

**The Black Justice Project:  
A Study of Volunteering, Racialised Identity and Criminal Justice**

**Joanne Britton**

**Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the  
Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield.**

**September 1997**

# **The Black Justice Project: A Study of Volunteering, Racialised Identity and Criminal Justice**

Joanne Britton

## **THESIS SUMMARY**

This thesis is based on a qualitative study of a black voluntary organisation, the Sheffield Black Justice Project. The purpose of the organisation is to offer practical advice to local black people about any aspect of the criminal justice process and the main part of its work involves operating a Help On Arrest Scheme. The thesis sets out to explore significant gaps in sociological knowledge about the participation of black people in voluntary organisations, the racialisation of identity and criminal justice issues.

The research was concerned with an investigation of how volunteers from a variety of racialised groups understood the meaning and role of 'race' as they participated in the Black Justice Project. It assessed how far a successful collective response was possible in this specific social context and evaluated the extent to which the project was able to balance the needs and interests of local black people with those of supporting statutory organisations.

Three central research questions have been addressed. Firstly, the research has examined the nature of and reasons for the volunteers' involvement in the Black Justice Project. Secondly, it has considered how volunteers perceived their identity to be racialised in relation to other black and white people both within the project and more widely. Thirdly, it has compared and contrasted the understanding of the volunteers with that of custody officers working in South Yorkshire Police, to provide detailed information about the ways in which each group interprets both the relationship between black people and the police and black people's experiences of criminal justice.

The fieldwork consisted of two methodological elements. Firstly, a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with the three main groups involved in the research. A sample of thirty volunteers of varied racialised origin was interviewed. Those involved with the management of the project were also interviewed as well as various police officers, including one-third of custody officers in Sheffield. Secondly, informal participant observation of the project was undertaken over a period of two years.

Overall, the thesis demonstrates that the Black Justice Project's apparent success resulted from a careful management of its image rather than a comprehensive implementation of the black perspective defined by the volunteers. However, it was found that the black perspective itself was based on the highly questionable notion of an essentialised black identity. The thesis demonstrates how racialised identity is always a process of accommodation, negotiation and transformation involving both group identification and categorisation by others.

The research also revealed that the job-related objectives of the volunteers were thwarted by the custody officers who, it was found, effectively adhered to their job-related priorities and so racialised the project's Help On Arrest Scheme. It was found that these two groups had a very different interpretation of the nature of police-black relations to the extent that the volunteers regarded racialised policing as the norm whereas the officers regarded it as an extremely infrequent deviation from it.

## Acknowledgements

I owe a great debt to the people who gave up considerable amounts of time to enable me to conduct my research. Many thanks go to all of my research participants at the Black Justice Project and at South Yorkshire Police.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Simon Holdaway, for his much-appreciated guidance, support and encouragement. I would also like to thank Prof. Colin Holmes for his constructive advice and interest and Prof. Peter Jackson for his help and support.

Thanks go to other research students, Saeed, Rekha, Joe, Andrea, Craig and Tim for their friendship and solidarity and special thanks go to Rohan, Rachael and Asi for their friendship, sympathy and encouragement.

The greatest debt is owed to my family. Thank you Mum, Dad, Rob and Amjid for your constant love, support and understanding.

# CONTENTS

|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| List of Abbreviations & List of Tables                 | v   |    |
| <b>Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review</b> |   |    |
| 1.1  | Introduction to the research: The Sheffield Black Justice Project | 1  |
| 1.2  | Review of the literature: introduction                            | 3  |
| 1.3  | Black volunteers and the racialisation of identity                |    |
| 1.3.1  | Introduction  | 5  |
| 1.3.2  | Why do black people volunteer for a black organisation?           | 6  |
| 1.3.3  | The volunteers' racialised identity                               | 9  |
| 1.3.4  | The meaning of the term 'black'                                   | 13 |
| 1.3.5  | British national identity   | 16 |
| 1.3.6  | Diversity: the post-modernist interpretation                      | 17 |
| 1.3.7  | Other relevant aspects of social identity                         | 21 |
| 1.3.8  | Conclusion  | 22 |
| 1.4  | Black people and criminal justice: an overview                    |    |
| 1.4.1  | Introduction  | 23 |
| 1.4.2  | The search for pure discrimination                                | 24 |
| 1.4.3  | From stopping to sentencing: the black experience                 | 25 |
| 1.4.4  | Black people as victims of crime                                  | 27 |
| 1.4.5  | Conclusion  | 28 |
| 1.5  | The criminalisation of black people                               |    |
| 1.5.1  | Introduction  | 29 |
| 1.5.2  | The main theories of criminalisation                              | 30 |
| 1.5.3  | The role of the media   | 33 |
| 1.5.4  | The spatial context of the criminalisation of black people        | 34 |
| 1.5.5  | The crime statistics  | 37 |
| 1.5.6  | Conclusion  | 38 |
| 1.6  | The relationship between black people and the police              |    |
| 1.6.1  | Introduction  | 39 |
| 1.6.2  | Police-black relations: the main theories                         | 40 |
| 1.6.3  | The results of empirical studies                                  | 43 |
| 1.6.4  | Conclusion  | 46 |
| 1.7  | Review of the literature: conclusion                              | 46 |

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology**

|       |  |    |
|-------|--|----|
| 2.1   | Introduction   | 48 |
| 2.2   | The research design                                  |    |
| 2.2.1 | A qualitative methodology: The interpretive approach | 49 |
| 2.2.2 | Qualitative interviewing                             | 54 |
| 2.2.3 | Researcher participation                             | 60 |
| 2.3   | Main stages of the research's development            |    |
| 2.3.1 | Choice of site                                       | 61 |
| 2.3.2 | Access   | 62 |
| 2.3.3 | Sampling   | 63 |
| 2.3.4 | The interview schedule                               | 65 |
| 2.3.5 | The venue  | 66 |
| 2.3.6 | Data recording                                       | 67 |
| 2.3.7 | Data analysis  | 68 |
| 2.4   | Ethical and political issues                         |    |
| 2.4.1 | The ethical position of a white researcher           | 70 |
| 2.4.2 | Whose side am I on?                                  | 71 |
| 2.4.3 | Values and the research process                      | 74 |

## **Chapter Three: The Origins and Purpose of the Black Justice Project**

|       |  |     |
|-------|--|-----|
| 3.1   | Introduction   | 75  |
| 3.2   | The institutional origins of the Black Justice Project         | 76  |
| 3.3   | The black perspective  | 86  |
| 3.4   | Embracing the black perspective: the BJP's management of image | 95  |
| 3.4.1 | An advocate and intermediary for black people?                 | 95  |
| 3.4.2 | An independent organisation?                                   | 98  |
| 3.5   | Conclusion   | 105 |

## **Chapter Four: The Relationship Between Black People and the Police**

|       |  |     |
|-------|--|-----|
| 4.1   | Introduction   | 107 |
| 4.2   | Police-black relations: the volunteers' understanding      | 108 |
| 4.3   | Police-black relations: the police officers' understanding | 119 |
| 4.4   | Addressing problematic police-black relations              | 128 |
| 4.4.1 | The Structural Level                                       | 129 |
| 4.4.2 | The Institutional Level                                    | 132 |
| 4.4.3 | The Individual Level                                       | 136 |
| 4.5   | Conclusion   | 139 |

## **Chapter Five: The Help On Arrest Scheme (HOAS)**

|     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 5.1 | Introduction                                     | 141 |
| 5.2 | The custody officers' presentation of their role | 142 |
| 5.3 | Power relations and the custody process          | 149 |
| 5.4 | The purpose of the Help On Arrest Scheme         | 156 |
| 5.5 | Racialisation and the custody process            | 161 |
| 5.6 | Conclusion                                       | 165 |

## **Chapter Six: The Black Justice Project's Volunteers**

|       |  |     |
|-------|--|-----|
| 6.1   | Introduction   | 167 |
| 6.2   | The main social characteristics of the BJP volunteers                            | 168 |
| 6.3   | The relevance of racialised identity<br>to the volunteers' decision to volunteer | 173 |
| 6.4   | An analysis of the various reasons why people volunteered for the BJP            | 178 |
| 6.4.1 | The altruists  | 179 |
| 6.4.2 | The semi-altruists   | 180 |
| 6.4.3 | The semi-self-interested volunteers  | 181 |
| 6.4.4 | The self-interested volunteer  | 181 |
| 6.5   | The recruitment and retention of BJP volunteers                                  | 183 |
| 6.6   | Conclusion   | 196 |

**Chapter Seven: Racialised Identity: A Sociological Understanding**

|     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 7.1 | Introduction  | 198 |
| 7.2 | Within a black racialised group   | 199 |
| 7.3 | Between different black racialised groups                               | 204 |
| 7.4 | Between black racialised groups and white, negatively racialised groups | 209 |
| 7.5 | Black racialised groups and the 'white majority'                        | 214 |
| 7.6 | Conclusion  | 223 |

**Chapter Eight: Conclusion: An Evaluation of the Research**

|     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 8.1 | The BJP: an evaluation of a black voluntary organisation | 225 |
| 8.2 | Racialised identity                                      | 229 |
| 8.3 | Criminal Justice   | 231 |

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| References | 235 |
|------------|-----|

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| Appendix I | 244 |
|------------|-----|

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| Appendix II | 256 |
|-------------|-----|

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Appendix III | 258 |
|--------------|-----|

## List of Abbreviations

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| BJF:   | Black Justice Forum.   |
| BJP:   | Black Justice Project.   |
| HOAS:  | Help On Arrest Scheme.   |
| NACRO: | National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. |

## List of Tables

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Table 2.1 | Minority ethnic origin and gender of the volunteers interviewed.                   |
| Table 6.1 | The volunteers level of education.   |
| Table 6.2 | Volunteers employed in managerial or professional positions.                       |
| Table 6.3 | Current employment of volunteers which reflects the project's aims and objectives. |



## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction and Literature Review**

#### **1.1 Introduction to the research: The Sheffield Black Justice Project**

This thesis is focused on a black voluntary organisation in Sheffield, the Black Justice Project. The project was formally established in 1991 by a Home Office grant and has subsequently been funded mainly by South Yorkshire Probation Service. It is accurately marketed as the only one of its kind in Britain. Its broad objective is to offer practical advice to local black people about any aspect of the criminal justice process. The main part of its work involves operating a Help On Arrest Scheme. With the agreement of South Yorkshire Police, trained volunteers are available to go to any police station in Sheffield, on the request of an arrested black person, in order to offer practical help and assistance. A telephone rota system ensures that a volunteer may be contacted twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

At the time of the research, the project employed only one full-time co-ordinator, although it has since employed an assistant co-ordinator. It therefore relies almost entirely on volunteers in order for the scheme to operate adequately. Since its inception, the project has successfully attracted and maintained a body of around sixty volunteers from various minority ethnic groups.

In principle, the project aims to serve all the minority ethnic groups in Sheffield. 1991 census data (Home Office, 1991a) indicate that minority ethnic groups account for 5.03% of the city's total population. This means that, according to the census, more than twenty-five thousand people living in Sheffield do not classify themselves as 'white'. Of these, 2.3% originate from the Indian sub-continent and 1.6% are of African origin. In terms of size, 'Pakistanis' (1.7%) and 'Black Caribbeans' (1.0) are the largest minority ethnic groups.

During the course of the research, there was a working agreement at the project that 'non-white' groups represent the focus of its work. Thus, although the project has attracted volunteers from, for example, the Irish population, and would respond to a request for help from an Irish person, it is not actively promoted as an organisation serving local Irish people. As a result, the project has not pursued the needs and

interests of minority ethnic groups which are usually classified as 'white' and, instead, conforms to the more common definition of the term 'black' as meaning 'non-white'.

The census data also reveal that Pakistanis and black Caribbeans in particular are concentrated in areas which were heavily industrialised during the expansion of Sheffield's steel industry. From the mid-nineteenth century, an area, which is still sometimes referred to as the 'black belt', spread rapidly north-east from the city centre along the river Don. This area includes Burngreave and Darnall which remain two of the districts most heavily populated by 'non-white' minority ethnic groups. Sharrow, the second most heavily populated area, is located in the old city centre area which pre-dates 1832. This spatial concentration of specific minority ethnic groups reflects the racialised processes whereby they are restricted to residual residential space (Smith, 1989; Cashmore & Troyna, 1990). The areas are characterised by high density, poor quality housing and inferior public services to those found in other parts of the city. They are visibly identifiable by shops, cafes and take-aways owned by the people that live there. They provide evidence of how the economic opportunities of minority ethnic groups are restricted to those that are unwanted by the majority population. These businesses also have a finite chance of expansion because they tend to service their own communities exclusively. The areas are also identified by their own community and religious centres. For example, by 1993, Sheffield had ten mosques and two Islamic centres.

In addition to this, these areas of Sheffield have been the scene of well-publicised incidents between local residents and the police. For example, in recent years, young Pakistani men have protested about discriminatory policing in the Darnall area. In June 1997, local newspapers reported figures from an official police report which indicated that a markedly disproportionate number of robberies occur in Burngreave and Sharrow. These areas are seen to be targets of the police in the same way as the comparable areas of Chapeltown in Leeds and the Manningham district of Bradford. As a result, the project aims to serve minority ethnic groups which are noted for their experiences of racialised discrimination and their conspicuous exclusion from Sheffield's social, economic and political life.

The Black Justice Project's continued existence and development over a number of years is significant in that other comparable schemes, such as one operated by Haringey Racial Equality Council in London, have failed (Haringey REC, 1992).

Consequently, a central objective of my research was to determine the reasons for the project's apparent success.

Overall, the Black Justice Project provided me with an excellent site for the exploration of important sociological questions central to the three major themes of my research: volunteering among black people, the racialisation of identity and the relationship between black people and the police. The remainder of this chapter is a review of the relevant literature. It introduces and examines these sociological questions in detail.

Next, Chapter Two is an explanation and defence of my research methods. In Chapter Three, the origins and purpose of the Black Justice Project are explored. The chapter provides a critical analysis of the project's aims, objectives and status as a black voluntary organisation. Having outlined the general background to the formation of the BJP, Chapter Four introduces the immediate context to its formation by exploring the nature of the relationship between local black people and the police. This relationship is explored further in Chapter Five which focuses on the project's Help On Arrest Scheme. Here, police-black relations are explored in the specific context of police custody in order to examine the potential for the custody process to be racialised.

In Chapter Six, an overview is presented of the BJP's volunteers. This includes an assessment of the relevance of racialised identity to both their voluntary activities and their reasons for volunteering for the BJP. The wider relevance of the volunteers' racialised identity is investigated in Chapter Seven which presents a sociological understanding of how social life is racialised more generally. The final chapter is an evaluation of the research. It summarises how my thesis contributes to sociological knowledge in each of the three research areas covered.

## 1.2 Review of the literature: introduction

The aim of the literature review is to demonstrate how a black voluntary organisation, the Black Justice Project, provided an ideal site for the exploration of key sociological questions about volunteering among black people, the racialisation<sup>1</sup> of

---

<sup>1</sup> The focus on process is instrumental to the theory of racialisation. This theory was first advanced by Robert Miles who conceptualised it as follows.

"If 'races' are not naturally occurring populations, the reasons and conditions for the social process whereby the discourse of 'race' is employed in an attempt to label,

identity and criminal justice. Similarly, it aims to outline the general context in which the BJP worked. Each of the following sections highlights significant gaps in existing knowledge and explains how they can be addressed by investigating empirically the meaning and role of 'race'<sup>2</sup> within this specific social context.

First, Section 1.3 will highlight the lack of knowledge regarding how 'race' is mobilised and acted on in the voluntary sector. It will argue that, by establishing the reasons for the volunteers' participation and their understanding of the organisation, the question of what makes a unified collective response possible can be answered.

Further, this will enable an exploration of how individuals understand their identity to be racialised both within the project and beyond. Thus, perceptions of similarity and difference can be assessed with reference to, for example, the use of the term 'black'<sup>3</sup>, a British national identity and the collective response of various, diverse racialised groups.

In the subsequent sections it will be demonstrated that studies of black people and criminal justice generally neglect the perspectives of those individuals involved. As a result, there has been too much emphasis on investigating racialised discrimination at the structural level without considering the agency of both black people and representatives of criminal justice, such as police officers. It will be argued that it is only by determining the perspectives of these groups that a better understanding of, for example, the nature of police-black relations can be established.

---

constitute and exclude social collectivities should be the focus of attention rather than be assumed to be a natural and universal process" (1989:73).

<sup>2</sup> The term race has inverted commas throughout the thesis. This acknowledges that the category is a social construct with no proven essential nature. The term is included in the text because a central purpose of the research was to investigate the meaning of 'race' as a fundamental defining and categorising principle which informs and structures everyday social life. This does not attribute 'race' with the status of a scientific concept. It simply reflects the unavoidable position of social scientists who seek to examine empirically and, as a result, understand the social world. It reflects the argument that 'race' is a social relationship rather than a category of human being (Mason, 1994). In fact, by investigating the meaning of 'race', the research aimed to discover processes of racialisation which underpin this relationship.

<sup>3</sup> The use of the term 'black' is the subject of considerable academic debate. A detailed discussion of the issues arising from this debate is provided in the literature review. Investigating the adequacy of the different uses of the term forms part of the empirical research. However, it is used in the text to refer to racialised groups who originate from both Africa and the Indian sub-continent. This is a very common, albeit problematic, use of the term. It is used here because it reflects both the working definition of the project and the racialised origin of the majority of volunteers who participated in the research. It also encompasses the vast majority of Britain's 'non-white' population. Some of the studies quoted in the text use the term to refer specifically to people of African-Caribbean origin. This alternative usage is highlighted wherever it occurs.

### 1.3 Black volunteers and the racialisation of identity

#### 1.3.1 Introduction

There is a well-established history of volunteering among black people in Britain. Volunteering refers to the collective responses of black people which occur willingly without a specific guarantee of remuneration. In fact, voluntary activities are frequently a response to the difficult circumstances with which black people are confronted (Obaze, 1992). The history of post-war immigration to Britain reveals a pattern of differential access to a range of social and welfare services and differential treatment by various economic, political and social organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors (Cohen, 1988; Sivanandan, 1990; Skellington & Morris, 1992). As a result, collective responses of voluntary action range from traditional organisations such as church and religious groups, community service groups and groups promoting citizenship rights to the, much less common, spontaneous protests such as those signified by the urban disturbances during the 1980s. A large amount of literature has been generated by these various forms of collective response but it has been characterised by a failure to consider empirically the nature of and reasons for individual involvement. There is little evidence of how the people involved in volunteering understand the meaning and role of 'race' as they participate. This means that there is a considerable lack of knowledge regarding the ways in which 'race' is mobilised and acted on within the voluntary sector.

In addition to this, despite assumptions to the contrary, there is nothing inherent in being black that guarantees unity between individuals or groups (Goldberg, 1992; Ware, 1992). Indeed, Robert Miles (1984) has argued that black homogeneity and cohesion is a myth. A collective response is frequently assumed by theorists who wish to explain the nature of black social life in Britain. The link between theory and collective voluntary action becomes problematic as a result of this assumption. For example, theories based on this assumption fail to demonstrate if and how a specific definition and meaning of 'black' is an adequate basis for effective voluntary action. They also fail to establish if individuals organise themselves solely around a racialised identity or if other factors are relevant to adequate organisation. Despite his legitimate criticism, it has been argued that Miles' work neglects the issue of how to explain collective responses among black people (e.g. Solomos & Back, 1995:25). Examining

how volunteers understand the meaning and role of 'race' as they participate in an exclusively black organisation will help to explain how a collective response is possible.

This section therefore provides an overview of the issues to be addressed if the mobilisation and use of 'race' within the black voluntary sector is to be examined adequately. The aim of the section is to establish a number of empirical questions as a basis for such an investigation.

### **1.3.2 Why do black people volunteer for a black organisation?**

It is useful to begin an examination of black volunteering by considering why volunteers choose to work for an exclusively black organisation. Their choice suggests that they understand their identity to be racialised in some way and, as a result, are able to identify themselves with other black people. The significance of the volunteers' racialised identity in deciding to volunteer can be determined by establishing whether or not they would have considered volunteering for the organisation if it had not been exclusively black. Furthermore, examining why an exclusively black organisation is chosen helps to reveal how the volunteers understand the meaning and role of 'race' as they participate in voluntary work. A related issue is if and why volunteers regard it as necessary for black people to have their own voluntary organisations. It is worthwhile to explore this issue because it can reveal how volunteers understand both their own identity and that of other black people to be racialised.

A Home Office research study by Jackson and Field (1989) discovered that the services of so-called mainstream voluntary organisations are under-utilised by minority ethnic groups. It concluded that a number of factors are likely to be responsible for this situation. These include the possibility that the services offered do not meet the specific needs of black people and that direct or indirect discrimination, or the fear of it, may reduce the availability of services. The conclusions of this research study help to explain why black people in Britain have a well-established history of self-help and mutual support. The Black Perspectives in Volunteering Group completed the first ever survey of black volunteering in 1988. They discovered that one quarter of the black volunteers surveyed wanted to 'meet needs' specific to black people and that they had to rely on black organisations for adequate volunteering opportunities (Obaze, 1992).

The volunteers' understanding of their role within a black voluntary organisation is significant because principles such as self-help and mutual support are implicitly

related to the meaning and role of 'race' as it is understood by the volunteers. If principles such as these are discovered to be priorities, it suggests that volunteers are able to relate to other black people because they identify them as being fellow members of a particular racialised group.

An associated empirical question is how far and why do volunteers regard working for an exclusively black organisation as a worthwhile experience? This question enables an exploration of how a sense of fulfilment is related to each volunteer's identity as a black person. For example, obtaining satisfaction from being able to help other black people indicates the centrality of 'race' to their role as volunteers. Similarly, would volunteering for a mixed organisation be a less satisfying experience? This question introduces consideration of the potential disadvantages of volunteering for an organisation which includes both black and white people. Determining perceived disadvantages will indicate how far perceptions of direct or indirect discrimination within mixed voluntary organisations contribute to the decision to volunteer for an exclusively black organisation.

The perceived level of racialised discrimination within a specific area may influence the decision to choose to volunteer for a particular black voluntary organisation. For example, the increased focus on various aspects of criminal justice in recent years may have resulted in a greater propensity for black people to become involved in a related collective response. The role of the media in both supplying information and affecting perceptions is an associated factor worthy of investigation. In fact, the various sources of information which may encourage black people to volunteer must be considered. This is particularly significant with reference to the relationship between black people and the police because accounts of encounters between the two are frequently thought to be based on rumour and hearsay (see Smith & Gray, 1983 for a study of African-Caribbeans). The decision to volunteer for a particular organisation may be related to personal experiences, first-hand knowledge of the experiences of others or perceptions of the experiences of black people in general. It can, of course, be a combination of the three. Each of these helps to determine both the meaning and role of 'race' within the context of a black voluntary organisation and how volunteers come to understand their identity to be racialised.

It is also useful to consider if black volunteers expect to achieve specific results for and on behalf of black people. This is implicitly related to their reasons for choosing

a particular organisation and the sense of fulfilment gained as a result of participating in a collective response. Volunteers can be excluded from the management committees of the organisations in which they participate and, as a result, cannot contribute to the main decision-making process. It is also doubtful that, particularly localised, black voluntary organisations can enhance the accountability and increase public control of appropriate external agencies (Mawby, 1991). This means that the realisable achievements of volunteers are usually limited. Anticipated results can be superficially identified with reference to pursuing a particular cause. This is of limited usefulness because pursuing a cause is an abstract notion which is likely to conceal a whole range of issues that are relevant to the anticipated outcomes of the volunteers. For example, relatively mundane issues, such as the desire to successfully provide practical advice and support, may co-exist alongside more universal issues, such as the desire for equity and social justice. Both mundane and universal issues may be connected to the ways in which the volunteers understand their identity to be racialised.

Expected achievements are related to the volunteers' understanding of the organisation for which they work and their interpretation of its role. The meaning and role of 'race' within a black voluntary organisation can be examined empirically by determining the main functions of the organisation identified by its volunteers. It is important to consider how the volunteers' initial understanding of the organisation and its role is either modified or simply reinforced as a result of participation. This is linked to the potential formation of a volunteer culture. A volunteer culture is defined as the sharing of a group of core values which include commitment to the organisation and solidarity with colleagues as well as shared perspectives on a range of job-related issues (Gill & Mawby, 1990). Thus, the presence of a volunteer culture is likely to reflect a shared understanding of the meaning of 'race' among volunteers.

Overall, the meaning and role of 'race' within a black voluntary organisation can be explored by establishing both the reasons for individual participation and the volunteers' interpretation of the organisation. Further exploration is required in order to determine how wider processes of racialisation influence the ways in which 'race' is understood by the volunteers as they participate. This is discussed next.



### 1.3.3 The volunteers' racialised identity

An appreciation of the meaning and role of 'race' in the context of a black voluntary organisation can be examined by considering how volunteers perceive their identity to be racialised in relation to other black and white people both within the organisation and more widely. This can be achieved by considering three key questions. First, to what extent do the volunteers understand themselves as belonging to a particular community and how does this relate to their own sense of having a racialised identity? Second, which racialised groups do they regard as being included in this community and in what circumstances? Third, to what extent are the volunteers able to negotiate, transform or reject the racialised definitions applied to them by others? These key questions are discussed in detail below.

Cohen (1985) has argued that the meaning, rather than the definition, of the term 'community' represents an important focus for analysis. 'Community' is where individuals learn about and acquire the symbols to be social. It is for this reason that the symbolic significance of community is such that it represents a unifying factor in itself. It implies, for example, cohesion and shared values and, as a result, it can be a powerful mobilising force.

“People assert community, whether in the form of ethnicity or locality, when they recognise it as the most adequate medium for the expression of their whole selves” (Cohen, 1985:107).

Paul Gilroy (1987) has acknowledged the difficulty of referring to a single community among a particular group of African-Caribbeans whom he identifies as having a 'self-conscious' black community at the symbolic level. Despite this acknowledgement, his conclusions are tenuous because he fails to produce sufficient empirical evidence which confirms that black people regard themselves as members of a localised, symbolic black community. Referring to a self-conscious community is also problematic because it reifies the concept, suggesting that community is a tangible, rather than a symbolic, entity.

Gans' concept of symbolic ethnicity refers to the construction of an imagined identity which involves creating boundaries around an imagined community. He defines it as,

“A nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour” (1979:9).

This view complements Cohen's assertion that community is an important medium for the expression of diverse interests and aspirations and is therefore a convenient mobilising force (1985:107-9). A racialised community is therefore able to incorporate diverse interests and social identities specifically because it exists symbolically. Conceptualising community in this way is useful as an analytical tool because it necessitates identifying the boundaries of this community and examining who is included and who is excluded and in what circumstances. In the context of a black voluntary organisation, this can be achieved by determining if and how volunteers understand themselves to belong to a particular racialised community.

The absence of detailed empirical research means that dominant definitions of 'community' tend to both reify the term and reinforce common-sense notions of it. For example, Sivanandan (1982: 1990) used the term 'communities of resistance' to refer to groups consisting of individuals who are often extremely diverse with respect to various social characteristics. He neither defined the term 'community' or explained why these groups should be labelled as such. The definitions suggested by Cohen and Gans may help to prevent this kind of oversight.

The weaknesses exposed in the work of Gilroy and Sivanandan, by their speculative and problematic use of the term 'community', can be addressed by examining how volunteers construct a notion of community symbolically and how this is related to their racialised identity. This perspective is innovative specifically because it precludes the assumption that black people automatically perceive themselves as being part of an identifiable racialised community and respond accordingly. As a result, community may exist at different levels. This means that the volunteers' understanding of community is context-dependent. Consequently, the possibility is introduced that black volunteers may simply regard themselves as representing other black people. This may increase the potential for a successful collective response because the notion of a community implies cohesion and shared values whereas the perception of a group of people with similar interests and objectives is less exclusive. The relative importance of each is likely to be influenced by the specific nature of the black voluntary organisation.

The extent to which volunteers understand their identity to be racialised, either through belonging to a particular community or through recognising more generalised common experiences, reflects how they perceive the meaning and role of 'race' as they participate in a black voluntary organisation. Determining if and how volunteers

understand themselves as belonging to a particular community is therefore significant in explaining the nature of and reasons for individual involvement.

It is useful to regard the racialisation of identity as a process of interaction through which by categorising ourselves, we are automatically categorising others who are, in turn, categorising us. This incorporates the idea that the self is a unity of individual and social elements. For example, G.H. Mead argued that the self is inherently social in nature and cannot be separated from the whole social process (Mead, 1934). If volunteers understand themselves to belong to either a particular community or to a particular racialised group, an associated empirical question is who do they regard as also belonging to it and in what circumstances? Exploring this question will reveal how volunteers define notions of 'self' and 'other' in specific contexts.

Sustainable definitions of 'self' and 'other' are dependent on the articulation and maintenance of racialised boundaries. These boundaries are comparable to ethnic boundaries which have been defined by Cohen as both symbolic and relational. They mark the boundaries in relation to other ethnic categories or groups and it is here that individuals become aware of 'others' (Cohen, 1985:58). Like ethnic boundaries, racialised boundaries occur at both the micro and macro level and are therefore discernible within any form of social unit. The markers of these boundaries include ethnicity, language, nationalism, religion and other symbolic identifications such as dress and appearance (Cohen, 1994:199-200). There appears to be two kinds of racialised boundaries. First, there are those that are created and maintained by dominant groups in order to consolidate their privileged position. Second, there are those that are recognised and manipulated as a means of organisation and resistance by people who are excluded from dominant groups. They are not mutually exclusive and the same boundary can in fact have varying and contradictory meanings applied to it by different interest groups (Jenkins, 1996:92-103).

Barth (1969) argued that ethnic boundaries are the principles of social organisation. This argument is usefully applied to racialised boundaries as well because it asserts that a particular group can be defined by its boundaries as opposed to the culture it incorporates. Here he commented on the generally accepted central importance of sharing a common culture,

“In my view, much can be gained by regarding this very important feature as an implication or result, rather than a primary and definitional characteristic of ethnic group organisation” (1969:11).

Barth also argued that differences can be reduced whilst boundary maintaining processes are not broken down. This means that, analytically, the preoccupation with cultural differences can be challenged whilst the way in which boundaries are maintained, negotiated and transformed is problematised. The continuing racialisation of identity is attributable to the persistence of racialised boundaries. It follows that examining how volunteers understand the meaning and role of 'race' as they participate in a black voluntary organisation involves determining their interpretation of notions of 'self' and 'other'. It also involves considering how they understand their identity to be racialised as a result of the definitions they regard as being applied by other people.

Furthermore, the functioning of racialised boundaries confirms that volunteers are unlikely to understand their identity to be racialised solely as a consequence of processes beyond their control. Racialised boundaries are achieved, negotiated and transformed within a specific social context. This means that volunteers contribute to, and maybe challenge, processes of racialisation. Richard Jenkins has made the useful distinction between a 'category' and a 'group'. The former is externally defined, and therefore precludes any element of choice, whereas the latter is internally defined by categorising others.

“So, whereas social groups define themselves, their name(s), their nature(s) and their boundary(s), social categories are identified, defined and delineated by others. Most social collectivities can be characterised as, to some extent, defined in both ways. Each side of the dichotomy is implicated in the other and social identity is the outcome of the conjunction of processes of internal and external definition” (1994:201).

He has argued that they combine to produce ethnicity but it can also be argued that they combine to produce racialised identity. Volunteers are members of a racialised category if they understand their identity to be racialised as a result of a series of ascribed and arbitrary characteristics. They are members of a racialised group if their racialised identity is achieved by understanding themselves as exercising choice in belonging to a particular black population. The factors that volunteers identify as leading them to consider their identity to be racialised are likely to be a combination of those associated with a racialised category and a racialised group.

This subsection has discussed how volunteers understand their identity to be racialised in relation to both other black and white people. Their understanding involves the symbolic construction of community, the operation of racialised boundaries and the processes whereby 'self' and 'other' are defined. These factors are inevitably inter-

related and are likely to influence the meaning of 'race' within the specific context of a black voluntary organisation. Having examined how identity is racialised, it is necessary to consider what makes a unified collective response among different, negatively racialised groups<sup>4</sup> possible. The following three subsections address this issue.

#### 1.3.4 The meaning of the term 'black'

The term 'black' is frequently used by both statutory and voluntary organisations to refer to a range of negatively racialised groups. It is the subject of a great deal of argument as a result of its often contradictory and imprecise meanings. Its use in the specific context of a black voluntary organisation needs to be examined because it potentially contributes to a unified collective response. Barth's perspective is again helpful here because the meaning of the term may depend on the definition of its boundaries as opposed to the sharing of a culture among those it incorporates.

By defining 'self' and 'other' in the context of an exclusively black organisation, volunteers begin to reveal how they understand the meaning of the term 'black'. Thus, investigating how volunteers define and understand this term is necessary because it is an aspect of how they understand the meaning of 'race' in general. It reflects the view that 'race' is an open political construct within which the political meaning of terms like 'black' are struggled over (Hall, 1980; CCCS, 1982; Solomos, 1988: 1993). This was the view of the influential CCCS group.

“A major concern of the CCCS group was the need to analyse the complex processes by which race is constructed as a social and political relation. They emphasised that the race concept is not simply confined as a process of regulation operated by the state but that the meaning of race as a social construct is contested and fought over” (Solomos & Back, 1995:148).

Firstly, the term 'black' can be used either to refer to people of African origin exclusively or more broadly to refer to all 'non-white'<sup>5</sup> people. It is therefore

---

<sup>4</sup> A negatively racialised group is any group which, as a result of processes of racialisation, is labelled as having negative characteristics. Labelling may be based on any combination of cultural, social, genotypical and phenotypical characteristics. A group is racialised negatively in order to legitimate the positive racialisation of another group. This means that the racialisation process inevitably involves dynamic relations of power. It is therefore instrumental to sustaining inequalities based on socially constructed differences. In the thesis, the term 'black racialised group' also refers to groups that are negatively racialised.

<sup>5</sup> The term non-white is used in the text to refer to those racialised groups who do not fit the socially constructed norm of whiteness. Thus, in everyday social life, they are not classified as white and, as a result, are understood to be subjected to related processes of racialised discrimination and exclusion. In

unsurprising that its suitability to Britain's Asian<sup>6</sup> population, in particular, is the focus of considerable debate. Tariq Modood has written extensively on this subject (1988:1990:1992:1994). He has argued that the term is detrimental to the identity of Asians because it amounts to an acceptance of the way in which they are defined by Britain's race relations establishment. It also results in the subordination of Asian interests to those of the African-Caribbean population. Modood has discussed the issue with specific reference to Muslims of Asian origin.

“The root problem is that contemporary anti-racism defines people in terms of their colour; Muslims - suffering all the problems that anti-racists identify - hardly ever think of themselves in terms of their colour. And so, in terms of their own being, Muslims feel most acutely those problems that the anti-racists are blind to; and respond weakly to those challenges that the anti-racists want to meet with most force” (1990:157).

This suggests that Asians are unlikely to be involved in a collective response which organises around the term 'black' simply because they do not identify themselves as such. It is therefore necessary to examine how Asian volunteers understand the meaning and suitability of the term as they participate in an organisation which adopts an inclusive definition.

Secondly, a distinctively more liberal definition of 'black' may incorporate any minority ethnic group in Britain and is likely to include, for example, Irish and Jewish people. Considering the latter definition is timely due to an increase in the number of asylum seekers and refugees from Eastern Europe. During the 1990s, this diverse group has become the focus of processes of criminalisation and racialisation even though it is not defined by skin colour (Miles, 1993; Cohen, 1994). However, a specifically radical definition of 'black' as a collective identity rejects the participation of white people regardless of whether their identity is negatively racialised. Stephen Small's definition of 'black' is any person of African origin. He has argued that 'non-Blacks' must be excluded from black organisations because they simply do not understand what it means to be black (Small, 1994).

---

Britain, people of Asian origin represent the largest group in this category followed by African-Caribbeans.

<sup>6</sup> This undoubtedly vague but commonly used term refers to people who originate from the Indian sub-continent which is, in geographically more precise terms, Southern Asia. It includes Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It must be stressed that it is used in the thesis for ease of reference only and is not meant to imply a false homogeneity among what are inevitably very diverse groups. The population of Britain also includes people who originate from countries in South East Asia, such as China and Malaysia. In order to avoid confusion, they are not included in the term 'Asian'.

Similarly, the above inclusive definitions of the term 'black' arguably disguise the specificity of particular racisms<sup>7</sup>. As a result, they potentially imply that racism is a unitary phenomenon experienced in a uniform manner by different racialised groups. This is unhelpful either as the basis for a collective response or as the starting point for analysis. However, the relatively small size of each of Britain's minority ethnic populations suggests that, even though some black people regard it as political anathema, it is sometimes practical for voluntary organisations to adopt a more liberal definition of the term 'black'. Incorporating a range of excluded and exploited racialised groups in this definition means that more people support the organisation and benefit from its work.

The meaning of the term 'black' as it is understood by volunteers does not, however, necessarily reflect the definition adopted by the organisation. The nature of the organisation may therefore be reflected in the meaning of the term 'black' adopted by the volunteers. This means that volunteers who adhere to an exclusive definition and meaning of 'black' in terms of their racialised identity may participate in an organisation that adheres to an inclusive definition because there are no viable alternatives.

Investigating the nature of and reasons for individual involvement therefore includes determining both the extent to which individual and organisational definitions differ and, if significant differences are discernible, the specific reasons given by the volunteers for making what appears to be an incongruous choice of organisation. This has implications for the way in which black voluntary organisations in general attract and retain volunteers.

In summary, the term 'black' is a political and social construct which is negotiated. Its meaning within a black voluntary organisation is worthy of investigation because it has implications for the possibility of unified collective action. A radical definition of the term necessarily excludes white people. The next subsection discusses to what extent this exclusion is understood to be inverted in relation to British national identity.

---

<sup>7</sup> This term is used in the plural wherever it is used the text in order to stress, first, that racism is not a 'natural' and permanent feature of the social world and, second, that it assumes many different forms. Stuart Hall has succinctly explained this position.

"It has no natural and universal law of development. It does not always assume the same shape. There have been many significantly different racisms - each historically specific and articulated in a different way with the societies in which they appear" (1978:26).

### 1.3.5 British national Identity

The radical interpretation of the term 'black' usually includes the notion that a black identity and a British national identity are strongly antithetical (CCCS, 1982; Gilroy, 1990; Husbands, 1994). As a result, skin colour is understood to be the primary criterion through which identity is racialised in this context. This means that defining who is included and who is excluded is ultimately determined by the binary opposition of black and white. It ignores other processes of racialisation which are likely to be significant. For example, Paul Gilroy (1987) has referred to a process of cultural synchronisation whereby British black racialised identity contains elements of dominant white culture, which is itself heterogeneous, as well as elements derived from the African diaspora. The same process can be identified for the other minority ethnic groups in this country. The reference to diaspora reflects Bauman's assertion that 'races' are 'non-national nations' and are therefore truly international (Bauman, 1989:52-5). It does not necessarily preclude the possibility that black identity incorporates elements of a national identity.

Gilroy's argument can be used to challenge the frequently taken-for-granted assumption that black identity is the opposite of a British national identity. Volunteers who adopt a radical interpretation of the term 'black' cannot be assumed to reject a British national identity. It is therefore important to examine if and how volunteers regard themselves as belonging to a British nation. The influence and effects of dominant white British culture on, even a radical, black voluntary organisation should also be considered. For example, a black voluntary organisation recognises a specific definition of Britishness if it aims to achieve equal citizenship rights for black people in this country. It organises volunteers around an interpretation of the term 'black' in a way which also accepts dominant notions of what it means to be a British citizen.

Accepting dominant notions of and aiming to achieve full British citizenship raises the question of why black people identify with the system that is shown to be excluding them. A straightforward Marxist interpretation attributes this identification to false consciousness or the functioning of hegemony (e.g. Hall *et al*, 1978). However, it appears incongruous when applied to black voluntary organisations which explicitly promote the economic, political and social interests of black people. Similarly, a common but inadequate interpretation of the inner city disturbances during the 1980s was that they signified a rejection of British society by young black people as a result of



processes of alienation (Solomos, 1993; Benyon & Solomos, 1987). The empirical evidence gathered by Field and Gaskell suggested that they were in fact an indication of the desperate desire of black, and white, young people to gain access to various parts of mainstream British social life (Field, 1984; Gaskell, 1986). This indicates that black racialised identity is not a straightforward rejection of a British national identity.

Overall, investigating the meaning and role of 'race' within the context of a black voluntary organisation necessitates being sensitive to how volunteers understand the meaning of both a 'black' and a British national identity. The latter can be expressed as a 'white' identity although pre-conceptualising black racialised identity as the antithesis of a British national identity inevitably conceals a complex and significant tension between them. Empirical research can examine to what extent a specific understanding of what it means to be British contributes to successful collective voluntary action among black people. A similar tension is present with regards to how black voluntary organisations can represent the diverse interests of Britain's negatively racialised, non-white groups whilst seeking to acknowledge a certain uniformity of experience. This tension is explored next.

### **1.3.6 Diversity: the post-modernist interpretation**

Examining how volunteers understand the tension between representing diverse interests and acknowledging a certain uniformity of experience is important in order to appreciate how 'race' is mobilised and used in the black voluntary sector. For example, how far do volunteers regard all black people as having certain interests in common? If so, should they pursue these interests collectively or does it depend on the circumstances? Perceived conflicting interests may result in a fragile unity among volunteers within a black voluntary organisation and this increases the likelihood of an unsuccessful collective response. Empirical evidence is required in order to establish if and how incorporating diversity militates against effective co-operation.

The recognition of diversity is an important aspect of post-modernist writing and, in recent years, the theme of identity has been extensively explored by writers in this area (e.g. Hall & Jacques, 1989; Turner, 1990; Giddens, 1991; hooks, 1992; Rattansi, 1992). Post-modernists have argued that the acceptance of diversity is necessary in order to challenge the series of binary oppositions which correspond to 'self' and 'other' and maintain, for example, the racialised status quo.

“Binarism operates in the same way as splitting and projection: the centre expels its anxieties, contradictions and irrationalities onto the subordinate term, filling it with the antithesis of its own identity; the Other, in its very alieness, simply mirrors and represents what is deeply familiar to the centre, but projected outside of itself” (Rutherford, 1990:22).

They have also argued that, as a result of accepting diversity, 'personal meaninglessness' becomes an acute danger of the post-modern experience (Turner, 1990; Giddens, 1991). This view reflects the deep cynicism and fatalism which pervades post-modernist theory. It is unavoidably ahistorical because it ultimately assumes that a consciousness of the past does not exist. It has been taken to an extreme by the French deconstructionists, such as Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard, who ultimately deny the role of human agency (Megill, 1985).

By denying human agency, the deconstructionists were unable to identify any capacity for change and therefore the possibility of a successful collective response among black people is automatically discounted. For example, Baudrillard argued that the 'social' no longer has the sort of reality attributed to it by theorists of modernity. It no longer exists as an object of representation or collective action (Hollinger, 1994:128). This means that the 'death of the social' automatically discounts the possibility of any kind of collective response.

The post-modernist recognition of diversity is not a considerable achievement because diversity is undoubtedly present throughout the social world and has been present historically. Even African culture under slavery survived the considerable efforts of the slave owners to eradicate it. A culture of resistance based on African traditions developed and ensured that diversity survived despite incredible adversity (Genovese, 1974; Gutman, 1976). Additionally, post-modernist writers have provided no substantive empirical evidence which supports their argument regarding 'personal meaninglessness'.

Promoting the acceptance of diversity without establishing how this enables structural inequalities to be challenged is another significant weakness of post-modernist writing on identity. Practices which sustain racialised inequalities at the structural level need to be considered in order to provide an understanding of processes of discrimination, exclusion and exploitation. By focusing on 'self' and 'other' as a basis for analysis, post-modernist writing neglects the influence of structural factors. This means that the dynamic interplay between agency and structure is ignored. Similarly, the post-modern perspective is ahistorical and therefore fails to consider any notion that a stable

identity may arise from historically fashioned racialised identities (Harris, 1996). In terms of black voluntary organisations, it is unclear as to how they can successfully incorporate a diversity of racialised identities and interests and still create a successful collective response which challenges racialised inequalities.

Post-modernism also leads to a rejection of essentialist theories of social identity. As a result, post-modernists have argued that identity is permanently contestable and provisional.

“Identity then is never a static location, it contains traces of its past and what it is to become. It is contingent, a provisional full stop in the play of differences and the narrative of our own lives” (Rutherford, 1990:24).

Even though it has been established that 'race' has no basis in biology, it retains a great deal of meaning in everyday social life and many of the taken-for-granted assumptions which inform ideas about 'race' originate from essentialist theories (van den Berghe, 1978; Gilroy, 1987; Mason, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994). For example, the idea that black people are less intelligent than white people remains influential (e.g. Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). In order to investigate the meaning and use of 'race' among black volunteers, the relationship between essentialist and deconstructionist ideas about 'race' should be regarded as one of tension. Simply rejecting essentialist theories is inadequate when they are still likely to inform how volunteers understand their identity to be racialised.

Promoting the acceptance of difference has a double-edged character because, although it seeks to acknowledge the legitimacy of a diversity of identities, it reinforces the socially constructed categories it is attempting to challenge. There is an associated danger that a collective response which mobilises around a specific black identity will reinforce the racisms that it is attempting to challenge. In terms of black racialised identity, the negative construction of 'black' has been inverted in order to promote a positive black identity (hooks, 1992; Mercer, 1994). This introduces the possibility that essentialist notions of 'race' may well inform collective responses mobilising around a black racialised identity. The inherent danger of challenging essentialism is that these collective responses are weakened because associated aspects of black identity are also challenged. Again, acknowledging a tension between essentialist and deconstructionist ideas about 'race' is preferable as it avoids this danger and is conceptually more sound.

It is clear that the post-modernist idea of recognising diversity does not represent an adequate basis for a successful collective response among black people. One

alternative approach is for black voluntary organisations to acknowledge that the various racisms experienced by different racialised groups nevertheless result in some kind of uniform experience. For example, the arguably poor and discriminatory police response to racist attacks affects the Asian population predominately whereas the disproportionate number of black people featuring in police arrest statistics are mainly African-Caribbeans. It can therefore be argued that the differential policing of both the Asian and African-Caribbean populations, albeit in different ways, results in a uniform experience of discrimination and mistreatment by the police.

Identifying this particular kind of uniform experience does, however, increase the risk of reducing the complexities of black racialised identity to an effect of various racisms. The centrality of different racisms to the racialisation of identity cannot be assumed. In fact, this is a reductionist assumption which should be avoided if the way that black volunteers understand their identity to be racialised is to be adequately examined. It is a negative and partial explanation which conceals a whole range of factors that are likely to be relevant to racialised identity formation. For example, Gilroy (1987) argued that the rich and resilient culture of the African diaspora influences the formation of racialised identity among African-Caribbeans in Britain. This is a positive influence not least because the culture has survived the debilitating effects of various racisms historically.

In fact, the racialisation of identity occurs through a combination of cultural, ideological and social processes and is related to the processes through which unequal power relations exist throughout the social world. The associated social and political construction of black people as a problem is frequently referred to in the academic literature (e.g. Hall *et al*, 1978; CCCS, 1982; Layton-Henry, 1984; Gilroy, 1987; Cohen & Bains, 1988; Solomos, 1988: 1993). These arguments are advanced with specific reference to the African-Caribbean population although they can be applied to the Asian population with relative ease. The so-called culturalisation of racism involves attributing black inferiority to cultural deficiency and social inadequacy. The issue of power is important because it is conveniently subsumed under culture and attributed with limited significance (Barker, 1981; Gilroy, 1987:1993; Omi & Winant, 1994). Within discourses on difference, 'culture' replaces skin colour as the key signifier in processes of racialisation (Solomos & Back, 1995:114-29). However, post-modernists have claimed that skin colour remains significant in that negative stereotypes are legitimated by the

construction of 'whiteness' as the norm (hooks, 1991; Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992). This has been explained by Richard Dyer.

“In the realm of categories, black is always marked as a colour (as the term ‘coloured’ egregiously acknowledges), and is always particularising; whereas white is not anything really, not an identity, not a particularising quality, because it is everything - white is no colour because it is all colours” (1988:45).

The way in which volunteers understand themselves to be defined and evaluated in relation to a range of generalised, taken-for-granted assumptions and negative stereotypes is worthy of investigation. It helps to reveal how far they regard their identity to be racialised as a result of processes beyond their control and also tests the claims of the post-modernists.

Overall, acknowledging a certain uniformity of experience is likely to be a useful way for black voluntary organisations to seek to represent the apparently diverse interests of Britain's negatively racialised, non-white groups. An examination of the ways in which volunteers understand the meaning and role of 'race' as they participate in an organisation involves determining how far they perceive this acknowledgement to be both legitimate and useful. It also involves determining which other factors, apart from different racisms, they perceive to be relevant to the racialisation of identity and how far they understand these factors to be shared among different racialised groups. By doing so, the post-modernist preoccupation with diversity can be questioned empirically.

### **1.3.7 Other relevant aspects of social identity**

The discussion so far has concentrated exclusively on processes of racialisation as a basis for black voluntary action. However, it must be acknowledged that processes of racialisation do not exist in a vacuum but occur alongside and in combination with other processes of identity formation. Paul Gilroy (1987) has argued that 'race' is central to British social life. It follows that 'race' is central to the social identity of both positively and negatively racialised groups. However, uncritically accepting this argument has implications for studying the racialisation of identity within a particular context. It means that the possible significance of other aspects of social identity, such as age, class, gender and sexuality, is excluded. These aspects should be considered when studying the nature of black volunteering.

For example, empirical research in the United States has indicated that socio-economic variables are the most reliable indicators of the propensity to volunteer among African-Americans. Volunteers are likely to be well-educated and belong to higher occupational groups (Woodard, 1987). In Britain, empirical research has demonstrated that a middle class socio-economic position is an important general indicator of the propensity to volunteer. It is, however, considered less important for black people than it is for whites (Hedley & Davis-Smith, 1992). The reason for this is unclear. It may be that working class black people have a greater propensity to volunteer than working class white people or it may be a consequence of the fact that a greater proportion of the black population is working class. Additionally, a study of the social characteristics of the members of police-community liaison committees concluded that, in terms of social status and where they lived, members were not representative of small neighbourhood localities. In fact, their social characteristics were usually atypical of those of both offenders and victims (Stratta, 1990).

The example of class is also significant because the loyalty and responsibility of the black middle class to the rest of the black population has been the subject of intense academic debate (Sivanandan, 1982:1990; Small, 1994). It is therefore extremely important to examine the ideological, political and social position of middle class black volunteers who provide advice and support to their working class counterparts. The way in which they perceive their identity to be racialised as black volunteers is intricately related to their perceptions of loyalty and responsibility to other black people. This demonstrates that the way in which volunteers understand the meaning and role of 'race' is intrinsically related to other aspects of their social identity.

### 1.3.8 Conclusion

The series of empirical questions outlined in this section represent a means of investigating how 'race' is mobilised and acted on within the voluntary sector. Examining how volunteers understand the meaning and role of 'race' as they participate in the work of a black organisation provides an understanding of the nature of and reasons for individual involvement. This understanding is helpful in order to secure a profitable future for the wide variety of black voluntary organisations in Britain. It also provides more general sociological evidence regarding the racialisation of identity. The next section presents an overview of black people and criminal justice. It is necessary as

a basis for understanding the nature of and reasons for black voluntary action in this area. The perceptions of black people regarding the reality of racialised relations within the sphere of criminal justice form a symbolic and indeed justifiable context for associated volunteering.

## 1.4 Black people and criminal justice: an overview

### 1.4.1 Introduction

Although a range of evidence shows how black people are discriminated against in various aspects of social life, such as education, employment and housing, empirical material has been relatively scant with regard to the criminal justice system. Criminological research has tended to be preoccupied with whether, or not, black people commit more crime (Albrecht, 1991:36). It has also tended to focus almost exclusively on African-Caribbeans. The studies quoted in this section are representative of this tendency. Available evidence suggests that black people's experiences of criminal justice are very different to those of white people (Crow, 1987; NACRO, 1991; Fitzgerald, 1993). However, the processes which result in so many black people being sent to prison are among the least understood aspects of the way the criminal justice system operates (Dholakia & Sumner, 1993:36). The way in which what happens at an early stage feeds into and reinforces what occurs at later stages can be examined by viewing criminal justice as a process rather than a system (Waters, 1990; Dholakia & Sumner, 1993). As a result,

“... discrimination at one part of the process, direct or indirect, is likely to feed through to other parts and reinforce black people's perception of the whole system as racist” (Crow, 1987:311).

The process can be divided into three main aspects which are the pre-sentencing, sentencing and post-sentencing stages. For the purpose of considering black people's relationship with the police, the influence of the pre-sentencing stage is crucial particularly because the police determine who is arrested and charged with a specific offence (NACRO, 1989; McConville *et al*, 1991; Sanders & Young, 1994).

This section summarises research findings based on the pre-sentencing and sentencing stages. It is included because it provides a necessary background to understanding the perceptions of criminal justice held by individuals from negatively racialised, non-white groups. The section covers research based on the stopping and

arresting stage, the cautioning and charging stage and the prosecuting and sentencing stage. Finally, evidence of black people's experiences as victims is considered. Research which focuses on the pre-sentencing stages is arguably even more necessary as a result of an increase in Britain's prison population and the persistently 'tough' law and order policies of the two main political parties. It is also necessary due to the gaps in some of the research studies completed. The following subsection discusses a likely reason for these gaps.

#### **1.4.2 The search for pure discrimination**

An overview of the research completed on the subject of black people and criminal justice is necessary because it highlights several important gaps in academic knowledge regarding black people's understanding of criminal justice. For example, the studies frequently cite the profound mistrust of black people in the criminal justice process without the support of detailed empirical evidence. This is at least partly due to a tendency towards quantitative studies in criminological research. As a result of this tendency, the search for pure discrimination is usually prioritised (Pure discrimination means to establish conclusively that black people are treated differently to white people when all other relevant variables have been accounted for. This is extremely difficult not least because an adequate definition of discrimination is a matter of contention).

The search for pure discrimination is a misnomer for two main reasons. First, it detracts from serious consideration of the potential ways in which decisions made at different stages of the process interact to produce a discriminatory outcome. Most importantly, it neglects to consider precisely the processes of racialisation which inform these decisions. Second, a satisfactory understanding of how discrimination occurs and persists can only be achieved by examining the perspectives of relevant individuals. This must include the perspectives of other negatively racialised groups apart from African-Caribbeans. These reasons suggest that extensive qualitative research is required in order to address the limitations of the studies included in this section.

A black voluntary organisation that operates within the criminal justice area provides an ideal site for examining the perspectives of both black volunteers and the relevant members of appropriate criminal justice agencies. The processes of racialisation which result in discrimination can be identified by exploring how both groups understand the meaning of 'race' during the course of their work. The following subsections reveal



that, although the studies do not provide conclusive evidence of discrimination, the differential treatment of black people when compared to white people by each of the criminal justice agencies is inferred.

#### 1.4.3 From stopping to sentencing: the black experience

A number of quantitative studies have shown that African-Caribbean young people are much more likely to be stopped by the police and arrested than their white counterparts (Stevens & Willis, 1981; Smith & Gray, 1983; Skogan, 1990; Norris *et al*, 1992). The study by Skogan also revealed that African-Caribbean people who are stopped are much more likely to be searched than white or Asian people. However, two studies found no difference in the stop and arrest rates between African-Caribbean and white people (Tuck & Southgate, 1981; Walker *et al*, 1990). There is also agreement that African-Caribbeans are no more likely to be arrested than whites when stopped (Fitzgerald, 1993).

The research findings of the greater proportion of the studies suggest that the police are more proactive in the policing of African-Caribbean people. A Home Office research study discovered that the police were more likely to have initiated contact with black people than with white or Asian people (Home Office, 1994a). This raises the issue of whether differential arrest rates are a consequence of differential policing or whether they are a consequence of racialised disadvantage more generally. The distinction between legal and extra-legal variables, and the relative salience of each, is an important aspect for investigation in criminological research (Landau, 1981; Waters, 1990; Cook & Hudson, 1993; Fitzgerald, 1993). A statistical analysis carried out in the US found an association between the 'race' of a suspect and the probability of arrest was attributable to the larger proportion of black people residing in lower status neighbourhoods (Smith *et al*, 1984). Again, this may be attributable to either different patterns of police activity in areas where there is a high concentration of black people or racialised disadvantage. The available evidence suggests that it is likely to be due to a combination of both of these factors.

The important point to stress is that if black people are more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested and, as will be explained below, charged, they are also going to appear in court more frequently (Crow, 1987). This emphasises the way in which what occurs during the early stages of the criminal justice process unavoidably affects

what occurs later. It also emphasises the crucial role of the police in determining a racialised outcome.

In fact, the police appear to have a determining role with reference to patterns of cautioning and charging. Black young people are less likely than their white counterparts to be cautioned and are more likely to be referred for prosecution (Landau, 1981; CRE, 1992). The pattern of charges brought against African-Caribbean people in general differs from that of white or Asian people. For example, research suggests that black defendants are more likely than white defendants to be charged with assault when no injury has been sustained by the victim (Stevens & Willis, 1981; Crow & Cove, 1984). The Crow and Cove study also suggested that white people are more likely to recognise themselves as victims of crime, and to report it, if the perpetrator is black. Another study indicated that African-Caribbean people are more likely to face serious charges than white people for the same substantive offence (Blom-Cooper & Drabble, 1982). Additionally, black people are more likely than white people to be remanded in custody. Their over-representation in the remand population is even greater than that of convicted prisoners (Jefferson & Walker, 1993). It also increases the likelihood of receiving a custodial sentence (Hood, 1992).

The complexity of prosecuting and sentencing means that the research task is extremely difficult. Piecemeal data from a variety of sources provide the only available information regarding this stage of the criminal justice process. Research has shown that there is no evidence of blanket discrimination in the sentencing of people from different minority ethnic groups (McConville & Baldwin, 1982; Crow & Cove, 1984; Moxon, 1988; Hood, 1992). However, Hood has provided the clearest evidence yet that 'race' has, in some circumstances, an effect on sentencing independent of other factors. For example, all else being equal, black offenders in his study had an eight per cent greater probability of being sent to prison than white offenders (Hood, 1992). This means that certain differences in outcomes remain explicable in terms of discrimination.

Controversial outcomes at the prosecuting and sentencing stage reflect on the police as the most conspicuous and immediate representatives of the criminal justice process. One of the police officer's explained,

*"If more cases went to court and people got sentenced accordingly for racial harassment or other offences with racial motivation in it, and we could put that out to the press or put that out publicly, then I think that would show that we are taking it seriously. But all too often, there's two*

*recently where the CPS has messed the job up and because of that we can't take them to court". (Sgt. Davies)*

Perceptions of injustice are instrumental in determining the relationship between black people and the different criminal justice agencies. As this police officer indicated, the treatment of black people who are the victims of crime has been widely criticised in recent years. This is the topic of the next subsection.

#### 1.4.4 Black people as victims of crime

A British Crime Survey analysis revealed that African-Caribbean and Asian people are more vulnerable to many types of criminal victimisation than white people. Even when social and demographic factors are taken into account, the risks are still higher. Asian people are particularly at risk of vandalism, robbery and theft from the person (Aye Maung & Mirrlees-Black, 1994). The third report of the Home Affairs Committee on Racial Attacks and Harassment expressed a deep concern for the estimated and increasing number of 'racial incidents'. It questioned the ability of the police and other agencies to effectively formulate policies and allocate resources when they are unaware of the extent and nature of the problem (HMSO, 1994).

This lack of awareness is partially due to the massive under-reporting that is believed to be characteristic of racist attacks. Victims fail to report these crimes for a number of reasons. Fear or dislike of the police and a severe lack of confidence in their response have been cited as significant dissuading factors (Home Office, 1981:1994b; Aye Maung & Mirrlees-Black, 1994). Delays in responding to requests for assistance, denial of a racist motive and an unwillingness to prosecute perpetrators have also been reported as being familiar aspects of the police response (Gordon, 1990). Again, these reports are characterised by an absence of detailed empirical evidence regarding the ways in which victims perceive and experience the police and the associated implications for reporting behaviour. Qualitative research in this area is impeded by the fact that victims are a partially unknown population.

The nature and quality of the police response is believed to send a clear, negative message to black people (Runnymede Trust, 1994a). This message is reinforced by the other criminal justice agencies which, for example, fail to prosecute and convict individuals charged with incitement to racial hatred. By March 1994, a deplorably low number of prosecutions had been authorised under the 1986 Public Order Act. Out of a

total of fourteen, only seven prosecutions had resulted in a conviction (Runnymede Trust, 1994b). In summary, the inadequate police response with reference to victims of racist attacks and harassment is reflected in the poor prosecution and conviction record of the other criminal justice agencies and is likely to reinforce black people's perceptions of the entire system as being unjust.

#### 1.4.5 Conclusion

This section has summarised the research which has focused on black people's experiences of criminal justice. It has provided a background to understanding the associated perspectives of individuals from negatively racialised, non-white groups. It has demonstrated how criminological studies have been preoccupied with determining if pure discrimination exists and to what extent. The search for pure discrimination is a methodologically complicated exercise and this is reflected in the failure to provide conclusive evidence of its existence. However, evidence accumulated over a number of years indicates that black people's experiences of criminal justice are different to those of white people.

Investigating the meaning of 'race' within the specific context of an appropriate voluntary black organisation provides an opportunity to overcome the weaknesses created by the search for pure discrimination. It prioritises the understanding of the individuals involved and, as a result, is likely to reveal how processes of racialisation contribute to the quantitative data discussed in this section. An investigation of this kind is therefore more likely to reveal if and how crime in particular is racialised. According to some commentators, the racialisation of crime has ensured that the criminal justice system now represents a determining mechanism in the construction of particular racialised groups (Keith, 1993: 248; Solomos, 1993). The following section therefore discusses how black people's experiences of criminal justice are reported to be mediated by the widespread socially and politically advantageous criminalisation of black people.

