders' situation. This is clearly absurd in that by virtue of their professional training and access to resources social workers must surely be of use in developing strategies to combat the oppressions experienced by the Insiders.

Thirdly, the Insiderist doctrine is misleading, because it assumes homogeneity (Yuval Davis 1994) amongst for instance Black people, whereas this term could include a whole range of peoples from different classes, cultures and ethnicities.

The Outsiderist doctrine also has weaknesses in that it can reinforce professional tendencies (because of education, training and power differentials) to impose reality on clients. A paradoxical example of this might be in situations where social work managers impose equal

opportunities policies in an hierarchical manner on their workforce and service users, because as Outsider professionals, they believe they have a more focused view on the construction of oppression and the strategies needed to tackle it (Nelson 1990, Sibeon 1991a). This is problematic, because it assumes a lack of consciousness and an acceptance of the prevailing political hegemony on the part of services users in particular, and seeks to impose solutions rather than discuss and negotiate them. This type of Outsiderist model which social work has attempted to achieve through professionalising, is criticised by Statham (1978) as an expert model that has no place in a service that should focus on a service user's definition of their situation.

Merton's third type of professional knowledge, that of Empathetic Understanding, is one that both traditional (Butrym 1979, Davies 1985) and radical (Jones 1983) advocates of social work knowledge have laid claim to. This emphasises the importance of social workers and service users working together to negotiate reality. Thus Insider service users such as Black people and women must define their experiences and the personal services needed, and professional Outsiders have to work with them, using their professional knowledge and expertise to develop their understanding of the Insiders' situations and to reach agreed solutions with them :-

*'The purpose is to base action upon the conceptual linking of personal situations of welfare worker and client, to an analysis of the macro structural location and circumstances of each . . . and to ground this "making of connections" in socialist values, rather than in the ideology of technical professional superiority, nor the crude solipistic doctrine of client cognitive monopoly of self understanding.'* (Sibeon 1980:39)

The weakness of this perspective is that it demonstrates a naivety about the structural relations of 'race', gender and class and the statutory responsibilities of social work. As a consequence there is a risk that the type of empathetic social work being argued for is idealistic and therefore not realisable in practice.

Although Merton's typology cannot give answers to the problems, it does provide an analytical framework from which to examine social work knowledge and practice in relation to oppression. It highlights the difficulties that committed radicals face in trying to tackle oppression and the need to develop fluid, ever changing responses in social work practice to challenge it.

### *The Impact of Anti-Racist Strategies on social work practice*

In the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, it is fair to say that anti-racism within social service departments became *the* primary anti-discriminatory concern, taking preference over other forms of discrimination that also needed to be tackled (CCETSW 1991a). As has already been noted, however, the focus was limited and dominated by perspectives that did not do justice to the complexity of the issues involved. Anti-racist social work tended to read like a litany of 'do nots', in contrast to the many creative ways of working with people (Jones A. 1993). Another weakness linked to the adoption of simplistic analyses of 'race' issues has been the lack of attention paid to ignore issues of class and poverty (Sivanandan 1993b). On the positive side, these early attempts to develop anti-racist strategies did lead to a critical eye being focused on areas of social work which could be interpreted as operating

in a racist way (Harris L. 1993, Husband 1991), and to this extent at least, a sensitivity to developing services for Black people evolved. In particular they resulted in greater attention being paid to the experiences of individuals and organisations from the Black community and in a recognition of the strengths among diverse cultures and ethnic groups working in and around social work (Ahmad 1990, Singh 1992).

Since the mid-1990s there has been a shift in social work policy from a sole focus on anti-racism to a broader anti-oppressive/discriminatory practice knowledge base (CCETSW 1995a). This approach encompasses all oppressions, and prioritises none. It is a shift that partly reflects the then government's dislike of the radical influence of anti-racism (Pinker 1993), but one that also demonstrates the constantly shifting power base of various collectivities within social work. (Clegg 1989).

The ease with which social work moves from one oppression to another gives cause for some concern. Traditionally, social work has taken on new ideas and approaches and incorporated them into its rather unstable and uncertain core knowledge base (Rojek et al 1988). In addition, it suggests an uncertainty about its role in relation to disadvantage and also to a lack of theoretical understanding of how disadvantage occurs and is maintained in society. This in turn can be linked to social work's traditional antipathy towards radical ideas and analyses, to a culture within social work of anti-intellectualism (Sibeon 1991c), and to reliance on practice wisdom and learning from practice (see Brewster 1992, Carew 1979, Curnock and Hardiker 1979). Viewed less critically, it could be argued that regardless of the uncertainty of where to place its emphasis, there has been an overall shift in social work since the mid-1980s with a growing political sensitivity to service users' situations and

to the issue of structural disadvantage, so much so that by the middle of the 1990s anti-oppressive practice, in terms of knowledge, skills and values had become a fundamental corner stone of social work training. This is even more remarkable in some ways because CCETSW's adoption of anti-oppressive values coincided with local authority social work's most conservative, managerialist era since the inception of the COS (Brewster 1992, McBeath and Webb 1991). Thus, while CCETSW/TOPSS was promoting anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice among those responsible for social work education and training in universities and colleges, social services department managers were much more concerned with negotiating the pitfalls of providing needs-led services in a market economy climate (Howe 1994).

## **Social Work Education, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression**

### *Theorising and Competency*

Social work education has always lurched between two models of teaching and learning, the first being knowledge and theory based with a view to equipping practitioners with key concepts for understanding and tackling social and psychological problems, and the second being competence –based with a view to ensuring that practitioners have the skills and experience required to undertake the social work role. Striking a balance between the theoretical input from universities, and the practitioner/apprenticeship model has until recently been seen as the best means of preparing trainee social workers for their future occupational role (Sibeon 1991b). However, from the late 1980s onwards CCETSW, the body responsible for validating and monitoring social work education, has more and more placed its emphasis on employer-led, though in



partnership with Universities, models of education. For many social work educationalists (situated largely in colleges and Universities), this shift has been seen as detrimental resulting in a loss of reflective and flexible practitioners who can with the aid of theories and knowledge think on their feet about the situations facing them (Cannan 1994, Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995). By contrast, employers, despite the shift to a more practice-focused set of arrangements, have been critical of social work qualifying courses and (until very recently) uninterested in post-qualifying training, instead showing much greater commitment to the stronger form of competency training found in National Vocational Qualification courses (Sibeon 1991b).

It could be argued that particularly in relation to anti-racist practice the complexity of the issues involved requires the practitioner to have the ability to think creatively, which is something to which the notion of compartmentalising competencies does not easily lend itself (Buchanan and Millar 1996). If indeed anti-oppressive practice is concerned with bringing about change, it is quite probable that the competency based model will stifle much of this in future social work students, because of its prescriptive nature. As one Sibeon puts it:-

*'Social work has become increasingly remote not merely from modern social science . . . but also from the discourses of citizens and those needs it is supposed to serve.'* (Sibeon 1991c:158)

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have critically examined the historical and sociological

formation of social work knowledge and the impact that radical ideas have had its development. I have also explored here some of the theoretical contradictions and complexities that can arise when trying to teach and practice in a radical anti-racist social work way This argument has built on some of the fierce criticisms of anti-racism dealt with in the first chapter of this thesis. In the next chapter I propose to move the discourse on one step further by examining more recently post-modern paradigms in great depth to establish whether they offer any more opportunity to develop a clear but flexible framework for anti-racist practice learning.

## **CHAPTER 3 ANTI RACISM, POST-MODERNITY AND THE OTHER, - ITS APPLICATION TO SOCIAL WORK**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I intend to explore some of the theoretical opportunities that post-modern ideas offer to our understanding of 'race' issues and to anti-racist practice learning.

As has already been argued, social work has often failed to grasp the complexity and fluidity that is needed to understand the issue of 'race' and to therefore carry out anti-racist practice in a fully informed way (Cross and Keith 1993, Macey 1995, Rattansi 1992). Social work has managed to make a very complex, multi-faceted (Gilroy 1992) phenomenon, racism (and anti-racism), seem one dimensional and simplistic. This simplification has to some degree had the opposite effect to that which was intended, namely to "empower" Black people. In relation to Black service users, it could be argued that simplification has in some areas of social work worked to their detriment – in child protection, for instance, where there has been a failure to protect children because of over concern with anti-racist ideas (see Brent 1985, Lambeth 1987). In relation to Black social work professionals it could be argued that they are only being employed because of their perceived value in achieving anti-racist outcomes. In relation to Black social work students, it could be argued that many are being favourably assessed because there is a fear that if they are failed by white practice teachers, allegations of racism will surface (Burgess et al 1992). By this means there is a danger

that notions of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice become merely an overt form of political correctness (Dominelli 1996), resulting in a lack of academic freedom and rigour (Phillips 1993, Pinker 1993, Sibeon 1991a) in relation to social work in general and Black students in particular (Burgess et al 1992).

In this chapter, it will be argued that post-modern ideas which have largely been ignored within social work discourses about 'race', racism and anti-racism, in fact have much to offer in developing understanding beyond the simplifications that have characterised these debates so far. In particular, the concept of Otherness (Gabriel 1996) as a defining category in the process of the racialization of Black and white people will be further explored (Miles 1994). The impact of modernity and post-modernity will also be examined in terms of its contribution to social theory in understanding racism (LLoyd 1994, Malik 1996a, Rattansi and Westwood 1994, Wiervorka 1994). I will critically examine how social work makes sense of the discourses of racism and anti-racism (Dominelli 1996), in an era where new managerialism is prevalent (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996), where social work is the defence against this retrenchment, and where local authority agendas have been first dominated by the New Right's financial restrictions and, more recently, by New Labour's Best Value expectations (LGMB 1998). Attention will be paid to understanding models of racism in the context of market focused Britain (Gabriel 1996), a merging Europe (Vieux 1994, Weivorka 1994) and the subsequent influence of these developments on the process of racialisation (Miles 1994).

## **Of Sociology and Social Work**

Before embarking on this journey, however, I wish to examine in more general terms the relationship between sociology and social work. My aim in so doing is to emphasise the history and background of this relationship and to provide a context and even an explanation as to why social work might find it hard to draw on sociological and post-modern ideas about 'race', racism and anti-racism.

I have already argued that sociology has been particularly critical of social work (Jones 1996, Novak 1995, Sibeon 1991b, 1993). This "critical" view of sociology has been argued by some as being a reason for dismissing its utility as a body of knowledge for social work (Davies 1991). I will now take issue with this premise, and will argue that if social work delves into some of the more sophisticated interpretations of discourses concerning racism and anti-racism (Gilroy 1992, Macey 1995), there will be greater clarity in the application of anti-racist knowledge and practice to areas of social work and social work practice teaching. A key difficulty, however, is that the texture, the subtlety and the richness of explanation that sociology can offer social work concerning racism is not easily transferred into practice (Novak 1995). This can in part be explained by the fact that sociology is in the business of questioning and critical analysis, whilst social work inevitably is concerned with models of practice, and with 'doing' (Jones 1996). Social work, including practice teaching and learning, all too often calls on 'experiential wisdom' (Carew 1979), to inform practice. With regard to 'race' and racism, the outcome is an often well intentioned, but theoretically, politically and sometimes practically flawed anti-racist

practice. This position is further undermined by social work embracing a competency based approach (Cannan 1994), through the vehicle of CCETSW's learning continuum (CCETSW 1995b), which has led to the profession being even more atheoretical and confused in its practice of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice (Dominelli 1996, Frogget and Sapey 1997, Macey and Moxon 1996). So what does sociological theory offer social work then?

This question will be answered by demonstrating that social theory through the development of competing discourses encourages the evolution of an informed debate, a debate that is never static, fixed, nor simple, but one that probes the questions below the surface of the 'obvious'. For racism and strategies to combat it, this means an appreciation that there is no ultimate position that any person, Black or white, needs to adopt to be credible, but what is important is an intellectual commitment to seek out the most effective ways to understand it and to thereby challenge its consequences (Donald and Rattansi 1992, Gilroy 1992).

### **Understanding Racism as a Process**

Social work approaches to racism are largely limited to naming racism rather than being concerned with explaining the process by which it is created. As we have seen, however, there are those who explain racism as being primarily moved by market forces and capital (Gabriel 1996). This type of explanation, it is argued, is not fully acknowledged by many practitioners dealing with issues of 'race'. Rather, their focus is more on examining the experiences of non white people in a world which is not conceived as being driven by these forces (see also Sivanandan 1982,

Miles 1994). But this analysis does not do justice to the complexity of the process. Miles, for instance, in an attempt to explain the concept of racism links it to,

*'an exclusionary practice (which ) refers only to a concrete act or process. . . to both intentional actions and unintended consequences, which create patterns of inequality.'* (Miles 1989:84)

In this sense it is ,

*' a particular form of representation which is a specific instance of a wider process of racialisation.'* (Miles 1989:84)

The process of racialisation is one that divides the social relations of people of African and South Asian descent, juxtaposed to those of Europeans, based on purported biological differences. This manifests itself in an ideology of 'Otherness' (Gabriel 1996, Miles 1989). This Otherness has been socially constructed into an ideological reality, that in terms of economic exploitation is historically specific and has been central to the exploitation of Black people nationally, and Africans and Asians internationally.

In sum, racism is the product of a process whereby racialisation takes place. It is the social construction of difference based on purported biological categorisations, that in turn leads to a notion of Otherness for people of African and Asian descent. This Otherness has an historical specificity in terms of economic exploitation (Miles 1989).

This analysis is useful because it provides two essential concepts on

which to develop an understanding of racism :- Capital /market forces, and Otherness. For the sociologist, this analysis is not remarkably innovative, but in terms of social work knowledge it provides a bigger picture and a context for understanding rather than a simple acceptance of the Black/white dichotomy in a political vacuum. From this perspective, it is argued that, when explaining and perhaps combating racism, social work practitioners need to have a more sophisticated understanding of racism in global terms, and to work from a fuller picture concerning for instance Somali people and poverty, or Bangladeshi people and struggles around immigration. It is the balance between the broader explanation and the specific instance that sadly has, up to the present, been missing within anti-racist social work (Macey 1995, Malik 1996b).

The notions concerning Insiders and Outsiders in a context of Europe will be explored in more detail later on, but at this stage, I will turn to a more in-depth analysis of the concept of Otherness.

### **Otherness - a Black Reality**

Post-modernists (Hall 1991, Lyotard 1984, Rorty 1989) and Poststructuralists (Foucault 1978, Goldberg 1993) use the notion of the Other to explain the ascendance of Western societies and the subsequent oppression of Black people through the idea of difference. However, the concept of Otherness does not have to relate exclusively to 'race', but underpins the concept of Insiders and Outsiders, a way of viewing one's self image.

*'The Other was conceived as the perceiving, conscious, meaning-conferring other person, who helps, or forces the conscious subject to*



*define its own world picture and its view of it's place within it.* ' (Malik 1996b:221)

The notion of Otherness has been used as a way of explaining how societies have measured normality. In medieval society, the other included those suffering from leprosy, and over time they have been succeeded by criminals, the homeless and those in mental distress (Foucault 1967).

*'Not only is everything beyond the boundary treated as the Other, but society requires an Other, without which there can be no sense of self.'* (Malik 1996b:221)

The term Black has been constructed as Otherness. It serves more to define and differentiate whiteness or those of European descent. One of the obvious dysfunctions of this way of viewing the world is that the term "Black" is left as a name to incorporate the diversity and complexity of all ethnic groups that are non western, or more appropriately of non European descent (Gabriel 1996). Thus the term homogenises the diversity of Black people. Otherness or Blackness (in the case of racism) is seen as inferior, thus stressing Outsider or White superiority.

We have seen these processes at work in the way Orientals or Muslims were portrayed in the Rushdie affair (Yuval Davies 1992). When the liberal establishment defended Rushdie and blamed the outspoken authoritarian Muslims of Iran, a clear pattern was emerging. This was one of fusing Muslims with anybody who is Asian which in turn was equated with being undesirable. The hegemony created in this country was one of hatred towards Asians, and of great anti-Islamic feeling

(Malik 1996b). In this context anything is fair game, including physical assaults. The Gulf war is yet another example of Arabs being depicted as crazed people (Gabriel 1996), as is the aftermath to September 11<sup>th</sup>.2000.

The position of women within a discourse of Otherness and Orientalism, is in itself interesting. Black women are reluctant to criticise Islam, to avoid promoting stereotypes of a religion and Asian people that are distorted (Hill-Collins 1990, Saghal and Yuval Davies 1992). However, there is a need to find a space that is both in dialogue with Islam but rejects the West's stereotypes. In this sense, it is the contested ground of oppression that will determine a more sophisticated understanding of Otherness for Black women and Islam. This has resonance with hooks' (1991), depiction of the individual struggle Black women have with their partners as men, in which they strive not to encourage the false construction of Otherness that whiteness thrives on, but also refuse to let the hegemonic values of maleness dominate their lives. In terms of the contested ground of oppression this means,

*'Each group speaks from its own standpoint and shares its own partial situated knowledge. But because each group perceives its own truth as partial its knowledge is unfinished.'* (Hill-Collins 1990:236)

*'ideas of 'race' are always contingent and relative, shifting and shiftable, capable of working this way and that.'* (Gabriel 1996:41)

Otherness as an all encompassing category not only provides a focus for the process of racialisation, but it results in those who are labelled 'the Other' implicitly or explicitly accepting this label by, for instance, encouraging the use of the word Black to describe themselves. On one

level this creates a sense of unification and solidarity (Sivanandan 1994), but at the same time it denies the wide-ranging diversity of the whole of the non-Western world (Hall 1991). Another dysfunction is that the notion of Blackness with its political solidarity implications emphasises a male hegemonic position, used, as it is, to strengthen the notion of and necessity for a combative struggle against racism.

Otherness then becomes a vehicle to support a whole host of stereotypes about Black people and Black culture. For instance, in the case of women, there is the image of Black womanhood, imposed by the West: the mammy, the matriarch, the welfare mother and the promiscuous woman (Hill-Collins 1990). Black men's collusion with these images can deny women a leading role in the struggle against racial oppression. They deny that the ground concerning 'race' is shifting, contradictory and contested, because inherent within this is a pecking order itself, one that resists Black women taking a leading role in struggles concerning for instance Islam, or Black 'communities' (Lewis 1996, Yuval Davies 1994) because they are still expected to take a traditional role, one of being supportive to men.

*'Women are expected to submerge their own interests to uphold the . . . anti racist tradition.'* (Saghal and Yuval Davies 1992:35)

Otherness though, is a double sided mirror, for not only does it encourages the replication of oppression for women, it also ensures that the negative images of Black masculinity (hooks 1991, Yuval Davis 1994) are firmly embedded.

Another issue that becomes submerged by the generalised notion of

Otherness as regards 'race' is that of homophobia. As with the issue of gender, this process is linked to the Black masculine stereotype. It is an area of oppression that is popularly scorned within popular western Black culture (hooks 1991). It is denied a place, because heterosexism within the Other is seen as normal and anything else is viewed as abnormal. What this means for Black people is that being the Other, accepting the definition of being the Other is not only to be oppressed, it is to oppress as well, to be constrained in one's outlook, and restricted in terms of strategies to deal with this oppression. Put another way, the hegemony of 'the Other' not only influences the way white people view Black people, but also the way Black people view themselves (Gilroy 1993, hooks 1991)

The process, therefore, by which racism is generated is as follows. Firstly, it is a product of racialisation, depicting a sense of Otherness based on phenotypical and cultural categories. Secondly, this form of distinction is used within the Western world as a means of exploiting Black people for the purposes of international capital. Thirdly, the notion of Otherness is reinforced by its linkage with what is perceived as a dangerous over zealous religion -Islam- and that Islam is an Arab/Asian phenomenon. The effects of the demonisation of Arab and Asian peoples because of their adherence to Islam is one of hostile racism both at national and global levels. Finally, the outcome of the notion of Otherness is that of a mythical reality of sameness, homogeneity and oneness for all Black people (Donald and Rattansi 1992) in contrast to a notion of individuality and superiority for white people as Outsiders.

## **Otherness as a Theoretical Problem**

Whilst the notion of the Other has been and will continue to be utilised throughout this chapter, it needs to be acknowledged that within the different strands of post-modernity, this concept has its limitations.

Firstly, there seems to be an inherent contradiction in the term. Created by postmodernists, it has been identified as a product of the Enlightenment period (a period of intellectual, industrial and scientific revolution), and therefore as time specific. Yet, it has also been presented as a constant in human perception; an ever present phenomenon of them and us, Insiders and Outsiders (Malik 1996b). Said (1985) in his critique of Orientalism, discusses Western Enlightenment as if it is ahistoric. It portrays a mythical period that stretches from Greek Civilisation to Modernism, with no recognition of the different historical periods. Secondly, there is an unreality in depicting the West as an ontological whole. In Said's (1985) analysis the West has never had differences nor wars, and European society is and always has been homogenous. It is therefore, an essentialist argument.

A more thorough examination of post-modernism will be carried out later in this chapter. For now it is important to recognise the theoretical problematics that 'time' and homogeneity throw up for the Other.

These criticisms demonstrate the theoretical and logical limitations of the notion of the Other on a broader level. However, as it is being applied here, that is, specifically to address current discourses on 'race' and racism, it is a pliable theoretical concept with which to mark the contours

of racism.

Blackness in terms of identity and representation will also be explored a little later on, but the point to reaffirm here is that Otherness as a form of distinction and identity is a double sided mirror for Black people. Black people through an experience of racism have internalised and accepted this differentiation as natural, as much as white people have (Gilroy 1992, Malik 1996a). They have accepted it as the way things are and not as a social construction based on social, economic and political relations (Sivanandan 1991, Miles 1989). This acceptance of a natural order of things, Black and white (Macey 1995), them and us, has a salience when examining some of the criticisms Black women have made of Black men and in regard both to their notions about masculinity (hooks 1991, Yuval Davies 1994) and about sexual orientation (Gabriel 1996).

The implication of these damning criticisms is that the really creative politically difficult task of making links between the struggle against different oppressions, racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism has been neglected and frequently left to Black women to explore (Anthias et al 1990, Hill-Collins 1990, Lewis 1996).

As Smith and Smith aptly put it,

*'What I really feel is radical is trying to make a coalition with people who are different from you. I feel it is radical to be dealing with race and sex and class and sexual identity all at one time. I think it is really radical because it has never been done before.'* (Smith and Smith 1983:125 in Macey 1995)

The next point to be made is the contingency of time and space when exploring the process of identity, racialisation and racism. The construction of Otherness and its particular depiction can be seen as specific to the particular temporal arena and zonal space being regarded by the dominant perspective of the West. There is a big difference, for instance, in the perception of Others locally when so-called 'race' rioting takes place. In such situations Black people (the Others) are seen as a specific threat (Cross and Keith 1993). The inner cities in these cases are perceived as being run by Black people, and as no-go areas for White people. They are all but excluded from mainstream economic participation in society. In contrast there is the more global image of starving Africans (Gabriel 1996, Miles 1994) who are often viewed as pitiful, stirring up feelings of guilt that manifests itself in initiatives such as Band Aid and Comic Relief.

### **Otherness and White People**

A fundamental problem with locating discourses concerning 'race', in the arena of racialized ethnicity, the Them and Us referred to above, is that it diverts attention from the key issues, so that instead of ethnicity being seen as a social, cultural and religious concept, it is viewed simplistically as an issue of being non-white or Black. In turn Otherness becomes a vehicle for Black people to become inward looking and insular. As a result, self perception becomes the key debate rather than broader global issues.

It follows from this broader line of thinking that analysing the process of racialization, while historically of interest and importance, is not necessarily the most helpful way of developing an understanding of

issues of 'race', racism and anti-racism. It may be more fruitful to explain ethnicity as a continuum. This continuum of ethnicity does not need to be perceived so much as linear but lateral in the sense of being wide ranging. This provides the opportunity to examine the notion of ethnicity from a range of different standpoints, such as culture, values, hegemonic themes (political and/or religious), and to be inclusive not polarising around a Black/White dichotomy. This opens up the discourse concerning racialization and racism and moves it away from being perceived solely as an experience for Black people. Explanations of racism are not solely located in Black peoples' experience. They are much more broadly located and research into how a range of racisms have developed, and into the roles, motivations and justifications of oppressors as well as the consequences for the oppressed is likely to provide us with a richer understanding of these processes.

To take this further, the continuum of ethnicity can enable a broader analysis of the values and hegemonic beliefs that create the ascendancy of one social group over another and moves the focus of racism away from the frequent mistake of focusing on the complexion of skin, which in many arenas is an issue, but is not always *the* issue. Racism, thus, cannot be explained solely as a White/Black experience. Culture, heritage, religion and values inform the constitution of ethnicity. It is therefore critical that the experiences of Irish people (Stitt 1996, Garrett 1998), those of Jewish heritage (Bauman 1989), Muslims located within Europe and other so called 'white' people are explained in terms of racism.

Equally, when explaining racism, it is important that the continuum of ethnicity is critically examined as a whole, white and Black, Black and white. Thus a continuum of ethnicity enables viewing 'race' and racism



in this broader fashion and creates opportunities for incorporating other oppressions into the analysis in a way that does justice to the complexity of oppression in all its forms and the inter-linkages between those oppressions.

A good example of this is the work of Frankenberg who has explored the experiences of white women and Black people. Her analysis starts with the issue of whiteness and explains that it has a set of linked dimensions. Firstly, it is a location of structural advantage, and of 'race' privilege. Secondly, it is a standpoint from which white people view themselves, others and society. Finally, it refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg 1994). Here, anything viewed as non-white is the Other, even though, the demarcation concerning the criteria for a non-white category theoretically shifts. Frankenberg's analysis is particularly useful because she moves the spotlight away from Black people and their explanations of 'race' and racism to white people. However, Frankenberg's prime aim in this study is to examine why white feminists had apparently ignored 'race' for so long. Locating whiteness, in a continuum of ethnicity, Frankenberg explains,

*'Whiteness, refers to a set of locations, that are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and . . . are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination.'* (Frankenberg 1994:6)

By interviewing 30 white women on their experiences of whiteness, 'race' and racism, two themes emerged. Firstly, she found evidence of an essentialist racism that explained differences through biological categorisation. Secondly, she found an evasion of the issues of colour

and power by arguments for viewing people in terms of common humanity. It should be noted also that in her sample there was a group that acknowledged that racism did play a part in the arguments just quoted.

Frankenberg explains how a group that is conscious of its own oppression (in terms of gender) can seem relatively short-sighted to the oppression of others (including Black women) by emphasising the salience of culture, that is, that which can be named, bounded and separated. The notion of them and us is created when whiteness is viewed as the normal experience in life:-

*'Whiteness, as a set of normative cultural practices, is visible most clearly to those it definitely excluded and those to whom it does violence. Those securely housed within its borders usually do not examine it.'*

(Frankenberg 1994:228-229)

Frankenberg proceeds to develop the notion of a dualistic framework for 'race' and cultural difference as if they were totally separate and there were no linkages between them.:-

*'Individuals or movements jump from side to side of received dualisms rather than engage critically with the dualistic system itself.'*

(Frankenberg 1994:231)

Frankenberg's analysis highlights the absurdity of seeing 'race' and culture as solely being concerned about ethnicity and particularly about Black ethnicity. Such an analysis misses out on the issue of white cultures. What is needed instead is an analysis of racism that is inclusive

of whiteness and Blackness viewed within a continuum of ethnicity, a lateral plain, one that gives full consideration to the issue of power formed through the dominance of particular cultures, values, religions and hegemonies.

The notion of a continuum of ethnicity gives the opportunity to turn the analysis of racism on its head. In this sense, the relatively recent development of a post-modern paradigm can also be seen as theoretically useful. One of post-modernity's key strengths is that it takes nothing as read, or for granted. Before looking at the contribution it makes to the discourse of racism, the concept of post-modernity will be explained.

### **Post-Modernity and Modernity**

Although reference has been made to the term 'post-modernity' throughout the thesis, it is important to explain its key concepts in fuller detail. Post-modernity often defies definition, because one of its critical themes is to question the existence of everything (Harris L.1993). There are three main positions taken by post-modernists. The first is that there is currently a crisis of knowledge signifying the end of enlightenment and reason. The second is recognition of the importance of post -structuralist writings which question the analytical centre of the social world, i.e.structural absolutes including 'race', class and gender. The third is the need to continually reflect on the nature of time, by revisiting the past repeatedly, aesthetically, rhetorically (as in the left/right politics of heritage) or materially (Cross and Keith 1993).

One of the original authors of post-modernity describes it as,

*'incredulity towards metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences, but that progress in turn presupposes it.'* (Lyotard 1984)

Post-modernists then, reject the big picture and the notion of the completed project and question everything (Baumann 1991, Cross and Keith 1993, Lyotard 1984). They do not assume connections and see phenomena as fragmented, individual and different. They reject a notion of enlightenment that views achievements from cars to vacuum cleaners and organised government to metropolitan cities as the finished project.