## 1.5 The criminalisation of black people

### 1.5.1 Introduction

It has been argued by the CCCS group and its adherents that the criminalisation of black people has occurred through the social and political construction of the black population as a problem and as a significant threat to the social and moral order. The pervasiveness of the criminalisation process ensures that, as a consequence of supposedly possessing an inherent latent criminality, no black person is exempt from attracting this label (See Hall *et al*, 1978; CCCS, 1982; Gilroy, 1987; Solomos, 1988:1993). This section covers the issues to be addressed in order to understand why black people are reported to be a criminalised population.

The studies included refer specifically to the African-Caribbean population. However, the association of criminalisation with immigration means that the Asian population is not exempt from this process. It is also worth noting that in recent years increasing attention has focused on young Asian, particularly Pakistani, males who have apparently become a radicalised section of Britain's Asian population. Their much publicised encounters with the police further suggest that processes of criminalisation are discernible with reference to this negatively racialised group. Studies of the criminalisation of black people must therefore take their experiences into account.

The second subsection considers two essential questions that have occupied proponents of the theory of criminalisation. Firstly, why have black people been criminalised and, secondly, how have they been criminalised? These questions are addressed by examining the historical, political and social context within which what was initially perceived to be a law-abiding population was held to be responsible for a range of social ills. The next subsection summarises the media's role particularly in creating and sustaining a number of so-called 'moral panics' related to the black population. Next, the claim that the criminalisation of black people can be contextualised spatially is examined. This is crucial in explaining the link between 'race', crime and disorder which has characterised more recent debates about the black population (Keith, 1993; Solomos, 1993). Finally, the contribution of criminology, and sociology in general, in formulating reasonable explanations for this link is considered. A review of the relevant literature suggests that by focusing almost exclusively on the debate regarding black

criminality, researchers have contributed to the problems for which they are attempting to provide a solution.

Evidence cited to support commentators' claims regarding the criminalisation of the black population generally excludes the perspectives of both black people and the agents of the criminal justice process. This section therefore demonstrates how accounts of the criminalisation of black people are overly theoretical. They reflect a tendency to examine processes of criminalisation at the structural level without considering how relevant individuals negotiate, challenge and transform these processes during the course of everyday social encounters. An understanding of the processes through which black people are criminalised is incomplete if it neglects to examine the experiences and perspectives of those individuals directly involved.

Again, an appropriate black voluntary organisation provides an ideal site for an empirical investigation of the arguments advanced by theorists included in this section. By exploring the meaning of 'race' as it is understood by the relevant actors involved, the processes whereby certain negatively racialised groups become criminalised can be determined more adequately.

### 1.5.2 The main theories of criminalisation

The association of criminality with non-English qualities has historically been used to explain criminal behaviour and to focus concern about crime on different immigrant groups (Nugent & King, 1979; Walvin, 1984; Gilroy, 1987; Holmes, 1991). In terms of the post-war period, Powellism has been widely accepted as the most important development in the racialisation of political debate (Hall, 1978:30; Solomos & Back, 1995:59). It was a crucial aspect of the criminalisation of black people due to the fact that Powell invoked images of black criminality in order to accentuate the idea of a threatening, alien enemy within. This underpinned his form of popular patriotism (Gilroy, 1987:87). In fact, by the late 1960s when Powellism emerged, the criminality of the black population in general, and of black young people in particular, was already the subject of political discussion (Solomos, 1988:1993). The discussion complemented political arguments about immigration which had characterised the late 1950s and 1960s. These culminated in the 1971 Immigration Act which effectively ended primary immigration (Hiro, 1973; Holmes, 1991). It has been suggested that criminalisation is an important feature of the discourse of exclusion (Cook, 1993:156). Gilroy has argued

that the criminalisation of black people represents an aspect of initiatives towards repatriation (Gilroy, 1982:1987). It follows that the gradual exclusion of black people from full citizenship, which was initiated by immigration controls, increased the likelihood that their legal status and actions would be regarded with suspicion.

Commentators have highlighted how the construction of black criminality facilitates a 'problem-centred' view of black people. This view focuses attention on the cultural backgrounds, social environment and supposedly pathological family structures of the black population and neglects to consider issues of economic, political and social exclusion and inequality (Gutzmore, 1983; Solomos, 1988; Smith, 1989). The responsibility for the crimes committed by a minority of black people is placed firmly with the black population and, correspondingly, absolves the state from accepting responsibility for the accumulative disadvantages which undeniably characterise their lives.

The criminalisation of black people has also been explained with reference to the traditional police role of policing the powerless (Cohen, 1979; Jefferson, 1991). Cohen argued,

“It is no coincidence that working class kids call the police ‘The Law’ because it is from them that they receive their physical and moral education about the place they occupy as legal subjects in class society” (1979:128).

Policing 'race' was thought to be the contemporary manifestation of the police role in part of a system which educates individuals about the state and about their legal conditions of existence in civil society. This argument assumed a great deal without any corroborating evidence and was therefore unsustainable. Cohen (1979) also argued deterministically that changes in the political economy account for the replacement of white working class 'roughs' with black people as the socially disadvantaged group subjected to processes of criminalisation and repression.

Similarly, Jefferson (1993) has argued that the police are not racist primarily because they discriminate against young black males. Police racism occurs in producing a criminal 'other' which features young, black males predominately. The archetypal criminal 'other' is, in order of importance, male, young, working class and black. Before the politicisation of 'race' which followed post-war immigration, this archetype existed without the latter category.

The CCCS group produced a convincing account of the criminalisation of black people by arguing that, during periods of economic and social crisis, compliance has to be achieved through repression. By persuading the majority to blame the dissenting minority for a variety of social ills, increased repression is legitimised (Hall, 1980; CCCS, 1982; Gilroy, 1987; Solomos, 1988:1993). Adopting the work of Gramsci, Hall *et al* argued that this is achieved by establishing and maintaining a consensus.

“The suggestion is not that power has been effectively dispersed in modern democratic mass societies but that the vast majority of people are united within a common system of values, goals and beliefs - the so-called ‘central value system’; and it is this consensus on values, rather than formal representation which provides the cohesion which such complex states require” (1978:215).

Ideas about black criminality were thought to be part of a legitimisation struggle which has been supported by the police for their own purposes. The police have adopted, manipulated and reinforced these ideas in order to justify increases in their resources, their professional independence and the extension of their powers (Cashmore & McLaughlin, 1991). The legitimisation of repression as a result of the criminalisation of black people therefore has a number of beneficial implications for the police.

In conclusion, a number of commentators have suggested that promoting the idea of an inherent black criminality is politically and socially expedient for the police in particular and the state in general. Black people have been criminalised as an exercise in state legitimisation during a prolonged period of economic and social crisis. It has been argued that allegations of the responsibility of the black population for a variety of social ills detract attention away from the actual causes of crisis and reinforces processes of exclusion and inequality. The impact of these arguments is weakened because they have not been supported by empirical evidence from the groups who are directly involved. For example, they appear to assume that the groups who are identified as being responsible for criminalising black people are collectively aware of what they are doing and why they are doing it. Thus, although these arguments help to explain criminalisation at a structural level, they also neglect the processes of criminalisation which occur during and as a result of everyday social contact between black people and the police. The following subsection demonstrates how the assessment of the media’s contribution also focuses exclusively on processes at the structural level.



### 1.5.3 The role of the media

It has been argued that the white majority is persuaded to blame the black minority for various social ills through the creation of public concern regarding a number of issues. These have sometimes been labelled 'moral panics' although the applicability of this label is a matter of contention (Waddington, 1986). Political debates have focused on the category of 'black youth' and the associated topics of 'mugging', drugs and, more recently, urban disorder. The media has sustained an instrumental role in facilitating these debates and has arguably pre-empted debate in a number of cases. The public perception of alienated and disaffected black youth was fuelled by the intensive media reporting of serious disturbances between the police and young people at the Notting Hill Carnivals of 1976 and 1977 (Jackson, 1988; Solomos, 1993). However, it has been argued that, by this time, the young black 'mugger' had been politically constructed as the public's main enemy signalling Britain's moral and economic decline (Hall *et al*, 1978; Gilroy & Lawrence, 1988). More recent debates regarding the association of young black men and street crime have reinforced the idea that 'mugging' is synonymous with second and third generation black criminality. The perceived association of black culture, particularly Rastafarianism, with drugs also complements the idea of an inherently criminal sub-culture within the black population (Gilroy, 1982; Gilroy & Lawrence, 1988; Cashmore & Troyna, 1990). The black population is frequently identified with hard drugs, despite evidence to the contrary, and, with no supporting evidence, the media portray dealers and users as being predominately black (Silverman, 1993).

The alleged disproportionate involvement of young black people in crime set a precedent for the social and political interpretation of the urban disturbances during the 1980s. As a result of the conservative perspective on collective violence favoured by the government, the crisis which resulted in the disturbances was simplistically reduced to a crisis of law and order (Joshua & Wallace, 1983; Benyon, 1984; Benyon & Solomos, 1987). This interpretation took precedence in the media's reporting of the disturbances. The popular press in particular reported the lawlessness of black youths.

"The strength of these images was particularly clear during July 1981 when headlines proclaimed the hatred that blacks had for the police, their alienation or detachment from the mainstream values of British society and the growth of racial tension in certain important localities" (Solomos, 1993:151).

The constant and inevitable threat of a supposedly latent black criminality was re-emphasised and this legitimated the increased militarisation of the police (Gutzmore, 1983). Again, the police were seen to be monopolising upon the perceived need to protect the majority from the dangerous black minority. It is maintained that the police achieved significant gains during the 1980s by appearing to lose the battle against law and order (Benyon & Bourn, 1986; Cashmore & McLaughlin, 1991; McConville *et al*, 1991). The media arguably played a considerable role in creating and sustaining this perception.

Overall, the media is understood to have greatly contributed to the formation of the white majority's apparent perception of a black lawless minority. This perception is said to have been beneficial to the police because it has resulted in a largely uncontested increase in their powers. This argument is flawed mainly because it makes unsubstantiated assertions regarding the ability of the media to influence the opinions of its audience. It assumes that audiences are human 'sponges' that unquestioningly absorb the messages conveyed to them. The criminalisation of black people is likely to be better understood by examining how they are negatively racialised during and as a result of everyday social encounters with the police and other criminal justice agencies. This necessitates obtaining the perspectives of relevant individuals. However, it has been argued that an alternative understanding of police gains can be achieved by considering how black people are criminalised spatially. This argument is explored in the next subsection.

#### **1.5.4 The spatial context of the criminalisation of black people**

A number of commentators have claimed that the gains achieved by the police are in fact better understood by exploring the spatial context of the criminalisation of black people. Residential segregation is a medium for the reproduction of racialised inequality and symbolises, together with the imagery associated with it, black people's exclusion from some of the basic rights of citizenship (Smith, 1989). The construction of separate racialised group areas serves to constrain, restrict, monitor and regulate urban space and those who experience it (Goldberg, 1993). Black people experience urban space disproportionately to white people because the overwhelming majority of the black population is city dwelling (Peach, Robinson & Smith, 1981). Historically, the concentration of black people in cities was a consequence of various political and social

processes which restricted newly-arrived immigrants to settling in particular areas. These included, with reference to housing, the availability of inexpensive accommodation and the racialised restrictions imposed by a number of agencies including housing associations and local councils (Rex & Moore, 1967; Pryce, 1986; Jones, 1993). Evidence suggests that residential segregation is becoming more potent in late twentieth century Britain (Smith, 1989:172). This is interpreted as having multifarious negative implications for the black population not least because the 'inner city' is replete with symbolism which reinforces the criminalisation of black people.

The association of the 'inner city' with black people, particularly African-Caribbeans, and criminality is not new because the areas in which post-1945 immigrants settled rapidly became identified as localities with crime-related behaviour (Pryce, 1986; Solomos, 1988). According to Solomos (1988), this ensured that, by the early 1970s, the stereotype of areas of African-Caribbean settlement as criminal areas was deeply entrenched in police mythology. The stereotype is thought to have formed due to the dominant problem-centred approach to these areas. The approach focuses on the supposed characteristics of the inhabitants as opposed to the structural inequalities which perpetuate areas of deprivation (Hall *et al*, 1978; Solomos, 1988:1993). It legitimates the differential policing of 'inner city' areas and so reinforces the conflict relationship between the police and the black population. For example, Keith, who focused specifically on African-Caribbeans, argued that this approach enabled Sir Kenneth Newman, the former head of the Metropolitan Police, to refer to 'symbolic locations' which euphemistically and contentiously meant high crime rate areas with an inevitably high concentration of black residents (Keith, 1993).

By focusing on crime, the geographical and historical depth of this conflict can arguably be misrepresented (Keith & Murji, 1990:119). Keith examined relevant events at three of Newman's 'symbolic locations'. As a result, he maintained that police racism and black resistance existed long before black people were criminalised.

*"All of these events precipitated conflict and confrontation with the local police, almost none of them had anything to do with thieving or any form of serious criminal activity"* (Keith, 1993:49).

Thus, Keith suggests that the real history of police-black conflict has been ignored in order to invent a history which presupposes black criminality. The criminalisation of black people has been possible through an ahistorical interpretation of the main areas of black settlement. This means that criminalising black people diverts attention away from

examining the basis of the taken-for-granted conflict-ridden relationship between the police and the black population. Keith concluded that it has been necessary in order to justify disproportionate proactive policing in these areas which in turn serves to reinforce the image of the black population as an alien, threatening presence.

The symbolic threat of violent disorder, which was frequently linked to crime in political and social discourse, became a reality during the Notting Hill Carnivals of 1976 and 1977 (Solomos, 1993). These instances of collective violence represented a watershed in the history of police-black relations. They indicated that black people were being policed differently and provided an early warning of the urban disturbances during the 1980s (Gilroy, 1987:1993; Jackson, 1988). The disturbances were reported as being associated with black criminality. This rapidly enabled them to be defined as an aspect of the black threat to law and order (Benyon & Solomos, 1987; Solomos, 1988; Cook & Hudson, 1993). The potential creation of police 'no-go areas' and the possibility of creating US style ghettos were fears cited by the media, the police and politicians following the disturbances (Keith, 1993). Accordingly, one of Lord Scarman's recommendations, and arguably the recommendation most enthusiastically pursued, involved introducing new methods of policing which would include better equipment and tactics for handling collective violence (Benyon, 1984).

When further disturbances occurred during 1985, the widespread acceptance of the law and order argument ensured that the government could legitimately highlight the need for tougher policing against criminal activities (Solomos, 1988). Again, it follows that the criminalisation of black people proved extremely advantageous to the police. Cross and Keith (1993) have implied that these advantages continue to be evident during the 1990s. They argued that the Safer Cities Programme insinuates that cities are not safe and provides legitimation for increased formal structures of surveillance. If this interpretation is correct, the implications for black people are negative due to the professed link between unsafe cities and black crime.

In summary, it is argued that the criminalisation of black people through space contributes to the general perception of an inherent black criminality. It misrepresents the nature of the conflict between negatively racialised groups and the police and provides justification for increasingly repressive police powers and procedures. In order to further validate this theory, it is necessary to consider how far the racialisation of crime is reflected in everyday perceptions of crime-prone areas by both the police and

the negatively racialised groups being policed. The next subsection assesses the extent to which the problem-centred view of black people, discussed so far, has been reflected in some of the academic work which aims to investigate the link, if any, between 'race' and crime.

#### 1.5.5 The crime statistics

The question of why black people are over-represented in the crime statistics has been integral to criminological research and has generated numerous explanations. Again, this research has focused mainly on African-Caribbeans. The unresolved issue of whether, or not, black people commit more crime lies at the centre of criminological debate. There is no firm evidence that black people are more likely than white people to commit crime or that the size of the black population is related to the level of recorded crime in an area (Stevens & Willis, 1979; Albrecht, 1981). Despite this, the majority of commentators have concluded that higher offending behaviour is at least part of the explanation for higher arrest rates among black people (Stevens and Willis, 1979; Smith, 1983; Lea & Young, 1984; Reiner, 1985; Benyon, 1986). A division within radical criminology over whether there is a 'real' problem of black crime or whether the real problem is the criminalisation of black people highlights the difficulty of achieving a satisfactory explanation (Cook & Hudson, 1993).

For those commentators who have concluded that there is a 'real' crime problem among black people, the role of relative deprivation, and associated social problems, is emphasised. They have regarded high black offending as unsurprising because known offenders are disproportionately drawn from manual workers, the unemployed and the socially deprived in general (Crow, 1987; Lea & Young, 1993; Jefferson, 1991). However, Jefferson acknowledged that Asian people, who are under-represented in arrest rates, represent a significant and currently inexplicable anomaly. He suggested the potential influence of cultural factors but accepted that the link between deprivation and offending is complicated, even though it is not straightforwardly refuted, by this research finding (Jefferson, 1991). The centrality of culture to the explanations advanced by proponents of the 'real' crime problem theory has been criticised. Culture is relied on as a medium through which social injustice is transformed into criminal behaviour. As a result, the idea of cultural pathology legitimates the criminalisation of black people (Keith & Murji, 1990).

Commentators who question the existence of a real crime problem among black people have highlighted the ways in which both crime and the criminal population are politically and socially constructed (e.g. Hall *et al*, 1978; Hall, 1980; CCCS, 1982). The notorious inaccuracy of police statistics has been attributed to their inability to reflect the wide variety of factors that determine who is arrested and charged. For example, they cannot reveal any police bias in the treatment of suspects or any public bias in reporting crime and co-operating with the police (Gutzmore, 1983; Bhat *et al*, 1988).

“Rather than assuming a priori that ‘race’ will not affect the production of arrest statistics, it might be hypothesized that the activity of agents (such as police officers) working within an institutionally racist society is likely to produce an effect which has a racial bias” (Bowling, 1990:489).

Research which incorporates the tenuous assumption that ‘race’ has no influence on the production of arrest statistics has therefore been condemned as being intrinsically inaccurate.

The debate regarding whether, or not, black people commit more crime can be criticised in a similar way to the search for pure discrimination in the criminal justice system. In short, it is ultimately irresolvable due to the methodological impossibility of determining pure criminality. It has arguably contributed to the criminalisation of black people by ensuring that the link between ‘race’ and crime remains a politically and socially expedient topic for discussion. It detracts attention away from considering the ways in which the individuals concerned experience and understand the relationship between black people and the criminal justice agencies. For example, it is necessary to consider whether these individuals identify a ‘real’ crime problem among black people and, if so, to examine their explanations for it. This facilitates an understanding of how the day-to-day encounters between black people and the police are predicated on notions of black criminality. Examining the perspectives of appropriate individuals also precludes the assumption that black people are automatically and unavoidably criminalised. It is more likely to reveal the specific contexts within which criminalisation occurs.

### 1.5.6 Conclusion

This section has discussed how and why black people are reported to be a criminalised population. It has provided an overview of the main theories which suggest that it is economically, politically and socially expedient to racialise crime. It has demonstrated the tendency of theorists to focus on these processes at the structural level

without considering how these processes also occur at the level of the individual. Similarly, the arguments regarding the link between 'race' and crime fail to consider how the relationship between black people and criminal justice agencies is understood by the individuals concerned.

It is clear that empirical research within the specific context of an appropriate black voluntary organisation can help to address this imbalance. It enables an investigation of how processes of racialisation inform the contact between black people and criminal justice agencies and how these processes occur during, and as a result of, contact. This can then be linked to processes that occur at the structural level in order to provide a more comprehensive picture. The relationship between black people and the police is another area that requires detailed empirical research. This is discussed in the final section.

## **1.6 The relationship between black people and the police**

### **1.6.1 Introduction**

The relationship between black people and the police is widely reported to be one of endemic conflict and tension. The urban disturbances of the 1980s were interpreted as the culmination of at least two decades of the differential policing of Britain's African-Caribbean population in particular (Benyon, 1984:1986; Benyon & Solomos, 1987; Bhat *et al*, 1988; Keith, 1993). This section summarises the substantial literature covering police-black relations. It is summarised here in order to consider two central issues. The second subsection examines the attempts of theorists to explain the hostile nature of the relationship between black people and the police. The inadequacy of existing theories is highlighted. Subsection three assesses the extent to which existing research satisfactorily establishes the nature of and reasons for the relationship between black people and the police.

The third subsection is crucial because the literature reveals that the people who are directly involved in this relationship are rarely asked for their interpretation. There is a tendency to assume that all police-black encounters are hostile or potentially hostile. Black people and the police are regarded as having no common interests and, as a result, there is reported to be an immovable divide between them. As a direct consequence of this interpretation, all black people are understood to regard all police officers as being

racist and all police officers are understood to regard all black people as being potential criminals at the very least. This conclusion oversimplifies an extremely complex relationship and is inadequate if it is used, without sufficient empirical evidence, to indicate the central characteristics of police-black encounters.

The available empirical evidence is critically examined in order to determine how far it supports the assumption of endemic conflict between black people and the police. Overall, the aim of this section is to demonstrate how a black voluntary organisation working within the criminal justice arena provides a much needed opportunity to investigate the understanding of those individuals who directly experience the relationship.

Again, the literature included in this section generally refers to the African-Caribbean population. However, empirical research must include Britain's Asian population because, in recent years, a less than satisfactory relationship has been reported between Asian people and the police. Asian people have collectively protested against the lukewarm police response to racist attacks and have articulated the right to defend themselves (Holdaway, 1996). The widespread mobilisation of the Asian population around this issue demonstrates how the nature and form of police-black conflict changes over time. As with the African-Caribbean population, evidence of differential policing, albeit in a different way, has resulted in a perceived deterioration in the relationship between Asian people and the police.

### 1.6.2 Police-black relations: the main theories

A traditional Marxist analysis understands the police to be agents of the ruling classes (Hall *et al*, 1978; Cohen, 1979). This means that the disadvantaged structural position of black people in a capitalist society ensures that they are inevitably among those who have to be policed. It follows that the relationship between black people and the police will never be harmonious. The ultimate role of the police is to enforce and protect an unjust social order and therefore any attempt at impartiality is a pretence (Holdaway, 1979; Keith, 1993). The Marxist interpretation relies heavily on the influence of factors at the structural level and, as a result, it tends to neglect the role of human agency. The police are not simply agents of the state. They have the discretionary freedom to impose their own interpretations of the police role on those of the decision-makers (Holdaway, 1979:5). In terms of policing black people, they



therefore have the discretionary freedom to influence both the outcome of police-black encounters and the nature of their relationship with black people more generally.

As a result, several theories of police racism have been advanced by commentators. These are inadequate because they are ahistorical and simply reify the problem of police racism (Keith, 1993:15). For example, the so-called 'rotten apple' theory places the blame on the personal prejudices of individual police officers. Another theory blames the apparently racist 'canteen sub-culture' of the police (Gordon, 1983; Cook & Hudson, 1993; Keith, 1993). Police Racism Awareness Training incorporates these theories because it targets police attitudes and behaviour without considering the wider social and political context of policing the black population (Home Office, 1983; Southgate, 1984). Keith has argued that encounters between black people and the police are racist in their effect because the racialisation of crime is a direct consequence of police behaviour. He explained,

“Such behaviour, not deliberately racist by intention, is manifestly racist in effect, criminalization being not “the fault” of police officers concerned but still the direct consequence of their behaviour” (1993:198).

This means that police behaviour does not have to be intrinsically racist in order to produce a racist outcome. Theories of police racism are therefore tantamount to suggesting that the symptoms rather than the cause of the problem should be addressed. They provide little evidence of the reasons why the relationship between black people and the police deteriorated. Evidence of the mistreatment of black people by the police is more indicative of the cause.

From the 1950s to the present day, the police have consistently been criticised for their apparently harsh treatment of the black population. By the late 1960s, a number of specific complaints against the police emerged, none of which could be justified by the alleged criminality of the black population. First, the police were reported as using excessive physical force when dealing with black suspects (Humphry, 1972; Gordon, 1983; Solomos, 1993). Second, young black people were reported as being repeatedly harassed by the police because they were perceived to be a 'problem' group (Solomos, 1988). Third, unacceptable police attitudes and behaviour were understood to be perpetuating the myth regarding black criminality (Solomos, 1993). These complaints are evident in Gus John's much quoted study of Handsworth in 1970. He concluded that a massive breakdown in relations between black people and the

police was imminent (John, 1970). Police mistreatment of the black population therefore understandably led to a deterioration in police-black relations.

Within the relevant literature, widespread misuse of Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824 is perhaps the most frequently cited example of police malpractice with reference to black people (e.g. Moore, 1975; Gordon, 1983; Benyon & Bourn, 1984). Under this section, a person could be charged with loitering with the intent to commit an arrestable offence. The charge was known as 'sussing' and was repealed in 1981 following a great deal of controversy over its use in arresting young black people (Small, 1983). It appeared that, for the police, simply being black constituted reasonable grounds for suspicion (Stone, 1986). This explanation remains pertinent because black people are still considered to be treated automatically with suspicion by the police. The disproportionate number of black people featuring in police stop and search statistics appears to support this contention (Fitzgerald, 1993).

Police surveillance of the black population in general is an important source of mutual hostility and suspicion. The associated activities of police Special Patrol Groups (SPG's) during the 1970s are reported to have caused an enormous amount of resentment among black people. It appeared that the black population had become the unjustifiable target of exercises in differential, saturation policing. These exercises are understood to have contributed to the severity of the deterioration in police-black relations (Blom-Cooper & Drabble, 1982; Gordon, 1983). For example, the saturation exercise labelled SWAMP '81 in Brixton is thought to have been a significant precursor to the disturbances there (Blom-Cooper & Drabble, 1982; Benyon, 1984).

The widespread disturbances in Britain's cities during the 1980s generated a great deal of comment and discussion. They were frequently interpreted as the culmination of many years of police mistreatment of black people. The police were understood to be legitimate targets for those participating because they were perceived as a hostile force guilty of discrimination, harassment and general malpractice (Benyon, 1984:1986; Benyon & Solomos, 1987; Bhat, 1988). Lord Scarman viewed police-black relations in Brixton as 'a tale of failure' even though he contentiously denied that institutional police practices were racialised (Scarman, 1986). Entrenched mistrust and hostility towards the police, particularly by young people, was reported to be one common characteristic of the areas where the disturbances occurred (Benyon &

Solomos, 1987:34). The disturbances therefore provoked serious criticism of the police and served to highlight the continuing hostility between them and black people.

In summary, the relationship between black people and the police is reported to have deteriorated mainly as a consequence of the understanding that the black population is policed differently to the white population. However, the arguments included in this subsection lack the support of detailed empirical research and, as a result, they tend to neglect the perspectives of the two groups involved.

These perspectives can be examined by exploring how individuals from the two groups understand the meaning of 'race' through their involvement in an appropriate black voluntary organisation. Their understanding is likely to be influenced by the way in which they experience and interpret police-black relations. An empirical investigation is likely to reveal the main sources of information used in forming this understanding. The relative importance of immediate experiences compared with, for example, media reporting can be assessed. An empirical investigation of this kind can also assess what individuals regard as being the main sources of police-black hostility, who they regard as being responsible for it and how they believe hostility can be reduced. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of police- black relations. The following subsection highlights the limitations of the empirical studies completed on this subject and suggests further how these limitations can be overcome.

### **1.6.3 The results of empirical studies**

Police-black relations have been the subject of a number of empirical studies. These studies reveal that the assumption of endemic conflict conceals a more complex relationship. Hostility is evident but it does not wholly account for the ways in which black people understand the police. For example, an influential Policy Studies Institute (PSI) study entitled 'Police and People in London' concluded that hostile views do not indicate a complete rejection of the system of policing. Black people desire and make use of police services but are highly critical of the services received (Smith & Gray, 1983). A study in Manchester in 1981 concluded that the experiences of black and white people were remarkable for their similarities as opposed to their differences (Tuck & Southgate, 1981). A more recent study of young men in selected areas of Leeds revealed that white and black attitudes to the police may be more similar than is generally implied (Jefferson & Walker, 1993). An analysis of the influence of 'race' on

being stopped by the police concluded that black and white people are equally likely to be calm and civil to the police during contact (Norris *et al*, 1992). These studies are also relevant because they reveal that some hostility and suspicion is present in terms of both black and white experiences of and attitudes towards the police.

However, the black men in the Leeds survey had an overall more negative perception of the police than their white counterparts (Jefferson & Walker, 1993). Similarly, a series of Home Office surveys regarding public satisfaction with police services discovered that seventy-six per cent of white respondents believed that the police do a very or fairly good job. This percentage compares unfavourably with a figure of sixty-two per cent for Asians and fifty-two per cent for black respondents (Southgate & Crisp, 1992). Similarly, black people make more complaints against the police than white people per head of population. They are also less likely to withdraw their complaints (Stevens & Willis, 1981). Each of these studies is supported by Small's research finding that young African-Caribbean people have a severe lack of confidence in the police (Small, 1983). They reveal discernible differences in the attitudes of black and white people towards the police.

Evidence of differences in black and white attitudes does not, however, support the assumption of endemic conflict in police-black relations. Differences over space and time produce a more complex picture. These include the ethnic and social composition and history of the local black population as well as the methods of policing adopted in a particular area (Keith, 1993). They result in differences in the ways in which black people understand their relationship with the police. For example, the study in Manchester may be contrasted with the PSI study because it reported little difference in black and white experiences of contact with the police (Tuck & Southgate, 1981; Smith & Gray, 1983; Crow, 1987). This means that spatial and temporal differences may have contributed to a more conflict-ridden relationship in the London area.

The PSI study has, however, been criticised for regarding policing as the sole stimulus for police-black conflict (Waters, 1990:54-5). This criticism introduces the possibility that details of the research methodology can effect the outcome. By placing policing at the centre of their analysis, the PSI researchers did not effectively take into account other potentially relevant factors in their research design. The relationship between black people and the police cannot be understood fully without reference to the

wider social and political context which both sustains racialised inequalities and influences policing.

The wider context within which black people are policed must therefore be considered in conjunction with past policing strategies. A study by Gaskell (1986) revealed that young black men are not anti-police simply because they regard the police as symbols of an oppressive white society. Similarly, a high level of unemployment among them is not the sole contributory factor. He concluded that the way in which the black population is understood to have been policed has an important influence on their attitudes (see also Field, 1984). A crucial, related empirical issue relates to how this understanding is achieved.

Tuck and Southgate's study of Manchester failed to discover clear evidence to support the complaints of black people regarding excessive police attention. As a result, they concluded,

“The relative lack of clear evidence for West Indian complaints about excessive police attention suggests that rumour and hearsay may play a part in creating discontent” (1981:44).

This suggestion is related to the argument that the collective experience of racialised discrimination has produced a kind of collective consciousness which transcends the particular experiences of individuals (Jefferson, 1991). This means that the nature of the relationship between black people and the police is not solely dependent on immediate experiences and is not necessarily an accurate reflection of police behaviour (Jefferson, 1993).

Police-black relations crucially depend on an understanding of how the police are perceived to treat members of a specific racialised group. The literature does not adequately explain how this understanding is formed. Empirical evidence does not cover the relative importance in the formation of perceptions of, for example, the media, localised examples of police-black conflict and police treatment of racialised groups nationally and more widely. Additionally, it fails to examine how available discourses of racialised discrimination and injustice influence perceptions of policing (Jefferson, 1993). The explanation of rumour and hearsay is insufficient because it fails to identify the specific processes through which information is obtained and disseminated among the black population.

In summary, the literature reveals that black people's perceptions of the police are generally less favourable than those of white people. This does not, however,

straightforwardly support the assertion that police-black relations are characterised by endemic conflict. First, differences over space and time help to determine the extent to which hostility is evident. Additionally, the wider social and political context within which black people are policed is a significant determining factor. These must be examined together with past policing strategies because the way in which black people are understood to have been policed features significantly in the formation of their associated attitudes.

Empirical evidence is also required in order to reveal how the acquisition and dissemination of information regarding police practices is achieved and how this results in a specific understanding of police attitudes and behaviour. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that black people have been policed differently to white people but the associated assumption that all police-black encounters are inevitably conflict-based is simplistic. The ways in which black people achieve an understanding of policing therefore need to be determined if the relationship between black people and the police is to be better understood.

#### **1.6.4 Conclusion**

This section has highlighted the need for detailed empirical research into the nature of and associated reasons for the relationship between black people and the police. It has drawn attention to the tendency of commentators to neglect the perspectives of the two groups involved. It has argued that black people's negative perceptions of the police do not necessarily result in hostile encounters. This assumption can be tested empirically by considering how the relationship is understood by the individuals concerned and how this particular understanding is applied to different situations. A relevant black voluntary organisation provides an ideal context within which to examine the perspectives of both black people and the police. It enables an in-depth exploration of the specific processes through which each group establishes an understanding of the other.

#### **1.7 Review of the literature: conclusion**

The four sections comprising the literature review have demonstrated how empirical research within the context of a black voluntary organisation, the Black Justice

Project, could address important sociological questions regarding volunteering among black people, the racialisation of identity and criminal justice. This has been achieved by highlighting the weaknesses of existing studies and theories and explaining how these can be addressed by studying the meaning and role of 'race' in this specific social context. In doing so, the literature review has also described and analysed the general context within which the BJP worked.

Thus, the first central aim of the research was to produce much-needed empirical evidence regarding how volunteers understand the meaning and role of 'race' as they participate in a black voluntary organisation. This included investigating the reasons why people decided to volunteer for the BJP and their related interpretation of it.

The research's second central aim was to examine how the volunteers understood their identity to be racialised in relation to other black and white people both within the project and beyond. The research therefore concentrated on the construction of racialised similarities and differences. This involved assessing the extent to which the notion of racialised communities was significant as well as considering the formation and negotiation of racialised boundaries. In doing so, the research aimed to determine what makes a unified collective response among different negatively racialised groups possible.

Finally, the research aimed to analyse the nature of the relationship between black people and the police, a crucial criminal justice agency, by focusing on the understanding of individuals involved in the relationship. It therefore aimed to provide a balance to research and theories of crime and criminalisation which tend to focus on processes of racialisation at the structural level only. Thus, the research focused on how relevant individuals negotiate, challenge and transform these processes during the course of everyday social encounters.

By fulfilling these three central aims, it was anticipated that the research would more accurately assess the extent of the BJP's apparent success. At face value, the project appeared to be extremely successful in recruiting and retaining volunteers, in securing the support of a number of key statutory organisations and generally maintaining an harmonious and productive relationship with those who contributed to its operation. However, as Chapter Four will begin to demonstrate, the project's success was neither straightforward or unproblematic.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter Two is divided into three main sections covering the research design, the research process and the ethics and politics of the research. It aims to provide a broad overview of my research methodology in an accurate and detailed manner.

Section 2.2 begins by considering the epistemological and theoretical issues which underpin the choice of qualitative methods as the most appropriate form of research for the study of processes of racialisation. It summarises the qualitative researcher's perspective of the social world and examines critically what constitutes evidence and knowledge for those of us who adopt this perspective. Next, the benefits of the semi-structured interview are examined in order to establish why it was the most useful method for realising the aims and objectives of the research. Finally, the issue of researcher participation is discussed as a way of explaining and defending the extent to which I became involved with the organisation which formed the basis of my research.

The main stages of the research's development are summarised in the third section. The stages are reviewed chronologically and the section therefore begins with choosing the site and gaining access, followed by sampling, the interview schedule, the venue, data recording and, finally, data analysis. It must be stressed that these stages are by no means discrete. They are treated as such here purely for ease of reference.

Finally, relevant ethical and political issues are addressed. First, my ethical position as a white researcher studying a black organisation is examined. Second, the question 'whose side am I on?' is considered in order to establish my ethical responsibilities to both the individual research participants and the Black Justice Project more generally. Finally, the chapter is concluded by calling into question the notion that sociological research can ever be value-free.



## 2.2 The research design

### 2.2.1 A qualitative methodology: The interpretive approach

The aim of this subsection is to establish why the objectives of the research, to explore the meaning of 'race' and how it is related to racialised identity in a specific social context, were ideally suited to a qualitative methodology. First, it argues that qualitative research methods were most appropriate for this research project specifically because they enabled a focus on the experiences and interpretations of relevant individuals in a particular social setting. Thus, it explains how qualitative research is useful because,

“... satisfactory explanations of social activities require a substantial appreciation of the perspectives, culture and world-views of the actors involved” (Allan, 1991:178).

It then describes and responds to the main criticisms of the qualitative approach to research. However, in order to explain satisfactorily the merits of adopting qualitative methods for the purpose of studying processes of racialisation, the section begins by establishing how they are distinguishable from the quantitative alternative.

Quantitative methods of research are usually associated with the positivist tradition. This tradition informed the beliefs of early social theorists. August Comte, the so-called founding father of sociology, defined the task of the discipline as explaining the laws of progress and social order. For Comte, the successful completion of this task depended on sociologists adopting the method of observation, experimentation and comparison which had been used so successfully in the natural sciences (Cosser, 1977:5). This methodological approach was accepted by Durkheim who argued that the aim of sociology is to establish principles that have the same objective status as natural scientific laws (Giddens, 1977:38).

This approach is manifestly unsuited to a research design that does not seek to evaluate and generate facts and laws in the sense of, for example, investigating the relationship between minority ethnic origin and the sentences passed in British courts of law. It cannot be adopted to determine the nature of the relationship and related understanding between individuals in a specific social setting. This means that it cannot be used to determine the meaning of 'race' as it is understood by the individuals involved.

The 'received' view of science, to which Comte and Durkheim subscribed, has since been exposed as a methodologically naive attempt to establish universal 'truths' in a detached, neutral manner. Although it is unlikely that quantitative researchers maintain a strictly positivist position today, they have a fundamentally different approach to that of qualitative researchers. As well as evaluating and generating facts and laws, quantitative researchers aim to produce interval or ordinal data which can be subjected to statistical manipulation. The researched are defined as objects with given properties, such as attitudes, which can, with care, be measured (Allan, 1991:177-8). This approach is undoubtedly inappropriate to the study of racialised identity primarily because social identity cannot, in any straightforward way, be measured. A comprehensive examination of racialised identity requires in-depth exploration of both the relevant experiences of individuals and the meanings they attach to different social situations. This cannot be achieved by simply measuring their attitudes.

It can be achieved by adopting research methods that are under-pinned by sociological theory which advocates the importance of the interpretation and therefore meaning of social behaviour. For the qualitative researcher, the self is not pre-supposed and cannot represent a simple unit of analysis to be discovered under laboratory-style conditions of experimentation. It can only be understood in terms of its relationship with the social whereby meanings are attached to behaviour in the process of interaction (Bryman, 1988:54). This reflects George Simmel's belief that the unity of society is not something detachable from the individual's sense of belonging to it (Simmel, 1971). A similar idea is found in the work of G. H. Mead who argued that the self is inherently social in nature and must therefore be considered as part of the whole social process (Baldwin, 1986:106). Simmel and Mead were a great influence on the Chicago School's development of symbolic interactionism as a useful method of qualitative research. Their arguments are equally applicable to qualitative research methods in general.

The qualitative researcher's conceptualisation of the self is crucial to the effective study of the racialisation of identity. It encourages a focus on the social processes whereby individuals are negatively or positively racialised as a result of the meanings attached to behaviour during the course of everyday interaction. It highlights the importance of investigating how identity is negotiated, achieved and transformed in creating a self which is a unity of individual and social elements.

In summary, for the reasons outlined above, this research project was conducted in the interpretive as opposed to the positivist tradition. Interpretive methods provided the most satisfactory methodological framework within which to realise the research objectives.

In order to examine the main criticisms of interpretive research methods, it is necessary to consider what constitutes evidence and knowledge to the qualitative researcher. A central criticism of qualitative research is that it has no firm grounds on which to legitimate its interpretation of the social world. As a result, it is argued that methods of qualitative research generate invalid evidence and knowledge due to their biased, subjective and unsystematic nature. These claims will be addressed here by examining the specific scientific frame of reference used by qualitative researchers to defend the academic status of their statements.

A central aim of sociology as a discipline is to make the familiar unfamiliar. For qualitative research in particular, common-sense interpretations of reality are rejected in order to investigate the ways in which meanings are constructed and applied in various social circumstances. This reflects Wittgenstein's statement that,

“The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity” (Wittgenstein, 1968: para 129).

For example, the police officers interviewed for this research insisted that, due to the very nature of their job, ‘race’ has no meaning as they carry out their duties. Qualitative methods of research were successfully employed to demonstrate that ‘race’ does in fact have meaning during the course of their work. Richard Jenkins has usefully distinguished between folk models and analytical models in order to emphasise the academic status of the qualitative researcher's interpretations.

“...analytical models should be capable of including the contradictions between differing folk models within their scope; social scientists often have access to a broader, more heterogeneous stock of information about a given situation than do lay actors; and social science models, unlike most folk models, are explicitly intended to be explanatory and communicative” (1987:154-5).

These analytic models succeed because they are informed by a substantial body of sociological theory and knowledge. For example, the analytical model referred to in the thesis as the custody officers' presentation of their role reflects a broad body of sociological knowledge regarding the police occupational culture and the operational norms of policing (see Chapters Four and Five).

Furthermore, sociology is a disciplined and systematic approach to interpreting social reality particularly because sociologists have well-established rules regarding how to proceed. As Berger and Kellner have noted,

“If I am not an ordinary observer but a sociologist, the process of interpretation is different in that I am, or should be, much more aware of the dynamics of this interaction, and therefore more in control of it. Also, *qua* sociologist, I am subject to explicit and implicit rules as to how to proceed - the ‘rules of the game’” (1981:42).

There is a tradition of qualitative research to which the inexperienced researcher can refer in preparation for fieldwork. The observations of Berger and Kellner provided useful preparation for this research. For example, they have referred to the specifically sociological act of listening which involves distancing, in order to attain a greater sense of control and open-mindedness, and disengaging, in order to suspend personal views (Berger & Kellner, 1981:32&76). The latter was particularly important for my fieldwork with the police officers as any expression of my disapproval regarding their views could have jeopardised the success of the interview.

In addition to this, the apparently precarious validity of qualitative research is successfully refuted by examining the scientific frame of reference used by qualitative researchers. Methods of qualitative research produce valid data because,

“A valid account is one which can be defended as sound because it is well-grounded conceptually and empirically” (Dey, 1993:228).

Sociological concepts are crucial in that they represent the means by which common-sense versions of reality are transformed into sociological understanding. Within the context of this research, Weber’s methodological tool of the ‘ideal-type’ was relevant in translating the custody officer’s understanding of their job into a sociological conceptualisation of it. Thus, the officers’ presentation of their role was conceptualised as a kind of ideal-type of policing which does not exist in reality but which is crucial to the officers’ interpretation of their job (for an explanation of Weber’s methodological tool see Giddens, 1971:142).

The strength of the qualitative researcher’s interpretations also depends ultimately on the support of empirical evidence. Sociology is essentially an empirical discipline and its legitimacy is secured by ensuring that every interpretation is validated by substantial empirical evidence. Thus, each research finding presented in the main body of the thesis is supported by numerous extracts from the data collected.

The validity of this evidence is sustained further by the constant search for falsifying data. Gilbert has explained why the strategy of falsification is important.

“First, by directing attention to ‘awkward cases’ it helps to improve theories. Second, it has been argued that it is a useful criterion for what should count as theory. The criterion is that it must be possible in principle to falsify a theory” (1993:24).

The search for data which does not support emerging concepts and theories is a useful rule of procedure as it secures the legitimacy of the qualitative researcher’s conclusions. For example, it was clear from the interviews with the BJP volunteers that individual police officers were sometimes thought to be responsible for conflict between black people and the police. This appeared to contradict the emerging theory that volunteers, as lay people, are much more likely than the police to highlight the significance of structural and institutional racialised inequalities for the perpetuation of problematic police-black relations. However, by focusing on the importance of stories to their understanding, it became clear that, for the volunteers, the actions of individual officers simply serve to emphasise ‘the way it is’ in terms of explaining the nature of the relationship more generally (see Section 4.2 of Chapter Four for a full account). This interpretation did not therefore amount to an individualistic theory of police racism.

The ‘richness’ of qualitative data also contributes to the validity of the research findings. For example, the flexibility of qualitative research enables the testing and re-testing of accumulated empirical evidence (Becker, 1970:52-3). Additionally, the relatively long period of time over which it takes place contributes to the depth of understanding reached. My fieldwork was completed over a two year period. This enabled me to obtain a detailed understanding of the organisation which formed the basis of my research. It also gave me the opportunity to investigate in greater detail particular issues that were raised during the interview process. For example, two of the volunteers interviewed expressed a concern that the main trainers used by the BJP are white. They argued that the project’s aim to support the black community should be reflected in its internal structure. I subsequently included a question about the trainers in the interview schedule in order to investigate more thoroughly this unanticipated point of view.

Finally, qualitative research is replicable in purpose and, to a certain extent, procedure. Simply by reading this chapter, another researcher could quite satisfactorily adopt my general research design and methodology to study the meaning of ‘race’ and

racialised identity in a similar social context. This research would have the additional benefit of being informed by my research findings.

The above discussion has demonstrated that qualitative researchers have a specific, scientific frame of reference within which they can adequately defend their interpretation of the social world. This frame of reference has three main components. One, qualitative research is supported by an enormous body of sociological theory and knowledge which sustains its analytic focus. Two, it has well-established rules governing procedure. This again distinguishes the qualitative researcher's approach to social situations from that of the lay person's. Three, the frame of reference includes a number of ways in which the validity of qualitative research can be thoroughly established. Having established the usefulness and scientific validity of qualitative research methods, this section will now discuss the particular methods of research that I used to study the BJP.

### 2.2.2 Qualitative interviewing

Often, a crucial aspect of the design of sociological research is selecting an appropriate interview method. The choice is important as it inevitably influences both the kind and amount of data collected and thus the results of the study (Fontana & Frey, 1994:370). A semi-structured interview method was selected as the most satisfactory approach for this study. The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that the majority of questions were designed to be as open-ended as possible. Gilbert has summarised the principles which inform this approach.

“First, the questioning should be as open-ended as possible, in order to gain spontaneous information about attitudes and actions, rather than a rehearsed position. Second, the questioning techniques should encourage respondents to communicate their underlying attitudes, beliefs and values, rather than a glib or easy answer” (1993:138).

Semi-structured interviews are designed to establish the respondent's frame of reference whilst dealing with several complex and detailed issues. Their design reflects the common perception of qualitative interviews as ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984:102).

My interview schedule was constructed to incorporate this ideal by including questions that were designed to encourage a conversational-style response (a copy of each of the five interview schedules used is contained in Appendix I). For example, the

following questions were designed to encourage the BJP volunteers to talk about their experiences of visiting the police stations.

“Tell me about the custody officers. How have you got on with them?”

“Do you remember any call-outs in particular? Tell me what happened”.

Other questions included in the interview schedule are noticeably more structured. This approach was adopted for two significant reasons. First, it was necessary to elicit some essentially factual information in order to establish a profile of the respondents. The following questions are also taken from the volunteer’s interview schedule.

“How long have you been a Black Justice Project volunteer?”

“How did you come to be involved with the project?”

A postal questionnaire was initially constructed to gather this data. However, the questions included in the questionnaire were eventually included as part of the interview schedule. They formed a convenient ‘ice-breaker’ at the beginning of the interview and did not increase substantially the interview’s length. A one hundred per cent response rate was also ensured.

The second reason for the use of more structured questions relates to the nature of the topics covered in the interviews. For example, detailed questions were included in order to investigate how volunteers understood the notion of ‘community’ symbolically. A simple probe such as ‘tell me about your community’ was likely to have been inadequate, particularly as it presumed membership of a community in the first place. It was unlikely to establish the nature and extent of the volunteer’s identification with a community and it also precluded the potential for membership of more than one community. Instead, the following questions are representative of those asked in this respect.

“What, if anything, do (self-defined racialised group e.g. Pakistani, African-Caribbean) people in Sheffield have in common?”.

“Do you see (self-defined racialised group) people as making up a real community in Sheffield?”.

The above discussion demonstrates the usefulness of semi-structured interview methods for my qualitative study of the BJP. A combination of open-ended and more structured questions, with the option of probing if necessary, presented the most satisfactory way in which to collect the data required.

The opportunity to probe accentuates the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews. Open-ended questions enable the researcher to adjust each interview

according to the information provided by the respondent. This means that the interviewer plays a far greater role in the interaction with the respondent than would be acceptable in a structured interview. It is precisely for this reason that qualitative researchers have had to confront the criticism that the nature of the researcher-respondent relationship negatively effects the data obtained. It is necessary to address this criticism here in order to defend further my decision to adopt the semi-structured interview method.

Studies completed on the subject indicate that interviewer effects must be acknowledged as an inevitable consequence of qualitative interviews (Gilbert, 1993:144-5). It follows that it is desirable to match the demographic characteristics of the interviewer and respondent. Within the context of my research, an obvious potential criticism is that, as a white person, I was ill-qualified to study a predominately black organisation. However, controlling for various relevant characteristics such as age, class, gender, status and racialised origin is a hugely difficult, and perhaps impossible, task. Due to the demographic diversity of the respondents in my research, several interviewers would have been required simply to provide a match according to racialised characteristics. The necessity of doing so is also debatable as Carol Jones has argued.

“The question of the extent to which it is possible to be an ‘insider’ merely by virtue of shared gender identity, race or ethnicity remains open to debate” (1991:212).

This suggests that being black provides no automatic guarantee of an advantaged position when interviewing other black people. /NB

A more practical approach is for the interviewer to be aware of the different social and cultural factors that each party brings to the interview situation. For example, all but one of the police officers interviewed for the research were male. I was acutely aware of the gender difference, particularly because it appeared to be advantageous. Overall, the police officers were extremely courteous and co-operative and did not appear threatened by the interview situation. On several occasions, I left the police station feeling surprised at the frankness of the interview. This advantage has been noted by other female researchers (Fontana & Frey, 1994:370). In order to produce a valid account, interviewers must note differences, such as gender, and consider their effect on the research findings. However, given the rigorous rules applied to qualitative research, these effects are unlikely to be substantial.



Producing a valid account also depends on managing the dynamics of the interview situation. Establishing a rapport is vital to the success of a qualitative interview because, without it, underlying beliefs and values are unlikely to be revealed (Whyte, 1984:104). It was generally easy to establish a rapport with the volunteers, particularly because I had met some of them at previous BJP training sessions, meetings and social evenings. The majority of volunteers were a similar age to myself and sixteen volunteers had completed or were studying for degrees, mainly in Sheffield. These factors facilitated the initial 'ice-breaking' component of the interview situation because they provided broad areas of common interest. With reference to the police officers, establishing a rapport was also relatively easy. I quickly discovered that it was usually sufficient simply to be honest about the nature of the research and my motives for undertaking it. In addition to this, the police officers were on-duty during the interviews. Acknowledging that I was inconveniently interrupting their work represented another valuable way of gaining their commitment to the interview. Establishing a rapport is therefore the vital first stage of obtaining valid interview data.

A frank and open discussion can, however, be impeded by the relationship of power that exists between interviewer and respondent. A useful way to overcome this potential problem is to treat the interview as a reflexive process through which the structure is negotiated as the interview is underway. As Berger and Kellner have explained, the much-neglected ability to listen properly to what the respondent is saying is crucially important when establishing a reflexive approach.

“I must keep attentive to what this person is saying. I must not let my mind wander, and I must try to keep attuned to her communications. I must not interrupt. And I must especially not interrupt with judgements or opinions of my own, not only because this might make her angry or defensive, but because it will deflect my attention from what she is communicating to me” (1981:28-9).

Not interrupting means that digressions must be permitted wherever they occur. For example, I had great difficulty establishing a rapport with one of the older volunteers. He seemed extremely uncomfortable with the interview situation and appeared reluctant to give a full response to my questions regarding his social identity as a black person. The following is his interpretation of my questions.

*“I think, right, when you talk about racism, I don't want to go into that for the simple reason that I'm getting to sorta just ignore it now because I see it every day and I can't believe what I'm seeing”. (Lewis)*

However, this rather dismissive comment provoked a very revealing digression resulting in a page of interview transcript on the subject of racism in the local football leagues. The respondent was a trainer for an African-Caribbean community football team. By encouraging him to talk about the team's experiences, I obtained valuable information regarding how he understood the social world to be racialised. The following is a small extract from his digression. It is an example of how he understood his team's experiences to be racialised.

*“There was an incident right, you know. I used to run a mid-week team in Sheffield which consist of all black guys, its a black team. We had a couple of white guys as well but half the guys been in prison, been on curfew, just out of prison, going in courts and you know things like that. This league been going since 1940 odd, mid-week league. Oh, it had, what, about five division right. We went in it about ten years back, summit like that. We just went in it and we lift ourself up 'til we get to division one. So, the year before last, we completed the double. Down to two division. The following year, again we complete the double. Down to one division. Last year we completed the double again. Last year it folded up, why? 'Cause we were winning”.* (Lewis)

This demonstrates that digressions are not simply irrelevant information to be discarded following transcription. They are integral to the interview specifically because they enable the respondent to frame questions in ways which are relevant to them; thus taking some control away from the interviewer.

The nature of the interaction between researcher and respondent is prioritised by treating the interview as a reflexive process. This means that the researcher focuses on the interview as a social relationship and, as a result, attention is drawn to the concerns, interests and questions of the respondent. During an interview with a volunteer, I was confronted with the following questions regarding Britain's colonial legacy.

*“What do you think when you hear all this? You know, as a white person, how does it make you feel?”.* (Richard)

The question was asked in a good-humoured, confrontational manner and constituted a direct appeal to my personal feelings and beliefs. Instead of dismissing the question as rapidly as possible, I engaged in what I hope was a frank discussion which demonstrated my knowledge of colonial history and satisfied the volunteer's curiosity. I briefly exchanged my role as interviewer in order to prioritise the nature of the interview as a social relationship and thus facilitate a more equitable exchange.

Similarly, producing a valid account depends on securing a frank and open discussion. This is not guaranteed simply by establishing a rapport as Maurice Punch explained with reference to his qualitative study of Dutch police.

“In the closed world of a police force, interviewing strangers can be a futile and frustrating business, and interviews with constables not in my group were not very successful” (1993:193).

Thus, it follows that my interviews with the police officers were of dubious frankness as a result of our mutual status as strangers. The research findings included in Chapters Four and Five demonstrate that officers understandably sought to present themselves as fair and unbiased up-holders of the law. It is reasonable to suggest that they intentionally withheld information that would have contradicted this presentation. However, evaluating the success of the interview does not depend on determining how far the officers understood this presentation of their role to be accurate in terms of the social reality of their job. Rather, it is important to explain why the officers presented their role in this way. In doing so, the research findings adequately demonstrate that everyday police work contradicts the consensual image of the police officer's role promoted by the officers.

This means that the interviews successfully investigated the, evidently contradictory, social world of the police officers. The interview questions facilitated an exploration of both their public image together with the, less public, social reality of policing. Partial frankness and openness are not necessarily obstacles to valid data. The respondent's perspective can adequately be discovered by the appropriate framing and wording of questions and the sensitive management of the social context within which the interview takes place. It is ultimately questionable as to whether an interviewer can ever achieve a depth of relationship that ensures a completely frank and open discussion.

In summary, there are various strategies that qualitative researchers can adopt in order to address satisfactorily the criticism that the researcher-respondent relationship negatively affects the data obtained. These strategies were used successfully in this research to ensure the validity of the data collected using semi-structured interviewing techniques.

### 2.2.3 Researcher participation

Due to the nature of qualitative research, the researcher seeks to acquire an in-depth understanding of the group or organisation being studied. Observation is an important method employed by researchers in order to aid understanding. Fetterman has explained why participant observation, as part of the ethnographic tradition, represents a crucial stage of the research process.

“Participant observation sets the stage for more refined techniques and becomes refined itself as the fieldworker understands more and more about the culture. Ideas and behaviours that were only a blur on entering the community take on a sharper focus” (1989:45).

This means that informal participant observation is a useful information-gathering element of the fieldwork. It facilitates preparation for designing the interview schedule, establishing the respondents’ frame of reference and approaching the data analysis.

It is for these reasons that I undertook informal participant observation of the BJP. The observation took place in three main organisational areas. First, I trained as a BJP volunteer. The training consisted of a two-day intensive workshop and a visit to the custody area of a local police station. Second, I attended meetings and social evenings organised by the project’s co-ordinator for the volunteers. Third, I visited the project’s offices on a regular basis. The project operates an ‘open-door’ policy and, as a result, I met various clients, volunteers and management committee members during these visits.

Participant observation in these three areas proved invaluable to the research process. For example, it provided a useful insight into the work of the volunteers, as well as establishing the extent and type of contact between them. This contributed to an evaluation of the degree to which a volunteer culture existed at the project. The resulting research findings are included in Chapter Six. It also revealed relevant information regarding the management of the project, especially with reference to its key social actors. Thus, my visits to the offices were particularly informative in terms of investigating the dynamics of local black politics and the project’s development in general. This was crucial to establishing both an overview of the project as an organisation and its associated efforts to realise stated aims and objectives.

For the purposes of recording my observations, I kept a research diary. Following each training session and visit or telephone call to the project’s office, I recorded what had occurred and my related thoughts and questions. This was

particularly useful during the early stages of the research because it provided a way of focusing my ideas and also ensured that potentially useful information was not forgotten. It proved invaluable when formulating the interview schedule, conducting the interviews and analysing the data collected.

Overall, informal participant observation increased my understanding of the BJP as a black voluntary organisation operating within the local political structure in Sheffield. It was instrumental to both the success of the interviews and the analysis of the data collected because it informed the composition of the interview schedule, enabled me to demonstrate my interest in the project to the research participants and increased my knowledge of its origins, composition and management.

Having outlined in detail the research design, the chapter will now consider the various stages of the research process.

### **2.3 Main stages of the research's development**

The main stages of the development of the research are reviewed in the following broadly chronological order: choice of site, gaining access, sampling, the interview schedule, the venue, data recording and analysis. However, it is important to conceptualise the research's development as a process whereby each part reflects both previous and subsequent parts. For example, both the likelihood of successfully negotiating access to the project and the potential sample of research participants were considered when deciding to choose the BJP as a suitable site for the research. This means that the various parts identified here are not discrete and, as a result, what follows is a record of the research process.

#### **2.3.1 Choice of site**

The choice of site is dependent on empirical and practical concerns. The Black Justice Project was chosen primarily because it represented an ideal site for a detailed empirical investigation of the main research questions regarding volunteering, the racialisation of identity and criminal justice issues. For example, the project's suitability was evident because its success crucially depends on attracting and maintaining a large body of volunteers. Thus, it provided an excellent site for the exploration of sociological questions regarding volunteering among black people. It was also chosen

for significant practical reasons. The project's Help On Arrest Scheme had been operating successfully for seven months when I first contacted the co-ordinator. It had formally secured the support of the region's chief constable and had maintained a relatively harmonious relationship with the police during its initial development. The probation service had agreed to fund the project for a further two years and the co-ordinator had applied for additional funding from various other sources. These were considerable achievements and, as a result, I was confident that the project would steadily progress, or at least continue to exist, during and beyond the fieldwork period. The project therefore represented a stable site for the research.

### 2.3.2 Access

The openness of access is connected to the relative power of the group being studied (Hornsby-Smith, 1993:52). It therefore appears paradoxical that gaining access to the BJP was a more laborious process than gaining access to the police. However, the willingness of the police to co-operate with my research probably reflected South Yorkshire police's current official policy of honesty and openness. In this instance, it did not reflect the relations of power that inevitably persist between researcher and researched.

Access to the project was negotiated during a six month period following the initial contact. It involved my supervisor and I attending meetings with both the co-ordinator and the management committee. A written agreement of the terms and conditions of the research was drafted and sent to the committee for approval. This required some small amendments before it was formally accepted (a copy of the agreement is contained in Appendix II). The final agreement effectively ensured that the co-ordinator acted as my 'gate-keeper'. I was not given access to the volunteers' telephone number and address and was therefore completely reliant on the co-ordinator for arranging the interviews. This significantly impeded the smooth running of the fieldwork. I was frequently waiting for interviews to be arranged and, despite numerous reminders to the co-ordinator, several weeks would pass without one. I finally completed the fieldwork six months after I had originally intended.

Access to the police officers was negotiated by my supervisor who arranged a meeting between ourselves and an assistant chief constable at police headquarters. A verbal agreement of permission to conduct the research was secured at this meeting. A

member of headquarters staff was assigned as my gatekeeper. This officer quickly arranged the first group of interviews on receipt of details regarding my intended respondents. Two of the custody officers interviewed were willing to co-operate even though they had not received notice of the interview from police headquarters. This was possibly due to the complexities of police administration and was inconvenient only in that it provided an initial obstacle to rapport-building. As a result of internal restructuring at South Yorkshire police, I was assigned another gatekeeper after six of the interviews had taken place. This created an unanticipated difficulty in that my new gatekeeper was reluctant to arrange additional interviews because he argued that six were sufficient. However, he co-operated after I had persuaded him sufficiently that my research would benefit from the views of a larger sample of officers.

Additionally, prior to access being granted, I arranged an informal meeting with the minorities officer at police headquarters. He proved to be a valuable source of information and support throughout the fieldwork. For example, due to his personal experience, he explained in detail how the police were involved during the formation of the project.

In my experience, the gatekeepers were therefore a small obstacle to the smooth running of the research and, as a result, the timetable for the completion of the fieldwork was extended several times.

### **2.3.3 Sampling**

Three groups of people participated in the research: the BJP volunteers, the project's management committee and police officers at South Yorkshire Police. Issues of sampling were relevant to each of the groups and I will therefore consider each in turn.

Typicality in the statistical sense is not a major concern of qualitative researchers who focus instead on analytical generalisation (Rose, 1991:192-4). In order to generalise analytically from my interviews with the BJP volunteers, I required a sample that was representative of each of the minority ethnic groups involved. This was satisfactorily achieved using a method of convenience sampling (see Rose, 1982:50). The co-ordinator worked through a non-alphabetical list of volunteers and arranged interviews with those he was first able to contact on each occasion.

Although the project co-ordinator insisted that the project had a body of sixty volunteers, it appeared from his records that only forty-five were fully trained and operational. Thus, two-thirds (thirty) of the operational volunteers were interviewed. The following table provides a summary of the volunteers interviewed.

|                   | Female | Male | Total | %    |
|-------------------|--------|------|-------|------|
| African-Caribbean | 8      | 7    | 15    | 50%  |
| Pakistani         | 0      | 8    | 8     | 27%  |
| Irish             | 1      | 1    | 2     | 7%   |
| White British     | 1      | 1    | 2     | 7%   |
| Indian            | 1      | 0    | 1     | 3%   |
| Chinese           | 0      | 1    | 1     | 3%   |
| Persian           | 0      | 1    | 1     | 3%   |
| Total             | 11     | 19   | 30    | 100% |

Table 2.1 Minority ethnic origin and gender of the volunteers interviewed.

In percentage terms, these statistics broadly correspond with those outlining the composition of the BJP volunteers in the project's annual report of 1994/95.

Additionally, two-thirds (five) members of the management committee were interviewed. This sample was selected on the basis of their status as title holders (chairperson, secretary and treasurer), probation service representative and founding member of the project. A sample of management committee members was necessary in order to obtain the perspective of the decision-makers at the project. Accordingly, the project's co-ordinator was also formally interviewed. Of the management committee members interviewed, three were African-Caribbean males, one was a Pakistani male and one was a white British female. The co-ordinator is a Pakistani male.

It must be stressed that considerable efforts were made to interview the management committee member referred to in Chapter Three as Maria. As will be demonstrated, she was instrumental to the formation of the project and I was therefore very keen to interview her. Despite my persistence over several weeks, she neither accepted or returned any of my phone calls. By chance, I later learned of a probable reason for her apparent reluctance to participate but, as it is not substantiated, I cannot provide a reliable explanation here.



One-third (eight) of the city's custody officers were interviewed. All of the police officers were white and all but one were male. They were chosen primarily because they had direct experience of the project's HOAS. However, due to significant re-structuring within the regional police, some of my respondents were relatively new to the job. The re-structuring therefore had, albeit slight, unforeseen consequences in terms of sample characteristics. It also created some difficulties for my gatekeepers in terms of seeking custody officers who would prove useful to the research. The inspector responsible for two of the city's four custody areas was also interviewed as well as the minorities officer and a representative of the criminal justice department at headquarters. These officers were interviewed because they had detailed knowledge of and direct contact with the BJP. Additionally, they were former custody officers. They were also useful in establishing the perspective of the decision-makers at headquarters. This perspective was established further when I interviewed the chief constable of South Yorkshire Police towards the end of the fieldwork. Thus, in total, I interviewed twelve police officers.

During the early stages of the research process, it was anticipated that I would interview a sample of BJP clients who had been arrested and had made use of the HOAS. However, it was evident that the sample would be tightly controlled by the coordinator as I was unable to secure access to the project's confidential files. In addition to this, I soon became aware that, in order to obtain a representative sample, I would need to interview people who had been arrested and, for whatever reason, had not requested the scheme's assistance. This was impossible because, unsurprisingly, I had no access to police files. As a result, I decided that it was of extremely limited utility to interview a group of former users of the scheme.

#### **2.3.4 The interview schedule**

A draft of the interview schedule was piloted using two BJP volunteers. The volunteers were aware of the purpose of the interview and provided feedback regarding both the topics covered and the wording of the questions. In addition to this, a postgraduate research group commented on the schedule. The draft required several amendments before it was of a satisfactory standard to begin the interviews.

The schedule was divided into five distinct sections in order to provide coherence and structure to the interview (see also Appendix I). The first section

covered the personal characteristics of the respondent and included mainly descriptive, factual questions. As was stated earlier, these questions also served as an 'ice-breaker' at the beginning of the interview. This was followed by a section regarding the respondent's understanding of the BJP as an organisation. Section three concentrated on the HOAS and was therefore included only for those respondents who had attended call-outs. Next, issues of community and identity were addressed followed, in the final section, by the potentially most sensitive questions regarding the relationship between black people and the police.

This format was adhered to for each of the three groups participating in the research. However, the questions contained within each section were amended slightly to take account of differences between the groups. For example, questions regarding the degree of interaction between volunteers were omitted from the police officers' schedule. They were re-phrased for the management committee's schedule to refer to interaction between the committee and the volunteers.

The schedule contained set questions in a pre-determined order. However, the semi-standardised approach to the interview ensured that respondents were able to talk relatively freely about the issues which were significant to them. This meant that often questions were not asked in the order that they appeared in the schedule. Occasionally, I deliberately omitted to ask certain questions in order to maintain a focus on what appeared to be important to the respondent. Such an approach was essential if the respondent's frame of reference was to be established adequately.

### **2.3.5 The venue**

The venue varied according to the preference of the research participants. The BJP volunteers and management committee members were asked to choose where they preferred to be interviewed. This meant that they were able to select an environment in which they would feel most comfortable and thus less intimidated by the interview situation. As a result, some were interviewed at home, some at work, some at the centre where the BJP had its office and one even chose to come to my house.

As has already been stated, all of the police officers were interviewed during working hours at either police headquarters or the station where they were on duty. Again, this ensured that they were in a familiar environment where they were able to

assume maximum control of the interview situation. I was confident that this facilitated their willingness to contribute willingly to the research.

Inconveniently, it also resulted in frequent interruptions from colleagues and, on one occasion, I inadvertently found myself interviewing an inspector who had entered the room where I was interviewing one of her custody officers. She was evidently intending to be helpful by offering her views but, after she had departed, the officer simply repeated the replies she had given. I therefore suspected that she had influenced his responses. As a result, I decided to discard the responses in question. This provides a good example of the potential hazards which follow if gatekeepers and respondents are asked to choose the venue. On balance, it was, however, an excellent strategy for securing the support and co-operation of the research participants in general.

### 2.3.6 Data recording

All of the interviews were tape-recorded. The average length of an interview was one and a quarter hours, although some were significantly longer. As a result, tape-recording provided the least arduous means of recording the data. The request to tape-record was explicitly made at the beginning of the interview. I stressed that confidentiality was ensured and that the interview recording would be erased following transcription. Several of the respondents expressed, albeit in a light-hearted manner, their discomfort at being recorded. I therefore agreed to switch the recorder off at any time if they so wished. This, in fact, occurred only when we were interrupted by other people or a telephone ringing.

The interviews were conducted at a variety of locations some of which had an effect on the quality of the recording. I recorded a number of significant peripheral noises including traffic (two of the interviews took place outdoors), office telephones, suspects shouting and continuously banging on cell doors, police radios and the babies and young children of volunteers. It was necessary on these occasions to increase the tape-recorder's volume and place the recorder as close to the respondent as possible. This was problematic only because it drew further attention to the fact that I was recording the responses.

The tape-recorder proved unreliable only on one occasion when the interview was recorded at high speed despite a normal speed setting. The transcribing machine's speed control enabled me to comprehend the majority of the data. Thankfully, I was in

the habit of checking the tape-recording immediately after the interview and was therefore able to make notes about the lost data. I discovered later that faulty batteries had been responsible.

### 2.3.7 Data analysis

Analysing qualitative data is undoubtedly a daunting task due to the sheer quantity of data. It involves the apparently enormous chore of imposing order on what appears to be an order-less variety of transcripts with a complex range of interview responses. For example, it quickly became evident that, due to the 'richness' of my data, virtually no two answers were overtly identical. It is therefore unsurprising that this part of the research process is frequently overlooked by sociologists when outlining their research methodology. Methods for analysing data remain relatively rudimentary and, as a result, it is arguably incumbent on new researchers to make their methods more explicit. Thus, the following is a detailed discussion of the procedures that I adopted.

I began from the assumption that, although I had to determine a way to reduce the quantity of data for analysis, I initially had to subject all of it to scrutiny. I therefore read all of the interview transcripts and made notes of my initial impressions. By familiarising myself with the data in this way, it subsequently became easier to remember and locate pieces of transcript. It was also a useful way of beginning to identify patterns and similarities between responses and, of course, it revealed significant differences.

Essentially, analysis is the interpretation of data. This process of interpretation is described in the relevant literature as a constant internal dialogue (e.g. Strauss, 1987; Dey, 1993). This emphasises the nature of data analysis as a creative process. I discovered that it was crucial to keep a record of my insights, thoughts and possible hypotheses when transcribing because these informed the ways in which I later coded the data. Similarly, my research diary was a useful source of ideas and information during the data analysis and thus was always close at hand.

The following quote adequately summarises the role of computers in contributing to the analysis of data.

'... computer programs are passive systems and can only facilitate the sorting of data as they are instructed (or as data are coded), and it is the investigator who must make the decisions regarding sorting, selecting and coding of the text accordingly' (Morse, 1991:117).

Although my computer could not interpret the data for me, it was invaluable for sorting and storing the data both during and after it had been coded. After reading the interview transcripts, I separated the data by creating a file for all of the responses to each question. I then read each of the newly created files in order to obtain a greater appreciation of the research participants' perspectives.

In order to obtain an analytic perspective, I began coding the data. The term 'coding' essentially refers to the discovery and naming of categories. The object of coding is to sift through the data in an attempt to impose order and meaning upon it. This enables an exploration of the ideas and objectives which inform the analysis (Dey, 1993:127). Thus, I created new files according to the categories I had created. For example, several of the police officers referred to 'one bad incident' as a significant cause of police-black conflict. I therefore used 'one bad incident' as an initial category to group comparable responses. The notion of equality before the law was also characteristic of the officers' responses and so I created a category entitled 'equality'.

After identifying a substantial series of codes, I wrote about each of them in detail. This entailed explaining what they meant and why they were relevant to answering the main research questions. This approach has been recommended by Strauss who argued that a code is 'saturated' only when the researcher can find nothing else to write about it (Strauss, 1987). Next, I created a number of core categories as a means of reducing the number of codes by summarising them. These core categories provided key themes which formed the basis of my empirical chapters. For example, the police officers' notion of equality was instrumental to the presentation of their role. This, in turn, was a core category and eventually became a key theme examined in Chapters Four and Five.

Finally, I assessed the categories in order to ensure that they met the criteria of validity, generality and representativeness. This ensured that I deliberated carefully before discarding cases which failed to fit my overall hypothesis. I was also careful not to over-generalise when determining core categories from the data and took care to ensure that I had numerous examples to support each of my interpretations.

This method of organising my data enabled me to write up the results in a thorough and methodical manner. By choosing from many representative quotes to illustrate the key themes corresponding to my core categories, I was able to present my research findings in a way which prioritised the understanding of my research

respondents. As was discussed in the literature review of Chapter One, this was a key aim of my research.

Each of the stages of the research discussed above raises important issues regarding the ethics and politics of the research process. Thus, the final section addresses the ethical and political questions with which I was confronted during the course of this research project.

## **2.4 Ethical and political issues**

This final section considers the main ethical and political issues which arose during the course of my research. It begins by discussing why a white researcher is able to study legitimately a black organisation. There have been numerous occasions on which I have been asked to defend my position as such. However, I wish to stress that at no time was I challenged in this way by any of the research participants. It only became an issue within the academic arena and, as a result, I have decided that it is pertinent to include a brief statement here to defend my position. Next, my potentially conflicting obligations towards the two main groups involved in the research are considered and, finally, the notion of value-free research is assessed critically.

### **2.4.1 The ethical position of a white researcher**

The familiar phrase 'its a black thing, you wouldn't understand' has been used, mainly by people of African origin, as a means of asserting a positive black identity (Jackson, 1991:131). It is relevant here because it implies that a white researcher is ill-equipped to study a black organisation. The implication is counter-productive for three main reasons. First, it involves resignation to a universal condition that will always set a white researcher apart from non-white subjects. Second, it falsely assumes that there is a single truth about racism that only non-white people can know (Miles, 1989:6-7). Third, if pursued to its logical conclusion, it implicitly accepts the existence of separate and distinct 'races'.

As a result, the argument that a white researcher cannot satisfactorily study a black organisation is both unacceptable and unsound. It ultimately serves to legitimate the essentialist notion that issues of 'race' and racism are problems for black people only. They are in fact problems for all of us wherever they are articulated and wherever

they reinforce processes of discrimination and exclusion (Brah, 1992). This argument reflects a consistent criticism of liberal 'race relations' sociology. If it is a 'black thing' that white people cannot understand, it necessarily becomes a black problem for which white people are absolved of any responsibility. It is morally reprehensible to suggest that only black people can understand and challenge the debilitating effects of various racisms.

My position as a white researcher studying a black organisation was therefore legitimate and useful. This is reflected in the following comment by Margaret L. Andersen.

“As whites learn to see the world through the experiences of others, a process that is itself antithetical to the views of privileged groups, we can begin to construct more complete and less distorted ways of seeing the complex relations of race, class and gender” (1993:52).

This means that my position highlighted symbolically the role of white people in understanding and addressing the various racisms that continue to influence the social lives of both black and white people. Furthermore, it implicitly challenged the mistaken assumption that only black people experience and are affected by these racisms.

Ultimately, it must be stressed that, if the rigorous methods of sociological research are adopted, the effect of a researcher's racialised origin on the research findings is arguably limited.

#### **2.4.2 Whose side am I on?**

Empirical research is never merely an intellectual exercise. It unavoidably involves the researcher making decisions on the basis of principles, values and the interests of both participating individuals and organisations (Kimmel, 1988:124-5). Within the context of this research, my ethical obligations towards two groups with potentially conflicting interests required consideration. The question of 'whose side am I on?' inevitably arose with reference to the distinction between those involved with the BJP and members of South Yorkshire Police.

The criminal justice system in general is a highly controversial and much-criticised social institution. As a result, for both the BJP and the police, the main research questions introduced sensitive issues of significant organisational concern. Additionally, for the research participants, these issues represented potential sources of anxiety, frustration and anger on a personal level. Ethically, it was imperative that I took account of the concerns of both parties whilst conducting the fieldwork. This was

necessary in order to minimise the possibility of causing stress to the respondents through the insensitive handling of highly-charged topics.

For example, during the previous year, there had been a well-publicised confrontation between police and mainly young Pakistani men outside one of the police stations included in the research. It would have been a high risk strategy to include questions about the incident solely based on limited information gleaned from media reports. References to the incident inevitably occurred and, if I judged that it was appropriate to do so, details were pursued.

However, the desire not to cause undue stress must be distinguished from the principle of beneficence. This principle involves an obligation to take positive steps to help further the legitimate interests of others. As part of my contractual agreement with the BJP, I agreed to produce an evaluation report which would identify strengths and weaknesses and would aid the project's development over the next couple of years (Appendix III contains a copy of this report). In this respect, my research had practical policy implications. This understandably heightened my sense of responsibility towards the project and increased my awareness that negative research findings could harm it. Additionally, I agreed to meet Home Office officials who were visiting the project as part of an assessment exercise. I was aware that my stated research interest in the project was of value in terms of attempting to increase its legitimacy in their eyes.

My responsibility towards the BJP was arguably incompatible with an obligation towards the police. The stated aim of the project is to address processes of racialised discrimination within the criminal justice system, of which the police are a crucial part. As a result, any defence of the BJP could be interpreted as implying that the police do not carry out their duties satisfactorily. I therefore reluctantly considered the possibility that my research findings could upset what had otherwise been a relatively amicable relationship between the project and the police.

These ethical concerns were addressed by adopting a similar approach for both the project and the police. Essentially, I was committed to reporting the research findings accurately and honestly. As far as possible, I fulfilled an obligation to secure the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents and to respect their opinions and concerns as one moral being to another. However, at no stage did I promise to shelve research findings if I suspected that they were likely to upset someone. This would have



seriously compromised the objectives of the research and thus my academic freedom (Becker, 1970:113).

Despite addressing these ethical concerns, I quickly discovered that each interview had the potential to produce new ethical dilemmas in respect of how far I should 'tell the truth'. Maurice Punch notes,

“With formal organisations and certain communities, where entry has to be negotiated through hierarchical channels, a statement of purpose is normally essential to satisfy gatekeepers. Thereafter it may be *situationally* inappropriate to repeat continuously that purpose and to identify oneself” (1986:37).

This was often the case with both the respondents from the police and the project. It was usually sufficient to state that I was evaluating the project and that the evaluation formed part of my personal research. I was rarely asked to explain the details of my personal research and, when I attempted to do so, I frequently had the impression that the respondent was both unconcerned and uninterested. As a result, some of the respondents were unaware of the primary objectives of the research and my main purpose in undertaking it. This introduced the question,

“... is not the very act of selection not an act of omission, a reinvention of oneself that prefigures betrayal?” (Keith, 1992:554).

My approach did not amount to a betrayal because I did not deliberately withhold information and always answered truthfully any of the respondents' questions about myself and the research.

There was, however, one occasion when I became extremely uneasy with the way I had presented myself and the research. The following comment is taken from the end of an interview with one of the police officers.

*“Its like you, if this was a political thing I wouldn't be saying as much as what I've said. If you get your degree and have a party, I want to be invited!”*. (Sgt. Davies)

This police officer had been extremely supportive of and interested in the research. I was initially mortified that he perceived my research as non-political. I assumed that, by its very nature, the research would be interpreted as having some political implications. On reflection, the comment may accurately refer to the fact that, ultimately, my purpose in completing the research was to obtain a higher degree and not to advance any personal political beliefs. Nevertheless, it remains a useful example of how both the aims of the researcher and the research are potentially misinterpreted.

### 2.4.3 Values and the research process

Both my choice of research project and genuine interest in the BJP undoubtedly reflected some of my personal and political beliefs regarding issues of 'race' and racism. As Kimmel has argued,

“One’s definition of a problem targeted for change is likely to be a direct reflection of what one believes to be ideal” (Kimmel, 1988:125).

This means that it is impossible for sociologists to conduct wholly value-free research and that decisions made at every stage of the research process inevitably involve a value judgement. As Max Weber argued, the very existence of science, whether natural or social, pre-supposes the existence of values which cannot be validated scientifically (Giddens, 1971:138).

In conclusion, even though my choice of research project was inevitably 'subjective', this chapter has demonstrated that it is possible to conduct sociological research in a disciplined, methodical and, ultimately, valid manner. Despite rejecting the idealistic pursuit of value-neutrality, I have therefore provided an accurate and detailed account of the way in which this research project was designed and conducted. The chapters which follow present the resulting research findings.

## Chapter Three

### The Origins and Purpose of the Black Justice Project

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is an overview of the Black Justice Project (BJP) as a voluntary organisation formed, managed and operated by black people for the local black population in Sheffield. The aim of the chapter is to explain how and why the project was formed and to assess critically the understanding under-pinning the project's aims and objectives.

The second section reveals the institutional origins of the BJP and argues that institutional support for the project arose from the wider social, economic and political context of the 1980s. Particularly, this section highlights the predominately liberal response to the urban disturbances and the subsequent favouring of multi-agency initiatives to address the needs and concerns of black racialised groups. In addition to this, the relevance of voluntary sector expansion as part of a mixed economy of welfare is identified. It is argued that the formation of the project involved a process of legitimacy whereby its aims and objectives reflected the policies of both the probation service and the police in particular. Further, it will be demonstrated in this section how three individuals, instrumental to the formation of the project, were well placed as a result of their paid employment to pursue effectively the idea for a project.

Section 3.3 outlines the content of a black perspective as it was defined by the volunteers and management committee at the project. It is argued that this definition indicates an imagined black community based on shared experiences and interests. Thus, the black perspective adopted by the BJP is conceptualised as a form of moderated essentialism which ultimately presupposes an essential black identity that excluded whites. The inherent weaknesses in this perspective are revealed by identifying a significant internal contradiction which serves to highlight the ambiguities surrounding notions of blackness.

Next, the section analyses the implications of adopting this black perspective for the aims and objectives of the project. It is explained that, in essence, the BJP was understood to provide a means through which black people can challenge their racialised

status as second class citizens. Thus, via the black perspective, the project was thought to prioritise and advance the specific interests of black people.

Finally, the project's adoption of a black perspective is examined critically in order to stress how it involved a careful management of image. Section 3.4 identifies two key tensions arising from the project's rejected role as a community representative and its reliance on the support of statutory organisations. The legitimacy of the project's self-appointed role as advocate and intermediary for black people is questioned. Crucially, it is argued that the success of the project's aims and objectives inevitably depended on the co-operation of both funding bodies and particular criminal justice agencies.

Chapter Three represents a useful introduction to the main themes of the thesis explored further in subsequent chapters. In particular, the chapter provides the background to the volunteers' understanding of the meaning of 'race' both as they participated in the project and more widely. Further, the outline and critique of the black perspective serves as an aid to evaluating the success of the project.

### **3.2 The institutional origins of the Black Justice Project**

The urban disturbances of the early 1980s contributed to the racialisation of debates about law and order. The issue of black street crime and violence became part of the mainstream political agenda (Solomos, 1988; 1993). The liberal explanation for the disturbances focused on social institutions as the source of injustice. As a result, one potential solution lay in social reform and the redistribution of social rewards (Benyon, 1984:26). The recommendations of the Scarman report, based on the disturbances in Brixton, reflected in part the liberal solution by arguing that the disturbances were not merely an expression of lawlessness.

“But the disorders cannot be fully understood unless they are seen in the context of complex political, social and economic factors which together create a predisposition towards violent protest” (Lord Scarman, 1986:195).

Thus, it became politically expedient to consider the specific needs and requirements of black people. During the 1980s, this resulted in a number of government sponsored initiatives such as the much-criticised urban programme (Smith, 1989; Sivanandan, 1990).

The various criminal justice agencies were inevitably central to the law and order response to the disturbances. Specifically, the problematic nature of police-black relations attracted scrutiny. Michael Keith has argued that the police explanation for the disturbances predominately reflected a racialised liberal perspective (Keith, 1993). It follows that the law and order response of the police, and other closely associated criminal justice agencies, included an apparent commitment to reform and redistribution with specific regards to black people. The substantial academic literature and political commentary generated as a result of the disturbances focused on viable ways to implement a programme incorporating this commitment (e.g. Benyon, 1984; Benyon & Solomos, 1987). The aim of this section is to demonstrate that the formation of the BJP reflected one widely adopted response.

Thus, the section identifies the origins of the BJP in the institutional response to the disturbances. In particular, the role of three key individuals in the formation of the project is identified. It is revealed that these individuals were ideally placed to form the project due to their paid employment within relevant criminal justice agencies. It is suggested that the 'post-riot' political climate of the mid-1980s provided a suitable context within which their idea for a Black Justice Project could be pursued at an institutional level. Specifically, it is argued that their detailed working knowledge of police and probation service policy enabled them to legitimise their idea for the project using the acceptable language of reform and redistribution adopted by both organisations following the disturbances. Additionally, the section demonstrates that this climate incorporated the development of inter-agency co-operation and the expansion of the voluntary sector. This also effectively secured institutional support for the project.

The three key individuals are referred to below as Maria, Morris and Raymond. As will be explained further, Maria was a black initiatives worker employed by NACRO, Morris was an outreach worker employed by South Yorkshire Probation Service and Raymond was a senior youth worker at the city council's education department.

NACRO, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, provides resettlement services, such as housing and employment education, for ex-offenders. It also provides information on penal affairs and for prisoners' families. Following the disturbances, NACRO's Black Initiatives Unit represented a timely endeavour, at an institutional level within the criminal justice process, to foster a more

constructive working relationship with black racialised groups. It was therefore inevitable that workers employed by the unit perceived themselves to be part of the post-riot social and political context. In fact, the management committee at the BJP referred to the instrumental role of one of the unit's regional workers in forming the project. The worker, Maria, helped to create a Black Justice Forum from which the idea for the project emerged. Like the other key individuals, she remained a member of the project's management committee.

*"Maria, as a member of the management committee, who was one of the people involved in the forum from the outset. I've got to say in the case of Maria that, from the very outset, because as a member, being part of the community black initiatives unit of NACRO in the mid-80s, she was probably central to developing a forum. And part of her role, she had a regional role in the north of England and other areas, and this was one of the things that she was very much involved in getting off the ground".*  
(Joe)

It was clear that the forum reflected a working commitment to multi-agency co-operation. The future co-ordinator and management committee of the BJP attended meetings as a result of their paid capacity within the careers service, local authority, probation service and youth service. Here, the co-ordinator explained the nature of his original involvement.

*"Initially, I used to work for the local authority, in the community safety unit, as a student on placement from a degree course. Now, part of what the unit was trying to do was advise black people about what their rights were. So, we got together with South Yorkshire probation service to set up some seminars and so we set up a series of seminars, I think there was about six, and they went really well. And then probation service and one of the workers, who was a black woman from NACRO, said would I like to get involved in the Black Justice Forum. So, I asked my boss and my boss said, well, you can do it in work time".* (Majid)

The co-ordinator revealed the significance of the NACRO worker's role further by explaining how the future of the forum was potentially jeopardised when her period of employment with NACRO ended.

*"Now, the Black Justice Forum was looking at issues around black people and criminal justice and then what the group was trying to do was set up a Help On Arrest Scheme. But as we were about to get together and start setting that up, Maria's job, who was the woman who was working with the black initiatives unit, her job finished and therefore there was no-one really to co-ordinate the meetings et cetera. So, the group decided to disband and what they would do is apply for*

*some funding from the Home Office. If the funding came through, the group would get back together and decided on how to spend it, job description, personnel spec et cetera. We left it at that. The application form was filled in by probation and Maria". (Majid)*

This explanation demonstrated how the existence of the BJJ depended on the worker's contribution as co-ordinator. Particularly, it revealed that those who attended the forum through their paid employment within statutory organisations had a limited commitment to its development. Thus, a co-ordinating body was required to pursue a multi-agency approach. Furthermore, the co-ordinator indicated that, in being able to secure the co-operation of the probation service, the NACRO worker was ideally placed to apply for Home Office funding.

In fact, the worker was based at a particular probation service office which provided an inevitable focus for her work due to the large black, working class composition of its catchment area. The 'post-riot' focus on reform and redistribution with regards to the black population ensured that such areas were identified as targets for the resources provided by the Black Initiatives Unit. It was from this office that the application for government funding was prepared. During the research, the senior probation officer at the office was also a management committee member of the BJP. She explained her office's involvement as follows.

*"Historically, this office has always been involved right back when the project was under the umbrella of NACRO with the black initiatives unit, it was all with the senior probation officer. And so there have been two of us who've been closely involved, myself and Chris who's the previous senior probation officer here, who was here for five years. So, he sort of saw it through all its early incarnations, and when I came in to take over from Chris, it was part of the job that I took over". (Jill)*

The worker for NACRO's Black Initiatives Unit provided the initial link between the BJJ and this probation service office. Again, this demonstrated how she was ideally situated to pursue the potential for a Black Justice Project at an institutional level.

It follows that, through her paid employment, the worker was well placed to enter into a productive exchange with the probation service. Her inevitable familiarity with the newly reinforced language of reform and redistribution, and the development of associated policies, enabled her to legitimise the idea for a project without alienating these potential funders. This argument reflects Paul Rock's work on victims policy. He has argued that radical feminists in Canada could not enter into an exchange with the

government because, unlike other feminists, they did not describe themselves as victims (Rock, 1986:210-40). Similarly, the NACRO worker would almost certainly have failed in her attempt to secure institutional support if she had framed her proposal in more radical language and had excluded the idea of partnership through inter-agency co-operation.

The 'post-riot' willingness of the probation service to support the forum's idea is explicable with reference to the creation of its outreach worker position. The senior probation officer referred to this position as part of the liberal institutional response to the disturbances.

*"I suppose the service has the concern to support the project because our outreach worker post was set up because of the unrest in 1981 and I mean a number of service posts were created particularly to outreach into black communities around that time. But certainly, the particular focus of our outreach post I suppose became fairly clear around then".*  
(Jill)

With increasing budget restrictions, the plan for a Help On Arrest Scheme represented a legitimate means of re-defining the role of the outreach worker in a way that would not reduce service provision to black people.

*"So, it was increasingly important that the outreach worker's service became very closely linked to the core of the service and one of the implications of that has been that we've been less able to devote time to pre-trial work. So, the BJP and the Help On Arrest Scheme provided a specific focus for one bit of that where certainly Morris was routinely called out when people were arrested. He'd go down to the police station and put in an awful lot of time".* (Jill)

This meant that the probation service's broad commitment to black issues could be maintained without jeopardising the quality of its core work.

Further, the service could develop a multi-agency initiative in accordance with newly established policy. During the 1980s, the idea of partnership began to be pursued by various statutory organisations including the probation service. This was a result of the Home Office's increasing concern with the effectiveness of the public sector and its financial management. The resulting 'Statement of National Objectives and Priorities for the Probation Service' helped to introduce the general policy of 'buying in' services which had previously been provided internally (Parry-Khan, 1988; Home Office, 1991b). Thus, the service's support for the project reflected a key policy requirement.



The perceived legitimacy of the forum's funding proposal was therefore inevitably judged according to the policy priorities of the probation service. The service's role in both writing the proposal for funding and forwarding it to the Home Office demonstrated that it was a vital source of support for the forum's idea.

Additionally, it is important to note that the idea for the BJP was developed at a time when the expansion of the voluntary sector was increasingly advocated by a government favouring minimum state intervention. This led to a revised focus on volunteers in the criminal justice system (Gill & Mawby, 1990:7-10). It was therefore reasonable to assume that the Home Office welcomed the BJP's proposed status as a voluntary organisation. This, together with the project's role in complementing the probation service's commitment to black issues, was almost certain to have positively influenced the successful outcome of the funding proposal.

The outreach worker referred to by the senior probation officer was, in fact, the second key individual instrumental to the formation of the BJP. Based at the same probation service office as the NACRO worker, Morris was attributed with providing some of the crucial impulse initially required to form the BJP. His previous experience as a youth worker both enabled him to secure the outreach worker position and pursue the development of a project.

*"Morris was the other person who was one of the main inspirations behind this scheme and, at the time when it was being developed, one, he was working with me as a part-time youth worker, I was in charge and he was one of my workers, and, secondly, he got a job as an outreach worker with the probation service. Which again helped us to attach it to that". (Raymond)*

Similarly, Raymond's explanation of Morris's role suggests his contribution as the third key individual in the formation of the BJP. He also became involved due to his paid employment in the youth office of the city council's education department.

*"Originally, I was a youth worker working with a black project in the city and when we sort of ... obviously I was working quite considerably with young people who was falling foul of the law, for whatever reason, and there was a need to actually devise a scheme really. So, we did a lot of work with the probation service and, in conjunction with the probation service, we began to look at ways in which a scheme could be devised. So, that was sort of the beginnings of the BJP". (Raymond)*

Raymond's paid employment as a youth worker therefore involved liaising with the probation service regarding issues which corresponded to its political agenda of black

street crime and violence. Further, Morris's role as a youth worker and probation service outreach worker to black communities demonstrated his working commitment to pursuing the interests of black people.

Significantly, the contribution of both reveals the youth service's involvement as another key source of support for the project's formation. Their paid employment suggests the service's commitment to both black issues and multi-agency co-operation, with particular emphasis on working with the probation service. Thus, the youth service's support for the development of a BJP represented an extension of its priorities at that time. The legitimacy of the proposal's focus was therefore already firmly established within this statutory organisation as well.

Like Maria, through their paid employment, Raymond and Morris were familiar with the language of reform and redistribution which characterised the policies of relevant statutory organisation following the disturbances. They were therefore well placed to adopt this language and policy orientation to seek support for a project within the youth service and probation service. In fact, both Raymond and Morris perceived themselves to be part of the social and political context which followed the disturbances. Specifically, they understood the project to be a formal response to the apparently dire state of police-black relations. They explained how their related experience and knowledge was integral to their involvement with the project.

*"About twenty years ago, the youth service had a committee of people, youth workers, who would go out to interview people and assist people who get arrested within the local prison cells. And that fell through after about ten years because something happened to one of our youth workers who got arrested and there was a lot of mistrust between black people and the police. Hence, what the BJP is doing now, and what it actually done, is brought all this back into the arena". (Morris)*

Raymond revealed that he was the youth worker referred to by Morris.

*"I was one of the root causes for the relationship between the African-Caribbean community and the police actually breaking down so I always find this subject difficult to talk about. Because I didn't want to be a root cause of that at all. I mean, back in 1981, they decided to arrest me and that led to real problems". (Raymond)*

In summary, during the summer of 1981, Raymond explained that there were a number of minor confrontations between the police and, predominately, young African-Caribbean men in a particular part of Sheffield city centre. He understood these

confrontations to be a direct result of proactive policing. With the agreement of the police, the youth office responded by sending youth workers to act as intermediaries whenever a confrontation took place. However, on one occasion when his assistance was requested, Raymond was arrested, charged and, eventually, found guilty of causing an obstruction. He argued that the injustice of his experience combined with the harassment of the young men had serious consequences.

*"Basically, what happened was, formally, people from the African-Caribbean community withdrew their support link with the police and its been difficult for them to get back in and negotiate round the table".*  
(Raymond)

Thus, for Raymond, the BJP represented one means of re-formalising communications between the two groups. However, the BJP was never described officially as a response to seemingly oppressive, unjust police actions. Additionally, it was never described as being on opposite sides to the police. Rather, it was marketed more neutrally as a means of achieving justice for black people by educating and informing them of their rights under the law. Again, this suggests that it was acceptable at an institutional level specifically because those involved in formulating the proposal for the project did not adopt the confrontational language of racism and, instead, adopted the liberalised, politically acceptable language of reform and redistribution.

To summarise, the job-related priorities of these three key individuals reflected racialised issues which were part of the mainstream political agenda during the 'post-riot' period of the mid-1980s. As a result, they were ideally situated to legitimise the BJF's proposal by reflecting the politically acceptable language and related policies of reform and redistribution. This provided the initial impetus for the acceptance of the idea for a BJP at an institutional level. The employee of NACRO's Black Initiatives Unit was instrumental in consolidating the idea specifically in practical terms of co-ordinating the BJF and applying for Home Office funding. Again, her specific success is understandable with reference to wider political concerns following the disturbances. Importantly, their idea for the project reflected the probation service's directive to pursue the development of multi-agency initiatives and to reform its financial management by purchasing services which had previously been provided 'in-house'.

Furthermore, it was clear that the Black Justice Forum's plan for a HOAS was transformed into a successful funding proposal despite considerable difficulties of a constitutional nature. The liberal notions of reform and redistribution were implicit

within institutional acceptance for a project that appeared to contradict the idea of equality before the law. The minorities officer at South Yorkshire Police outlined the efforts of both his department and probation service representatives to overcome this obstacle and secure institutional approval.

*“There was quite a bit of research done into it. Our legal representative looked at it to see if we could run it under the race relations act ... under the law we were allowed to do it because, although we were facilitating the scheme, we weren’t actually running it. So, we were allowed under, if I could look the actual official words up, that took a bit of researching”. (Sgt. Davies)*

The approval of the police was essential to securing Home Office funding as the establishment of a HOAS required their co-operation. The police therefore represented another key source of support. Speculation regarding the reason for the chief constable’s support of the project was abundant. It was usual for research participants to assume that his previous experience of a similar project in London indicated the reason for his consent.

*“I think it paved the way for us through the service, you know, and that’s because he was used to something like this happening in London where he was based before. He used to work around the Broadwater Farm area and he used to have what we’ve got now as volunteers going into prison cells but also, what did they call it, assisted visitors from the black community”. (Morris)*

This explanation was rejected by the chief constable who argued that his experience of the London project was not entirely favourable. Instead, other aspects of his general professional experience provide a more accurate explanation. These include a highly relevant ‘community relations’ post at Scotland Yard in the ‘post-riot’ political climate of the 1980s. The chief constable was asked if his previous experiences of policing within black communities had, in any way, influenced his decision to support the BJP.

*“Oh definitely, absolutely, yes, because I’d served in Notting Hill in 1966 to 67 then again in 1973 through to 1977. Then I went to the Yard in 1981 and was the chief superintendent in charge of community relations strategy. So, each of those had a very strong influence. And then there is something about the personal, as well as the professional, about equality and even-handedness of treatment. So, all of that, both the professional and the personal part, combined to influence me in being sympathetic towards the establishment of the group”. (Chief Constable)*

The centrality of issues of 'race' and police-black relations to police 'public relations' understanding has been well-established (Solomos & Back, 1995:188). From 1981, this understanding included the potential benefits of multi-agency initiatives. Thus, it is not difficult to appreciate why, in particular, the chief constable's position at Scotland Yard influenced his decision to endorse the idea for a project. The chief constable's endorsement essentially reflected a more general police policy orientation towards the kind of initiative being developed by the project. This meant that the policy context of the 1980s was, again, highly relevant to institutional support for the project. In fact, the following comment by the chief provides clear evidence of this position.

*"We had, here in South Yorkshire, a unique group called SYGMA which is South Yorkshire Group for Multi-Agency Co-operation within the criminal justice system. I was the founder of the group even before I took office. I was designated chief constable in June 1990 and I founded the group prior to my arrival". (Chief Constable)*

As a result, police endorsement for the formation of the BJP was the outcome of a process of legitimacy whereby both the legal and political implications of their support were carefully considered and deemed to be in accordance with police policy.

This section has identified the role of three key individuals in the formation of the BJP. It has been revealed that these individuals were able to form the project successfully due to their paid employment within relevant statutory organisations. This was achieved by adopting the politically acceptable language of reform and redistribution to both legitimise the project and reflect the policy context at an institutional level. The organisations were identified as the probation service and the police with the collaboration of NACRO and the youth service.

Thus, the section has confirmed that the 'post-riot' political climate of the mid-1980s provided the wider social, economic and political context within which their idea for a project was endorsed at an institutional level. Statutory endorsement of the idea for the project was secured via a process of legitimacy which took into account the policies of each organisation at the time. Particularly, a general adherence to the development of both multi-agency initiatives and the voluntary sector increased the likelihood that the idea for the project would be formally accepted. In short, the formation of the BJP was seen to have specific benefits for these organisations, especially in terms of operationalising the policies of both the probation service and the

police. Institutional commitment to the project and its aims culminated in the support of the Home Office by a successful application for funding.

Having established the institutional origins of the BJP, the following section examines its subsequent development by outlining in detail the perspective which underpinned its aims and objectives.

### **3.3 The black perspective**

The aim of this section is to examine why the volunteers at the project understood the interests and experiences of black people to warrant the formation of organisations like the BJP. It is revealed that a crucial racialised division was understood to exist in accordance with the black-white binary opposition. Further, it is argued that the black perspective defined by the volunteers relegates the dominating perspectives of white people to a secondary position in order to establish an alternative 'black' way of viewing the racialised social world. This is based on an imagined black community which presupposes a white majority community. It is therefore argued that the perspective represents a moderated essentialism which, ultimately, excludes whites.

The section begins by determining the theoretical basis underpinning the black perspective. The internal contradiction inherent within the perspective is highlighted as a prerequisite for examining its implementation by the BJP. The second part of the section relates the black perspective to the project's aims and objectives in order to provide the background required to assess the extent of its success.

It must be stressed that the term 'community' is used below to delineate both an advantageous medium for the expression of diverse interests and aspirations and a ready means of mobilising collectively (Cohen, 1994:108-9). It is described as 'imagined' because its members will never know the majority of their fellow members but, nevertheless, have in mind an image of their commonality (Anderson, 1983:15-16). Importantly, it reflects the volunteers' common sense understanding of the social world and reveals the contribution of symbols to this understanding. These ideas are explored in greater detail in Chapter Seven but are included here because they are instrumental to defining the black perspective.

The black perspective, as conceptualised by the volunteers, is based on the premise that the black population exists in relation to a white community which manifestly fails to respond to the specific needs and interests of black people in general.

Particularly, the needs and interests of this imagined white community were understood to be furthered automatically by statutory organisations in direct contrast with those of black people. This meant that, for the volunteers, white interests are prioritised at the expense of black ones.

*“Because the community is obviously made up of black people and those who are at the head or forefront of government and society aren't catering for black people anyway. Don't recognise their needs, don't try to cater for their needs, don't understand black people, don't want to understand black people”.* (Ross)

*“Yes, 'cause I think white organisations can't cater for their needs ... There's a lot of racism. I think that, no matter how right on people can pretend to be, when it comes to the choice, I think they'll always put their own first. So, we do need our own organisations really”.* (Marie)

As a result, there was a consensus of opinion among the volunteers that predominately white institutions cannot be relied on to further the interests of black people. Instead, the black population was thought to have no alternative but to take responsibility for its own well-being.

*“Personally, I think because the mainstream, well community or statutory bodies or whatever, actually fall short in meeting the needs of the black community. Well personally, I believe that the idea around care in the community has been going on in the black community for some time anyway because it was a matter of survival, yeah?”.* (David)

By prioritising black needs and interests, the black perspective was therefore conceived of as part of an ethic of self-help which arguably pervades black racialised groups. It was thought to represent a crucial response to the racialised inequalities experienced by black people and was thus thought to incorporate a potential challenge to the assumed privileges of an imagined white community.

In terms of the volunteers' broader understanding of the meaning of 'race', the black perspective in no way implies that racialised inequalities arise from natural, predetermined differences between white and black people. Rather, it suggests that they exist illegitimately to benefit one group over and above the other. This corresponds with the view of 'race' as a social and political construction.

Similarly, the volunteers described an imagined black community based on a common, collective experience and understanding. As has already been stressed, the volunteers' understanding of this black community reflected the importance of symbols

in helping individuals to make sense of the social world. The numerous differences between the various groups included in this description were deemed irrelevant by the symbol 'black' meaning negatively racialised. Thus, what mattered was that volunteers perceived a shared experience of being under-privileged in relation to white people. The BJP was regarded as a means of sharing this experience and understanding in order to further the interests of all members of the community.

*"I do think that it is important where people have commonalties, common awareness and understanding, that they are able to develop strategies within those organisations to go further to provide those kind of ways forward ... because they have the understanding and awareness, they do have the basis of knowledge to put forward to say, you know, this is something which has to be addressed". (Susan).*

*"I think you tend to have this respect. I think they go through the same things we go through kinda, yeah. Those I know, the volunteers who are Afro-Caribbean, blacks and Asians, when we go to the police station, there is this sense of solidarity, kind of thing. This is our organisation. We have all suffered from it now and then". (Khalid)*

In fact, the volunteers considered it important that the interests of this imagined black community are represented by black organisations and black professionals. This amounted to a partial rejection of the assistance offered by their white counterparts.

*"... form their own as opposed to having white people voicing them? I think its better for black people to have a voice for black people instead of having white people voicing them". (Diana)*

*"I'm one of the believers that really the black community needs to do a lot of things for itself which means using black professionals wherever possible". (Raymond)*

Furthermore, a collective effort by members of the imagined black community was thought to be necessary to ensure that their needs and interests effectively command the attention of statutory organisations.

*"Because, without getting together, you know, like these like projects and organisations, you're pulling people together and they'll get their voices heard more". (Anwar)*

*"Its down to the more people. Well, its basically down to if one person shouts its less likely to be heard than if a hundred people are shouting. Group efforts always seems to work. They're your best bet aren't they?". (Gary)*



The black perspective, defined by the volunteers, was thought to reflect an imagined black community and was described as representing a means by which the black population can collectively pursue its specific requirements whilst challenging the unequal, racialised relationship of power which was understood to privilege an imagined white community.

The volunteers' insistence that a collective effort is desirable introduced the question of if and how far members of the white community are legitimately able to contribute to it. The following volunteers were asked if the BJP's training programme focused specifically on the needs of black people in the criminal justice system.

*"I think it was more general which helped me a hell of a lot in as much as most of the volunteers are either black, Afro-Caribbean, Asian or other minority group. And so it made it a hell of a lot easier for me, being a white European male, with no concept of what its like to be, you know, in the situation". (Peter).*

*"It (the training) was always from a black perspective, or with always a black perspective in mind. Because the trainers were white, so I don't think there gonna manage to deliver a black perspective". (Richard)*

*"If you've not got black trainers, it can't obviously be from a black perspective". (Caroline).*

Their responses suggest that members of the white community are fundamentally unable to understand fully and adopt the black perspective. As a result, being black is of crucial symbolic significance because it enables differences between the various 'non-white' racialised groups to be disguised. It suggests an essential black identity from which all white people are permanently excluded. From this view, it is crucial for the black community to form its own organisations to satisfactorily further its specific needs and interests.

*"Yeah, its very important. I feel that if its a black person and its a black organisation, they'll actually push it more for it to be a success. Rather than try and it don't go well then just leave it. They'll keep pushing and pushing". (Charlotte)*

*"But I think that its also important for there to be independent black organisations as far as possible, independent including the funding, so that they can push for issues without compromise, without having to trim". (Nabeel)*

However, none of the volunteers agreed that white people should be prohibited from volunteering for the BJP. It was therefore useful to conceptualise the black

perspective as a moderated form of essentialism. The volunteers insisted that the white population is capable of appreciating such a perspective and considered it important that white people are educated in this respect.

*“Me Mum’s white and she doesn’t understand ... but she wasn’t educated in that respect. She’s always been in your working class jobs or whatever. So, I can’t blame her, she was always there to support me. The sympathy was there but the empathy weren’t, you know?”.* (Alison).

*“Well because, like I said before, the Caucasians don’t, they have to learn about black issues and if they don’t learn about black issues they cannot understand. We need to have our own projects, right, for black people to talk about black issues”.* (Veronica).

Thus, the volunteers identified a distinction between the experience of being black and being able to appreciate what it means to be black. This serves the purpose of validating the perceived existence of an essential black experience, from which an imagined black community arises, whilst including the white community in the response to racialised inequalities.

In fact, the volunteers stressed that simply creating an organisation for black people by no means provides an unambiguous guarantee of a commitment to furthering their community’s needs and interests. This meant that the volunteers did not understand black organisations to adopt automatically the black perspective. The following responses are from volunteers who were asked if they thought it was important for black people to have their own organisations.

*“As long as they have true principles and true priorities to meet. Not if they’re thought up by somebody in terms of political correctness, its just simply a policy judgement. You don’t want that. You want something that has a genuine aim and that there is a genuine need for”.* (Diana)

*“There has been such a lot of lip service paid to black people, certain projects, and this is going to be set up to do this and this and this, you know? Pay what is due to us, right? We don’t need little projects to get off the ground to do this and this and this for us, you know?”.* (Susan)

This raises the important issue of how to distinguish between a black organisation based on the key principles of the black perspective and one based on a rhetorical commitment to furthering the needs and interests of an imagined black community. In short, how to separate an authentic conception of blackness from one with no firm foundation. The issue is further complicated by the acceptable inclusion of white people in a collective response.

As a result, the internal contradiction surrounding the volunteers' notions of blackness is revealed. The volunteers provided no explanation regarding how to distinguish satisfactorily between the two kinds of organisation. Rather, they assumed that the BJP is an example of the more desirable kind. The inability of volunteers to propose a distinction was understandable due to their adherence to a moderated form of essentialism. The volunteers' idea of an essential black identity contradicted their view that blackness is socially and politically constructed to privilege an imagined white community. Ultimately, this kind of contradiction means that an authentic conception of blackness is, in fact, impossible to unobtain. Thus, the idea of an imagined black community sharing an essential black identity is questionable and, in turn, unsustainable.

However, as has already been demonstrated, the black perspective advanced by the volunteers depends on an adherence to the notion of an imagined black community with shared experiences and interests. It is therefore important to examine how the volunteers incorporated this understanding into their interpretation of the project's aims and objectives. The remainder of this section explores the volunteers' interpretation in order to provide a measurement with which to evaluate the BJP's success.

The stated aim of the BJP is to inform black people of their legal rights and to provide practical assistance to those who had been arrested or detained. Its objectives are to provide seminars and other forums addressing all aspects of criminal justice and to develop and promote both a HOAS and information packs covering the law and legal advice.

It was, however, clear that, for the volunteers, the underlying intent of the project is to ensure that black people in general are better equipped to manage racialised encounters with various criminal justice agencies. The likelihood of a satisfactory outcome was thought to be increased by reducing the possibility that the civil rights of black people assume secondary status to those of white people. The issue of citizenship is inextricable from debates about nationality. It is therefore useful to begin the final part of this chapter by examining how and why the volunteers described themselves as British.

The volunteers expressed a practical affiliation with Britain by describing themselves as British purely because they have British citizenship. In fact, one half of the volunteers referred specifically to the fact that they are British by birth.

*"I am British actually. I've lived here, I was born here and everything. It makes me British ... as far as my status is concerned, how I see it is, I was born here, I was brought up here, I went to school here, I'm working here". (Amjid)*

*"By the very fact that I was born here, yeah I'm British. But that's as far as it goes". (Ross)*

As the latter response indicates, the volunteers did not straightforwardly define themselves as British. They used a restricted definition of Britishness to refer to citizenship only. This excluded any symbolic identification with a British national identity. For example, the following volunteer identified symbolically with her country of origin.

*"I was born in India but I'm British. So yes, I would describe myself as British but I do have a lot of patriotic feelings towards India and I'm very proud to be an Indian. And strictly speaking, I'd say I'm Indian not British ... I only describe myself as British when it comes to application forms, when it talks about nationality, and my nationality on my passport is British. That's the only reason why I say British". (Lata)*

In addition to this, the volunteers argued that they have no alternative but to adopt a restricted definition of Britishness. This implies that they are unable to adopt a British national identity at the symbolic level. The following comments are representative of their views.

*"Most definitely not. I mean, we are English because we were born in England, we're British. But I could never stand up and say that I were proud to be British. I don't see how, sorry". (Caroline)*

*"No, I'm a black Afro-Caribbean Jamaican of Jamaican parents. I've got British nationality but I'm not classed as British". (Veronica)*

The distinction between a practical affiliation and a symbolic identification links the understanding of the volunteers. For the purposes of this section, the distinction is significant because it means that, regardless of their symbolic identification with the country, the volunteers acknowledged their British citizenship. Their understanding of the purpose of the BJP reflected the entitlements of black people as British citizens. The discussion that follows is therefore a summary of how they considered the project to challenge racialised inequalities by adopting the black perspective to protect and advance the civil rights of an imagined black community.

An explicit aim of the project is to provide information and advice to black people regarding the law and the criminal justice process. A management committee member explained the various methods through which this aim is realised.

*“And the main aim of that (BJP’s seminars) was to spread and share information about how the system works, people’s rights on arrest ... so that’s information, whether its through seminars, conferences, also the printed form, client’s cards, packs, things like that, that you’re probably familiar with. So, information has been a key thing and also information face-to-face or on the phone. There’s a telephone help-line, there’s an office. People can come in just with general enquiries”.*

(Joe)

The project’s role as an information provider was recognised by the volunteers. By providing information, the project was thought to enable black people to access their right to equal justice before the law. In this sense, the project was understood to empower black people to pursue their citizenship rights.

*“Again, its access to justice really. Its being there on the end of a phone, its being there to see people. I think it definitely does fulfil what it says it does”.* (Karen)

*“I think the main use for it is, if it was in full swing, its to let people know their rights and defend them, their rights. Sometimes people, because they don’t know or they, I don’t know, its just helping people to know what their rights are and helping each other through difficult times”.* (Pam)

The idea of empowerment is implicit in the following response from an interview with the project’s co-ordinator. He explained how the project’s function as an information provider enables black people to handle negative contact with the police. Essentially, they were deemed to be better able to manage racialised encounters successfully.

*“Under certain circumstances, by law, they are required to answer certain questions, right. Now, because they don’t know that, it then gives the police officer the right to arrest them, right, until he can get the answers to those questions. So, unless people are aware of simple things like that, they’re gonna get into hassles, into conflict with the police. So, part of what we’re doing is educating people, so that should overcome some problems”.* (Majid)

Furthermore, the project was understood to help protect black people’s right to equal justice before the law by monitoring the various criminal justice agencies, including the police. In principle, it decreases the likelihood that black people’s civil rights are neglected by ensuring that the law is applied correctly. For the volunteers,

this observation function of the project provides a useful means of challenging potentially racialised policing.

*"It keep the police on their toes ... its like its keeping a check on the police, on whether they do things to the book. Say, for example, its a way of checking the police to see if they're doing the right job".*  
(Khalid)

*"Also, what I also expected and what it is is more, I don't know if it was brought out for this, but its also more a check on the police that they're doing their job correctly".* (Anwar)

The BJP was also understood to advance black people's right to equal justice by aiming to protect their well-being. As a result, the project was seen to adopt a welfare role by providing practical help and support according to the requirements of black people.

*"Like helping ethnic minorities really. I just feel like that knowing that there's a project like this, people know, ethnic/black minorities know, that there's actually a group of people that are there to actually help them with any kind of problem to do with the police or whatever".*  
(Charlotte)

The project's welfare role is particularly apparent in references to its HOAS. The principle of the scheme involves ensuring that suspects receive an acceptable standard of care whilst in custody. This includes offering support by tending to the suspect's health and dietary requirements.

*"If someone came to me and said, obviously I can't get you out of here but I'm certainly here to help and to make sure you've got everything and to give you some advice if I can, then I'd be more than happy you know. So I think, more than anything, its support to the detainee".*  
(Peter)

Again, this was thought to help protect the civil rights of black people by implicitly monitoring how far the police apply the law correctly in the specific context of police custody. In theory, the HOAS reduces the likelihood that the police codes of practice are ignored or manipulated.

In summary, the aims and objectives of the BJP were understood to represent a means through which an imagined black community can advance and protect its civil rights of citizenship. For the volunteers, the purpose of the project is to challenge the racialised status of members of the black community as second class citizens in relation to members of the white community. The project was conceived of as functioning from

the black perspective in order to ensure that, in future, local black people are better equipped to manage encounters with the police and other criminal justice agencies.

The next section examines critically how the BJP attempted to pursue its aims and objectives, and so operationalise the black perspective, through its self-defined status as an independent black voluntary organisation. Section 3.4 therefore begins the consideration of the project's success.

### **3.4 Embracing the black perspective: the BJP's management of image**

The purpose of this section is to explain how and why embracing the black perspective required careful management of the BJP's image. The argument presented is based on two key, identifiable tensions. First, the project's self-appointed role as both advocate and intermediary for black people incorporated an explicit rejection of the notion of community representatives. It is argued that this rejection ultimately contradicted the black perspective's notion of an imagined black community and thus did not straightforwardly portray the project's position. Second, the section investigates the tension between the project's self-defined independent status and its dependence on statutory organisations for financial and practical support. The potential dilution of the black perspective is suggested as one likely consequence of the project's carefully formulated strategy to secure support.

It is demonstrated that evaluating the BJP's success was as much about determining the success with which it managed its image as it was about determining the extent to which it successfully operationalised a black perspective. This, it is argued, succinctly highlights the contradictory notions of blackness confronted by the project when formulating and pursuing its aims and objectives.

#### **3.4.1 An advocate and intermediary for black people?**

It was clear from the interviews with the project's co-ordinator and management committee that they were careful to distance themselves from the notion that the project acts as a representative for black people. They referred critically to the role of self-defined 'community representatives' and criticised, in particular, the willingness of the police to liaise with so-called 'community leaders'. By doing so, they questioned the legitimacy of these people's claims to represent an imagined black community.

*“Like all this thing about community leaders which is a load of crap basically. They’ve got friendships or alliances with some key people in every community, black and white, but then again, its all words with the black community when they meet with the leaders. And that’s the notion that we need to come away from. There’s no community leaders in my book. At the end of the day, we have some puppets who are claiming that they represent the community”.* (Salim)

*“The mistake they sometimes make is that, because you’re black, you must know everyone and everything and you don’t. I would never say that I did. I mean, I don’t know everything that happens within the African-Caribbean community and I’m quite active within it, you know”.* (Joe)

Instead, they promoted the project as an advocate and intermediary for black people. Rather than assuming the precarious and contradictory role of non-elected delegate, the project was therefore conceived of as an ally and source of support for those who requested it. This meant that, rather than acting as a voice for an imagined black community, the project was understood to help others in pursuing their own needs and interests. The following example demonstrates how the project’s co-ordinator was always cautious to express the project’s role in these terms.

*“The incident in Northhill, for example, that happened. The people approached us and what we did was we advised them in terms of what the legalities were. You need to inform the police, you need to do this, you need to do that. But the work of the picket itself was done by the young people themselves. So, they went round organising everything ... it was the young people themselves that went to the meeting with the police, right, so we were just advising them and they were doing everything themselves. So, I think if there’s an issue then the community can actually take it up themselves and deal with it and what we can do is advise them and help them along the way”.* (Majid)

Thus, the project was understood to facilitate and support black people without adopting a leading role. The young Pakistanis, to whom the co-ordinator referred, organised a successful protest to voice their criticisms of the police. By ensuring that they understood how to organise a legal protest, the project’s assistance was thought to eliminate the need for a ‘community representative’ to liaise with the authorities. This example indicates how the role of advocate is less overtly political when compared to that of representative. The political stance of the young people was central to the action taken whereas that of the project’s was, at most, peripheral. Instead of the project, the young people were therefore understood to represent an imagined black community.



The HOAS was also understood to operate according to the project's self-appointed role as advocate and intermediary. For example, BJP volunteers are only permitted to attend call-outs if their assistance is specifically requested by suspects. This project regulation was consistently stressed during their induction training. Further, the volunteers clearly defined their role in terms of being an intermediary between black suspects and custody officers.

*"We're like middlemen in there aren't we? Like, like liaison officers or something. Someone in there making sure both sides are at ease and everything's going right". (Wasim)*

*"You know, so we're there, we're in your face, we're here to do a good job, to serve both sides. You know, everybody gets fair treatment; a good job". (Peter)*

In addition to this, the volunteers were asked if they regarded themselves as representing the interests of black people. Their responses reveal that they did not define their role strictly in these terms.

*"I see myself as representing the BJP. Whatever I do, I try and do in an accurate and effective manner, 'cause at the end of the day any mistakes that I do effect the reputation of the BJP". (Lata)*

*"No, not really, not representing interests. Its like, I mean, we're there to help people really aren't we? Not be there to represent interests. We're not politicians or whatever". (Wasim)*

This means that there is a distinct relationship between the way in which the BJP's coordinator and management committee promoted the project and the way in which the volunteers perceived their role. Both involved a rejection of the notion that the project acts as a representative of black people.

However, both groups also acknowledged the apparent precariousness of the project's role as advocate and intermediary. The success of the project was understood to depend on maintaining the good will of the police without jeopardising the trust of black people.

*"If they're going to even attempt that they'd better be very careful because they could easily lose the trust of the black community; especially the ones most in need". (Marie)*

*"The best thing the Black Justice Project can do is try and win the trust of the black community by showing that its got nothing to do with the police and that its totally independent". (Pam)*

*"If it can do it without it being detrimental to the project, because it is there as a go-between and can act as a go-between, but it has to be careful that it does it from the point of view of the community, OK?".*

(Raymond)

Their understanding incorporated the notion of an imagined black community, inherently and uniformly mistrustful of the police. This contradicted the project's self-appointed role as advocate and intermediary for black people specifically because such a role implicitly rejects the notion that there was an imagined black community to represent. Thus, a key tension existed between the project's stated objective to help only those who request assistance and its apparent need to secure the trust and obtain the views of an imagined black community.

This meant that, paradoxically, the project faced a similar dilemma to that of community representatives. Its self-appointed role as advocate and intermediary failed to overcome the difficulty presented by adhering to the notion that there exists a black community with common needs and interests. This, in turn, indicates that the distinction between being a representative and an advocate is less clear than members of the project insisted.

Consequently, the project appeared to have two, equally unattractive options. It could either discard or retain the claim that its aims and objectives were based on the needs and interests of an imagined black community. By discarding it, the project would have severely compromised the black perspective and so would have lost the foundation under-pinning its aims and objectives. By retaining it, the project's similar role to that of community representatives would, ultimately, have been acknowledged. However, during the course of the research, the project was never compelled to make a choice. The second part of this section explains why by examining the project's careful management of image.

### **3.4.2 An independent organisation?**

The BJP's co-ordinator and management committee persistently emphasised the project's apparent independence. This involved promoting the notion of 'partnership'. The term 'partner' implies a mutually beneficial relationship in which each party co-operates with the other and thus means that, in principle, the BJP maintains its independence whilst working with relevant statutory organisations.

*“Because we want to see all the partners and funders to be real partners and that’s another strength. Because we’ve got partnership work and I can put my hand on the heart and say we have got real partnership work”. (Salim)*

*“A lot of people bandy around the word ‘multi-agency work’ right and, what you usually find is, there’s a lot of conflict between the different organisations. What we’ve found is we’ve got probation, Sheffield Law Society, South Yorkshire Police and community groups working to support this scheme”. (Majid)*

A rejection of traditional notions of liberalism underpins this idea of ‘partnership’. Instead of organising around the anticipated commitment and generosity of statutory organisations, the BJP was presented as organising around the black perspective in order to define and further its own aims and objectives. As a result, it was not perceived as the passive recipient of funds.

*“I think, in setting up and being part of an organisation, what you get satisfaction from is taking and developing some sort of self-determination and power for ourselves and being part of a long process. But we have to see it in the context of long term benefits and results within the existing power structure. So, that’s part of the satisfaction that you’re actually making a contribution to the community, being able to determine for itself justice and equality rather than going cap in hand to institutions and asking for altruism. So, its taking direct action on our own behalf, that’s an important part of it”. (Joe)*

Thus, allegedly, statutory organisations had not influenced the constitution and organisation of the project. Rather, their contribution was deemed to be acceptable only if it furthered the project’s self-determined aims and objectives.

In emphasising the project’s apparent independence, the co-ordinator and management committee were careful to distance themselves from the rough and tumble of local black politics. For example, at the time of the research, the project was purposely not a member of the city’s Black Community Forum. The forum is composed of interested individuals representing various local black community organisations. The decision to remain apart was based on the desire to avoid allegations of partisanship.