For instance, Harris (1993) is particularly critical of the way in which the West has put the United States of America on a pedestal and the way in which it is constructed through the media and government as a form of Utopia, as the Ideal Type on which other societies should model themselves. The irony of the views that Harris criticizes is particularly strong in relation to the subject of this thesis (racism). America's track record on this subject positions it a long way distant from Utopia (Gilroy 1993, hooks, 1981, 1984, 1991, Omi and Winnant 1986)<sup>2</sup>. The critical point for post-modernists then is that there is no final destination nor completed project (Bauman 1991, Lyotard 1984, Mason 1990), because an analysis of society and societal institutions that is utilising time and space as its axis will be perennially regarding the past in a new and critical perspective. Therefore, because time is boundless, that is, it has

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<sup>2</sup> There is clearly a constant litany of sociological, historical and political writings emanating from and about America and racism. The salient point to remember here, is that as Gilroy (1993) skilfully acknowledges, there are many useful comparisons to be made between the British and American experience of racism.

no parameters, post-modernists will always view society and institutions contained within it as unfinished (Boyne and Rattansi 1990, Hill-Collins 1990) or problematic.

A major theme in post-modernity is the description of an ever-changing world, one that is fluid and cannot be fixed. This has particular significance concerning discourses of 'race', ethnicity and identity (Gilroy 1994, Goulbourne 1993).

*'Individuals in the Urban West make and remake their identities without foundational commitment; the urban centres of the West are like theatres, while their citizens are like actors who frequently change roles.'* (Harris L. 1993:32)

Thus, a post-modern analysis lends itself to a view of the world that is uncertain of everything and allows individuals to identify themselves within, as is suggested here, a continuum of ethnicity, that is not polarised by a Black / white dichotomy (Werbner and Modood 1997). Rather this shifting identity is informed more by changing culture, religion, class, spatial arenas, time, self determination and geographic and political contexts.

Post-modernism is a reaction to or development on the idea of modernity. Modernity is a European/Western phenomena (Baudrillard 1988, Lyotard 1984). Its origins are situated in the 18th Century, when Europeans were striving for social and intellectual order (Foucault 1978, Rattansi 1994). The period of modernity has been characterised by the growth of democratic institutions and has incorporated a period of globalisation and Imperialism (Rattansi 1994). A key feature of the development of ideas

and systems of thinking of this period has been belief in the rationality of science and the iron law of nature.

Post modernists (Baudrillard 1988, Harris L.1993, Lyotard 1984, Rattansi 1994) argue that the rationality of modernism relies on hegemonic metanarratives, which are often authoritarian. This form of thinking leads to oppression and in turn marginalised and differentiated subjects. The notion of the United States of America as being the model society, referred to above, is an example of modernist thinking. There is an assumption that it is an advanced society based on the development of democracy, and technology over a period of evolution. There is a belief that this is the type of society that other parts of the world should aspire to with its obvious material advantages and political freedom. A post-modernist view is more complex, infused with less certainty and offering a variety of interpretations. Modernist views of the history of advanced societies such as the USA emphasize progress linked to democratic ideas and underpinned by a commitment to rational and objective forms of thinking and knowledge. Post-modernist analyses paint a more fragmented and opportunistic picture with greater emphasis on power and imperialism.

*'America is neither dream nor reality. It is hyper reality . . . because it is a utopia which has behaved from the very beginning as though it were already achieved.'* (Baudrillard 1988:28)

Other post-modern writers in criticising Modernist ideas point to the fact that with social order and 'democracy' came expansionism, colonialism of Africa and Asia and slavery (Harris L.1993, Ramdin 1986). They also point to the fact that the reification and objectification of rationality as the

ultimate, was in part causal in the eugenics movement and the ethical justification of the holocaust in the 1930s in Germany (Bauman 1989). Finally they argue that the legacy of Modernist progression is a divided world in terms of access to material and natural resources. Thus, one fifth of the world (the West) views the other four fifths with increasing distaste and paranoia. Following on from this, it is contended that accepted notions of racism are inseparable from and greatly influenced by the characteristics and concepts of modernity (Wierviorka 1994, 1995).

## **Modernity, Post-Modernity and Racism**

### ***Explaining Racism***

For the past twenty years, “modernist” social theorists have struggled to explain racism. The permission to analyse a concept from a reverse angle leads post-modernists to assert that there is no one racism, but a multiplicity of racisms (Hall 1992). This is nothing new in itself, as others (Gilroy 1992, 1994, Macey 1995) have argued for an understanding that racism is a fluid, dynamic and changing process. Yet post-modernists take this a step further by highlighting the fact that several racisms exist and by providing a coherent theoretical base for understanding this fact (Miles 1994, Rattansi 1994). They are much more emphatic in stressing the redundancy of an all-embracing concept of racism.

Post-modernist ideas tackle many sacred cows. Because of the acceptance of a multiplicity of racisms (Harris L.1993), the theoretical value of an analysis that encourages binary positions of Old and New racisms is brought into question (Bauman 1991, Miles 1994). This binary approach

creates an invisible marker in time, and categorises all racism before it as linked to biological and phenological factors created also by the exploitation of the market. All racism since that time is seen as cultural. This is a simplistic analysis (see Barker 1981) and one that denies the fluidity of the notion of 'race' and of the different forms of racism that are constantly evolving. In other words, the post-modern frame acknowledges a time and space dimension in the analysis of racism which has a critical influence on its constituency.

Post-modernity also points to the linkages between temporal and spatial dimensions in the analysis of racism.

*'Relatedly, time cannot be opposed to space, with the former connoting and the latter being seen as static. If space is seen as socially constituted, then it has to be conceptualised as intrinsically dynamic and in a continuous process of transformation.'* (Rattansi 1994:32)

What this means for the analysis of racism is that the spatial origins of racism, for instance national boundaries and nationalism, are intrinsically linked to time in terms of the development of an ideology. On a more local or specific level this opens up endless possibilities for the interpretation and understanding of individual experiences of racism. Thus, an individual who is perceived as the Other within, say, a leisure club in a predominantly middle class environment, will experience one form of racism, such as polite but exclusive tolerance. In contrast an Other individual attacked on the street in a deprived inner city area by white people shouting racist abuse will experience another form of racism.



Thus the post-modern frame challenges a whole range of apparent boundaries so that what have seemed to be obvious facts are no longer certainties. White/Black binaries are seen as having conceptually limited value, and likewise any clarity between rational and irrational becomes clouded (Bauman 1989). This argument then lends itself to the continuum of ethnicity. Nothing is certain, fixed or static (Gilroy 1992) and thus the analyses should be of many racisms, not one.

Explaining racism in a post-modern frame is therefore about fragmentation and fractioning (Cross and Keith 1993). It is about many racisms dependent on spatial/zonal considerations. These points have provided a rubric with which to explore racism in greater depth.

Rattansi (1994), for instance, uses post-modernism to problematise the analysis of racism. He is critical of the straightforward binary definitions of Old and New racisms and any argument that promotes any singular definition of racism. He argues for the impact of class, sexual and cultural difference on the experience of racism to be acknowledged. Supporting an analysis that explores the continuum of ethnicity, Rattansi argues for a 'decentering' and de-essentializing of the terms 'race' and ethnicity, as it

*'makes for a much more fruitful analytical engagement with these processes of flux, contextual transformation and dislocation, and the complex overlapping and cross cutting of boundaries that characterises the formation of ethnic and racialised boundaries.'* (Rattansi 1994:59)

Here, reference is made to the contradiction between strict often self imposed ethnic and racial definitions, and the reality on a local and global

scale of a constant redrawing of cultural, ethnic and racial identity boundaries (Gilroy 1993). A good example of this is the situation in Bosnia or in the former Soviet Union, where an identity was imposed on people, but by their very behaviour was rejected. It is referred to as 'Undoing the Social' (Rattansi 1994), where ethnic and racialised discourses are always relatively open, but in the process of becoming closed, and yet never do so. By rejecting the binary of Old and New, Rattansi, proposes that discourses concerning racism are perennially trying to close and complete. Thus, Hall's (1992) *New Ethnicities* which tries to locate cultural diversity in a non-absolutist open position is theoretically helpful in explaining difference. There is a recognition, that the circle is never quite completed, as Old ethnicities, as evident in the Rushdie affair, Bosnia or Rwanda are still a significant variable in the equation.

The rejection of Newness in explaining racism is a common theme for post-modern writers. Wieviorka (1994, 1995) identifies cultural racism as part of the justification for the Nazis' hatred of Jews, because of a perceived cultural difference. The post-modern analysis here, is that across Europe there is Unity and Diversity in the promotion of racism, in other words, comprehensive and contradictory strands. Wieviorka states that there are four levels of racism. Firstly there is a weak inarticulated racism that is xenophobic populist prejudice, called infra-racism; secondly, there is a split racism still inarticulate but lacking any coherent political expression. The third kind is political racism that has an ideological base and an organisational structure; and finally, there is total racism where the state is based on racist principles, as was South Africa (Wieviorka 1994, 1995).

Wieviorka's four levels of racism, contradict other post-modernist assertions, that it is not possible to quantify or indeed measure racism, and to this extent it is theoretically restricting. However, it provides a useful framework, albeit different to Rattansi's, that enables European racism to be analysed both within individual states, and from a cross-continental standpoint. Although examples are provided of political racism, Weviorka argues that racism is largely a populist phenomenon in modern-day Europe and that it varies between individual countries depending on their social, cultural, political and migrant histories.

The convergence of European states and the notion of fortress Europe in the face of asylum seekers points to the development of greater similarities developing between European countries and to more common experiences of racism across them (Bainbridge, Burkett and Macey 1994). However, Miles (1994) asserts that whilst there are similarities with the current restructuring of Europe, there are radical differences in the treatment of 'race'. Therefore, to analyse 'race' as a whole in Europe is theoretically problematic, firstly, because the 'European project' reifies the notion of 'race' and secondly, because European evolution has been different depending on state to state variations. Focusing particularly on identity, Miles questions the appropriateness of Black as a blanket term to describe the experience of non-Europeans and links it to the problematic of time,

*'the idea of black denotes a particular, rather than a universal, political perspective and strategy of resistance. It is spatially, culturally and historically specific.'* (Miles 1994:198)

Miles highlights the slow, but gradual erosion of the nation state's

influence in Europe and attributes it to the commodification of the labour market by transnational companies, which has developed to such an extent that cheap non European labour produces goods for European states that undercut the European labour market. This it is argued is the primary reason for the different forms of racism that emerge within European states. The central point in Miles' analysis is that racism as a force within Europe has emerged for differing and contradictory reasons. Again, time, space, social formation and capitalism are competing variables within this manifestation, but different times and locations within Europe bring different expressions of racism. The impact of this contradictory nature of racism on anti-racism will be examined further on.

### **To Identity and Representation**

It is important here, before, moving on to look at the implications for the post-modern frame on anti-racism, to consolidate exactly what is being stated about identity in this chapter.

Firstly, the all embracing post-modern theoretical concept of fluidity, a non-fixed position, needs to be grasped. From this perspective, although society may construct identity in some form or other, it is neither predetermined nor static. The critical variables within this are time and space. For instance, a Black person living in the United States will probably now self identify as African-American. It was not so long ago that they would describe themselves as Negroes. In between this there were the terms Coloured and Black. Another example of these transformations is the shift from simply using Blackness as an identifier to making explicit links with Islam. What these processes depict is the gradual diversification of peoples through ethnicity. Time and space

determine this because it is the specificities of culture, context and religion, forged at a particular place and at a particular moment, that alongside an individual's own will, produce an identity.

A second key issue with regard to identity is the concept of the Other. Acknowledging the 'Other' is to concede that the point of reference for Black people for too long has been somebody else's definition. For example, a major concern within Black communities has been the predominance of Black men who have become representative of the Other in its entirety. However, Black masculinity too often promotes homophobic and sexist perspectives on the world and creates a view of Black women as upholders of traditional values, such as motherhood and family preservation with the result that the Other can come to mean:-

*'black masculinity in a white supremacist social context.'* (Audre Lorde in hooks 1991:18)

By this means one segment of a Black population can come to portray the whole. To counter this, hooks talks about the 'radical subjective self' and of the need to shift to the margins this paradigm of Black masculinity which has held centre stage for too long. The imperative then is to confront masculinity with difference and establish,

*'counter-hegemonic marginal space where radical black subjectivity is seen, not over seen by any authoritative Other claiming to know us better than we know ourselves.'* (hooks 1991:22)

Notwithstanding these concerns and criticisms, the Other is the defining category around which Black people organise and self identify. It is a

concept which usefully captures the perspective with which Black people view themselves and the world, in this country, here and now.

The third point to make is to establish how the post-modern frame squares nicely with the continuum of ethnicity. It has been argued throughout this chapter that in developing strategies to combat racism, a sense of Black identity has been taken too much for granted. Realising a continuum of ethnicity means shifting away from the simple Black /white dichotomy to an explanation that attributes the experience of racism to more complex and fluid criteria than phenotypical attributes such as skin complexion and hair texture. Culture, religion and the make-up of the community, phenomena which in themselves are so fluid, have a direct influence on the ethnic identification of an individual.

It is not that an expression of ethnicity is always a negative thing, or that it is solely an experience of racism, but that often the first call of ethnicity is to identify itself through a reaction to racism. By arguing for this continuum, it is being asserted here that no one person or community necessarily has the definitive right to call itself Black or White, because of the constant flux of peoples, cultures and religion through time and spatial zones. To give an example, it has long been asserted within Liverpool's Black community that to be Black is not necessarily a question of complexion, but one of heritage. Put another way, people who to the 'untrained' eye appear phenotypically to be white, are indeed regarded as Black because one of their parents, or even grandparents, are of African or Asian origin.

This line of argument has merit, and lends itself to a changing notion of ethnicity. It becomes difficult though to maintain this flexibility of

thought when attributing the culpability for racist oppression. Here, within Liverpool, it is white people, who have through institutions and individuals, systematically oppressed the local Liverpool Black population. Yet, where do 'Black' people who are physically white fit into this? Are they too, responsible for the perpetuation of the most racist city in England tag? (Gifford et al 1989, Ben-Tovim et al 1998)

The answer to this is of course that they are not. However, locating very light skinned people into a Black/ white split in defining racism, creates the paradox of leaving light skinned people of African and Asian heritage ethnically nowhere. What is being proposed here is a continuum of ethnicity that allows for individuals and communities to redefine or resite themselves, in a different ethnic position, dependent on the variables of time and space, but also of power, culture and religion (Gilroy 1992, 1993). Whilst using this concept, and arguing for ever changing difference, it is important not to go overboard by denying that racism does define the Other as being Black, and that at certain times it is politically prudent to organise around this political term (Donald and Rattansi 1992, Sivanandan 1992b)

In 'Show and Tell' Bell (1996) analyses Toni Morrison's book 'Jazz' and describes a scene where a young boy identifies himself and everybody around him as Black, but his grandmother, who is very light skinned as being white. His mother irritated by this, states quite baldly that she (his grandmother) is Black, and has always been Black, and that is that. The boy clearly puzzled by this, defers to his mother and accepts that somehow, his grandmother although white to him, is 'really' Black. This brief passage describes how at a certain time in Black American history, with specific cultural and political manifestations of power, it was quite

obvious to all who understood, that although the boy's grandmother was evidently very light skinned, it was her racial heritage that signified (Derrida 1978) she was Black. Bell goes on to assert that what the eye sees in relation to identity and the struggle against racism has limited value,

*'In terms of anti racist politics, attempting to fix colour as if it were an autonomous fact that can be overlain with political affiliation reduces the understanding of racism that is reduced to vision.'* (Bell 1996:231)

The final point to make at this stage is one of representation. It has been argued here that post-modernity provides a rubric with which to develop an inclusive but ever changing concept of ethnicity, and as a result, a more temporally and zonally specific base from which to fight racism. The all-embracing category covering this is the notion of the Other, which while it can be limiting and perpetuate reactionary debate (Gabriel 1996, Hill-Collins 1990, hooks 1991, Yuval Davis 1994) also allows for the expression of difference within Blackness, and the interconnection of oppression from different hegemonic positions (hooks 1991). Yet, by arguing for diversity and the fluidity of identity, the use of this ensures that the vexed question of representation appears.

One of the problematic areas of the struggle against racism has been the legitimacy of representation. Within this difficulty, there are further questions such as exactly what is meant by the notion of the Black community (Yuval Davis 1994), what are its boundaries, and how is difference represented within this? This chapter to some extent has tried to address these questions, but inherent within them is the problem of representation. To a large extent there has been little acknowledgement of what had been described as these New Times (Hall 1992), and



community leaders tend to propagate their view of the world (Cain and Yuval Davies 1990). This throws up profound difficulties when thinking of the struggle against racism, because strategies adopted do not reflect the identities of the many changing ethnicities outlined here.

To take the example of Liverpool again. This city has stood alone in defining a criterion for ethnicity that is effectively based around notions of 'race', class and space issues in terms of identity, which leads to discrimination over access to jobs, employment, education and health care (Ben-Tovim 1997, Ben-Tovim et al 1998). The term used is that of 'Liverpool born Black'. Now it is not within the confines of this thesis - although it most certainly worthy of a thesis in its own right - to examine the many historical, political and theoretical complexities of this perspective, but it does throw up interesting questions concerning representation. The local state has constantly grappled with providing adequate services for an ever-changing ethnically diverse city (Ben-Tovim et al 1986). Yet, in terms of racialised relations, and the hard nosed political bargaining that takes place, it has often, been those with a 'Liverpool born Black' perspective who have defined the realities of Blackness within the city. Implicitly and explicitly, this is articulated in promoting a notion of a pecking order in terms of the experience of racism, with Liverpool born Black people naturally portrayed as the worst treated.

This has serious consequences for the issue of representation in a city that is perennially becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse. Firstly, the 'realities' of racism are at times being delineated for Black people who may be Somali, Bangladeshi or Chinese, by 'Liverpool born Black' people who probably have no more understanding of their experiences than have people from say Rwanda or Bosnia.

Secondly, by defining a particular kind of racism that ‘Liverpool born Black’ people experience (that is, in effect identifying a point where ‘race’ and class meet in a tightly identified geographical area) there is an adherence to an hierarchy of racism, that is relatively fixed. As a consequence of this form of representation, those New Ethnicities (Hall 1991), who do not want be identified in this way, may receive a lesser and imposed share of a diminishing public sector cake.

Thirdly, community ‘leaders’(Yuval Davies 1994) who purport to represent all Black people within this anti-racist rubric believe it is the most effective strategy to bludgeon change from a liberal public sector. Yet, such a strategy will by definition – because of such a specific ‘race’, class and space criterion - have its limitations in meeting the needs of the diverse ethnic Black communities currently residing in Liverpool or of understanding the ethnic and cultural physical manifestations of these post-modern New Times (Donald and Rattansi 1992, Hall 1992) and instead is locked into the old racial order of Them and Us.

As can be seen, therefore, the post-modern frame by questioning the static nature of racism, and highlighting difference, asks searching questions concerning the contested arena of representation for Black communities.

### **Post-Modernity - The End of the Road for Unity?**

The usefulness of post-modern ideas for developing greater understanding of the issues of ‘race’, racism and anti-racism is by no means shared by all. Indeed it could be argued that it is loathed with a passion by many committed anti-racist writers and activists, not least because it asks awkward questions such as the following:-

*‘Are effective politics and adequate theoretical analysis inherently*

*contradictory to each other?’ (Yuval Davis 1994:188)*

A fundamental criticism of post-modernity is that it dissipates organised struggles against oppression (Malik 1996b, Sivanandan 1990, Spivak 1991, Vieux 1994) into an expression of difference. Just as damningly, it is perceived as a liberal excuse to replace anti-racism with forms of multiculturalism (Sivanandan 1990). These criticisms stem from the epistemological discourse that post-modernity engenders. Undoubtedly post-modern analyses are concerned with examining how different discourses inform and shape struggles and conflicts rather than with seeking explanations of why they are taking place and offering solutions about how to resolve them. Far from critiquing political positions of power, post-modernity constructs notions of how they are constructed (Foucault 1978). Post-modernity has given expression to a trend both global and specific (Gabriel 1996, Hall 1992, Modood 1997a, Omi and Winnant 1993) that has located the social formation of ‘race’ as diverse and in flux. It has, provided a framework within which this debate can flourish.

Further criticisms of post-modernity in relation to the issue of ‘race’ (though also having more general applicability) are that it has created an amorphous body of knowledge (Vieux 1994) and that it is theoretically dense and incomprehensible (Sivanandan 1990). It is also seen as empirically weak, and lacking in terms of research and validation (Sivanandan 1990, Vieux 1994). These criticisms do have validity in that post-modern writers at times produce work that is abstract and over-theoretical. (For examples of this see Bauman 1991, and Rattansi and Westwood 1994, amongst others.) But in part that is the very nature of the beast. Likewise, the current dearth of post-modern empirically based research could partially be explained by the newness and ever changing

nature of the subjects that the paradigm identifies.

Perhaps a more pertinent criticism of post modernity in relation to the issues of ethnicity, racism and anti- racism is that those who write about the oppressed and purport to have something liberationist to say, must ensure that the subjects of the discourse, the recipients of oppression, are able to read and understand it (Sivanandan 1992b, 1996). Anti-racist writings must be easily accessible to all, if their aims and objectives are to bring about change. This is also a valid criticism in that post-modern writings concerning 'race' have to reach out further than just to academic audiences and must find a method of expression that is open to all.

Returning to the themes of politics and conflict theory, it is not hard to see why post-modern ideas have been rejected by those espousing socialist views on society and issues relating to class and 'race'. At a time when the western world is experiencing the harsh realities of neo-liberal social policies, the predominance of market forces, low wage/low inflation economies, a flexible workforce, surplus labour and so on (Baimbridge, Burkitt and Macey 1994, Vieux 1994), many on the Left have responded by adopting post-modern notions of diversity and have immersed themselves in issues relating to generic Equal Opportunities, diverse ethnicities, disability, and ageism, to name but a few (Hall 1992, Hill-Collins 1990, hooks 1991). In so doing the Left have swept under the carpet the harsh realities of capital and exploitation in favour of a change in tack and the acknowledgement of diversity. Tony Blair's New Labour policies exemplify this shift from a class/capital based analysis, to one that embraces difference and compassion as its new theme (Hutton 1997).

*'By virtue of its scepticism, localism and culturalism, post-modern theory is inherently incapable of mounting any sort of effective attack on the neo*

*liberal doctrine in its theoretical or practical forms.* ' (Vieux 1994:30)

Again I return to the view that to saddle post-modernity with a cultural versus conflict dichotomy is to miss the point, as it is contended here that post-modernity explains events rather than attempts to define them. It is not simply about ignoring class conflict, but reflecting the differences in those constituencies that experience the most brutal effects of capital (Miles 1994).

Similar attacks have been made on post modernity's effect on issues of 'race' as have been made in relation to more general politics. Malik (1996a) has argued that post-modernity in essence is the antithesis to universalism and equality. In his view, by focusing on difference, the essence of human equality is in severe danger of being lost. If this is the case, then the struggle for change is no longer an imperative, because there is no struggle for equality, and, therefore, anti-racist discourse shifts from a struggle for basic equality to the fundamental right to be different. It is an ironic position because post-modernists of the New Times have rightly felt that issues of difference and representation have enhanced the struggle for human equality (Gilroy 1993, Goulbourne 1993).

However, critics of post-modern ideas have further argued that by emphasising diversity, there is a logical move to separation and to encouraging peoples, both theoretically and politically, not to concentrate on what unites them i.e. Blackness, a struggle against racism, community politics, and representation (Jeffers 1993), but on what divides them (Malik 1996b, Sivanandan 1990). This division, it is argued, not only diminishes focus on the social, but also perpetuates naturalistic, biological and positivistic myths. To look at the individual and to

fragment everything is to '*remove the subject from the social.*' (Malik 1996b:253). From this point of view, relationships can be invented. Thus, an individual's sexuality, ethnicity, class, culture, or gender are seen as simple and straightforward, as individual things that are self determined, and not as part of any grander, bigger picture. This analysis is seen as denying the importance of examining for instance, class and gender on a macro level.

Finally post-modernity has been criticised because of its general reluctance to embrace change,

*'There is no question here of proposing a "pure" alternative to the system . . . (as it would . . . end up) resembling the system it was meant to replace.'* (Lyotard 1984:66 in Malik 1996b:262)

In relation to 'race' and anti-racism, post-modernity is seen to embrace '*the politics of defeat*' (Malik 1996b:265) in the name of difference, and to dilute anti-racism into little more than what has previously been politically eschewed, that is, multi-cultural celebration (Sivanandan 1994).

Malik and Sivanandan are two of the main critics of post-modernity, highlighting the dissipating effect it has on the basic anti-racist premise of human equality. However, many of the above arguments focus on the theoretical extreme of post-modernity, taking individualism and diversity to arguably what can be described as their logical conclusion. Malik does acknowledge a need for a relationship between the '*particular and the universal*' (Malik 1996b:265), but he is doubtful about translating this into a campaign for difference and about the importance of the

interconnection of oppressions. For instance, the fact that some Black women articulate the importance of linking the struggle for racial equality with that of sexuality and gender (hooks 1989, 1991) and the way post-modernity provides a vehicle to express this, is viewed by Malik as diversionary.

Malik's critique fails to recognise the following :-

- the burgeoning movement for change amongst Black people
- the reductionism of some structural analysis concerning 'race'
- the ever changing continuum of ethnicity
- the fixed temporal and spatial nature of the arguments concerning issues such as the 'Liverpool born Black' discourse
- the right for Black people including Black women to identify with whom they want and how they want
- the rejection of acting or being like something, and embracing the Other tag, in an unquestioning manner.

On the other hand, Malik's analysis does remind those who focus on diversity not to ignore structural realities that impinge on Black people, and the consequent need for unity in the struggle for human equality, alongside diversity. It is important now to address the current crisis in anti-racism, in the light of some of the constructive elements that post-modernity brings to the debate.

### **Anti-Racism Crisis or Consolidation?**

It has been argued thus far that racial and cultural identity has for too long

been represented as a static phenomenon which fails to represent or galvanise the diverse sections of Black and other communities that experience racism. Further, that this chronic failure to understand the fluidity of identity both theoretically and politically has profound consequences. These consequences revolve around the central axis of power in the struggle against racism, in representation in communities, in acknowledgement of oppression, in the right to self determination, and in the construction of a false hierarchy of oppressions and racisms, to name but a few. It has been further argued that an alternative way of viewing the articulation of Otherness is through a continuum of ethnicity that is constantly in flux forming a kaleidoscope of ethnic, cultural and religious positions, contingent on both spatial and temporal circumstances, and also on structural realities, but not completely pre-determined by the latter.

For anti-racist practice, particularly in a social work context, this chapter has provided an analysis that suggests that post-modern social theory has much to offer it. The main criticism of anti-racist social work practice, is that it is built on theoretically inadequate foundations (Dominelli 1996, Gilroy 1992, Macey 1995, Macey and Moxon 1996, Mallinson 1995). It is argued that in many cases little thought has gone in to developing a rigorous understanding of the nature, causes or process of racism, but all too often morally wholesome individuals have leapt in to fight the anti-racist cause (Macey and Moxon 1996, Mallinson 1995). Other oppressions and their links with racism have frequently been ignored and the notion of Blackness has been used to subsume a whole host of cultures and ethnicities. Issues of such simplistic and one dimensional thinking have led to situations ridiculed in the press and media such as in the case of the Norfolk couple, one Black parent and one white, who were



refused by the local authority to adopt a Black child, because the Black parent didn't hold the 'right' Black perspective (Rooney 1993).

Another feature of anti-racism within social work is the development of a culture of blame. All too often the objective seems to be to find culpability in individuals rather than to focus on developing innovative and empirically grounded practices (Macey 1995).

However, post-modernity offers a vehicle which encourages critical debate, to move away from a single definition of racism, and to develop fluid multifaceted ones that embrace diversity and look at the ever changing interconnections with other forms of oppressions.

*'Anti racist activities encapsulate one final problem which may outlive them. This is the disastrous way in which they have trivialised the rich complexity of Black life by reducing it to nothing more than a response to racism.'* (Gilroy 1992:60 in Macey 1995)

The implications of this for social work are immense. It is argued that struggles for racial equality have become embedded in an anti-racist groove that has increasingly become politically and economically marginalised (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996). Too often Black social workers or Dip/SW students are seen to too readily adopt the 'victim' mantle, and to have their realities defined as helpless recipients of the brutal forces of organisational or individual racism (Aymar and Bryan 1996, Burgess et al 1992). Yet, it is argued, the real need for innovative anti-racist practice with service users continues on the whole to go unresearched or critically evaluated (Gilroy 1992, Macey and Moxon 1996). It is also argued that this kind of anti-racism suits the needs of

organisations rather than one informed by the need for equality of opportunity and a quality service for the user because it embraces a fixed notion of identity, and within this allocates all of us our places and denies critical or informed debate (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996, Macey 1995, Macey and Moxon 1996, Mallinson 1995). This kind of anti-racism particularly suits a brand of social work organisation that focuses on a market orientated criterion of service provision, that measures success in terms of outcomes and performance indicators (Aldridge 1996, Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996). An anti-racism built on a limited conceptual foundation, although purportedly radical, is easy to manage, and marginalise (Frogget and Sapey 1997, LLoyd 1994, Macey 1995). It is easy to marginalise because too often the arguments centre around a blame culture that is static, and simplistic in explanation (Macey 1995). It fails therefore to be the political threat that it should potentially provide for Black recipients of social work services (Mallinson 1995). Until it moves out of this groove, where social work managers can manipulate and control this discourse, anti-racist practice will be little more than a high ideal practised by the very few, but used by the many to blame (Dominelli 1996, Gilroy 1992, Macey 1995, Mallinson 1995).