*“So, for a whole range of reasons, we decided not to get involved with politics and I think the value of that is being seen as, no-one sees us as being associated with one particular community group. We have cases coming from the whole spectrum. The police don’t see us as being here just to bash the police, right. Its the easiest thing to do. Community groups don’t see us as being too closely linked with the police or probation or anyone. Everybody sees us as being independent and I*

*think that's one of the reasons why everybody's OK in using us".*  
(Majid)

Demonstrating the project's independence was therefore essential to safeguarding both the support of statutory organisations and the trust of black people. This introduced the question of to what extent was the project's independence simply a careful management of image.

The project remained something of an unknown player on the local political scene. During the course of the research, suspicions arose that individuals purporting to be prospective volunteers simply displayed an interest in the project in order to discover information for other organisations. These incidents helped to validate the scepticism with which project members viewed greater involvement with other organisations, black or otherwise. However, they also indicated one way in which the project avoided criticism. Namely, its self-defined status as an independent organisation could not be criticised if others had little information with which to assess it.

For example, the co-ordinator consistently referred to criticisms that the project failed to publicise itself well. He argued that the project's publicity had generally been low key due to the substantial cost of high impact publicity.

*"When we did the annual report, what was interesting was that the police, the volunteers and clients that have used the service, when they were questioned about what they thought of the BJP, they all criticised the project for not doing enough publicity. Which is something that we're well aware of, the only problem was we never had the money".*  
(Majid)

However, it is also reasonable to assume that greater publicity would have increased the possibility of assessing effectively the extent to which the project maintained its independence.

By implication, the project's self-proclaimed independent status was, indeed, questionable. The issue of funding provided a useful means of investigating the key tension between the project's professed independence and its unavoidable dependence on statutory organisations for support. At the time of the research, the BJP received funding from three different sources. Its main funder was the probation service and it had also secured grants from the city council's Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and the National Lottery Charities Board. The volunteers recognised the importance of funding in terms of facilitating the nature and extent of the project's development.

*"There's always something else you can be doing, improved but, if you haven't got the money, and unless you've got the time, you can't do it".* (Veronica)

*"I think that perhaps with more backup and with more staff it would be able to do it more effectively, you know".* (Susan)

The project was typical of a voluntary sector organisation in terms of its relative financial insecurity. Thus, the volunteers recognised the ultimate precariousness of the project's long-term future due to the piecemeal, irregular receipt of grants.

*"Also, I don't think it should be funded off things like lottery, it should be funded off wherever on a regular basis, so it can actually keep on. I think its should actually be something that's expanded, something that should be on a proper basis".* (Charlotte)

*"I think its a success at the moment and lets hope that they keep getting the funding. That's the real problem area, the funding. They've got funding for the next three years, is it? Which is nice, and it gives it a bit of breathing space, but three years isn't really a long time at all. So, I think that's my main fear, that the funding may not be there".* (Gary)

It was therefore evident that further development of the BJP depends on the success of future funding proposals. Without financial investment, the ability of the project to fulfil both its present and prospective objectives would be severely reduced.

It was established in Section 3.2 that the formation of the project reflected the wider social, economic and political context and the resulting priorities of various statutory organisations. In fact, it is clear that the project's success in securing funding resulted from a strategy which reflected these priorities. For example, the following volunteers indicated that one practical way in which the probation service benefited was by using the project as an alternative, preliminary training ground for prospective probation officers.

*"From applying for the probation officer work, when I got turned down and they were telling me to volunteer. So, that's how I heard about the project, through going for probation interviews".* (Charlie)

*"Initially, I went to the probation office to be a volunteer there and I was on the waiting list for about six, seven months, and then they sort of told me about this".* (Gary)

In order to secure funding from the probation service in the future, the project's prospective objectives were also designed to attract its support.

*“At the moment, we'll be negotiating with South Yorkshire Probation Service either working together on co-ordinating their volunteers and our volunteers to do prison visits. Or we may be able to take over their volunteers so we're co-ordinating volunteers in police stations, courts and prisons as a unified service. Because currently their volunteers are being managed by two probation officers so, in terms of cost effectiveness, it makes sense for them to send the volunteers to us, pay us a little bit more in terms of the grant that they give us, to co-ordinate everything”. (Majid)*

Therefore, the project's objectives arguably arose from the needs and interests of statutory organisations. This contradicted the project's overt adherence to self-determination and thus the black perspective.

During the course of the research, a difficulty arose which highlighted the tension between the project's supposed independence and its accountability to the probation service. The management committee decided that it was desirable to have volunteer representation at committee meetings and, accordingly, the volunteers democratically elected their representatives. Unfortunately, their choice created a dilemma for the management committee in that one of the elected representatives was also a probation officer. The committee's probation service representative explained the problem.

*“Its been further complicated by one of the elected volunteers being a member of the service who, in terms of the Home Office circular, couldn't be a member of the committee. It gets very difficult and I think the black communities would say that that Home Office circular militates against them because the pool of people who they could draw on both as volunteers and as management committee reps is actually much smaller than many white voluntary organisations. So, that for me has been a real tension”. (Jill)*

Essentially, the committee had three options. They could challenge the Home Office ruling and risk jeopardising institutional support for the project, they could exclude the probation officer from participating as a candidate in new elections or they could abandon the problematic idea for volunteer representatives. The second and third options militated against the interests of the volunteers and therefore contradicted the spirit of the black perspective. The committee chose the first option and thus began lengthy negotiations which eventually resulted in the ruling being waived for the project. However, as a result of the ruling, the elected representative did not attend any committee meetings for over a year.

This example demonstrates that the project faced significant difficulties in adhering to the black perspective and thus prioritising the needs and interests of black people. Attempting to do so involved a complicated process of negotiation whereby its smooth development was inevitably compromised. This meant that the project depended on the practical, as well as financial, support of statutory organisations.

Despite promoting the project's independence, the co-ordinator and management committee did, in fact, recognise the potential difficulties arising from a reliance on institutional funding. For example, they argued that funding black organisations, such as the BJP, provides statutory organisations with an excuse to avoid addressing comprehensively the issues themselves.

*"I think that's about the white communities and agencies abrogating their responsibilities and relying on the good will of the black community, when it's right that that good will is there, but it shouldn't be trampled on in that way. And I think that's dangerous ... and, you know, it's just this constant pushing back and saying we have suggestions to make and we'll work with you to resolve the issues, but it's not our responsibility, it's everybody's responsibility. And you just have to keep pushing it. You get seen to be a focus and, if it's a black issue, you go send for the BJP". (Jill)*

Furthermore, they recognised that the paucity of statutory funds allocated to black racialised groups meant that the BJP's success in securing funding was likely to have occurred at the expense of other black organisations. As a result, statutory commitment to the BJP is by no means regarded as synonymous with a commitment to furthering black needs and interests in general.

*"I think that, often, we're fighting for the same resources amongst ourselves. Again, one of the reasons why the political term black cannot rest easy with me is that if you're sort of fighting for resources within a black melting pot, you know, and even say within say the Afro-Caribbean community, we're not all one singular homogeneous group. There's different needs within communities and there are times when you actually have to target different groups and provide them with different resources, you know?". (Raymond)*

In addition to this, the co-ordinator maintained that he rejected co-operation with statutory organisations unless it occurred on the basis of a reciprocal relationship. He referred to a police request for assistance in recruiting volunteers to attend identity parades involving black suspects and argued that he was reluctant to disseminate

information for the police when he doubted that custody officers provided information about the HOAS to black suspects.

*“It can't be a one-way street, its got to be a two-way street and, on that basis, I'll co-operate with it. If they don't want to co-operate in anything else but they want us to do something for them, then, no, I won't do it. Because I don't see why the black community should always be helping organisations, whether its the police, the local authority or any organisation, and yet, in return, they're getting nothing”.* (Majid)

The custody officers' failure to provide the required information is explored in greater detail in Chapter Five. It is significant here because it provides further evidence of the project's inevitable reliance on statutory organisations for practical support.

Institutional support for the project was therefore always conditional and never straightforwardly reliable. The question of what to do if support ceased was considered by all contributors to the project, including the chief constable and co-ordinator.

*“What are their outputs in respect of their finances? If funds dried up, have they got an exit strategy which will help the government to see that they are thoughtful about life after the Home Office, or SRB or even Safer Cities?”.* (Chief Constable)

*“Originally, we had the option of either going down the road of being a pressure group or of being a group that works with different organisations. And we decided, after a long discussion, that we wanted to go down the road of working in co-operation with the organisations. And we found that that has actually worked, right? ... We chose the co-operation. If that is pulled away, then the pressure group is still there”.* (Majid)

Paradoxically, the alternative identified by the co-ordinator introduces a more satisfactory means of pursuing the ideal of an independent organisation. However, adopting a pressure group status would fundamentally alter the objectives of the project. For example, it would involve abandoning the HOAS, and the associated role of the BJP volunteers. Thus, institutional support was indispensable to the project in its existing form and it therefore had no alternative but to continuously negotiate and modify its adherence to the black perspective.

It has, however, been demonstrated that the BJP's careful management of image ensured that its modified adherence to the black perspective remained, for the most part, hidden. Thus, its dependence on statutory organisations for practical and financial support did not seriously challenge its self-proclaimed independent status. Further, it



ensured that the project was able to successfully distance itself from the role, and associated inadequacies, of community representatives.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has critically assessed the project's self-identified adherence to the black perspective. The perspective was described as a means of challenging the views and privileges of an imagined white community. It was revealed that a successful challenge was thought to be achievable by prioritising the needs and interests of a similarly conceptualised, imagined black community.

The process of legitimacy outlined in Section 3.2 amounted to an early indication that the project's stated adherence to the black perspective was questionable. Institutional support for the project was inherently dependent on the wider social, economic and political context which provided legitimation for a black voluntary organisation working within the arena of criminal justice. This process of legitimacy was instigated by three individuals in particular who, due to their paid employment within the criminal justice process, were familiar with the politically expedient and de-radicalised language of reform and redistribution. They ensured the project's legitimacy, first, by adopting this language to engage in a productive exchange regarding its viability and, second, by incorporating the related policies of statutory organisations which emphasised the need to develop partnerships through multi-agency initiatives and to contract out services at a local level. In short, the project attracted support because it reflected the policies of key agencies, including the probation service and the police in particular. Thus, the project's self-proclaimed independent status was shown to be doubtful in relation to its strategic reflection of the wider policy context and its associated reliance on the practical and financial support of statutory organisations.

However, the demonstrably tenuous nature of the black perspective itself suggests that the project could not have operationalised it fully. The notion of an essential black identity was shown to under-pin the perspective. Thus, being black was of crucial symbolic significance because it enabled volunteers to ignore the differences between the various racialised groups. It also enabled them to ignore possible similarities with white, negatively racialised groups. Instead, they focused on an assumed, shared identity based on being negatively racialised in relation to all white people. This contradicted the volunteers' understanding that differences between black

and white people are only constructed in order to further the interests of the latter group.

In addition to this, the volunteers' understanding incorporated no clear way to distinguish between a black organisation committed to the black perspective and one based on a rhetorical commitment to furthering the needs and interests of an imagined black community. This means that the black perspective provides no distinction between a supposedly authentic conception of blackness and one manipulated to further sectional and institutional interests.

The notion of an imagined black community cast further doubt on the conceptual validity of the black perspective. This was highlighted in the chapter with reference to the ambiguity surrounding the project's criticism of community representatives and its subsequent, self-defined role as advocate and intermediary for black people. It was argued that the project's expressed concern to secure the trust and reflect the views of an imagined black community meant that it could not legitimately claim to represent only those who explicitly sought assistance. As a result, the project adherence to the black perspective ensured that it did not seriously challenge the notion that there is an imagined black community to represent.

The tensions inherent in adopting the black perspective serve to highlight broader issues regarding the meaning of 'race'. Importantly, they indicate that processes of racialisation still incorporate essentialist notions to explain socially constructed differences between racially signified groups. By revealing the ambiguities surrounding notions of blackness, they also demonstrate the inherently indeterminate nature of 'race' as a social and political construction. These key themes are explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Having presented an overview of the broader social, economic and political context within which the BJP was formed, the following chapter explores the relationship between black people and the police in Sheffield, as it was understood by all of those who participated in the research. This provides the immediate context within which the project operated and explains further the notion of an imagined black community with common experiences, needs and interests.

## Chapter Four

### The Relationship Between Black People and the Police

#### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three located the origins of the BJP in the 'post-riot' context of the 1980s. It explained how and why the nature of police-black relations became part of the mainstream political agenda for various statutory organisations. The aim of this chapter is to present the more recent state of affairs regarding the relationship between black people and the police, with particular reference to Sheffield. Perceptions of both the volunteers and the police officers are examined in order to explain the immediate context which contributed to the project's aims and objectives.

Section 4.2 presents the volunteers' understanding of the relationship. From an analytical standpoint, the significance of stories as a means of interpreting the social world is examined. It is argued that, for the volunteers, stories played a crucial role in determining the nature of the relationship between black people and the police. An imagined black community is identified as providing the key linking the specificity of personal knowledge to the experiences of black people in general. Further, it is suggested that determining the level of racialised discrimination provides only a partial account of the nature of this relationship. The section presents three central, assumed truths, contained within the volunteers' stories, each of which results in the conclusion that the policing of black people is irrefutably, negatively racialised.

In the third section the police officers' understanding of the relationship is explored. It is argued that the officers' interpretation of police-black relations involved a particular presentation of their role which discounted policing as a social activity involving unequal relationships of power. The officers, it is revealed, argued forcefully that 'race' has no meaning in police work. Consequently, their understanding is shown to contrast sharply with that of the volunteers.

Section 4.4 outlines possible options suggested by the volunteers and police officers for addressing problematic police-black relations. These broadly corresponded with challenging racialised inequalities at the structural, institutional and individual level. It is argued that the officers ignored processes of racialisation at the structural level but

were keen to highlight the racialised beliefs and actions of specific officers. In contrast, the volunteers identified a meaning for 'race' at each level. Thus, the officers identified racialised policing as a rare aberration from the norm whereas the volunteers identified it as normal, particularly given the wider context of racialised inequalities.

This chapter provides further evidence of the volunteers' interpretation of the meaning of 'race' both within and beyond the BJP. In addition to this, the chapter also sets the scene for explaining the police officers' interpretation of and limited support for the HOAS. Thus, assessing both groups' understanding of police-black relations contributes to an evaluation of the BJP's success.

#### **4.2 Police-black relations: the volunteers' understanding**

It was established in the previous chapter that the relationship between black people and the police, and indeed other criminal justice agencies, has consistently been regarded as problematic. As a result, black people's apparently inherent mistrust of the police has been a common feature of police 'community relations' strategy in recent years. However, the precise sources of knowledge from which this mistrust arises remain unclear.

Therefore, the aim of this section is to determine how the volunteers constructed an understanding of the relationship. The section is based on the premise that volunteers, as social actors, impose meanings upon the social world as they reproduce it. As Berger and Luckmann have explained, this world originates in both their thoughts and actions.

"The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these" (1966:33).

Thus, the volunteers' understanding of police-black relations reflected a 'folk model' of the social world because it expressed a common sense version of social reality (Jenkins, 1987:154-5). The following represents an 'analytical model' of the volunteers' understanding in order to provide a critical interpretation of their related thoughts and actions.

The volunteers recounted their knowledge of the police through the telling of stories. Stories constitute a representation of reality which involves transferring a

number of central, assumed truths from one party to another. They are significant because, as Shearing and Erikson have indicated, they become part of the taken for granted understanding of the social world and represent an implicit basis for action.

“Stories constitute a consciousness, a sensibility, a way of seeing out of which action will flow, point blank, as it were, without recourse to specific instructions” (1991:491).

Telling stories of police-black relations is, in fact, one form of action and is significant in that the central, assumed truths revealed represent a reality for both the volunteers and those who learn of their knowledge. This is important in that, although the stories were told to the interviewer during the research, it can be assumed that the volunteers are likely to recount them to other acquaintances in the context of their everyday social lives. Thus, the stories contribute to a shared, mutual understanding of police-black relations whenever related subjects are discussed.

The resulting action is also significant in that each story has implications beyond the specific experience it describes. This means that it represents a useful way of moving from the particular to the general.

“Each story refers implicitly to a larger whole that is expressed through the story but is never fully revealed by it ...” (Shearing & Erikson, 1991:498).

Thus, the volunteers’ stories referred to specific incidents. However, their stories also represented ‘the way it is’ in terms of explaining the nature of police-black relations more generally. They provided the volunteers with a tacit guide to understanding the social world regardless of the extent of their personal experiences. As a result, the volunteers were able to generalise when discussing their understanding. For example, the following volunteer described her lack of surprise on hearing of negative incidents involving black people and the police.

*“No, you get used to it. I’ve got used to it. I haven’t even thought about it ... it don’t come as a surprise to me now when a black man or a black woman’s been arrested and battered in the cells or charged with something that they haven’t done or set up or whatever. It doesn’t come as a surprise”. (Marie)*

Before examining the content of the volunteers’ stories about their understanding of police-black relations, it is important to determine how and why the volunteers considered them to be a sound reflection of reality.

The volunteers constructed an understanding of police-black relations through a representation of their personal knowledge. They understood their stories to be an accurate illustration of reality containing a number of central, assumed truths specifically because personal knowledge formed the basis of the account. In this context, personal knowledge reflected either direct experiences or the experiences of people that they knew. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) have argued, this is the most secure type of knowledge because it is the most difficult to disprove. In short, the volunteers understood their stories to be 'the truth' because their knowledge was not obtained from an assumed, less reliable third party.

The volunteers were asked how they knew about the relationship between black people and the police. The following are a selection from many responses which highlight the contribution of direct experiences to the volunteers' understanding.

*"Before I might just have believed that they do (discriminate), for example, through reading newspapers or through other people who've been on the actual BJP. But I know they do now. Yeah, this is personal experience. They do". (Khalid)*

*"Well, I happen to have been out and about quite a bit and I've seen it myself. I've been stopped by a police car. I've been stopped in my car. I've had a copper say to me shut up you black so and so. I've had a copper say that to me, you know?". (Anwar)*

*"I mean, I've been there twice. One for self-defence basically and one when they thought I was driving a stolen car. They'd got this trumped up charge, something like that". (Gary)*

Incidents involving people that they knew also figured prominently in the volunteers' accounts. They are distinguishable from mere rumour and hearsay because the volunteers' personal knowledge of those involved was thought to validate the authenticity of the stories told.

*"There's people in the community that I've known who've been arrested and a lot of them wrongfully arrested and assaulted as well". (Charlotte)*

*"First hand, by speaking to people who are black and have been arrested, I've heard some of the things that have gone off. Well, the thing is, I get it from both sides because I'm very, very lucky to be in the position I am. I recruit for law firms, I recruit criminal lawyers ... and I'd like to think lawyers don't lie". (Peter)*

*"I've got friends and other members of the community coming foul of the law as well. While a lot of people might want to tell lies in their*

*defence and all of that, its hard to think that so many people lie at once, you know?". (David)*

These representative responses are also revealing in that the volunteers' understanding was based upon cumulative experiences. Although their stories referred to specific incidents, the volunteers suggested that they had a pool of relevant, personal knowledge to which they could have referred.

Thus, the research findings clearly suggest a distinction between personal knowledge obtained from apparently reliable sources and the arguably less reliable sources suggested by the authors of other studies addressing the subject of police-black relations. In contrast, their conclusions emphasised the importance of rumour and hearsay.

"For whatever reasons, a small number of difficult encounters do occur, and these can easily form the basis for a collective community suspicion of the police. Hostile and unfriendly contacts may become over-emphasised in the 'group consciousness' of West Indians in an area" (Tuck & Southgate, 1981:44).

"... attitudes are not the simple reflex of direct personal experience but are mediated, via the accumulated folk wisdom of community experiences" (Jefferson, 1993:38).

The volunteers' understanding indicated that these studies over-stressed the significance of the 'community' in disseminating relevant knowledge. In fact, this has been a criticism of police 'community relations' initiatives which have relied on unelected, so-called 'community representatives' for liaison purposes (Keith, 1993:181). Crucially, these authors problematically assumed that there is a tangible black community from which its members straightforwardly formulate an understanding of the relationship. The research findings presented above suggest that the general knowledge of an apparent black community was not central to the volunteers' understanding of police-black relations. If this was the case, rumour and hearsay would have played a more significant role in accounting for their knowledge. Rather, the volunteers referred to their personal knowledge in order to substantiate general statements regarding the nature of the relationship. As a result, this knowledge enabled them to refer to the general experiences of an imagined black community.

In fact, the volunteers distinguished personal knowledge from other accounts considered to be less relevant to their understanding of the relationship. This distinction

is usefully illustrated with reference to the media who were regarded as an unreliable and unhelpful source of knowledge. The volunteers were asked who or what were their main sources of information about the relationship.

*"I'm dubious of any media information on any black issue. I don't think it can be taken as read. On many occasions, I don't think it can be taken as read. Most of its personal experience, my friends and family".*  
(Diana)

*"I mean, I know you can't believe everything what's in the media but you do see it happening, the way we're treated".* (Anne)

In fact, the media's selective portrayal of black people was understood to contribute to their experiences of negative racialisation. For the volunteers, this further invalidated the media as a reliable source of knowledge.

*"One thing I've noticed is, when the police or the CPS actually employ agents who are black, the programme itself always tends to be very negative about black, rather than positive".* (Lata)

*"Every so often, something comes up in the media that stirs it about young black people, Afro-Caribbean young black especially, and it sticks. And years later they're still seen as that".* (Marie)

Having established that the volunteers constructed their understanding of police-black relations on the basis of a representation of personal knowledge, rather than the general knowledge of an apparent black community, their stories could be analysed to identify any central, assumed truths.

In summary, the volunteers' stories collectively represent a constructed reality comprising three central, assumed truths. The first central, assumed truth is that the police abuse their powers when dealing with black people. The second is that, for police officers, black people constitute a criminalised sub-population and the third is that 'race' has meaning during encounters between the two groups. The three truths are inextricably linked specifically because each results in the conclusion that the policing of black people is irrefutably, negatively racialised.

The stories told by the volunteers to illustrate how the police abuse their powers represent the hard edge of their understanding. They amount to a catalogue of police mistreatment and violation of trust. The following representative stories highlight incidents of physical and verbal abuse encountered by the volunteers.

*"I was there and I actually heard one of the police officer's radio back saying 'we've got problem with some Paki'. And I was just stand*



*watching and suddenly this riot van come along and they took him round the side of the car, yeah? They just beat him up and he was bleeding there (points to eyebrow) and they beat him up badly ... Now I know the other side". (Khalid)*

*"My friend said this Asian guy that had gone in, you could tell he'd been giving them some kind of information, you know the police were all friendly seeing him out, shaking his hand and then he turned round when he'd left and went 'stupid Paki' ... they think nothing of making sick remarks like that". (Alison)*

*"I mean I was involved in a situation a couple of years back where the police were making arrests on South Hill and a guy dropped his glasses. They were on the scene, it wasn't particularly concerning this guy. He like ran across the road and he dropped his glasses and I saw a police officer walk across the road and he stepped on them ... basically that's what happens ALL the time". (Raymond)*

These comments are of further significance because the concluding remark of each volunteer highlights explicitly how the stories represent 'the way it is' in terms of explaining the central, assumed truths of police-black relations in general. This means that the folk models used by the volunteers to understand the everyday world are reinforced by their accounts of particular incidents. Moving from the specific to the general is, in fact, a consistent feature of the volunteers' stories.

*"I've seen incidents of where police chase someone through our centre, which is Elmsmead, and we dealt with it, calmed it down. And he shook hands on it saying 'oh we'll forget the matter' and then the following month the lad get a summons. ... so I mean you can't trust 'em". (Lewis)*

*"I see it day in and day out when I'm interviewing people for pre-sentence reports and you're reading police statements about what took place, and about who said what and how they said it. And you know full well that people just don't talk like that, how the police put it down". (Richard)*

The latter story is less specific due to the frequency with which this particular violation of trust was deemed to occur. However, both volunteers provided particular examples of police dishonesty which served to reinforce the prevailing central truth that the police abuse their powers. Importantly, the function of the stories to reveal 'the way it is' for black people in general meant that the volunteers were able to refer to the experiences of an imagined black community.

The second central, assumed truth is that black people make up a criminalised sub-population. The volunteers' understanding was constructed with reference to the ways in which the police are seen to target both particular areas of the city and specific individuals from black racialised groups. They did not consider proactive policing to be an accurate reflection of the distribution of crime and, accordingly, the proliferation of illegal drugs represented a timely example which served to support their perspective. The first response refers to a recent study completed in the city which concluded that illegal drugs are present in high income areas.

*"Cocaine and other drugs are being dealt away from the inner city and not being policed in the same way. So, what I'm trying to say is that some operational policing of front-line inner city areas, with a high proportion of black people, there's been some very serious and heavy handed policing, not all directed where it should have been. Whether that's just lackadaisical, too many front doors, too many raids on houses that are smashed up, related to the problem. Whereas that would never happen in (names two high income areas of the city)". (Joe)*

*"Black areas are highlighted such as (names two areas of the city with a high concentration of black people) when there's a drug problem in most areas these days and it must be the police where the highlighting's coming from so they're not doing us any favours". (Marie)*

For the volunteers, the targeting of specific individuals is predominately a matter of skin colour. This meant that any member of a black racialised group was recognised as having an increased likelihood of experiencing police harassment. The following responses are from volunteers whose paid employment involved working with young people.

*"I mean there's confrontations that have been happening recently here ... with the youngsters and the police. I think there's a whole thing about when young people can actually see that they're being unjustifiably picked upon by the nature of their colour, then there's bound to be these sort of suspicions". (Raymond)*

*"I think very many young men I know, young white men I know, who are aware that their black friends get hassled sometimes simply because they are black, you know the way they look". (Nabeel)*

In order to reinforce the significance of targeting, some of the volunteers also referred to personal experiences of police harassment. They regarded the particular actions of the police as inexplicable unless viewed through the lens of 'race'. The following response, from a white volunteer, suggests that this understanding is not confined to black people.

*“Whenever I would have a black person in the car with me I always used to get stopped and that happened three times in the space of a few months. I don’t get stopped any more. I’ve got a very old car, a V reg. car, and, when I’m on my own, I don’t get pulled up. Now that’s just a very minor thing but very important. A very important observation”.*  
(Susan)

For the volunteer, these were minor yet important incidents. This suggests that the implication of the story told is the same regardless of its perceived gravity. Thus, any story is significant provided that it contains a central, assumed truth about the nature of the relationship. Similarly, another volunteer argued that a relatively minor incident can negatively effect police-black relations.

*“There was nothing wrong with the car. It had its MOT and its road tax but we were persistently followed by police officers in the other lane and they were continuously jotting something down. But there was nothing to jot down and it was intimidation, that’s all it was, intimidation of a black person on a motor way. And that’s a minor example. Its that sort of attitude that really, really aggravates the situation”.* (Lata)

This volunteer stressed that the attention of the police was not lawfully justifiable. Her argument is representative of that of other volunteers with comparable experiences.

*“I mean I’ve been driving two years and I can’t count on both hands how many times I’ve been followed or stopped for no reason whatsoever. There’s always been a tax disk, my wheels have never been bald, but they’ve always done it, you know? I’ve been fully legal, covered, everything”.* (Alison)

Thus, the volunteers’ stories of targeting were based on personal knowledge and resulted in the central, assumed truth that black people are a criminalised sub-population. They argued that black people receive unwarranted police attention for no other identifiable reason than that they are black. Proactive policing was understood to be neither a reflection of the incidence of crime or of the likelihood that an offence has been committed.

In particular, the relative unimportance of the perceived severity of incidents suggests that attempting to determine a pure level of police discrimination is arguably misguided. For the volunteers, it did not matter whether the incidents they recounted were minor or serious. What mattered was that each story indicated ‘the way it is’ for black people by providing further evidence that policing is irrefutably racialised. This means that the first central, assumed truth, outlining the distressing abuse of police

powers, does not necessarily take precedence over the second and third in determining the nature of the volunteers' understanding.

The third central, assumed truth is that 'race' has meaning during encounters between black people and the police. In order to emphasise this truth, the volunteers cited numerous examples of errors committed by the police as a result of their mistaken understanding of black racialised groups. For example, the police were understood to misinterpret the character and manner of black people.

*"Any normal reaction is taken as an over reaction, any quietness of temperament is taken to be arrogance. You see a black person as being, for want of a better term, 'cool' under the circumstances, its taken to be arrogance. So you can't win. You either say something and be termed violent or you say nothing and be termed as arrogant". (Diana)*

The stories of the volunteers illustrate how the police have over-reacted as a result of what was considered to be an evident misinterpretation of an incident. This volunteer told a story of when her daughter was attacked by a man at a funfair.

*"The guy was standing there and the officer didn't do anything. So, she shouted at the officer and, instead of the officer taking notice of what she was saying, she was arrested. So, she started struggling, so the officer grabbed her and threw her into the van". (Veronica)*

The officers' apparent misinterpretation of the incident resulted in the arrest of the innocent party, for which the family eventually received a police apology. Consequently, when an offence had been committed, the police were understood to adopt inappropriate methods to enforce the law.

*"My uncle is a Christian, yeah? He's very serious about his church or whatever. He failed to pay a parking fine or something like that. They came and they like surround the house (laughs incredulously). This guy of about fifty odd. I couldn't believe it. I don't know if they saw the car or what but there was about ten or twelve of them". (David)*

For these volunteers, a racialised interpretation of the situation provided the only legitimate explanation for the misplaced actions of the police officers involved. Furthermore, policing was deemed to be racialised due to the questionable actions of both groups of and individual officers. These actions were understood to be based on a specific meaning of 'race' whereby unsustainable assumptions were made about black people.

The volunteers also referred to specific incidents of mistaken identity which served to reinforce their understanding that the police make unjustifiable assumptions about black people.

*"They reckon that all black lads look the same and they are wrong, they are wrong". (Lewis)*

The following volunteer's story refers to the personal experience of a friend whose physical appearance was understood to resemble that of another African-Caribbean man who had assaulted a taxi driver.

*"This guy has been in trouble before. The taxi driver said he was wearing black jeans but he has never owned a pair in his life. The police didn't arrest him until five weeks after the assault took place. Why? He has no alibi because he cannot remember what he was doing on that particular night. Two other men took part in the assault but they have never been traced". (Pam)*

However, incidents of mistaken identity were also thought to occur between, as well as within, black racialised groups. This volunteer, of Indian origin, recounted her brother's personal experience of an undeserved negative encounter with the police.

*"They'd been following a thief apparently, an Afro-Caribbean person. There's a lot of difference between an Asian person and an Afro-Caribbean person, and he'd burgled one of the houses in the street. But as soon as my brother got out of the car they arrested him". (Lata)*

These cases of mistaken identity further support the general implication that any member of a black racialised group is at risk of unjustifiably experiencing a negative encounter with the police.

The three central, assumed truths culminate in the volunteers' understanding that black people experience a different kind of justice to that of white people. For the volunteers, the law is applied inequitably by the police and, as a result, cannot be expected to protect the interests of black people.

*"I think, you know, you've got the little thing that you're innocent until proven guilty. That is the main thing. If you're black, they'll look at you and you're assumed to be guilty. You've got to put your case forward". (Gary)*

*"If there was say a fight between an Asian and a white, and the white was at the fault, they're more likely to diffuse things out rather than go to prosecution but, if its the Asian person who is at fault, its like no, they won't chance it. He's gonna end up in the dock". (Khalid)*

Crucially, the volunteers' central, assumed truths provide three important reasons for the 'mutual backcloth of suspicion and hostility' which has been said to characterise police-black encounters (Reiner, 1985:172-3). They provide justification for the volunteers' references to the inherent suspicion and mistrust of black people.

*"A lot of black people just will not trust the police any more. They just don't want to know". (Pam)*

The volunteers reinforced this understanding through evidence of their personal misgivings regarding the police.

*"If the police stopped me when I leave here now, I would be questioning everything, noting everything. I would be so wary. I would wonder what this person is going to say to me or do to me or whatever. I would be double checking and all of that". (David)*

*"His mate says 'yes, that's his name Sergeant Sergeant'. He says 'oh yes, that's me real name'. They're supposed to be called 'custody officer' on the top. I thought, are they taking the piss or not?". (Lewis)*

There was, in fact, a custody officer with the name in question but this did not detract from the volunteer's automatic scepticism of the officers' assurance. The backcloth of suspicion and mistrust is part of the folk model of racialised social life with which this volunteer interpreted the situation.

In summary, the three central, assumed truths of the stories documented in this section result in the conclusion that the policing of black people is inarguably, negatively racialised. The behaviour of police officers could only be explained by the volunteers when viewed through the lens of 'race'. This meant that proactive policing was not thought to reflect the incidence of crime. Rather, it reflects the racialised misunderstanding of the police whereby all members of black racialised groups are considered to be potential offenders. The central, assumed truths revealed by the volunteers' stories were understood to be of more significance than the perceived seriousness of an incident. For the volunteers, even minor incidents simply serve to illuminate the social reality of racialised policing. Specific incidents therefore represent 'the way it is' for an imagined black community. As a result, the reality contained within the three truths inevitably leads to black people's inherent suspicion and mistrust of the police in general.

The following section examines the police officers' understanding of their relationship with black people. This provides a useful comparison with the

understanding of the volunteers. Particularly, it highlights both the contested nature of the meaning of 'race' between the two groups and their fundamentally different understanding of what constitutes problematic police-black relations.

#### 4.3 Police-black relations: the police officers' understanding

The aim of this section is to outline the police officers' presentation of their role in order to demonstrate how and why their understanding of police-black relations differed significantly from that of the volunteers. It is argued that their presented role was based on a particular perspective of law and order which incorporates the assumption that, ideally, the police are a neutral social institution designed to protect the rights of all citizens. This, in turn, reflects a widely held view regarding the function of criminal justice which was acknowledged by the following volunteers. They voiced their expectations that police officers adhere to high standards of social conduct.

*"I'm sorry but I don't want a cross-section of society coming into my living room. I want police officers to be better than a cross section of society. I want them to be morally superior and to behave like that as well". (Charlie)*

*"You hear the copper say 'black bastard' and then you hear the other normal guy say 'black bastard'. You're gonna be shocked when you hear a copper say it. You're gonna be more shocked because you think, bloody hell, he's trying to keep the law". (Anwar)*

Thus, the officers' presentation of their role incorporated the ideal that they are dispassionate during the course of their work. However, it is likely that this presentation concealed as much as it revealed.

*"A sacred canopy is drawn over police work; these ideological mechanisms suffuse policing with a moral integrity and by so doing conceal as well as reveal the realities of police work" (Manning, 1977:5).*

As a result, their presented role was a kind of performance whereby the police officers acted out the roles required to realise the police identity (see Goffman, 1971). This meant that the officers alluded to an ideal type of policing which did not exist in reality but which greatly informed the way in which they articulated their role. The resulting performance involved selectively interpreting police work in order to sustain the basis of their particular perspective of law and order. It is outlined in detail below with reference to data derived exclusively from the interviews with those officers involved in police

custody. It therefore represents the understanding of police officers who inevitably confront the practical demands of operational policing.

The officers' presentation of their role had two central components. First, they insisted that the police maintain law and order regardless of the personal characteristics of the individuals they encounter. Second, they claimed that the police straightforwardly apply the principle that everybody is equal before the law. The two components are inextricably related and so will be discussed together. It will be demonstrated that their presented role incorporated a specific definition of equality which provided the background required to explain the police officers' understanding of the relationship between black people and the police.

The officers agreed that a general priority of the police is to deal with people who have committed crimes. They argued that this inevitably entails enforcing the law regardless of an individual's racialised origin.

*"I do my job regardless of colour, creed or whatever standing of that particular person that I'm dealing with. And if they've broken any law, then I shall deal with them; and I would". (Sgt. Grant)*

*"At the end of the day, you've got an individual there, don't matter what his colour or creed, suspected of committing an offence, then we've got to deal with it. And people have to understand that". (Sgt. Burton)*

In fact, the custody officers stressed the importance of treating everybody equally. In keeping with their particular perspective of law and order, the definition of 'equal' amounted to treating everybody the same. This meant that potential differences between, and thus the specific needs of, various groups of people were considered to be irrelevant. For the officers, the priority of the police is therefore to ensure that everybody is equal before the law.

*"I can't afford, neither could any policeman afford, to decide that right I'm gonna treat Asians differently to Scottish or whatever. We cannot afford to do it. Nobody would want to do it". (Sgt. Clarke)*

*"Its very important that we treat everybody the same. That's why, you know, I'm against these sort of things for black people or for white people or for Chinese people". (Sgt. Morris)*

*"Why should they be treated differently to anybody from the white community just 'cause he's vulnerable. They're both vulnerable sets of people and we are there to help them". (Sgt. Burton)*



All of the rank-and-file officers interviewed were confident that they satisfied the standard of treating everybody the same. As a result, racialised differences were not understood to influence their work practices.

*“Certainly the custody staff at both my sites will deal with people fairly and expeditiously whatever their colour”.* (Insp. Williams)

*“But as I say, when they come through our doors, they all get treated the same”.* (Sgt. Lamb)

However, the aims and objectives of the BJP were seen to challenge the officers’ specific definition of equality by suggesting that treating everybody equally is not synonymous with treating everybody in the same way. In fact, operating a HOAS specifically for black people was understood to contradict their assertion regarding guaranteed equality of treatment. This meant that, due to the custody officers’ perspective of law and order, the scheme was thought to represent an unacceptable form of positive discrimination.

*“A lot of police officers don’t like it when they think one’s getting better treatment than the other. They think black people are getting better treatment than white people”.* (Sgt. Davies)

*“Well, its complete discrimination against white people isn’t it?”.* (Sgt. Pearson)

For the officers, the scheme would only be fair if it involved treating everybody in the same way. Thus, operating a scheme for both black and white people appeared to be the only acceptable solution.

*“I would say that it could be extended to the fact that it shouldn’t be just for black people”.* (Sgt. Bingham)

*“It should be for everybody, yeah. To make sure that everybody’s treated correctly”.* (Sgt. Morris)

As a result, the definition of equality incorporated within the custody officers’ perspective of law and order was fundamental to the way in which they presented their role. It enabled them to present themselves as impartial agents of criminal justice whose job it is to apply the law uniformly to all citizens. It also meant that racialised differences were deemed to be immaterial to policing.

This had significant consequences for the police officers’ understanding of police-black relations. Crucially, it implicitly discounted the volunteers’ insistence that

their awareness was based on personal knowledge arising from their own experiences and those of people that they knew. Instead, their awareness was thought to be better explained with reference to inaccurate perceptions.

*“But it all comes down to perceptions as well doesn't it? The truth, really it gets lost”.* (Sgt. Grant)

*“Because that's the way they've been conditioned. They've been conditioned that way and probably that is a fault of the media, but it isn't true”.* (Sgt. Snell)

The media were understood to contribute to the questionable perceptions of black people. In this respect, the newsworthiness of a story was thought to override its accuracy and statistics were said to be distorted with negative consequences for the police in particular.

*“Like I said, that incident at Eastside, which was a public order situation, if it hadn't of been because it was people from the Asian community it would never have made headlines”.* (Sgt. Morris)

*“And obviously when a death in custody occurs, that blows it out of all proportion. People die. It doesn't matter where they die, whether its in custody or on the street, but because the police are involved its headline news. I mean white people die in our cells just as many as blacks ... But again its the manipulation of statistics to say what you want”.* (Sgt. Bingham)

*“They've got their job to do, you know the media, and occasionally it does exaggerate incidents which doesn't help the police and the black relationship whatsoever”.* (Insp. Williams)

However, the previous section revealed that the volunteers were, in fact, highly critical of media information. This suggests that the custody officers over-estimated the role of the media in influencing the nature of police-black relations.

In summary, the perspective of law and order which informed the officers' presentation of their role enabled them to assert that all police actions have a legitimate explanation. The officers insisted that, as the police straightforwardly apply the law impartially, it is impossible for policing to be racialised. This had particular consequences for their understanding of the nature of police-black relations. First, they argued that the mistreatment of black people by the police is perceived rather than real. Second, they insisted that black people who have negative contacts with the police are criminals rather than a criminalised sub-population and, third, they concluded that

police-black hostility is not racialised. These three arguments will now be explored in order to demonstrate further that 'race' was understood to have no meaning within the specific context of operational police work.

The officers deemed black people's complaints of police mistreatment to be without foundation. The following responses reveal that black people were believed to have unjustified suspicions of the police.

*"However, and its mainly of the brown people, they do have a chip on their shoulder and that is quite evident a lot of times. I would say that, despite the fact that we arrest probably nine whites to every black, we get a far greater proportion of, I wonder what the correct word is, they don't like us". (Sgt. Clarke)*

*"I mean a lot of it is just a big gripe". (Sgt. Morris)*

Black people were therefore thought to be a significant source of problematic police-black relations in that they are supposedly more likely than the police to be the source of hostility.

*"I've always said that the blacks are more hostile to the police than the police are to blacks". (Sgt. Pearson)*

This understanding inverted the volunteers' interpretation that the police are a problem for black people. The officers were unable to accept this view because adhering to their particular perspective of law and order allowed no room to consider any potential justification for the complaints of black people. Ultimately, hostility towards and differential treatment of a specific social group was inconceivable within the context of a perspective that incorporates the ideal of equality before the law.

Similarly, the officers understood black people to have a preconceived assumption that they will be treated unfairly by the police purely as a result of their racialised identity. Again, this was deemed to be without foundation because, in keeping with their favoured perspective, the stated priority of the police is to maintain law and order. This, the officers insisted, does not involve illegitimately targeting black people.

*"From my point of view, I don't think there's much unfairness but the coloured people think we're picking on 'em because of their colour. Its not whatever's brought the police to that area. I mean, you know, disorder, that's your general thing, public disorder. Whether its white, pink, black, yellow or what, we will react to whatever's needed. They think we're heavy handed". (Sgt. Lamb)*

Furthermore, the unfounded complaints of black people were thought to represent a demand for special treatment. This meant that black people apparently attempt to subvert the course of justice by questioning the legitimate actions of the police.

*"In my experience, they think they shouldn't be brought here. They're always up in arms as soon as they walk through the door. They want this and they want that, they want the other because they've been conditioned into thinking that that is what they're entitled to. I mean that's irrespective of what they are entitled to. Their attitude is I want this, I want that I want the other. I'm not going to conform with what you want me to do". (Sgt. Grant)*

*"Its due to this conditioning, you know, if you kick off and make a lot of noise about it, it'll look as if you're the innocent victim and you're being picked on by the police". (Sgt. Snell)*

In addition to this, problems were understood to be mistakenly identified by black people in order to utilise their racialised identity as a kind of trump card. For example, officers were said to be reluctant to apply the law fairly when policing black people because they risk being accused of discriminating against them.

*"I've worked down Brinford and, you know, different areas where there are specific problems. And my experience is that you can't talk to people without them jumping on this discriminatory bandwagon. You're picking on me because I'm not white, kind of thing". (Sgt. Snell)*

For the following officer, the reluctance of the police to apply the law fairly ultimately means that they operate an informal policy of positively discrimination for the benefit of black people.

*SC: Have they ever been to Drakeman's?*

*JB: Drakeman's?*

*SC: Yeah the blues club up South Hill. Its illegal. No, I bet they haven't have they? No*

*JB: I doubt it*

*SC: No, I doubt it*

*JB: I've never heard of it*

*SC: You want to read a paper*

*JB: Its illegal?*

*SC: Yeah, but they don't do anything about it. They ought to get the Black Justice Project onto it but, you have to be careful, we don't want to appear to be racist. (Sgt. Clarke)*

Thus, the police officers' first argument regarding their understanding of police-black relations revealed that they identified no real problem with respect to their treatment of black people. Rather, the problem was said to exist due to the inaccurate perceptions of black people and, as a result, the responsibility for a poor relationship lies disproportionately with them. In fact, perceived problems were thought to be manipulated by black people in an attempt to avoid justice.

The officers' second argument reflected their first by illustrating further the apparent misconceptions of black people. By using their particular perspective of law and order to interpret the relationship, the officers maintained that black people with negative experiences of the police are simply criminals who happen to be black. As a result, 'race' was said to have no meaning whereas crime was depicted as being of singular importance.

*"If you've been arrested, you are a suspected criminal. Let's say it that way, whether you're white or black. I don't care whether you're white or black really, if you've done something that's against the law which society has drawn up. . We don't care whether you're black or white but their perception of it is that we pick on them because they're black. But we don't pick on anybody. We pick on people who commit crimes".*  
(Sgt. Burton)

*"Cause at the end of the day they're not here because they're black, they're here because they've committed a crime".* (Sgt. Snell)

The following officer was asked if improving the relationship between black people and the police would, in any way, help to reduce crime.

*"It wouldn't because again, you're not looking at a black person, you're looking at a criminal and it wouldn't help to reduce crime if you improve the relationship between the police and white people".* (Sgt. Morris)

This interpretation extended to the officers' understanding of particular racialised groups. The following responses refer to African-Caribbeans as a criminal rather than criminalised sub-population.

*"It seems that the longer that they're here, the more chance there is of them coming to crime. (Sgt. Samways)*

*"When I first came into this area in 1968 the blacks were just coming to the Sheffield area and they were a very religious people. They would go to church every Sunday, all day Sunday, and they looked after their kids. But when the kids got to about seventeen and started to cause trouble and take trouble home to them, they started to kick them out, you know,*

*and we had a lot of young blacks on the street living in communes and that's when the street robberies started in Sheffield. A lot of the trouble started 'cause they're having to commit crime to live because the families have kicked them out". (Sgt. Pearson)*

The latter response is significant because it explicitly links African-Caribbeans with 'street robbery'. The officer questionably implied that this type of crime did not exist in the city before the arrival of the 'young blacks'. It also includes a pathological view of the black family by referring to problem children with parents who are either unable or unwilling to cope. Thus, this officer's understanding incorporated racialised views which have been shown to contribute to the construction of black criminality (Solomos, 1988). However, for the purposes of this section, it reinforced the view that black people with negative experiences of the police are criminals. The officer continued his assessment of black criminality with reference to Somalians, the city's most recently arrived immigrant group.

*"And you can see the Somalis now are going down that path ... the problem at the moment is that they're the biggest car thieves in the country. They'll pinch anything that's not nailed down". (Sgt. Pearson)*

As a result of this officer's particular perspective of law and order, Somalians were said to be likely to experience negative encounters with the police due to their criminal tendencies. The officers' unsubstantiated generalisations also extended the view of inherent black criminality and, by doing so, introduced the possibility that Somalians have become part of a criminalised sub-population defined in terms of 'race'.

The officers' second argument therefore revealed that black people who negatively encounter the police were considered to be criminals rather than members of a criminalised group. This means that, from the officers' perspective, black and white people are treated the same in that negative experiences of the police correspond with having committed a crime rather than being a member of a particular racialised group.

Finally, the custody officers stated consistently that 'race' has no meaning in police work. The above arguments inevitably contributed to this interpretation. It was illustrated further by their insistence that the policed population cannot be separated, apparently arbitrarily, into hostile blacks and co-operative whites. Focusing on conflict between black people and the police was therefore understood to obscure conflict between the police and white people.

*"I would say there are certain groups, even white groups, who are very hostile to police officers. So to say, to try to restrict it to a certain group, I think is, I don't think you can really justify it. You know, we've had comments about you're only picking on me because I'm black, you know. We've had, there have been occasions when we've had that just like we have occasions where we've had a white man come in and say you're only picking on me because I'm John Smith or whatever, you know. So that kind of attitude is, it can be picked out in any group of people". (Sgt. Grant)*

This officer failed to distinguish between a generalised category and a specific individual. Unlike the hypothetical black person, the white John Smith would not receive unwanted police attention simply because he is a member of a specific group. However, by emphasising that both black and white people are hostile towards the police, the custody officer was able to legitimate his doubts regarding the particular significance of police-black hostility. As a result, the possibility that 'race' has meaning was dismissed. The following officers also expressed the understanding that the relationship between themselves and those that they police is not racialised.

*"The door swings both ways bear in mind. There's a lot of blacks I dislike intensely, there are a lot of whites I dislike intensely. But there are a lot of blacks I like and a lot of whites I like. There's a lot of black and white people who hate me, you know, doesn't matter what you do". (Sgt. Clarke).*

*"You see a person, you speak to them and either you and him get on together or you don't. Some people are easy to talk to, some people you've got to be patient with, some people you can easily fall out with and it can happen just the same with white people as with black people It just doesn't make a difference". (Sgt. Samways)*

These officers' emphasised the importance of inter-personal relationships in determining the nature of police-black encounters. This represents a useful way of discounting any meaning for 'race' as a factor contributing to incidents of police-black hostility.

Again, the officers explained the hostile actions of the police with reference to the same underlying perspective in that they were understood to be entirely in the interests of law and order. As a result, racialised differences were considered of no significance whereas the officers stressed the relevance of the individual's criminality.

*"Some detainees, and again black and whites, do object to being searched and, of course, we have the power to forcibly search them and they are forcibly searched and that is equal to blacks or non-blacks". (Insp. Williams)*

*"I mean the relationship between the police and a regular white villain would be hostile". (Sgt. Bingham)*

In conclusion, the custody officers' presentation of their role utilised a particular perspective of law and order to argue that racialised differences are irrelevant to police work. They identified no real problem with respect to their treatment of black people. Instead the problem was considered to be the result of black people's inaccurate perceptions. Black people with negative experiences of the police were understood to be criminals who simply happen to be black. This meant that, for the officers', black people do not constitute a criminalised sub-population. Finally, hostility towards the police was not thought to be racialised and could not therefore be explained with reference to the unequal treatment of black people. Rather, it was understood to correlate with the criminality and hostility of particular black and white individuals.

Thus, the understanding of the officers was fundamentally different to that of the volunteers. However, despite disagreeing that policing was irrefutably racialised, the officers acknowledged that the relationship between black people and the police is problematic. The final section of the chapter highlights the different understanding of the two groups further by exploring their suggestions for improving this relationship.

#### **4.4 Addressing problematic police-black relations**

This section outlines three options suggested by the volunteers and custody officers to address problematic police-black relations. It includes an analysis of the options in order to demonstrate that, despite their apparent similarities, there were notable disparities between the understandings of the two groups.

The options correspond with three different interpretations of the police. First, the police were interpreted as agents of social control. As a result, the first option is to reduce structural inequalities which were understood to inevitably lead to police-black conflict. Secondly, the police were interpreted as a social institution. Accordingly, the second option involves changing police operational policy and examining the police as part of an inadequate criminal justice process. The third option was based on the interpretation of the police as a group of individuals. It therefore locates a solution to problematic police-black relations in the actions and behaviour of specific police officers.

The three options reveal that mutual suspicion and hostility were not understood to be unavoidably endemic to police-black encounters. However, they also reveal the



perceived likelihood of a problematic relationship from the macro to the micro level of policing.

#### 4.4.1 The Structural Level

The first option arises from the volunteers and officers' understanding that the police will always be unpopular due to their social control function. This was regarded as inevitable, particularly if the boundaries of social control are challenged by those who are being policed. For example, the following volunteer's comparison with traffic wardens reveals how the authority of the police was thought to be questioned simply because they are agents of social control.

*"There will always be animosity on both sides, that's fact. Its like purely from the fact that I don't particularly like traffic wardens. If they're gonna give me a ticket then I'm going to have to pay thirty quid. They can go and piss off, you know what I mean? But merely from the fact that they are traffic wardens". (Peter)*

Similarly, the following custody officer perceived a general reduction in the control exercised by parents and teachers. This, he argued, has negative consequences for the authority of the police.

*"What I'm getting at is that sometimes we have a situation out on the streets where we have a young person in a uniform telling another fairly youngish person not to do something. You're not going to do that, I'm not going to allow you to do that. And sometimes they find that hard to cope with because, for the first time in their life, they've got somebody saying to them stop that or I'm not going to allow you to do that". (Sgt. Grant)*

In fact, the custody officers' revealed that the social control function of the police was understood to be experienced disproportionately by a specific group consisting of young, unemployed people. This understanding incorporated a very specific conceptualisation of what constitutes 'crime' in that it referred exclusively to the types of offence committed by those who can be described as working class.

*"Its only the younger element that we're going to have a problem with and we're never going to sort that one out until there's enough jobs to go round; but we're never going to get them days anyway, are we?". (Sgt. Pearson)*

*"The public order problems which are getting created in this particular division seem to be mainly up Duck Hill and are whites who are being brought in. Young idiot whites who are never going to get work at all". (Sgt. Samways)*

These young people were understood to experience the police negatively due to their apparent stupidity and related inability to secure employment. Their racialised identity was never referred to as being of relevance. This meant that, for the police officers in general, structural inequalities based on socio-economic position were sufficient to explain the challenges to police authority, particularly when combined with a young age. The officers equated youth with rebellion and thus conflict was thought to occur due to young people's inclination to interpret the police as an agent of the state.

*"I mean, I have three lads. I mean, I've one at eighteen and I would say that his friends are just as much anti-police than what any blacks would be. Its part of growing up in't it? They all go through this anti-establishment in't it? Its challenging, that's all it is. They're feeling their feet and that's what its about". (Sgt. Pearson)*

Although the volunteers agreed that socio-economic factors and age influence these challenges, they also explicitly referred to racialised differences as a major contributory factor.

*"Even if they do do well at school, they've got to compete against white kids for the jobs and they're not necessarily gonna get them. And the police don't take things like that into consideration. Its just a black thing. Because why is it people who are at the lower scale of the class system, they're the ones who're getting into the trouble? It must have got something to do with lack of opportunities, all that crime and things, really". (Marie)*

*"There's no opportunities out there for them and I'm saying its worse for black people because black people who are as qualified. I mean there's Home Office studies and there's national studies to confirm what I'm saying. You know, we are discriminated against. So, you can understand, if it is bad enough for a white young person?". (Salim)*

Furthermore, the volunteers argued consistently that black people experience the police more frequently simply because a larger proportion of them live in poor socio-economic areas.

*"At the end of the day a lot of things that happen in any deprived area where most black people actually live, where young black people actually live, there is quite a few things that lead people to be involved or in contact with the police". (David)*

The volunteers' perspective corresponded with the following argument by Jefferson in that being black was understood to combine with other social characteristics

to produce an outcome whereby a specific group is more likely to negatively encounter the police.

“‘Because they are black’ ought to read ‘because they are young and male and ‘rough’ working class and black’” (1993:35).

This understanding implied that mutual suspicion and hostility are far less likely to be endemic to police-black encounters if the black person involved is older, of a higher socio-economic status and, explicitly in Jefferson’s view, female.

For the volunteers, black young people are in a worse position than their white counterparts as a direct consequence of processes of racialisation. A lack of opportunities arising from the debilitating experiences of discrimination was thought to be commonplace. Additionally, some volunteers argued that this situation is compounded by a general failure to address specific social problems until they affect the population of the city as a whole. The following response highlights this perspective with reference to Sheffield’s apparent drug problem.

*“I actually highlighted drugs as an issue within the (youth) service. Nobody really wanted to know because it wasn’t an issue as they saw it and when it became a city-wide issue. And again, the whole thing with unemployment, there was an unemployment issue amongst the black community, you know, probably before it hit the white community in this city ... black kids were on the streets a couple of years before the white kids”.* (Raymond)

In conclusion, both the volunteers and the custody officers attributed importance to structural inequalities as one source of problematic police-black relations. It follows that improving the relationship between black people and the police was thought to involve reducing inequalities at the structural level. However, for the police officers, this entailed addressing inequalities based exclusively on social class. This understanding both discounted any significance for ‘race’ in police-black encounters and absolved the police of responsibility for addressing problematic police-black relations. For the volunteers, the effect of other structural inequalities was understood to be compounded by inequalities based on racialised difference. Addressing racialised inequalities was therefore thought to be essential if the social control function of the police is to be reduced. This meant that, in contrast to the custody officers, the volunteers stressed the significance of the meaning of ‘race’ in police-black encounters.

#### 4.4.2 The Institutional Level

Differences in the respective understanding of the volunteers and the custody officers were particularly acute with reference to their understanding of inequalities at the institutional level. In fact, only the minorities officer and chief constable agreed with the volunteers that there is a need to improve police-black relations at this level. In keeping with other studies of the police, this indicated that there are discernible differences between the views of senior and specialist officers and those of the rank-and-file (e.g. Cain, 1975; Holdaway, 1983). For example, the chief constable's willingness to endorse the project's HOAS involved recognising the possibility that black people are 'disadvantaged'.

*"I don't resolve from the fact that this (the scheme) is an advantage to the black members of the community because black members of the community perceive that they are disadvantaged and, in fact, it seems that actually they are". (Chief Constable)*

Implicitly acknowledging that the police are not always impartial, the chief constable indicated that the custody officers' perspective of law and order is of less relevance to his management position.

However, determining the understanding of rank-and-file officers was crucial because the volunteers' stories, as analysed in Section 4.2, demonstrate that the vast majority of police-black encounters are likely to occur at street level and therefore involve these officers only. The following responses serve to highlight how, for the custody officers, 'community relations' is completely separate from their work. The officers were asked if they thought that some racial groups have more of a say with the police than others.

*"I would presume that, you know, that there's quite a bit of communication going on between different groups with higher ranking officers". (Sgt. Morris)*

*"Its something that I've never had anything to do with, these community projects that are set up by different departments in the force". (Sgt. Snell)*

*"I don't know really 'cause I don't deal with that aspect at all really. You're better talking to our community affairs or our area inspector". (Sgt. Lamb)*

The assumption that 'community relations' is the exclusive remit of police management implies that it has no practical relevance to routine operational policing. It follows that rank-and-file officers are less likely to consider how to improve police-black relations at the institutional level.

In fact, the custody officers provided no evidence that they considered the police as an organisation to be in any way responsible for problematic relations. Again, their adherence to a perspective of law and order which promotes police impartiality was a legitimate explanation for this omission because their presentation of role represents a practical response to the operational demands of police work and, as a result, is divorced from the organisational considerations of senior officers (Holdaway, 1979:7-8). Adopting this stance effectively precluded any potential for the custody officers to criticise the police at the institutional level. Thus, the following discussion of institutional, racialised inequalities is derived entirely from interviews with the volunteers, minorities officer and chief constable.

The second option for improving police-black relations is based on the understanding that racialised inequalities are present within the police at an institutional level. For example, the project co-ordinator described a meeting he attended with custody officers where he remembered distinguishing between, apparently irrefutable, evidence of individual and institutional discrimination.

*"He goes 'my officers don't discriminate, we treat everybody equally' and I said 'Look, you're taking this personally. It isn't personal, I'm not accusing you. I'm saying the organisation discriminates. Now, its not gonna be every single individual, its gonna be some individuals' and I says 'what happens is that you claim you don't treat anybody differently. Research will prove you to be a liar on that basis'". (Majid)*

Similarly, some of the volunteers referred to the apparently entrenched racism of police culture in order to highlight the inability of individual police officers to act in contradiction to the questionable norms and values of the organisation as a whole.

*"I mean, there are the ones who want to try. There's always gonna be more who don't. So, if they go there with good intentions, I don't think they've got no hope. Its all to do with police culture". (Marie)*

*"You'd probably get the odd one but, when he's been in the force for five years, he's probably gonna have been manipulated. You know, I think its inbred in them sometimes". (Alison)*

*“In an organisation that has a very different culture about these sorts of issues, how able is the custody sergeant to say and, in the last resort, to actually understand the subtleties of what’s actually going on? And I’m sure I do some of those a disservice in saying so”. (Jill)*

Consequently, for these volunteers, racialised inequalities must in some way be addressed at an institutional level rather than being dependent on individual attitudes. The following suggested solution to problematic police-black relations involves addressing operational concerns in order to obtain the desired effect, regardless of the views of individuals.

*“I’m afraid I’ve come down to the view that its not about attitudinal training. Sadly, its not gonna work with the organisation of individuals ‘cause you’re dealing with years of conditioning and three or four hundred years of history. Its behaviour and systems. So sadly, taking that to its conclusion, someone deep down might still hold questionable beliefs ... but if you can work with them on a professional working level to address operational systems, then at least that’s something and you’re not dependent on an individual’s liberalism or altruism or something like that”. (Joe)*

From this perspective, there are few benefits of racism awareness training. Rather, the key to challenging racialised inequalities entails implementing appropriate operational changes.

Furthermore, addressing operational concerns in an ad hoc way was understood to be of limited use. The following volunteer argued that these concerns need to be addressed consistently at all levels of the organisation. This implies that it is inadequate to rely on specialised community relations departments within the organisation. An holistic approach is inherently preferable.

*“These are the kind of issues that I think they need to be addressing and not just on a monthly basis, or yearly, or when the need arises, or when you get told off. It needs to be made part and parcel of your policing plan, you know what I mean, and I think they have got different levels of policing”. (Salim)*

Likewise, the volunteers identified a distinction between the perspectives of the police management and the rank and file.

*“Cause we had to take time to, to get established and for the police to recognise, although higher management in police recognise the project, you know, it was the foot soldiers that we had to be careful about”. (Richard)*

*“I mean, I think the senior management in the police for whatever reason, and I’ve no doubt some of them are the right reasons, backs the project and has been prepared to say so in public. I think the bit that needs nurturing is the officer and the custody sergeant and the inspectors and the arresting officers”.* (Jill)

*“I think that we don’t need to be speaking to the fellas up top, we need to be speaking to the people who are actually making the arrests”.* (Peter)

This means that an holistic approach to addressing racialised inequalities at the institutional level needs to be directed at all ranks of officer within the police for it to be effective. In short, the volunteers’ understanding was that it needs to be adopted by the organisation as a whole.

In addition to this, some of the volunteers referred to the police as part of the criminal justice process. As a result, examining racialised inequalities at the institutional level was thought to involve considering how the police both reflect and reinforce a racialised system of justice. The decision of the police to arrest an individual was interpreted as the first stage of a process whereby each subsequent stage is influenced by those that preceded it.

*“Who gets a slap on the wrist at the arresting stage and told to go and who’s kept to go into court. And its always, I mean, my own experience in my own job, that, if there were twenty people, ten black and ten white, if they went into court, you would find that all black people would go straight either on remand or to return to court and half the white population would get a slap on the wrist”.* (Raymond)

In fact, racialised inequalities beyond the police custody stage were understood to be a particular problem for black people.

*“They tend to get detained longer whereas a white person tends to get released more quickly and, I know its going a bit further, but its also like when a black persons gets put down, they get put down for something that maybe quite petty whereas if a white person does something quite drastic they get a lesser sentence”.* (Anne)

Racialised inequalities at later stages of the process were also referred to by the minorities officer who criticised the Crown Prosecution Service’s questionable handling of racial harassment cases. His view illustrates the understanding that the functioning of one criminal justice agency has implications for another.

*“At the end of the day, if it doesn’t go to court or if something goes wrong, its the police who have to go back and tell the victim that we’ve*

*not done it. But its us isn't it and it shouldn't be. It should be the CPS. You've made a mess of it so you tell them and they won't do it, they won't do it, and it annoys me". (Sgt. Davies)*

The chief constable also highlighted the importance of focusing on racialised discrimination at each stage of the process by arguing that securing parity of treatment in the police station is of little use unless it is secured elsewhere.

*"I've made the assumption that if you squeeze the bubble of discrimination by white people, the majority, against visible minorities that the bubble would squeeze away from the police towards other parts of the criminal justice system. It would also be fair to say that we might squeeze the bubble to an earlier part of the process. If everything seems to be legitimate and above board in treatment and fairness within the police station, it may be fair to look at that treatment before the police station". (Chief Constable)*

In summary, the volunteers, minorities officer and chief constable argued that racialised inequalities should be addressed at the institutional level. This was understood to require an holistic approach involving two strategies. First, operational policing needs to be altered in the interests of achieving parity of treatment and, second, wider changes are required in order to challenge a racialised system of justice.

#### **4.4.3 The Individual Level**

The final option presented in this section is based on the interpretation of the police as a group of individuals. Both the volunteers and custody officers identified the actions and behaviour of specific police officers as one source of problematic police-black relations. Again, the analysis will demonstrate that disparities between the understanding of the two groups are evident on closer inspection. It will also demonstrate that mutual hostility is not necessarily endemic to police-black encounters.

The responses included in Section 4.2 demonstrated that the volunteers referred to a variety of specific incidents involving particular police officers. The stories told by the volunteers revealed that the behaviour of these officers was understood to be explicable only if it is viewed through the lens of 'race'. The volunteers recounted these specific incidents in order to illustrate their understanding that police-black relations are problematic. Although they did not regard mutual hostility and mistrust as being all that there is to the relationship, they were always careful not to over-emphasise the positive



aspects. The volunteers were asked how they regarded the relationship between black people and the police in Sheffield.

*“Half and half. For instance, I've got a good relationship with my community bobby but some of the other officers are very different, they do target black people. I myself have been stopped”.* (Veronica)

*“There are one or two nice police officers. I mean we have a local bobby there I usually talk to and I play football every Monday against the police. They're absolutely amazing. They're good guys, yeah? I don't know what they say in their spare times but, at that time when we play football against them, they're very nice people”.* (Khalid)

*“I mean, there's a lot of police officers in their defence, I mean I don't want to defend them but in their defence, a lot do actually go out of their way to actually be straight and be alright with you ... I mean, some of them really look hard and I've had a laugh and a joke with them and they've been alright”.* (Gary)

Stories describing the commendable conduct of particular officers, such as community bobbies, are exceptional because they do not serve to alter the volunteers' central, assumed truth that the relationship is problematic. For the volunteers, the solution to problematic police-black relations did not therefore wholly depend on addressing the relationship at an individual level.

The police officers also acknowledged the responsibility of individual officers for the appropriate management of specific incidents involving black people. This interpretation implies that the likelihood of hostility during police-black encounters depends on situational rather than endemic factors.

*“I mean, as far as day to day contact with people from ethnic minorities, obviously it is all down to individual officers and how they react. I mean, I generally, when I am outside, bearing in mind that I haven't been outside now for a couple of years, I will talk to people whatever or whoever during my course of duty. Each individual officer is different to how far that, if you like, informal contact is developed”.* (Sgt. Grant)

In fact, the police officers' understanding was substantially different to that of the volunteers. The following responses are representative of the officers' views. They reveal that a minority of exceptional officers were understood to be responsible for racism within the police.

*“I can understand that some people, some black people, have been, well claim to have been, mistret by the police and I'm sure that there are some racist officers because we come from society. You know, there's bound to be somebody amongst the police that's racist and you've just*

*got to try and find out who the ones are and make sure that, you know, they are dealt with accordingly. And I come to accept it as I've worked with it". (Sgt. Morris)*

*"Again, its the odd one or two people in the police force and the odd one or two people in the community who do the dirty deed, and it doesn't make everything alright. Its the one or two bad people that make the whole world rotten for the rest of us to some extent". (Sgt. Burton)*

In addition to this, the experiences of black police officers were referred to as evidence that only exceptional officers have racist tendencies.

*"Peter Smith (black police officer) says there are racist problems amongst some, in some places. At Rotherham there's a particular inspector who's a bit racist and had to, I think Peter bore the brunt of it a bit. He was a P.C.". (Sgt. Lamb)*

This means that, for the custody officers, exploring the nature of police-black relations more generally is a pointless exercise. They argued that the relationship is based on specific encounters between individuals from the two groups and it is therefore these individuals who represent the correct focus for investigation.

*"Relationship between the police and blacks, its down to the one, the officer and the individual involved. Everyone likes to portray police versus black. Well, its not like that or its not the way that I've experienced it". (Sgt. Bingham)*

As a result, the officers argued that the questionable actions of individual officers should not be presented as evidence regarding the nature of policing and police officers in general.

*"If somebody's mistret by a police officer, then they shouldn't take it out on the whole of the force, you know. We've got to teach people the proper ways to make complaints about a particular, specific officer, not the whole of the police service". (Sgt. Morris)*

*"Its been highlighted recently that there is a section of the service that are prejudiced. But I honestly think that they do spoil the reputation of everybody else who are good police officers who aren't prejudiced and would deal with everybody fairly". (Sgt. Snell)*

This understanding inverted that of the volunteers because it contradicted their interpretation that specific negative incidents are evidence of 'the way it is' regarding police-black relations. Rather, the officers argued that specific racialised incidents are exceptional and should be treated as such when making generalisations about the nature

of the relationship. For these officers, the primary solution to problematic police-black relations therefore entails challenging the minority of individual officers thought to be responsible for racialised incidents.

Importantly, the apparently exceptional racialised incidents referred to by the custody officers did, however, threaten their presentation of role as outlined in the previous section. By acknowledging that racialised differences influence the work practices of certain officers, they also acknowledged that officers do not always treat everybody the same. This reinforced that their presented role was a kind of performance whereby they acted out the roles required to realise the police identity. This performance inevitably involved a process of concealment which faltered when the work practices of officers were revealed.

Furthermore, the understanding of the custody officers amounted to a 'rotten apple' theory of police racism (Keith, 1993:11). It individualised the problem of racialised policing and thus ignored the social and political context of policing. In short, it failed to consider the possibility, suggested by the volunteers, that processes of racialisation are a common feature of normal policing.

Thus, the volunteers and custody officers revealed very different perceptions of the nature of police-black relations at the individual level. Examples of good conduct on the part of individual officers did not alter the volunteers' understanding that everyday policing is racialised. In contrast, for the officers, the poor conduct of individual officers is exceptional and does not indicate that policing in general is racialised.

This section has demonstrated that the volunteers regarded racialised policing as the norm and, as a result, identified negative consequences of processes of racialisation at the structural, institutional and individual level. Their understanding differed significantly to that of the custody officers who, due to their particular perspective of law and order, argued that racialised policing is merely a rare deviation from usual non-racialised standards.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed in detail the relationship between black people and the police as it was understood by the various research participants. It has outlined the immediate context to the formation of the BJP in Sheffield by examining how both the volunteers, as members of the local black population, and the custody officers, as

members of South Yorkshire Police, regarded police-black relations. In particular, it has presented further evidence required to determine the extent and nature of support for the project.

By analysing the composition and content of the volunteers' stories, Section 4.2 revealed three central, assumed truths, each of which leads to the conclusion that policing is irrefutably racialised. Thus, the volunteers regarded racialised policing as normal and were alone in arguing that challenging it involves addressing processes of racialisation at the structural, institutional and individual level. In terms of support for the project, the volunteers clearly identified a need to reduce racialised inequalities, specifically with reference to black people's racialised experiences of criminal justice. Again, this suggests an endorsement of the project's aims and objectives. The reasons for their support of the project are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

The understanding of the minorities officer and chief constable also indicated support for the project. As representatives of police headquarters and management respectively, they are divorced from the demands of everyday, operational policing and, as a result, identified a need to address racialised inequalities at an institutional level. Their interpretation was in keeping with the police 'community relations' strategy referred to in the previous chapter.

However, the custody officers' presentation of their role provided no option to acknowledge the significance of racialised policing to the same extent as any of the other research participants. In fact, for these officers, racialised policing was thought to be the responsibility of a small minority of officers who contradict the notion that officers are neutral upholders of law and order. Apart from individualising problematic police-black relations, this understanding provides no apparent justification for the formation of the BJP.

The conflicting understanding of the volunteers, police management and custody officers is explored further in the following chapter which examines the operation of the project's HOAS. Thus, the specific, practical context of police custody reveals the implications of their different interpretations of racialised policing for the success of the scheme and, ultimately, the project.

## **Chapter Five**

### **The Help On Arrest Scheme (HOAS)**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The Help On Arrest Scheme (HOAS) ensures that a volunteer is available twenty-four hours a day to attend any police custody suite in Sheffield on the request of an arrested black person. The role of the volunteer is to provide practical help and advice to suspects in order to facilitate and protect their general well-being. By pursuing and protecting the interests of black suspects, the HOAS therefore represents one way in which the BJP attempts to operationalise the black perspective.

Chapter Five examines critically the extent to which the project was able to operationalise the black perspective in the specific, practical context of the scheme. It reiterates the central research finding that the project's self-defined independent status was extremely tenuous and ultimately unsustainable. In short, the project evidently depended on the police, a predominately white institution, for the satisfactory functioning of the HOAS and could not therefore adequately substantiate its claim of autonomy. This, in itself, contradicted an important aspect of operationalising the black perspective.

The main part of the chapter begins by exploring further the custody officers' presentation of their role as outlined in Chapter Four. It reveals how they applied their particular perspective of law and order to their particular area of police work by promoting both the independent nature of their job and the pursuit of justice. Similarly, it will be argued that, by adhering to this perspective, these officers reinforced a specific racialisation of policing whereby issues of 'race' are deemed to be irrelevant to the custody process. Furthermore, it will be argued that their perspective of law and order was not solely a rhetorical device used to invalidate the HOAS. Rather, it represents a powerful means of explaining and legitimating the role of the custody officer more generally.

Section 5.3 discusses the custody officers' presentation of their role in order to explain the power relations which influence the management of custody suites. Drawing on other studies of the police, it is argued that police custody personifies the unequal

relationship of power that usually exists between police officers and those that they police. As a result, the custody officers in Sheffield were able to prioritise the operational demands of policing in general and ignore or challenge the 'race relations' initiatives of their seniors. In the specific context of the HOAS, this meant that officers either failed or refused to fully support the initiative. This seriously impeded the success of the scheme, which unavoidably depended on the officers' active co-operation. Crucially, the BJP's dependence on the co-operation of the custody officers prevented the successful implementation of the black perspective.

In Section 5.4, the understanding of the custody officers will be compared and contrasted with that of the volunteers in order to examine the purpose of the HOAS according to each group. It will be demonstrated that both groups regarded the experience of police custody as being more disturbing for black suspects. Thus, the officers implicitly acknowledged a meaning for 'race' in the custody process. However, it will also be revealed that they ultimately adhered to their particular perspective of law and order whereby the fears of black suspects are deemed to be perceived rather than real. This meant that, whilst the volunteers explained their role in terms of operationalising the black perspective, the custody officers explained why they were inclined to challenge the scheme's full implementation.

Finally, the reasons given by the custody officers for their rejection of the HOAS are explored in greater detail in Section 5.5. It is argued that they used the language of racism to discredit the scheme and thus reinforced their central assertion that 'race' has no meaning in the custody process. Similarly, it is argued that officers were only able to deny the racialisation of police custody by ignoring the vastly unequal power relations which characterise it.

This chapter therefore draws together a number of key themes explored in the main body of this thesis regarding volunteering among black people, the racialisation of identity and criminal justice issues, within the specific context of the BJP. It therefore provides a useful summary as a prerequisite for exploring the wider racialisation of identity in the final two empirical chapters.

## **5.2 The custody officers' presentation of their role**

The role of the custody officer was created by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). The provisions of that part of the act relating to 'the detention,

treatment and questioning of persons by police officers' aimed to ensure that the rights of suspects did not take second place to the interests of investigating officers (Home Office, 1985; Brown, 1989). Balancing the needs and interests of both groups became one of the key responsibilities of the custody officer. The provisions of PACE therefore suggested that the rights of suspects would be protected by the new custody officers as a matter of course.

Thus, the custody officers who participated in the research were of vital significance to the efficient operation of the HOAS because they had the main responsibility for maintaining the rights of black suspects. It was therefore crucial to establish how far they acknowledged and promoted their autonomy from other police officers specifically because it had implications for their endorsement of the scheme. Essentially, the role of the volunteer would be rendered redundant by an apparently independent officer who was understood to address comprehensively the needs and interests of black suspects. Thus, it was important to establish the custody officers' understanding of both their role and that of the scheme in order to assess the meaning of 'race' within the specific context of police custody.

This section demonstrates how the custody officers' presentation of their role incorporated an understanding that their work necessitates independence and impartiality. It reveals that this presentation involved a particular perspective of law and order whereby the officers insisted that it is their duty to apply the law strictly and without discretion. To reiterate, in Section 4.3 of Chapter Four it was demonstrated that this perspective incorporates the assumption that the police are an impartial social institution working to protect the rights of all citizens.

First, the officers argued that they are independent specifically because they adhere to the provisions of PACE. In particular, this was thought to ensure that the care of suspects is undoubtedly given priority. Next, they asserted that, as professionals, they are bound to fulfil the requirements of their role in a neutral and efficient manner. Finally, they claimed that the HOAS undermines their pursuit of justice because they interpreted it as challenging their particular perspective of law and order. The officers arguments are presented in detail below.

The custody officers understood their role to be independent in the specific sense that the care of the suspect is a necessary priority during the course of their work.

*"All my job is, is to look after people once they're in police custody".*  
(Sgt. Morris)

*"And the fact that the custody officer's independent, they're there to look after ... I mean, that's the whole point. You see, the custody officer's role is to look after the prisoner. That's a legal requirement, care in custody, you know, of the individual. He's personally responsible and people don't understand that".* (Sgt. Burton)

The second comment highlights the personal responsibility of the custody officer for the suspect's welfare. This was emphasised by other officers who referred to their lack of immunity from the law. For example, the inspector responsible for two of the four custody suites in Sheffield argued that his staff are controlled by regulations which prevent unacceptable conduct. As a result, custody officers were understood to carry out their duties satisfactorily regardless of a suspect's racialised origin.

*"Because of course, we are controlled by regulations, as you know, and the discipline code. But certainly, in my experience, I have not seen anything untoward from my staff dealing with black persons in custody".* (Insp. Wilson)

From this perspective, the custody officers agreed that it is in their personal interests to ensure that the provisions of the PACE Act are closely followed and that suspects are treated uniformly regardless of their individual characteristics.

The provisions of the PACE Act were frequently referred to by the custody officers who insisted that, due to it being a legal requirement, they have no alternative but to apply the codes of practice contained within them. For the custody officers, the standardised, mandatory 'record of custody' form provides crucial evidence that they adequately fulfil the requirements of their role.

*"He (a volunteer) came up to the counter saying he's got to have this right and he's got to have that right. We said, oh wait a minute, the custody record's there. Look, that's what he's been offered, that's what he's signed for, that's what he's got".* (Sgt. Pearson)

*"If they want anybody notifying, that person's notified. If they want legal advice, they're given legal advice. If they want a copy of the codes of practice, they're given a copy. Which are their three basic rights. They're given a notice which explains those rights in more detail, to get them their entitlements".* (Sgt. Snell)

The above remarks suggest that the custody record represents a straightforward and accurate reflection of what occurs during the period spent in police custody. The



remarks implicitly discount the possibility that custody officers have any influence on the suspect's decisions or the outcome of the custody process. However, research has indicated that the attitudes and practices of custody officers significantly affect the decisions made by the suspect. For example, they have been observed to use numerous ploys to prevent suspects from seeking legal advice (Sanders & Young, 1994:132-7). These ploys ultimately ensure that the operational demands of policing have priority. This did not feature in the custody officers' presentation of their role. They were asked why suspects sometimes decline their offer to call out a volunteer.

*"They're offered a solicitor, they're offered all the things under PACE. They say, well who are these people? What can they offer me besides?"*  
(Sgt. Samways)

*"They don't see a need for it. They understand, if the job's been done properly, they understand the reason why they've been arrested, they understand what's going to be happening to them, they understand what their rights are".* (Sgt. Grant)

This suggests that suspects are fully informed and thus completely aware of their rights. However, the latter comment is important in alluding to the possibility of discretion in the custody officer's job.

This custody officer's response is worth quoting at length because he alone introduced the significant caveat that officers do not necessarily fulfil their duties satisfactorily. Consequently, he was the only officer to imply that a suspect's racialised identity could have a bearing on the conduct of the custody officer.

*"You see, my problem with the scheme is that I feel that the codes of practice and people's rights, once they are brought into the police station, are adequately covered by the codes of practice. And the B.I.P seems to me duplicating what we already do, if we're doing our job properly. There shouldn't really be a need for this scheme because it is catered for within the codes of practice, which we're all bound to carry out".* (Sgt. Grant)

However, even this officer maintained that the HOAS is unnecessary because, when pressed, he adhered to the same perspective of law and order as his colleagues. This left him with no option but to agree that the custody officer's role is a neutral one designed to protect the rights of all suspects. He was asked if he thought that the scheme is necessary.

*"I'll reiterate briefly. I feel that there is no discrimination ... its basically saying, you're not doing your job and, because a person is*

*black, Asian, Chinese, Somalian, you're not going to do your job, because of their colour, and that the scheme is there to redress that situation. And that personally I take exception to". (Sgt. Grant)*

In accordance with the operational demands of policing, this officer therefore dismissed the possibility that 'race' has meaning during the course of his work. The custody officers' presentation of their role therefore excluded the possibility that they unavoidably make assumptions and judgements according to the personal characteristics of suspects, racialised or otherwise.

In addition to this, the custody officers insisted that they are professionals who fulfil their duties according to a professional code of conduct which includes impartiality.

*"Bearing in mind that, at the end of the day, everything that happens down here happens because it has to and there's nothing done that can't be done. Everybody's more than fair with people so, you know". (Sgt. Snell)*

*"I don't mind these people coming in because, as far as I know, these people down here are very professional. They're in here because they want to be here. We see it as offering a service, just like any business, where they're our clients. We deal with them professionally. Why should we worry about other people coming in and seeing what happens?". (Sgt. Pearson)*

The custody officers' notion of professionalism suggests competence, skill and an adherence to strictly enforced rules. Specifically, it precludes any meaning for 'race' in the context of their work. Thus, it complements their particular perspective of law and order and the assertion that they implement the provisions of PACE in a uniform and methodical manner.

Finally, the custody officers argued that the HOAS undermines their pursuit of justice by jeopardising the case-building exercise. Again, their comments revealed how their understanding incorporated a specific racialisation of policing whereby issues of 'race' are deemed to be irrelevant. They insisted that the ability of the police to apply the law effectively, and in accordance with their particular perspective of law and order, is threatened by the admission of volunteers to the custody suite. Thus, the presence of volunteers was thought to obstruct their ability to meet the operational demands of policing. As a result, volunteers were understood to be obstacles in the pursuit of

justice, despite the fact that they were issued with compulsory identification cards by South Yorkshire Police following the completion of criminal record checks.

*“They could go and inform people that really the police don’t want to be informed. Yeah, and in fact, disclose the whereabouts of stolen goods, things like that. It could happen”.* (Sgt. Lamb)

*“You don’t know who the volunteer is when he comes down. You do not know if any messages are going to be passed to him, you know, to go and be passed to someone else”.* (Sgt. Samways)

Furthermore, this suggests that, for the officers, the volunteers are an obstacle to case-building due to their possible criminal tendencies. In fact, there was a suspicion among a few of the officers that volunteers are ‘criminals’.

*SN: Are they criminals?*

*JB: What the volunteers?*

*SN: Yeah*

*JB: The majority of them haven’t got criminal records. I think there are about five or six that have.* (Sgt. Snell)

The following custody officer was asked if there had been any occasion when the project failed to respond to a suspect’s request for a volunteer. His response, which was repeated by another officer, appeared to confirm the suspicions of his colleagues.

*“Yes, funnily enough, yes, yes. (laughs) Yes, in fact, it was the last time. Yeah, and the person that was under arrest was a member of the BJP and he was the one who was on duty. And I can actually give you his name ‘cause I can remember it. But I don’t suppose you want that? (laughs)”.* (Sgt. Clements)

The project co-ordinator confirmed that a volunteer had been detained at the police station where this officer worked, but denied that the volunteer in question was on duty at the time. However, the custody officers’ understanding effectively criminalised the volunteers and, ultimately, the scheme. This served to reinforce their argument that the scheme undermines the pursuit of justice.

Also, the presence of a volunteer was understood to detract from the reasons why suspects are in custody. For the custody officers, suspects are more than likely to have committed the offence for which they have been arrested and it is their job to pursue justice accordingly.

*“The fact that they might well have committed a crime I suppose ... well, people won't come to police stations for no apparent reason, you know? There aren't daft people out there, you know?”.* (Sgt. Burton)

*“We don't charge people just for the sake of it but, like I say, I've been working here for six months, so you can imagine how many people I've actually dealt with while I've been down here, and I've only released about three people, insufficient people. So, that goes a long way to saying, or to showing, that people who get arrested have done what they're getting arrested for”.* (Sgt. Snell)

These officers demonstrated a working assumption that suspects are guilty and that being formally charged with an offence constitutes proof of guilt. This assumption has been stressed in previous studies of policing (e.g. McConville & Baldwin, 1982; Holdaway, 1983). The officers therefore highlighted the continuing dominance of the police occupational culture in influencing the practices of operational officers. As a result, the volunteers were referred to as an unnecessary inconvenience because they appear not to view suspects from the officers' perspective of law and order. The officers were adamant that suspects be perceived as criminals first and foremost.

*“They're not here because they're disadvantaged as blacks. They're here because they've committed a crime”.* (Sgt. Snell)

*“It depends on the crime rather than the skin colour”.* (Sgt. Clarke)

The custody officers' perspective of law and order therefore represents a powerful means of explaining and legitimating their role. For the officers, it provides a framework within which to interpret their work in order to address any criticisms of partiality. In terms of the HOAS, this meant that they were able to criticise its apparent failure to acknowledge the likelihood that suspects have committed a criminal offence. Thus, the scheme was understood to obstruct the pursuit of justice whereas their role was deemed to facilitate it. This suggested that volunteers are, in fact, guilty of partiality by focusing on the personal characteristics of suspects. Ultimately, the role of the HOAS was considered to be redundant in that a check on and balance for police powers was not thought to be required.

This section has revealed how the custody officers explained and legitimated their role using a particular perspective of law and order whereby they are perceived as neutral upholders of the law. First, it demonstrated that the officers confidently asserted their neutrality and independence. Second, it explained how, during the course of their work, the pursuit of justice was understood to take priority in accordance with their job

description as upholders of the law. The custody officers maintained that the personal characteristics of suspects are irrelevant and thus discounted any meaning for 'race' within the custody process. The extent to which the custody officers' presentation of their role constituted an accurate interpretation of police custody is examined in the following section.

### 5.3 Power relations and the custody process

The custody officers' presentation of their role, as outlined in the previous section, corresponded with the conclusions of previous research which focused on the custody process. Particularly, these research findings demonstrated that the interests of other police officers were still prioritised following the implementation of the PACE Act. The researchers explained why custody officers fail to be impartial.

“In practice, however, custody officers are unable to divorce themselves from the 'needs' of policing and are unable to stand back from their institutional and collegial ties with other officers. At the end of the day, a custody officer is a police officer” (McConville *et al*, 1991:42).

As a result, the researchers argued that the custody officers' role could never be independent due to their working commitment to both other police officers and the operational demands of policing in general. Essentially, they concluded that the custody process is crucial to the police criminal justice function. Its purpose is to construct a case for the prosecution in order to maximise the potential for the suspect to be charged and, ultimately, convicted. The suspension of liberty is instrumental to the success of this process. Thus, police custody personifies the unequal power relations that exist between police officers and those that they police.

“Before the police are able to construct evidence, however, it is necessary for them to create the social and environmental conditions which enable them to do this in the circumstances most favourable to them” (McConville *et al*, 1991: 36).

The custody officers in Sheffield were originally informed by internal circular that senior officers at South Yorkshire Police had agreed to support the HOAS. Each custody area was sent a supply of posters and leaflets advertising the scheme. They were requested to use the supply to inform black suspects of the new service provided. However, it was evident that the request was only partially implemented. In fact, two of

the officers interviewed had never informed a suspect of the scheme. Those who had complied with the request of their seniors did not appear to do so unreservedly.

*SS: The leaflets seem to have been used up, but we've got that on the wall. They can see it, get the telephone number from it and say, there it is, I want it.*

*JB: Right, and do you actually point the poster out and tell them about it or ...*

*SS: We tend to rely on their eyes. (Sgt. Samways)*

*"There are notices up, we haven't actually got any at the moment. But, when it first started, we gave every person from an ethnic background a leaflet as well as the rights leaflet, which is just a small copy of the notice up on the wall". (Sgt. Bingham)*

At the station where these officers worked, the poster advertising the HOAS had been placed opposite the custody desk which meant that suspects had their backs to it whilst being informed of their rights. It was therefore essential that officers directly acquainted suspects with the service. However, for the officers, the absence of leaflets together with the discrete positioning of the poster meant that they did not inform black suspects. This was contrary to the instructions of senior officers. The aim of this section is to explore the relations of power within the custody process in order to explain the reasons for the custody officers' apparent reluctance to support the scheme.

Essentially, this section will reveal how the officers were able to create the conditions which restricted the successful functioning of the HOAS and, by doing so, fulfilled the operational demands of policing. It also explains how they were facilitated by the social and environmental conditions of police custody in general. First, the custody area is defined as police territory within which the custody officers were able to exercise overriding control. Second, the importance of the custody officers' use of discretion is emphasised in order to explain how the instructions of senior officers were partially implemented and, ultimately, ignored. Third, the operational priorities influencing the custody process are examined in order to explain further the custody officers' lack of support for the scheme.

The section therefore reveals that the custody officers' exercised their authority through a process of interpretation and decision-making whereby their understanding prioritised the demands of operational policing rather than the interests of black suspects. It therefore explains why their presented role as independent and neutral

seekers of justice does not withstand critical inspection and thus does not preclude a meaning for 'race' in the custody process.

The following volunteers recognised that they were privileged to be granted access to the custody area. They consistently referred to it as police territory and alluded to their sense of vulnerability when attending call-outs.

*"Sometimes you also feel that you're somebody special, you know, 'cause you're being let in ... so, we are special, in a way, to be going past the corridors of the power into the police cells. And all the personnel are looking at you, who is he?". (Salim)*

*"If I'm gonna go in and, the way I see it now, its a policeman's second home, I wanna know whether I am safe and they're not gonna make a fool of me ... to me, the fear was this. If you go in a police station and you ask them anything, any awkward question, you be sitting yourself in a police cell". (Khalid)*

Territorially, the physical environment of the custody area reinforces the custody officers' authority, and thus the volunteers' lack of authority, by creating a sense of isolation and vulnerability. This territorial control has been explained in detail by Simon Holdaway in terms of the distinction between public and private space.

*"The further we move from the public space of the station counter into the increasingly private space of the station itself, the more dominant the values and practices of the lower ranks - the occupational culture" (1983:35).*

The custody areas visited were extremely gloomy. They were characterised by little, if any, natural light, limited ventilation and a lack of space. They were located in the basement or at the back of the police station and were isolated from the rest of the building. The custody officers' acknowledged the oppressive nature of this environment.

*"As you'll appreciate, they're like submarines those places. They're right at the bottom of everything. So, you've got very little natural light, you know, the air conditioning, fans. Well, they're pretty grim aren't they?". (Sgt. Burton)*

*"'Cause, when they get down here, I'm in a controlled environment, they can't get out. Don't matter what they do, they're not going anywhere until I push the buttons and walk out the door. Same as you can't get out of here now". (Sgt. Snell)*

The 'controlled environment' referred to above enabled officers to deny or terminate access to volunteers at any time. This is not to suggest that such practices were illegal. Rather, it demonstrates how the officers were able to use formal rules of conduct to their advantage. This was particularly useful if a volunteer was understood to have behaved in an unacceptable manner. One custody officer described how he responded to a volunteer who questioned his integrity.

*"I says, well look, take it from me this happens, you know. If you've got a complaint, you know where to go and do it. And then I told him to leave the police station. I'm not having somebody shouting at me at the desk". (Sgt. Pearson)*

The custody officers' control of access to and from the custody area had particular implications for the volunteers who were plainly aware that they crucially depended on the good will of the officer on duty. The following volunteer described how attending a call-out required caution when dealing with the custody officer.

*"If you approach him in a proper manner, you get dealt with in a proper manner, yeah, and if you wanna go there and sorta rough him up, he'll do the same to you. And it won't be any good to you as a volunteer, when you get there, 'cause, what he's gonna do, he's gonna make you wait longer. So, you've just gotta be calm, play his game". (Lewis)*

The custody officers' control of access demonstrated how their work, in general, involves a process of decision-making allowing discretion in responding to specific situations. This process extended to the officers' supervision of HOAS call-outs. For example, the custody officers differed according to whether, or not, they allowed volunteers unsupervised access to suspects. At the time of the research, the rules of the scheme provided no guidance in this respect and they were therefore able to apply their own judgement. The officers were asked to describe what they did when a volunteer arrived at the station.

*"We checked out he was who he said he was and then he was allowed a supervised visit to the prisoner". (Sgt. Bingham)*

*"It was just a case of introducing him to the other person and letting them get on with it. Its silly playing these hide and seek games in police stations. If someone's called, you might as well show them what they're on with and let them get on with it". (Sgt. Samways)*

Importantly, the second comment indicates that custody officers' in general are able to exercise their authority, and thus considerable discretion, in deciding if and how far to



co-operate with visitors. The success of the volunteer's visit, and ultimately the HOAS, was therefore unavoidably affected by the extent to which custody officers actively lent their support. As a result, it was evident that, not only were the officers able to retain control by exercising discretion, they also had ample opportunity to racialise the HOAS. This research finding introduces the question of whether the custody officers' support was forthcoming.

For a period of at least six months, the volunteers were rarely requested to attend call-outs. Following enquiries from the BJP's co-ordinator, the minorities officer at South Yorkshire Police discovered that many officers were either unaware of its existence or unaware that it was continuing.

*"I thought it had stopped before I became a custody officer because there was so little uptake of the services and the leaflets had disappeared and the notice had disappeared from the custody area".*  
(Sgt. Grant)

This was significant in that the custody officers were never instructed to remove the leaflets and poster and had not received formal notification that the scheme had ended. It was therefore clear that they failed to follow the request of senior officers to inform all black suspects of the service provided by the HOAS. By exercising their discretion in assuming that the scheme no longer operated, they effectively removed the HOAS from their work agenda without seeking confirmation.

The resulting, acute lack of call-outs was testimony to the HOAS's reliance on the active co-operation of custody officers. This seriously restricted the scheme's objective of protecting and pursuing the interests of black suspects and, as a result, highlighted the contradictions inherent in the BJP's operationalisation of the black perspective. Again, it demonstrated how the project could not fully adhere to the black perspective because it unavoidably depended on the assistance of a predominately white institution. In addition to this, it provided further evidence of the potential for custody officers to racialise the scheme.

The removal of the scheme from the custody officers' work agenda begged the question of why they did not rigorously implement the instructions of their seniors. The research findings presented below suggest that, by prioritising the demands of operational policing, the custody officers failed to actively support the scheme.

For example, it was clear that the satisfactory management of the custody area entails achieving maximum efficiency for both the custody officers and investigating

officers more generally. Maximum efficiency involves ensuring that suspects are charged and disposed of as quickly as possible. The custody officers frequently referred to the possibility that calling out a volunteer amounted to a considerable time delay in the custody process.

*“You’ve then got the appropriate adult and the solicitor, you know, ‘cause that’s the way it goes, and you might be waiting three hours or more before you’re in a position to go ahead with the interview. Its a long time”.* (Sgt. Samways)

*“If we’re in a position to interview him, we could interview him and give him a verbal caution within an hour. So really, to call somebody out, they’re not going to be down here before he gets released”.* (Sgt. Morris)

It has already been demonstrated that, by operating in a controlled environment, custody officers are able to create the conditions within which maximum efficiency for themselves and investigating officers is likely. Similarly, it was evident that the presence of a volunteer threatened the effective management of the custody process. The officers were asked if the HOAS makes their job more difficult.

*“There are times when it is extremely busy and, obviously, we have no control as to how many prisoners come in. We might have a run where literally one comes after another or three all come in at once. So anything, any additional task, which you then place on me, yes it makes my job more difficult”.* (Sgt. Grant)

*“You’ve got officers dealing with prisoners, wanting to get rid of them, and sometimes the custody officer will be feeling quite harassed. And sometimes, if he’s got to do an extra, offer somebody an extra facility, it might well just get his heckles up a little bit”.* (Sgt. Burton)

In particular, the officers referred to the potential safety risk to both volunteers and themselves. They explained how the issue of safety created further difficulties and resulted in additional tasks to complete.

*“You’ve also got to sort of supervise that person, not to put the volunteer’s safety at risk. You’ve got to look after his safety as well as the person who’s been arrested”.* (Sgt. Davies)

*“At the end of the day, they’re putting themselves at risk, they’re putting the prisoner at risk and they’re putting my staff at risk”.* (Sgt. Snell)

Again, the presence of a volunteer was thought to be undesirable because it threatened the successful management of the custody process. The same argument was evident with reference to the difficulty created by a lack of space.

*“And when you’ve got solicitors, Group Four (they do the escorting for us), prisoners, appropriate adults, juveniles, a whole group of people that you get down there, an extra one sometimes can just tip the balance. Space is a premium, interview rooms are at a premium”.* (Sgt. Burton)

*“We’ve only got limited facilities. It would create further problems in having to facilitate another consultation between the person and the volunteer”.* (Sgt. Snell)

As a result, the custody officers were reluctant to endorse the HOAS. The scheme was understood to affect adversely the custody process by creating difficulties and additional work for them. Specifically, it was thought to negatively affect the speed with which a suspect is discharged from custody and thus arguably inhibited their ability to meet the demands of operational policing.

This section has outlined the nature of power relations in the custody process in order to demonstrate how the custody officers were able to maintain their authority and thus ignore or selectively implement the instructions of their seniors regarding the HOAS. This meant that the support and apparent commitment of senior officers was not straightforwardly translated into active co-operation at ground level. This is in keeping with the research findings included in the previous chapter. Unlike more senior officers, the custody officers did not acknowledge a need to address racialised inequalities at the institutional level. It was therefore unsurprising that a scheme apparently addressing such a need failed to assume a high priority on their work agenda.

As a direct consequence of the custody officers’ maintenance of authority, it was clear that black suspects were by no means certain of receiving the assistance of the HOAS, either partially or in full. Thus, the BJP, in general, and the volunteers, in particular, were unable to successfully operationalise the black perspective.

In this section, it has been explained that, by exercising their authority through a process of interpretation and decision-making, the custody officers’ presentation of their role as independent and neutral was inaccurate. This, in turn, calls into question their assertion that ‘race’ has no meaning in the custody process. The research findings clearly demonstrate that, by retaining control, the officers had plenty of opportunity to racialise the HOAS. The following section examines further if and how the scheme was

racialised by comparing the custody officers views regarding the necessity of the HOAS with that of the volunteers.

#### 5.4 The purpose of the Help On Arrest Scheme

The evidence presented in Chapter Four suggested that, contrary to the perspective of the custody officers, the volunteers understood encounters between black people and the police to be inherently racialised. In this section, the understanding of the custody officers is again compared and contrasted with that of the volunteers to accentuate further the differing ways in which the two groups interpreted the meaning of 'race'. However, it will be demonstrated that both groups defined the HOAS as a coping strategy aimed to address the lack of trust characterising black suspects' experience of police custody.

The section introduces a tension between the custody officers' adherence to their particular perspective of law and order and their appreciation of the value of a HOAS. It reveals that, even though they acknowledged the disturbing nature of the experience of police custody for black suspects in particular, they ultimately rejected the volunteers' assertion that the fears of black suspects are justified. Thus, there was a significant tension between their presented role and their, albeit implicit, acknowledgement that 'race' has meaning in the custody process.

It was clear from the interviews with the volunteers who had attended HOAS call-outs that they understood their assistance to be greatly appreciated by suspects. For the volunteers, this provided evidence of the success of the scheme in general. The volunteers were asked how they decided if a call-out had been a success. The following volunteers received direct, positive feedback from the suspects themselves.

*"Well, the ones that I've been on, I've seen the people after I've been down to visit them, so I've sort of got feedback from them. And they've been really sort of up on it and said 'thanks' yeah? 'Cause I mean, one of the guys works in a fast-food place and I was getting free chips and chicken for ages, so it must have been alright!". (Gary)*

*"Now I mean, I've liked doing it because I know at the other end how much they appreciate you. I've had people ringing me up the following day and saying, I'm really grateful". (Salim)*

*"'Cause I've also seen some on the street later and they say 'oh thanks so and so'. Then you know you've been alright. I mean, its a helping*

*hand, you can't really do that much, its a helping hand but its limited. We're not professionals". (Anwar)*

The latter comment implies that the role of the volunteers is inevitably restricted when compared to that of duty solicitors, who are the other main group permitted access to suspects. It was therefore important to consider why the volunteers, and thus the HOAS, were appreciated by suspects if they were unable to fulfil the important function of offering legal advice.

The significance of the volunteers' role is explicable with reference to the HOAS as an optional coping strategy for suspects. The suspension of liberty, and resulting isolation, which characterises police custody was frequently referred to by both the volunteers and the custody officers. A sense of isolation, and associated vulnerability, was attributed to two inter-related factors. First, the suspect's enforced isolation from any person who is not a police officer was noted. Second, the suspect's dependence on the custody officer to maintain contact with the outside world was also understood to be significant.

*"They just need to speak to somebody, or anybody, who's not a police officer. Just to, you know, just to talk to somebody, because it can be a stressful situation. Everybody would agree to that at some stage". (Sgt. Grant)*

*"I think that, on the bottom line, they've been successful because another person has gone there. So, the person arrested has known that they're not forgotten". (Nabeel)*

The issue of trust under-pins these references to the suspect's isolation and vulnerability. For both the custody officers and the volunteers, the nature of police custody inevitably ensures that suspects have no choice but to entrust custody officers to act in their best interests and to respond to their requests. As a result, the volunteers' role reduced any sense of isolation by providing evidence that custody officers had fulfilled the requirements of their duties. The following volunteers described how a call-out was successful simply because they repeated the reassurances of custody officers.

*"When I saw her she was really, you know, tense and really unhappy and frightened, you know. So, I relieved a lot of that off her. 'I'm here now and we'll try and get you out as soon as we can'. And I told her what the policeman told her. You know, she's not been in trouble before, they'll probably just caution you. So, a lot of that anxiety's taken out". (Amjid)*

*"Me saying, you know, don't worry, although there was something to worry about (laughs) You tend to say that don't you, don't worry? He'd seen a solicitor and that right and I think it helped, you know. Then you know that you're doing alright. You're doing something".*  
(Anwar)

Thus, for the volunteers, the HOAS represented a coping strategy by reducing the sense of isolation and perceived vulnerability of suspects.

In fact, this lack of trust among suspects was understood to extend to other criminal justice agencies. For example, the custody officers acknowledged how the volunteers' role differed from that of legal representatives specifically because their independence from the police was unquestionable.

*"To see somebody who's got more of their interests, more interest in them really, I suppose, than a legal system that's, well it depends on their perception I suppose, but somebody who's hopefully seen as independent of the police, who can assist them".* (Sgt. Davies)

*"I think its just satisfaction of mind that they've got somebody else other than police or a legal representative".* (Sgt. Lamb)

*"Contact with the outside world other than a solicitor because although they are, any person's that under arrest, is entitled to visits, its at our discretion. I'm afraid that, the way that our accommodation blocks are set out, we just cannot supervise a visit so they don't get them. The only contact we allow is a phone call and a solicitor and therefore a volunteer from the project is one way of overcoming that".* (Sgt. Bingham)

The inability of volunteers to offer legal advice was thought to be of little importance as their role was different from yet complementary to that of the solicitor. Whilst being demonstrably separate from the criminal justice process, volunteers were understood to fulfil more adequately the solicitor's subsidiary role as both trusted link to the outside world and provider of accurate, practical information.

This was confirmed by the volunteers who described a call-out as successful if they accessed information which may not otherwise have been readily available to or accepted as accurate by suspects. Again, volunteers were asked how they decided if a call-out had been successful.

*"If its someone who's been locked up for a long time, if I get some answers from the custody sergeant, when they'll be interviewed, when they'll be released. You communicate that to the people who are detained there and they would appreciate that, because they don't*

*normally get these answers. So, if I get the right answers for them, honest answers". (Khalid)*

*"Say like about four years back, there were nothing like this that were set up. So, now its a good thing. If people got locked up four years ago, they didn't know what were going on at the station. They had no contact outside to tell them what were happening, right? Whereas, if somebody got locked up inside now, they'll know what's happening 'cause we can go and visit them and make sure they've not been beaten up or anything". (Lewis)*

The final remark of the latter's response introduces another important issue which was instrumental to the custody officers' understanding of the scheme. For the officers, volunteers fulfilled a useful symbolic function in confirming that the rights of black suspects in particular are not abused whilst in police custody. The following response succinctly summarises this understanding.

*"Now what it seems to do, is ensure the non-white people are treated fairly and squarely. We would say, from the other side, that they get treated fairly and squarely anyway. So, it does come back to perceptions. You say, well look, the perception of the black community is that we, that if they come into police detention and get treated unfairly and anything, that can sort of allay or improve the perception. Its the crux of the matter really". (Sgt. Burton)*

However, as was demonstrated in Chapter Four, there existed a strict division between the understanding of police officers, who regarded the relationship between black people and the police as a perceived problem, and the volunteers who maintained that it was a real problem. Within the specific context of police custody, the different understanding of the two groups is acutely evident. The volunteers' understanding precluded challenging perceptions as a primary function of the scheme. Rather, they argued that the HOAS protects the rights of black suspects precisely because the custody officers cannot avoid scrutiny.

*"At the end of the day, you're still making a note of it. The information's still coming back here and that. The police still know you've come out. Its still keeping that little check isn't it? There's still that little check element on it". (Anwar)*

*"I think that the police actually knowing that there's groups like this around, it makes them actually be careful in how they conduct themselves as well, with the people that are detained". (Charlotte)*

In this sense, the HOAS was thought to provide a means of policing the police. The volunteers' interpretation corresponded with that of a study which examined police accountability. The authors concluded that the police can only behave in ways that are regarded as unacceptable if their behaviour remains hidden (Jones, Newburn & Smith, 1994). The HOAS therefore represents an opportunity for volunteers to both observe directly the work of the custody officer and ensure that this work is carried out in accordance with the codes of practice.

As a result, both the custody officers and volunteers agreed that black suspects' experience of isolation and vulnerability whilst in police custody is likely to be different from that of their white counterparts. Again, the issue of trust was integral to the understanding of both groups because they agreed that a lack of it inevitably characterises the experience of black suspects.

*"The whole thing's to try to put them at ease by bringing somebody similar to them in, and if it's just another white face, I think you're just likely to upset them more". (Sgt. Samways)*

*"The thing is, they've probably got somebody from their own, well a non-white background who is there to make them feel better". (Sgt. Burton)*

*"They feel at risk, especially if they've been detained. They do feel that, I don't know, that being black, they're at a disadvantage et cetera, et cetera. And it's nice for them to be able, if they want that type of help, then they can phone BJP and it makes them feel more at ease, that they're not being set up and things like that". (Alison)*

Their responses clearly demonstrate that 'race' was understood to have meaning during the custody process specifically due to the wider social context of police-black relations. Black suspects were thought to bring to the situation of police custody a lack of trust based on an understanding that their rights in particular are likely to be abused. However, although the volunteers regarded this understanding as justifiable, the custody officers rejected its validity.

The section has therefore demonstrated that the custody officers' acknowledgement of the usefulness of the HOAS was confined within the boundaries of their presented role. This resulted in a significant tension between their understanding that the distressing experience of police custody is more acute for black suspects and their insistence that 'race' has no meaning in the custody process. As a result, the officers' presentation of their role as neutral upholders of the law was extremely tenuous



due to their acknowledgement of a scheme incorporating an explicit aim to challenge processes of racialisation. Thus, how could the custody officers legitimately argue that 'race' has no meaning in the custody process when they agreed that the experience of black suspects is different to that of their white counterparts? The final section provides an answer.

### 5.5 Racialisation and the custody process

Without exception, the custody officers maintained that the HOAS is unjustifiable even though they acknowledged its specific use in reducing the experience of isolation and vulnerability for black suspects in particular. At the end of the interview, each custody officer was asked if they regarded the HOAS as necessary. The following comments are representative of their responses.

*"Why do we need it? Somebody must have thought there was a need for it in order to set it up in the first place. I personally can't see of any need, nothing like that. I think it just sort of segregates people when we just want everybody to be tret the same". (Sgt. Morris)*

*"No, in the true answer, not really. I would say if it was open to anybody that came in here then it would be more beneficial but, as I say, that's not a racist view, its simply the overall view of the people that come in here. If they could do with just a little bit more assistance in general, they ring their friends or get a solicitor to do it". (Sgt. Lamb)*

The custody officers' view that the HOAS is unnecessary consisted of three general arguments, each of which stemmed from their particular perspective of law and order. First, they argued that the role of the volunteers simply repeats the tasks performed routinely by others. Second, they agreed that a spirit of self-help prevails among suspects. Third, they insisted that the scheme amounts to special treatment for black people and is therefore unjust.

Each of these arguments will now be considered in order to highlight further how the officers' understanding ignored the vastly unequal relationship of power which exists between themselves and the suspects in their care. Thus, this section will explain how the custody officers were able to argue that 'race' has no meaning in the custody process when they also acknowledged that the experience of black suspects is different to that of white suspects. The evidence presented will support the argument that police

custody is racialised due to the unequal power relations between custody officers and black suspects.

The officers were keen to stress that suspects receive a number of important services according to their particular needs. 'Appropriate adults' for both juveniles and suspects with learning difficulties were consistently mentioned.

*"I mean, put it this way, of the people who come in here, there are an awful lot of people that do get the offer of help, which is not official, and skin colour doesn't come into it. You know, there's plenty of people who you look at, you think, he needs more than a solicitor. We've got appropriate adults, if they're slow on intelligence, we've got social services, if there's kids involved". (Sgt. Clarke)*

*"We've got, we can call out, they get solicitors, you know, they get appropriate adults for juveniles or whatever. Or they could have someone notified that they're here who takes an interest in their welfare, that kind of thing. There are many things". (Sgt. Burton)*

Significantly, the officers did not mention the fact that, in these circumstances, the presence of an 'appropriate adult' is a statutory requirement. Failure to comply with it almost certainly results in the dismissal of the case when it comes to court. In contrast to the HOAS, custody officers cannot exercise discretion in deciding whether, or not, to request this type of assistance. The officers also referred to solicitors as the most vital source of support for the suspect.

*"And really, all they're wanting is their solicitor. They want legal advice. The only person that can really help them". (Sgt. Morris)*

*"'All I want is my solicitor' and, by rights, the solicitor will tell them what's happening anyway. But they still phone a solicitor because, at the end of the day, the solicitor's got some standing in law. The Black Justice worker hasn't". (Sgt. Burton)*

It was, however, demonstrated in the previous section that the officers understood solicitors to be potentially less trustworthy than a HOAS volunteer due to their integral role as part of the criminal justice process. This meant that, in highlighting the apparent lack of necessity for the scheme, custody officers contradicted their acknowledgement that it did have its uses. As a result, there existed a marked tension between the officers' adherence to their particular perspective of law and order and their revealed understanding that black suspects are likely to experience a specific, racialised sense of isolation and vulnerability whilst in police custody.

Essentially, this perspective allowed little space for acknowledging the unequal relationship of power that exists between suspects and officers. It precluded the opportunity to acknowledge that the custody officers' work involves a process of interpretation and decision-making determining if, how and when the assistance of various third parties is requested. Thus, it ignored both the resulting potential for police custody to be racialised and the wider context of the problematic relationship between black people and the police. This resulted in the conclusion that the role of the HOAS is obsolete simply because it repeats the tasks performed by others.

The same argument was evident with reference to the custody officers' assertion that the idea of self-help inevitably prevails for the suspect. The officers were asked why suspects have declined the assistance of a volunteer.

*"Because they've been before and they know exactly what the game is. And that really does account for the vast proportion of the people we deal with, you know. They know exactly what's going on".* (Sgt. Burton)

*"'Cause what they're saying is, well I can look after my own rights".* (Sgt. Samways)

*"And the person that was under arrest was a member of the BJP and he was the one who was on duty ... so that was, yeah, rather unfortunate for him. Had to help himself out. But that's the whole point it comes down to innit, to help yourself?".* (Sgt. Clarke)

The argument that suspects can effectively take care of themselves is highly questionable given the tightly controlled environment of police custody. As was explained in the third section of this chapter, the characteristically unequal suspect-custody officer relationship ensures that the outcome of the custody process is unavoidably determined by an officer's management of each case. This means that the demands of operational policing inevitably take precedence over and above the rights of suspects. Thus, even for those suspects with previous experience of police custody, there are few opportunities to implement the idea of self-help to any significant extent. In fact, in terms of the HOAS, it means that officers' have plenty of space within which to racialise their management of suspects.

Finally, the custody officers' argument that the HOAS is unnecessary incorporated the understanding that 'race' has no meaning in the custody process and is therefore irrelevant to the experience of black suspects. In fact, the scheme's apparently

preferential treatment of black suspects was thought to contradict their pursuit of justice. First, the officers explained how it apparently caused resentment among white suspects. The inspector responsible for two of the four custody suites in Sheffield outlined his direct experience of their complaints.

*“I have had one white detainee actually comment on it and quite strongly. He was very grievous about it because he was present when we was explaining the scheme to a black person. And he stamped his feet in a questionable manner in so much that he found it discriminatory against the white, i.e. him, because he hadn't ... he wanted to know what the volunteer system was, you see, and of course, delicately, we had to explain it to him that, unfortunately, it wasn't for him”. (Insp. Wilson)*

Next, the officers referred to incidents where black suspects were understood to be offended by a custody officer's offer to call out a HOAS volunteer. The idea of self-help was understood to be the most satisfactory explanation for their negative reaction.

*“They realised that, probably, the aims of it were almost demeaning to the people. In other words, whites don't need anybody to help them but the blacks do. And the implication is that the blacks aren't capable of helping themselves”. (Sgt. Clarke)*

*“They think that they're being discriminated against. In fact, we've had one or two, specially Asians, who are very cut up about it. You know, they say well, you know, you're totally implying that I can't look after myself, that I'm not intelligent enough to look after myself”. (Sgt. Pearson)*

Similarly, the following officer succinctly summarised the view that the HOAS unnecessarily focuses upon the racialised characteristics of suspects whilst ignoring their criminality.

*“You know, just because I'm black, that doesn't make any difference. As I say, all I'd want was a solicitor or I'd want legal advice whilst in police custody. I don't need somebody else to look after the colour of my skin”. (Sgt. Morris)*

The custody officers' responses are particularly significant in that they incorporated the language of racism to make sense of the suspects' rejection of the scheme. Thus, the HOAS was thought to be discriminatory because it supposedly implies that black suspects are inferior to their white counterparts. This argument reflects a well-documented strategy used in discourses of 'race' to disguise processes of racialisation (Reeves, 1983).

Without interviewing a sample of black suspects, it was impossible to determine how far the scheme was viewed in such a way. However, the research findings clearly show that this interpretation provided useful support to the officers' overall argument that the scheme is unnecessary. It deflected attention away from the probability that police custody is racialised and so supported the officers' assertion that 'race' is irrelevant to the custody process.

Given the unequal relations of power which characterise police custody, the officers' view of the scheme almost certainly influenced the likelihood that a suspect requested a volunteer and also that the request resulted in a volunteer being called out. For example, it was revealed in the second section of this chapter that officers are able to prevent suspects requesting solicitors (see p145). It was therefore likely that their view of the scheme as racist influenced the way in which they informed suspects of the service. Again, this meant that the severe lack of call-outs was unsurprising.

In conclusion, this section has highlighted how the custody officers' assertion that the scheme is unnecessary could not withstand the contradictions inherent in their argument. In particular, it has revealed that, it was only by ignoring the unequal relations of power present in the custody process, that officers could sustain their view of 'race' as being irrelevant. In addition to this, it was demonstrated that the officers inverted a principle argument underpinning the scheme by insisting that it practises a form of discrimination against black people. This, it was argued, is a classic strategy used to deny or detract attention from the significance of processes of racialisation. A combination of unequal power relations together with the custody officers' particular racialisation of the scheme provided strong evidence to suggest that police custody is racialised.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In keeping with other studies of police custody, those by McConville and Baldwin (1982) and McConville *et al* (1991) for example, this chapter has demonstrated that the custody process is a continuation of the unequal relationship of power that exists at street level between the police and those that are being policed. The crucial difference is that this process occurs behind closed doors. The privileged few who are allowed access to the custody suite and its suspects are confronted with an environment controlled by police officers in favour of the operational demands of policing. As a

result, the research findings reveal that, more than a decade after the implementation of the PACE Act, the role of the custody officer still favours the operational demands of policing.

Furthermore, this has specific implications for black suspects who enter police custody amidst the wider social context of problematic police-black relations. The lack of trust which characterises this relationship leads to their particular, racialised experience of isolation and vulnerability. It is compounded by their relative powerlessness when compared to the control exercised successfully by custody officers. Thus, the evidence presented here highlights ample opportunity for the custody process to be racialised.

The HOAS therefore potentially fulfils a specific function in addressing this unequal, racialised relationship of power. The volunteers' role attempts to challenge the authority of custody officers by prioritising the interests of black suspects rather than the operational demands of policing. However, it was demonstrated that the aims of the scheme were often effectively thwarted by officers who based their objections to it on a particular perspective of law and order which excludes the possibility of their partiality and discounts the opportunity for officers to racialise the scheme. By doing so, the officers ultimately had no alternative but to discount a meaning for 'race' in the custody process, despite their significant acknowledgement that black suspects' experience of police custody is particularly disturbing.

As a result, the HOAS was only partially successful in pursuing and prioritising the interests of black people. The scheme depended on the active co-operation of custody officers and was manifestly unable to overcome the irreconcilable differences between its aims and those of the custody process. It was therefore evident that police custody represented an unsuitable arena in which to implement the black perspective.

This chapter has outlined the role of the volunteers together with their understanding of the HOAS. It has therefore indicated further their understanding of the meaning of 'race' as they participated in the BJP. The following chapter continues this important theme of the thesis by presenting a detailed analysis of the volunteers.

## Chapter Six

### The Black Justice Project's Volunteers

#### 6.1 Introduction

Apart from the project co-ordinator, everybody involved with the BJP contributes to the organisation on a voluntary basis. As a result, the project's substantial body of volunteers is crucial to its effective operation. In particular, the project could not operate a twenty-four hour HOAS without the volunteers' contribution. The value of this voluntary work was recognised by both the co-ordinator and the volunteers themselves.

*"The volunteers, at the end of the day, are the heart of the project. Without them the project wouldn't function and we could do things like the seminars, the information pack but we couldn't operate the HOAS, right, not as successfully as we have done". (Majid)*

*"I think a good thing is, its based on unpaid work. So, the main crux of it is unpaid work, people wanting to do it; and it isn't just black people that are doing it, its across the board". (Gary)*

Chapter Six represents a policy-related, comprehensive profile of these volunteers. It complements and presents additional information to that included in the previous chapter by examining the reasons given by the volunteers for their voluntary activities.

In this chapter, there are two central, related aims. The first is to determine how far a volunteer culture existed at the BJP. For the purposes of the chapter, a volunteer culture, as defined in the literature review of Chapter One, is the sharing of a group of core values which include commitment to the organisation and solidarity with colleagues as well as shared perspectives on a range of job-related issues (Gill & Mawby, 1990). This will provide an understanding of how the volunteers, from various racialised groups, were able to participate collectively in the project. The chapter's second aim is to examine the significance of the volunteers' racialised identity to their voluntary activities. Both aims are designed to determine the importance of 'race' as they participated in the project.

It will be argued that a volunteer culture existed at the project only to the extent that the volunteers assumed a sense of affinity with other participants. This was centred

around an assumed affinity with other black people and presupposed an essential, black racialised identity. Thus, the volunteers' solidarity and shared understanding was based on an appreciation of the black perspective which was not, as outlined in Chapter Three, straightforwardly adopted by the project. Despite the necessary components being present, there was, in fact, no developed volunteer culture centred around the job-related objectives of the project itself. The chapter suggests reasons why a volunteer culture remained under-developed and, furthermore, why its development would have threatened the project's careful management of image.

The chapter is divided into four main, inter-related sections. Section 6.2 introduces the BJP volunteers by examining the extent to which they shared similar social characteristics. It reveals that the volunteers were extremely diverse in this respect and that, as a result, there was no immediate evidence to suggest the likely formation of a volunteer culture. The third section explores the relevance of the volunteers' racialised identity to participating in a black voluntary organisation. It reveals that their racialised identity did not straightforwardly influence their decision to volunteer. This arguably militated against the formation of a volunteer culture. However, this section also reveals that the majority of volunteers shared an understanding that their racialised identity contributed in some way to the decision to volunteer.

In Section 6.4, the decision to volunteer is considered further by examining the diverse reasons given by volunteers for their participation. It is argued that benefiting others did not have to be an initial reason for volunteering in order for volunteers to appreciate the apparent value of the BJP. Thus, if it was not clearly related to their decision to volunteer, the meaning of 'race' to the project's aims and objectives became evident as the volunteers participated. Finally, the recruitment and retention of volunteers is discussed in Section 6.5 in order to examine further the restricted development of a volunteer culture.

This chapter is a useful introduction to the final chapter in that it explores issues related to the racialisation of identity and the meaning of 'race' more generally.

## **6.2 The main social characteristics of the BJP volunteers**

This section explores the extent to which the propensity to volunteer for the BJP is related to an individual's specific social characteristics. It presents data to support the



argument that the volunteers were extremely diverse in this respect. Three main social characteristics are examined. First, the volunteers' educational background is analysed. Next, the socio-economic status of the volunteers is assessed and, finally, the extent to which their voluntary work for the project was an extension of their current or prospective employment is determined. The research findings presented here are significant because diverse social characteristics militated against the likelihood that volunteers would share similar job-related perspectives in a way which potentially contributed to a sense of solidarity and, ultimately, the formation of a volunteer culture.

The data collected clearly demonstrate differences in terms of the educational background of the volunteers. For example, the volunteers were divided between those who had either acquired, or were currently studying for, a university degree and those who had not. The following table demonstrates that sixteen (54%) of the volunteers interviewed were graduates or undergraduates.

|                | Graduates | Undergraduates | Total |
|----------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Law            | 4         | 3              | 7     |
| Other Subjects | 7         | 2              | 9     |
| Total          | 11        | 5              | 16    |

Table 6.1 The volunteers' level of education.

The table also shows that seven (23%) of the volunteers were either graduates or undergraduates in law. This is significant because, due to the nature of its aims and objectives, the project was understood to provide valuable experience for law students. The volunteers were asked why they decided to volunteer for the project.

*"First of all, it was because I was a law student. It was to get some sort of practical experience. I was finding it difficult getting like summer vacation work and stuff like that so it was basically practical experience". (Diana)*

Thus, in relation to their overall number in the general population, graduates and undergraduates were disproportionately represented among BJP volunteers. In terms of policy, the research findings suggest that universities are excellent potential recruiting grounds for volunteers. This supports one of the recommendations of the 'Make a Difference Team' which identified universities as a possible source of volunteers in its volunteering strategy for the UK (Make a Difference Team, 1995).

However, the table also indicates that almost half (46%) of the volunteers were not educated to this level. Thus, although there is a relationship between level of education and the propensity to volunteer for the BJP, a clear majority of volunteers did not share this characteristic. As a result, the evidence suggests that the volunteers did not share similar job-related perspectives based on a similar level of education.

This was also the case in terms of the volunteers' socio-economic status. Those volunteers in employment can be divided according to whether they were from a middle or working class background. However, among the volunteers classified as middle class, there were significant differences in type of employment. For example, eleven (37%) of the volunteers were in professional or managerial positions.

| Employment Position             | No. of Volunteers |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Probation officer/Social worker | 3                 |
| Teacher                         | 1                 |
| Trainee solicitor               | 2                 |
| Project co-ordinator            | 2                 |
| Senior administrator            | 1                 |
| Sales office manager            | 2                 |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>11</b>         |

Table 6.2 Volunteers employed in managerial or professional positions.