### **And so to Practice Teaching**

In CCETSW's revision (the first revision - Dip/SW mark 2) of the Diploma in Social Work and Practice Teaching award (CCETSW 1995b, 1995a,), anti-oppression is defined as requiring the following:-

*'Identify, analyse and take action to counter discrimination, racism, disadvantage, inequality and injustice,'* (CCETSW 1995a:17).

Yet, with the notable exception of the post-qualifying award in social work (CCETSW 1990) there is now no longer an explicit reference in its currently operative literature to anti-racism or anti-racist practice. This, is in part a consequence of the previous government's disdain for what they perceived to be CCETSW's anti-racist mission (Dominelli 1996) and also a result of the ever increasing drift towards competency based training and education in social work (Aldridge 1996, Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996). However, it is also, I suggest, a result of social work's inability to clearly explain precisely what anti-racist practice is, and how it can enhance to provision of service for all (Mallinson 1995).

The post-modern frame (Rattansi 1994) with an explanation of the Other, the fluidity of racism, an identity that is not fixed nor predetermined, and the notion of a continuum of ethnicity provides the opportunity for a more liberated and non-essentialist understanding of the concept of 'race' and of the strategies to combat racism. Post-modernity also gives permission for individuals, or in this case social work practice teachers and students, to discuss and debate their understanding of the terms racism and anti-racist practice, without being held to an absolute definition.

One clear gain of anti-racist initiatives within social work has been the proliferation of recruitment of Black people onto Dip/SW courses and into social work agencies both nationally and locally (Burgess et al 1992). This in itself should not be underestimated. Yet, it surely defeats the object if, once recruited, Black students/practitioners are expected to adopt a 'victim' role (Aymer and Bryan 1996), and along with white colleagues to adopt an essentialist understanding of issues of identity.

While the criticism of post-modernity as being too theoretical (Corby

1997) and therefore potentially elitist because of its inaccessibility to non-academics does have some resonance, nevertheless it does provide some interesting explanations for ethnic fragmentation and diversity both on a local and global level. Likewise, for practice teachers trying to teach students on social work placements, it offers a more sophisticated conceptual understanding of the task of social work (Parton 1994), allied to anti-racist practice, and arguably provides the space for discourses to be explored that may be politically 'unsafe', but very real. Is it not a practice teacher's role to encourage an understanding of racism and anti-racist practice that is theoretically informed and liberated? It is the contention here that the answer to those questions is an unequivocal yes.

Therefore, when teaching anti-racist practice, while it is clearly beneficial to call on their experience of working with Black service users and Black organisations, this should only be part of the student's learning about 'race' and racism. It must be combined with a rigorous theoretical understanding of 'race' issues, the social work task and anti-racist practice, which involves examining class, Black women's perspectives, functionalist, Marxist and Black perspectives and post-modern paradigms. For it is only with such a rigorous understanding of racism and its impact on the individuals and communities that either have need to or are compelled to access social work services that students can, both as individual practitioners and as part of an organisation, hope to offer a service that is liberated, effective and anti-racist.

Social work teaching in this area needs to send out a clear message, namely that there is no such thing as one kind of anti-racism, because the nature of racism changes and connects with other oppressions in temporal and spatial arenas. It needs to move on from the mistakes of the past, that

is, to try and pinpoint racism, and its antidote, as if it were something that were fixed and static. Post-modernity enables an understanding of racism that embraces the notion of constant change and therefore, provides a theoretical justification for ensuring that to challenge and combat racism, strategies should be perennially reviewed and negotiated. Such an analysis does not negate the need for a bigger structural picture (Malik 1996b), and the need for united strategies against racism, but it does demonstrate that within all individuals there is a constant re-evaluation taking place of who, what and where we are along the continuum of ethnicity. This perpetual repositioning must surely inform the way anti-racist practice is provided in social work today.

I have, in these first three chapters presented a critique of racism, anti-racism and anti-racist practice, one which has been located within the discourse of global, community, local government and social work analysis. In the remainder of the thesis the focus will move to the business of gaining an occupational qualifying award as both a practice teacher, and a Dip/SW student. The following section therefore, will initially look at the role of the practice teacher, within an anti-racist context examining practice teachers' and students' understanding of racism and anti-racist outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 4 PRACTICE TEACHING, ANTI-RACISM AND THE BLACK PRACTICE TEACHERS' PROJECT**

To have a full understanding of the empirical research in the next section of the thesis, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the role of a social work practice teacher. This chapter will outline what a practice teacher does, and how this relates to the work of social work students. It will also focus on models for achieving anti-racist outcomes in practice teaching and describe the Black practice teachers' project in Merseyside.

### **Practice Teaching.**

Practice learning in social work is a process whereby social work students undergo a period of training and assessment in a practice setting. It enables them to gain experience of working with service users within a social work setting (Stokes 1996, Thompson et al 1990). It is the nearest thing to full practice. Practice teachers are those social workers within agency settings who provide practice learning opportunities to enable social work students to meet all the necessary practice competencies stipulated in CCETSW paper 30 (original and revised-CCETSW 1989b, 1991b, 1995b). To be eligible to practice teach, social workers need to have attained at least two years post qualifying experience. The number of placements and placement times are prescribed by CCETSW. There must be a minimum of two placements, the first of which must be of a minimum of 50 days duration and the second of which must be a minimum of 80 days duration. These placements can be carried out concurrently with academic teaching or in blocks so that students are in placement for whole working weeks. In the Merseyside region

placements are all carried out in blocks. Practice competencies are the vehicle used to assess social work students while on placement. Similar sets of competencies are also used for practice teachers who undertake the CCETSW post qualifying practice teaching award which is a course designed specifically for the development of practice teaching skills. The competencies for both qualifying social work and post-qualifying practice teachers' awards are set out respectively in CCETSW paper 30 and CCEYSW paper 26 (CCETSW 1989a,1991b). It should be noted that half of practice teachers at the time of the research had undertaken or completed a post-qualifying award. Therefore, when looking at anti-racist outcomes in the empirical research consideration will be given to what if any differences there are in this respect between those practice teachers with the CCETSW award and those without.

The role of the practice teacher is complex in that it incorporates the skills of enabling, supporting, challenging, teaching, managing and evaluating (Thompson et al 1990). The key tasks expected of practice teachers are to provide regular supervision and rigorous assessments of students. Also they are centred round the concept of promoting learning through adult learning methods (Channer and Stokes 1996, Coulshed 1993). Practice teachers are expected to examine and evaluate theoretical perspectives, agency policies, statutory tasks and the political context in which social workers work (Stokes 1996).

Practice teaching (via the CCETSW award) has been given higher status in the Diploma in Social Work than was attached to its predecessor, placement supervision, under the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. The Diploma in Social Work was designed deliberately to ensure that social work education should be more practice-oriented and in this

context it was intended that practice teachers should be seen as equally important as their counterparts within academic institutions (CCETSW 1991b). The Diploma in Social Work highlighted the principle of 'partnership' between academic institutions and agencies in the provision of social work education and in this scheme of things practice teachers could be seen as partners with academic tutors.

### **Supervision, Adult Learning And Competence**

It is important to explain the terms, supervision, adult learning and social work competencies more fully here because in the presentation of the empirical research findings they will figure largely.

#### ***Supervision***

Supervision is a task and process that is inculcated into the very ethos of social work agencies. It serves three main functions :-

- a) it is a means whereby practitioners/workers' accountability to their line managers can be monitored
- b) it also provides an opportunity for support for the practitioner's professional growth
- c) it also provides an environment that facilitates learning if carried out in an empowering way (Brown and Bourne 1996, ILP 1994).

These are functions that are replicated in the supervision of social work students by practice teachers. However, the role entails more than this. As noted above, the development of the idea of practice teaching was to a large degree in response to criticisms of arrangements for placement supervision under the previous social



work qualifying award. Here, the supervisor had no prescribed framework with which to assess and supervise the student, and tended to rely more heavily on personal experience, ability and agency protocol (Doel 1993). Under the new arrangements there is much greater emphasis on using supervision as a learning time in which knowledge, theory and practice ideas are integrated.

### *Adult Learning*

Adult learning ideas are particularly relevant to the practice teaching role because of the generally more experienced nature of social work students. It is argued that such ideas should guide the entire practice teaching/student relationship, and that practice teachers should enable students to learn in a self directed manner (Knowles 1983) and to value and make use of the experience they bring to the placement. This seems to be particularly the case for students who have experience in the arenas of struggle of racism, sexism and poverty as oppressions, for instance, Black people and women (Burke and Wainwright 1996). To create a liberatory teaching environment (Dore 1994, Humphries 1988) on the placement requires an understanding of the power relationships that exist within the learning environment and an appreciation of the strengths, knowledge and experience that participants bring to the practice learning experience. Critical adult learning with social work students on placement should involve practice teachers using their own and their students' knowledge, skills and value base to create an environment and framework of justice and equality (Burke and Wainwright 1996). There is much evidence to demonstrate the problems that can arise if there is an hierarchical teacher/ learner relationship in the supervision process (Gardiner

1989).

### ***Competence***

It is argued that practice teaching like social work is '*multi dimensional in nature*' (Tsang 1993:63). CCETSW Paper 26.3 sets out the basic framework for the training of practice teachers outlining 14 different areas in which practice teachers need to evidence their competence. While this provides a comprehensive and apparently well-structured framework for developing and assessing practice teacher competence, it can prove to be a fragmentary rather than unifying learning experience (Braye and Preston- Shoot 1995, Cannan 1994). This is because dividing the whole complex practice teaching role into fourteen discrete areas can work against another key goal of the learning process, that of encouraging integration of knowledge, skills and values with practice.

Nevertheless, competencies for both practice teachers and students do provide a framework to assess specific tasks, for instance to '*intervene with service users appropriately,*' or '*work in an ethnically sensitive and anti racist way*' (CCETSW 1991b). Use of competencies in this way has the benefit of enabling learners to have a clear idea about what needs to be demonstrated to achieve a pass on placement (Burke P. 1996). Competencies can also be achieved in an incremental manner. Therefore, it is possible for students and practice teachers to gradually ensure each competency is performed and assessed (respectively) enabling incremental progress in their learning. The most significant benefit of competencies is that all areas of the stipulated practice curriculum must be evidenced in order for the student to pass the placement. This is particularly important for the subject of this thesis, in that the introduction

of competencies by CCETSW not only opened up the possibility of a more consistent practice assessment, wherever the agency was located, but it also ensured that all qualifying social workers had to demonstrate competence in anti-racist and ethnically sensitive practice (CCETSW 1989a, 1991b). In addition, in order to obtain the CCETSW award and demonstrate their competency in practice teaching, practice teachers also had to evidence that they had taught /enabled Dip/SW students to achieve anti-racist outcomes (CCETSW 1989a, 1991b, 1995b).

Another feature of the use of competencies is that it can work to the advantage of adult learning by rewarding prior experience. An occupational standard model can enable an individual with little or no academic qualifications to perform just as well, in a specific role or function, as someone who is well qualified (Burke P. 1996) because it recognises performance and evidence in that particular role (Higham 1999). This also of course applies to the social work student on practice placement, and is particularly helpful in encouraging those individuals who have not had the opportunity to gain a traditional academic education to still perform well on placement. This group includes some Black students as well as women, disabled people and those in poverty (Burke and Wainwright 1996).

However, as has already been noted, the notion of competency has been subjected to a good deal of criticism in academic circles, the fundamental one being that competencies fragment and oversimplify what is a complex, fluid and whole task for students (Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995). Competencies, so the charge goes, are devoid of theory, are anti-academic and anti-intellectual (Cannan 1994, Sibeon 1991c). Hence, by assessing social work students and practice teachers in a functional, task

related manner, their capacity to critically reflect on the whole or individual elements of the social work role is restricted (Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995). Furthermore, while competencies purport to be neutral, in fact, because they are functional, they are likely to transmit the values of the setting, the practice teacher and the student, and therefore individual performance will vary because of this. In other words, achieving a competence cannot be a standardised matter, nor indeed can it be a value free or objective exercise.

It is also argued that although CCETSW's paper 30 and 26.3 are established on the premise of competencies ensuring a standardised performance, irrespective of the student or the social work setting, neither paper actually stipulates the standards that need to be achieved. The competencies listed are criteria, but there is no real level or depth of performance that is expected universally.

Finally, and perhaps the most telling of all the criticisms of competencies, is that they are an anathema to professionalism (Feery and Wainwright 1997). The occupational standard learning continuum adopted by CCETSW and to be amended but embraced by their successor TOPSS, was first put in place in order to enable a large low skilled social care workforce to be able to achieve qualification and base line competence as quickly as possible, with very little rigorous intellectual testing (TOPSS 2000). How many medics, lawyers or architects for instance, are qualified through the use of competencies and occupational standards as the backbone of their qualification? The answer of course is none. Yet, social work education has embraced competencies wholeheartedly not without, it must be said, some enthusiastic encouragement from a strong Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) lobby. In a

consultation exercise for the new Dip/SW (mark 3), whilst the ADSS were keen to include a rigorous theoretical knowledge base. They expressed their primary objective was the development of a new award that placed NVQ based competencies at the heart of the learning and assessment process for social work students (DoH 2000a).

Despite these criticisms, the notion of competencies is firmly entrenched in social work education, management and practice. Two key concerns of the research in this thesis will be whether practice teachers have a firm enough theoretical grasp of anti-racist theory, and the way in which the competency model impacts on this aspect of learning and practice.

### **Models of Anti-Racist Practice**

The regulations of the Diploma in Social Work published in 1991 required agencies to provide practice learning opportunities that enabled students to learn anti-racist, anti-sexist and other forms of anti-discriminatory practice and to enable them to work effectively in a multi-racial and multi-cultural society (CCETSW 1991b). This clearly is a difficult task for anyone, including social work agencies and practice teachers. It requires a pool of different resources, skills and knowledge on the part of the individual practice teacher, the setting and the agency. Also, it is argued that in order to deliver anti-racist outcomes an agency must have developed a set of values, policies and practices that actively promote creative and innovative practice with and for Black service users

:-

*'Unless and until black and white professionals who share common aims, objectives and values as well as having diverse preoccupations can*

*develop a shared language to articulate their concerns, misunderstandings will continue and the problems delineated will be relocated.* ' (Brummer 1988:7)

Stokes (1993) suggests that practice teaching needs to address individual and institutional racism and discrimination on three levels. Firstly, the organisation needs to provide a basis for change. Secondly, the college or educational establishment should provide guidance on addressing issues of racism or discrimination and oppression from an academic perspective. Thirdly, the placement or agency should address the value systems that are used in working with Black families when providing practice learning opportunities.

There are several other key conditions for the achievement of a positive environment in which to teach and learn about anti-racist ideas.

Firstly, a clear understanding of social work's relationship to structural disadvantage and the destructive effect this can have on users of the service is a crucial component to the development of anti-racist practice. Practice teachers are better able to develop this understanding if the team, the setting, and their line manager provides support and commitment to develop this line of thinking (Taylor and Baldwin 1991). Therefore, to achieve these goals, social work education and practice must adopt the theoretical standpoint that British society is multi-cultural and multi-racial (Modood 1997a). This may seem to be a basic point, but may still be a contested issue in some agencies in certain parts of the country.

Secondly, it must be acknowledged that personal racism exists within social work and is practiced by social workers (Phillips and Ferns 1999, Rooney 1981). I have argued earlier that there is a good deal of crude

and simplistic anti-racism evident in statutory social work agencies, that is, that which blames individuals for racism. Indeed, a central premise of my argument is that this type of activity can be essentialist and reductionist and too often focuses on blaming individuals instead of developing broader informed agency strategies to challenge racism. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we should ignore individual acts of racism. Far from it, but we need to be careful that this does not become the sole or even the main aim of our anti-racist activities.

Thirdly, anti-racist practice needs to be informed by an awareness and understanding of institutional racism (now formally recognised in the MacPerson Report 1999) which can be very much a part of social work/welfare provision (Francis 1991b, Jones A 1993).

### **Creating the Right Conditions**

To achieve anti-racist learning outcomes, the practice teacher needs to create the right learning environment in which to teach the student. This should build on adult learning pedagogic principles particularly in relation to the oppressed as identified earlier (see Friere 1972). These include laying effective groundwork by careful planning for the student placement, and having a clear structured yet flexible practice curriculum prepared for the student's learning. A practice curriculum is a programme developed for students on placement that is adjusted in ongoing negotiation with them and which links theoretical material with practice learning opportunities. The practice curriculum needs to be theoretically informed with a variety of creative and constructive practice learning opportunities in regard to anti-racist practice (Doel 1993, Shardlow and Doel 1993).

Other practice teaching methods involve treating social work students as creative individuals who possess knowledge and experience of oppression, both as potential oppressors and as oppressed people themselves. It is important to build on the student's lived experience and make links between this and racist oppression (Humphries 1988).

Also when teaching anti-racism it is important to build on students' confidence and empower them to learn rather than by emphasising their ignorance about the subject. It is also important that practice teachers do not portray themselves as fonts of all anti-racist wisdom, as this can deskill students. It is more productive to show empathy by recognising one's own difficulty in understanding such complex theoretical issues. Racism should also be located not only in a present day theoretical context, but also in an appreciation of the historical context of racism, and how this impacts on both the agency and the service provided (Singh 1996).

Singh (1996) supports the analysis put forward in this thesis that the development of a theoretical understanding of anti-racism should be fluid and open to a variety of perspectives, '*not a stagnant understanding of racism and anti racism*' (Singh 1996:49). As Gambe states,

*'Anti racism should not be seen as offering certainties, absolute for all time. We have to be ready to change and adopt ideas in the light of experience, debate and developments.'* (Gambe 1992:10)

Therefore, students should be encouraged to develop their conceptual



understanding of racism, and be encouraged to critically reflect and learn as the placement progresses.

There are also specific methods which can be used as vehicles to progress this learning. These include project work, reviewing agency policies (Singh 1996), working with Black organisations, working within a multi-racial and multi-cultural community, use of case studies and role play, critical appraisal of case notes and reports, observation visits, direct work with Black users, and incremental discussion and development of students' assessment reports (Singh 1992). Group learning methods can also be useful vehicles with which to explore racism. Finally, team commitment within the placement setting can also facilitate this type of learning.

### **Black Practice Teachers**

Black practice teachers provide an added dimension of experience and commitment to anti-racist practice learning. Furthermore, several of the practice teachers interviewed in this research attended a Black practice teacher CCETSW programme which had been organised partly to increase the number of settings that could provide particular experiences in relation to the development of anti-racist learning. It is generally thought that Black practice teachers have a great deal to contribute to social work education and training in that they can bring different and additional perspectives to this forum (Humphries et al 1993). Equally, they can provide positive role models for Black and white students and thus destroy some of the negative 'ethnic' stereotypes that exist. Black practice teachers can also bring experience and skills to aid a student's understanding in a multi-racial community (de Souza 1991). The

presence of Black practice teachers can be seen as validating Black experiences. For Black students it can provide the opportunity to have positive role models as well as creating a positive learning experience (Burgess et al 1992). The theoretical and political difficulty with calling on Black practice teachers, is that agencies often see them as 'experts' in addressing racism in an agency simply because they are Black. Being identified as an expert concerning racism is also an experience that Black students have to endure (Burgess et al 1992, Humphries et al 1993). However, it is my contention that Black practice teachers/workers can provide a useful perspective or insight into racism, but that this should not necessarily be equated with expertise. The danger is that such an approach can marginalize the role of white practice teachers in relation to teaching anti-racist approaches. As Humphries (1993) notes :-

*'... it could be advantageous for a Black student to have a Black practice teacher, in that he/she will be in tune with the student's perception of their 'Blackness' and their experience of racism. . . although we largely agree with this analysis . . . white practice teachers should equally be responsible for adequately training Black students the same way Black practice teachers have a responsibility to train white students.'*

(Humphries et al 1993:64)

This quote identifies a central question within this research, that is whether Black practice teachers provide better and richer understandings of racism and are more effective in producing anti-racist practitioners than white practice teachers.

## **The Black Practice Teachers' Project**

As part of the role which I had throughout the implementation of this research, that of a practice learning coordinator in a social work agency (that is, the person responsible for training, developing, coordinating and supporting practice teaching and learning within an agency), one of the key strategies that I adopted to achieve improving anti-racist practice learning outcomes was to develop two Black practice teaching (CCETSW) programmes. It is therefore critical to the interpretation of the empirical research to gain a full understanding of the development of the Black practice teachers' programmes as a central strategy to achieve anti-racist learning outcomes.

The number of Black practice teachers nationally has remained at a low level and this has been particularly the case in Merseyside and Manchester (Stokes 1993). Different approaches and initiatives such as positive action in the recruitment and training of Black practice teachers had been undertaken in areas such as Bradford as early as 1992. It was decided to tackle this problem in Greater Manchester and Merseyside by establishing two accredited practice teachers courses solely for Black social work practitioners, commencing in 1993.

In both courses not only were the practice teacher trainees Black, but so also were the trainers and the practice supervisors. Both courses, though different in structure, adopted similar aims and achieved similar outcomes.

Both projects have clearly demonstrated that many Black workers are keen to become practice teachers, but that many obstacles exist within

agencies and other systems which prevent them from achieving this objective (Stokes 1996).

The projects provided ways of overcoming some of those obstacles. In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the projects it was important to move away from conventional methods of recruiting practice teachers within agencies and practice teachers' programmes. By having a group of Black social workers only, it was possible to provide a programme that was tailored to their needs and enabled there to be particular focus on issues of 'race' and racism in social work. The programmes were enriched by the experiences of the Black social workers who undertook them and at the same time they enabled these practitioners to use their experience to develop as practitioners and practice teachers (Burke et al 1996).

## **Rationale for the Project**

### ***Professional Issues***

Much of the rationale has been covered in the above, but to summarise the following were the key reasons for setting up Black practice teaching courses in Manchester and Merseyside:-

- The then new requirements of the Diploma in Social Work with its emphasis on the need for social work students to work with service users in an anti-racist/sexist and anti-oppressive manner.
- The development of the practice teachers award with its specific stipulation in requirement 5 that practice teachers must enable students to work in an anti-racist/sexist and anti-oppressive manner.

- The belief that Black practice teachers could play a crucial role in these developments (Burgess et al 1992, de Souza 1991).
- The lack of opportunities for Black practice teachers to be trained. (de Souza 1991).
- The belief that the only way anti-racist education can clearly be established was by developing Black resource units, where Black experiences in practice teaching and lecturing could be utilised to ensure anti-racist practice was taught consistently (Bradford post qualifying partnership 1991).
- The need to ensure that the increasing number of Black students being recruited onto Dip/SW programmes were trained at least to some degree by Black trainers and educators (de Souza 1991).
- The need to harness the extensive contribution made by Black organisations in the voluntary sector, which offered placements and were at the forefront of developing diverse anti-racist practice learning opportunities (Bradford post qualifying partnership 1991).

It is notable that CCETSW had been enthusiastic for individual agencies and accredited programmed providers to develop and train Black practice teachers alongside other practice teachers. In Manchester and Merseyside a separate course for Black practice teachers was the preferred option for the following reasons.

The guidelines CCETSW established for accreditation of practice teachers under transitional arrangements (CCETSW paper 26.3), that is,

by submitting a portfolio for the 'agency accreditation based on prior supervisory experience did very little to help Black social workers (particularly in statutory agencies) to become accredited as very few had had the opportunity to supervise students (de Souza 1991). Also, many Black workers from the voluntary sector who had previously gained student supervision experience were barred because of the requirement for practice teachers to be social work qualified.

### ***Political Issues***

The primary reason for developing separate courses for Black practice teachers was, however, political. There was clear evidence that many prospective Black practice teachers felt their training needs would be best met in an environment which would enable them to explore Black perspectives and develop strategies to deal with racial oppression (Ahmed 1991, Singh 1992, 1994) in a setting which did not further expose them to 'white hegemonic' attitudes (hooks 1991:20) in social work education. On the contrary, Black practice teachers wanted such courses to explore the commonalities in their experiences, and the richness in differences of the Black diaspora (Gilroy 1987).

The above arguments suggest that many Black workers were in favour of undertaking a course where they could be with other Black colleagues who shared their experiences of oppression (namely racism) within this society. They also emphasised the need to recognise diversities amongst each other and at the same time to create a safe accepting environment in which they could learn and grow.

By creating a pool of Black practice teachers, the courses afforded the

opportunity for Black workers to learn together, whilst making a contribution to the development of anti-racist learning opportunities in Manchester and Merseyside. However, the courses were not set up because it was believed that Black workers have the monopoly on anti-racist strategies (Husband 1991) or that Blackness is a perspective that is inherently oppositional (hooks 1991). The rationale for this approach is best captured in the following quotation:-

*'for Black persons in Britain anti-racism is not a political course which may voluntarily be taken up. Racism is an inherent element of their life. This is not to say that white anti-racists are not valued, nor that all Black persons responses should be seen as constructively anti-racist. What is required is an honest recognition of the different histories, and current social positions which inform individuals' personal and collective participation in anti-racist struggles.'* (Husband 1991:67)

The contribution of Black practice teachers to social work can also be seen in Brummer's (1988:3) argument that :-

*'the presence of black workers is needed to promote credibility and trust and to facilitate the raising of awareness of racial/ethnic issues in white peers.'*

### **Key features of the Merseyside Training Partnership Project**

The Merseyside and Manchester projects emerged and progressed collaboratively. Both shared a commitment to the notion of Black perspectives (Ahmad 1990, Stokes 1993) and shared a common philosophy and value base centred around the political ideas of Black

perspectives and anti-racist/anti-oppressive practice (Burke et al 1996).

The Merseyside programme developed its Black practice teaching programme alongside its general practice teacher course. Funds were secured from both CCETSW and participatory agencies within Merseyside. In the initial stages it did not recruit as heavily as had been expected. This in retrospect may be accounted for by two main factors. The first of these may have simply been pressure of work within the social work agencies.

Secondly, it appears that in some cases, social work agencies worked in an explicitly or implicitly institutionalised racist manner (Stokes 1993, MacPherson 1999) by blocking the information getting to the practice teacher, or by team managers not systematically raising career progression/training opportunities in supervision, and thus not addressing the opportunity of a Black practice teachers' course. In one notable case, a statutory agency refused to 'allow' a Black worker to attend the course.

Notwithstanding the difficulties in recruitment, the taught part of the programme was completed by the end of the Autumn 1993, and subsequently the seven practice teachers (four of whom took part in the qualitative research) who attended the course submitted their portfolios and in 1994, were all accredited with the CCETSW practice teachers' award. The participants on the course viewed it as a positive experience because they felt confident and at ease within an all Black surrounding to explore issues of professional pertinence and to express their feelings about practice teaching and compiling the portfolio. These practice teachers are still actively working with Diploma in Social Work students, and also as practice assessors (supporting/assessing) for other practice



teachers undertaking the CCETSW award.

It is worthwhile here just adding a brief footnote to the outline of this project. This is, seven years on, the themes discussed above, in terms of the need for more Black practice teachers to work with Black students, and to offer anti-racist learning opportunities are as politically and professionally pertinent issues now as they were then. There still appear to be Black people entering social work as a profession and expecting placements with Black practice teachers to minimise the experience of racism in agencies (de Souza 1991, Burgess et al 1992), because too often when they are placed with white practice teachers (in voluntary and statutory agencies) they are still experiencing racism of various forms and raising this as an issue of fundamental concern on placement monitoring forms.

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter consideration has been given to the notion of practice teaching as prescribed by CCETSW in the early 1990s, the development of practice teachers' courses and in particular CCETSW's commitment to the development of anti-racist and ant-oppressive strategies. I have looked at the issue of Black practice teacher training and the steps taken on Merseyside to develop a programme specifically for Black practice teachers. Before moving on to look at the research methodology, it is important to restate that in theory practice teachers (once they are trained) must enable students to understand a common language of anti-racism, multi-culturalism and diversity, along with concrete actions to achieve social justice. These actions must include practicable steps to achieve positive action for Black service users (Ben-Tovim 1997) so that they can

receive more of the welfare resource giving services and less of the statutory coercive elements (Sone 1993).

## **CHAPTER 5    METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS**

The methodological part of this thesis is concerned primarily with the methods used and the anti-oppressive and value based issues that emerged in implementing them. The process of understanding the research, interviewing, transcribing and so on is a refreshing contrast to theoretical analysis and writing. However, to develop a reflective paradigm (Harding 1987), one that links theory and practice (Davies 1991, Sibeon 1991c) there should be by necessity a bonding of the two processes.

I intend to locate and explain the focus of understanding racism (Essed 1991) and anti-racist practice within the choice of research methods used, and in turn place it at the centre of the discourse concerning the methodology. This chapter will therefore be an explanation and exploration of the concerns regarding the production of material and data, that is reliable, valid (Gilbert 1993) and clear.

### **Triangulation Methods**

The initial motivation for this research was a personal despair at the apparently one-dimensional approach towards anti-racist practice that had taken hold in social work. This was a view grounded in my ten years of professional experience both as a practitioner and trainer, that too often anti-racist practice was taught, discussed and acted out in social work in an absolute way (Macey 1995) - that there was a 'right' and a 'wrong' way to teach and practice anti-racist social work, and those that fell foul of this absolute position could be blamed for practising in an oppressive manner. This position far from encouraging innovative anti-racist

practice has led, in my opinion, to practitioners being frightened of saying and doing the purportedly 'wrong' thing when it comes to 'race' and often taking the safer option of doing nothing. This argument is no great surprise as it has been the main thrust of the analysis presented in this thesis to date (Gilroy 1992). It has been further suggested that within social work there is little theoretical understanding of the nature of racism and therefore anti-racist practice has been built on epistemologically weak foundations (Macey and Moxon 1996), a house of cards which could come tumbling down at any moment. Hence, the research theme of anti-racist practice, just what exactly is it? This was proposed as the research question, with the hypothesis that there was not much effective anti-racist practice really taking place, and what practice there was tended to be fairly crude one dimensional stuff.

The social researcher's task is to investigate a specific question. In essence to establish whether the hunch they have about a social circumstance is correct or indeed misplaced. By investigating a social problem one of the main concerns a researcher will have is that of ensuring any answers to the questions put are as reliable and valid as possible. A central argument throughout this thesis is that an understanding of racism and implementing anti-racist practice is a complex task (Essed 1991). With this in mind, to investigate how anti-racist outcomes are produced in a social work arena, between a practice teacher and student, issues such as social work knowledge (Howe 1991, Jones 1996, Rojek et al 1988) and anti-racist practice (Williams 1999) need to be explored.

These are difficult questions. What is the nature of anti-racist practice outcomes in a practice teacher-student relationship? How can this

question be most effectively interrogated? Time and space (Harvey 1990), an individual's understanding and how much information is clearly explained to a respondent (Gallagher et al 1995), the researcher as a Black male training officer concerned with practice teaching, are amongst the key variables which need to be taken into account (Anderson 1993, Rhodes 1994). For these reasons and my previous inexperience in social research, the methods chosen have erred on the cautious side, with a constant eye on reliability and validity issues (Procter 1993).

To be cautious in research is to look at every possible angle, to acquire as accurate a picture of the social phenomenon as possible, whilst simultaneously being ever vigilant, sceptical and critical of the research methods used and the data generated (Harvey 1990, Standfield 1993).

For a beginning researcher, adopting triangulation methodology is to employ a safe pair of hands with which to catch the slippery ball of complex data. It involves looking at research from a variety of different angles. It does, implicitly therefore, necessitate the use of at least three specific research methods (Denzin 1970, 1978). It enables different snapshots in time and space to ask what is the nature of anti-racist practice teaching and learning outcomes. As Denzin puts it triangulation is,

*'using an interesting set of different research methods in a single project.'* (Denzin 1978:188)

As the implementation of triangulation has unfolded the process has demonstrated that it also creates a vast amount useful of data. Secondly, triangulation has afforded the research process the luxury of being able to compare, contrast and complement different sets of results from the different methods. The third point to make here, is that the construction

of the research tools and the process of collecting the data took a period of twenty four months. It therefore has afforded the opportunity for the question to be investigated across a relatively long period of time as well as different spatial zones (Harvey 1990). Fourthly, it has provided the opportunity for a wide and a specific research population to be accessed. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were sent to students and practice teachers to undertake the quantitative survey, fifty-four of whom responded. For a qualitative angle in the triangle forty respondents were identified and thirty-four actually interviewed.

There are, however, difficulties with using triangulation. Firstly, if care is not taken, generating so much data can cloud the research question not crystallise it (Kellaher et al 1990). Secondly, although caution was the motive for triangulation, the research data is no more scientific nor rigorous than other methods as the problematics thrown up for instance, with quantitative research used solely, will still arise when utilised alongside other methods (Denzin 1978). Indeed, though more research material is generated there is the danger of producing contradictory results which muddle messages instead of clarifying them. However, conflicting results established from different methods of collecting data can also ensure a greater depth and rigour about the research process,

*'they will produce a more complete picture . . . difference between sets of data may be just as important or illuminating.'* (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:112)

My own bias is still an issue, as the choice of methods will partially reflect criteria other than the need for rigour and consistency in data. This may be the researcher's preference, ease of access and simplicity in

execution. But the research material can be as flawed and inconsistent using these methods as any other (Hughes 1990, Shakespeare et al 1990).

Ultimately, the primary motive for implementing this overarching method was a concern to be consistent and rigorous. However, it has also afforded the opportunity to contrast at least two fundamentally different methods based on different principles and practice (Denzin 1978, Kellaher et al 1990). To achieve this the investigation methods of qualitative, quantitative and documentary analysis were used.

Semi-structured interviews that were subsequently taped and transcribed comprised the qualitative focus (Bell 1993, Fielding 1993). The quantitative angle was met by the use of postal questionnaires, adopting the Likert (1932) 1-5 questionnaire. Documentary analysis (Macdonald and Tipton 1993) involved looking at the portfolios practice teachers had provided to attain CCETSW accreditation, particularly examining what had been written about anti-racist outcomes in contrast to what has been spoken. The interviews, quantitative data and portfolios included those produced by those Black practice teachers who took part in the Merseyside Training Partnership Black practice teachers programme. Each of these three angles of investigation provide areas of methodological concern which will be examined below.

## **The Qualitative research**

### ***Making Contact***

Respondents were ‘phoned to establish some personal contact, explain the purpose of the research and enquire whether they would mind being interviewed. This ‘phone call was followed within four weeks by a letter to each respondent confirming the aim of the research and the date and time of each semi-structured interview. Many of the respondents worked or were students in social work offices. This enabled ‘phone calls to be made in work time making informal contact less intrusive or threatening. The venues for the interviews were chosen by the respondents, most felt comfortable in their offices, some met the author in his workplace others chose their home. All the respondents were told in the interview that they would receive a copy of the transcript that they had provided. This was sent to each respondent once it had been transcribed providing them with the opportunity to re-word/edit any responses that they felt were unrepresentative of the comments that they had made. The purpose of doing this was to provide respondents with the opportunity to retain as much power over the research process as they could. Throughout the interview process the author attempted to be as informal as possible to encourage a dialogue with the respondents to enable them to express themselves as naturally as they possibly could within this situation.

The qualitative interviews were conducted over a two year period and were structured in the following way. Twenty practice teachers and fourteen students were interviewed. Each student interviewed had been placed with one of the twenty practice teachers. The objective of this was to acquire some understanding of anti-racist discussions and practice that occurred throughout the practice teacher/student relationship. The



intention was to interview all twenty Dip/SW students who had been on a practice placement with the twenty practice teachers identified. Ten of the twenty practice teachers interviewed had achieved CCETSW accreditation status (four of these through the Black practice teachers programme) and had submitted a portfolio successfully for assessment. The other ten were practice teachers with the minimum CCETSW criterion of being two years post qualified. Some of these practice teachers may well have been very experienced in terms of working with Dip/SW students, more so even than those who had achieved CCETSW accreditation. Six of the twenty students who were identified as having been placed with the corresponding practice teachers could not be located. This was primarily because they had moved away from Liverpool and had neither left an employer's address where they could be contacted, or they had not yet managed to find employment. However, the fourteen students that were interviewed, provide interesting perspectives on their experience.

### **Developing Categories for Analysis**

Transcribing the tapes of interviews that lasted between one and two hours involved at least five hours transcription per interview. Whilst this was time-consuming and arduous it afforded the opportunity to reflect on the respondent's answers and remind the author of the some of the key themes that had been focused on or had emerged through the interview process. Analysis of the data involved calling on some of the themes that had emerged initially in the interview process and through time sifting out new and different themes that reflected practice teachers' and students reality in terms of anti-racist practice. The categories used for analysis were those outlined below. However, the themes that emerged from this

categorisation threw up a somewhat different story (as can be seen in the following chapter). Although some of these categories were pre-conceived ideas the author had, others became evident through the months of interviewing as the author reflected on the respondents experiences. There was thus a balance between a rational framework with which to start the research and reflexive coding that created categories and themes as the responses to the interviews emerged (Reissman 1994).

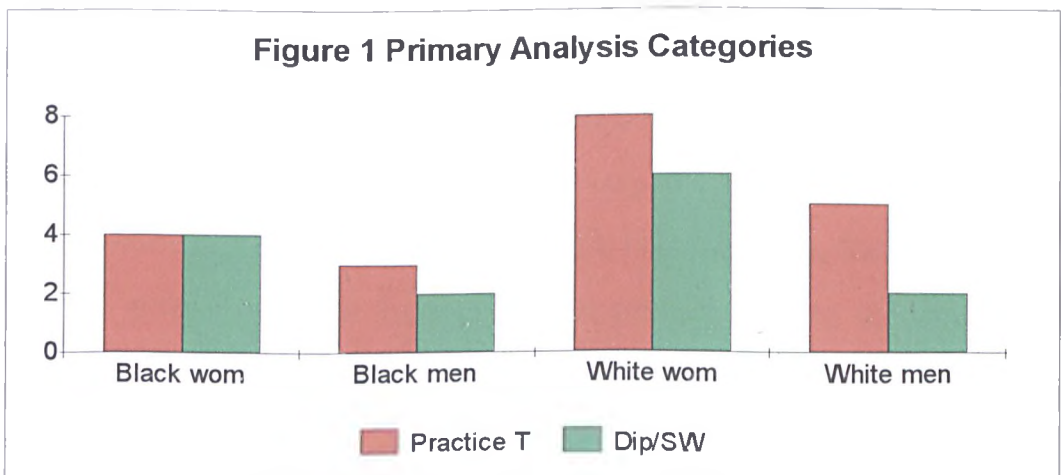
With the focus of the research being about anti-racist outcomes, and how these are taught by practice teachers to students and how students and practice teachers put anti-racist ideas into practice, the primary categories that were developed for analysis were as follows:

The contrasts and comparisons in responses between:

- i) practice teachers and students.
- ii) Black and white respondents.

Category 1 looked at the practice teacher/student learning relationship. Has the practice teacher been able to teach anti-racist practice in an effective manner to meet the outcomes expected in CCETSW's paper 30 (and in the CCETSW accredited practice teachers case) paper 26.3? Which were the most effective methods used and how did both practice teacher and student reflect on the practice learning experience? This first category was important because it focused on the outcomes for both teacher and learner, and provided an opportunity for comparative analysis.

The second category identified provided an opportunity to examine the experience/ knowledge debate concerning racism. Do Black practice teachers have a greater insight both theoretically and in practice than their white colleagues in practice teaching and learning anti-racism? How does a Black practice teacher work with a Black student when addressing anti- racist practice? What about a white practice teacher with a Black student, or a Black practice teacher with a white student? Put another way, had the work to develop a pool of Black practice teachers (through the Black practice teaching programme) (Stokes and Wainwright 1996) been an effective strategy to augment the provision of anti-racist learning opportunities within the agency? These were important areas to analyse when looking at the type of anti-racist theory and practice outcomes for practice teachers and learners because they provide the opportunity to explore the effect ethnicity has on this process. There were seven Black practice teachers and six Black Dip/SW students responses within this data and these numbers are illustrated in the diagram identified below. See fig 1



The second set of categories that emerged were as follows:

i) The geographical area – whether the practice learning setting was within the Black community, close to it or not.

ii) Whether the practice teacher was qualified with the CCETSW practice teachers award or not

iii) The practice teachers area of practice (i.e their specialism) – the setting that they worked in and the service user group.

iv) Gender

Category 1 identified for analysis of data was that of geographical proximity of the particular student placement to the Black community. The rationale for this was that practice teachers working closer or within the Black community may have the opportunity to provide students with more ‘race’ related experiences which could provide evidence to demonstrate anti-racist practice. Proximity to the Black community could also affect team discussions concerning issues of anti-racism and anti-oppressive practice, because the social work may consistently involve working with Black service users. However, because CCETSW clearly links anti-racist practice with working with Black people, there is a clear relevance when looking at the service user group a student works with. In figure 1.1 (on page 153) this category is listed as near or not near to the Black community.

Category 2 refers to a comparison of practice teachers who have been

formally trained and assessed via the completion of a portfolio to CCETSW's standards and are therefore accredited to teach Dip/SW students on placement. Achieving this status includes being able to teach 'the student to work in an anti-racist and ethnically sensitive manner'. (Requirement 5 paper 26.3 CCETSW 1991a). These practice teachers' responses when relevant are compared to those without the accreditation award. Figure 1.2 identifies the number of Black and white practice teachers that had attained CCETSW's practice teacher accreditation.

Category 3, specialism, refers to the particular area of practice the practice teacher worked in and that the student experienced as their placement (CCETSW 1991b). This necessitates mention because different areas of practice identify different strategies to adopt concerning anti-racist practice. The specialisms for example, could be family placement concerned with the adoption and fostering of children, that has a same 'race' policy for placing children with particular parents and also a significant population of Black workers within the section.

Alternatively, practice teachers and their students were interviewed in hospital settings, short term assessment and long term statutory child care field work teams, youth justice and adult work, all with varying emphasises on anti-racist practice that can effect practice teachers', and students' anti-racist outcomes.

Category 4, gender, is identified because in the practice teaching and learning process great emphasis is laid on power and adult learning methods to facilitate learning. Making connections between sexism and racism and the experience of women in the education process is an opportunity promoted in some practice teaching sources (Humphries 1993, ILP 1994). It was also interesting to view how men learn from

women and vice versa, and how Black women learn from white men and so on.

It is important to establish at this stage that the main variables or categories that were consistently analysed were the two primary ones mentioned above; the secondary categories were referred to in the research findings in an *ad hoc* way to emphasise a particular point that was of specific relevance to anti-racist outcomes.

Figure 1.1 provides a break down of the practice teachers in terms of a Black/white dichotomy (these are denoted as red and green bars for Black practice teachers), their specialism or particular area of practice (this is identified on the horizontal axis - the 'adult res' category means a residential setting, and hospital A and C refer to adult and children respectively, Family P refers to Placement) and whether the placement provided was within close proximity to the Black community or not (denoted as red bars for Black practice teachers working near the Black community and blue for white practice teachers). For instance, the chart illustrates that there were four practice teachers interviewed that were located in adult fieldwork settings. Out of these four practice teachers two were Black, and two practice teachers one white and one Black worked in or near the Black community. This chart provides at a glance a picture of the practice teacher population who were interviewed regarding their 'race', particular social work specialism and whether they worked in or near the Black community or not.

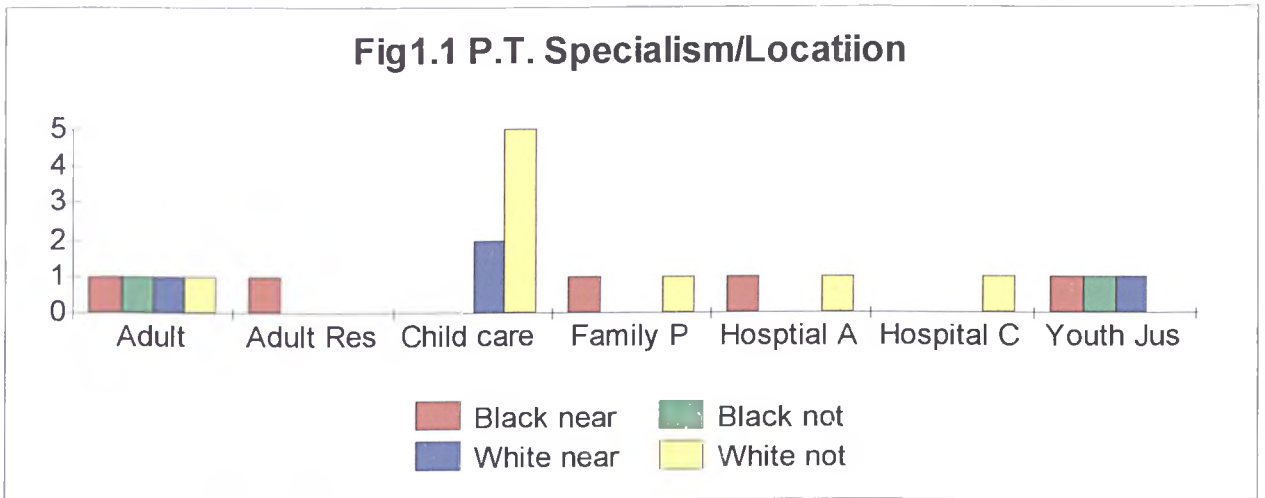
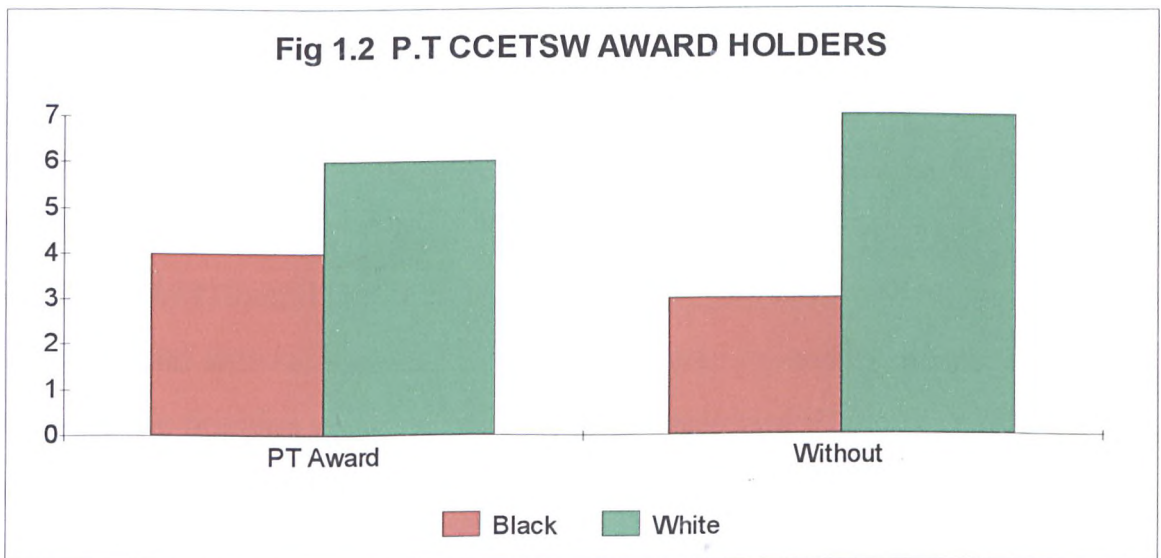


Figure 1.2 identifies the proportion of Black and white practice teachers who have gained the CCETSW award and become qualified practice teachers.



The process of looking at these categories then physically cutting and pasting themes as they emerged was very time consuming. Much of the transcribed data was detailed and complex and much had to be discarded. The data needed to be coded against these categories and then sub-coded into any descriptive themes that arose. However, what emerged was a balance between the categories identified for analysis and the themes that were produced as a response to these categories (Reissman 1994).

### **The Research Subject Area**

To examine anti-racist outcomes the subjects that were addressed within the interviews encompassed the theoretical material discussed in previous chapters. There was a need to establish the respondent's theoretical and practice understanding of social work knowledge, a knowledge of racism, and how this linked to a comprehension and implementation of anti-racist practice. The focus has also been on outcomes, therefore respondents' understanding of the role of competencies within the learning process was explored. The CCETSW award and adult learning were chosen as subject areas to discuss because these address some of the core issues raised in chapter 4 concerning the Black practice teachers project, requirement 5 of paper 26.3 (1991b) and the links made with students' experience of oppression and anti-racist practice. The other area looked at in some detail was the practice teaching /placement process and what effect this had on anti-racist outcomes. To comprehensively address the above subject areas the following categories were used as the basis for the questions.

The ten areas identified below broadly represent the three stages the



thesis critically examined. Firstly, the areas 1 to 3 explored the notion of experience and particularly practice wisdom. Secondly, the areas 4 and 5 focused on the respondents theoretical understanding of racism and anti-racism - these areas have direct relevance to the theory-practice debate examined in chapter 2, and thirdly; areas 6 to 10 looked at the process of teaching and the outcomes of anti-racist practice. Although three stages were identified, they are not mutually exclusive because of the very nature of the theory-practice problematic. The first stage when exploring the practice teachers' input and practice wisdom made reference to theoretical understandings and outcomes; likewise the second stages exploring the theoretical understandings of respondents drew on practice experience and concrete outcomes as examples and so on. Respondents were also given the opportunity to elaborate or digress on any subject area and were encouraged to revisit any particular theme if they wished at the end of the interview. The areas outlined below were not changed as these subjects or 'headings' appeared to encourage and allow respondents to talk openly and at length.

### **Stage 1**

- i) Student learning on the placement.
- ii) Experiences of the student on the placement.
- iii) The practice teacher's contribution and the quality of the practice learning experience.

### **Stage 2**

- iv) The respondent's understanding of the concepts of :
  - a) racism
  - b) anti-racism/practice

v) The respondents understanding of the links between anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice.

### **Stage 3**

vi) The methods used to facilitate anti-racist learning outcomes.

vii) The effect of competencies on the learning process.

viii) The factors that added to the students understanding of anti-racist practice.

viii) The use of critical adult learning within the practice learning setting.

x) The formal CCETSW award and the specific competency that focuses on anti-racism, requirement 5.

When addressing these subject areas during the interviews both practice teachers and students were asked the same mirror questions. For example, to the practice teacher, ‘What do you think your student learnt whilst on placement?’ and to the student ‘What do you think you learnt whilst on placement?’ Respondents were encouraged to say as much or as little as they wanted and were guided on their interpretation of a particular question only when this was requested. (See appendix 1 for details of the questionnaires used with respondents).

The principle advantage, it is said, of using qualitative methods to paint a research picture, is that the material gathered can be gained in a live experience and can be rich in its depth (Burgess 1982). In this particular case, face to face in depth interviewing provided the opportunity for respondents to talk as much or as little as they felt comfortable about anti-racist outcomes, and they were also enabled to define the parameters of their answers. Giving people the space to talk enables respondents who are able to articulate their opinions clearly, licence to do so. However, it

also encourages people who miss the point to talk endlessly with the material being of very little use to the research question (Burgess 1982). The experience of the semi-structured interviews with practice teachers and students confirmed this. Although practice teachers tended to take much more time in the interview, than their students.

Secondly, because the material provided is in the respondent's own words, reality can be structured as they perceive it, rather than through the more sanitised perspective of the researcher (Burgess 1982). This enables the respondents to construct their truth, supporting the notion of no absolute reality, but rather creating a diverse, fragmented, and complex set of knowledge (Lyotard 1984, Shakespeare et al 1990).

Thirdly, this method of research has enabled respondents to express their views on quite complex matters that not only demonstrate their viewpoint, understanding or performance, but also the values attached to specific words or phrases and actions. Being aware of semiotics (Saussure 1974) in the value laden and political (Jones 1993) world of social work, is a crucial aspect in unpicking and understanding of the terms racism and anti- racism. Saussure defines semiotics as,

*'a science that studies the life of signs without society.'* (Saussure 1974:198)

It is therefore important to have a critical appreciation of the art of verbal communication, and the meanings beneath the language, at both the point of interview and when transcribing and interpreting the data. An awareness of the construction of language is also important when Black respondents whose use of English is their second language participate, as

meanings provided here can be and are different to definitions provided by respondents who use English as their first language (Essed 1991). Within the respondent population there were students and practice teachers who were African or Asian and for whom English was their second language.

A central problematic in the process of qualitative research is the position of the author/researcher in this process. In my case, this meant a Black male training officer with particular prominence within the organisation around the arenas of 'race', who had responsibility for practice teaching and learning. Which meant that there was always going to be a danger that answers provided by respondents might be those they believed were the 'correct' ones or which met with my approval (Ladner 1971, Schaeffer 1980). There was also the danger that respondents might try to second guess my own particular view, informed they thought, by the prevailing ethos within the agency concerning a particular way to address anti-racism (Rhodes 1994, Sudman and Bradburn 1974). Attempts were made by myself to minimise this. For instance, each interviewee had the importance and integrity of confidentiality clearly explained to them before the interview commenced. There was one caveat to this, and this was explained with the option - if the respondents requested - of the interviews not commencing. Harding (1987) identifies this point by explaining that the beliefs and behaviours of the researcher can be taken into account as part of the empirical evidence provided in the research and that this too must be open to critical scrutiny. However, if the research seems to achieve the goal of being critical and reflective, I need to acknowledge that often,

*'Socially acceptable responses are particularly ways of dealing with*

*interviewers rather than expressing the respondents' actual view.'*

(Fielding 1993:145)

Respondents were chosen in effect in pairs, a practice teacher and the Dip/SW student who was on placement with him/her. This meant that each practice teacher and student that had worked together knew that the other was going to be interviewed. On the surface respondents stated, once this had been explained, that it was not problematic. However, knowledge of the student's practice teacher being interviewed and vice versa has some implications (Anderson 1993). What had the other person stated about their own performance? Did their answers tally? In other words were both answers reflecting the same reality or 'truth'? This would inevitably make an impression on the answers given. Yet, by stressing confidentiality, it was hoped that respondents felt empowered or 'free' enough to express their views as frankly as they felt necessary concerning racism, anti-racist practice, social work and the particular agency they worked in.

Secondly, as a Black male aware of my own impact on the interview process, a conscious decision was made by myself to make it known to respondents that in my view there was no right or wrong way to practice anti-racism, and that I as a Black man, a training officer and somebody responsible for, and who had authority over, practice teaching and learning was not engaging in this process to judge either their views or performance. Rhodes (1994) states that for both white and Black respondents this can be difficult, as the respondents may feel inhibited talking to a Black respondent about 'race' issues. Or the effect may be one of empowering the respondents, particularly the Black ones because there is an opportunity to explore commonality of opinions within the

research process (Burke et al 1996).

Thirdly, within the process reference was made which acknowledged the fear or blame factor concerning anti-racism (Macey and Moxon 1996), in order to encourage participants to be critical, reflective and to state their mind. It was also discussed that a central tenet of critical research was to think in contrary ways to perceived truths or wisdoms (Rojek et al 1988): main paradigms maybe of use, but nothing need be ruled in by respondents nor ruled out. Put another way, I attempted to enable the respondents to be able to question the social and structural reality that they worked in (Harvey 1990). So, at the beginning of all the interviews I made it plain that I had an open mind, and was keen to comprehend their understanding and application of the concepts racism, anti-racism and practice learning. Whilst undertaking the interview process through to transcription and interpretation, I was critically aware that the responses I would receive would be through a filter of acceptable discourse and within the social construct of the social work agency that the practice teachers and students worked in (Burgess 1982, Harvey 1990).

Notwithstanding this, a central consideration in the research process that as a Black male training officer within the agency was power. Power, through the mere ethical consideration of asking respondents to be honest and fulsome in their answers (Essed 1991). Power through the research process being a one way circuit, taking and not giving. Power, in the transcribing and interpretation of material, and in the editorial decisions and final presentation of the findings (Harvey 1990, Reissman 1994). Power, in a social work agency culture where anti-racist practice was vogue, that a Black male was questioning both Black and white respondents (Rhodes 1994). Again, even when allowing for

confidentiality, an anti-racist/racial equality policy was in place in the organisation that could theoretically have been invoked against any of the respondents if answers had been deemed so inappropriate as to warrant further formal investigation. Power, as a man asking women questions in an unreciprocated research relationship (Ladner 1971, hooks 1984, 1989). These questions are ethically very challenging (Hughes 1990), and in some ways quite ironic, when the research question itself is concerned with equality issues around racism. Within the research process these questions/issues need to be acknowledged with respondents. Yet, however much I have attempted to assuage these ethical difficulties, there will have been an effect on the researcher-respondent relationship and the consequent production of material generated.

Associated with these methodological difficulties was the opportunity for respondents within a semi-structured 1-2 hour interview to misunderstand the meaning of the questions. For instance, respondents may be defining a term or explaining an action from a very confused knowledge base, that further blurred the research question rather than clarified it. Imbued within this could be a desire on the part of the respondents to please myself as a Black male training officer/researcher (Modood 1994, Rhodes 1994).

Culture, within this context was another problematic for these interviews. Within the particular City (Liverpool) where the research was undertaken, the politics of racial equality and indeed social work is particularly parochial (Rooney 1987, Gifford et al 1989 see also chapter 3). This particular parochialism is perhaps the one thing that crosses the racial and political divide within the City. It underpins what was called anti-racist practice and is now increasingly called racial equality (CRE 1995) within

Liverpool. This culture defines, sometimes articulated and at times unspoken, a political line of acceptability concerning what is 'Black' (Bell 1996, Gilroy 1992) what is racism (Miles 1989) and what is anti-racist practice (Dominelli 1997). It is not important to re-open the discourse here, as it has been explored in previous chapters. However, it is my contention that this parochial politicisation, that is quite alien to other parts of the country (Gifford et al 1989), has had and will continue to have a significant influence on anti-racist practice within social work organisations in Liverpool and has moulded the shape of the answers offered by respondents (Essed 1991). This notion of 'reflexivity' is where evaluative, ethical and intellectual judgements need to be made by the researcher (myself) when the research findings are produced to reconcile my understanding of the social world (as explained above) (Essed 1991, Reissman 1994).

A second way in which culture has affected the quality of answers given in the interview process is through social work. This subject surprisingly has a dearth of information on it (and indeed could inspire a research paper itself). Yet, social work as a discipline and a professional culture has apparently a completely different set of values and perception of the world (Rojek et al 1988, 1989) to the rest of society (Penketh 1998, Pinker 1993). These values are quite laudable, based around social justice, the rights of individuals and perhaps more polemically a view of anti-oppression that focuses on the individual rather than the structural (Ellerman 1998, Jones 1993, Penketh 1998.). This is fundamentally informed by the role of social work being focused on working with the individual.