This means that the remaining fifty three per cent of volunteers, classified as middle class, were not managers or professionals. In fact, they ranged from a recruitment consultant to a self-employed retailer and wholesaler. Thus, by classifying the majority of volunteers as middle class, significant differences in their employment backgrounds are disguised. In addition to this, one volunteer was employed as a manual worker and two were unemployed. This means that a further ten per cent of volunteers had a working class socio-economic status. It was therefore unlikely that volunteers shared similar job-related perspectives based on a similar socio-economic background.

Previous empirical research has indicated that a middle class socio-economic status is an important general indicator of the propensity to volunteer. However, researchers have considered it to be less important for black people than it is for whites (Hedley & Davis-Smith, 1992). The research findings presented here question this conclusion because, in the case of the BJP, being middle class did in fact greatly increase

the propensity to volunteer. Ninety per cent of the volunteers were classified as such. Again, this has policy implications for the recruitment and retention of volunteers in that it cannot be straightforwardly assumed that black people from a working class background are more likely to volunteer than their middle class counterparts. This means that other factors, such as the type of voluntary work, must be taken into consideration when predicting the social characteristics of potential volunteers.

Furthermore, the research findings reveal that community and social work featured significantly in the current employment of the volunteers. This is important because it indicates that the propensity to volunteer for the BJP increases if an individual is employed in an area which reflects its aims and objectives. Table 6.3 indicates four key, relevant areas of employment in which volunteers worked.

| Employment Position                      | No. of Volunteers |
|--|-------------------|
| Advice worker/Careers advisor            | 2                 |
| Community project worker/co-ordinator    | 4                 |
| Social/Youth worker (includes part-time) | 9                 |
| Legal profession/Law-related work        | 5                 |
| Total                                    | 20                |

Table 6.3 Current employment of volunteers which reflects the project's aims and objectives.

Each of the four areas of employment listed in the table reflects the stated aims of the project to advise people of their legal rights and to provide practical help and advice if required. Thus, the service provision and information function of the project was familiar to two-thirds of the volunteers as a direct consequence of their employment position.

It was inevitable that the work of the majority of volunteers included in Table 6.3 involved contact with young people in general and young offenders in particular. This is significant because available statistics indicate that the project's HOAS disproportionately serves suspects below the age of thirty. For example, the project's annual report of 1994/95 stated that 60% of suspects were below the age of twenty-five and a further 20% were below the age of thirty. The following comments highlight that young people were one connection between the current employment of volunteers and their work for the project.

*"I'm currently involved in a group football team that plays from about aged twelve. I'm also in the process of setting up a working group around provision for young Afro-Caribbean people that live in the city. Also, because quite a few people know the sort of work I do (advice worker), I tend to do things that way". (David)*

*"Through my experience with working with young people, I decided to come out and put some more into it, like more work ... I'm also a volunteer worker for Barnardos and I'm also a volunteer worker for probation, I do a lot of prison visits as well". (Lewis)*

Finally, seven (23%) of the volunteers explicitly stated that their decision to volunteer was also related to their prospective employment in one of the areas included in the above table. The propensity to volunteer is therefore influenced by both current and prospective employment. The following remarks are representative of these volunteers' comments regarding their reasons for volunteering.

*"One, because I wanted to do some voluntary work to get me into social work". (Alison)*

*"It was to get into youth working, to get in and help the youngsters". (Jabir)*

Additionally, the category of 'legal profession and law-related work' is connected to the research finding that seven of the volunteers were graduates or undergraduates in law. This meant that, in total, eleven volunteers (37%) had some form of vocational association with the criminal justice process. These figures are relevant in that they also support the research finding that the propensity to volunteer is strongly connected to either a person's current or prospective employment.

However, it must be stressed that there is a vast amount of difference between the work, and related socio-economic status, of, for example, a youth worker and a solicitor. As a result, although the propensity to volunteer increases in this manner, it does not indicate that volunteers shared similar job-related perspectives based on their current or prospective employment.

In summary, it was clear that the propensity to volunteer for the BJP increases according to three main criteria; being a graduate or undergraduate, having a broadly middle class socio-economic status and being, or aiming to be, employed in an area of work which reflects the project's aims and objectives. Despite this, it has been argued that there were significant differences between the volunteers included in these categories as well as between those volunteers included in and those excluded from

them. As a result, the volunteers were still extremely diverse in terms of their social characteristics and were unlikely therefore to share job-related perspectives based on a similar level of education, socio-economic status or current or prospective employment. Thus, due to this diversity, the social characteristics of the volunteers did not increase the likelihood of the formation of a volunteer culture. The potential formation of a volunteer culture is considered further in the following section which outlines the relevance of the volunteers' racialised identity to their decision to volunteer.

### 6.3 The relevance of racialised identity to the volunteers' decision to volunteer

This section investigates the extent to which the racialised identity of the volunteers influenced their decision to volunteer for both black organisations in general and the BJP in particular. It begins by assessing the propensity to volunteer for either mixed or black voluntary organisations. The research findings presented indicate that the volunteers were, again, a diverse group in this respect and, as a result, suggest that racialised identity is not a straightforward indicator of a general propensity to volunteer for a black organisation. The section then considers the significance of racialised identity to participating in the project. It reveals that seventy-five per cent of the volunteers understood their racialised identity to have played some part. The implications for the possible formation of a volunteer culture are considered.

Nine (30%) of the volunteers were participating in or had considered participating in specifically black organisations and interest groups. The following comments are from volunteers whose voluntary activities included black projects only.

*"I do go to a meeting, its for black women's sexual abuse forum. That's very new and hasn't really settled yet but I'll be very hoping that giving me a lot of work around black women who've been sexually abused who are isolated really". (Marie)*

*"I worked previously, I don't now but some time ago, I also went on a by-road expedition to Pakistan seven years ago ... that's what really got me more involved in it you know ... the person that arranged that trip also had some other projects going. For example, in the area I live in particular there's a major drugs problem, up in (area with a large black population) and they were writing a report trying to get some funding to do some research in that area and try to look more into drugs related problems in that area. So, it seemed as though they could do something about it and I had a lot to do with that project". (Anwar)*

Similarly, the volunteers were asked if they had considered volunteering for any other organisations. The following volunteers revealed a particular interest in black issues and community initiatives.

*"My consideration is on the Afro-Caribbean section of things because they are very under-represented in several areas. Most of my time is spent in the cleaning industry and I want to branch out more into that side of things, to get a clearer picture". (Veronica)*

*"There's lots of things I'd like to volunteer for but the problem with, I mean I like the volunteer work that I do and like that everybody else does, but the problem is with the types of voluntary work that people from black communities get involved in, is always work that should be provided for through central funding, through central agencies". (Richard)*

However, a further thirteen (43%) of the volunteers participated in or had considered participating in mixed organisations. As a result, the volunteers by no means demonstrated an increased propensity to volunteer for a black organisation. These volunteers referred to their current involvement with mixed organisations.

*"I'm also a volunteer worker for Barnardos and I'm also a volunteer worker for probation. I do a lot of prison visits as well". (Lewis)*

*"I work at a community centre. Basically, I work at two community centres just doing community work and recently I've been involved in a drop-in project and that involves working with young people of around school leaving age. And what I do is support them in getting onto training courses and further education and also general advice work as well". (Kevin)*

In addition to this, mixed organisations also featured among the organisations that volunteers had considered.

*"If I didn't work full time, I would get involved in other things and I guess the Samaritans is an example because I actually enquired about it. And there's lots of other things, you know, like victim support for people who have been burgled, and all sorts of things like that". (Caroline)*

*"Yes, the special constabulary. I've not done it. I wanted to do it but, you know, I spoke to a lot of people and they didn't think it was a good idea". (Ali)*

Thus, volunteering for the BJP did not indicate a more general tendency to participate solely in black voluntary organisations. The research findings therefore suggest that there is no clear relationship between having a black racialised identity and volunteering

for black organisations only. The remainder of the section considers if this meant that the racialised identity of the volunteers did not significantly contribute to their decision to volunteer for the project.

It must be stressed that four (13%) of the volunteers interviewed were 'non-black'. Of these, two classified themselves in racialised terms as white British. They were not asked if their racialised identity contributed to the decision to volunteer. With hindsight, a question regarding the significance of being white would have been appropriate in that a white racialised identity potentially contributed to their decision to participate. Only a tentative conclusion regarding the significance of this factor can be inferred from the interview transcripts and, as a result, these volunteers are excluded from the research findings presented below. The remaining two described themselves as having an Irish racialised identity. The significance of their racialised identity to the decision to volunteer was assessed.

Seven (25%) of the twenty-eight volunteers were categorical that their racialised identity was a significant contributory factor in their decision to volunteer for the project. The following replies are from volunteers who were asked if being black played any part in their decision to volunteer.

*"Oh yeah, definitely. I mean you wouldn't be involved in a project like that, basically you've got black communities' interests at heart and that is the bit what played the biggest part in me volunteering, for doing something like that". (Caroline)*

*"I think for me it had everything to do with being black, especially when you're talking about the criminal justice system". (Richard)*

For these volunteers, their racialised identity was central to their participation.

A further fourteen volunteers (50%) referred to their racialised identity as a contributory factor. In fact, their racialised identity was understood to be the obvious criterion for volunteering. First, the volunteers described how they regarded their voluntary work as helping to challenge the various processes of racialisation which result in negative experiences for both themselves and other black people in relation to whites. This meant that their racialised identity enabled them to appreciate the value of their potential contribution to the project.

*"I think yeah, partly because of being black myself, because like black people tend to be under-represented and they also get the raw end of the deal. And I feel that I need to do something positive to make other black people feel that their being looked out for". (Anne)*

*"I think basically what it was, the fact that the project is a Black Justice Project. Its specifically designed to help black people or Asian people who are maybe under-represented in these areas. People who can most relate to them, who are similar to them, who understand what they're going through and, therefore being an Asian or black, obviously its the criteria, that's the obvious criteria". (Amjid)*

Second, the volunteers argued that, by being black, the project had been formed to serve both their interests and that of their families. In this sense, volunteering signified a reciprocal relationship because their contribution to the project was understood to help secure support for themselves, if ever required.

*"I think it did. It did in the way that this is orientated, aimed at ethnic minorities and black people. So, it involves me, don't it really, in ways to help blacks ... so, the project's really to help me. So, I'm just putting my little bit into that and all". (Anwar)*

*"As a black person, it would interest me because I mean my family obviously, through one way or another, have had dealings with the police and the only support they had was their family. There wasn't any legal support, professional support, so that interests me as well. So, obviously that aspect is important". (Diana)*

All of the above responses reveal that the volunteers articulated an assumed sense of affinity with other black people both within and beyond the project. Thus, the project was thought to serve both themselves and people like them. In keeping with the black perspective, as defined in Chapter Three, this view incorporated the notion of an essential, black racialised identity that excludes whites. This understanding is reflected in the volunteers' third main argument that their racialised identity was significant as it increased the likelihood that they would be aware of the project's existence. For these volunteers, white people were presumed to be excluded from learning of the project.

*"It has played a part because I were told about the project by the co-ordinator". (Matthew)*

*"I suppose, if I was white, I wouldn't have even heard about it. So, that's another thing 'cause, I mean, white people wouldn't even know about the scheme anyway because its not on offer for them". (Ross)*

This meant that, in total, twenty-one volunteers (75%) understood their racialised identity to have had some influence on how and why they came to participate in the BJP. With regards to facilitating the formation of a volunteer culture, this research finding suggests that these volunteers, at least, shared a perspective which acknowledged a



symbolic affiliation with other participants based on an assumed, shared black racialised identity.

However, seven (25%) volunteers explicitly stated that their racialised identity had no relevance to their decision to volunteer. This suggested a different perspective to that of the majority of volunteers.

*"No, that wasn't why I volunteered at all. I volunteered because I thought that it was for a good cause and I liked the sound of it, what they were doing. But it wasn't related to me being Asian". (Lata)*

*Jabir: No, because obviously, the basic aim was to go into this volunteering job because of getting into the community, irrespective of my colour I think. I don't think that came into it at the time.*

*JB: So, you're talking about community in a general way, the Sheffield community?*

*Jabir: That's right. It was to get into youth working, to get in and help the youngsters. (Jabir)*

Despite insisting that their racialised identity played no part, each of these seven volunteers articulated aspects of the black perspective. For example, it became clear that Lata's reference to a 'good cause' was an acknowledgement that the BJP considers the specific needs of black people. She explained how the project aims to address the oversights of mixed organisations.

*"It is because sometimes other organisations can't cater for their needs and it's the black organisations themselves that sometimes can relate to the needs of people from the ethnic minorities". (Lata)*

Thus, despite dismissing a meaning for 'race' in terms of their personal reasons for volunteering, 'race' was significant as they participated in the project. As a result, an assumed sense of affinity with other black people was evident even among these volunteers.

The volunteers therefore acknowledged a symbolic sense of affinity among black people based on shared interests and a common purpose. This either contributed to their decision to volunteer for the BJP or was recognised as being an important aspect of the project's aims. Importantly, the volunteers' responses reflected the black perspective and thus an understanding that black people share an essential, black racialised identity. This indicates that the volunteers' decision to participate was not centred on the project's job-related objectives. Rather, it reflected a broad orientation towards the project's general aim of challenging racialised inequalities. Thus, there was

little evidence to suggest the likelihood of a developed volunteer culture in this respect. The following section explores this argument further by examining in detail the various reasons why the volunteers decided to participate in the project.

#### **6.4 An analysis of the various reasons why people volunteered for the BJP**

It is important to consider why the volunteers decided to volunteer for the BJP because the various reasons given provide useful information regarding how they interpreted the meaning of 'race' as they participated. In particular, exploring the perceived benefits of volunteering helps to determine further the volunteers' understanding. Importantly, it also helps to determine if the decision to participate was centred on either the project's job-related objectives or a broad orientation towards challenging racialised inequalities. Thus, the reasons given by volunteers for their decision to volunteer are relevant in assessing the likelihood of the formation of a volunteer culture.

The volunteers gave a variety of reasons as to why they decided to volunteer for the project. Overall, these reasons referred to either benefits for themselves or benefits for those that they help. In fact, it was common for volunteers to give more than one reason. Nineteen (63%) of the volunteers referred to a combination of the two kinds of benefit. The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed explanation of these benefits and to discuss critically how far they revealed a racialised understanding of the project.

Accordingly, the volunteers are assigned to one of four groups corresponding to a scale from the most to the least altruistic. Group one includes ten volunteers (33%) who agreed that their sole motive for volunteering was to benefit those who the project seeks to assist. The second group is composed of nine volunteers (30%) who agreed that their motives for volunteering were based on potential benefits for both themselves and the people they help. A further ten volunteers (33%) stated that they benefited in terms of furthering their personal goals and development, although they acknowledged that the people they help benefit as well. This group therefore refers to volunteers who had a specific personal aim in mind when they volunteered for the project. Group four includes one volunteer (3%) who stated that the motive to participate was personal benefit alone.

The volunteers' responses were, again, characterised by diversity. As a result, the four groups, to a certain extent, create artificially a sense in which their reasons for

volunteering corresponded. Thus, it must be stressed that the groups reflect general themes arising from the volunteers' understanding and are not, in themselves, specific reasons for volunteering.

The research findings presented below indicate that a common understanding, linking the reasons given by volunteers in groups one to three, was that the project is both necessary and worthwhile. Overall, the most frequently mentioned reason for volunteering was that volunteers were able to meet needs and offer help through participating in a worthwhile cause. The volunteers therefore implicitly endorsed the project's overall aim to redress the imbalance which results in black people's negative experiences of criminal justice. By regarding the project in this way, twenty-nine (97%) volunteers in some way included a meaning for 'race' among their reasons for volunteering. As will be demonstrated, this also suggests a similar sense of commitment to the black perspective, rather than a commitment to the specific job-related objectives of the project.

#### 6.4.1 The altruists

The most altruistic volunteers were those who primarily identified benefits for those that they help as opposed to potential benefits for themselves. This is not to suggest that they gain no intrinsic satisfaction from volunteering. Rather, personal benefits were never cited as a reason for participating. Clearly, the pre-existing knowledge of these volunteers regarding black people's experiences of criminal justice provided a strong incentive to participate. The volunteers were asked why they decided to volunteer for the BJP.

*"(Its) to do with being aware of issues for black people specifically to do with the police and the criminal justice system, and about knowing that very often black people get, compared to white people, not as good a deal". (Nabeel)*

*"I think possibly, at the back of my mind was that, I do believe in the very basis of it. The fact that probably ethnic minorities are more likely to get pulled up by police people and there is a certain level of discrimination in society, which undoubtedly means the police force as well". (Matthew)*

These volunteers clearly articulated a racialised understanding of the project by referring to the discriminatory experiences of black people.

In addition to this, the most altruistic volunteers referred to personal skills and abilities that could benefit the people they assist during the course of their voluntary work. The following comments are from volunteers who were keen to emphasise their translating skills and relevant experience.

*"I felt it was like a worthwhile cause and I would be helping people. And obviously, people have different skills and needs and I've got added skills which I felt I would be able to offer". (Anne)*

*"I initially worked for the police as an interpreter and I could see the problems people faced when they were arrested; and then I started working for the solicitors as their sort of interpreter. I left the police and I could see from the other side and then, when something like this came up, I thought well that'll be handy, it can help people". (Wasim)*

#### **6.4.2 The semi-altruists**

As the above quotes indicate, all of the most altruistic volunteers implied that they decided to volunteer because they understood the project to be necessary and worthwhile. This reason was certainly evident among the second group of volunteers who identified both personal benefits and benefits to others. Again, the volunteers were asked why they decided to volunteer.

*"I got nought to do in my spare time so I thought I'd put some in as well because there's a need for it as well ... sometime you need to get to your own culture. Not all times, sometimes you can have a mix, but sometimes you need to get together. So, like BJP is just BLACK JUSTICE PROJECT". (Lewis)*

*"There was two reasons. The first reason was, I wasn't working as much at the time, you know. I was only doing a few hours a week, so I had the time. The second thing was that I felt that generally, amongst the Asian or black community, it would be some sort of thing to get involved with, you know. The general thing, you know, the BJP, what it stood for. We believed it was something of importance, of moral value". (Amjid)*

These volunteers acknowledged how they benefited by using their free time productively. However, they both emphasised the necessity of the project for black people as a significant reason for volunteering. This meant that they also indicated a racialised understanding of the project.

### 6.4.3 The semi-self-interested volunteers

The volunteers included in group three focused mainly on ways in which they personally benefit by volunteering for the project. Despite this, the perceived value of the BJP was also recognised by these more self-interested volunteers.

*"The reasons to begin with really were really selfish because I was thinking, I initially wanted to work, to train, as a probation officer, until I started dating a probation officer and she cracked up so .. but then I did the training and I got called out, I thought this is quite worthwhile and I sort of get a sense of fulfilment when you go out and talk to people". (Gary)*

*"I think, initially, it was because I'd just graduated and I didn't have no job so I needed the experience. I couldn't just sit back and do nothing so I had to do something and, once I volunteered for BJP, from there on, I liked the kind of going out helping. I felt some kind of a ... at the end of the day I achieved something". (Khalid)*

Through participating in the BJP, these volunteers were able to appreciate the value of their contribution and, by implication, the value of the project more generally. This meant that benefiting others did not have to be an initial reason for volunteering in order for them to endorse the project's aims. Rather, the worth of the project became apparent as they volunteered. It follows that the perspective of these volunteers became increasingly similar to that of the more altruistic volunteers as a direct consequence of their voluntary work and that the likelihood of a racialised understanding of the project increased due to this tendency.

### 6.4.4 The self-interested volunteer

The solitary volunteer included in group four was distinguishable from the other volunteers because he did not agree that the project was necessary or worthwhile. This was related to his understanding that the voluntary sector in general is unjustifiable.

*"I didn't believe in volunteering because I thought its just another way of, you know, getting things on the cheap, right? So, I went to this programme that they wanted to train probation officers, they wanted two you know out of all South Yorkshire, and I went for the second interview. I got through the interview and the woman just turned round and says 'you're good but you've got no experience in volunteering work'. So, I thought well, you know, if this is the criteria they're looking for, I'd better go and volunteer, although it were against my better judgement and always has been". (Charlie)*

The volunteer's explanation suggests that, regardless of the project's aims and objectives, he was unlikely to share the perspective of the other volunteers. His participation was based purely on self-interest in that he had no alternative but to undertake voluntary work if he wished to pursue his career aspirations. This inverts the spirit of voluntary work which, by its very nature, is based on a desire to help others. Consequently, a volunteer of this kind was an anomaly and it was therefore unsurprising that only one volunteer responded in this way.

In conclusion, the common understanding that united all but one of the volunteers in terms of their reasons for volunteering was that the BJP is necessary and worthwhile. The project's general aims were understood to reflect an identifiable need and, by participating, the volunteers were able to contribute to it. Their perceived contribution to the project's aims and objectives was discernible regardless of their stated reasons for volunteering.

*"I think knowing that I'm helping people, because I'm involved in the legal side anyway, I like knowing that there is something done to help black people within the community". (Lata)*

*"To offer my services basically, the training I've been given, to the people out there. You just take it for granted that 'cause you know your rights everyone else knows them, but they don't you know". (Jabir)*

This understanding was shared by the project's co-ordinator who was also asked why he believed his work to be worthwhile.

*"Satisfaction that I'm helping somebody right, helping clients and, when we finish a case or when we help someone or advise someone. I mean, a lot of people say thank you but quite often its the way they say thank you, right. And its almost like, if you look at them, its like we were the last resort. They'd been to other organisations and been referred on. They'd come to us and we'd helped them out". (Majid)*

The shared understanding of the volunteers was particularly important because it provided evidence that their commitment to the project was based on a symbolic sense of affinity with other black people. This reflected a racialised understanding of the project's purpose because the volunteers referred to the discriminatory experiences and specific interests of black people. Thus, their adherence to the black perspective was evident in terms of their reasons for volunteering.

Again, the volunteers demonstrated a broad orientation towards the project's general aim of challenging racialised inequalities, rather than a commitment to the job-

related objectives of the project itself. For example, when explaining their reasons for volunteering, none of the volunteers specifically referred to their contribution to the effective operation of the HOAS. This militated against the likelihood that a volunteer culture existed. The final section explores in greater detail the extent to which a volunteer culture existed and suggests reasons why it remained under-developed at the project.

### **6.5 The recruitment and retention of BJP volunteers**

The aim of this section is to determine the factors which contributed to the recruitment and retention of BJP volunteers. It examines critically the extent to which a volunteer culture was able to form among the volunteers and, in doing so, highlights the informal networks that existed between volunteers both within the BJP and beyond. For example, the importance of prior mutual knowledge for the success of informal methods of recruitment will be discussed. The evidence presented will be used to argue that, although these informal networks indicated common interests and experiences often based on membership of a black racialised group, a volunteer culture remained under-developed at the project.

Furthermore, it will be argued that the project's training programme and rota system provided additional evidence of the likely formation of a volunteer culture. However, the section will reveal that the development of a volunteer culture was not actively facilitated or encouraged at management level. This served the purpose of maintaining the project's self-appointed independent image. Thus, this section reflects a central theme of the thesis regarding the project's limited success in operationalising the black perspective. Additionally, the following research findings are clearly policy-related in that they provide voluntary organisations with suggested guidelines for good practice.

The significance of word-of-mouth as a recruitment method has been identified in other studies of volunteering (e.g. Jackson, 1985; Hedley & Davis-Smith, 1992). The BJP was no exception in this respect. A key research finding is that word-of-mouth represented the single most important method through which volunteers were recruited for the project. For example, it became evident that the project co-ordinator was a crucial source of new volunteers. Twelve (40%) of the volunteers interviewed first

heard of the project through him. The volunteers were asked how they came to be involved in the project.

*"I know Majid, I knew him before that, and he actually formed the BJP and, if I remember correctly, he actually phoned me and asked if I was interested. So, that's how I found out". (Anwar)*

*"Well, Majid and myself sort of go way back through college, and also we tend to move into work in the community, straight from college, university and then into the community. So, Majid knew that I was interested in things like that anyway and he left some leaflets about the training and the volunteering aspect of it as well". (David)*

In addition to this, a further twelve volunteers (40%) initially heard about the BJP from other volunteers who were family, friends or acquaintances. Existing volunteers were therefore an important source of new participants.

*"Through my brother, my brother is a volunteer. He got some information and he decided that he wants to be a volunteer. So, he told me about it. So, I thought well I'd like to do it and I got in touch with Majid". (Charlotte)*

*"A friend and colleague basically told me about it and was surprised that I didn't know about it already. I just hadn't heard about it, and he was saying he was volunteering". (Nabeel)*

By informing their family, friends and acquaintances, the volunteers and co-ordinator demonstrated their commitment to the BJP. In particular, the significant contribution of existing volunteers further indicated their view that the project is necessary and worthwhile. This research finding supports those presented in the previous section. Further, prior mutual knowledge increased the likelihood that volunteers shared interests and experiences through which a volunteer culture could form.

In total, eighty per cent of the volunteers were recruited solely by word-of-mouth. This finding suggests that more formal methods of recruitment were of limited utility. This has implications for the recruitment policies of both the project and other voluntary organisations particularly because the benefit of investing in often expensive forms of advertising is called into question.

For example, the project's original recruitment initiatives included disseminating information by participating in newspaper and radio interviews and dispatching posters and leaflets to relevant organisations. These accounted for the recruitment of the



remaining six volunteers (20%). Of these, three learned about the project through posters displayed at local community centres.

*"What actually happened was, I went for a dinner at (the Afro-Caribbean centre) next door just for a change at lunch time and they had the posters up in there for volunteers". (Diana)*

*"Well, I think the initial way I found out was some posters on the local community centre wall saying do you want to become a volunteer for the BJP". (Amjid)*

In addition to this, one volunteer read an article about the project in a local newspaper, one learned of the project's existence whilst working at his local citizens advice bureau and the other received information from the probation service. This indicated that the project's formal recruitment methods of advertising and publicity had some effect although their overall contribution was evidently limited.

Furthermore, the various methods of recruitment successfully adopted at the BJP suggest that the volunteers did not actively seek voluntary work. For example, none of the volunteers sought information from a volunteer recruitment agency. Rather, they unintentionally received information which roused their interest and encouraged them to pursue the idea of volunteering. The following comment summarises this tendency.

*"I don't actively go out and seek volunteer work. If something comes through my letter box or somebody told me and I like the sound of it, then I would. But I don't go out and say I want to be a volunteer for this organisation. If something comes up, and I think I'll like it, then I'll do it". (Khalid)*

Overall, the research findings reveal that, for the BJP, successful recruitment involved utilising the informal networks which inevitably existed among potential participants. Thus, the racialised identity of volunteers was significant because it ensured that they had access to one of the networks through which they were more likely to be informed of the project's existence. The co-ordinator's efforts are worth highlighting in this respect because it was evident that he utilised a network of friends, acquaintances and former colleagues as part of the project's recruitment policy. On balance, this produced better results than the combined effects of the other, original recruitment initiatives. These findings therefore have useful policy implications for the recruitment initiatives of black voluntary organisations in general. Having discussed the

recruitment of BJP volunteers, the section now explores the reasons for the project's high retention rate.

During the course of the research, the BJP's volunteer retention rate was extremely impressive. The project's records indicated that only five volunteers had formally left the project since the inception of its HOAS. According to the co-ordinator, these volunteers had obtained employment away from Sheffield. Determining the reasons for the project's success in this area was useful because of the potential implications for the related policies of voluntary organisations more generally.

A key research finding is that volunteers were likely to know some of the other volunteers prior to participating in the project. It was not unusual for volunteers to have met existing acquaintances at project training sessions. The volunteers were asked if they had known some of the volunteers before participating in the project.

*"I knew some of them and I didn't know they were volunteers until I met them and I said 'oh you're a volunteer as well then'. One or two I did know fairly alright, you know, and some I knew in the past as well".* (Amjid)

*"Some of them. A lot of them I didn't know they were involved until I actually saw them at the training days".* (David)

Additionally, volunteers were acquainted due to a mutual association with local community groups and other black organisations. This suggested that networks related to membership of a black racialised group contributed to the likelihood that volunteers would have met before and would share experiences and interests. Furthermore, it indicated the significance of racialised identity as a common factor influencing the chosen social activities of volunteers.

*"I do actually use the (Afro-Caribbean business centre) for evening classes and there are quite a few people down there that I see now and again, you know, to say 'hello' to".* (Caroline)

*"There's some I know personally but not like friends, we don't socialise together, who I probably see through work or places like the Ellis community centre where I go often or (the Afro-Caribbean centre) or here at the (Afro-Caribbean business centre)".* (Marie)

As the latter respondent suggested, volunteers were also acquaintances as a result of their current employment. This provided evidence of another network whereby volunteers were likely to share similar interests and experiences. For example, the following explanation is from an interview with a probation officer who regularly met

BJP volunteers employed by the probation service, as well as other criminal justice agencies and the social services.

*"I see quite a few people socially or through work, who I know are also volunteers, who I would see anyway, whether they are volunteers or not, because we kind of simply move in similar circles". (Nabeel)*

In addition to this, it has already been demonstrated that mutual knowledge existed because certain volunteers were family and friends. Again, this is relevant because it provides evidence of other useful, informal networks among Sheffield's black population.

However, during the course of their voluntary work, volunteers rarely had contact with their counterparts at the project. Their comments highlight the isolated nature of volunteering because they reveal how volunteers met only at occasional social events and training sessions.

*"Unless something's organised like the training or the social that we had, I don't really see people that often". (Richard)*

*"We haven't had a regular meeting where we all get together. There have been a few social events, we've had a few, but its not like a regular basis. I don't think that would be feasible to be honest". (Jabir)*

This lack of contact inevitably militated against the formation of volunteer culture because there was little opportunity for volunteers to share views and experiences regarding a range of job-related issues.

As well as highlighting the lack of contact between volunteers, the isolated nature of volunteering activities suggested that volunteers had little opportunity to assist and support each other. This had implications for a volunteer culture because it was likely to result in a reduced sense of solidarity. The volunteers were therefore asked if they thought that they gave each other help and support. Their responses suggest that, although they had to take the initiative in seeking assistance, it was both plentiful and reliable. In fact, an informal network of support was discernible at the project. This increased the likelihood of solidarity among volunteers and thus the potential formation of a volunteer culture. First, the volunteers were confident that they could satisfactorily secure the support of other volunteers. They referred to incidents where support was forthcoming.

*"I was covering the phone and a person from the police station had rung up. And I couldn't actually get in touch with anybody to go 'cause*

*the man what was on duty was off sick. So, I had to like ring round and try and get somebody ... but ringing through all the volunteers, they were giving me little bits of advice on what to do and so there was quite a bit of support. 'Cause I was panicking a bit". (Charlotte)*

*"I remember an occasion when I was on telephone duty and for some reason the list that I had didn't have an up-to-date phone number of the call-out person. And I phoned Sandra, I think it was, and it was the early hours of the morning and I was wondering whether I ought to or not ... but it wasn't a problem. She had the number and she found it. And it was like three o'clock in the morning so, you know, she may have been annoyed but she didn't show it at all". (Caroline)*

The project also operated an ad hoc system whereby new volunteers accompanied experienced volunteers to the police station. The volunteers acknowledged the ways in which experienced volunteers were a source of advice and support in general.

*"I wasn't the first one to actually go out to a call-out so I went along with someone else who had already been out. So, then I needed help, you know, and asked for it and I got it". (Anwar)*

*"The experienced volunteer workers give the inexperienced ones a lot of support sometimes. Telling them what they're expecting when they go to the station, sort of advising them". (Lewis)*

As well as supporting each other, the volunteers were sure that they could successfully seek the support of the project co-ordinator. The co-ordinator was personally known to all of the volunteers and was understood to be accessible and approachable.

*"We can always get help and support instantly, what we need any time, through Majid or people who are at the head of the thing. So, it doesn't really matter if we don't see the volunteers. We have direct access to constant support, you know, so that's never a problem". (Amjid)*

*"I know if I've got any problems I'd ring Majid so, and Majid is a volunteer as well himself, as well as being the project co-ordinator. So, I'd say yes on that really". (Gary)*

The willingness of the co-ordinator to fulfil rota duties, and therefore adopt the role of a volunteer, was frequently mentioned by the volunteers. His evident commitment to the project was important because it helped to reinforce its worth and so facilitated the general sense of commitment essential to forming a volunteer culture. Furthermore, the volunteers' confident expectation of support was crucial because dealing with telephone calls and call-outs was potentially difficult and hazardous. A lack

of available support would therefore be detrimental to both volunteers and the project and would more than likely result in a lower retention rate of volunteers. Thus, an informal network of reliable support was significant in contributing to the high retention rate of volunteers.

The project's training programme and rota system were also significant in this respect. It was evident that they had the capacity to facilitate the formation of a volunteer culture. First, the BJP operated a relatively comprehensive programme of training. Prospective volunteers attended two, full-day training sessions in order to participate in the project. In addition to this, volunteers were occasionally requested to attend training if there were relevant changes to the law or if particular aspects of their voluntary work required additional clarification. For example, volunteers attended training following the implementation of the 1995 Criminal Justice Act.

The BJP's training was important because it reinforced to volunteers that they were members of an organisation and, accordingly, that they assumed the role of its representatives whenever they attended call-outs. It therefore instructed volunteers as to how to conduct themselves in an appropriate and responsible manner. The volunteers were asked what they had learned from their training.

*"Knowing what you could and couldn't do, especially in the police station. 'Cause I think there were some of us that had these grandeur ideas about what we were and weren't gonna do down at the police station. And it was important to realise what you can and can't do".* (Richard)

*"First of all, we were taught what and what not to say. You know, obviously not to advise anybody and things like that. So, whereas I probably wouldn't have known not to do that".* (Alison)

Increasing the relevant knowledge of volunteers was perceived to be crucial because it provided them with the confidence required to fulfil their voluntary duties effectively. This was understood to be particularly important when dealing with the police.

*"It gave me confidence, especially when dealing with this institution which can be intimidating. Knowing that I could deal with the situations in an assertive, confident way because I have the knowledge to do so. Yes, confidence was the most important thing".* (Susan)

*"I get confidence because I know my rights, I know what I'm allowed to do and I know what I'm allowed to say. I also gain a certain amount of confidence in dealing with those institutions that are very well barraged, for want of a better term".* (Diana)

This was vital in protecting the interests of the project because it minimised the possibility that volunteers behaved in ways that were detrimental to its progress and reputation. Training therefore represented an initiation whereby volunteers learned how they could contribute to the project's aims and objectives. Thus, it facilitated the adoption of a shared perspective and engendered a sense of commitment to the whole.

An essential message conveyed to volunteers was that the project was serious about its work and therefore dedicated considerable resources to a comprehensive training programme. For example, it hired trainers of a high standard to conduct the training sessions. Without exception, the volunteers considered the trainers to be a strength of the project.

*"They got the message across quite well, as well, and it wasn't boring either. It was quite interesting. I mean it was, I wouldn't say intense, intense is not the right word. It seemed it was at a nice pace and you just, well I retained it anyway so it must have been OK". (Gary)*

*"They came across very well and they explained things that we didn't understand, they explained things in detail. I was quite impressed with them". (Veronica)*

The volunteers' commitment to the project was further reinforced because the training demonstrated that their contribution was both valuable and valued. It emphasised the ways in which volunteering for the project was worthwhile. As a result, the training facilitated the formation of a volunteer culture because it engendered a sense of solidarity and pursuit of a common goal.

In addition to this, the project's rota system also contributed to the formation of a volunteer culture. The rota was compiled on a weekly basis by the co-ordinator who telephoned volunteers to ask if they would like to contribute to the following week's volunteering duties. This ensured that volunteers determined the extent of their voluntary activities and therefore were flexibly committed to the project.

*"So, and the other thing is, its not as much commitment. You're not committed where you feel that right that its, I've got so much for this month or week or whatever, but its not that. So, its flexible. You can volunteer for the day or for the week or for the hours or whatever ... So, I pick and choose really between what suits me, which is quite good, and I think that's one of the reasons why a lot of the volunteers are still on the programme". (Amjid)*

The ability of volunteers to choose helped to secure a high retention rate because they were unlikely to leave the project due to unacceptable expectations regarding the extent of their voluntary activities. The volunteers also understood the rota system to be well-organised. Again, this reinforced the sense that volunteering for the project was worthwhile.

*"I think, such as the rotas and that, all those things, I think its really good because like Majid'll probably phone me on the Friday or say Saturday and say there's some duties going for next week, do you feel like being on duty, yes, the rotas are in the post to you. You know, its very organised". (Alison)*

It was mentioned above that the co-ordinator's willingness to participate in the rota system helped to reinforce the volunteers' enthusiasm for the project. In terms of effective organisation, his contribution ensured that the system operated satisfactorily. Hence, the volunteers were reassured that they contributed to a professionally managed project.

*"The way I see it, I mean Majid, I know he worked hard for it and that's the reason I think its worth being part of that organisation". (Khalid)*

In summary, the project's high retention rate was attributable to three factors, each of which facilitated the formation of a volunteer culture. First, the significance of networks was evident. These included the informal networks that existed between volunteers aside from BJP activities as well as the informal network of support that existed within the project. Second, the project's training represented a useful, relevant initiation and, third, the project's rota system took into account the nature of volunteering as a limited commitment whilst demonstrating the project's effective organisation. They combined to increase the likelihood that volunteers were committed to the BJP and shared both a sense of solidarity and similar perspectives on a range of job-related issues.

However, despite the evidence presented in this chapter of the presence of a volunteer culture, there is also substantial evidence to suggest that it remained under-developed at the project. In fact, although all of the main components of a volunteer culture were discernible, their influence was extremely muted due to a notable lack of positive reinforcement. This meant that the project's high retention rate was not indicative of a well-established volunteer culture.

First, the volunteers' direct involvement with the project was extremely limited. It has already been demonstrated that flexible commitment contributed to the project's high retention rate. However, limited involvement is different from flexible commitment because it refers to a distinct lack of volunteering activities and related contact with the project. It was usual for volunteers to have no contact with the project for several months at a time. For example, volunteers rarely had cause to visit the BJP's offices. During the course of the research, the administration requirements of the project were a constant concern for the co-ordinator. Despite this, the assistance of volunteers was never requested. The volunteers believed that their skills and expertise were under-utilised by the project.

*David: Its like there is far less contact at the project with volunteer meetings and all of that. I know there are meetings from time to time and I know not everyone's able to attend. It might also be useful if we do a bit more seminars and things, publicise the thing even more by a more or less hands on approach.*

*JB: Some of the volunteers have said they don't feel they're being used enough.*

*David: Well that's my complaint as well. I think, with the experience I've got, I could be used more, not only to be sat around waiting for a phone call. (David)*

Similarly, the volunteers explained that undertaking regular rota duties was no reliable indicator of being an experienced volunteer. For those fulfilling telephone duties, calls to the project were extremely irregular and, for those undertaking call-out duties, requests for their assistance were even rarer.

*"I would have thought, possibly, the reaction to it might have been higher. Perhaps, when I was answering the phones, I would expect to get a minimum of a couple of phone calls a night. So, sometimes when you're four weeks down the road and you've only had one call, you think well this isn't right". (Matthew)*

*"The only thing I thought there'd be much more, we'd be really like, more involved. We'd get a lot of calls, it would be really busy ... but its the opposite of that to be honest". (Amjid)*

The reasons for this situation were discussed in Chapter Five. However, it is important to note here that the volunteers' desire to meet needs and offer help through participating in the BJP remained only partially fulfilled due to a lack of practical activities. Additionally, the lack of volunteering activities also helps to explain the



project's high retention rate. It was unnecessary to leave the project formally when voluntary activities were few and far between to the extent that volunteers had the option of never committing themselves to rota duties.

In addition to this, following the training, group activities were extremely irregular and were always optional. From a practical perspective, volunteers were sure that occasional group activities were useful. They were asked if it was important to meet from time to time.

*"I think it is, its quite useful because we can share experiences and talk about problems and it broadens your horizons". (Wasim)*

*"Yeah, just to bounce a few ideas off each other et cetera. You know, just try and develop it and, if there's anybody's had problems, it just gives you a chance to air it". (Pam)*

The volunteers consistently mentioned the need to share ideas and experiences at meetings. However, meetings were never arranged for this purpose. Volunteers either met at training sessions or social events. It was evident that neither of these provided an adequate opportunity to discuss issues related to their experiences of volunteering. Thus, the volunteers' informal network of support was never formally encouraged or reinforced by those at management level.

Furthermore, the volunteers agreed that it was essential, from a symbolic point of view, to see themselves as part of a group. This was understood to facilitate a sense of belonging.

*"I think if you know you belong to something a lot bigger, then its ... I think purely from a social point of view, then if everybody's doing the same thing, you must all have a similar way of thinking or a similar set of principles, morals or whatever you like. So yeah, I think its very important, it keeps morale up". (Peter)*

*"I think its useful to be able to spot some of the other volunteers on the street as a volunteer and I suppose that has something to do with being, as identifying yourself with part of the group, the project". (Diana)*

However, a persistent sense of isolation evidently endured. One of the volunteers' main criticisms of the project was that they received little information about its activities and remained unaware of its progress. The volunteers were asked to think of ways in which the project could be improved. A common suggestion therefore related to increasing the amount of information received by volunteers.

*"After every three months, if they sent a bulletin out to all the volunteers telling them exactly what has been done, how many cases have been reported or just sending them a case out, a case that they'd come across and telling them how it had been dealt with. Its always nice to read about a difficult situation that arises and how its handled". (Lata)*

The following volunteer described how the BJP compared unfavourably in this respect with another organisation for which he volunteered.

*"You have once, every two weekly meetings, you know. You sit down, you talk, you discuss things, you know, and you have newsletters, minutes of the last meeting. Everybody gets them so you're keeping in contact on what's happening. So, in that respect, you feel more of a part of it. Whereas this, you just feel that oh its just something I'm doing". (Charlie)*

The project's failure to provide regular information to volunteers meant that it also failed to reinforce a positive sense of group identity. It therefore restricted the extent to which a volunteer culture was able to form.

*"I don't know a lot about the project. I suppose I expected at this stage to know more but I mean, I think as a volunteer, I do feel quite on my own. You know, once a month I do my stint. I suppose one gap is kind of lack of feedback about, you know, how often do people go out and stuff like that. Then I'd have a sense of us as a body. So, in that sense, I don't have a sense of project as an identity as such". (Nabeel)*

It became clear that the project's management committee contributed directly to the lack of a positive sense of group identity. The majority of volunteers had not met any of its members, remained unaware of its composition and doubtful of its overall contribution to the project's progress. This meant that a sense of group solidarity and commitment to the project was not reinforced at management level. The following comments were among the most critical.

*"The management committee has, I think, has pretty much let the project down, you know. They don't attend meetings, they didn't even have the decency to turn up at the early stages of the project so we could see who the management committee was. We didn't know who they was". (Richard)*

*"At first, I thought it was diabolical and absolutely terrible, and I still haven't got a high opinion of them. But we don't really get minutes from the management committee anyway, so I'm not exactly sure if they've improved. So, it'd be wrong for me to say they're as terrible as they were before, but they were terrible". (Gary)*

Furthermore, volunteer representation at management committee meetings was considered desirable by all relevant parties. However, despite the HOAS commencing in June 1994, volunteer elections were not held until December 1995. More than eighteen months therefore lapsed before the volunteers were given any opportunity to represent their views formally and contribute to the project's decision-making process. Following the elections, two of the elected volunteers obtained employment outside of Sheffield and one was appointed assistant co-ordinator at the project. For reasons discussed in Chapter Three, the other representative was prevented from attending meetings. This meant that, by January 1997, none of the elected volunteers had attended a committee meeting. Again, the volunteers' involvement with the project remained restricted and, as a result, the likelihood that they experienced a sustained sense of isolation increased.

It is important to note that the project's apparently limited commitment to facilitating the formation of a volunteer culture served a useful purpose. If the volunteers were more actively involved with the project, both in terms of fulfilling voluntary duties and contributing to its decision-making, they would have had greater opportunity to assess the extent to which the project had the potential to meet its aims and objectives. In particular, they would have been in a better position to determine if the project fulfilled the requirements of the black perspective. Their understanding that they participated in a necessary and worthwhile cause would inevitably have been tested.

Essentially, the volunteers could have established if and how far the project maintained its independence from statutory organisations. This meant that they would have had the opportunity to discover the tension between the project's self-appointed independent image and its restricted ability to sustain it on closer inspection. As a result, it was in the project's interests not to actively facilitate the formation and maintenance of a volunteer culture.

In summary, although the main components of a volunteer culture were apparent among the BJP volunteers, it remained severely under-developed and was therefore of restricted utility. Despite the project's high retention rate, the formation of a volunteer culture was not actively encouraged. In fact, doing so was against the project's broader interests because it potentially jeopardised the successful management of its image.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The research findings presented in this chapter have revealed that there was not a sustained development of a volunteer culture at the BJP. First, broad similarities between the volunteers in terms of social characteristics and reasons for volunteering did not disguise their diverse backgrounds. Second, the presence of the necessary components for the development of a volunteer culture failed to ensure its development due to a lack of required support at management level.

Thus, a volunteer culture only existed to the extent that the volunteers acknowledged a symbolic sense of affinity among black people based on shared interests and a common purpose. This meant that the volunteers' decision to participate reflected the black perspective and the corresponding understanding that black people have in common an essential, black racialised identity. It revealed that the volunteers' racialised identity did, in fact, contribute to their decision to volunteer by encouraging a general orientation towards the project's aims. Further, it revealed how volunteers from a variety of racialised groups were able to participate collectively in the project.

It was demonstrated that the project's informal network of support, as well as its training programme and rota system, engendered a sense of group solidarity and commitment to specific job-related objectives. However, this remained under-developed and, as a result, the volunteers were isolated and did not have a strong sense of group identity. This served the purpose of sustaining the project's self-appointed independent image. Essentially, the volunteers were given little opportunity to discover the tension between the management committee's presentation of image and the project's reliance on statutory organisations. Thus, they did not question the project's adherence to the black perspective.

In fact, the under-development of the volunteer culture ensured that the volunteers' assumed affinity with other black people was never called into question. Their lack of contact with both the project and each other meant that they did not have cause to consider how the project attempted to pursue the interests of various black racialised groups. In addition to this, potentially conflicting interests and perspectives arising from the volunteers' diverse backgrounds remained hidden. Paradoxically, this meant that the an under-developed volunteer culture increased the likelihood that volunteers would continue to participate in the project.

This argument is extended in the final empirical chapter which investigates how far an assumed affinity with other black people corresponded with the volunteers' understanding of both processes of racialisation and their racialised identity. Thus, the assumptions underlying the black perspective will be examined critically.

## Chapter Seven

### Racialised Identity: A Sociological Understanding

#### 7.1 Introduction

As has already been established, the BJP provided a site for the exploration of important sociological questions regarding the racialisation of identity. The aim of this chapter is to combine the main related themes of the thesis by examining the volunteers' understanding of the meaning of 'race' within the general context of their everyday social lives. By doing so, the chapter will highlight further the tenuous nature of the black perspective and will thus present additional evidence to suggest that the project's efforts to operationalise it were inevitably fraught with difficulties.

This chapter therefore explores the various dimensions of racialised sameness and difference which the volunteers identified as being in some way significant to their racialised identity. It investigates how these dimensions operate at four separate levels. First, it examines how they were understood to function within a particular black racialised group. Next, Section 7.3 outlines how the volunteers described them with reference to different black racialised groups. In Section 7.4, a comparison is drawn between black and white, negatively racialised groups and, in Section 7.5, black racialised groups are compared with an apparent positively racialised white majority.

The chapter draws on studies of ethnicity within social anthropology and demonstrates how these can be applied usefully to the study of racialised identity. It is argued that, at each level, a racialised boundary exists to signify who is included and who is excluded according to the criteria used to define the relevant racialised group. In fact, it will be demonstrated that each boundary necessarily implies a process of both group identification and categorising others. However, the chapter also explains the distinction between a core and peripheral identity and argues that the former is based on group identification whereas the latter results from being categorised.

Consequently, this chapter will challenge critically the post-modernist tendency to focus on constructed differences, and thus diversity, at the expense of investigating the importance of similarities. It will also argue that post-modernists have over-emphasised our capacity to choose a social identity and will show instead, using

racialised identity as an example, that it is the result of processes of accommodation, negotiation and transformation.

A central objective of this chapter is to demonstrate that the inclusive term 'black' represents one dimension of racialised identity arising from social categorisation. It is argued that it is a weak symbol signifying an optional community of interest only and cannot compete with stronger, more ascribed symbols signifying a community of culture. As a result, it is necessarily and inherently a peripheral identification. By essentialising the experience of not being white, it questionably prioritises the signifier of skin colour as the key to the construction of racialised sameness and difference. Equally, it homogenises simplistically the experience of being white and assumes an associated, common collective experience. Thus, this chapter explains why the inclusive term is used by the project legitimately whilst explaining simultaneously why it is conceptually and theoretically untenable.

It must be stressed that, although the chapter concentrates on dimensions of racialised sameness and difference as sources of meaning, it also reveals that they have consequences in terms of encouraging and perpetuating racialised processes of economic, political and social exclusion. For example, it is argued that a peripheral identification with a particular racialised group by no means indicates a concomitant influence on an individual's life circumstances.

## **7.2 Within a black racialised group**

This section explores the construction of racialised identity within any particular black racialised group. It begins by focusing on perceived similarities and then continues by exploring the internal differences identified by the volunteers.

According to Stephen Cornell, collective identity varies continuously along three dimensions: shared culture, shared institutions and shared interests (Cornell, 1996:265-89). In this section it is argued that the first two of these three dimensions are acutely evident with reference to the volunteers' understanding of the similarities which unite members of a particular black racialised group. They will be explored in turn in order to demonstrate how each significantly contributed to the volunteers' understanding of what they share with other members of their specific racialised group.

Further, this section provides the background to the argument developed further in subsequent sections that membership of such a group creates a core identity based on

group identification. A core identity is one that is thought to be of immediate and enduring significance for individuals in their everyday social lives. Thus, a shared culture and shared institutions are integral to important processes of identity formation. The distinction, made by Richard Jenkins, between group identification and social categorisation is useful here because it highlights the research finding that, by defining themselves in such a way, the volunteers emphasised internal self-identification as opposed to external categorisation by others (Jenkins, 1996:23). Thus, primarily and significantly, the volunteers identified themselves as members of an internally constructed and defined racialised group.

First, the volunteers defined their particular racialised group with reference to a shared community of culture. By this, it is meant that members participate in a symbolic system of norms and values based on a shared cultural heritage which can include language, religion, country of origin, music and food. Membership of a community of culture is not calculated or planned. Instead, it is purely a matter of life and lifestyle circumstances. This means that the racialised boundary separating one group from others is relatively fixed and, as a result, movement into and out of the group is very limited. The volunteers were asked if they understood themselves to belong to a particular community and, if so, what brings this community together. The following quotes are from volunteers who referred specifically to a shared cultural heritage.

*“Probably the language. The fact that we speak the same language or we’re all from the same country. That in itself brings us together, and religion”. (Lata)*

*“I think that Pakistani communities in particular, you know our culture and that, we’re more closer really I think”. (Anwar)*

*“Culture, language, origin. That’s it, isn’t it?”. (Wasim)*

The importance of country of origin was articulated effectively by the following two volunteers who used the infamous measure of the cricket test to explain their predominate affiliation with Pakistan and Jamaica respectively.

*“Now, if say there’s cricket and England are playing Pakistan, then I’ll support Pakistan because that’s where I come from but if England are playing New Zealand then I’ll support England ‘cause its the country I have the most ties with”. (Jabir)*

*“If the West Indies are touring, I’m shouting for the West Indies. I don’t apologise for that, that is the situation. But, if other UK matches are going on, I’m rooting for England ... I do consider meself British*



*yeah, but, at the end of the day right, because of my Jamaican heritage, and the African heritage as well, and the sort of upbringing I got from my parents as well right, I look first towards Jamaica". (David)*

Interestingly, none of the Asian volunteers referred to the same aspects of culture as the African-Caribbean volunteers when describing what brings members of their racialised group together. Therefore, the following quotes are representative of those volunteers of African-Caribbean origin only.

*"Music and food. Seriously, that's what I think it is, music and food". (Gary)*

*"I, for example, am deeply into reggae music yeah, and I like me soul as well, but I don't have anywhere to go in Sheffield, as in night-clubs, to hear that sort of music. So, I tend to either come here (African-Caribbean community centre) on a Saturday night or sometimes I go to the blues. We tend to like the same things so ...". (David)*

As a result, a community of culture was understood to bind members of a particular racialised group together by providing the common ground of a shared identity. For the volunteers, this group identification was achieved through the recognition of diverse, shared symbols such as musical styles, food types and familiar symbols of national identity and pride.

Next, it is clear that the idea of an institutional community featured regularly in the volunteers' description of their racialised group. Cornell used a narrow conception of institutions as follows.

*"To be high on the shared institutions dimension means that members of the group participate in a common and more or less exclusive set of institutions through which they attempt to solve life problems" (1996:270).*

These institutions can be both formal and informal organisational mechanisms. In fact, it is arguably preferable to refer to an institutional community as a community of support because it provides a useful strategy for coping in a social world where particular racialised groups encounter specific problems and difficulties. The volunteers' understanding suggests that it is often a response, and thus a challenge, to the racialised conditions created by others. However, there is no reason to suggest that a community of support exists solely for this purpose. The volunteers described it as both a formal and informal network. The following volunteers were asked what brings their community together.

*“Well, we all have the same problems, social problems, welfare problems, money problems, you know. The thing that’s getting us altogether is discussing our problems and, you know, we can see the chance where we can help each other”. (Veronica)*

*“Its mainly around the struggle, that’s one of the words that comes to mind. One is sharing the similar problems and so we find we sort of link together as a mutual support set-up ... I went on a black access course, quite a few us went on it, and we sort of keep that support straight through to university”. (David)*

For those volunteers of Pakistani origin, a community of support also included the idea of a spatially distinct community in which kinship networks are of considerable importance.

*“Its a community where they’ve always lived together, they stay close together, they don’t believe in separation, you know. Your son could get married and he might want to go and live in his own house but his parents would love him to stay at home with his wife ... they believe in sticking together and, you’ll find that in a lot of areas, a lot of Asian people who live close by, they’re all related. There’s cases where there’s a street full on both sides of just relations”. (Ali)*

Thus, an institutional community complements a community of culture in that it provides further common ground of a shared identity. This is based on group problem-sharing and -solving and reflects a spirit of mutual support.

Inevitably, this type of community incorporates shared interests but these are not what helps to keep the group together. When asked about their particular racialised group, the volunteers did not describe a community of interest. In short, they did not refer explicitly to sharing a distinctive set of purely positional interests. Rather, they referred predominately to cultural heritage and support networks as the key sources of group identification. Thus, using Cornell’s typology, individual black racialised groups are high on culture and institutions and low on interests.

In fact, it is important to stress that the volunteers were keen to highlight the differences which they understood to frequently divide members of the same racialised group. As a result, shared culture and institutions are no straightforward indicators of shared positional interests. For example, the following volunteers indicated differences in social class and age as sources of division.

*“I’m sure that there’s quite a lot of black Caribbeans, of Afro-Caribbeans, who would not identify with me at all and I’m sure there might be some who think I’m the most appalling snob. No honestly, I’ve*

*had, they tell it like it is and so I tend to have this accent or something, so they don't identify with me". (Diana)*

*"I think the younger generation are more likely to speak out than the rest of the older generation. The older ones want to just leave it and they just want the least trouble as possible, you know, any agro, they just don't want it. They think, if they keep quiet, they won't come across it but we're not like that". (Anne)*

In addition to this, lifestyle differences were also cited as another significant way in which members of the same black racialised group are divided.

*"As with white people, or any other culture, there's a difference. We couldn't all come together, its totally different. You've got the very religious Afro-Caribbeans who probably wouldn't understand why the guys are selling the drugs. So, there's a big difference .. there's still sections in the community". (Marie)*

However, none of the differences identified by the volunteers affect the racialised boundary which denotes who is included in and excluded from a particular black racialised group. Membership was not understood to be determined by characteristics such as social class, age and lifestyle. Thus, such differences do not lead to movement across boundaries. As a result, these identified differences do not affect the central research finding that similarities based on cultural heritage and mutual institutional support characterise racialised group identification.

On the basis of the volunteers' understanding of what constitutes their particular racialised group, it appears that the project's inclusive use of the term 'black' is of extremely limited utility. It does not denote either a community of culture or a community of institutions and cannot therefore signify group identification. From this perspective, the criticisms of its inclusive use, as outlined in the review of the literature in Chapter One, appear to be well-founded. For example, the term disguises the cultural heritage of both the African-Caribbean and Asian volunteers. Thus, having established what unites members of a particular black racialised group, it is pertinent to consider how unity is possible between various black racialised groups. This is the aim of the following section.

### 7.3 Between different black racialised groups

The volunteers at the project were unanimous in their assertion that, whilst fulfilling their voluntary duties, they regarded themselves as serving members of all of the black racialised groups in Sheffield. The following quotes are representative of their comments.

*"No, I'm not protecting the interests of other West Indians, I'm protecting the interests of any, well, non-white person that needs help. It doesn't matter what race they are". (Pam)*

*"Yeah. I represent all. I'm not just representing black Afro-Caribbeans. I'm representing black people overall .. I wouldn't just discriminate against someone because, although they might be black, they're a different ethnic minority group to myself". (Anne)*

This indicates a perceived identification with members of black racialised groups other than their own. The aim of this section is to explain how, when they explicitly identified with a particular black racialised group, the volunteers were able to regard their racialised identity in this way and thus accept the inclusive use of the term 'black'.

The key to explaining the volunteers' understanding lies again with the distinction between group identification and group categorisation. The latter is constructed and defined externally by others. This means that individuals who belong to a racialised category do not choose to be members because, instead, membership is delineated for them, without their consent. As was established in Chapter Three, the volunteers understood a crucial racialised category to exist at the level of the binary opposition black-white. 'Black' was primarily thought to be meaningful to describe a common collective experience of being categorised as not white in a social world where whiteness is constructed as the norm and thus has a privileged status.

*"For me, black is anybody who isn't white and we all have a common experience in our oppression. It comes in different forms, you know". (Richard)*

*"That all boils down to them not being white. At the end of the day, that's where the similarity comes into it and its got to be a big similarity because Britain, the way Britain sees anybody that's not white". (Alison)*

*"It brings people together in terms of street level. When you say you meet another black, Afro-Caribbean or Asian, even Somalis or anything, I think you tend to have this respect. I think they go through the same thing we go through kinda". (Khalid)*

In addition to this, whiteness was understood to assume a privileged status because it is commonly regarded as being synonymous with Britishness. Individuals who are not classified as white cannot therefore be classified as being British.

*"I'm sure they (the different black groups) have things in common. That's almost guaranteed because essentially, whether they're born here or not, they're treated essentially as being as not from this country".*  
(Diana)

*"I think, if you're white and British, then people look at you and say you're British. If you're black and British, people say you're black and you're living in Britain and I think that's the difference".* (Gary)

Thus, in defining 'black' as a form of social categorisation, the volunteers prioritised the racialised signifier of skin colour. This, in turn, indicated another, seemingly impermeable, racialised boundary separating all white people from those racialised groups who cannot be described phenotypically as white. The problematic nature of this perceived boundary is explored in the next section but, for now, it is adequate to acknowledge its significance in explaining the legitimacy of the inclusive term 'black'.

This use of the term is best explained as denoting a community of interest. Members who belong to this type of community are united predominately on the basis of a set of perceived positional interests rather than a shared cultural heritage or institutional support network. As the volunteers explained, external racialised conditions rather than internal characteristics provide the impetus for unity. Consequently, shared membership of either a community of culture or an institutional community is unnecessary. Unlike these forms of community, a community of interest, based on an inclusive use of the term 'black', is a calculated, formal response to the negative conditions to which 'non-white' people are subjected. It is inherently conditional and is always crucially dependent on the nature of racialised relations in the wider social world.

The volunteers therefore argued that members of both African-Caribbean and Asian racialised groups can create a form of unity purely as a result of their shared experiences of not being white. Essentially, unity represents a means through which they can address the unequal relations of power that were understood to benefit the white majority at the expense of the black minority. In the specific context of the BJP, it

was thought to be helpful in challenging processes of racialisation present within the various, predominately white, criminal justice agencies.

*"Its simply because when you do actually go on visiting you don't see it as its going to be a Pakistani or Asian or say Jamaican or even Somalian. You say 'black'. Its more like black people against the, helping black people against the police. Its just the way it is, its like a pure white organisation". (Khalid)*

*"Sometimes it makes you quite mad because you think, well, it would be easier to put them together to get the white people out and that, you know". (Alison).*

The inclusive term 'black' therefore denotes a specific dimension of racialised identity. This dimension is based solely on a perceived difference between black and white people regardless of their membership of particular racialised groups. It in no way suggests that all 'non-white' groups have anything in common but their experiences of racialised exclusion from the privileged white majority. It simply reflects an optional, pragmatic response to one set of racialised circumstances. Thus, the racialised groups subsumed under the inclusive term 'black' are high on shared interests and low on shared culture and institutions. This was summarised succinctly by one volunteer.

*"We either are black or we're African-Caribbean and Asian". (Richard)*

It is a peripheral aspect of racialised identity specifically because it indicates a political position only. It is distinguishable from core aspects of racialised identity which include a cultural and social position as well. The volunteers stated clearly key differences between the different racialised groups subsumed under the inclusive term 'black'. For example, the following volunteers identified cultural differences as a source of division.

*"We're separate for the simple reason: Muslim is Muslim. Like, I don't think I could go in a mosque, they wouldn't let me for a start. And things what we do they wouldn't do it. Like, they don't go dancing. I go dancing, I ain't no Jesus, yeah? I go dancing and I drink me beer and I have me time, you know what I mean? But that's where we come different like". (Lewis)*

*"I think, in one sense, its a lot harder for them because of the linguistic differences. That makes them stick together more and the religion. You know, Asian people, like a lot of Asian people's religion is a way of life, such as Muslims, whereas a lot of black people its Christianity. You know, that kind of thing". (Alison)*

In fact, some of the volunteers referred to the likelihood that social relationships between particular black racialised groups and white people are more evident than comparable relationships between different black racialised groups.