Yet, this alternative view of the world, that at times is eschewed by the



service users, media and other professionals that social workers work alongside (Penketh 1998, Williams 1999) has evolved into an unspoken set of rules, values and practices for practitioners that inevitably effects the content and texture of some of the responses given. This is in part effected by semiotics and social work epistemology but also by this unwritten code (Rojek et al 1988). It must be said that although this culture in social work views the world with a critical eye, the world increasingly views social work with bewilderment and curiosity (Rooney 1993). Therefore, answers by social workers about social work will be very distinct, in contrast to other professional groups.

Thirdly, there is the culture of the city that the research was undertaken in. Liverpool as a city is quite different from any other. It has a sense of separateness, of difference and isolation. This is partially borne out of a recent history of poverty, deprivation and class, but also it is embroidered by a political culture of resistance that effects perspectives on social work and 'race'. When researching about a subject as political and emotive as racism, responses provided will to some extent be informed by this culture of resistance and separateness. It is proposed here, that within this context some of the findings will be unique to Liverpool. This context, it should always be acknowledged is a city with the longest established Black community in the country (Law 1985) still systematically excluded from the mainstream political, economic and social life (Ben-Tovim 1997, Ben-Tovim et al 1998). The 'Liverpool born Black' debate is one manifestation of this social exclusion. Therefore, when understanding the responses given to questions posed, an appreciation of the importance of culture is an essential prism through which to view the findings, if they are to be fully comprehended.

The last point to make regarding the semi-structured interviews is that practice teachers who either undertook the formal CCETSW award through the Merseyside practice teaching programme, the Black practice teachers' programme or indeed an 'in house' training course were aware of my personal commitment to developing and sharing anti-racist practices: practices that moved away from the one dimensional crude perspectives talked about in this thesis, to those that would actually empower Black people. Again, this backdrop would affect the nature of the researcher-respondent relationship.

The qualitative work generated by far the most data and most of the resources used undertaking the research. It also needs to be acknowledged that the quantitative and documentary angles are provided as alternative snapshots, and do not provide correspondingly in depth views.

On the whole, whilst acknowledging these factors respondents appeared to enter into this research process with an honesty and desire to have a genuine dialogue concerning the subject. Throughout the interviews, although the respondents were very diverse, the author did not experience any resistance to the questions. On the contrary respondents enthusiastically engaged in a dialogue about their understanding of anti-racism, social work practice and learning.

### **Practice Teachers' Portfolios**

Turning to the documentary analysis of the ten practice teachers' portfolios. These portfolios were produced by the practice teachers with the primary aim of being assessed by a practice teaching programme to

gain the CCETSW award, become accredited, and be deemed competent to work with a student on the 14 requirements in paper 26.3 (CCETSW 1991b). (These 14 requirements have subsequently been revised through the production of 'Assuring quality in Practice teaching'(CCETSW 1995b) to a format more akin to NVQ competencies with five main units and various elements.) Within these 14 requirements, one of them specifically requires the practice teacher to provide evidence and evaluate their performance concerning enabling the student to work in an anti-racist way (see chapter 4). That is to,

*'Help students to develop anti-racist, anti-sexist and other forms of anti-discriminatory practice and the capacity to work effectively within a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society.'* (CCETSW 1991:5)

The analysis of the portfolios focuses on this particular requirement.

The ten portfolios analysed were the products of the ten practice teachers interviewed all of whom had gained the CCETSW award. Four of these had produced their portfolio after completing the Black practice teachers' programme. The purpose of the analysis was to look at the type of evidence, if any, that was provided to demonstrate anti-racist practice.

Analysis of these portfolios though, had its limitations. Firstly, the evidence provided was manufactured, that is the primary aim of them was to impress an assessment panel that they could teach anti-racism, rather than honestly express their opinions and beliefs concerning anti-racist practice. Information in the portfolios addressed what was expected of them as practice teachers rather than what they genuinely believed. The same point was made above concerning the qualitative interviews; the

difference with the documentary evidence though, is that any detraction from an anti-racist perspective would have been deemed as not acceptable by the portfolio examiners, whereas the option was available, if not always taken in the interviews, to express whatever view they wanted in confidentiality. Therefore, the portfolios were produced for a specific reason, for a practice teacher to pass and become an accredited practice teacher. This point regarding documents is neatly summed up by Scott (1990),

*'Texts must be studied as socially situated products.'* (Scott 1990:34 in MacDonald and Tipton 1993:198)

Secondly, reading the portfolios only reflects a one dimensional perspective on an event. What can be read is what can be interpreted, nothing can be added. Again, the use of semiotics is important (Saussure 1974), because the portfolios are written within the implied givens and values of social work knowledge, anti-racism (Dominelli 1997) and indeed practice teaching.

Nevertheless, and perhaps most importantly, the portfolios offered the opportunity to compare the behaviour and ideas identified in the documents with what had been revealed in the semi-structured interviews.

### **Quantitative responses**

Turning to the quantitative responses, one hundred and twenty quantitative questionnaires were sent out to practice teachers and students. Sixty were sent to each group. The questionnaires were sent

over a one year period and therefore reflect both a first year (fifty day) and a second year (eighty day) placement. Twenty six practice teacher questionnaires were returned and twenty nine student ones. Therefore, there was a response rate of 40% for practice teachers and 44.6% for Dip/SW students. However, the numbers of student and practice teacher returns that experienced the same placement were only five (just below 10%). Likewise, those returns that correlated with the respondents in the qualitative interviews were purely coincidental (and very small in number).

The questionnaires asked seven questions of each respondent, and were provided within the framework 1 excellent and 5 poor, the Likert scale. However, the four main themes used to analyse the questionnaires were the main focus of the qualitative research. The questionnaires were also devised to monitor how organisations had met CCETSW's requirements for an Approved Practice Learning Agency (CCETSW 1991b). These requirements, should provide the infrastructure to support and develop practice teaching in a social work agency and in this case monitor the quality and support both practice teachers and students received to implement anti-racist practice (Penketh 1998).

The results from the questionnaires have enabled a back drop or 'big picture' to be produced which in turn can be compared with the other data.

The picture or results provided clearly were hindered by less than fifty per cent of the questionnaires being returned. Therefore, results provided from this source need to be interpreted with this limited response in mind.

### *Changing Times.*

As the data has been sifted through and the author has reflected on the findings, my thinking has been influenced by the continual production of theoretical material on 'race', ethnicity and social work. National and local events have also affected the evaluation of the data, for instance, the impact of the Stephen Lawrence murder, latterly the Victoria Climbié tragedy and the consequent changes to public sector and social care policy (Revans et al 2002). The author's involvement in practice teaching and learning, the Merseyside and North West Black practice teacher's project and constant involvement in the provision of social care learning across agencies. Just as importantly, being in a constant dialogue with Black and white colleagues and friends concerning the issues of 'race' and social work and how these two themes interact in policy and practice has also had a significant bearing on the reflections I have made as the data has been analysed.

### *A Political Process*

Before, moving onto the findings of the research, it is important to state that at the time this research was undertaken I had a key role to play in practice learning within the agency. Furthermore, that I have clear views concerning the nature and way social work is practised and anti-racist practice is implemented. I am aware that my own reality, perceptions and opinions are constructed through my personal, professional and political biography (Burke and Wainwright 1996). This biography acted as a prism through which I listened to and communicated with respondents in the interview process and the way I interpreted the research data.

Finally, I make no excuse for owning a particular value base concerning understanding racism and how anti-racist practice should be delivered. Research I contend, that explores the brutalities of racism and the necessary strategies to combat it, must necessarily make a constructive contribution to a better understanding of this and produce some concrete proposals to tackle it (Ben-Tovim et al 1982, 1996, Dyson et al 1998, Flemming et al 1998). Therefore, it is important that I state here, that whatever evidence the data produced, it is important that I research racism, not as some intriguing social phenomenon, as a ‘social scientist’, but as something that is real, destroys lives and communities, and should constantly be struggled against, research being but one small contribution to this process. This research therefore, has been not been undertaken from position of value free objectivity, but from a perspective of bringing about constructive change to anti-racist practice, by entering into a dialogue with the practice teachers and students engaged in this process.

## **CHAPTER 6 IMPLEMENTING ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE**

In this and the following two chapters consideration is given to the findings from the interviews with practice teachers and students and from the other data, most notably the portfolios completed by the practice teachers as part of their training, and the questionnaires which they completed for the research. The findings are presented thematically but it is important to recognise that they are closely linked and interact. In this chapter I will look at the findings in relation to the implementation of anti-racist practice. In Chapter 7 I will look at how social work ideas about teaching, learning and practice influence the implementation of anti-racist practice, and in Chapter 8 I will look at the findings in relation to identity and anti-racist practice. The theoretical aspects of these three thematic areas were dealt with in the same order in Chapters 1 to 4:- Chapter 1 addressing explicitly racism and anti-racism, Chapter 2 theory/practice in social work and practice learning and Chapters 3 and 4 issues of identity and the impact of the Black practice teachers' project. The intention therefore, is to enable the reader to make clear links between the theoretical sections of the thesis and empirical research.

### **Anti-Racist Practice - the fear factor.**

Looking initially at anti-racist practice it is important to emphasise that most of the responses from practice teachers and students about teaching and implementing anti-racist ideas practice were positive. Nevertheless, there was a common thread of fear and blame throughout the answers. This fear



can be put into two broad categories. The first fear factor is one of a white practice teacher or student feeling that they are saying or doing the wrong thing. This quote from a white practice teacher illustrates this well :

*'The student placement should make links with a body of knowledge gained in college, making practice sensitive to people's needs and disadvantages - a way of looking at the world. Black students too often say, "Hell, the world's against me". But there is a need to meet in the middle because if you can make sense of oppression then you can have a better understanding of it. There is not a relaxed feeling about anti-racist practice. It puts the fear of God into most people.'*

There are in fact several key points in this statement .

Firstly, it points to the need for practice teachers to be sensitive towards the oppressions that Black students may be perceiving or experiencing, that is, seeing the Black student as an actual or potential 'victim' of racism. This viewpoint is supported in the anti-racist literature which pinpoints some of the institutional and individual experiences of racism that Black workers experience daily and how these can act as a paralysing force, which leads them to believe they are professionally impotent and powerless in the face of events (Burgess et al 1992). These feelings can particularly arise in the case of marginal students where there is the possibility of a failed placement or indeed poor performance (Aymer and Bryan 1996).

Secondly, it points to the need for practice teachers to help students make links between their own experiences of oppression and those of service users

and to use them to improve and develop their practice (Dominelli 1997, Humphries 1988).

Thirdly, this statement points to the blame factor that is perceived by some to hang like a spectre over anti-racist practice (Gilroy 1992). The respondent here states that white practice teachers and students often feel frightened of addressing anti-racist practice because they might say and do the wrong thing in the view of Black students and colleagues. He goes on to comment that this fear should not obscure a genuine commitment to anti-racist practice, but that it does often gets misrepresented and can lead to negative experiences for that particular practitioner. There is evidence therefore of a need for Black practitioners to work positively with committed white practitioners and students and to support them in their efforts to tackle racism. The type of fears reported here reflect the views of a significant minority of respondents, many of whom had given the issue of anti-racism considerable thought, but as a result of ‘bruising’ professional and personal experiences were extremely wary about it.

### *A Party Line?*

Another fear factor that was apparent from Black respondents’ views was a belief that there is a ‘party line’ that must be followed to be ‘really’ Black. This respondent, a Black male practice teacher with a white female student, drew on his life experiences as a Black person to highlight how people can use anti-racism to blame people.

*I shared something from my own experience because it is a valuable way*

*people can teach ..... to do with the complexities that arise in and around racism and anti-racist practice. I wasn't trying to portray the text book stuff. I was.... trying through my own personal and life experiences to illustrate some of the difficulties and pitfalls to try and equip my student. For instance, if your language that is used around 'race' and ethnicity is questioned and the person who questions you comes from your standpoint, don't feel you have to cave in because they feel you are horrendous. Be confident about where you are. Be assertive and say this is where you are at the moment . . .and (do) not feel that the latest Black person that they come across governs exactly what they think about racism. . . It's the balancing and putting it all into context and trying to ensure that a white person goes on and tries to be anti-racist and doesn't run away because they opened their mouths and said something somebody objects to. There are two different things here, a learning process and not being smashed to pieces by it.'*

This quotation also highlights the blame culture within which anti-racist practice operates and the potential conflicts around words and meanings both between Black people and between Black and white people in social work (Gilroy 1994, Rooney 1993). It demonstrates the vulnerable position in which individuals can find themselves, particularly students (Aymer and Bryan 1996). The view put forward by this practice teacher is persuasive, because it combines a critical analysis of some of the many assumptions concerning Black perspectives and anti-racist practice with a perspective that empowers individuals not to be bullied into thinking or acting in a particular way, but to develop anti-racist strategies that are most appropriate for them (Aymer and Bryan 1996). This Black respondent is clearly challenging the

prevalent school of thought which encourages Black and white people that there is only one credible way to address anti-racist practice, and that to divert from it means that anti-racist credentials cannot be claimed. Clearly, the views put forward in previous chapters of this thesis about the fluid, ever changing, form of racism(s), allied with a notion of a continuum of ethnicity, show that a pre-ordained 'party line' concerning anti-racism is nonsense.

In concluding this section, while it should be stressed again that the fear factor was not explicitly referred to by most of the respondents, those that did so made important points. One of the areas in which it was specifically raised was in relation to policies and practices of same 'race' placements in fostering and adoption where it was felt that questioning these could be seen as indicative of holding racist values (for a fuller discussion of these issues see Gaber and Aldridge 1994). It is important for those involved in developing anti-racist practices to take into account the dysfunctional impact of the fear factor. As was noted earlier, Race Awareness Training (RAT) which was prevalent particularly in the USA in the 1980s (Katz 1978) made the reductionist assumption that to be white was to be inherently racist (Gilroy 1992), thus placing any strategy to challenge racism that involved white people in a compromised position from the start. From this point of view, working with white people was equivalent to working with the enemy within. It assumed that the complexion of one's skin was the main determinant regarding a person's capacity and credibility to work in an effective anti-racist way. This element of fear that scars anti-racism was evident in the recent disturbances in Bradford between Asian youths and the police. In an inquiry into community relations between the Black, white, and Asian Community, Lord Herman Ouseley - the former chairperson of the

Commission for Racial Equality - specifically identified the blame culture as contributing to perpetuation of the almost complete separation of the Asian, Black and white communities that exists in Bradford (Ousely 2001). Ousely concludes his report by stating that until this blame culture within anti-racism/ 'race' relations is constructively tackled the tensions and resentments between the three communities in Bradford will continue to deteriorate.

## **Understanding and Being Committed to Anti-Racist Practice**

### *Understanding of Racism*

The importance of grounding anti-racist practice in a clear theoretical understanding of 'race' and racism has been stressed throughout the earlier part of this thesis. In this section attention is paid to the types of understandings demonstrated by the research respondents. The responses received in this area of questioning were, with the exception of two practice teachers, both clear and coherent.

### **Personal Experience and Theoretical Perspectives**

Both Dip/SW students and practice teacher respondents located their understanding of racism within a personal conviction to challenge it. Significantly, although Black practice teachers were seen by some white practice teachers as 'experts' in the field and as providing a lead in understanding and doing something about racism, the quality of their answers - in terms of theoretical explanations - was little different from

those of the white respondents. This led to a position, therefore, where at times far from grounding their answers in a theoretical understanding, white respondents were referring to Black practitioners' 'expertise' which tended to be based more on personal experience. This should not be viewed too negatively in that Black practice teachers' personal experiences were very useful for learning about the nature of racism and ways of combating it. Indeed, it has been argued convincingly that there is great value in having a pool of Black practice teachers so that their personal experiences of racism can be used to help provide effective anti-racist learning opportunities for students (Brummer 1988, Stokes 1996). However, there are some dangers that in this process the contributions of theoretical perspectives can take a back seat.

### **Racism at the Structural and Individual Levels**

Practice teachers' responses mainly located racism as having an impact on both structural and individual levels. This was in contrast to the Dip/SW students' responses which tended to emphasise racism as a structural issue. Half of the students also identified the importance of ethnicity in understanding racism and so, for these, racism was as much located within a multi-ethnic understanding as an appreciation of the structural effects (Gilroy 1987, Hall 1992, Modood 1997a). Most practice teachers tended to focus more on issues of racial equality, that is, the difference in service provision for Black and white service users. Students were more likely to consider the more subtle differences in need between Black service users from different ethnic backgrounds.

Most of the respondents tended to locate racism within CCETSW's broad understanding of a Black/white dichotomy, seeing racism as centrally about the oppression of Black people through the individual practices and the organisational and institutional structures that white people have established (Ben-Tovim 1997, Penketh 1998, Uduku and Ben-Tovim 1998). This may be as a consequence of CCETSW's pronouncements concerning Black people's experience of racism in this country, or it could reflect the political and cultural make-up of the organisation within which the respondents work. One of the important side effects of this was to clearly narrow the field in a way which meant that, for example, Irish (with one exception) or Jewish experiences of racism were not identified as priorities (see Garrett 1998). On the one hand, this clearly has negative implications, but, on the other, it has ensured a clear focus on racial equality as a Black/white issue – in other words the key issue of colour and its impact on racial discrimination has not been allowed to be overlooked.

### ***Power and Racism***

'Power' as a concept was rarely referred to by practice teachers, but this was in sharp contrast to their students' frequent use of the term. This probably reflects the lack of appreciation of the power practitioners wield as statutory social workers in general terms to say nothing of how this could impact on Black service users (Francis 1991a, Knowles 1990). Therefore, despite practice teachers having clear views about racism as a Black/white issue, they did not make particular connections between Black services users' experience with statutory social work agencies and 'race' discrimination that could be used to help students develop anti-racist

practices.

### *Issues of Language*

The importance of, semiotics, or the construction of language (Saussure 1974), in understanding individuals' understandings of 'race', racism and anti-racism are pertinent here. It is clear that there is an accepted code within which racism is understood and communicated within practice teaching and social work . The code is underwritten by a perception that racism does exist and its effect on society and social work is massive (Law 1996). The code also has the sub text that the primary recipients of this form of oppression are Black people (James et al 1993, Modood 1997a, Yeboah 1997). This demonstrates that there is an acknowledgement and clear commitment to address racism within social work. The code also uses a range of words within a matrix of definitions, colour/Black, individual, institutional, discrimination, poverty, oppression, 'race' and so on. These are all major variables within any definition that addresses the structural and personal effects of racism and were, therefore , either explicitly or implicitly found in the responses about understandings of racism made by practice teachers and students.

Another language –meaning issue arose from the fact that in the answers given, particularly by the students, because of all the talk of 'races', racial equality and difference being important, it seemed at times that definitions went beyond an understanding (implicit or not) of the social construction of 'race', to one of the naturalness of different racial categories. This gave the impression that difference was inherent and work should be planned to deal



with racism as such (Gilroy 1987). There is always a danger here, when so much emphasis is placed on policies and practices that emphasise ‘race’, that people lose sight of this form of discrimination being a social construction. It unwittingly becomes real. This in turn, can lead to confusion between identity, culture, religion and ethnicity (which this thesis has argued is fluid) and the existence of ‘races’ in the absolute and fixed sense (Law 1996, Modood 1994, 1997a). An example of this is perceived racism within family placement planning either within the child’s own family in a foster setting or adoptive home where practices are deemed racist if the ‘racial’ matching is ‘wrong’ for instance, a Black child in a white home (Gilroy 1994, Macey 1995, Rooney 1993). Little attention is paid to the other factors mentioned in earlier chapters for instance, culture and its fluidity (Modood, 1994, 1997a, Rattansi 1994).

### **A Sense of Commitment**

Generally, the evidence presented here demonstrates that despite differences in terms of ways of understanding and conceptualising ‘race’ and racism there was a robust professional and political commitment to address racism in the practice teaching and learning settings, and that far from ducking the issue practice teachers were discussing it regularly. There were also many clear examples in both the written portfolios and in the qualitative responses of the brutality of racism, and the violent and opportunity-limiting effects of discrimination, which as the last practice teacher quoted attests, provided the stimulus for many, particularly Black, practice teachers to be committed to teaching on anti-racist issues.

## **From Understanding to Practicing Anti-Racism**

In this section the focus shifts to the delivery of anti-racist teaching for practice. There was also considerable evidence of a commitment to teaching anti-racist practice in all the data provided. Respondents clearly identified three main methods of putting anti-racism ideas into practice:-

- Firstly, a strategy that involved challenging racism either individually, or at institution level
- secondly, locating anti-racism within the ‘doing’ of social work practice, and
- thirdly, establishing political strategies to tackle racism.

The responses provided significant examples of practice teachers thinking through issues and evidence of thoughtful implementation of anti-racist strategies.

### **Challenging Racism**

Challenging racism was a key strategy called upon by Black practice teachers and students, although white practice teachers made regular references to it as well. Black practice teachers have particularly emphasised challenging racism as a strategy because their personal experiences have given them an awareness of the fact that confronting racism has an immediately positive impact (Stokes 1996). Challenging racism also reflects the personal frustrations of Black respondents faced with what they see as a lack of will and commitment to tackle the problem of racism within some social care arenas. Here is a response from a Black

practice teacher indicative of the challenging strategy:

*'Anti-racism is to challenge where you are and what the situation is. Any person who truly believes in anti-racism and is passionate enough, I say passionate because I refer to non Black people, should challenge racism. This can be done individually. Anti-racism can be groups that come together to challenge.....I feel all ethnic minorities not only in this country but other countries throughout the world . . are going to still experience oppression from white supremacy, and the only way to combat it is for all ethnic minorities to work together. . . recognising that we do come from different areas of the world and different social structures, different castes .....Anti-racist practice means that I would combat racism within the student or colleague. I would challenge it with more reason. I would not tolerate racism anywhere. I would enforce it within practice teaching.'*

This response focuses on identifying racism and then challenging it. It is, in one respect, a negative way of implementing anti-racism because the behaviour and actions are about responding to events and incidents after they have happened. It is argued that it should be mandatory for practice teachers and is particularly identified as white people's responsibility. However, the challenging theme is also embraced by a significant number of white respondents as well. For instance,

*'Anti-racism acknowledges that racism is an issue, not only in this country but everywhere. It is about challenging stereotypes. Does anti-racist practice challenge racist ideas within the workplace? It involves common*

*sense ideas, being prepared to challenge constructively. I don't think its about crusading. Ten years ago when I did the CQSW I felt I was personally responsible for 400 years of British Imperialism. There is a need for a standard concerning anti-racist practice.'*

This comment while advocating the need to challenge racist behaviour/views also argues for the avoidance of guilt or blame in the process. In this response there is level of pragmatism at work that implies anti-racist practice is about challenging practices and making sure it happens, not being inhibited by a history that cannot now be acted on. This is in contrast to the first comment by the Black practice teacher who clearly blames 'white supremacy' for the oppression of Black people.

This theme interestingly is embraced by another white male respondent who was working with a Black student,

*'It's a problem that a lot of white folks face, that in a certain kind of way we are cut off from a proper appreciation of our own influence in terms of "race". . . and in turn have to come to it circuitously through a kind of intellectual approach to the issue. . . it is not about intellectual appreciation . . . it's about what side you are on, and if you come to some proper conclusion about that it helps you to move on.'*

This is a complex multi-layered response. In the respondent's view, racism makes it difficult for white people to empathise with Black people, because Black people experience the brunt of it. As a result white people have more of a tendency to conceptualise the issue in theoretical terms, but ultimately,

it is argued, there needs to be a straight-forward decision between right and wrong and about whether acts of racism are acceptable or not, that is, it is a moral decision about whether you collude or challenge. He moves on to state:

*It isn't just about recognising what the problem is; it's about feeling indignation about it and articulating that anger. We have an opportunity to do that, to actually articulate that anger, not only your own but other people's. . . it isn't enough to simply identify with the perspective of my student because in some senses that's illusory because I can't have the experiences of being a Black person so I have to find another way . . . I think there's a danger that the Black experience is only articulated in terms of anti-racism . . . Black people's experience of life is to some extent mediated by them being Black in a way that my life isn't for being white.'*

The practice teacher clearly believes that to be anti-racist a person cannot be neutral or simply empathise with a Black person's experience because that does nothing to alter the daily negative impact of racism. He argues that to have an impact on racism there must be active professional and political challenging and that it is particularly a responsibility of white people. At the end of the statement there is also a thoughtful comment about the need to recognise that Black people's lives and experience should be about more than just racism, and that white practitioners challenging of racism must be sensitive to this.

Here, a white male student placed with a white male practice teacher responds by placing challenging at the heart of anti-racism:

*'Anti-racism is challenging racism or any kind of oppression. It is institutional and individual whether it's from colleagues or service users. Its recognising social divisions in society and trying to counter act them. It wouldn't be a case of treating everybody the same because people have different life experiences. Therefore if you're Black there is a pretty good chance you've experienced racism.'*

This student explains anti-racism within a structural and individual understanding of racism. For this respondent effective anti-racist practice involves challenging racism at both the individual and structural level. There is also an appreciation of diversity and fluidity through individual biographies within this explanation.

It should be noted that challenging racism was the method most embraced by the respondents as the strategy that brought about immediate change.

### ***Practicing Anti-racism***

The second method of anti-racist practice mentioned by respondents was that embraced in doing social work itself, that is, as an element in a piece of social work intervention. This statement by a Black practice teacher in his portfolio gives a fairly typical example of this:

*'I initiated a case study about a Black woman to be assessed for residential care in our area (a predominantly white area) to test out further the student's knowledge and value base.'*

This practice teacher provided evidence of anti-racist projects in his portfolio by requiring his student to distribute an Equal Opportunities questionnaire to residential settings available for Black people in the north (largely 'white') area of the city, and to compare the findings with a Black voluntary organisation's provision for Black people with mental distress problems situated within the Black community.

Anti-racist practice that locates the service user at the centre of the activity is arguably the most constructive and empowering method of practice within social work provision. There were three portfolios that demonstrated outstanding evidence of this in an innovative project form including the one just quoted from. Although this was the portfolio of a Black practice teacher, it should be noted that there was a greater propensity for white practice teachers to locate anti-racism/practice within a practice framework. Less than half the Black respondents who were practice teachers identified practice as a useful method of anti-racism, in contrast to over three quarters of the white ones. Here is a pragmatic customer focused view of implementing anti-racism from a white practice teacher,

*'A practice that is developed taking into account the needs of disadvantaged individuals or groups.....monitoring and measuring outcomes the whole time, to begin to address where the services are not impacting.'*

It should also be noted that most students located their anti-racism within practice.

That Black practice teachers had been less prominent in incorporating anti-racist strategies into their social work practice is not as surprising as it seems to be at first sight. The challenging strategies identified in the previous section probably better reflect their views about and understanding of racism which are based more on their experiences both within social work agencies and in their lives outside of the world of work (Sivanandan 1991). This experience is permeated by racist attitudes and practices that impinge on and deny humanity for Black service users and for Black staff as well (Stokes 1996). There are numerous examples of social work practice both in the child care and adult spheres that have a negative impact on the quality of Black peoples' lives (for example Francis 1991a, Goldson et al 1999, Rooney 1987). Likewise, Black workers' experience of racism in institutions in the public sector (MacPherson 1999) also provides a clear rationale for adopting challenging and political strategies.

The greater propensity for students and white practice teachers to locate their explanations of anti-racism within practice can be understood because they do not share the experiences of their Black colleagues and may find it more acceptable and in keeping with their professional goals to focus on trying to achieve tangible and practicable results. It is also the preferred method for producing outcomes for Black service users through the Department of Health's Performance Assessment Framework. Thus, those respondents that identified a practice based response to anti-racist practice were in line with the DoH approved method of working with Black people to achieve specific practicable and measurable outcomes (DoH 2000b).



## **Political Strategies**

The third anti-racist strategy adopted was a political one. 'Political' in this context means initiating organised resistance against racist forces (Ben-Tovim et al 1986). Political strategies were identified by most of the respondents as key means of tackling racism and to some degree were linked with some of the challenging racism strategies dealt with in a previous section. It was a theme common to both Black and white practice teachers. Here, a Black student identifies a political strategy for tackling racism:

*'Racism I understand... But anti-racist practice. - I understand the principles behind it, but working with the principles I am not happy about. Because say an organisation does not have Black people working within it, not just an individual but a few. . . implementing the practice then becomes lip service. We have the policy but when it comes to the practice a lot of white social workers don't want to cause trouble and they overlook a lot of issues. They don't want to address a lot of issues because they are frightened about being labelled racist.'*

This student believes that anti-racist practice can only be delivered when there are enough Black workers in an organisation and that employing more Black workers is a key strategy in ensuring that both Black and white practitioners deliver effective outcomes with regard to the organisation's anti-racist policy. It is also of note that although a political strategy is adopted, the fear factor of anti-racism is also referred to here.

The perspective that anti-racist practice is best delivered through a political route concurs with the perspective that anti-racism itself is inherently

political. Black respondents tend to support political strategies for tackling racism because their own experiences in a range of spheres informs them that they are the most effective strategies for bringing about change. This 'lived' experience may have been informed by the uprisings on the streets (Solomos et al 1983) or by being a member of an organised Black worker's group (Rooney 1987, Stokes 1996). Such groups, along with Black practice teacher's forums and Black perspectives are all political positions in the struggle against racism (Stokes and Wainwright 1996).

Frequently, respondents talked about the need for Black and white workers to unite within, and at times outside the social work agency to fight racism (Jones 1993, Dominelli 1997). This struggle against racism could take the form of a workers' struggle against management policies or be one that identifies a particular policy or practice that needs challenging. Black practice teachers were particularly committed to identifying and fighting racism in this way (BPQSW 1991, Stokes 1996) as were many of the Dip/SW students.