*"I'd say West Indian people mixed more with white people than with Asians really". (Charlie)*

*"It's interesting that there are more overlaps between whites and Asians and Afro-Caribbeans and the whites. There's very little overlap between say Afro-Caribbeans and Pakistanis". (Jabir)*

This understanding succinctly highlighted the limited similarities between the various black racialised groups.

It also revealed that 'black' is a weak symbol because, rather than representing a number of key racialised similarities which are integral to an individual's racialised identity, it conceals important racialised differences. Even negative processes of racialisation were not thought to be experienced uniformly across the different racialised groups. Instead, specific groups were described as being racialised in particular ways.

*"We've got our differences haven't we? Black people are more or less muggers and drug pushers, and whatever else, and the Asians are scroungers and whatever else, taking all our jobs. So we're all to blame for something but we're all to blame for different things". (Marie)*

As a result, in terms of the volunteers' understanding, the BJP's legitimate use of the term 'black' is restricted to reflect exclusively the significance of 'colour' discrimination as a particular dimension of racialised discrimination more generally. It represents a political community of positional interests rather than a community of culture or institutions. The following quotes are representative of the volunteers' understanding.

*"The Black Justice Project is black in the political sense that its non-European, non-English. So, everyone belongs to the BJP that isn't English". (Lata)*

*"I think black's OK as a political term as in anybody who's not white". (Marie)*

It must be stressed that, although the volunteers accepted the broader term 'black' in a political sense, they in no way endorsed its conflation as an analytical or theoretical category. Instead, they questioned the legitimacy of adopting the term to describe accurately any racialised group.

*“There’s no black language, there’s no black religion, there’s no black culture, there’s no black land. It doesn’t exist. For me its just another tactic to detach us even further from our roots”. (Richard)*

*“Someone’s either gonna say to me Paki or black Paki to me. They’re not gonna say brown or anything but saying that, I don’t know, I’ve never seen myself to be black, its just the way I think”. (Anwar)*

This meant that ‘black’ was thought to be acceptable only if and when they choose to define themselves as such. It is useful as a means of engendering a collective response but it is reprehensible if it is used to reinforce the racialised status quo. Paradoxically then, processes of racialisation were thought to be challenged by adopting a term which represents an important source of racialised inequality. The black-white binary opposition is acknowledged and mobilised in an effort to effectively overcome it.

Significantly, the volunteers’ understanding demonstrates that racialised identity is always negotiable and open to transformation. However, the extent to which individuals are able to choose their racialised identity is inevitably restricted due to the unavoidable inter-play between group identification and social categorisation. In short, even if individuals wholly reject the term ‘black’, it does not follow that they will no longer be categorised as such.

In terms of its use by the BJP, the inclusive definition of the term ‘black’ was therefore understood to be the basis for a form of collective resistance to the racialised categorisation imposed by others. Thus, it was thought to be a response to the unequal power relations whereby any individual who cannot be classified as white is apparently subjected to similar processes of racialised exclusion. However, it was noticeable from the volunteers’ responses that this use of the term implicitly discounts the interests of negatively racialised groups which are categorised as being white. This omission is explored in the following section which analyses critically the volunteers’ associated understanding.



#### 7.4 Between black racialised groups and white, negatively racialised groups

The aim of this section is to establish conclusively that the racialised boundary which separates people according to the signifier of skin colour serves to mask the heterogeneous nature of blackness and whiteness. Thus, the boundary is of extremely limited utility and its existence is, ultimately, tenuous. It will be argued that referring to a white majority makes as little sense analytically as referring to a black minority. Thus, a central argument of the thesis will be reinforced by illuminating further the fragile nature of the black perspective adopted by the project.

Within the context of the BJP, the position of white, negatively racialised groups was explored with specific reference to the Irish. This group was chosen because the project explicitly claimed to incorporate the interests of Sheffield's Irish community even though it had a working agreement that the interests of black racialised groups represented its focus. Likewise, two Irish volunteers were interviewed.

Accordingly, it will be argued that white, negatively racialised groups have been de-racialised in relation to their black counterparts. This means that the specific experiences and interests of, for example, the Irish have become invisible due to the tendency, both politically and socially, to prioritise the black-white boundary at the expense of other influential racialised boundaries.

The volunteers' responses revealed a general recognition that the Irish cannot be categorised straightforwardly as being part of the positively racialised white majority. They were asked if it is acceptable to include the Irish in the BJP. The following comments are representative of twenty-two volunteers (73%) who argued that it is acceptable.

*"As far as the Irish are concerned, they've been facing segregation and discrimination for as long as I can remember, so its not as if they aren't discriminated against ... now the Irish are discriminated because of their race. They don't come into the definition of colour but they do come in the definition of the race". (Lata)*

*"I don't know whether this is one of the official aims but I see that the aims of the BJP are to help those who have been in certain instances stereotyped by institutions, and the Irish are no less stereotyped than Afro-Caribbeans". (Diana)*

*"I'm comfortable with them being included given the history of victimisation and harassment. So, I'm alright with that". (Nabeel)*

However, for those eight volunteers (27%) who rejected the inclusion of the Irish, the racialised signifier of skin colour was again prioritised. The following volunteers described the significance of this symbol in contributing to their experiences as members of a black racialised group.

*"Its like, I grew up in Heathside and there aren't any black people there, you know. So, if you're walking in the street or, say, when I walked into a classroom, they'd all look round 'cause I was the only black face". (Pam)*

*"Its a visual thing and, the only way I can say it is if you, if a group of black people were to walk into a room, then they are immediately discriminated against because of the visual thing. If a group of Irish people walked into a room, before you've opened your mouth or done anything, they are still not black people". (Caroline)*

The related issues of choice and visibility provide the key to the volunteers' understanding. The volunteers argued that they have no choice but to be categorised as black because they are unable to change their skin colour. The Irish, however, were understood to have the option of disguising their membership of a negatively racialised group. In short, they can arguably become invisible.

*"Whereas a black person, you're just black aren't you? You can't change the colour of your skin and say I'm not black ... Some people will tolerate Irish people just because they've got white skin, won't they? But they won't tolerate a black person". (Marie)*

*"An Irish person, they can hide their culture, if they haven't got a strong Irish accent. Whereas a black person can't. You know, they just can't (laughs and points to herself)". (Anne)*

As the latter comment suggests, the volunteers recognised the potential contribution of other racialised signifiers, such as accent, but insisted that skin colour is a more potent signifier specifically because it is non-negotiable.

However, this understanding ultimately reduces racialised discrimination to colour discrimination. Individuals are not racialised solely according to skin colour. The examples given by the volunteers to emphasise the specificity of their experiences provide an extremely partial account which ignores many of the various ways in which individuals experience processes of racialisation. In fact, members of black and white, negatively racialised groups are racialised as a result of a variety of easily distinguishable features including name, address, religion, dress, country of origin and language. Thus, visibility is not determined solely by skin colour. The following quote, from a custody

officer, demonstrates how the Irish, and their descendants, are easily identifiable by their names alone.

*"You know, if you go through the names on the list of officers what are working here, it looks like there's a good fifty per cent of Irish descent".*  
(Sgt. Samways)

The following volunteer argued that a person's voice is indicative of racialised origin.

*"I went for a job and when I phoned this guy up he said 'come down for an interview'. And, when I got there, he just didn't want to know because I was black. And I had a go and said 'why've you wasted my time, you can pay my bus fare' because he must have known on the phone. I mean, I can tell a black voice, I can always tell if its a black person I'm speaking to".* (Clive)

However, in terms of negotiability, the volunteers inferred that the Irish have the dubious option of invisibilising their racialised origin. For example, the following volunteer argued that they have the perhaps unrealistic option of not speaking or changing their accent.

*"We have to live with it more than you would because at least some Irish people, if they don't open their mouth, will get away with it as white people. But black people, it doesn't matter where you are, if you're in the European countries, you are straight away stigmatised and labelled as a black person".* (Salim)

The likelihood of cross-generational racialised disadvantage among the Irish was also rejected by those volunteers who referred to it.

*"I know they suffer from racism but its difficult because with their offspring, you wouldn't even know, would you, unless they say it? But they are Irish so they can be Irish when it suits them politically and not Irish when it suits them, to their advantage".* (Marie)

This understanding incorporated the assumption that second generation white racialised groups are, ultimately, assumed to be white British. That is, their racialised origin becomes invisible. The following comment from a police officer is significant because it indicates that becoming invisible is not synonymous with becoming white British.

*"I was reading something today about the Jewish people that, now they've been here so long, they regard themselves as British ... thing is, I think people think about any attacks they might get so they tend to blend in with the white community".* (Sgt. Davies)

The officers' understanding incorporated the assumption that Jewish people are not British regardless of their length of residence in the country. It also suggested that Jewish people are not white but are able to present themselves as such. This means that Jewish, and by inference Irish, people are able to conceal their racialised origin but are unable to reject it completely.

These examples have been included here in order to emphasise the complexity of processes of racialisation and the subtle, multi-faceted ways in which various racisms operate. They therefore emphasise the extremely limited account of racialised identity produced by a restricted focus on the racialised signifier of skin colour. In particular, they reveal that the interests of white, negatively racialised groups, such as the Irish, automatically become secondary to those of black racialised groups. In this sense, the Irish are a de-racialised group in that their racialised experiences are automatically assumed to be less acute than those of, for example, African-Caribbeans.

This is not to suggest that the volunteers exaggerated or misunderstood the extent and significance of their racialised experiences. Rather, it calls into question their common sense understanding that skin colour is the key to explaining these experiences. As has already been argued, skin colour is a specific dimension of racialised identity and is thus only one contributory factor to processes of racialisation.

In particular, by prioritising skin colour, the notion of a common black identity is reinforced. As was established in Chapter Three, this essentialises the experience of not being white and, in doing so, implies an assumed white identity common to all white people regardless of racialised origin. Ultimately, by accepting whiteness as the norm against which they are defined, the volunteers suggested that white people do not have a 'race'. This detracts attention from the various ways in which those defined as white are positively racialised. An analysis of this kind is instrumental to understanding processes of racialisation.

Furthermore, it implies that the racialised boundary separating black and white people provides a clear, unambiguous dividing line. Both the volunteers and the police officers revealed that this is manifestly not the case. For example, the following officer described his mistake in offering the services of the HOAS to a woman who he thought was 'mixed race'.

*"I experienced it with a girl I thought was mixed race and she wasn't, and she was quite upset about it. She looked it. She had got a dark*

*complexion, plus the fact that she'd recently been on holiday in Greece, and she looked of mixed race, you know". (Insp. Williams)*

One of the volunteers described a man she met regularly at her place of work who she argued, despite his insistence to the contrary, was white.

*"There's a guy there who honestly thinks he's black, and its true (laughs) And, when he comes into the office, he says 'these Caucasians don't understand us blacks do they?' Then they think what is this guy on? But, honestly, he really believes he's black. I find it very sad. I don't know, I've tried to ask him". (Veronica)*

It is unclear in each of these cases as to which party presented the most accurate racialised identification. However, the cases are significant in highlighting the negotiated nature of racialised identity. Both black and white individuals are able to exercise some degree of choice in determining their racialised identity. They also indicate that it is far from simple to categorise individuals straightforwardly as black or white. Again, this demonstrates the difficulty of prioritising skin colour as a dominant indicator of racialised discrimination.

Prioritising the black-white binary opposition does not therefore further our understanding of processes of racialisation. This may be to the detriment of both white, negatively racialised groups and black racialised groups. For example, it discounts the possible ways in which the experiences of Irish people are still racialised in Britain. It also detracts from the various processes which operate to racialise groups usually defined as black.

In terms of the BJP, prioritising skin colour serves to validate the black perspective because it suggests a shared experience and resulting shared interests. These cannot be shared by white people regardless of their racialised origin. However, such a view results from the misconception that labelling an individual as 'black' is inevitably synonymous with having a shared 'black' experience.

*"Identification is never just a matter of the formal semantics of name or label: the meaning of an identity lies also in the difference it makes in individual lives" (Jenkins, 1996:77).*

It has been argued in this chapter that racialised group identification is primarily based on similarities within a particular racialised group arising from a community of culture and institutions. It is a core identification which has an immediate and everyday influence on an individual's social life. Conversely, the inclusive term 'black' is based on

an inherently optional community of positional interests. Thus, it is a peripheral identification which is of much less significance to an individual's racialised identity. In fact, the link between the label 'black' and an associated experience is extremely tenuous on inspection. As has been argued, having a non-white skin colour does not indicate a related uniform experience specifically because, first, skin colour accounts very partially for processes of racialisation and, second, defining oneself and being defined as black is, in fact, negotiable to a certain extent.

In conclusion, this means that it was impossible for the BJP to fully operationalise the black perspective because crucial racialised differences between those racialised groups it claims to represent were disguised. Specifically, it had no firm basis from which to assert that the experiences of black racialised groups are substantively different from those of negatively racialised, white groups. It simply assumed that skin colour united the racialised experiences of black racialised groups.

As a result, the constructed racialised boundary which apparently separates all white people from all black people disguises the heterogeneous nature of both groups. The final section examines this boundary in greater detail by exploring how the volunteers understood racialised similarities and differences between their particular racialised group and a positively racialised white majority. It furthers the argument presented in this section that skin colour provides an extremely limited basis for explaining processes of racialisation.

### **7.5 Black racialised groups and the 'white majority'**

This section outlines the volunteers' understanding of how a perceived white majority categorises black racialised groups. It will explain how processes of racialisation were not thought to be determined, ultimately, by the signifier of skin colour. Rather, the volunteers' responses revealed that particular groups are racialised in various different ways. The aim of the section is to demonstrate how the construction of racialised similarities and differences is inevitably replete with internal inconsistencies. This reinforces the necessary ambiguity and fluidity of processes of racialisation. It will be demonstrated that the volunteers understood these processes to take many forms including overt and covert and intentional and unintentional. Evidence from the interviews with the custody officers will be used to illustrate and support both the assertions of the volunteers and the main arguments presented in the section. This

section, and thus the chapter, will be completed by examining the strategies adopted by the volunteers for coping with the racialised perspectives of positively racialised others.

It must be stressed that, by describing the racialised categorisations applied by white people, the volunteers were also referring to the ways in which group identification occurs among them. Thus, by negatively racialising particular groups, white people are, by implication, defining themselves both internally and positively. It is therefore impossible to examine racialised categorisation without acknowledging the corresponding process of group identification.

For the volunteers, the racialised understanding of white people incorporates many crucial contradictions and paradoxes. For example, the following volunteers referred to evidence that the actions of white people do not correspond with their racialised beliefs. They were asked how they thought white people in Sheffield regard local black people.

*"They're always saying oh Pakis or Indian or whatever, generally Pakis means anyone brown right, have got the corner shop and that. But what's stopping them from having one and whose corner shop do they go to after half five, generally, when most shops are shut? ... we also tend to get remarks like Pakis stink ... its Pakis, right, stink of curry. You go into an Indian restaurant and it'll be mostly whites". (Anwar)*

*"He's (her employer) talking about Indians and Pakistanis and anybody like that and he's the one who goes for a curry every night. He's the one who brings curries into work and stuff. And so he's happy to sample the cuisine and all stuff like that but then, I mean, when it comes down to a one to one and being out with people, he don't want to know". (Caroline)*

Immediately, it is clear from these responses that the volunteers highlighted how specific black racialised groups are racialised in particular ways. For these volunteers, the distinctive cuisine of Asians represents one source of racialised categorising.

Additionally, the volunteers referred to familiar misconceptions regarding black people to argue that the racialised beliefs of white people are manifestly inaccurate and nonsensical.

*"They start saying 'oh well, you know, you can't have sex with a black man because he's so well-endowed, he'll probably cripple you' Well, I thought Errol Flynn was like that myself and he didn't look very black to me!". (Richard)*

*"I know my Dad did some shitty jobs, you know what I'm saying, but when my Dad works, he's always paid his tax and that, national*

*insurance and that. People tend to skive it, do a little tax this and that. But everyone does that, its the way it is ... I strongly believe that, nowadays, you don't have to be corrupt, but, if you're gonna be a hundred per cent honest, you ain't gonna get nowhere. This is white and black I'm speaking about though". (Anwar)*

The former comment refers to the sexualised nature of a racialised generalisation applied to African-Caribbeans whereas the latter refers to the supposedly inherent dishonesty of Pakistanis. Again, each highlights how particular black racialised groups are racialised in specific ways.

The volunteers frequently expressed their dismay at the apparent ignorance and related lack of understanding of white people. They argued that this leads to inaccurate generalisations and unacceptable stereotypes. The following African-Caribbean volunteer explained how she is often mistaken for a client rather than a social worker.

*"I've been to places before and they'll ask for a social worker. And they don't think I'm one and they just say 'could you wait there please with the rest of the people'. I don't say who I am first. I just see what response I get. They've always assumed I'm a client". (Marie)*

Another volunteer, of Indian origin, explained how both her racialised identity and Asian culture more generally are commonly misconstrued by white people. From this perspective, Asians are racialised according to their cultural practices.

*"They classify everyone that is Asian as Pakistani. Its not are you Indian or are you Bangladeshi or are you Pakistani or Muslim? Everyone has to be Muslim. That's the other thing that I've found. And again, if you don't drink or if you don't go to night-clubs, you've got no life. That's how I've seen people portray it. We don't necessarily see it like that. So, I think the lack of understanding arises from ignorance. They don't know things, they've never taken the effort or initiative to know things. And that's why they see it as backwards and, maybe, boring". (Lata)*

Unacceptable stereotypes were identified by volunteers of both Asian and African-Caribbean origin. In fact, these stereotypes were generally regarded as being specific to their particular racialised group. The first response below refers to Asians and the second to African-Caribbeans.

*"They have different stigmas and different ideas, perceptions, about us. That's what they think about in their minds all the time. They're criminals or they're crazy or they're all sort of fundamentalists. And its wrong to say that, you know, but its just their own perception of what they think of us". (Amjid)*



*"I'm not gonna generalise at all, but the majority of them see black people as lazy, dirty and they don't want to work. And they're all drug pushers and they just want to be with their own. And, what else, they should all do menial jobs, they shouldn't be managers". (Anne)*

The latter comment is worthy of consideration because the volunteer acknowledged that referring to white people inevitably required her to generalise. However, in keeping with the other volunteers who acknowledged this, she understood her generalisations to be accurate in describing the racialised beliefs of the majority of the white population. In fact, the volunteers stressed that determining who constitutes the minority is inherently problematic. For example, they identified a major contradiction in that white people's positive experiences of an individual from a particular racialised group was not thought to affect their racialised understanding of the group in general. In addition to this, positive experiences of one black racialised group were not thought to precipitate a challenge to the racialised understanding of other black groups.

*"Some white people like, that I've known, they don't like Asians or Pakistani people but they like you. But they don't like other black people, but they like you because they know you and I've had that a lot". (Charlotte)*

*"You know, your friends at work who say, you know, 'you don't mind do you Caroline, but we don't like Pakis'. 'Why don't you like Pakis?'. They can't even explain". (Caroline)*

Thus, it does not follow that a rejection of the racialised categorisation of a particular individual or group necessarily indicates a rejection of racialised categorisations in general. Indeed, for the volunteers, rejecting racialised categorisations was no firm evidence of a general commitment to challenging racialised inequalities. Rather, it could be a strategic response based on personal and professional considerations.

*"A lot of people sort of use it as a means to further their standing in the sense that, well, I know situations where people actually need to put it on their CV. So, they've got the means of doing it, to be more socially acceptable". (David)*

*"And some are really good, or say they are. I don't know if its genuine but they've got no choice 'cause they're management". (Charlotte)*

Having established the volunteers' understanding, it is pertinent to consider the racialised understanding of the custody officers. This is important because, as part of

the positively racialised white majority, the officers are in a position to categorise in a way which reinforces an unequal, racialised relationship of power. Evidence from the interviews with the officers supported the volunteers' understanding of how white positively racialised people categorise negatively racialised groups. For example, they generalised significantly when referring to particular racialised groups. The following responses are representative of this tendency.

*"Now, you get, even the Irish, who are some of the thickest people in the world as far as I'm concerned. I've got friends who are Irish and they're thick". (Sgt. Pearson)*

*"Afro-Caribbean people, they're the ones who seem to, well, I've had more conflict with. One of the reasons why they might be more prominent out there, is that they were more outward going". (Sgt. Davies)*

*"They're very insular people, the Chinese. They're very independent and so on. The Chinese are a very quiet group aren't they, in general? We have no great problems from them". (Sgt. Lamb)*

The first response reflects the racialised myth that the Irish are of below average intelligence. The second incorporates the racialised assumption that people of African origin are of a naturally extrovert disposition and, in contrast, the final response repeats the racialised assumption that the Chinese are natural introverts. Each of these is significant because, even though a biological basis to 'race' is generally rejected today, beliefs based on essentialist notions of natural and innate differences still persist. The following comment, from a member of the BJP's management committee with direct, professional experience of the Chinese population in Sheffield, indicates the inaccuracy, and related consequences, of such beliefs.

*"The classic one who's over-looked in terms of services is the Chinese community. A lot of assumptions are made about self-reliance and stuff like that. So, my understanding of the community is you've got people from Hong Kong, China, they've got degrees in their own language but they're being ghettoised to a totally constricted existence in the restaurant and take-away sector. It's so frustrating. Very highly skilled people with language needs. They've not got much English but they're highly skilled graduate level and they're trapped in something that would drive you absolutely barking". (Joe)*

Importantly, this comment highlights how a racialised understanding of a particular group has real consequences in terms of facilitating various processes of exclusion. Thus, the assumption that the Chinese are insular and independent is likely to have real

consequences in terms of how they are policed. This, in turn, re-emphasises the importance of investigating the construction of racialised sameness and difference. Investigating racialised meanings is a crucial part of determining and challenging racialised inequalities.

The above responses are also significant because they reveal that both black and white groups are negatively racialised in different ways which do not depend on the signifier of colour. In fact, the reference to white, negatively racialised groups indicates again that it is simplistic to refer straightforwardly to white people as if they constitute an homogeneous group. Thus, for example, the Irish are negatively racialised even though, as white people, they are in a position to categorise other black racialised groups. However, it is worth noting that they are also likely to be in a position to categorise other white, negatively racialised groups.

The custody officers also revealed their racialised understanding in other important ways. For example, the racialised notion that Britain is being 'swamped' by immigrants is well-known, particularly as a result of Margaret Thatcher's comment to this effect shortly before the 1979 general election (Barker, 1981:1-3). The custody officers revealed that this notion was integral to their understanding of the racialised composition of particular cities and districts.

*"'Cause there's some cities now where the balance is tipping towards whites beginning to be an ethnic minority. Its certainly a minority, you know. You go to Bradford or Leicester, somewhere like that". (Sgt. Clarke)*

*JB: Really? Are there many (Somalians) in Sheffield then?*

*SP: Oh yeah, there's loads. You know, down Greenhill, the flats.*

*JB: Yeah, I used to live down there.*

*SP: Well, that's horrendous down there. That's just a colony of them. (Sgt. Pearson)*

The reference to a 'colony' is significant because it infers that the area has been taken over and transformed by the recently arrived immigrant group. By implication, the previous, probably white, residents have been displaced and dispossessed. The same inference is evident in the following response.

*"I think that you could separate areas on the map of Sheffield and we could, say, get up as far as eighty or ninety per cent, possibly up to ninety per cent of people within this area come from a particular ethnic group". (Sgt. Grant)*

The custody officer then referred to two districts of Sheffield where this was apparently the case. However, according to the census statistics for these areas, white people constitute seventy-four and eighty-four per cent of the local population. As a result, the custody officers clearly demonstrated that, despite reliable evidence to the contrary, particular areas of Sheffield have been identified symbolically as being overwhelmingly 'black'. This reinforces the 'swamping' notion and, as various commentators have suggested, is likely to influence how these areas are policed (e.g. Gilroy, 1987; Solomos, 1988; Keith, 1993).

In addition to this, the following custody officers were keen to challenge the BJP's assertion that black people are disadvantaged in comparison with the white population.

*"You've got just as many disadvantaged white people, if not more, in the same situation as them. There's no disadvantage because they're black and in a minority. They're no more disadvantaged than a white person. I mean, you can say, yeah alright, that, comparative wise, there are far more white people in a better situation than them and you've got to agree because there's far more white people. But there's hell of a lot of black people who are in better positions than them as well". (Sgt. Snell)*

*SC: You're gonna start saying Irish, then what about Jews?*

*JB: Well, I assume they would be included. They're another group who've been ...*

*SC: But they've never been disadvantaged by English people. They've been disadvantaged by German people, you know. Lets face it, the majority of Jewish people that I know are very wealthy. They aren't disadvantaged. Point taken?*

*JB: Oh yeah, definitely. I mean, this is why I'm asking the question.*

*SC: We were ruled by the Romans at one time. We were all enslaved, we were.*

*JB: Yeah, that's true if you go back far enough.*

*SC: Yeah, as I say, if you go back far enough, the French came over and diffed us up nine hundred odd years ago". (Sgt. Clarke)*

The officers' perspective is important because it reveals three useful rhetorical devices for invalidating the claims of negatively racialised groups. First, relatively advantaged members of negatively racialised groups were referred to in order to question the assumption that the group as a whole is disadvantaged. Second, the past was confused with the present in order to suggest that the positively racialised white majority has

equal claim to the experience of disadvantage. Third, racialised disadvantage was regarded as a practise employed by other people.

The three combine to produce a denial of processes of racialisation and, ultimately, a rejection of the claims of the volunteers. However, the research findings presented above demonstrate that the custody officers' racialised understanding reflected the related assumptions of the volunteers. They articulated common misconceptions about negatively racialised groups, including inaccurate generalisations and questionable stereotypes. They also revealed a considerable lack of understanding regarding the processes of exclusion experienced by these groups.

The rest of this section assesses the strategies adopted by the volunteers for coping with the misguided perspectives of the positively racialised white population. They are included because they provide a useful reminder that racialised interpretations have direct consequences for individuals from negatively racialised groups within the context of their everyday social lives. They also demonstrate how the volunteers accommodate, negotiate and transform the racialised categorisations imposed by others. The first strategy, identified by the volunteers, is to educate white people by highlighting and challenging their mistaken racialised assumptions.

*"I'd rather they said something and said something really stupid so that they could be disabused of the idea, rather than kept their mouths shut and kept their opinions to themselves. Even if their opinions are so stupid as to be banal". (Diana)*

*"They're always asking me things and you might say something like 'I don't smoke or drink or eat pork' and they say 'do you not, why?'. So, they're learning about my religion and my culture through me telling them things. And, also, they know I'm involved with the BJP so they use me as a sort of point of reference. I tell them straight, 'you've got tunnel vision, you don't look around you. Or you just laugh and make fun of it'". (Jabir)*

The second strategy represents a more subtle form of direct challenge. The following detailed example reveals how one of the volunteers was able to negotiate and transform the racialised perspectives of others without explicitly referring to them.

*"I walked into this pub. As soon as I walked in, there were five white blokes standing at the bar, and I could hear them saying 'look at that black bastard over there. What does he think he's doing, coming in here?' So, I bought a drink and I went and stood over by them and I put my drink down next to theirs. I made a point of doing it. Then, I took out a cigarette and said 'have you got a light?'. You should have seen*

*their faces. But one of them gave me a light and then I started talking to them. 'I'm from Sheffield, I've come to meet a friend of mine'. And, by the time I left, it was 'see you Kevin, have a good time'". (Kevin)*

Thus, through his actions, this volunteer disabused racialised ideas about himself. This type of challenge was also understood to be part of the volunteers' role at the BJP. The volunteers explained how, during the course of their voluntary work, they potentially transformed the racialised understanding of the custody officers.

*"People like Majid (the co-ordinator) coming in and them saying 'this is Majid. He's black and he's alright so, maybe, our stereotypes need a little bit of changing' Now, it shouldn't have to be that but because the volunteers are going down there and showing themselves counter to the stereotypes that the police will have ... that might help to change things". (Matthew)*

*"By setting an example in saying not all black people are the same. Because, I mean, these things are attached to black people. A lot of people saying they're all bad and that. So, if we're doing everything by the books and everything and being positive about it". (Anne)*

The final strategy identified by the volunteers is, to a considerable extent, fatalistic. The following response is quoted at length because it refers to both racialised labelling and the meaning of that label in terms of the difference it has made to the volunteer's life. It is perhaps one of most poignant comments recorded during the course of the research.

*"If people want to call me, you know, Asian, black, Paki, I say 'thanks very much', you know. I really like it because you suddenly realise that none of this makes any difference. In the beginning, when I was at school, and I was called names 'Paki, Paki, black and Asian' and all that, got bullied and, you know, you get upset about it. But, there comes a certain time in your life when none of this really makes any difference. You know, you think they can call me what they want, if that makes them happy, then let them call it me. You know, it doesn't make any difference to me, you know, if nobody gives me work, a job. I'm the particular type of person, I don't bother, I'm not concerned. Although I know the problem exists and I like to help other people". (Amjid)*

This volunteer was therefore reconciled to the racialised nature of the social world in which he lives and, as a result, rejected the possibility of negotiating and transforming the racialised categorisations imposed on him.

In conclusion, this section has investigated how a positively racialised white majority was understood to categorise negatively racialised groups. It has revealed that

the majority of white people were thought to adopt various illogical notions, crude generalisations and negative stereotypes to perpetuate and reinforce processes of racialisation. These were shown to be based on the construction of racialised similarities and differences which were not thought to be determined necessarily by the skin-colour signifier. It was demonstrated that the interviews with the custody officers provided evidence to support the volunteers' understanding. Thus, the section has indicated the internal inconsistencies and nonsensical nature of racialised categorisations. Despite this, it was stressed that these categorisations have real consequences for those who are categorised in terms of perpetuating processes of exclusion. As a result, the section also investigated the various coping strategies adopted by the volunteers in order to accommodate, negotiate and transform the racialised categorisations which affect their lives.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the volunteers' understanding of the meaning of 'race' within the context of their everyday social lives in general. It has been argued that the volunteers articulated an internally defined, core racialised identity based on shared culture and shared institutions. In this case, there is little movement across the racialised boundary which separates who is included in and excluded from the particular racialised group. In fact, the volunteers did not identify any racialised differences between members of the group which could lead to such movement.

Likewise, the volunteers understood the inclusive term 'black' to represent a peripheral identity based on shared positional interests only. It arises from the external categorisations imposed by others and is strictly an optional response to processes of racialisation. Defining oneself as 'black' in these terms is therefore inevitably conditional and thus movement across the related boundary is much more common. Importantly, racialised differences between members are concealed or ignored in order to highlight an apparent similarity based on the racialised signifier of skin colour. A perceived, fixed racialised boundary separating all black people from all white people was shown to underpin this understanding.

By highlighting the heterogeneous nature of both blackness and whiteness, the chapter demonstrated that movement across the black-white boundary is also inevitable due to the complexity of racialised categorisation. It has been argued that skin colour is

but one of many racialised signifiers and that being defined as 'black' is contestable to some extent. As a result, prioritising the black-white binary opposition is part of a common sense understanding of the meaning of 'race' and does not enhance a sociological understanding of processes of racialisation. Particularly, it fails to consider the experiences and interests of white, negatively racialised groups.

In fact, the black-white boundary, it has been argued, leads to the misconception that being categorised as 'black' is synonymous with having a 'black' experience. Thus, there exists a level at which those individuals who are not categorised as 'white' are assumed to share identical experiences and interests. This was the inaccurate assumption which enabled the BJP to defend its adoption of the inclusive term 'black'. However, it has been shown clearly that there can be no adequate, operational black perspective because, unsurprisingly, there is no evidence to indicate that the racialised identity of black racialised groups is essentially different from that of white, negatively racialised groups. In short, there is no essential black identity even though the BJP's aims and objectives suggest otherwise.

Additionally, this chapter has revealed that racialised identities never remain fixed and unchallenged. Through their understanding of the meaning of 'race', the volunteers demonstrated how the racialisation of identity is always a process of accommodation, negotiation and transformation involving both group identification and social categorisation. In contrast to the post-modernists, the chapter therefore presented evidence to suggest that the ability to choose a racialised identity is inherently and inevitably limited regardless of an individual's racialised origins and characteristics.

Finally, it has been argued that essentialist notions of sameness and difference persist and manifest themselves in a variety of racialised generalisations and stereotypes. Although the chapter focused on their meaning, it included evidence to highlight the consequences in terms of their contribution to processes of racialised exclusion.



## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion: An Evaluation of the Research**

In the light of the research findings reported in the main body of the thesis, this final chapter considers further the three main areas of research included: volunteering among black people, racialised identity and criminal justice. It will explain how this study has contributed to sociological knowledge covering each of these areas.

#### **8.1 The BJP: an evaluation of a black voluntary organisation**

A central aim of my research was to examine how 'race' was mobilised and acted on in the BJP, a voluntary sector organisation. Research in this area was necessary because the continuing expansion of the voluntary sector, together with cumulative evidence of racialised discrimination and disadvantage, means that black voluntary organisations have an increasingly important part to play in meeting the specific requirements of the black population. The research was of direct relevance to policy because it identified the factors needed for a successful collective response.

It was established in Chapter One that the black voluntary sector is a highly neglected area of sociological study. Very little is known about how a collective response is possible among black people. For example, commentators have been criticised for their extremely precarious assumption that being black automatically guarantees unity (Miles, 1984; Goldberg, 1992; Ware, 1992). The research was therefore directly relevant to a key area of sociological enquiry because it examined volunteering as a form of the mobilisation of 'race'.

My research has established clearly how a collective response was possible in the specific context of one black voluntary organisation, the BJP. It has revealed that evaluating the BJP's apparent success was as much about determining the success with which it managed its independent image, as a black voluntary organisation dependent on the financial and practical support of statutory organisations, as it was about determining the extent to which it realised its aims and objectives. Importantly, the research has identified how the project attempted to balance the needs and interests of local black people with those of key statutory organisations. As a result, the research has confirmed

that the project's self-proclaimed independence as an organisation in the voluntary sector was highly questionable. This has wider implications because it suggests strongly that the independence of a voluntary organisation is always, at least, partly illusory if it cannot continue to function without the financial and practical support of statutory organisations.

It was explained that the project secured the support of key statutory organisations through a process of legitimation which reflected the wider social, economic and political context of the 1980s. Specifically, the project adopted the language of reform and redistribution which characterised institutional policy following the urban disturbances in the early part of the decade. In fact, its aims and objectives reflected the policies of both the probation service and the police. Thus, the formation of the BJP was seen to have specific benefits for these organisations. Together with the development of inter-agency co-operation and the expansion of the voluntary sector, this ensured that statutory endorsement of the project was forthcoming. These research findings therefore verified that the project acted on the basis of the racialised agenda of appropriate statutory organisations in order to begin addressing the needs and interests of local black people.

It has also been argued that the BJP mobilised 'race' by adopting what was defined in the thesis as the black perspective. This, it was revealed, encompassed an imagined black community based on shared experiences and interests. The black perspective was a form of moderated essentialism because it ultimately presupposed an essential black identity that excluded whites. The idea of an essential black identity was shown to contradict the view that blackness is socially and politically constructed to privilege an imagined white community. As a result, it was argued that notions of blackness contain significant internal contradictions. In particular, it revealed that there is no means of distinguishing between a black organisation that adheres to the key principles of the black perspective and one articulating a rhetorical commitment to furthering the needs and interests of an imagined black community.

This has very important, practical implications for the ways in which 'race' is mobilised and acted on in the voluntary sector because it demonstrates the difficulties confronted by black voluntary organisations when attempting to meet the needs of black people. If the notion of an essential black identity is rejected, these organisations are compelled to define both their target group more specifically and the related, specific

processes of racialisation they aim to challenge. Crucially, this ensures that rhetoric is more easily identifiable from realisable aims and objectives. However, it also increases the likelihood that the needs of specific sections of the black population are neglected. This is particularly the case if, like the BJP, the organisation attempts to secure institutional support by reflecting the policy agenda of appropriate statutory organisations. Additionally, the organisation is much less likely to secure institutional support if it does not incorporate the general interests of a broadly conceived target group.

Consequently, my research has highlighted an important new area for future investigation. How do those organisations with a far more specific remit than the BJP mobilise and act upon 'race'? Do they still incorporate the political agenda of statutory organisations in order to secure their support or are their aims and objectives more autonomously defined? Do their aims and objectives in any way reflect a black perspective based on a form of moderated essentialism? If so, how do they justify their specific focus to both black people and statutory organisations? These questions can only be addressed by conducting in-depth, qualitative research of appropriate organisations. By placing the understanding of key individuals in these organisations at the centre of such an investigation, the meaning of 'race' can more satisfactorily be established. Particularly, the shared basis of racialised group identification can be determined in order to consider the precise reasons for a successful collective response.

Finally, my research identified clearly how the project maintained its independent facade by careful management of its image. This involved promoting itself as an advocate and intermediary for black people rather than as a 'community representative'. However, this self-defined role failed to overcome difficulties arising from an adherence to the notion of an imagined black community with common needs and interests. As a result, a key tension existed because the project identified a need to secure the trust and views of this community whilst insisting that it only responded to those individuals who specifically requested assistance. Overall, this was an extremely significant research finding because it suggested that the distinction between a representative and an advocate is less clear-cut than is usually claimed by voluntary organisations.

Having summarised how the BJP mobilised and acted on 'race' at an organisational level, it is pertinent to summarise how it secured a collective response among its diverse body of volunteers. My research confirmed that, paradoxically, an

under-developed volunteer culture at the project facilitated unity among the volunteers. Potentially conflicting perspectives arising from the volunteers' diverse racialised backgrounds were absent specifically because they shared only a broad orientation towards the project's general aim of challenging racialised inequalities, rather than a commitment to its job-related objectives. Thus, a perceived, symbolic sense of affinity among black people prevented the volunteers from considering the inevitable, racialised differences between them. Additionally, the research verified that the project's management did not actively pursue the potential to develop a volunteer culture. This had a strategic benefit because, as a result of their limited involvement within any management fora, the volunteers had little opportunity to assess the project's claim of independence.

In terms of its wider relevance, this research finding indicated that successfully retaining a large body of volunteers in no way implies the existence of a highly developed volunteer culture. It also suggested that unity within a black voluntary organisation incorporating volunteers from diverse racialised backgrounds is guaranteed only if there is little contact between them. This begs the question of how far unity is possible if the development of a volunteer culture is explicitly encouraged. Again, further research is required to assess such a situation.

The research findings regarding the various characteristics of the volunteers were also of much-needed, direct relevance to policy. Contrary to the commonsensical assumption regarding black people's reasons for volunteering, the volunteers' racialised identity did not straightforwardly influence their decision to volunteer. Specifically, benefiting other black people did not have to be an initial reason for volunteering in order for volunteers to comprehend the apparent value of the project. In addition to this, the research findings questioned the usefulness of defining volunteers according to extremely general categorisations such as middle class and working class. For example, it was revealed that, even though the propensity to volunteer increased with a middle class socio-economic status, there were significant differences between those volunteers included in this category. Thus, research that has measured the characteristics of volunteers in this way has inevitably provided a partial understanding of the background and reasons for volunteering of those surveyed.

In summary, my research has contributed to a sociological understanding of how 'race' is mobilised and acted on in the voluntary sector. It has dismissed the idea that

being black automatically ensures unity and has instead determined the factors which facilitated a viable, collective response at the BJP. By doing so, it has clearly demonstrated how the project successfully claimed to prioritise the needs and interests of black people whilst securing the support of relevant statutory organisations.

## 8.2 Racialised identity

The sociological study of 'race' and racism has paid inadequate attention to the ways in which social identity is racialised. Theorists who have addressed this neglect have tended to focus mainly on processes of racialisation at the structural level (e.g. Gilroy, 1987; Small, 1994). However, there is a distinct lack of understanding regarding the ways in which the racialisation of identity contributes to racialised outcomes at both the individual and institutional level. This thesis drew on theories of ethnicity within social anthropology in order to demonstrate the importance of studying racialised identity. Specifically, it revealed that, by examining the understanding of those who are both positively and negatively racialised, a better understanding of processes of racialisation can be obtained.

It was confirmed that a comprehensive sociological understanding of racialised identity is only possible if its formation is regarded as a dynamic process whereby similarities and differences are taken to be of equal importance. Thus, the formation of racialised identity must be examined as a matter of both internal identification with a group and external categorisation by others (see Jenkins, 1994:1996). The research therefore revealed that the post-modernist focus on difference and diversity occurs at the expense of considering the inevitable importance of constructed similarities in the formation of social identity. It also revealed that post-modernists have been mistaken in over-emphasising the extent to which individuals are able to choose their social identity.

My research has also highlighted the heterogeneous nature of blackness and whiteness. Crucially, a key research finding was that prioritising the binary opposition of black-white simply replicates a common sense interpretation of the meaning of 'race' and does not contribute to a sociological understanding. The distinction between black and white simply represents one dimension of racialised identity and there is no theoretical or conceptual foundation for its centrality in explaining the racialised social world. It was established that its misplaced significance has resulted in a failure to examine the situation of 'non-black', negatively racialised groups.

In fact, this has been a consistent failure of British 'race relations' sociology which has focused almost exclusively on post-second world war immigration and thus black racialised groups. By examining the meaning of blackness, the research therefore reinforced the equal importance of studying the construction of whiteness. In particular, the research findings suggested that theories of the meaning of 'race' would benefit from establishing how and why particular groups of white people are negatively racialised. There is ample opportunity for future research in this area.

However, my research did explain why the BJP was able to use the term 'black' inclusively to refer to all of those groups who do not fit the socially constructed norm of whiteness. In doing so, it revealed that the research respondents of Asian origin accepted the term to denote an optional community of positional interests. Modood has argued that the term black cannot be applied to Asians because it subordinates their interests to those of African-Caribbeans and represents a form of social categorisation only (e.g. Modood, 1990). By distinguishing between a core and peripheral identity, my research revealed that, within the BJP, 'black' was, in fact, thought to be acceptable as a peripheral identification which can be mobilised to further the positional interests of diverse racialised groups. As a result, the Asian volunteers perceived a strategic advantage in labelling themselves accordingly. This indicated that Modood's explicit rejection of the term does not, as he has suggested, straightforwardly reflect the views of Asian people.

Similarly, the research established the enduring nature of the popular conception that being British is synonymous with being identified as 'white'. The distinction between a practical affiliation and a symbolic identification with Britain linked the related understanding of the volunteers. They refused to identify Britain primarily as their symbolic 'home' and, instead, acknowledged their British citizenship more forcefully. The volunteers' understanding reflected Paul Gilroy's argument that discourses of 'race' and nation are closely intertwined in ideas of Britishness (Gilroy, 1987:68-9). However, they did not reject the idea of being British per se. Rather, they could not identify with populist, racialised conceptions of what it means to be British.

The aims and objectives of the BJP were therefore thought to reflect the entitlements of black people as British citizens. The BJP was regarded as a means of challenging processes of exclusion in order to gain access to the basic rights attributed to the British population in general. This research finding was in keeping with those of

Field and Gaskell who argued that the urban disturbances reflected a desire to challenge racialised exclusion in order to gain access to mainstream British social life (Field, 1984; Gaskell, 1986). The BJP did not therefore signify a radical rejection of all that it means to be British.

Additionally, it was revealed that racialised identity never remains fixed or unchallenged. Even those racialised categorisations which appear to be entrenched and immovable are always negotiable. Thus, the research has reinforced that a racialised social world is by no means inevitable. By exploring how dimensions of racialised sameness and difference operate at different levels, it has also suggested a way of investigating how racialised identity is accommodated, negotiated and transformed. In particular, it emphasised the importance of studying the extent of movement across the racialised boundaries which separate who is included in and excluded from any particular racialised group.

In summary, my focus on racialised identity was useful because it emphasised that processes of exclusion occur specifically because identity is racialised. This provides a means of over-coming the much criticised tendency to reify racisms as if they are tangible entities to be identified and isolated. It is not by determining whether or not a particular individual or institution is racist but by determining why a racialised outcome is likely that the racialised social world can be challenged. In short, what are the processes that contribute to this outcome and how are these processes decided by the racialised understanding of relevant individuals? This inevitably involves considering how, and for what purpose, notions of racialised similarities and differences are employed in specific social situations.

### **8.3 Criminal justice**

The criminal justice aspect of my research concentrated on two themes. First, it investigated the nature of the relationship between black people and the police and, second, it examined the extent to which processes of racialisation influence police custody in particular. The relevant research findings will now be evaluated together.

The thesis presented an in-depth analysis of how black people and the police construct an understanding of their relationship. This was significant in that it successfully addressed the limitations of more common studies which have tended to focus on attitudes only. Specifically, the thesis criticised previous research findings that

black people's understanding of the relationship is a consequence of 'rumour and hearsay' within an apparent black community. Rather, by revealing the nature and content of the volunteers' stories, it was demonstrated that they understood the relationship to be racialised as a result of personal knowledge incorporating three central, assumed truths. This research finding was significant because personal knowledge represents a much more resilient and difficult to disprove basis for understanding than rumour and hearsay. Thus, police initiatives to improve the relationship should not under-estimate the enduring, resulting argument that policing is inherently and unavoidably racialised.

These research findings also challenged the pre-occupation within criminology to focus on the search for pure discrimination. By placing the understanding of relevant individuals at the centre of the analysis, they provided a more detailed understanding of how processes of racialisation occur. For example, it was revealed that the custody officers presented their role in such a way so as to provide no option of considering the possibility that policing is racialised. Thus, despite acknowledging that the experience of police custody is particularly disturbing for black suspects, they evidently failed to endorse and actively support the project's HOAS. By ignoring the arguably misplaced search for pure discrimination, the research therefore demonstrated how police custody is likely to be racialised even though the officers insisted that 'race' is irrelevant to their work. In short, it revealed that the officers shared a racialised understanding of black suspects, and black people in general, in spite of their insistence to the contrary. Again, this has implications for police 'racism awareness' training because it suggests that those who are being trained currently regard it as being of little, if any, value. However, as the research also demonstrated, 'race relations' is still defined as a specialist function rather than an integral part of operational policing. The custody officers' view of the lack of significance of 'race' was therefore reinforced by its status at the institutional level.

In terms of its wider significance, my research has emphasised the enduring significance of the police occupational culture, more than a decade after the last comparable research was published on this subject (Cain, 1973; Holdaway, 1983). This is particularly important because the research revealed detailed empirical evidence to support previous research findings that custody officers are manifestly not independent from other police officers (McConville et al, 1991). In fact, this particular group of police officers has not been researched in such detail before. The research therefore



drew attention to the way in which police custody personifies the unequal relationship of power that exists between the police and those that are being policed. Thus, the officers' lack of independence had serious consequences as their discovered partiality inevitably affected the outcome of both police custody and the overall criminal justice process.

This means that, ultimately, a racialised outcome to the process is unavoidable because police custody is racialised. In principle, the HOAS represented a way of independently checking that the custody officers carried out their duties according to their codes of practice. However, in keeping with the findings of a research study which assessed the effectiveness of police lay visitors schemes, the research revealed that the role of the volunteer was necessary yet successfully restricted by the custody officers (Kemp & Morgan, 1996). As a result, the research questioned the continued viability of a scheme which met the policy objectives of the police and the probation service whilst evidently failing to achieve its potential in protecting the interests of black suspects. In summary, investigating the question of who benefited most from the HOAS uncovered a deeply unsettling answer.

Further, my research presented evidence to suggest that, in the long term, the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act has not ensured that the rights of the suspect are protected. In the case of police custody, the police cannot be relied on to police themselves and therefore the relations of power that characterise police custody still need to be altered in favour of the suspect. The research revealed that implementing a HOAS does not provide a satisfactory solution. In fact, it indicated that it is only by reducing the amount of control exercised by the custody officer that a more equitable solution can be found. This is more likely to be achieved by implementing a universal, statutory initiative rather than a piecemeal, voluntary initiative with no supporting foundation in law.

Although my research determined individual cases where the BJP's volunteers had provided a worthwhile service to black suspects, it established that the project was unable to satisfactorily meet its aim of challenging racialised discrimination within the criminal justice process. This was not solely a limitation of the project. Rather, it highlighted the importance of encouraging those involved at all levels of criminal justice to acknowledge both the centrality of various processes of racialisation in determining inequitable outcomes and their professional responsibility for challenging them.

Overall then, my research has contributed to sociological knowledge about volunteering among black people, racialised identity and criminal justice. It has reinforced the importance of studying how individuals perceive the meaning of 'race' in everyday social contexts. This, it has been argued, facilitates a better understanding of processes of racialisation. The thesis has therefore presented a sociological interpretation of the racialised social world.

## References

- Albrecht, H. (1991) 'Ethnic Minorities, Crime and Criminal Justice in Europe', in F. Heidensohn and M. Farrell (eds) *Crime in Europe*, London: Routledge.
- Allan, G. (1991) 'Qualitative Research' in G. Allan and C. Skinner (eds) *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*, London: The Falmer Press.
- Andersen, M.L. (1993) 'Studying Across Difference: Race, Class and Gender in Qualitative Research' in J.H. Stanfield II (ed.) *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*, California: Sage.
- Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso.
- Aye-Maung, N. and Mirrlees-Black, C. (1994) *Racially Motivated Crime: A British Crime Survey Analysis*, Home Office Research and Planning Unit Paper 82, London: HMSO.
- Baldwin, J.D. (1986) *George Herbert Mead: A Unifying Theory for Sociology*, London: Sage.
- Barker, M. (1981) *The New Racism*, London: Junction Books.
- Barth, F. (1969) 'Introduction' in F. Barth (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Bauman, Z. (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Becker, H.S. (1970) *Sociological Work: Method and Substance*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.
- Benyon, J. (ed.) (1984) *Scarman and After: Essays reflecting on Lord Scarman's report, the riots and their aftermath*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Benyon, J. (1986) *A Tale of Failure: Race and Policing*, Policy Papers in Ethnic Relations 3, Coventry: University of Warwick, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations.
- Benyon, J. and Bourn, C. (eds) (1986) *The Police: Powers, Procedures and Proprieties*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Berger, P.L. and Kellner, H. (1981) *Sociology Re-Interpreted: An Essay on Method and Vocation*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Bhat, A.E., Carr-Hill, R. and Ohri, S. (1988) *Britain's Black Population: A New Perspective*, 2nd edition, Aldershot: Gower Publishing.
- Blom-Cooper, L. and Drabble, R. (1982) 'Note: Police Perception of Crime: Brixton and the Operational Response', *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 22, pp. 184-87.
- Bowling, B. (1990) 'Conceptual and Methodological Problems in Measuring 'Race' Differences in Delinquency: A Reply to Marianne Junger', *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 30, pp. 483-92.
- Brown, D. (1989) *Detention at the Police Station under the PACE Act 1984*, Home Office Research Study 104, London: HMSO.
- Bryman, A. (1988) *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, London: Unwin Hyman.

- Burgess, R.G. (1984) *Into the Field: An Introduction to Field Research*, London: Routledge.
- Cain, M. (1973) *Society and the Policeman's Role*, London: RKP.
- Cashmore, E. and McLaughlin, E. (eds) (1991) *Out of Order? Policing Black People*, London: Routledge.
- Cashmore, E. and Troyna, B. (eds) (1982) *Black Youth in Crisis*, London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1982) *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 1970s Britain*, London: Hutchinson & Co.
- Cohen, A.P. (1985) *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Chichester: Ellis Horwood.
- Cohen, P. (1979) 'Policing the Working Class City' in B. Fine, R. Kinsey, J. Lea, S. Picciotto and J. Young (eds) *Capitalism and the Rule of Law*, London: Hutchinson and Co.
- Cohen, P. (1988) 'The Perversions of Inheritance: Studies in the Making of Multi-Racist Britain' in P. Cohen and H.S. Bains (eds) *Multi-Racist Britain*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Cohen, P. and Bains, H.S. (1988) *Multi-Racist Britain*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Cohen, R. (1994) *Frontiers of Identity: The British and the Others*, Harlow: Longman Group.
- Commission for Racial Equality (1992) *Juvenile Cautioning: Ethnic Monitoring in Practice*, London: Commission for Racial Equality.
- Cook, D. (1993) 'Racism, Citizenship and Exclusion' in D. Cook and B. Hudson (eds) *Racism and Criminology*, London: Sage.
- Cook, D. and Hudson, B. (eds) (1993) *Racism and Criminology*, London: Sage.
- Cornell, S. (1996) 'The Variable Ties that Bind: Content and Circumstance in Ethnic Processes', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 19, pp. 265-89.
- Coser, L.A. (1977) *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Cross, M. and Keith, M. (1993) 'Racism and the Postmodern City' in M. Cross and M. Keith (eds) *Racism, the City and the State*, London: Routledge.
- Crow, I. (1987) 'Black People and Criminal Justice in the UK', *The Howard Journal*, vol. 26, pp. 303-14.
- Crow, I. and Cove, J. (1984) 'Ethnic Minorities in the Courts', *Criminal Law Review*, pp. 413-17.
- Dey, I. (1993) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists*, London: Routledge.
- Dholakia, N. and Sumner, M. (1993) 'Research, Policy and Racial Justice' in D. Cook and B. Hudson (eds) *Racism and Criminology*, London: Sage.
- Donald, J. and Rattansi, A. (eds) (1992) 'Race', *Culture and Difference*, London: Sage.
- Dyer, R. (1988) 'White', *Screen*, vol. 29, pp. 45-64.
- Fetterman, D.M. (1989) *Ethnography Step by Step*, London: Sage.
- Field, S. (1984) *The Attitudes of Ethnic Minorities*, Home Office Research Study 80, London: HMSO.

- Fitzgerald, M. (1993) *Ethnic Minorities and the Criminal Justice System*, London: HMSO.
- Fontana A. and Frey, J.H. (1994) 'Interviewing: The Art of Science' in N.K Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, London: Sage.
- Gans, H.J. (1979) 'Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 2, pp. 1-20.
- Gaskell, G (1986) 'Black Youth and the Police', *Policing*, vol. 2, pp. 26-35.
- Genovese, E. (1974) *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, New York: Pantheon.
- Gerard, D. (1985) 'Values and Voluntary Work' in M. Abrams and D. Gerard (eds) *Values and Social Change in Britain*, London: MacMillan.
- Giddens, A. (1971) *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1977) *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, London: Hutchinson and Co.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gilbert, N. (1993) 'Research, Theory and Method' in N. Gilbert (ed.) *Researching Social Life*, London: Sage.
- Gill, M.L. and Mawby, R.I. (1990) *Volunteers in the Criminal Justice System*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Gilroy, P. (1982) 'Police and Thieves' in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 1970s Britain*, London: Hutchinson and Co.
- Gilroy, P. (1987) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack (the Cultural Politics of Race and Nation)*, London: Unwin Hyman.
- Gilroy, P. (1990) 'The End of Anti-Racism' in W. Ball and J. Solomos (eds), *Race and Local Politics*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Gilroy, P. and Lawrence, E. (1988) 'Two-Tone Britain: White and Black Youth and the Politics of Anti-Racism' in P. Cohen and H.S. Bains (eds), *Multi-Racist Britain*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, London: Penguin.
- Goldberg, D.T. (1992) 'The Semantics of Race', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 15, pp. 543-69.
- Goldberg, D.T. (1993) *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gordon, P. (1983) *White Law: Racism in the Police, Courts and Prisons*, London: Pluto Press.
- Gordon, P. (1990) *Racial Violence and Harassment*, London: The Runnymede Trust.
- Gutman, H.C. (1976) *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925*, New York: Vintage.
- Gutzmore, C. (1983) 'Capital, 'Black Youth' and Crime', *Race And Class*, vol. 25, pp. 13-30.

- Hall, S. (1978) 'Racism and Reaction' in Commission for Racial Equality, *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain*, London: CRE.
- Hall, S. (1980) 'Race Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance' in UNESCO, *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*, Paris: UNESCO.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts, B. (1978) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*, London: MacMillan.
- Hall, S. and Jacques, M. (eds) (1989) *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Haringey REC, *Aiding and Abetting? A Review of the Haringey REC's Police Liason Subcommittee 1974-1991*, London: Haringey REC.
- Harris, R. (1996) 'Openings, Absences and Omissions: Aspects of the Treatment of 'Race', Culture and Ethnicity in British Cultural Studies', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 10, pp. 334-44.
- Hedley, R. and Davis-Smith, J. (eds) (1992) *Volunteering and Society: Principles and Practice*, London: NCVO.
- Herrnstein, R.J. and Murray, C. (1994) *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, New York: Free Press.
- Hiro, D. (1973) *Black British/White British*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Holdaway, S. (ed.) (1979) *The British Police*, London: Edward Arnold.
- Holdaway, S. (1983) *Inside the British Police: A Force at Work*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hollinger, R. (1994) *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*, London: Sage.
- Holmes, C. (1991) *A Tolerant Country?*, London: Faber and Faber.
- Home Office (1981) *Racial Attacks*, Report of a Home Office Study, London: HMSO.
- Home Office (1983) *Community and Race Relations Training for the Police*, Report of the Police Training Council Working Party, London: HMSO.
- Home Office (1985) *Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (S.66) Codes of Practice*, London: HMSO.
- Home Office (1991a) *1991 Census*, London: HMSO.
- Home Office (1991b) *Organising Supervision and Punishment in the Community: A Decision Document*, London: HMSO.
- Home Office (1994a) *Race and the Criminal Justice System*, Publication under Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, London: HMSO.
- Home Office (1994b) *Racial Attacks and Harassment*, 3rd Report of the Home Affairs Committee, London: HMSO.
- Hood, R. (1992) *Race and Sentencing: A Study in the Crown Court*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- hooks, b. (1991) *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, London: Turnaround.
- hooks, b. (1992) *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, London: South End.
- Hornsby-Smith, M. (1993) 'Gaining Access' in N. Gilbert (ed.) *Researching Social Life*, London: Sage.

- Humphry, D. (1972) *Police Power and Black People*, London: Panther Books.
- Husbands, C.T. (1994) 'Crises of National Identity as the 'New Moral Panics': Political Agenda Setting about the Definitions of Nationhood', *New Community*, vol. 20, pp. 191-206.
- Jackson, H. (1985) *Recruiting Volunteers*, Home Office Research and Planning Unit Paper 31, London: HMSO.
- Jackson, H. and Field, S. (1989) *Race, Community Groups and Service Delivery*, Home Office Research Study 113, London: HMSO.
- Jackson, P. (1988) 'Street Life: The Politics of Carnival', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 6, pp. 213-27.
- Jackson, P. (1991) 'The Crisis of Representation and the Politics of Position', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 9, pp. 131-34.
- Jefferson, T. (1991) 'Discrimination, Disadvantage and Police Work' in E. Cashmore and E. McLaughlin (eds) *Out of Order? Policing and Black People*, London: Routledge.
- Jefferson, T. (1993) 'The Racism of Criminalization: Policing and the Reproduction of the Criminal Other' in L.R. Gelsthorpe (ed.) *Minority Ethnic Groups in the Criminal Justice System*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, Institute of Criminology.
- Jefferson, T. and Walker, M. (1993) 'Attitudes to the Police of Ethnic Minorities in a Provincial City', *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 33, pp. 251-66.
- Jenkins, R. (1987) 'Doing Research into Discrimination: Problems of Method, Interpretation and Ethics' in Wenger, G.C. (ed.) *The Research Relationship: Practice and Politics in Social Policy*, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Jenkins, R. (1994) 'Rethinking Ethnicity: Identity, Categorization and Power', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 17, pp. 197-223.
- Jenkins, R. (1996) *Social Identity*, London: Routledge.
- John, G. (1970) *Race in the Inner City: A Report from Handsworth*, London: The Runnymede Trust.
- Jones, C. (1991) 'Qualitative Interviewing' in Allan, G. and Skinner, C. (eds) *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*, London: The Falmer Press.
- Jones, T. (1993) *Britain's Ethnic Minorities*, London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Jones, T., Newburn, T. and Smith, D.J. (1994) *Democracy and Policing*, London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Joshua, H. and Wallace, T. (1983) *To Ride the Storm: The 1980 Bristol 'Riot' and the State*, London: Heinemann.
- Keith, M. (1992) 'Angry Writing: (Re)presenting the Unethical World of the Ethnographer', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 10, pp. 551-68.
- Keith, M. (1993) *Race, Riots and Policing: Lore and Disorder in a Multi-Racist Society*, London: UCL Press.
- Keith, M. and Murji, K. (1990) 'Reifying Crime, Legitimising Racism: Policing, LAs and Left Realism' in W. Ball and J. Solomos (eds) *Race and Local Politics*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.

- Kemp, C. and Morgan, R. (1996) *Behind the Front Counter: Lay Visitors in Police Stations*, Bristol and Bath Centre for Criminal Justice, London: HMSO.
- Kimmel, A.J. (1988) *Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research*, London: Sage.
- Landau, S.F. (1981) 'Juveniles and the Police: Who is Charged Immediately and Who is Referred to the Juvenile Bureau', *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 21, pp. 27-46.
- Layton-Henry, Z. (1984) *The Politics of Race in Britain*, London: George and Allen Unwin.
- Lea, J. Young, J. (1993) *What is to be done about Law and Order? Crisis in the Nineties*, London: Pluto Press.
- Make a Difference Team (1995) *Make a Difference: An Outline of Volunteering Strategy for the UK*, London: NCVO.
- Manning, P.K. (1977) *Police Work: The Social Organization of Policing*, London: The MIT Press.
- Mason, D. (1994) 'On the Dangers of Disconnecting Race and Racism', *Sociology*, vol. 28, pp. 845-58.
- Mawby, R.I. (1991) 'Community Involvement in Criminal Justice: The Representativeness of Volunteers' in R. Reiner and M. Cross (eds) *Beyond Law and Order: Criminal Justice Policy and Politics in the 1990s*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- McConville, M. (1991) *The Case for the Prosecution*, London: Routledge.
- McConville, M. and Baldwin, J. (1982) 'The Role of Interrogation in Crime Discovery and Conviction', *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 22, pp. 165-75.
- Megill, A. (1985) *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mercer, K. (1994) *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge.
- Miles, R. (1984) 'Marxism versus the Sociology of Race Relations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 7, pp. 217-37.
- Miles, R. (1989) *Racism*, London: Routledge.
- Miles, R. (1993) *Racism After 'Race Relations'*, London: Routledge.
- Modood, T. (1988) 'Black, Racial Equality and Asian Identity', *New Community*, vol. 14, pp. 397-404.
- Modood, T. (1990) 'British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair', *Political Quarterly*, vol. 61, pp. 143-60.
- Modood, T. (1992) *Not Easy Being British: Colour, Culture and Citizenship*, Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
- Modood, T. (1994) 'Political Blackness and British Asians', *Sociology*, vol. 28, pp. 859-76.
- Moore, R. (1975) *Racism and Black Resistance in Britain*, London: Pluto Press.
- Morgan, R. and Smith, D.J. (eds) (1989) *Coming to Terms with Policing: Perspectives on Policy*, London: Routledge.