It is of note though that although Black respondents particularly identified political strategies as a means of challenging racism, there was significant support identified by white respondents for this as well.

### ***Summary***

Therefore, to achieve anti-racist outcomes there was a mixture of a) direct challenge of individuals, b) incorporating anti-racist goals and objectives into one's social work practice and c) the adoption of broader political

strategies (Ben-Tovim et al 1996, 1998, Sivanandan 1994). It is suggested here that although all have a place in anti-racism only the first two can be directly located in the social work task (Francis 1991a, Jones A. 1993). While political activity clearly is important, it is more likely and proper to take place through a professional or workers' forum (Singh 1992), which in turn can have an influence on the policy context of provision of anti-racist practice with individuals and families.

The two clear messages emerging so far about developing anti-racist practice are the importance of challenging (including the 'political'), individuals and/or groups within the organisation and secondly that of working in an anti-racist way in carrying out social work practice. That challenging is integral to anti-racist practice is consistent with the critique of anti-racism explored in the earlier part of this thesis. However, the challenging identified here should not be solely a negative reaction, but one that looks to provide constructive political and professional solutions to the brutal effects of racism. In this sense challenging is the beginning of the process to achieve anti-racist outcomes.

The extent to which respondents (practice teachers and students) articulated specific examples of practice which clearly demonstrated an anti-racist approach resulting in tangible outcomes for individuals and families came as something as a surprise and was much more in evidence than expected. It is clear that locating this type of approach within a framework of constructive challenging potentially provides an opportunity for anti-racist practice to be hard-hitting and empowering for Black people.

It was encouraging to note that a great deal of the data collected for this study – from the interviews, portfolios, and questionnaires - provided a plethora of examples of practice teachers and students trying to get to grips with anti-racism in an organisation that was increasingly focusing on performance indicators, outcomes and budget management (Davies 1991, Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996), and moving away from some of the radical social work values that had previously been espoused by CCETSW.

### **Anti-Racism-the Primary Oppression**

A major policy shift that had taken place in CCETSW towards the end of the 1980s was, as we have seen in Chapter 4, a move towards promoting anti-racist practice. One key reason for this was the emergence of a Black perspectives committee within CCETSW (Singh 1992, 1994). This committee ensured that ‘race’ would no longer be on the margins of social work education but on the contrary at the heart of it. Therefore, when I was exploring anti-racist practice in practice teaching and learning settings, a key research objective was to establish what sense the respondents had made of this. It was clear that anti-racism had evoked signs of commitment from practice teachers and students but how was this located within the rubric of anti-oppressive practice? Was it prioritised above other oppressions as the one to tackle, that is, first among equals? Or was it integrated into part of a more fluid, holistic understanding of anti-oppressive practice? This was an area explored in the portfolios, the questionnaire returns and in greater depth in the interviews.

Significantly, respondents consistently considered racism as the primary

oppression to address, mostly taking the view that once racism was tackled in both the theoretical and practical sense, anti-oppressive strategies to deal with other oppressions would follow. In contrast, therefore, to other experiences of anti-racism in the North West (Penketh 1998) this was very much in line with CCETSW's message outlined in their papers 26,3 and 30 (CCETSW 1989a, 1991b). Placing anti-racist practice learning at the top of the agenda was also a policy direction at the time of the research of the agency in which practice teachers worked - no doubt this also played a part in reinforcing this message. In all, two thirds of practice teachers identified racism as the oppression to address initially, and all the Black practice teachers located racism in the centre of any theoretical or practice based strategy. Personal experience of racism both within and outside of the organisation was a key factor for Black respondents (Stokes and Wainwright 1996).

One comment that reflected the positioning of 'race' as the most significant oppression, is from a Black male practice teacher,

*'Some people take the "race" issue more seriously than other anti-oppressive issues. You can be Black and be a woman and be oppressed. One of the most important things about "race" oppression, is that you may be able to hide certain things, but you can never hide your colour.'*

Here the respondent implies that there is a hierarchy of oppressions and that although theoretically this may be problematic, it is justified by demonstrating how a person's 'colour' is the primary determining factor in the experience of oppression when multi-dimensional oppressions are an

individual's experience. The message is one of oppressions being diverse and interlinked, but the first objective needs to be that of tackling the most brutal and damaging oppression, racism, then move on to the others (see Phillips and Ferns 1999, Stokes 1993, 1996).

The following response came from a white female practice teacher working in a family placement setting :

*'I see them as very much interlinked, I see anti-racist practice as a very good starting point. . . get people to identify where they have been oppressed . . . and then look at links with other oppressions. If Black people gain something then women gain as well. It is useful for women that Black people have pushed hard to get into management positions.'*

A similar theme is followed by a white woman working in statutory child care:

*'It's tempting to treat them all the same, poverty, gender, underclass, but if you're Black it's ten times worse as well. Its out there on it's own.'*

This third response comes from a practice teacher in a hospital setting,

*'Racism is the power white people have over Black people in society. Prejudice (is) that (which) comes out in racist comments and the position Black people have in society. It is the most damaging oppression that is faced by people.'*

The central message from these definitions is the primary position of anti-racism within respondents' understanding of anti-oppressive practice. Black and white practice teachers identified this, and then made links with other oppressions. Again, responses reflected a subtext to a genuine commitment to tackling anti-racism and anti-oppression, and although some answers were theoretically flawed, (that is, there were contradictions within them) it is apparent that the issue had been given considerable thought by the individuals concerned.

In total, fourteen out of twenty practice teachers placed anti-racist practice and the Black experience as the fundamental building blocks with which to address anti-oppressive practice (CCETSW 1991b, Stokes 1996).

Furthermore, eight out of nine practice teachers who worked near the Black community identified anti-racist practice as the priority, compared with six from the eleven who worked outside of Black communities. This is an interesting finding because it indicates that those practice teachers working in or near the Black community are clearly more influenced by the need to deliver effective services to the Black families they serve (Stokes 1996).

This is in contrast to practice teachers that work a greater distance from the Black community who were more likely in general to view working against all forms of oppression as equally important. Arguably, it may be that because they do not experience the daily impact of racism in Black peoples' lives (in contrast to those working in the Black community that do) anti-racist practice is not such an urgent priority.

## Links between the oppressions

The following comments by a Black practice teacher (supervising a white female student) point to some of the complexities of the links between the various oppressions:

*'There are many links between the oppression Black people face and the oppression women face in society, being the majority of people, but being the minority themselves and the discrimination that they get. There are links all the way across with disabled people, with gay and lesbian people with discrimination on the basis of . . . age and class. The class issue of poverty. There is poverty throughout the Black minority communities in this country, but there is also poverty amongst white people as well and that shouldn't be lost. These links should be thought about and forged. The struggle to end racism should be seen in the context of the struggle to end all oppressions, to give people opportunities. . . There are contradictions as well as links. Unfortunately, it is a complex issue fraught with difficulties as well as exciting opportunities. What you can get is Black women split down the middle with who they can ally themselves in a struggle or particular situation, where a Black male was seen as an oppressor.'*

Here the interlinking and multi-faceted nature of oppression is to the fore in the definition (Hill-Collins 1990). Racism and Blackness is central to the explanation, not in the sense of an hierarchy, but in terms of commonalities and contradictions (hooks 1989, 1991). It also points to a more fluid notion of oppression. There is also an understanding by the practice teacher that



interpreting anti-racist practice within the context of anti-oppression is theoretically and practicably problematic and indeed at times contradictory. The notion of the Black woman and especially the question of which struggle she will prioritise, that of being Black, a woman or a person in poverty is an exemplar of Insider/Outsider contradictions that Merton's (1973) analysis highlights.

It seems therefore, that although practice teachers - as social workers - increasingly have to manage their cases, meet various specifications for the completion of assessment forms, and are increasingly urged to focus on the cost reduction of their service whilst simultaneously meeting key performance indicators, they have still managed to keep a clear commitment and focus on the needs of Black service users. Indeed, irrespective of the latest policy trends from the Department of Health, practice teachers at the time of the research were demonstrating a political and professional priority towards working with Black service users.

For practice teaching and learning many of the research respondents adopted (albeit implicitly) a strategy of dealing with anti-oppression that consisted of teaching students how to deliver effective outcomes for Black service users with the aim of developing in them a workable method enabling them to effectively address working with the disabled, and with women. It needs to be acknowledged that against the backdrop of competing demands for practice teachers, ever diminishing resources, full caseloads (Jones 2001), and the added challenge of working with a Dip/SW student, the clarity of thought and strategy adopted to implement working with Black service users was very creditable.

## The Views of Students

In contrast to the views of the majority of practice teachers, the responses of the Dip/SW students generally took a much broader view on the understanding of anti-racism's relationship with anti-oppression. A white student reflects this position,

*'Just setting people aside and not treating them as an equal you are oppressing. There are different forms of oppression. Regardless of 'race', colour, class, religion, we should be working alongside each other.'*

Only one third of the students identified racism as the primary oppression. One of the key reasons for this was a demonstration by students of a more inclusive understanding of the location of 'race' within the matrix of oppressions, gender, class, sexuality and disability. It was not so much a matter of contesting the importance of 'race', but more one of ensuring that the complexity of the service user's position and the vulnerability of the people that they were working with (both in the case of children and adults) be viewed in a more holistic sense.

Dip/SW students tended to recognize the links or commonalities that form the essence of their theoretical understanding of anti-oppressive practice (see Dalrymple and Burke 1998) in contrast to the focus on anti-racist practice by most practice teachers. This difference of perspective is probably related to the different ways in which knowledge and understandings about these issues were acquired (see Rojek et al 1988, Vance 1968). In the case of

students this was through the academic teaching on the Dip/SW course and for practice teachers through the particular agency in which they worked.

It is likely that Dip/SW students received a conceptual message in college linking the commonalities of oppression. This is interesting because although CCETSW has promoted a model of anti-oppression using anti-racism as the rubric for change, the education of Dip/SW students within universities seems to use a more fluid interpretation of anti-oppressive practice (Cain and Yuval Davis 1990, Hill-Collins 1990). It should also be noted that a significant minority of practice teachers also referred to the multi-faceted dimension of the concept of oppression.

### **Black and white practitioners**

Another important factor is that there was a clear difference in perspective between the Black respondents and white. Five 5 out of 7 Black practice teachers and 4 out of 6 Black students identified racism as the primary oppression to be addressed in an anti-oppressive strategy. It is clear that their personal experiences as Black people have greatly contributed to the push for anti-racist practice to be accepted on the mainstream agenda of social work (Singh 1996, Stokes 1996, Williams 1999).

This finding is consistent with the evidence that Black respondents generally favoured challenging and political strategies to tackle racism. It reflects Black students' experience of racism and a frustration that all too often change takes too long within organisations. As one Black student stated :

*'Racism is something that every Black person experiences . . . whether they are aware of this or not. I think somehow this can be different for other oppressions. I mean the impact may not always be as damaging. . . Yes, if we can fight racism (the) struggle against other oppressions will gain something.'*

### **Summary**

Overall, therefore, most of the views expressed by practitioners were congruent with the position of CCETSW, that is, that of first establishing an understanding/method of anti-racist practice after which progress with anti-oppressive practice will logically follow (Dominelli 1997, Williams 1999). It should be acknowledged that in asking for a definition of these terms, respondents had been set a theoretically very difficult task and some answers reflected this by being quite confused.

While the practice teachers' response of addressing anti-racist practice and then using this analysis to look at approaches dealing with other oppressions is a constructive way forward (Singh 1996, Williams 1999), this does not necessarily mean that the hierarchy of oppressions model is the only way forward (McDonald and Coleman 1998), because conceptually and practically there is space to discuss and implement anti-oppressive practice generically (Hill-Collins 1990, hooks 1991), and to deal with all oppressions, that is, disablism, sexism, poverty on an equal footing (Dalrymple and Burke 1995, Maynard 1994, McDonald and Coleman 1998). The benefits of stating that racism will be addressed within social work practice and policies/strategies will be developed to do this are that, practice

against other oppressions will surely benefit (because of their commonalities) and social work will have also made a clear stand in support of racial equality (Williams 1999).

The responses from the quantitative research demonstrated overwhelmingly a commitment from practice teachers and students to working within an anti-oppressive and anti-racist framework. Responses from over three-quarters of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with the quality and amount of learning on both subjects. Questionnaire respondents were not asked about the order in which they felt the oppressions should be tackled.

The findings in this section suggest that practice teachers predominantly had a clear vision about the importance of racism in Black service user's lives. This understanding was located in a political and practicable commitment to improving the outcomes for Black people in direct work with children and their families and adults. There is an appreciation of the connections with class, gender and disability, although tackling racism is the priority. This also informs us that at the time the research was taking place discourse concerning anti-racism and anti-oppression was a live issue in the workplace and high on the practice learning agenda.

However, there were other key determinants in the relative success of anti-racist practice learning taking place within this agency. One of these was the greater degree of ideas and anti-racist initiatives being explored within children and families settings.

## **Children's Services – being aware of the Black child.**

Working in child protection and youth justice are areas of social work intervention which invariably provide major challenges for agencies and practitioners committed to anti-racist practice because they involve safeguarding and meeting the needs of largely disadvantaged children living in poverty many of whom come disproportionately from Black families (Phillips and Ferns 1999). This has most recently been highlighted in the inquiry into the death of Anna Klimbie (Revans et al 2002) in the London Borough of Haringey. This case while also being concerned with organisational issues such as the importance of a coherent multi-agency communication and effective operational strategies for protecting children has raised the spectre of yet another Black child dying under the supposed supervision of a local authority's social services department. To compound matters this child was being supervised by a Black social worker and a Black police officer was the lead officer for the police force (Revans et al 2002).

In the light of this recent tragedy, it is interesting to observe that the responses in this study from practice teachers and students who worked with children and young people were among the most creative ones in relation to the implementation of anti-racist practice learning. For instance, a white male practice teacher who worked within the Black community in a youth justice setting talked about anti-racist practice learning in this way:

*'There were a number of opportunities. .(including) a working party for racially motivated offenders. He (the student) also developed a mission statement concerning anti- oppressive practice for the whole section. There*

*were issues relating to two particular cases. One case involved two brothers who were Black and developing criminal records. We received a fax from the police complaining about how they felt these young people had spiralling records totally out of control and that there was a lack of care and parenting. The children were in dire need of being removed from home. The student took on the case and developed a good relationship with the father who was a single parent. The police information was inaccurate. The dad had told the police to piss off. The student tackled the police about the information. All the issues of racism were challenged by the student. He felt the police attitudes were oppressive and racist, trying to use social services to batter the family. It was quite confrontational in challenging racism for that issue.*

*There was another case where a young person refused to work with a Black or female social worker. I had some angst about allocating this to a white male social worker. It was a commitment to getting a young person through their Order. I had no wish to pander to a young person's racist and sexist attitudes. I did allocate this case to the student who challenged the young person's oppressive attitudes constantly. The allocation was made with that in mind - the opportunity to challenge racism and sexism.'*

This response is particularly interesting in that it provides evidence of two white men, practice teacher and student, working out a variety of ways to teach and learn anti-racist practice. There are contradictions in the answer, merging anti-racism with anti-oppressive practice, but within a youth justice setting that practiced offence-focused intervention – working with the young person on the causes of offending - it was apparently effective. The first

case described provides a good example of a practice teacher and student developing strategies to challenge apparent racist attitudes within the police force. Both of these cases provide evidence of excellent anti-racist learning opportunities.

This, therefore, was one area of work which lent itself (but the opportunity also had to be grasped by the practice teacher) to a focus on tackling racism and working in an anti-racist way. Family placement work provided similar opportunities as the following quotation from a Black male student placed with a Black practice teacher in a family placement setting shows:

*'I visited Black organisations, discussed racism, labelling, prejudice and (the) personal experience of being Black. We looked at challenging racism from a Black perspective. We also looked at racism in a group setting-training foster parents.... Sculpting in terms of how they perceived Black oppression in comparison to others e.g. white women.- The foster parents' perceptions were not the same as ours as Black social workers. Clearly, they didn't understand or have the knowledge as far as racism, oppression and disability was concerned. That was interesting - within the organisation going to Black workers meetings, learning about different groups and the way they are working. We looked at the Race Relations Act and the principles of that and how it relates to the Children Act, using the principles to challenge the structure.'*

This example clearly illustrates that much thought and preparation has gone into developing anti-racist practice learning in the family placement setting. As with youth justice work, this is an area of social work activity which



lends itself well to such a development because Black children and families have in the past received a low quality of service (see Phillips and Ferns 1999) that has further encouraged child care social workers to re-double their energies in improving this service. There is something of a paradox here. On the one hand, the evidence provided by practice teachers and students is that this is fertile ground to develop anti-racist learning opportunities. Yet on the other, the evidence points to a perennial failure of children's services nationally (Jones A. 1993, Waterhouse 2000) and locally (Phillips and Ferns 2000) to effectively protect and safeguard Black children. In addition there is much evidence pointing to the need for a move away from provision of a statutory controlling service for Black children (Goldson et al 1999, Jones A. 1993) to the development of more empowering social work models, such as supporting Black children in their families and communities. Inadequate provision for Black children and families is quite probably the single most significant reason for the development of creative anti-racist discourses taking place in children and families settings, illustrating a commitment by managers and practitioners to want to improve services for Black children.

This finding was supported by the quantitative findings and by the portfolio submissions of practice teachers. Almost two thirds of respondents in the quantitative data responded positively to anti-racist learning opportunities within children and families settings. All four of the ten portfolios that were located in children and families settings produced clear evidence of anti-racist teaching and learning taking place. Interestingly, the portfolio evidence suggests that much of the learning took place around policies, for instance an anti-racist family placement policy or legislation, such as section

22.5 of the Children Act (1989) that identifies the need for authorities to take into consideration the 'race', culture, and religious needs of children and families when providing a service.

The evidence provided here suggests that the experiences of Black children and families facing the statutory side of social care provision has resulted in social work staff (including practice teachers and students) acknowledging that their practice can be discriminatory – even with outcomes that are institutionally racist (Phillips and Ferns 1999 Jones A. 1993). These outcomes have resulted in more Black families experiencing their children being excluded from school, or placed in 'out of city' residential accommodation, or sent to custody, or placed on the child protection at risk register, or becoming 'looked after' by the local authority, and waiting longer than white children to receive effective permanent placements (either adoption, fostering or effective support to return to their family). It is because of this that children's services workers are grappling with creative and innovative ideas to challenge racist practices and assumptions and to develop effective practice that improves the outcomes for Black children and families. Dip/SW students and practice teachers have benefited from the development of these anti-racist ideas which as the quotations from respondents indicate - particularly aid learning through supervision and theory and putting it into practice.

There needs to be a note of caution expressed here. Although the learning outcomes for students are presented as good and creative, we do not know how this impacted on outcomes for Black children. This research took place in the middle to late 1990s. Yet, in 2002, four years further on despite

developments in social work knowledge, and despite performance indicators and targets set for Black children through Quality Protects and the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF), outcomes for Black children have improved very little.

## CHAPTER 7

### TEACHING SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE AND ANTI-RACISM

The focus of this chapter is less directly on the actuality of anti-racist teaching and learning itself, but more on the style and context of general practice teaching and how these factors affect and influence anti-racist practice learning.

#### Experience as a Learning Tool

Learning from experience is one of the key methods adopted by practice teachers and students to enable practice learning to take place. Likewise, it was outlined earlier in the thesis that a key strand of social work knowledge has derived from practice wisdom (Carew 1979). It is this practice wisdom, the very essence of being a Black social worker, that has enabled some to learn about racism.

This observation was from a Black male practice teacher of a Black male student.,

*'Racism..... I believe we live in a racist society....., institutionalised racism..... on the street, as a Black person, I have experienced these first hand. There are different types, overt and covert and subtle forms of racism. Over the years I have experienced racism but have never been able to intellectualise it. Since I've got into this field of work I have developed an*

*understanding of why it exists and possibly being able to combat it.'*

Experiencing racism then, for some people, is the cornerstone for understanding it and is an important stimulus for moving on to conceptualise it. A fuller explanation is provided by another Black male practice teacher with a Black male student.

*'Racism is the oppression, exploitation, lack of access in employment, and all other aspects of life in a British context. In society a Black person lives with all of those things happening as a result of the colour of a person's skin or their culture or ethnicity. The elements of oppression involve power at the root of them, because prejudice is only part of racism and prejudice is a harmful element which is also added to by the lack of opportunities that power over Black people gives them (white people).'*

This explanation is again grounded in personal experience, and the respondent's language implies an unspoken assumption that because of his experience of being Black he is able to define racism clearly. Personal experience, therefore, is the major influence in the understanding of the concept. It is a Black/white thing.

Black practice teachers through life experience of being on the receiving end of racism all defined the term with conviction and some confidence. This confidence was also replicated with Black students and it is clear that many white respondents valued the experience of Black workers and practice teachers to inform their understanding of anti-racist initiatives. This acceptance of the importance of experience to inform social work practice

(that is, practice wisdom) is clearly a very important stimulus to promoting and developing anti-racist practice. On the down side, though, it can entail an anti-intellectual (Sibeon 1991c) ethos, which could be seen as damaging to the development of a rigorous knowledge base for understanding and working to combat racism, and of linking theory and practice.

There was however, a less experiential response from the students than their practice teachers. With the exception of Black students, Dip/SW students were more enthusiastic in articulating a relationship between theory and practice. A key explanation for this is that their college learning provided the opportunity to explore concepts such as ‘oppression’ and ‘racism’, and to be more theoretically rigorous.

Thus at a general level teaching about anti-racism often called on adult learning and experiential wisdom with practice teachers, and the Black respondents particularly identified with this type of approach. Students were more assured in theoretical aspects of anti-oppressive thinking prior to going on placements. In what follows I will look more broadly at ideas underpinning effective teaching and learning about anti-racist social work – in particular its place in relation to the totality of social work activity. These issues are explored below along with further reference to the teaching methods used and the appropriateness of competencies as a medium to bridge the theory-practice divide.

### **Ideas about Social Work as a framework for Anti-Racist learning?**

The research questions required respondents, that is, practice teachers and

students, to examine their understanding of social work knowledge as well as their ideas about anti-racism. This was done in order to see if it was thought that anti-racist practice needed to be taught within a good grounding of social work thinking. The respondents were asked a range of general questions about social work learning, knowledge and values to encourage them to reflect whether they considered that there were links between these and anti-racist thinking. Areas covered included the generic and specialist nature of social work, and defining and analysing what were believed to be the core tasks of social work practice and key areas of social work knowledge.

The following sections explore:

- 1) the links between the practice teachers' and their students' experience and understanding of social work and anti-racist thinking in social work
- 2) how ideas derived from working in a specialist area of social work impacted on anti-racist thinking , and
- 3) how, for some, there was little distinction between social work and anti-oppressive practice, that is, social work was anti-oppressive practice.

### **General social work experience**

Practice teachers identified their understanding of the social work role and how the student learnt from this in response to a question that simply asked 'what is social work?'. An example of this is as follows,

*'He learned something of the basics of the tasks involved in being a local authority social worker .. the duality of the notion that we were both local authority employees, although he wasn't technically, but also professionals working for the interests of our clients/ service users. I think that it also assisted him to bring together the kind of things he'd learned in theory on the course with the actual practice involved, making that reality.'*

Here, the practice teacher provides an explanation of social work being a balance between representing the service user and focusing on their needs and meeting the statutory responsibilities of local authority social work practice. The practice teacher also refers to the opportunity a practice placement provides in linking theory learned largely in the learning institution to the core roles and tasks of social work practice. Key tasks are mentioned but are not specifically identified. However in some of the quotations below the respondent attempts to list some of them. An example of this from a student was,

*'Assessment, theory to practice..... I think I was able to teach other members of the team different models.'*

This student identified assessment as a central role of social work – as it is in Dip/SW practice competencies (CCETSW 1991b). There is also reference to practice theories, models and methods of intervention that can be practically applied in social work (Carew 1979).



The notion of theory in both the quotations looked at so far is limited to that which informs the practical tasks of doing social work. There is no reference to those theories that explain the structural issues social workers face, such as poverty, gender, ageism. We get no sense of social work's key role being to tackle inequalities –rather the focus is on the practical tasks associated with a fairly tightly defined role. This is hardly surprising in a decade in which local authority social work has been pushed more and more towards achieving targets set by government and driven on by new management ideas (see Jones 2001).

### **Specialist Roles**

Several of the students in the research sample were involved in specialist rather than generic placements, again reflecting the trend in social work to develop along specialist lines, for instance family placement, or older people (Rojek et al 1988). In effect, these respondents identified teaching and learning about social work as a more specific task focusing only on the particular area of work, in contrast to teaching social work skills generically.

*'The student learned about child protection, preventative social work with children and families; she learned about working in a team that was not up to full staff, some of the political issues, boycotting work and other union issues.'*

This practice teacher explains the role of social work as one that needs to focus on child protection and preventative work. In addition, he points to the importance of an awareness of the context of a political reality of working

within social work. The response reflects the practice teacher's understanding of his role within social work. It also reflects the trend to move towards specialisms within social care that has continued apace over the last few years in response to the Government's Modernisation agenda. This agenda has emphasised that social care should focus on the service user's needs, and be 'needs led' (DoH 1998b). Many other respondents talked about social work being specifically about children's services, work with older people or those with learning difficulties and it was clear that their duties and responsibilities in respect of these groups were major factors in the development of their own professional identities and of what social work was.

Another example of this is found in the following quotation by a practice teacher working in youth justice:

*'Had to know law, relevant sections of the Criminal justice act, and various amendments, P.A.C.E., how to apply the knowledge and steer a course between the two Acts, because there is a contradiction between the two acts and how practitioners deal with this. "Just Desserts", the Criminal justice Act and a Criminal justice system that is oppressive around class, 'race', sex and how you mitigate those issues in your work.'*

### **Social work is Anti-Oppressive practice**

By contrast several practice teachers responded by linking teaching social work explicitly to teaching anti-oppressive practice. This may in part be explained by respondents feeling obliged to address anti-oppressive practice

from the outset, in the knowledge that the main focus of the interview was anti-racist practice. On the other hand, it could reflect a genuine commitment to and enthusiasm for anti-oppressive practice. Or it could reflect a belief that social work is purely and simply an issue of anti-oppressive practice. However, it also highlights an understanding of anti-oppressive practice and the importance of integrating it into every aspect of social work practice. The following quotation is typical of those who responded in this way:

*'The student learned a lot about planning, time management, equal opportunities and anti-oppressive practice. It was central to the student's work to have a considerable understanding of anti-oppressive practice within the assessment of foster carers.'*

This example illustrates the centrality of anti-oppressive practice, with anti-racism at the heart of it, within the practice teachers' understanding of the social work role (Williams 1999). As noted before, the area of family placement (and also youth justice) have particularly distinct policy concerns about 'race' and racism which may help account for the special emphasis found here. This respondent because of the nature of the specialist work being carried out sees little difference between doing social work and operating to achieve anti-oppressive (and particularly anti-racist) goals.

Another example of the link between placement learning and anti-oppressive practice is provided by a Black student with a Black practice teacher who commented,

*'I learned a lot about procedures and policies and there is more focus on*

*anti-racism within the work setting. All officers were working within a framework of anti- oppressive practice. . . Anything concerned with 'race' or oppression was challenged in an educational sense, guiding people the right way to challenge things.'*

### **Summary**

It is clear from the above that practice teachers' views of what social work is have an influence on how they perceive and teach anti-oppressive ideas and help students put them into action. The genericists see anti-racism as perhaps being secondary to learning about the social work task as a whole, or rather, as a part of social work rather than as its key goal. The specialists, particularly in family placement and youth justice, were concerned with key policy issues surrounding anti-racism and so gave it greater emphasis. Finally there were those that saw anti-oppression in general and anti-racism in particular as the key function of social work. It is also worth noting that there was some overlap between these "groups" of respondents.

Those that teach clearly give considerable thought to the kind of social work that they think their students should learn. It often reflects their own practice experience, and one in three believe this should be and is grounded in anti-oppressive practice. The discourse concerning social work practice verifies the respondent's understanding of locating anti-racism within practice.

Student experiences on the placement were good and recollections were consequently positive. Secondly, the students, understandings of what they

had learned largely correlated with those of the practice teachers with a significant focus on anti-oppressive practice. In fact, seven of the fourteen students identified anti-oppressive practice as a major learning point. Thirdly, Black practice teachers working with Black students particularly focused on teaching anti-oppressive practice as a core element of social work practice.

It is important to note that the teaching and learning was not a one-way process. Often students brought an anti-oppressive agenda and range of ideas from their respective teaching institutions to their practice placements.

### **Practice wisdom or theory to practice?**

How students learned and how they were taught not only relied on the type of placement - children and families or adult - but on the ability of the practice teacher to use different teaching methods to get the message across. It was important therefore to try to establish whether set teaching methods were used and, if so, the extent to which use of theory was embraced.

To assist the respondents with their explanations five categories or methods regularly used by practice teachers were provided as a framework for consideration. These were teaching;

- On a daily basis.
- Informally in Supervision.
- Through a practice curriculum - a structured theory to practice curriculum that is taught through the placement - (Shardlow and Doel 1993)

- By visits to Black and specifically anti-racist welfare organisations
- Other methods

In constructing these categories it is clear that more than one method or approach can be used in any one placement. However, they served as useful reminders for practice teachers and students about the way in which they taught and learned respectively.

The respondents clearly indicated that the most used method was a practice curriculum. Seventeen claimed to use this method. This is a structured learning process that is tailored to the students' learning needs and the practice learning opportunities available. It uses theoretical as well as practical material, for instance social work articles or policies within a particular agency that address anti-racist practice, and aims to provide specific learning opportunities in, that is, particular work that involves anti-racist initiatives (Shardlow and Doel 1993).

Supervision was also used as a method of teaching students anti-racist practice by sixteen respondents (Thompson et al 1990).

Visits to Black organisations was a common practice in nearly all placements and always combined with other methods.

Other examples of anti-racist teaching were quoted by sixteen respondents. Although some of these methods may fit into the methods of practice curriculum or supervision, the data is presented as provided by the practice teachers because they did not consider them to be part of the methods

considered so far. These methods included discussing anti-racist practice/initiatives in team meetings, setting case studies, setting reading tasks and using ‘What if?’ scenarios.

An example provided by a white male practice teacher illustrates the consistency in commitment and approach to facilitating anti-racist practice.

*‘It was an issue that was central at the outset. Anti-racist practice was set in the context of anti-oppressive practice. With respect to the likes of the necessary papers and the need to demonstrate those competencies those forums for discussion were highlighted at the outset. The issue was integral to every supervision session and included on every agenda. . . We identified as a team that the lack of a Black client group is not necessarily that those client groups don’t live in this part of Liverpool. It’s more about looking at how what service provision we offer potentially excludes Black clients coming to us for a service. It was useful as a starting point by which to talk about the idea of being anti-racist.’*

Here it is clear that the practice teacher has made consistent use of several of the methods of teaching anti-racist approaches outlined above. All respondents quoted more than one method; one respondent quoted only two methods, supervision and practice curriculum, (although arguably these are the most effective teaching methods). Most quoted three, four or even five ways of teaching anti-racism. The assertion from practice teachers that three, four and five methods were used is also validated by the fourteen Dip/SW student’s responses. It is also notable that the responses given by Black and white practice teachers were consistent, and for the most part

there was little difference between the methods used across different geographical areas. Multiple strategies were used for teaching anti-racist outcomes across the board.

It is also important to note that in many cases experiential wisdom seemed to be complemented by the implementation of a practice curriculum. Therefore, whilst students' learning needs were greatly enhanced by working with Black service users and with practice teachers with experience of working in an anti-racist way, the value of a reflexive dialogue in supervision relating to anti-racist theory, a tool very much used by practice teachers, was also very important.

The quote below illustrates the reflexive nature of some of the practice teaching taking place within supervision,

*'It is about consciously acknowledging when we have to critically examine our own practice, to look at things we need to be doing and to be integrating that into practice so that you're trying to integrate it into practice for every one so that its not just effecting our practice with Black families we work with . . . but with every one.'*

Therefore, Practice teachers and students managed to link theory to practice through use of the practice curriculum and by setting up opportunities for theoretical and practice based learning. This was reflected on in the supervision process with the student.



## **Can competencies bridge the theory-practice divide?**

Research respondents were particularly asked how the concept of competence and the way in which it had been implemented by CCETSW affected the delivery of anti-oppressive and anti-racist teaching. The answers were somewhat mixed. The quantitative returns suggested that most students in particular did find some value in using competencies as a vehicle to address anti-racism. Those practice teachers that had undertaken the CCETSW award and focused on requirement 5 of Paper 26.3 (CCETSW 1991a) (specifically addressing anti-racism) found some value in a clear competence focus to develop anti-racist learning opportunities.

However, respondents within the interviews indicated that anti-racist practice is too complex an ongoing learning experience to be captured accurately in one specific competency. Another common theme was that the competency framework was irrelevant and not referred to at all in the teaching process. It was regularly stated that the competency framework was of no use at all and that anti-racist practice was taught irrespective of this framework. This point, made by both practice teachers and students, is a little disconcerting given the considerable commitment placed by CCETSW and Dip/SW programmes on the competency framework.

A white male practice teacher in a statutory child care team articulated this criticism:

*'The competency model offered by CCETSW did nothing to improve either my need to further promote the issue of racism/anti-racism and it did*

*nothing to create the opportunity for me to change anything. Trying to implement opportunities for the student in the area of anti-racism needs to be set in a broader context. . . that racism and anti-racism is the central issue. It's that feeling of having addressed it, but never fully having addressed it. . .in terms of practice teaching it was very specific and that is to point out we can't legislate for the families we get through.... identifying this and making that point the difference between being non-racist and anti-racist.....being proactive and aware of the fact that we haven't got a Black community in this area, but making sure the service is up to standards.'*

This respondent clearly has a view about competencies only producing specific, singular outcomes, instead of a more fluid, integrated approach to working in an anti-racist way. The practice teacher demonstrates a theoretical understanding of anti-racism that locates it within a structural as well as individual explanation. Some interesting terms are used to explain his view of the limitations of competencies in addressing racism; he talks about anti-racism being an opportunity to 'change' something, that it needs to be set in a 'broader context' and feeling that 'competencies address racism but never quite address it'. This is the most pertinent criticism of competencies, namely, that one can achieve the indicator, meet the standard, but that qualitatively the practice experience for the social worker or service user is no better and in fact may be worse. Thus, this respondent has a clear view that competencies do not bridge the theory-practice divide.

A practice teacher highlights the problem of competencies and measuring social work outcomes, and calls on what are often the real criteria for the assessment of students,

*'When you look at competencies, it's about expression in a certain form. I think it's a valiant effort a worthwhile attempt. . . the difficulty is . . . whether in deconstructing this whole particular task, whether the baby isn't thrown out with the bathwater, because crucially I don't think human experience is something that can be fragmented in that way because there is a unity about it. . . Sometimes you get a feeling early on, this person's got what it takes to do the job. . and other times you have a student who will make the competencies but at the same time you think they're never going to make a great social worker however well they do, because there's something they haven't got. Its a lot of things like empathy, intuition . . it's almost a vague, ephemeral notion of the body the quantity of humanity that they possess.'*

Resistance to competencies then, is also about an understanding of learning social work and anti-racism that should be partially based on intuition (England 1986) and partially an experiential assessment that unravels as the student progresses through the placement. This is important because the clear message is that students and practice teachers were looking at anti-racism whether in terms of competencies or not. It seems therefore, that competencies have not been able to bridge the theory-practice divide but were often used as a checklist to ensure particular areas of social work, including anti-racism had been addressed.

The following response came from a white Dip/SW student in a hospital setting:

*I had no Black service users and also the competencies were too structured and inflexible.'*

This reflects a view that the competencies are too rigid, and also that the quality of the learning opportunities provided is a key determinant of whether anti-racist practice takes place. Anti-racist practice is here, described as synonymous with working with Black clients.

What was apparent from many responses was that the students interviewed were unclear about the purpose of competency based assessment. Black and white students were equally reticent about the value or relevance of competencies to grasping anti-racist practice.

However, there were a few comments made by practice teachers that were supportive of competencies. Firstly, they were seen as a useful focus for undertaking specific anti-racist work. Secondly, having specific competencies identifying anti-racist practice ensured that it was addressed. Thirdly, they were useful because they helped standardise the assessment process for both the practice teacher and student. This comment was from a woman practice teacher in a hospital setting:

*'It made me firm up my ideas. I had to consciously think about the things that hopefully I would do. . . It just helps discipline your thinking. . . A lot of learning is hypothetical, because this practice experience is fairly limited.. . to look at "what ifs?" and the cases of my own and extract from that.'*

It should be noted, however, that those respondents who were positive

towards competencies were in the minority.

Therefore, when teaching, learning and practising anti-racism, competencies are not seen by most practice teachers and students as a useful tool. The evidence provided indicates that respondents used the competencies within the Dip/SW as a point of reference only at the stage of compiling the assessment report on the student at the end of the placement. If anything, the students demonstrated less knowledge or interest in this framework than their practice teachers. The only significant exception to this were those practice teachers who had attained the CCETSW award through completing a portfolio of evidence. Within this context they explained that the use of competencies had helped to improve their own practice teaching. Nine out of these ten practice teachers expressed the view that requirement 5 (that addresses anti-racist practice within the CCETSW practice teaching award) had helped them focus on the task. This finding confirms the value of the practice teaching award as a focus to build a framework for anti-racist practice and also confirms the importance of supporting practice teachers on these programmes to develop anti-racist strategies (Stokes and Wainwright 1996).

However, the overall conclusion to be drawn is that - particularly in the case of Dip/SW students - many of the respondents did not either appreciate the significance of the competency framework in the practice teaching and learning process or were unaware of its existence. This is surprising because competencies were promoted in social work education as providing a focus by which students could 'objectively' achieve outcomes (CCETSW 1995b, Burke and Wainwright 1996). It needs to be acknowledged though that the

research was undertaken in the mid 1990s, when the Dip/SW as a qualification was still relatively new. This may have contributed to the lack of flexibility and imagination in using competencies to focus on anti-racist practice.

### *Summary*

A picture is emerging of practice teaching settings that were able in the mid 1990's to place anti-racist learning, or improving outcomes for Black service users, on the agenda. There was clear commitment, a strand of blame, but mainly creative attempts to enable a good learning experience. Practice experience has been a key element in this learning and with the exceptions of qualified practice teachers competencies were viewed as inhibiting this process.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **IDENTITY AND ANTI-RACISM**

One important theme running throughout the research has been the extent to which being Black and working in Black communities impacts on anti-racist teaching and learning, that is, does being Black, being located within the Black community and working with Black workers lead to extra 'expertise' or added insight in this area of work? These questions formed an important line of inquiry in the research - what did the respondents feel about this issue?

The notion of identity is contested ground within the arena of anti-racism. The author has made reference in earlier chapters to the continuum of ethnicity, a Liverpool born and/or Black perspective, and Merton's concept of Insiders and Outsiders (Merton 1973). The respondents have regularly referred to the impact of this within the social work arena generally and particularly in relation to family placement policy (Gaber and Aldridge 1994), to the wider population of children and young people who are looked after (Phillips and Ferns 1999) and to those involved in the youth justice arena. Indeed the issue of identity proved to be a pivotal theme for respondents.

#### **Working within or near the Black Community**

The majority of practice teachers that worked near the Black community made reference to anti-racism being political or in some way a struggle. For instance, they recognised the need to organise and that approaches need to be systematic.

This response was from a Black practice teacher working near a Black community.

*'Anti-racism is the active participation and struggle by all people, Black and white, to change and to stop the oppression that is racism in all its shapes and forms.....to present another way of doing things which doesn't involve discrimination on the basis of colour ...'*

It was felt that the quality of learning was enhanced by placements provided within close proximity to the Black community, and those with child care as the specialist area of practice. These findings are congruent with the author's expectations because they represent accurately the focus on, for instance, the over-representation of Black children and young people in the youth justice system (Goldson et al 1999), on the 'same race' adoption debate (Gilroy 1994, Doh 1998a), and latterly on the notion of improving outcomes for Black children, a matter that currently dominates child care social work discourse. A male student in a criminal justice setting stated,

*'I don't remember it being enacted too much as a formal tool. . . we spoke about it in supervision and stuff. I think it sort of permeates it. I think if you get too concerned with it you look at everything as a bureaucrat rather than as a social worker. You can't when you do day to day work. . .I think about fifty per cent of my clients were Black on my caseload.'*

Where there was regular contact, the issue of racism was frequently discussed in team meetings and as a daily occurrence, so that discourse



concerning racism was both familiar and thought-through.

Those practice teachers and students working within Black communities who responded to the questionnaires produced similar types of answers. The majority of student respondents in these situations scored their placements consistently highly in terms of satisfaction with their learning experience. The practice teachers who worked in the Black community also portrayed a greater degree of confidence in the placements that they provided. The students and practice teachers located in other areas of the city responded with average scores. These findings are in line with the analysis put forward earlier in the thesis that social work knowledge leans heavily on experientialism, a form of practice wisdom that builds knowledge by experiencing it. Those that were working on a daily basis with Black service users clearly gained greater confidence for that very reason, that is, because issues of 'race' and racism were part of daily practice. As racism, poverty, ethnicity and 'race' are constant factors in the social work interventions of practice teachers in the areas in question, reference to anti-racism or 'race' becomes an intrinsic part of the job. In contrast, where contact with Black people was unlikely, anti-racism as a practice and learning issue was less of a priority.

There are however, some important points to emerge from this finding. One of the key reasons that anti-racist learning is so polarised around practice experience is the demographic make up of Liverpool (Uduku and Ben-Tovim 1998). Liverpool as a city is unique because its Black population is mainly located in one area, towards the centre and south. This means that invariably quality opportunities for anti-racist practice learning based on

practice wisdom are limited to placement settings in this specific part of the city. The main exception to this is where either the students or the practice teachers are themselves Black. However, if over all practice learning is to avoid a situation of where there are Black people residing anti-racism is an issue and where there are few Black people it is not, it is important for creative methods of teaching anti-racism to be provided in areas not close to the Black community.

The location of the Black community and the links to learning experiences also touches on the 'Liverpool born Black' discussion identified earlier. A significant element of the struggle for anti-racism has emerged from the local Black population and those born and brought up within the city.

Those practice learning settings that are within the Black community are likely to have Black workers/practice teachers from Liverpool who will inform the discourse concerning anti-racism and provide some energy and commitment to it. Thus, whilst the 'Liverpool born' argument is theoretically problematic, it does not detract from Black people's experience of racism within this city and the consequent sense of urgency felt by Black people to challenge this discrimination.

The opportunity to work within or near the Black community provides students with practice learning opportunities not only with Black service users but also a variety of anti-racist and Black organisations (Stokes 1996, IRR 1999). Yet the importance of successfully transferring these lessons to placement settings in predominantly 'white' areas should not be diminished, because the ignoring of racism, not discussing or tackling it as professionals helps create a climate whereby situations such as arose around the death of

Stephen Lawrence can arise (Guardian 25<sup>th</sup> February 1999, IRR 1999, MacDonald 1989).

### **Black Practice Teachers, Students and Anti-racism**

The identity of the practice teachers and students also influenced the quality of the learning experience in the placement setting. Black and indeed white respondents argued that those practice teachers and students who were Black added an extra dimension to anti-racist learning and practice. For Black practice teachers particularly, there was a willingness to link their experience of racism to an understanding of anti-racism/anti-racist practice. This view is supported through work undertaken with Black practice teachers that states a 'lived' experience for the understanding of racism is beneficial to social work and Dip/SW students (BPQSW 1991, Brummer 1988, de Souza 1991).

However, whilst personal biography influenced peoples' understanding and explanation of racism and anti-racism, it did not necessarily make the definition any clearer or indeed fuller. In other words Black respondents, although clearly committed to understanding and explaining racism, had no greater theoretical insight than white respondents. Another important issue in this area which was evident from the responses of both Black practice teachers and students is that of the blurring of professional and personal boundaries in understanding racism. Black workers can find themselves caught up in trying to be experts as Black people and Insiders claiming inherent knowledge solely through a sense of 'being'. Through accepting a tag of innately being the 'expert' Black teachers and students are placed

under unnecessary pressure in the arena of racial equality whilst enabling some white colleagues to renege on their own legal and procedural responsibilities when addressing anti-racism.

The first of these quotations provides an example of how a Black practice teacher's knowledge and experience *can* enhance the learning a student gains. The second from a student demonstrates some of the inherent pitfalls in Black people being endowed with or undertaking an 'expert' role. This comment is from a Black male with a white female student not working within the Black community,

*'Considering the area and the lack of Black people, the student interviewed (users of) a residential home which she would have to deal with on her placement and asking about the provision for Black people. What anti-racist practice was going on in those homes? In asking those questions there was a development of an understanding of the issues brought to the fore . . . and (this) enabled the student not to make assumptions and to find out herself what the views were and to see for herself the way racism in an institution works. At the other end of the scale to look at a Black mental health day centre that tries to meet the needs of Black people with mental health problems. . .two ends of racism, one was anti-racist practice the other was what was going on for the people of Liverpool.'*

This respondent provides concrete examples of anti-racist practice in a placement that evidently had been thoughtfully planned. The quality of this answer also supports the argument put forward within this thesis that the development of a Black practice teacher programme to provide a pool of

Black practice teachers can add an extra texture, depth and level of personal understanding to the anti-racist learning opportunities available to students (Stokes and Wainwright 1996, Singh 1996). The experience of the practice teacher provided a personal and positive learning outcome for the student.

In contrast, however this comment is from a student who is a Black woman placed with a Black female practice teacher in a youth justice setting in the Black Community.

*'The client group was largely Black male and working class. It's taken for granted that you would understand. It was not formal. The team discussed it. They talked a lot about young Black men coming up against the criminal justice system and how they were discriminated against. Because both of us were Black there were assumptions that both of us understood the dynamics of it because of the client group.'*

Underpinning this dissatisfaction was an unwritten assumption that because two Black women were working together there would naturally be a theoretical and practical understanding of how to implement anti-racist practice based on the view that they would have experiential wisdom as Black people to explain anti-racism. It was also assumed that a similar social and political identity (Black) would naturally enhance the learning experience for the student. While it has been argued that this can contribute to a positive learning experience (Stokes and Wainwright 1996) it is clearly not the only ingredient necessary to enable flexible and effective learning outcomes to take place between the practice teacher and student.

However, the Black students' responses also emphasised the importance of a Black perspective or Black experience when practising anti-racism (BPQSW 1991, Singh 1996). The quotation is representative because five out of six Black students emphasised this point. In fact, this was a theme referred to by white students, if they had a Black practice teacher, but there is a contrast between Black and white student perceptions, as Black students believed that their experience or perspective assisted them in providing an anti-racist service (Burgess et al 1992, Penketh 1998). This also supports the analysis put forward here, that personal experience – provided by Black practice teachers - whilst not providing a greater theoretical knowledge of racism, does provide a platform with which to develop effective anti-racist learning outcomes (Channer and Stokes 1996, Brummer 1988).

It is interesting that all the (four) Dip/SW students who believed their practice teacher had not added to their understanding were Black. Furthermore, the (two) Black students who believed they had learnt from their practice teacher concerning this matter were placed with Black practice teachers. The reason cited for this was that it was only as Black students/practice teachers that they gained more experience and 'expertise' concerning racism and anti-racist practice.

This finding is interesting because it highlights the value that Black students and practice teachers generally place on their experience to inform their strategies to develop anti-racist outcomes (Burgess et al 1992, Stokes 1996). The findings also support the suggestion in this thesis, that too often social work is informed by 'practice wisdoms' (Carew 1979), in contrast to knowledge informed by theoretical rigour or empirical evidence. There is

also no distinction between the invaluable experience that Black students and practice teachers can bring to anti-racist practice, and expertise. It is the author's view that anti-racist expertise is developed, through an accumulation of knowledge, and it is not something that is inherent within Black people.

Practice teachers also recognised within their portfolios that their personal experience was central to their value base (Burke and Wainwright 1996). For Black practice teachers this was often both an emotive and political issue. This was written in a portfolio by a Black Asian practice teacher,

*'Having been on the receiving end of continual and incessant racist abuse between the ages of eight and eighteen, mainly at school, but also in my residential neighbourhood in the Midlands, I have a sense of urgency that this injustice is not allowed to predominate.'*

Later on he writes,

*'Throughout the placement I drew on my own personal experience of racism and the experience, knowledge and skills I have acquired in the racial equality field over the past eight years.'*

This sort of strong commitment linked to their own experience of the brutality of racism was evident in all of the Black practice teachers' portfolios (Brummer 1988). This comment also magnifies the importance of developing an understanding of racism over a long period of time. Thus, many Black practice teachers have developed over years a sense of the

‘injustice’ of racism and strategies to deal with it. This realisation implicitly highlights the extreme limitation a fifty (first year) or eighty (second year) day placement can provide in teaching anti-racism. If practice teachers are stating they have developed an understanding over a long period of time, this would mean that the gains made in teaching Dip/SW students in the duration of a placement would be modest in comparison.

### ***Summary***

It is clear that there is evidence of the development of anti-racist discourses as a result of the presence of Black workers and practice teachers in practice settings and many positive opportunities emerge as a result of this.

However, there are two dangers inherent in over-reliance on the experience of Black practice teachers and students to provide ‘expertise’ in matters of racism and anti-racism. The first is the resulting under use of theoretical perspectives and research knowledge to underpin such work. The second is that by over-reliance on this form of ‘expertise’ there will always be the potential hazard of other staff not taking on their own professional responsibility to work effectively in an anti-racist way.

### **Towards a continuum of ethnicity and diversity**

There was also an emerging trend by some respondents and particularly by students to recognise the emergence of self representation and diversity within the umbrella term of Black (Modood 1994). This first response is from a student explaining an understanding of racism within the context of ethnicity.



*'Racism - people of ethnic minorities discriminated against because of their culture, colour and the opportunities denied them in education and work . . . mostly institutional sometimes individual.'*

This response highlights a trend from both the qualitative interview responses and quantitative questionnaires. Students tended to make reference to notions of ethnicity and culture on a more regular basis than their practice teacher counterparts.

Another clear example of ethnicity and its fluidity is provided by a Black practice teacher in a criminal justice setting,

*'The experience of working with Black people has been interesting. I found a lot of teaching has been tokenistic. I think things are put down as cultural conflict, when they could be stages of development as adolescence. I think the understanding of culture and the way it's taught on social work courses doesn't provide any one answer. Culture has become where they fight back or where they resist. Culture is quite constant. I haven't got the same culture as my parents because I was born in this country. A lot of young Black people, there's things they want to go with and things they don't. Too mechanistic an interpretation of culture means sometimes they're quite reactionary. Sometimes in the guise of culture social work lets some quite reactionary situations go. You have to make decisions and be more problematic about it.'*

*To what extent does a fifteen year old Asian lad from a fundamentalist*

*background remanded to accommodation, what weight do you give his feelings not to want to go into a mosque as opposed to his family's feelings that he should do. You have to acknowledge that's a problem and depending on who you've read they come down on one side or the other but, I think it's better to see it as just problematic and I don't think its dealt with problematically.'*

This quotation points to the depth of critical debate and understanding that some practice teachers have concerning anti-racist practice. Racism is not seen here as a simple matter but one that is both complex and problematic. It implies a critique of social work, current anti-racist practice and structured competency-based thinking. The respondent also makes reference to culture as being 'constant' and 'problematic', pointing to a fluid, ever-changing, continuum of ethnicity that should be taken into account by social workers when they are engaged in anti-racist practice (Modood 1997a). It is significant that the respondent considers identity to be the most important issue that needs to be understood and acted upon in this case. The practice teacher is stating that being anti-racist is fine, but to be effective there must be an application of critical thinking within anti-racist practice that allows issues of culture, religion and identity to be viewed in a problematic and challenging way. For this respondent, only when ethnicity is viewed in a fluid way, can anti-racism move from being a rigid form of practice to one that is reflexive and has a real impact on Black people's lives (Rattansi 1994).

Thus, for some practice teachers and students an appreciation of a richness of diversity and the problematic of culture within this was evident. This

connects with their experience of practice either on placement or in social work settings, which has indicated that dealing with the structural issue of racism is but one facet of anti-racism. Challenges may arise for social work practitioners when Black people within their own families and communities have diametrically opposed views of culture, religion and ethnicity. These issues of conflict based on diversity and the fluidity of culture may manifest themselves within the family, that is, in the case of differing parental and children's values, the placement of Looked After children in residential or foster settings; or young people becoming involved in offending and finding themselves within the criminal justice system. Opposing views may also be played out within the myriad of cultures, values and religions within what is known under the umbrella term 'Black community'. Whatever the arena of conflict or contested ground, this evident continuum or fluidity of ethnicity provides the context within which anti-racist social work is practiced today, and - as is evident from these responses - some practice teachers and students were getting to grips with what this means for their social work interventions.

### **Adult Learning Identifying as the 'Other'**

One of the main tenets of practice teaching is the use of adult learning in linking concepts and theory to practice for the Dip/SW student (Channer 1996). This in essence is about relating the student's life experience to the professional learning that needs to take place. Critical adult learning also acknowledges the different ways in which people learn. Individuals' biographies vary significantly and are themselves constructed through experiences of class, poverty, ethnicity, gender, disability, age and so on

(Humphries 1988). From this point of view, it is important that practice teachers make links between Black people's experience of racism and Otherness and that of service users being excluded and discriminated against (Malik 1996b).

Some practice teachers encouraged students to think about their own ethnicity, gender or childhood for example, and to transfer some of those experiences to the commonality of Black service users, in terms of powerlessness and lack of opportunity (Channer 1996). The gender - 'race' connection was particularly drawn on by some practice teachers.

The following comment was made by a white male practice teacher working in the Black community,

*'There was a particular opportunity to do so because my student saw himself belonging to a particular racial group . . . north African Arab . . . I made use of his own racial origin and the effects of it.'*

A clear link was made in this situation between the Black student and the experience of Black service users. Another comment made by a practice teacher with a white female student linked her childhood to the experience of racism:

*'Getting the student to make links. Being working class and her experience in the education system and within the care system and an understanding of a significant amount of Black people within the system. I looked at her learning and used models that I devised to link to Black people's experience*

*in the educational system that was very similar to her own. The experience of many Black people within inner city schooling began a cycle of inequality. We also discussed the experiences of non-English speaking students to get through courses and looked at how adults can be disadvantaged for a variety of reasons.'*

This practice teacher had developed a sophisticated teaching style making the links using adult learning between the student's experience of the care system and a theoretical understanding of the impact of racism on Black people. Specifically, the practice teacher drew on practical examples of how education - one of the major factors in an individual's life chances - has failed Black people and those children and young people who have been looked after at some stage in their lives (Gifford et al 1989, Phillips and Ferns 1999).

Respondents did not explicitly state that their experience of discrimination was akin to being like the Other. Yet, by embracing a critical, reflective understanding of adult learning, that is, by identifying the commonalities in individual's oppression based on 'race', ethnicity, class, gender, or looked after experiences in childhood, it is clear that a significant amount of learning took place which enabled the student to identify with similar experiences to racism (Dominelli and McCleod 1989, Phillips and Ferns 1999).

Making the connection between one's own experience and those of others in a discriminated position was considered to be a key learning tool and was used to good effect by many practice teachers. Importantly, as the cases of

the students just referred to demonstrate, they can connect and recall learning based on commonalities and empathy. Indeed a major motivation for many individuals entering social work is the belief that having experienced damage by discrimination they can use this experience to make a positive contribution to helping others. It is clear that personal experience of oppression was viewed as a much more valuable learning tool than for instance, the application of competencies or indeed a rigorous theoretical analysis of 'race' and racism.

These findings are on the whole reassuring, because they confirm my own position concerning anti-racist practice. In my view, anti-racist practice should be grounded in a clear (though not necessarily complex) theoretical understanding of racism and of how to work in an anti-racist way. This in turn, should be grounded in the nature of the social work task, which, as explained earlier, is about working with individuals and families to enable them if possible to live and function with as full and independent lives as possible. This is difficult, as most social work is provided for people who are economically and socially at the bottom of society, that is, in poverty (Jones 1996, 2001). A key task for anti-racist practice, therefore, is that of enabling Black and white people to achieve the goals of satisfaction and independence and to challenge systems, processes and practices that have the net effect of being racist and in turn diminish, devalue and discriminate against already disadvantaged people.

### *Lessons for Social Work*

In sum, the evidence provided by the respondents through the qualitative,

quantitative and documentary (portfolio) data provides a positive message for anti-racism being taught through practice teaching. Whilst blame is an evident theme through the responses to the issues of 'race', racism and anti-racism this should not diminish the majority of respondents that provided clear explanations of their acknowledgement and their understanding of racism, and strategies to implement anti-racist practice. Practice teachers and students were able to locate anti-racist practice within a clear understanding of the social work role and articulate how this could be implemented to provide positive outcomes for service users.

There was some divergence in opinion regarding the use of competencies in reconciling theory with practice particularly in relation to implementing anti-racist learning and practice outcomes. Most students and some practice teachers felt the competencies were too restrictive or indeed irrelevant to the learning process whilst others, judging from the questionnaire response, believed it was a useful vehicle to engage in anti-racist learning and practice. Whatever else, the subject of competencies produced strong opinions amongst the respondents.

Identity was also a key theme that has emerged through this research. The presence of Black practice teachers, students and social workers has clearly informed and added significant value to the anti-racist learning and practice that takes place within the placement settings. All the respondents stated that a Black perspective enhanced their learning. Anti-racist learning was further enhanced by regular contact with Black service users and organisations. In other words, placements provided in close proximity to the Black community provided – unsurprisingly – a greater set of anti-racist

practice learning opportunities for the student. There were limitations to this learning experience, however, The evidence provided consistently illustrated that to be Black did not necessarily mean being an 'anti-racist expert'.

However, the identity of the practice teacher and student also informed the learning methods. Commonalities and links were made with the experience of Black people as the 'Other' with students' experience of discrimination and the 'Other'. This has enabled some practice teachers to critically examine the nature of a Black experience and articulate an awareness of the fluidity of culture and ethnicity within this. This is to say some practice teaching and learning that was taking place was well informed and critically thought through.

There are some lessons that social work can gain from these findings.

Firstly, it needs to be acknowledged that anti-racist practice is no longer (in 2002) the vogue or fashionable expression for work with Black people. The terms Outcomes for Black children/adults or Racial Equality are the common parlance for the public sector. This is all well and good. However, care must be taken that some of the energy, enthusiasm and creativity is not lost through abandoning the tradition of anti-racism and the knowledge and credibility of this concept amongst social workers that has been built up over a number of years.

Secondly, whilst competencies have some value there is clearly a danger in placing all social work NVQ, Dip/SW, and Post Qualifying learning within a competency framework (Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995). The message provided by respondents here is that competencies have considerable



limitations and often do not enhance the learning experience of students or the qualitative experiences of service users. This has implications for the bigger picture of social care and public sector provision. The current Labour government's drive towards Modernisation is built on the premise of Performance that is measured by competencies, targets and performance indicators. Whilst this is admirable, the evidence provided here in terms of anti-racist learning and practice is that qualitatively the outcomes for service users may not improve and may in fact be diminished if there is too rigid an application of the competency framework. Social work is too fluid and intuitive (England 1986) to be only measured and applied within this performance/competence framework and great care should be taken not to lose the creativity in learning and practice that takes place without the application of competencies.

Thirdly, there are lessons for social care provision generally. Social work has a long tradition of a radical value base. This has been explored in chapter two and throughout this thesis. The evidence from this research suggests that anti-racism has a positive contribution to make towards social work practice. Therefore, it is important that social care's radical value base, including that of anti-racism, is retained as it increasingly merges with other partnership welfare providers in youth justice, child protection, mental health, and adult care (DoH 1998b, DoH DfEE 1999). The other 'partners' in this multi-agency provision often provide a clear knowledge base or legal framework to work within (for instance the medical profession or the police) thus, it is vital for service users that social work values, underpinned by the values of anti-racism are integrated into this new way of working. These values should not be dismissed by partner agencies as social work 'political

correctness' that are irrelevant to the real needs of service users.

Fourthly, social work education and specifically practice teaching and learning should ensure that as the Dip/SW mark 3 emerges in 2003 the benefits of anti-racist practice- as demonstrated above- through the Practice Teaching Award in CCETSW paper 26.3 and the Dip/SW in CCETSW paper 30 are not lost and are embedded in the new social work awards. This is because from the evidence of these respondents there have been some significant successes.

### **The Importance of being Anti-Racist**

However, anti-racist practice is more than this. It should be about being proactive when working with Black people to enable opportunities to become available to them that are often taken for granted by white people in society. It is about creating the confidence to go where one wants without fear of racist abuse, or of being looked at as if one has just landed from Mars, and the opportunity to be economically active and apply for employment with the knowledge that an African, Asian or indeed non British name will not lead to instant rejection whatever the calibre of the applicant (Law 1985). It is about working with Black people and individuals from other ethnicities (Hall 1992, Modood 1997a), acknowledging the structural and individual impact of racisms (Cook 1998, Gabriel 1996, Law 1996, Rattansi and Westwood 1994, Uduku and Ben-Tovim 1998), yet building up self esteem, celebrating the cultural and ethnic differences and economically and socially empowering Black people and other ethnic minorities (Jones A. 2000, Waul et al 1996).

Anti-racist practice should be concerned with effectively challenging the political hegemony that encourages individuals and groups to engage in violent racist attacks (Guardian 24<sup>th</sup> February 1999). Anti-racist practice should be developing strategies that are critically aware of Liverpool's dubious distinction of being the most racist City in the country (Gifford et al 1989, Ben-Tovim 1997) and that violent racist assaults are common place in this City (Ben-tovim et al 1996).

It is imperative if anti-racist practice is to be effective in social work, that lessons must be learnt from the construction of a societal hegemony that enables Black people to be perceived and abused in this way. This ever-changing hegemony should be theoretically understood, and then utilised to inform social work practice, in relation to the conditions and experiences that Black people in this country, and more pertinently in this City, have to endure on a daily basis.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

The criticisms that I have made of anti-racist practice in social work, and particularly in practice teaching are fourfold. Firstly, that too often anti-racist practice is taught and delivered within a culture of fear, blame and is one dimensional in it's outlook (Law 1996). Secondly, that social work as a profession has moved down a path of anti-intellectualism (Sibeon 1991b), driven by a value for money agenda (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996,) that prioritises procedures and systems above the development and consolidation of a clear social work knowledge base (Howe 1991). This drive to move social work (education) to a technical 'doing' (Jones 1996) occupation -I have contested -has been delivered through the development of a comprehensive national occupational training framework (CCETSW 1995) that is competency based and focuses on outcomes (Buchanan and Miller 1996). Thirdly, I have proposed that too often, because of this uncertain knowledge base that social work - (Jones 1996, Novak 1995), coupled with a one dimensional application of anti- racist practice - has been devoid of a critical theoretical understanding of the nature of 'race', racism, or anti-racism (Macey and Moxon 1996). The fourth and related criticism, and the most damning of all, is that as a consequence of these critiques the outcomes for anti-racist practice for practice teaching and learning are very poor.

I have also articulated my expectation of what I believe to be constructive anti-racist practice, that is one that is underpinned by the knowledge and resources developed through Black practice teachers providing learning opportunities (Stokes and Wainwright 1996). I have also argued that this type of anti -racist practice can be delivered effectively by white practice

teachers, noting that although Black social workers can by and large provide a greater depth of understanding through their experience of racism they are not inherently experts because they are Black (Stokes and Wainwright 1996).

In this conclusion, therefore, I will examine whether these criticisms are justified in the light of the findings of this piece of empirical research using the evidence provided by the responses to the qualitative interviews, the contents of the practice teachers' portfolios and the questionnaire returns.

### **Anti-Racist Practice within a blame culture.**

I have identified, alongside my own misgivings, a plethora of writing that have questioned the validity of the anti-racist initiatives in social work throughout the 1990s. Some of these criticism have been from a perspective in social work/welfare that is constructive and is arguing from a perspective to see more sophisticated application of anti-racist practice in social work (See amongst others Gilroy 1994, Hall 1991, Macey 1995, Rooney 1993, Sivanandan 1991,1996). Others have done little to hide their disdain of either social work or anti-racism (Appleyard 1993, Phillips 1993, Pinker 1993). Part of the research carried out in this study was aimed at exploring whether such criticisms were justified by the experiences of practice teachers and students in Liverpool.

The documentary data and that of the qualitative interviews both showed some evidence of a culture of blame being associated with the teaching and delivery of anti-racist practice. However it is clear that mostly this was not

the case. Anti-racist practice was being taught to a good standard by practice teachers, and there was a significant amount of imagination applied to this process. Therefore, the accusation of anti-racism being synonymous with fear and culpability (a perspective that I also held) although acknowledged, is simply not borne out to any great degree by the evidence accumulated. To some extent, therefore, it could be argued that CCETSW's adoption of what at the time was a politically unpopular approach (Jones 1996, Penketh 1998, Pinker 1993) by placing anti-racist practice at the top of its educational agenda proved to be a commendable course of action. The evidence from this study is that CCETSW's requirements in its practice teaching and learning papers 26.3 and 30 (CCETSW 1989a,1991b) enabled anti-racist practice to be developed in a constructive manner by most of the practice teachers who participated in the research. Based on this finding, there is good reason to believe that the General Social Care Council (GSCC) and TOPSS should continue to ensure that racism and racial equality is a key component of the new three year Dip/SW due to be launched in September 2003 (DoH 2000a).

### **Anti-intellectualism and a competency Framework.**

There is no shortage of criticism of the notion and impact of the competency framework adopted by CCETSW (Feery and Wainwright 1997) either within this thesis or elsewhere (see Braye and Preston Shoot 1995, Cannan 1994). They have centred around the difficulty of measuring and monitoring social work performance in discrete individual units, at the expense, in a practice learning context, of encouraging practice teachers and Dip/SW students to be critically aware and appreciate the whole task as being complex and

perennially changing. Thus, a competency based teaching framework, has been seen as symptomatic of social work's weak and contested knowledge base (Howe 1991, 1994, Dominelli 1996). The results from the data point to some particularly interesting conclusions.

Firstly, the portfolios and the qualitative interviews point towards competencies for the CCETSW practice teaching award as being as constructive focal point to address anti-racist practice. Requirement 5 particularly evident within the portfolios, but also supported within the context of the qualitative interviews has enabled practice teachers to reflect on the type and quality of anti-racist practice taught and to achieve some tangible outcomes for service users.

Secondly, the message regarding anti-racist practice being taught around a competency within the Dip/SW is not so clear. Dip/SW respondents in the interviews were mainly unaware of the significance of the competency specifically identifying anti-racist and ethnically sensitive practice (CCETSW 1991b). However, the questionnaires returned provided evidence that for this - albeit different- cohort of students they were aware of the competency and found the format helpful. Again, the students' practice teachers demonstrated a greater appreciation of the need to demonstrate evidence for this particular competency. However, the nub of this competency debate is whether they assisted in practice teachers and students achieving anti-racist outcomes. The message from this research is therefore mixed. Requirement 5 undoubtedly has enhanced the reflexivity, thought, and actions of practice teachers engaged in providing anti-racist learning opportunities, and ultimately outcomes. Yet, for Dip/SW students the

evidence provided is so contradictory it is difficult to make a clear statement regarding anti-racist competency in the Dip/SW either way. There is clearly ample evidence of quality anti-racist outcomes, but the extent to which a competency framework assisted this depends on the data drawn upon. The returned questionnaires confirm competencies have a role in this process, the interviews do not.

The central message however, is through the whole practice teaching and learning process competencies have provided some limited opportunities for practice teachers to achieve quality anti-racist outcomes with their students. Therefore, it could be argued again, that CCETSW has achieved some degree of success, particularly in relation to the practice teaching award (CCETSW1991a, 1991b) by using a competency framework to develop anti-racist practice - and this despite the fact that this commitment was diluted somewhat in the later revised awards (CCETSW 1995a, 1995,b).

Competencies can, if applied in the absolute sense, contribute to the fragmentation of the social work teaching task to an extent that the whole picture is obscured (Buchanan and Miller 1996). However, the evidence provided demonstrates that if they are applied flexibly, along the entire social work educational continuum (CCETSW 1995b) -NVQ to PQSW - they can aid and structure learning, and place a clear obligation on students and teachers to address anti-racist practice. Furthermore, it is hoped here, the Dip/SW, Practice Teaching Award and PQSW (mark 3) that the GSCC, TOPSS and Universities are currently developing, retains a space within the competency based awards for anti-racist practice or racial equality to be met as a key requirement.



A finding that was equally as impressive was the practice teachers' clear - if practical - understanding of their knowledge base. The responses from the interviews demonstrate that respondents did have an appreciation concerning their own specialist knowledge based on practice experience. This knowledge was grounded in an ability to link this more generally to anti-oppressive practice and with a variety of examples of anti-racist practice (Dalrymple and Burke 1995, Williams 1999). A particular strength concerning knowledge of the social work task and an effective link was regularly evidenced within the children and families practice learning settings.

The results from the quantitative returns support this assertion. However, one of the most significant findings that were constant throughout the duration and methods of research was the importance of experiential knowledge within social work (Howe 1991). This practice wisdom (Carew 1979) informed the quality of anti-racist learning opportunities, because consistently respondents stated that placements within or near the Black community - that had contact with Black service users - provided quality outcomes. However, experiential wisdom was also regularly supported by the application of a practice curriculum teaching model enabling students to link their theoretical understandings to daily practice situations (Doel 1993).

### **Theoretical understanding of 'race', racism and anti-racism**

Throughout this thesis I have contended that social work's understanding of racism and anti-racism has been atheoretical. Indeed I have been at pains to

examine in detail the wealth of important theoretical material available that could further enhance the development of anti-racist initiatives and anti-racist practice teaching and learning both nationally and more locally (in the city of Liverpool). I have suggested that part of the reason for anti-racism's crisis in social work, has been an unwillingness to engage with the rich theoretical discourse unfolding within sociology and social theory. Further, I have proposed that anti-racist practice in social work has too often been ill-thought through, at times disproportionate in relation to need and unfinished (Hill-Collins 1990).

This critique of anti-racism within social work in Liverpool is not supported by the evidence produced. Anti-racist practice is not particularly theoretical, but the data suggests it is thought through particularly by practice teachers, and rarely is it built on conceptually inflated ideas of racism (Miles 1989), nor could the end product be reasonably described as unfinished (Hill-Collins 1990, Rooney 1993). There was evidence of this, but this was the exception to the rule, and most anti-racist practice, evidenced clear outcomes that could be of use to Black or white service users.

Furthermore, I have used the theoretical material available to state my own position concerning an understanding of racism and anti-racism. I propose here, that I have introduced terms, some of them new, that will enable anti-racist practice teaching and learning in this city - in Liverpool - to become more responsive to the requirements of Black and white service users. The concepts I have theoretically introduced are the following: a notion of 'race' and class oppression that is historically and spatially specific (particularly regarding Liverpool), of racism that is ever changing and fluid adapting to

new conditions perennially. Building on this, the idea of many racisms (Miles 1994, Rattansi and Westwood 1994) has been identified. From this position I have critically looked at the concept of Otherness (hooks 1991, Miles 1989, Rattansi 1994) identity, 'race' and racism, shifting from the importance and impact of an understanding of this in Liverpool to an internationalist perspective. The importance of a fluid flexible understanding of identity and racism, has been clarified by the use of post-modernity to understand these New Times (Hall 1992) of racism, ethnicisation (Werbner and Modood 1997) and what I have identified as the ever- changing continuum of ethnicity. To add to the equation of establishing a rigorous knowledge base concerning 'race', and anti-racism, I have placed two theoretical paradigms juxtaposed to each other, to highlight the importance of taking neither perspective as an absolute reality. On the one hand, I have used Merton's (1973) concept of Insiderist and Outsiderist knowledge, to examine Black and white respondents understanding and application of the issue, and on the other have promoted the importance of a Black perspective, and a pool of Black practice teachers when providing anti-racist learning opportunities (Stokes and Wainwright 1996).

It is with this theoretical understanding that the research into anti-racist practice learning has been undertaken. Firstly, the conclusion to be drawn regarding the respondents' theoretical understanding of the terms, is that it is patchy. The quality of the answers provided demonstrates that some respondents, practice teachers and students had a good grasp of the issues. Furthermore, both the questionnaire responses and those of the interviews indicate a high level of student satisfaction concerning the teaching of racism/anti-racism provided. The more sophisticated responses indicated an

understanding of the structural issues concerning racism, class, poverty, social construction; and as a response the importance of having in place both organisational policy initiatives and individual strategies to provide quality anti-racist practice.

Secondly, the evidence from the data demonstrates that the students - and some practice teachers - whilst not articulating notions such as the continuum of ethnicity, had an awareness of the importance of identity through an expression of diversity, both in terms of ethnic origin (Hall 1992, Gilroy 1993, Werbner and Modood 1997), but also when making links between 'race' and other oppressions (Hill-Collins 1990, hooks 1989, 1991, Smith and Smith 1983). Practice teachers' also identified 'race' in a Black/white dichotomy (Burgess et al 1992), both theoretically and in practice.

It seems that many of the responses, good though they were, are a hybrid of a theoretical reconciliation of ideas with that of their personal and practice wisdom. Three key themes became evident, in the quality of responses provided by respondents in all three methods of data collection. These were personal/professional commitment and experience, proximity to the Black community, and the importance of Black worker/practice teacher involvement in the setting. The Black practice teacher issue I will address separately below, but theoretically it is important to look at the other two themes.

Firstly, the racism that is challenged through personal commitment is a racism that is understood in a structural sense, either as individual racism or

institutional/organisational oppression. Thus, practice teachers have demonstrated that within this context they provide anti-racist practice, mainly within a Black/ white dichotomy. This dichotomy, for the more critically aware practice teachers, is located within an understanding of the local Black communities exclusion from the mainstream, political, social and economic activities within the City of Liverpool (Ben Tovim et al 1996,1998, Gifford et al 1989, Uduku and Ben-Tovim 1998). Furthermore, this understanding of racism, is located within the historical context of Liverpool's exploitation of Black people during the slave trade. Therefore, for many practice teachers, anti- racist practice must be delivered with an awareness of Liverpool having the longest established Black community in the country, whilst being amongst the most marginalised (Ben Tovim 1997).

Whilst this theoretical/historical and practice based understanding of racism is to some extent one dimensional, clearly it has had a positive effect because of the anti-racist outcomes demonstrated. However, whilst this understanding and application of racism and anti-racism is constructive. It neither deals with the complex issue of identity and heritage that the 'Liverpool born Black' community theme regularly throws up, nor the myriad of ethnicities that form part of the Black communities (Yuval Davies 1994) of this City. Yet, it can be argued from the evidence provided, that some practice teachers and students were beginning to grapple with this issue of ethnicisation (Werbner and Modood 1997).

I would suggest here, that anti-racist practice teaching and learning that is comprehensive, on an organisational and policy level, and individually tailored to meet service users (Stokes 1996) needs must develop a theoretical

understanding and practical application of these issues of identity, heritage, ethnicisation (Werbner and Modood 1997) and the fluid continuum of ethnicity taking place in Liverpool. This means understanding the brutal structural effects of racism in Liverpool, alongside a critical appreciation of the many communities - Somali, Pakistani, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, Iraqi, Yemeni, British born Black people, Liverpool born Black people, the list is endless and ever-changing in its constituency - that make the composite Black community; and be prepared to develop individual packages of social work practice that make a real difference and have a positive outcome in Black peoples' lives.

The second theme, that is evident in all the areas of data collection, is that of proximity to the Black community. The impact of direct contact with Black individuals and communities was probably more influential on the development of anti-racist thinking and practice than theoretical ideas. All the evidence from the data confirms that where practice teachers and students actually deliver a service to the Black community, the quality of anti-racist practice learning opportunity is invariably enhanced. This is not to state that placements that do not provide regular contact with Black service users, have not provided quality learning opportunities, but the propensity to do so is clearly greater for those settings that do.

The contributory factors for this, I suggest are three fold. Firstly, experientially or practice based wisdom (Carew 1979, Howe 1991) has a positive effect because of the regular contact with a multi-racial community. Secondly - and this relates to a point made above - working close to, or in the Black community encourages a culture of 'race' based topics discussed

regularly within team meetings/settings. These discussions are augmented by a backbone of racial equality policies within this organisation and in the case of children and family work, the opportunity to explore some of the current discourses concerning 'race' and social work (see for instance Gaber and Aldridge 1994, Waul et al 1996). The third factor that has influenced the quality of these practice learning settings is the presence of Black workers and/or Black practice teachers bringing a particular understanding or identity to the issues of racism. The significant point for anti-racist practice learning is the one identified by a Black practice teacher in his portfolio and in the interviews. This is to ensure that the practice learning opportunity provided not only makes use of the local area, but - in the case of those settings not near the Black community - concrete plans must be made for students to work with and for Black people. This can be through developing work with Black organisations, setting up an anti-racist project, or even undertaking joint work with a practitioner from an office within the Black community.

### **Anti-racist practice teaching and learning outcomes.**

It is important to conclude by stating quite clearly the anti-racist practice teaching and learning outcomes evidenced by this research. The outcomes are anti-racist practice taught through a structural understanding of the experiences of racism for Black people. Anti-racist practice is taught within rubric of challenging racism, specific pieces of social work practice and political organisation as resistance. The outcomes for students are invariably quality placements with the opportunity to practice anti-racism. The evidence also suggests that both the practice teaching award and the particular methods to deliver anti-racist teaching do enable the student to

examine notions of racism, and practical strategies to adopt for anti-racist practice (Doel 1993). Therefore within the confines of the social worker's role (Davies 1989, Howe 1991, Parton 1994) working to support, safeguard and empower individuals and families within statutory duties (Doh/DfEE 1999), the application of anti-racist practice teaching and learning has delivered effective outcomes within this agency.

It is also interesting to note that CCETSW's message that anti-racist practice can be developed as the oppression to address initially was adopted by most of the practice teachers. Links were made with anti-oppressive learning outcomes, but this tended to be after strategies to tackle racism had been formulated. In contrast Dip/SW student responses demonstrated a propensity to address anti-oppressive outcomes holistically. This finding is congruent with Dip/SW students generally making links with anti-racism and ethnicity and tending to take a more fluid view of the links between oppressions. However, the important point to establish is that CCETSW in emphasising anti-racist practice in the Dip/ SW and practice teachers' award achieved a measured degree of success in promoting positive anti-racist practice teaching and learning outcomes (CCETSW 1991a, 1991b).

### **Black practice teachers**

I have argued within this thesis that Black practice teachers provided a richness of understanding and experience to anti-racist practice learning that can enhance the students' learning opportunities (Stokes and Wainwright 1996). However, by introducing the paradigm of Insiderism and Outsiderism (Merton 1973) to the notion of Black perspectives, I have



placed parameters over what can be reasonably expected and delivered by Black practice teachers. To briefly recap: Insiderism argues that those with personal experience of - in this case - racism can develop strategies to deal with this. Likewise Outsiderism, enables a social group - in this case social work professionals - to have a more detached view concerning how to combat racism. The difficulty with this position, one clearly synonymous with a Black perspective/expertise paradigm, is that Black practice teachers are both Insiders as Black people, yet Outsiders as professionals. However, within this maze Black practice teachers are not homogenous-hence the continuum of ethnicity-nor can they claim to have a complete perspective on racism experienced by Black service users. This is because they are both professional Outsiders and they also cannot view racism from a perspective that is 'white' and therefore can theoretically only experience half of the equation, being recipients of racism not perpetrators.

The importance of labouring this point is to put a realistic parameter around Black practice teachers' contribution to anti-racist practice learning outcomes. The point is quite simple, Black practice teachers offer a significant amount to practice teaching and learning through their experience of being Black and of racism. However, they are no more experts than women are on sexism, or those with a disability on disablism.

It is also important to mention Black practice teachers' and students' experiences in the context of the 'Other'. Whilst on one level it is clearly a useful political strategy to wear the cloak of Otherness that society have given Black people; Black and white, them and us. There are also severe dangers within the notion of Black being synonymous with the Other.

These dangers include 'naturalising' racial differences, to the extent that commonly held views are that Black and white people are inherently, biologically different (Malik 1996a). To be explicit, to naturalise 'race' through adopting inflexible strategies concerning Blackness and Otherness, racist assumptions concerning for instance, the purported lower average intelligence of Black people in comparison to white people; Black/white relationships being untenable; and negative sexual stereotypes become absorbed into mainstream hegemonic thinking as 'facts' (Solomos et al 1983). As a consequence a society that regards Blackness and Otherness as a biological reality, as sub-humans believes it can treat Black people in this way. One just needs to count the number of violent racist assaults that come to the media's attention in any one year (Guardian 24<sup>th</sup> February 1999). Black practice teachers, we as Black workers, need to perennially be aware, Black perspectives can provide a positive identity, but if applied and adopted too rigidly, they can shift from being a constructive and oppositional Otherness; to a negative racist Otherness. 'Race' is a social construct, no more no less.

These are critical points to make because in developing anti-racist strategies three key principles need to be established.

Firstly, Black workers/practice teachers make an invaluable contribution to this process. Secondly, Black practice teachers should not be burdened with expectations that they are experts, or 'race' related matters should be left to them. Thirdly, as the data from this research demonstrates, white practice teachers committed to tackling racism should be collaborated with and encouraged, as they too have a significant contribution to make to achieve

real outcomes for Black people.

This thesis has been about racism, anti-racism and practice teaching. It is important therefore not to lose sight of the damaging effect that unchecked racism can have in a society. To provide a few examples, racism kills: the Stephen Lawrence murder is a chilling example of this (MacPherson 1999). Internationally racism left to fester leads to barbaric genocide, sometimes gallingly in the name of 'ethnic cleansing'. The millions that have been murdered in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosova perpetrated through an ideology of racial hatred, must be a perennial reminder of the vicious inhumane effects on a society that fails to tackle racism. Finally, within this City of Liverpool, it should not be forgotten that in almost every aspect of public, economic, social and political activity the exclusion of Black people is still very much evident (Ben-Tovim et al 1996, 1998). Within social care provision within Liverpool -notwithstanding some laudable racial equality policies - there is still evidence of a disproportionately statutory, coercive and institutionally racist service all too often being provided for Black children and families (Phillips and Ferns 1999).

Anti-racist practice - practice with a sense of balance - should be built upon and developed to ensure that the racism that threatens every nation, is kept very much in check in this country. Social work, practice teaching and learning has done and can still continue to make a valuable contribution to this.

To conclude I have made some recommendations gained from this research to further develop anti-racist practice teaching and learning.

1. The New Dip/SW (due to commence in September 2003) should retain a specific competency/requirement that needs to be met which addresses anti-racist practice (DoH 2000a).
2. Black practice teachers should be trained, developed and supported wherever possible, to provide anti-racist learning opportunities for students that offers a Black perspective (Stokes and Wainwright 1996).
3. Practice Learning agencies should retain a form of quality assurance in the provision of anti-racist learning opportunities for students, similar to the 'Approval of Agencies' model provided by CCETSW (in 1992).
4. Racial Equality policies must be put in place to set specific targets and outcomes for the recruitment of Black staff, and service delivery to the Black community. The CRE's Racial Equality standards (1995,1999) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) provide useful templates.
5. Anti-racist practice should be taught from a bedrock of theoretical knowledge concerning racism. This theoretical understanding should reconcile a 'race', and class understanding, with one that is sensitive to the rapid movement of ethnicities locally and globally and the constant evolution of many racisms (Hall 1992, Rattansi 1994).
6. Users of the social care service should be asked whether the student/practice teacher involvement in their lives has been constructive/effective.

7. As social care organisations 'join up' with other agencies in the provision of services they must ensure a continued commitment to policies of racial equality in the recruitment and training of practice teachers and students.
8. Practice teachers should utilise the practice curriculum model of teaching to help bridge the divide between the theory of racism and the practice of anti-racism (Shardlow and Doel 1993).
9. Anti-racist practice should not be taught in vacuum. Clear links should be made with Black social work/care agencies in the development and delivery of anti-racist learning opportunities. To ensure that this provision is not tokenistic nor ad hoc, Black agencies should be formally contracted and paid for their services by local authorities in the spirit of this new public/private partnership ethos to deliver Best Value.
10. The importance of contact with the Black community in meeting anti-racist learning opportunities for practice teachers and students (evidenced by this research) should signal the importance of formal links with social work offices in the Black community for students placed away from this area.
11. As new policy documents emerge to provide templates for working with children and families or adults, for instance the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance (Doh/DfEE 1999), the 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need' (Doh 2000), and the 'National Priorities' guidance for joint working with the health authority (1998c), it is of critical

importance that the new social work qualifying degree provides an opportunity for practice teachers to continue to be trained theoretically and with a view to practice in the area of anti-racist practice.

12. Finally there is a need for emphasis on outcomes in anti-racist practice. Firstly, it should be demonstrated that the practice learning experience for students has been theoretically rich and stimulating and has offered a variety of practice opportunities. Secondly, it should be demonstrated that students' practice has resulted in positive outcomes for Black or diverse minority service users (Waul et al 1996).

## Appendix 1

### *Qualitative Questionnaire -Semi Structured Interviews*

#### Practice Teacher Questions

1. Thinking about your student placement what do you think they learnt from it?
  
2. How positive was the practice learning experience offered to your student? Can you score (1-5) 1 being excellent, 5 being poor?
  
3. How much do you feel you contributed to this as the practice teacher?
  
4. One of the most important themes for both paper 26.3 for practice teachers and paper 30 for Dip/SW students is the importance of demonstrating anti-racist practice. Thinking about this for a minute, what is your understanding of the terms
  - a) racism,
  - b) anti-racism
  - c) anti-racist practice
  
5. How do you think anti-racist practice relates to the wider notion of anti-oppressive practice?

6. Did you teach/encourage your student to learn about anti-racist practice? How was this done- a) Daily in the placement setting-practice and conversations b) in supervision c) through a practice curriculum d) working with Black service users/Black/anti-racist organisations e) other.
  
7. The competency model is now used as a method of measuring practice outcomes for both the student (paper 30) and yourself (paper 26.3). How did this model enable you to teach the student anti-racist practice, can you think of any evidence of clear practice outcomes?
  
8. Do you think you added to your students understanding of racism and anti-racist practice. How?
  
9. Was adult learning used as a tool to teach issues of racism and anti-racist practice to your student? (e.g. using life experiences to make links with learning concerning anti-racism, powerlessness, discrimination)
  
10. What other factors may have influenced your student's understanding of racism and anti-racist practice?
  
11. (For the ten PT Award holders) Has undertaking the CCETSW award improved your practice teaching in terms of anti-racist practice?
  
12. Are there any other comments that you would like to add regarding anti-racist practice and practice teaching?



Dip/SW Questions (Below are listed any questions that were different, to those the Practice teachers were asked. All the other questions were the as above)

1. Thinking about your placement what do you think you learnt on it?
  
2. How positive was your practice learning experience/placement? 1 is excellent, 5 is poor. 1-5
  
3. How much do you feel your practice teacher contributed to this? 1-5
  
12. Looking at the two placements that you have experienced whilst working for your Dip/SW, was your understanding of racism/anti racist practice added to specifically by your placement with this practice teacher?

## Appendix 2

### *Quantitative Questionnaire*

All scores 1-5

1. How did the overall placement progress?
2. Did you feel that you taught/ learnt anti-racist practice?
3. Did you teach/learn anti-oppressive practice on the placement?
4. Did you make use of workplace/agency anti-racist policies on the placement?
5. How useful was the Dip/SW competency framework for assessing the student/yourself ?
6. Did the student/you pass their placement? Yes/No

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