- Morse, J.M. (1991) 'Analyzing Unstructured Interviews Using the Macintosh Computer', *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 1, pp. 117-22.
- Moxon, D. (1988) *Sentencing Practice in the Crown Court*, Home Office Research Study 103, London: HMSO.
- NACRO (1989) *Race and Criminal Justice: A Way Forward*, London: NACRO.
- NACRO (1991) *Black People's Experience of Criminal Justice*, London: NACRO.
- Norris, C., Fielding, N., Kemp, C. and Fielding, J. (1992) 'Black and Blue: An Analysis of the Influence of Race on being Stopped by the Police', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 43, pp. 207-24.
- Nugent, N. and King, R. (1979) 'Ethnic Minorities, Scapegoating and the Extreme Right' in R. Miles and A. Phizacklea (eds) *Racism and Political Action in Britain*, London: RKP.
- Obaze, D. (1992) 'Black People and Volunteering' in R. Hedley and J. Davis-Smith (eds) *Volunteering and Society: Principles and Practice*, London: NCVO.
- Omi, M. and Winant, H. (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s*, London: Routledge.
- Pajaczkowska, C. and Young, L. (1992) 'Racism, Representation and Psychoanalysis' in J. Donald and A. Rattansi (eds) *Race, Culture and Difference*, London: Sage.
- Parry-Khan, L. (1988) *Management by Objectives in Probation*, Norwich: Social Work Monographs.
- Peach, C., Robinson, V. and Smith, S. (1981) *Ethnic Segregation in Cities*, London: Croom Helm.
- Pryce, K. (1986) *Endless Pressure: A Study of West Indian Life-Styles in Bristol*, Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- Punch, M. (1986) *The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork*, London: Sage.
- Rattansi, A. (1992) 'Changing the Subject? Racism, Culture and Education' in J. Donald and A. Rattansi (eds) *Race, Culture and Difference*, London: Sage.
- Reeves, F. (1983) *British Racial Discourse*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reiner, R. (1985) *The Politics of the Police*, Brighton: Wheatsheaf.
- Rex, J. and Moore, R. (1967) *Race, Community and Conflict: A Study of Sparkbrook*, London: Published for the Institute of Race Relations by Oxford University Press.
- Rock, P. (1986) *A View From the Shadows*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rose, G. (1982) *Deciphering Sociological Research*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Rose, H. (1991) 'Case Studies' in Allan, G. and Skinner, C. (eds) *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*, London: The Falmer Press.
- Runnymede Trust (1994a) *Racially Motivated Attacks and Harassment*, Submission to the Home Affairs Committee, London: The Runnymede Trust.
- Runnymede Trust (1994b) *Multi-Ethnic Britain: Facts and Trends*, Compiled for the conference on 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Challenges, Changes and Opportunities', University of Reading, 1994, London: The Runnymede Trust.

- Rutherford, J. (1990) 'A Place Called Home: Identity and the Cultural Politics of Difference' in J. Rutherford (ed.) *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Sanders, A. and Young, R. (1994) *Criminal Justice*, London: Butterworth and Co.
- Scarman, Lord (1986) *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders, 10-12 April 1981*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Shearing, C.D. and Erikson, R.V. (1991) 'Culture as Figurative Action', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 42, pp. 481-506.
- Silverman, J. (1993) 'Policing the Media' in L.R. Gelsthorpe (ed.) *Minority Ethnic Groups in the Criminal Justice System*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, Institute of Criminology.
- Simmel, G. (1971) 'The Problem of Sociology' in D.N. Levine (ed.) *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings of George Simmel*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sivanandan, A. (1982) *A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance*, London: Pluto Press.
- Sivanandan, A. (1990) *Communities of Resistance*, London: Verso.
- Skellington, R. and Morris, P. (1992) *'Race' in Britain Today*, London: Sage.
- Skogan, W. (1990) *The Police and the Public in England and Wales*, A British Crime Survey Report, Home Office Research Study 117, London: HMSO.
- Small, S. (1983) *Police and People in London II: A Group of Young Black People*, London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Small, S. (1994) *Racialised Barriers, The Black Experience in the United States and England in the 1980s*, London: Routledge.
- Smith, D.A., Visher, C.A. and Davidson, L.A. (1984) 'Equity and Discretionary Justice: The Influence of Race on Police Arrest Decisions', *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 75, pp. 234-49.
- Smith, D.J. and Gray, J. (1983) *Police and People in London IV: The Police in Action*, London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Smith, S.J. (1989) *The Politics of 'Race' and Residence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Solomos, J. (1988) *Black Youth, Racism and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Solomos, J. (1993) *Race and Racism in Britain*, 2nd edn, Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Solomos, J. (1993) 'Constructions of Black Criminality: Racialisation and Criminalisation in Perspective' in D. Cook and B. Hudson (eds) *Racism and Criminology*, London: Sage.
- Solomos, J. and Back, L. (1995) *Race, Politics and Social Change*, London: Routledge.
- Southgate, P. (1984) *Racism Awareness Training for the Police*, Home Office Research and Planning Unit Paper 29, London: HMSO.
- Southgate, P. and Crisp, D. (1992) *Public Satisfaction with Police Services*, Home Office Research and Planning Unit Paper 73, London: HMSO.

- Stevens, P. and Willis, C.F. (1979) *Race, Crime and Arrests*, Home Office Research Study 58, London: HMSO.
- Stevens, P. and Willis, C.F. (1981) *Ethnic Minorities and Complaints Against the Police*, Home Office Research and Planning Unit Paper 5, London: HMSO.
- Stone, R. (1986) 'Police Powers After the Act' in J. Benyon and C. Bourn (eds) *The Police: Powers, Procedures and Proprieties*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Stratta, E. (1990) 'A Lack of Consultation?', *Policing*, vol. 6, pp. 523-49.
- Strauss, A.L (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tuck, M. and Southgate, P. (1981) *Ethnic Minorities, Crime and Policing: A Survey of the Experiences of West Indians and Whites*, Home Office Research and Planning Unit Report, London: HMSO.
- Turner, B.S. (1990) *Theories of Modernity and Post-Modernity*, London: Sage.
- Van den Berghe, P.L. (1978) *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*, 2nd edn, Chichester: Wiley.
- Waddington, P.A.J. (1986) 'Mugging as a Moral Panic: A Question of Proportion', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 37, pp. 245-59.
- Walker, M.A., Jefferson, T. and Seneviratne, M. (1990) *Ethnic Minorities, Young People and the Criminal Justice System*, Sheffield: University of Sheffield, Centre for Criminological and Socio-Legal Studies.
- Walvin, J. (1984) *Passage to Britain*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Ware, V. (1992) *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, London: Verso.
- Waters, R. (1990) *Ethnic Minorities and the Criminal Justice System*, Aldershot: Avebury, Ashgate Publishing.
- Whyte, W.F. (1984) *Learning from the Field; A Guide from Experience*, London: Sage.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1968) *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Woodward, M.D. (1987) 'Voluntary Association Membership Among Black Americans: The Post-Civil Rights Era', *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 28, pp. 285-301.

## **Volunteer Interview Questions**

### **Volunteering: Personal**

1. Do you have a job?
2. How long have you been volunteering for the BJP?
3. How did you come to be involved in the BJP?
4. What made you finally decide to volunteer?
5. Had you thought of volunteering for any other organisations?
6. Did your ethnic origin/being black have anything to do with why you decided to volunteer?
7. Would you have volunteered for the project if it helped both black and white people?
8. What do you get out of volunteering? Why is it worthwhile? How do you think you are helping black people?

### **Volunteering: Other Volunteers**

9. How often do you see the other volunteers?
10. Did you know any of them before volunteering?
11. Have you made any new friends through volunteering?
12. Do you think the volunteers give each other help and support?
13. Is it useful for you all to meet up from time to time?
14. What are the main things you learnt from the training?
15. Did the training cover issues which related to black people or was it more general?
16. How did you feel about the trainers themselves? Would it have been better if they had been black?
17. How useful was the volunteer's information pack?
18. Following the training, were you confident that you could help people from the different ethnic groups?

### **Volunteering: The BJP**

19. Is the BJP what you expected it to be?
20. What in your opinion does the BJP help to do in Sheffield?
21. Does the BJP meet its aims and objectives?
22. How do you feel about the management committee's management of the project?
23. Do you think it's important for black people to have their own organisations? Is it important for black people to form their own organisations in order to get their voices heard?

### **HOAS Call-Outs**

24. Do you attend call-outs? How many have you dealt with? At what time of day do you get called out?
25. Do you remember any call-outs in particular? Tell me what happened.
26. How do you judge if a call-out has been successful?
27. How have you got on with the detainees? Do any cases stick in your mind?
28. Who are the detainees that you deal with? Is it easier if you are male?
29. Tell me about the custody officers. How have you got on with them? Do you think they've made your job easier or more difficult? Do you remember any officers in particular? Have they all been white? Does it make a difference if they are white and you are black?
30. In your role as a BJP volunteer, do you think that you in any way change how the custody officers regard black people in general? Could this help to change the relationship between the custody officers and the black people they meet during the course of their work?

### **Community and Identity**

31. Which ethnic group do you belong to?
32. As a volunteer, do you see yourself as representing the interests of your ethnic group in some way?
33. Thinking of other () people in Sheffield, what, if anything, do you have in common? What, if anything, brings you together as a group? Do you think of () people as making up a real community in Sheffield?
34. Are the different communities in Sheffield completely separate or do they have some things in common? Is it just the experience of racism that brings them together or is there something else?
35. Do you think some communities have more of a say in Sheffield than others?
36. When you talk about the 'black' community in Sheffield, who are you referring to? Is it OK to include all the different ethnic groups in this term? e.g. Irish
37. Is it OK for white people to volunteer and to attend call-outs?
38. Do the people that you help accept you as a volunteer even when they are from a different ethnic group to yourself?
39. Through your involvement in the BJP, have you learnt anything new about the other ethnic groups in Sheffield?
40. I'd like you to think of white people you know personally in Sheffield (maybe people who you work with or live near). How do you think they see your community? Do they see all the different ethnic groups this way?
41. Do you describe yourself as British? Do you think that, in this country, some people are thought of as being more British than others?

**Black People and the Police**

42. How do you see the relationship between black people and the police? How has this come about and who is responsible?
43. Can you give me some examples? Have you had any personal experiences of the police?
44. How do you know about the relationship? What are your main sources of information?
45. Do you think there are differences in the ways that the police treat black and white people?
46. Did your personal experiences play a part in your decision to volunteer?
47. How can the BJP help to improve the relationship? Has it helped already?
48. What other factors could help to improve the relationship?
  
49. Is there anything else you feel is important for me to know when writing the evaluation report? Is there anything else you would like to add to the topics we have discussed?

## **Management Committee Interview Questions**

### **Volunteering: Personal**

1. What do you do for a living?
2. How long have you been a member of the management committee?
3. How did you become involved with the BJP?
4. What finally made you decide to become a management committee member?
5. Do you volunteer for any other organisations?
6. Are you on the management committee of any other organisations?
7. Did your ethnic origin/being black have anything to do with why you became involved with the BJP?
8. Would you have become involved if the Project helped both black and white people?
9. Why is being a management committee member for the BJP worthwhile? What do you get out of it?
10. How do you think you are helping black people through your involvement?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add about your involvement with the BJP?

### **Volunteering: Other Volunteers**

12. How often do you see the other management committee members?
13. How often do you see the BJP volunteers?
14. Did you know any of the committee members or volunteers before your involvement with the Project?
15. Have you made any new acquaintances through volunteering?
16. Do you think the management committee members give each other help and support?
17. Do you think the management committee meets frequently enough?
18. Do you think the volunteers have an adequate say in the way the Project is organised?
19. Do you think the management committee has enough contact with the volunteers?
20. Have you trained as a volunteer? Have you attended any of the training sessions?
21. What are the main things you have learnt from the training?
22. How do you feel about the trainers? Would it be better if they are black as well?

### **Volunteering: The BJP**

23. What in your opinion does the BJP help to do in Sheffield?
24. Is it what you expected it to be?
25. What is the Project's main strength?
26. Does the Project meet its aims and objectives?
27. Do you think they need to be altered in any way?
28. How could the management committee improve its management of the BJP?
29. How do you see the Project developing over the next couple of years?
30. Do you think it's important for black people to have their own organisations? Is it important for black people to form their own organisations in order to get their voices heard?
31. How could the BJP have a greater impact in Sheffield?
32. Is there anything else you would like to add about the BJP as an organisation?

### **HOAS Call-Outs**

33. Do you attend call-outs? How many have you dealt with? At what time of day do you get called out?
34. Do you remember any call-outs in particular? Tell me what happened.
35. How do you judge if a call-out has been successful?
36. How have you got on with the detainees? Do any cases stick in your mind?
37. Who are the detainees that you deal with? Is it easier if you are male?
38. Tell me about the custody officers. How have you got on with them? Do you think they've made your job easier or more difficult? Do you remember any officers in particular? Have they all been white? Does it make a difference if they are white and you are black?
39. In your role as a BJP volunteer, do you think that you in any way change how the custody officers regard black people in general? Could this help to change the relationship between the custody officers and the black people they meet during the course of their work?
40. Is there anything else you would like to add about the call-outs?

### **Community and Identity**

41. Which ethnic group do you belong to?
42. As a representative of the BJP, do you see yourself as representing the interests of your ethnic group in some way?
43. Thinking of other ( ) people in Sheffield, what, if anything, do you have in common? What, if anything, brings you together as a group? Do you think of ( ) people as making up a real community in Sheffield?
44. Are the different communities in Sheffield completely separate or do they have some things in common? Is it just the experience of racism that brings them together or is there something else?



45. Do you think some communities have more of a say in Sheffield than others?
46. When you talk about the 'black' community in Sheffield, who are you referring to? Is it OK to include all the different ethnic groups in this term? e.g. Irish
47. Is it OK for white people to volunteer and to attend call-outs?
48. Through your involvement in the BJP, have you learnt anything new about the other ethnic groups in Sheffield?
49. I'd like you to think of white people you know personally in Sheffield (maybe people who you work with or live near). How do you think they see your community? Do they see all the different ethnic groups this way?
50. Do you describe yourself as British? Do you think that, in this country, some people are thought of as being more British than others?

### **Black People and the Police**

51. How do you see the relationship between black people and the police? How has this come about and who is responsible?
52. Can you give me some examples? Have you had any personal experiences of the police?
53. How do you know about the relationship? What are your main sources of information?
54. Do you think there are differences in the ways that the police treat black and white people?
55. Did your personal experiences play a part in your decision to join the management committee?
56. How can the BJP help to improve the relationship? Has it helped already?
57. What other factors could help to improve the relationship?
58. Is there anything else you feel its important for me to know when writing the evaluation report? Is there anything else you would like to add to the topics we have discussed?

## Co-ordinator Interview Questions

### Personal

1. When were you appointed co-ordinator of the BJP?
2. How did you become involved with the BJP?
3. Why did you decide to apply for the position of co-ordinator?
4. Why is being the co-ordinator of the BJP worthwhile? What do you get out of it?

### The Volunteers and the Management Committee

5. How many volunteers do you have awaiting core training?
6. Why do you think the BJP has so successfully attracted and retained a large number of volunteers?
7. Do you think the volunteers have an adequate say in the way the project is organised?
8. Do you think the management committee has enough contact with the volunteers?
9. Do you think you have enough contact with the volunteers?
10. Do you feel that you can adequately represent the volunteers at management committee meetings?
11. Do you think the management committee meets frequently enough?
12. How could the management committee improve its management of the project?
13. Volunteer training issue: would it be better if the trainers were black?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add about the volunteers and the management committee?

### The BJP: Organisational Issues

15. Where does the BJP's funding currently come from?
16. Why do you think the project has successfully secured this funding?
17. What in your opinion is the project's main strength(s)?
18. Does the project meet its aims and objectives? Do they need to be altered in any way?
19. How do you see the project developing over the next couple of years?
20. Why is the formation of partnerships desirable?
21. How could the BJP have an even greater impact in Sheffield?
22. Is there anything else you would like to add about the BJP as an organisation?

### **HOAS Call-Outs**

23. How do you judge if a call-out has been successful?
24. How have you generally got on with the detainees? Do any cases stick in your mind?
25. Would you say that the custody officers make your job easier or more difficult?
26. How in your opinion can the HOAS make the custody officer's job easier?
27. Why is it beneficial for the volunteers to be trained as appropriate adults?
28. Is it in the project's interests to become involved in supplying appropriate adults?
29. Is it in the project's interests to become involved in supplying volunteers for the lay visitor's scheme?
30. How could the administration of the HOAS be improved?
31. Is there anything else you would like to add about the HOAS?

### **Black People and the Police**

32. How do you see the relationship between black people and the police in Sheffield?
33. How do you think the BJP can help to improve this relationship? Has it helped already?
34. Why is it in police interests to continue to support the project?
35. Do you think a change of chief constable will effect police support of the project?
36. Is there anything else you want to add about the police and their support of the project?
37. Is there anything else you feel its important for me to know when writing the evaluation report? Is there anything else you would like to add to the topics we have discussed?

## **Custody Officer Interview Questions**

### **Black Justice Project**

1. How long have you been a custody officer?
2. When did you first hear about the existence of the BJP?
3. Do you know how long its been running for?
4. Do you know who funds it?
5. Do you know who runs it?
6. Do you know where its based?
7. Do you know how long it will run for?
8. Based on what you know about the BJP, what do you think the BJP is for? What does it help to do in Sheffield?
9. In your opinion, approximately what percentage of police officers in Sheffield know about the Project?

### **HOAS Call-Outs**

10. Approximately how many times have you called out a volunteer on behalf of a detainee? or how much contact have you had with the volunteers?
11. When do you decide to call out a volunteer? Why?
12. Have there been any occasions when a volunteer has not been available to attend a call out? Have there been any occasions when you've been unable to contact BJP?
13. Who do you think the volunteers represent?
14. How have you generally got on with them?
15. Can you remember any of the times when you called out a volunteer? Do any cases stick in your mind?
16. Does calling out a volunteer make your job easier or more difficult? (Prompt for both)
17. How do police officers benefit from a volunteer's visit?
18. How could the volunteer's role be extended or changed in order to benefit everybody?
19. How do detainees know about the BJP? Is it usually through yourselves or do they already have knowledge of the Project?
20. What do you think are the main benefits for a detainee in requesting a volunteer's help?
21. Do you think black people in general benefit from the volunteer's visits?
22. Do detainees ever reject your offer to call out a volunteer?
23. Why do you think they reject it?
24. Have detainees ever made any comments to you about the BJP?
25. Can you think of any situations where it would be inappropriate to use the BJP?

26. Do you think it would in any way be useful to have a BJP for white people?
27. Do you think its fair to have a BJP for black people only?
28. Is there anything else you would like to add about the volunteers and their role when attending call outs?

### **Community and Identity**

29. When somebody talks about 'black' people, who do you think they are referring to?
30. The BJP uses the term 'black' to refer to all of the different racial groups in Sheffield. Is this OK or are there differences?
31. What about Irish people? If an Irish person is detained, would you tell them about the BJP?
32. The BJP has a couple of white volunteers. Do you think its OK for white people to volunteer for the BJP? For example, is it OK for white volunteers to represent the BJP on call-outs?
33. Again, thinking of the different racial groups in Sheffield, do you see them as being completely separate or do you see them as having some interests in common?
34. Do you think some racial groups have more of a say in Sheffield than others?
35. Do you think some racial groups have more involvement with the police than others?
36. Is the BJP of more use to some racial groups than to others?

### **Black People and the Police**

37. Some research studies suggest that the relationship between black people and the police is hostile. Do you think this is fair? Is it the whole picture?
38. How do you feel about the way the media portrays this relationship?
39. What would you say are the main problems between the police and black people?
40. How do you think the black communities could help to improve this relationship?
41. How do you think the police could help to improve this relationship?
42. Do you think that the lines of communication between the police and the black communities are adequate? (Why) is communication difficult?
43. Would improving the relationship in any way help to reduce crime?
44. Do you think that the BJP has done or is doing anything to improve this relationship?
45. Is there anything specific it could do in the future to help?
46. Is there anything else you would like to add about the way you see police-black relations?
47. Would you say that the BJP is necessary in Sheffield?
48. What about the BJP in general? Is there anything else you think its important for me to know in writing the evaluation report?

## **Chief Constable Interview Questions**

### **Personal**

1. When did you first hear about the BJP?
2. How did you become involved in its formation?
3. How far would you say you were personally involved in its formation?
4. Were you once involved in a similar project in London? Did this influence your decision to become involved?
5. Did your previous experiences of policing within black communities play any part in your decision to become involved?
6. Why did you ultimately decide to support the project?

### **The BJP: Organisational Issues**

7. Do you think its important for local black people to form their own organisations like the BJP?
8. What in your opinion does the project help to do in Sheffield?
9. Is the project what you expected it to be?
10. Would you say the project is now a significant player on the local political scene?
11. Why do you think the project has succeeded in this city in particular?
12. How do you see the project developing over the next 2-3 years? How could the project have a greater impact in Sheffield?

### **The Help On Arrest Scheme**

13. What would you say is the main purpose of the project's HOAS?
14. How, in your opinion, does the HOAS benefit the custody officer?
15. How, in your opinion, does the HOAS benefit the prisoner?
16. I have discovered that some custody officers are reluctant to support the scheme. How can the project co-ordinators promote the HOAS to the custody officers more successfully?
17. What can police management do to promote the scheme to the custody officers?
18. How can the HOAS be altered or improved to benefit the custody officers?
19. Do you think the HOAS is necessary?

### **Black Communities and the Police**

20. How do you see the current relationship between black people and the police in Sheffield?
21. How can the BJP help to improve this relationship?
22. Has it helped already?
23. Do you think that certain black communities in Sheffield have more of a say with the police than others?
24. Are there certain local black communities in particular that require the services of the BJP? e.g. Somalians.
25. Do you think the resources allocated to operating the HOAS would be of better use elsewhere?
26. Are you satisfied with the level of communication between the project and the police?
27. Would you like to see South Yorkshire police become more involved with the project? (particularly in terms of the project's management).
28. Is there anything else you would like to add to the topics we've discussed?

## **The Black Justice Project Research Specification**

### **1. Introduction**

The project will be undertaken by Joanne Britton, PhD student in the Department of Sociological Studies and Centre for Migration and Ethnicity Research, Sheffield University. Dr Simon Holdaway, Reader in Sociology and Joint-Director of the Centre will supervise the research and will be responsible for the completion of the work outlined. He will be the point of contact for enquiries about the progress and conduct of the research.

The research is independently funded by a Sheffield University Postgraduate Scholarship and is basically undertaken as a PhD that will also form an evaluation of the Black Justice Project, to assist its development by the management committee. It is anticipated that the fieldwork will begin in late September/early October 1995.

### **2. Methods of Research**

An interview survey of all volunteers will be conducted. This will deal, among other subjects, with volunteers' understandings of the objectives of the project; motivation to volunteer; perceptions of the main problems facing black and other persons held in custody; main problems encountered in delivering advice and other support to people held in custody; understandings of the nature of policing and criminal justice, not least how these subjects are of relevance to the situation of black people in contemporary Britain. The interviews will be conducted at times and places that suit the interviewees.

An interview survey of a sample of custody officers. We will need to include mainly officers who can be expected to have information about the project but nevertheless retain control of the selection process. These interviews will consider the same subjects as those covered by the volunteer survey.

Interviews with senior police officers responsible for policy and practice related to the work of the Black Justice Project. These will also cover the same subjects.

Interviews with members of the project management committee and staff. Again, these will deal with matters of policy and perceived problems faced by volunteers, police officers and black people held in custody.

If possible, interviews with a sample of black people who have been held in custody and received some service from a project volunteer. These will deal with problems faced; perceptions of police and criminal justice; the value of the service from the volunteer; and related matters. The interviews obviously need the full consent of the interviewee and will not be undertaken until we and project staff are satisfied that they do not feel compromised in any way.

If possible, it would be advantageous for Joanne to accompany some volunteers on visits to custody suites. Further arrangements would need to be made before this was feasible. She has undertaken all the training as a volunteer and already has an understanding of the purpose of the project.

She would not, however, be a volunteer offering advice to a person held in custody. The purpose of the visits would be to gain insight into the immediate context of the provision of advice and other services to people held in custody, which would of course greatly enhance the quality of the research.



The research will be informed by a thorough literature review of relevant subjects and an analysis of the main policy documents relating to the work of the project.

### **3. Access**

Volunteers will be invited to participate in an interview through a letter introducing the purpose of the research. It is anticipated that in August or thereabouts the project will inform volunteers of the impending survey and encourage participation. It is important to stress that all information provided by all interviewees will be regarded as confidential to Joanne Britton and Simon Holdaway. People will be quoted in the research dissertation and subsequent publications but complete anonymity is assured.

Once agreement to the project has been granted by the management committee, South Yorkshire Police will be approached and the most satisfactory means of access to custody officers discussed. Simon Holdaway has researched the police for many years and has good contacts in the force.

As far as interviews with black people who have been held in custody are concerned, initial discussions will be undertaken between Joanne Britton and Max Ghani. Final decisions about the feasibility of the interviews will be made in due course.

It is assumed that management committee members and staff are willing to be interviewed.

Other interviews with members of organisations and groups who may be relevant to the purposes of the project but are yet unidentified may also be undertaken.

### **4. Publications**

It should be remembered that the framework of the project is a PhD. The dissertation will eventually be independently examined by two examiners of standing and therefore have to be of excellent quality before it is passed and placed in Sheffield University Library. No publications based on the research will be published until the PhD dissertation is completed. This will be in 1997.

As in interim measure it is anticipated that a short report of preliminary findings will be submitted to the management committee in October, 1996, or thereabouts. This will be a private document that will only be circulated to others by the decision of the management committee. A final report will be submitted on completion of the project.

No publication will be submitted to any outlet until it has been seen and commented on by the Chair of the management committee, who may refer it to other members if considered necessary.

Simon Holdaway  
3/95

**An Evaluation of  
The Sheffield Black Justice Project**

**Joanne Britton  
Sheffield University  
Department of Sociological Studies,  
January, 1997**

## Contents

### Acknowledgements

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction                           | 2  |
| 2. Executive Summary                      | 2  |
| 3. Research Methods                       | 4  |
| 4. The Volunteers                         | 5  |
| 5. The Volunteers' Training               | 9  |
| 6. The Help On Arrest Scheme              | 10 |
| 7. The Project's Management Committee     | 14 |
| 8. The Project's Co-ordinator             | 16 |
| 9. The Aims and Objectives of the project | 18 |
| 10. The Future                            | 22 |

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The evaluation of an organisation committed to the delivery of a service has a number of benefits. Evaluation provides a means of understanding the organisation's success and is also a way of monitoring undesirable policies and practices. Informed consideration of the project's future development also enables it to progress. The basic agreed objectives of this evaluation are to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the Black Justice Project and to consider its appropriate development over the next two to three years.

1.2 This report is the product of an external evaluation of the project. An evaluation of this kind is desirable because the researcher's investigation is neutral and objective. The researcher is able to interview all relevant parties to the organisation without bias. Adequate internal evaluation is difficult in voluntary organisations due to restricted resources of time and labour.

## **2. Executive Summary**

### **2.1 Research Objectives**

1. The research reported here was designed to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the Black Justice Project and to consider its appropriate development over the next two to three years.

### **2.2 Methodology**

1. Interviewing was selected as the most appropriate research method to address the research objectives. 48 interviews were completed. These consisted of 12 police officers, 30 volunteers, 5 management committee members and the co-ordinator.

### **Key findings**

#### **2.3 The Volunteers:**

1. The project has 68 fully trained volunteers. This is due to a highly successful recruitment and retention strategy. The project successfully uses word-of-mouth as a primary recruitment method. Its under-stated approach to recruitment ensures that prospective volunteers are genuinely committed to the project's aims and objectives. Prospective volunteers receive detailed information about the project. This also helps to ensure that those who complete the core training are genuinely committed to the project's aims and objectives.
2. Volunteers are flexibly committed to the project. This favourably influences the project's high retention rate. The project's programme of training also helps to ensure a high retention rate as it offers specific benefits to volunteers.
3. The volunteers are a resource of the project. They are highly qualified and highly skilled and have a great deal to offer the project in terms of relevant knowledge and expertise. Their under-utilisation is, at present, a weakness. The volunteers' identified sense of isolation is another area of weakness to be addressed.

#### **2.4 Training:**

1. Training is regarded by all of the volunteers interviewed as a major strength of the project.

2. The core training is a useful balance of theory and practice.
3. Training is a strength of the project because it further secures the volunteers' commitment to its aims and objectives and ensures that they have necessary skills and knowledge.
4. Refresher training is likely to be beneficial for established volunteers.

#### **2.5 The Help On Arrest Scheme (HOAS):**

1. The views of custody officers regarding the conduct of volunteers were generally favourable.
2. The HOAS constitutes a comprehensive coping strategy for detainees in police custody.
3. The HOAS also benefits the custody officer in particular and the police in general.
4. Custody officers remain unconvinced that the HOAS is necessary. The project requires improved methods of communicating and marketing if the scheme is to continue.

#### **2.6 The Project's Management Committee:**

1. The management committee are professionally qualified in areas of employment relevant to the aims, objectives and management of the project.
2. The timing and frequency of committee meetings is generally adequate.
3. The practical functioning of management committee meetings is currently an area of weakness.
4. Forming subcommittees to address specific issues is an area for further development.
5. Expanding the management committee is an attractive option if approached with caution.
6. Training to enhance management skills is also worthy of consideration.
7. The on-going issue of incorporating volunteer representation at management level urgently requires a solution.
8. Links between the management committee and the volunteers need to be improved.

#### **2.7 The Project's Co-ordinator:**

1. The co-ordinator is regarded by both the management committee and the volunteers as a significant strength of the project.
2. The co-ordinator has established a good working relationship with relevant members of South Yorkshire police.
3. The co-ordinator has also established important working relationships with the volunteers.
4. The co-ordinator has developed a reliable rota system for the HOAS.
5. The co-ordinator acts as a useful, unofficial representative of the volunteers at management committee meetings.

#### **2.8 The Aims and Objectives of the Project:**

1. The project fulfils a need that mainstream voluntary and statutory organisations neglect.
2. The project provides help and support to black people in a difficult and stressful situation, it is a valuable source of information and advice and it monitors and, as a result, protects the rights of black people.
3. The project contributes to the government's policy of a mixed economy of welfare.
4. The project has the potential to improve the relationship between black people and the police.

5. The project's inclusive use of the term 'black' needs to be clearly defined and emphasised wherever appropriate.
6. Defining which communities are in greatest need is a difficult and sensitive task that needs to be approached carefully.
7. The project's policy of consulting local community organisations is good practice.
8. Undertaking community-wide initiatives involves implementing a constitutional change within the project and should therefore be pursued with extreme caution.
9. The project should pursue its current policy of shunning local politics and rejecting a pressure group strategy in order to continue the successful promotion of its independence.

## **2.9 The Future**

1. Incorporating the appropriate adult role as part of the HOAS is worthwhile providing that the project secures additional funding and relevant support.
2. A priority over the next two years is to consolidate and develop the role of the assistant co-ordinator.
3. Designating the training of the new administration assistant as a priority is of significant benefit in the long term.
4. Seeking additional funding for the project will remain a priority over the next two to three years. This funding needs to be sought with the project's long-term objectives in mind.

## **3. Research Methods**

3.1 The researcher has successfully completed an Economic and Social Research Council accredited training course as part of a PhD at Sheffield University. She has similar research experience of two other comparable external evaluations. As part of the research, the researcher trained as a volunteer for the Black Justice Project and subsequently attended meetings and social events held for the volunteers.

3.2 Four parties involved with the project contributed to the evaluation. First, 30 volunteers at the project were interviewed. Second, interviews took place with 12 South Yorkshire police officers. This included 8 custody officers, an inspector responsible for two of the four custody suites in Sheffield, a 'minorities' officer, a member of the criminal justice administration department and the chief constable. Third, 5 members of the project's management committee were interviewed. This included the chair-person, the treasurer and the probation service representative. Fourth, the project's co-ordinator was also interviewed.

3.3 The interviews were semi-structured. This means that although a standard interview schedule was administered to respondents, it included open-ended questions enabling them to explain and expand upon their views. All of the interviews were tape-recorded.

3.4 The interviews were treated as confidential. In addition to this, the anonymity of respondents is respected, as far as possible, throughout the report.

This report has been written for the management committee and the co-ordinators of the Black Justice Project. It is distributed to other interested parties solely at their discretion.

The main research findings are emphasised in **bold type** throughout the report.

## 4. The Volunteers

4.1 **The substantial volunteer base from which the project operates is an important strength.** It ensures that there is plenty of available labour to cover essential rota duties. The volunteer base arises from the project's **impressive recruitment and retention rate of volunteers.** It currently has 68 fully-trained and operational volunteers. In addition to this it has 16-20 volunteers awaiting core training. Only 5 volunteers have formally left the project since the inception of the Help On Arrest Scheme. These volunteers have obtained employment away from Sheffield.

4.2 **The project successfully uses word-of-mouth as a primary recruitment method.** 11 of the volunteers first received information about the project informally from the co-ordinator (Max):

“I know Max, I knew him before that, and he actually formed the BJP. And, if I remember correctly, he actually phoned me and asked if I was interested. So that's how I found out. I didn't actually read about it or anything”.

“I think Max asked me if I'd be interested. I think Max put it to me. I studied with Max years and years ago now so I knew him from before”.

10 of the volunteers initially heard about the project from family or friends who had either volunteered or had heard about it during the course of their voluntary or paid work:

“Through my brother. My brother is a volunteer. He got some information and he decided that he wants to be a volunteer. So he told me about it and I thought well I'd like to do it so I got in touch with Max”.

Only 5 of the volunteers interviewed first learned of the project through advertising in local community centres and newspapers. This has implications for future recruitment initiatives. **It is unnecessary to allocate significant resources to recruitment advertising when existing members of the project represent a reliable source of new volunteers.**

4.3 The following quotes demonstrate that the project has adopted an **under-stated approach to recruitment:**

“I came down and he (Max) explained to me what it was about; you know I got further information. Then we kept in touch or whatever. Any new information that came out about it, he posted it to me. And then he informed us that there were training courses taking place. And then I just put myself on a training course”.

“He (Max) told me he was getting this project organised, whether I was interested or not, and just gave me an application form. I went for an interview and took it from there really”.

“Max knew that I was interested in things like that anyway and he left some leaflets about the training and the volunteering aspect of it as well”.

**Volunteering for the project is partly dependent upon the prospective volunteer’s actions rather than an explicitly aggressive recruitment strategy. This helps to ensure commitment** and thus facilitates an impressive retention rate. The coordinator explains:

“Those people who weren't sure about it never return the application form and those are usually the ones who would have left fairly quickly. The ones that do return the application form have done it through their own choice, not because we've been pestering them, and therefore they are committed”.

**4.4 Prospective volunteers receive detailed information about the project before completing the core training.** This contributes to the high retention rate because they are aware of the project’s purpose and their potential contribution to it before they agree to volunteer:

“Max explained to me and to all the volunteers, before we actually joined, exactly what the Black Justice Project was about and exactly what it did. We weren’t given any false expectations”.

“When I first came to see Max, he explained what it did and he explained everything in detail. So I already, from the time of our meeting, knew what it was gonna be about and that’s it really because it hasn’t really changed”.

**It is good practice to brief prospective volunteers. It helps to ensure that those who complete the core training are genuinely committed to the project’s aims and objectives.**

**4.5 Flexible commitment is a key feature of volunteering for the project:**

“And the other thing is its not as much commitment. You’re not committed where you feel that right I’ve got so much for this month or week or whatever, but its not that. So its flexible, you can volunteer for the day or for the week or for the hours or whatever”.

The following comment highlights the importance of flexibility:

“I’m living here, everyone’s living here, we’ve got our own things to do. Its voluntary work. It is voluntary work on a part-time basis, do you know what I mean? You want to do your own thing, other things”.

Retaining a policy of flexible commitment is likely to become increasingly difficult if the volunteer’s role is diversified to include additional responsibilities. **It is imperative that available means of maintaining flexible commitment are considered. One realisable objective is to further expand the volunteer base to include those currently awaiting core training.** This will help to ensure that there are plenty of volunteers available to share rota duties.



4.6 The project's **programme of training offers specific benefits to volunteers** in terms of both their personal development and intrinsic satisfaction:

"I think its you get a lot of satisfaction personally. You gain more skills and it looks good on your CV. And it should help you personally, I think, work-wise. I know I would be lying if I said I was doing it specifically for young people because I am doing it for the experience as well; if I want to go into that field of work".

"I like it, I enjoy it, its stimulating ... I'm just sort of waiting for somebody to call".

The volunteers gain from the project whilst their work benefits others. **This research finding is a potentially useful contribution to future recruitment initiatives and provides another reason for the high retention rate of volunteers.**

4.7 The management committee and co-ordinator acknowledge **the importance of the volunteers as a resource and therefore as a strength of the project.** One management committee member commented:

"The volunteers are a huge, massive, perhaps the biggest resource that we have as a black community organisation and the number and quality of people and the skills that they have, you know, its just absolutely outstanding. I can't think of another organisation like it".

This acknowledgement is supported by the research findings. First, the following table demonstrates that 17 out of the 30 (57%) volunteers interviewed have either **completed or are completing degree courses.**

|                | <i>Graduates</i> | <i>Undergraduates</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Law            | 4                | 2                     | 6            |
| Other subjects | 8                | 3                     | 11           |
| Total          | 12               | 5                     | 17           |

Second, **community and social work** feature significantly in the paid employment of 12 of the 30 (40%) volunteers. Third, 9 (30%) of the volunteers are in **professional or managerial positions.** **These three research findings reveal that the volunteers are highly qualified and highly skilled. They have a great deal to offer the project in terms of relevant knowledge and expertise.** The following quotes are typical of the volunteers' reasons for offering their services:

"In a way I feel its a sense of duty because I have perhaps a little bit more knowledge. That's it, a sense of duty. I think in a sense it has a lot to do with why I've taken up the legal profession anyway. I think its just to make people a little bit more knowledgeable about their rights".

"... to offer my services basically, the training I've been given, to the people out there. You just take it for granted that 'cause you know your rights everyone else knows them; but they don't you know".

4.8 **It is in the project's interests to utilise the volunteers' skills and expertise efficiently.** The following volunteers expect their services to be utilised more frequently and in different ways:

"The only thing I thought there'd be much more. We'd be really involved, we'd get a lot of calls. It would be really busy".

"What I didn't sort of catch onto was I thought it would be more in the way of like following up work. Something like taking on cases and all of that. Unfortunately it wasn't".

"I think the volunteers should be a lot more involved in getting the project publicised. He (Max) goes into schools. I know sometimes he can't, but if he paid volunteers expenses and said would you like to come to the school to give a talk then volunteers would be involved you know? Or volunteers doing a newsletter, volunteers doing posters, get them involved in it".

**At present, under-utilisation is a weakness of the project. There is potential for the knowledge and expertise of specific volunteers to be utilised more effectively.** For example, those educated to degree level in law may be able to act in an advisory capacity to those groups the project seeks to help. Volunteers with experience of community work may be able to liaise with target groups with whom they are familiar.

4.9 The nature of the work undertaken by the project's volunteers dictates that they usually work alone. **Reducing the volunteers' sense of isolation is a useful way of retaining their enthusiasm for and commitment to the project.** The following requests for more information are representative of the volunteers views in general:

"Probably, after every three months, if they sent a bulletin out to all the volunteers telling them exactly what has been done, how many cases have been reported or just sending them a case out. A case that they'd come across and telling them how it had been dealt with. Its always nice to read about a difficult situation that arises and how its handled".

"I suppose the only thing that I had thought of and I think I've said it already is about not knowing what the other people in the project are doing. You know I think to myself is this the same for everybody that they may not get a call for months on end? How many people do we see? Just information really".

**Producing a quarterly newsletter would serve three useful purposes.** One, the volunteers sense of isolation is reduced. Two, volunteers are utilised more effectively if they become involved in its production. Three, important information regarding the project's development can be effectively disseminated.

## 5. The Volunteers' Training

5.1 The **training is regarded by all of the volunteers interviewed as a major strength** of the project. The following two quotes are indicative of their comments:

“I think the training was very well organised and very well timed. It was geared to people irrespective of their level”.

“You went in there and you found out the ins and outs and they made it, it was very interesting, very informative. I actually came away from there actually remembering a lot. It was good”.

5.2 The **core training is a useful balance of theory and practice**. This ensures that each volunteer is equipped with the required basic knowledge and skills regardless of their level of relevant experience:

“I think a lot of it was the actual, the imprisonment laws and things like that. Stop and search and things like that which, not being a lawyer type person, I didn't really know that much about. So that was one thing. Also, the rights that you have or you don't have”.

“It gave me confidence especially when dealing with this institution which can be intimidating. Knowing that I could deal with the situations in an assertive, confident way because I have the knowledge to do so. Yes, confidence was the most important thing”.

The training also ensures that volunteers conduct themselves in an appropriate manner as representatives of the Black Justice Project:

“I think the most important one for me ... was knowing what you could and couldn't do especially in the police station. 'Cause I think there were some of us that had these grand ideas about what we were and weren't gonna do down at the police station and it was important to realise what you can and can't do”.

However, it is almost three years since the first group of volunteers attended core training. It is pertinent to consider if **refresher training is required** in order to maintain the standard of service. Consultation with the first group of volunteers will determine if this is necessary.

5.3 The **trainers succeeded in clearly articulating a great deal of information in a restricted amount of time**:

“They came across very well and they explained things that we didn't understand; they explained things in detail. I was quite impressed with them”.

“I think the trainers were quite good actually. I think the trainers got the information across fairly well, you know, in the short amount of time”.

It is worth noting that 5 volunteers (17%) mentioned the **desirability of having black trainers**:

“I did raise some questions as to why there were white trainers rather than black you know, because its a Black Justice Project. And again, and for me, with it being such a project, one thing’s got to feed the other and its got to really get back to the black community”.

“If you’ve not got black trainers, it can’t obviously be from a black perspective”.

This is not an issue of major significance because the remaining 25 volunteers (83%) agreed that the skills and ability of the trainers are more important. The existing trainers are undoubtedly satisfactory. It is, however, appropriate to consider the volunteers’ preferences for black trainers when addressing other training needs in the future.

**5.4 The Black Justice Project also benefits from the training because it secures the volunteers’ commitment to its aims and objectives.** Volunteers subsequently regard themselves as representatives of the project and act accordingly:

“I see myself as representing the Black Justice Project. Whatever I do, I try and do in an accurate and effective manner ‘cause, at the end of the day, any mistakes that I do effect the reputation of the BJP”.

The volunteers’ commitment is further secured because the training reassures them that they will receive adequate support from other members of the project:

“Knowing that we’re there as a group and you’d got the support of the group and that’s the best thing that I found. Even though you’re volunteering and you might be on the phone and in a situation on your own, you know that, as a group, somebody will be on the other end of a phone if you begin to struggle”.

The above research findings confirm that **training is a considerable strength of the project with identifiable benefits for both volunteers and the organisation more generally.**

## **6. The Help On Arrest Scheme**

**6.1 The views of the custody officers regarding the conduct of volunteers were generally favourable.** They noted in particular the professionalism of volunteers:

“On the couple of occasions when I’ve spoken to them, they’ve seemed to produce themselves well. They’ve provided me with identification. Yeah, I mean the contact that I’ve had on the couple of occasions has been very good”.

“He’s come in and had a chat and allayed their fears and done a few errands for them so that’s about it. I haven’t got any further comments. I mean he hasn’t hindered me in my work or the investigating officer’s”.

One custody officer expressed a concern about the attitude of a volunteer he encountered:

“He said ‘yes but I know these things don’t happen’ so I says ‘well look take it from me this happens. You know, if you’ve got a complaint you know where to go and do it’ and then I told him to leave the police station. I’m not having somebody shouting at me at the desk”.

At present, there is no formal system whereby custody officers can feed back their concerns to the project. As a result, this custody officer's concern was neither reported or corroborated. A solution to this oversight is suggested in subsection 5.5.

**6.2 The HOAS constitutes a comprehensive coping strategy for detainees in police custody.** There are four elements to this strategy. One, it is a source of practical assistance for the detainee:

“There was one occasion where he came, went and took his key down to the house, took his dog out, because the chap was concerned about his dog and fed and watered it. That's basically what he wanted him to do as regards help”. (police officer)

“All I had to do was make contact with the solicitor and also contact family and getting information back from the solicitor to the family to make sure everything was OK”. (volunteer)

Two, it is an information provider:

“They don't have no clue of what they're supposed to do in a police cell and they suddenly call someone from the Black Justice programme. I usually go through with them what their rights are, what they should do, and these are the people who appreciate you most”. (volunteer)

Three, the volunteer acts as an intermediary between the custody officer and the detainee:

“They may then think well the police have said they've rung them and they've put everything down on paper but there's obviously mistrust there so I think that if they know that the solicitor's been informed its another life-line to them in't it?” (police officer)

“If its someone who's been locked up for a long time, if I get some answers from the custody sergeant, when they'll be interviewed, when they'll be released. You communicate that to the people who are detained there and they would appreciate that”. (volunteer)

Four, it reassures and reduces the fears of the detainee:

“Somebody who's here for the first time and genuinely fears what might happen 'cause you've got your misconceptions from the television or the paper. Then I accept that in those instances some additional help might be of benefit to them and indeed us because if we get a volunteer they can help calm the individual down”. (police officer)

“When I saw her she was really you know tense and really unhappy and frightened you know. So I relieved a lot of that off her”. (volunteer)

These examples demonstrate that **the police officers and volunteers are in broad agreement regarding the main strengths of the HOAS in terms of assisting the detainee.**

6.3 The HOAS also benefits the custody officer in four main ways. First it reduces the number of tasks for the custody officer to complete:

“It takes some of the pressure off in terms of the volunteers go and do some of the work that otherwise the custody sergeants would have to do or other police officers would have to do”. (co-ordinator)

Two examples of this are provided in subsection 5.2 (1). Second, it enables the officer to communicate more satisfactorily with the detainee by reducing tension and increasing trust.

“If the person who I was booking in is obstructive or didn’t want to co-operate with what I was saying to ‘em. Then if this volunteer was here or came and talked to them and calmed them down, then that would be a good advantage to me”. (police officer)

“I came back and the custody sergeant said 'thanks' and I said 'what for?' He said 'he's calmed down, we can actually go in there and hold a conversation with him' and he says 'now that we're holding a conversation with him, I think we'll probably release him before the solicitor gets here". (co-ordinator)

Third, this reduces the potential for legitimate complaint against the officer. The chief constable recognises this benefit to the custody officer:

“It should allow the custody officers during the course of their duty to be seen as thoroughly above board and professional and if that is later questioned it should be a reference point to the custody officer. In others words its an avowal of professional duty”.

As the chief constable notes, the HOAS provides evidence that the police treat detainees correctly. From the volunteers’ perspective, the scheme provides a means of examining the procedures of the police:

“At the end of the day, you’re still making a note of it. The information’s still coming back here and that the police still know you’ve come out. Its still keeping that little check isn’t it?”

Fourth, the scheme benefits South Yorkshire police more generally because it supports their policy of honesty and openness. The HOAS enables members of the public to view the usually closed world of policing:

“I think the police force benefits if we can open doors to people and allow them to come in even as a lay visitor or whatever and see that they’re actually tret properly; because there’s a lot of mythology”. (police officer)

“I do understand the reason for it and if it makes people you know see that we don’t like push them through the door and kick hell out of ‘em and then stick ‘em in a cell and then hold them down and all these sort of horror stories that I think people have”. (police officer)

**The HOAS therefore has a number of considerable strengths in terms of both assisting custody officers during the course of their duty and improving the public’s image of policing.**

**6.4 The custody officers, however, remain unconvinced that the HOAS is necessary.** This is a significant weakness of the HOAS. They refer to the perception that it is **special treatment for black detainees**:

“I can’t see why black people should be given this additional privilege, shall we say, when everybody else isn’t. We’re all the same people and we’ve all got the same rights. So just because they’re black, or come from ethnic minorities, why should they be given this extra privilege over and above white people?”

“We’ve had one or two, especially Asians, who are very cut up about it. You know they say well you know you’re totally implying that I can’t look after myself; that I’m not intelligent enough to look after myself”.

Furthermore, there is **evidence that certain custody officers no longer advise black detainees about the scheme.** The officers were asked how detainees receive information about the HOAS:

“From the picture on the wall as they come in ... we tend to rely on their eyes”.

“There are notices up, *we haven’t actually got any at the moment, but when it first started* we gave every person from an ethnic background a leaflet as well as the rights leaflet which is just a small copy of the notice”.

“There’s a notice displayed in the cell area about it which is where they’re booked in”.

The custody officers’ responses indicate that their co-operation cannot be ensured unless they receive additional information regarding the purpose of and reasons for the project.

**6.5 The weaknesses highlighted above need to be addressed if the HOAS is to continue.** The following list is a suggestion for an action plan. It highlights the **need for improved methods of communicating and marketing**:

1. Ensure that each of the four custody suites in Sheffield has a new supply of posters and leaflets.
2. Establish a method for custody officers to feed back their views of specific cases to the project. For example, this could entail devising an optional case form for custody sergeants to complete and return to the project following a volunteer’s visit.
3. Liaise with key members of South Yorkshire police’s criminal justice administration department in order to discuss ways of disseminating further information about the project to custody officers. This may involve the project’s co-ordinators meeting again with representatives of the four custody suites in order to promote the scheme.
4. Explore the possibility of submitting an article about the project to the police’s internal newspaper:

“Whether it would benefit from a feature in shall we say our in-service newspaper. That might be an advantage”. (chief constable)

## 7. The Project's Management Committee

7.1 The management committee members interviewed are professionally qualified in areas of employment relevant to the aims, objectives and management of the project. They are a senior careers advisor, a youth and community officer, a community safety officer, a probation officer and a senior probation officer. They represent a potential strength of the project because they have a variety of management and social work skills as well as detailed knowledge of the criminal justice system.

7.2 The management committee members agree that the **timing and frequency of committee meetings is generally adequate:**

“The organisation can always improve if you had more people doing the ground-work but, knowing the limitations and constraints that people have got, its enough for the time being”.

“On balance, I think so yes. I think its probably impractical to get people together more than once a month in the normal run of things”.

The committee members do, however, acknowledge that a monthly meeting is, on occasion inadequate. This weakness can be overcome by **forming subcommittees to address specific issues** as they arises:

“I think we have worked that, when there have been things that have been particularly difficult and problematic, we try to meet either for longer or try to throw in an extra meeting to try and deal with that”.

“We could work better if we formed small sub-groups in twos or threes and we had specific task to do. And so an example would be, where we have been able to work more effectively, is when we had to actually recruit an assistant co-ordinator. So we did basically form a small sub-group ... it takes a lot of time but we were able to actually recruit, design and plan the recruitment process”.

Forming a subcommittee is particularly advantageous as each management committee member has specific skills to contribute. This means that the composition of each subcommittee changes as available skills are matched with the task at hand. It also facilitates the designation of tasks which in turn ensures that each issue is addressed more quickly and comprehensively.

7.3 **The practical functioning of management committee meetings is currently an area of weakness.** This is effectively summarised by one committee member:

“It could be a lot more organised. We're not terribly good at sticking to the business. We're appalling at starting meetings on time and we're all busy people but we waste time by that ... I mean like in lots and lots of meetings we don't link terribly well from one meeting to another. We very rarely get minutes of the previous meeting before the next meeting so, if you've gone away and forgotten what you're supposed to do, you've got no reminder, nobody prompts”.

These weaknesses can be addressed by:

1. Reconsidering the most appropriate timing of meetings in order to minimise the potential for late arrivals and absences.



2. Ensuring that the minutes of previous meetings are sent to committee members at least a week before the next meeting. This increases the likelihood that tasks allocated to particular members are completed.
3. Designating a chairperson at the start of each committee meeting to ensure satisfactory time-keeping.

**7.4 Expanding the management committee is an attractive option** for three main reasons. One, it enables the committee to increase and consolidate its level of skill and expertise. Two, it increases the number of individuals available to form subcommittees and thus aids the allocation of tasks. This will help to overcome the following weakness identified by the committee members interviewed:

“I mean some of the problems have been with the management committee when we all decide that we can’t turn up or whatever. One minute we have a management committee and the next minute none of us is available”.

Three, it provides an opportunity to create links with existing or potential partners in Sheffield. Potential partners include black community organisations with an active interest in criminal justice issues and appropriate departments within the local authority:

“We want to look at the stakeholders within the black communities and get people involved; and stakeholders could include statutory bodies like probation, social services, but mainly community organisations. That’s a whole other area of representation”.

**The expansion of the management committee is desirable if it is approached with caution.** Existing management committee members need to carefully assess the extent to which each potential committee member contributes to the project’s image, aims and objectives. Retaining the project’s independent status is an important factor in this assessment.

#### **7.5 Training to enhance management skills is also worth considering:**

“Regular training of all management committees is important even if its training to enhance the skills they've already got or to give them new skills ... if you look at the bigger picture, it may help in a lot more ways than they actually think it does. I mean that's usually the falling point in a lot of the voluntary sector organisations, management committee members don't go through training”.

Management committee members are likely to benefit from training that reflects their particular area of responsibility within the project. For example, budgeting and funding are two key management responsibilities for which training may prove useful.

7.6 Volunteers have elected representatives to attend management committee meetings. Due to a number of difficulties, including a Home Office ruling regarding the acceptable membership of the committee, the elected volunteers have yet to attend any. **The issue of incorporating volunteer representation at management level is now urgent and needs to be resolved quickly. This involves considering whether new elections are necessary.**

7.7 **The volunteers' knowledge of the management committee is very limited.** The following quotes are typical of their comments:

“I don't know much about the management committee. I don't know them that well and I haven't really been in touch with them ... I don't know, I've never been given a list of the management committee and what they do or whatever. Its something that we've not been given the information about”.

“I haven't had much contact with the management committee personally or very, very little ... as to the actual working of the project, I'm not sure as to how the management committee actually fit in”.

**The volunteers expressed a need to have more contact with and information about the committee:**

“There would probably have been a fair number of volunteers who didn't know the management team and we asked for their presence just, you know, to stick their heads round the training room door for five minutes and they wouldn't even do that”.

The volunteers' needs can be addressed in three ways. These will also serve to demonstrate the committee's commitment to the project. One, designated members of the management committee can attend training sessions for the specific purpose of meeting volunteers. Two, committee members can train to be volunteers (two members are already trained in this capacity). This serves an additional function as the co-ordinator explained:

“If for any reason a volunteer gets arrested or detained, I don't want another volunteer to try and go and get that person out. ... I mean its never happened so far but ... I would go out and deal with something like that. Supposing the police didn't recognise my authority, we need the management committee to be able to be there for emergencies only”.

Three, one committee member can be elected as a direct point of contact for volunteers. This is particularly important whilst the issue of volunteer representation remains problematic.

**The above research findings reveal that the management committee has the potential to be a major strength of the project. However, further development of the committee is both necessary and possible.**

## **8. The Project's Co-ordinator**

Note: the Black Justice Project has recently appointed an assistant co-ordinator who has yet to complete her probationary period. The following research findings therefore refer exclusively to the co-ordinator.

### 8.1 The co-ordinator is regarded by both the management committee and the volunteers as a significant strength of the project:

“The specific contribution of Max as a development worker is immeasurable really. Even when, at times, when the management committee wasn’t functioning in the way that it should have done, Max has, well ‘development worker’ at the time never did his role justice. He’s now project co-ordinator but that was just a change in title. He’s basically done that from virtually day one”. (committee member)

“I would say, with no biases, Max, he takes his work very seriously. He works hard. I’ve seen him work till late at night and, not only that, the way he organises things. He looks ahead ... I mean, Max, I know he worked hard for it and that’s the reason I think its worth being part of this organisation”. (volunteer)

### 8.2 The co-ordinator has established a good working relationship with relevant members of South Yorkshire police. This has involved successfully promoting the project’s independence. Here a minorities officer explains how he described the co-ordinator to other police officers:

“Somebody said ‘who is Max Ghani?’ I said he’s an Asian bloke who works for the Black Justice Project and I said he’s not politically motivated or anything like that. I said he’s just doing his job. ‘Oh that’s alright then’. And they trusted me to talk about him and because I’ve told them exactly what I thought about him, and what his reasons were, they were alright”.

**Successfully promoting the project’s independence is crucial because it ensures that both the police and black community groups are willing to co-operate with and make use of the project.**

### 8.3 The co-ordinator has also established important working relationships with the volunteers. He is a source of support because they understand him to be accessible and dependable. It is important to appreciate that a reliable form of support is essential due to the sensitive and difficult nature of the tasks performed by the volunteers:

“We can always get help and support instantly, what we need any time, through Max ... We have direct access to constant support, you know, so that’s never a problem. I mean if the volunteers were told to just go away and sort the project out, then that would be a different issue and we would face problems”.

“I know if I’ve got any problems I’d ring Max and Max is a volunteer as well himself, as well as being the project co-ordinator”.

The last comment refers to the fact that the co-ordinator undertakes volunteering duties when volunteers are unavailable. This demonstrates his commitment to the project and is of crucial practical importance because it means that there is always somebody available to attend call-outs. As a result, **a reliable rota system is a major strength of the project.** It is in the project’s interests that this good practice is continued.

8.4 Whilst the issue of volunteer representation on the management committee remains unresolved, **the co-ordinator acts as a useful, unofficial representative of the volunteers**. One committee member commented:

“I think Max will always take care to represent the views of the volunteers. I think that has been good in so far as its gone. I think probably the volunteers have more influence than they perceive themselves to have”.

**The co-ordinator is therefore a strength of the project due to his evident commitment to and development of its aims and objectives.** Any changes of project personnel in the future should reflect the level of commitment and inter-personal skills required to fulfil the job description.

## 9. The Aims and Objectives of the project

9.1 **The project’s aims and objectives are based upon the informed assumption that black people’s experiences of criminal justice are negative** when compared to those of white people. Two management committee members explain:

“Its been shown conclusively that black people are discriminated against, by the home office and university researchers. So there's no question on that. The issue then becomes how do you redress it?”

“The overall aim of the project is to, in any way it can, address the generally negative experiences of the black community of any contact with the criminal justice system in any situation really”.

9.2 In practical terms, the volunteers agree that a strength of the project is to **fulfil a need that mainstream voluntary and statutory organisations neglect**:

“In an ideal world they shouldn’t have to rely on solely black organisations. They should be able to go to a central place purely because the level of trust is such that it doesn’t matter whether the organisation is predominately black or predominately white. So long as the organisation is doing a good job for whoever needs it; but its not an ideal world”.

“Personally I think the mainstream, well community or statutory, bodies or whatever actually fall short in meeting the needs of the black community”.

This view is supported by the co-ordinator’s experiences:

“A lot of people say ‘thank you’ but quite often its the way they say thank you. And its almost like, if you look at them, its like we were the last resort. they'd been to other organisations and been referred on. They'd come to us and we'd helped them out”.

9.3 The volunteers identified the project's three key functions, each of which serves to fill a gap in mainstream and statutory service provision. One, the project **provides help and support to black people in a difficult and stressful situation**:

“Supporting black people and their families, friends, partners etc., having to come up against the police, the courts, all the legal things. And also being involved with other groups in the community. Its got those type of concerns”.

“Like helping ethnic minorities really. I just feel that knowing that there's a project like this, people know, ethnic/black minorities know, that there's actually a group of people that are there to actually help them with any kind of problem to do with the police or whatever”.

Two, **it is a valuable source of information and advice** for black people.

“Its just helping people to know what their rights are and helping each other through difficult times”.

“So far ... its access to justice really. Its being there on the end of a phone. Its being there to see people”.

“A lot of the volunteers are also youth workers and they've taken this knowledge back to their communities. So the Black Justice Project's been a good way of passing on information and improving things that way as well”.

Three, **it monitors and, as a result, protects the rights of black people**:

“We're there to ensure that any of you're rights aren't infringed”.

“From the start, I've always seen it as being a sort of monitoring operation of the police. OK? That's how I've always seen this project”.

By filling an identifiable gap in service provision, the **project demonstrates its contribution to the government's continuing general policy of a mixed economy of welfare**. This considerable strength of the project can be highlighted in future funding proposals.

9.4 The project's key functions serve an additional purpose because they **have the potential to improve the relationship between black people and the police**. First, the police officers' positive contact with volunteers has recognisable benefits :

“Its helping to prevent friction from the start by going there and in that sense improving the relationship with the police. Because the police are having to work with more black people and deal with them and, if they've got any negative perceptions, it gets rid of them”.

Second, it contributes to the efforts of the police to reduce both the number of complaints received and general hostility:

“I think the policies that the police have now that if they can be spared any trouble and any aggression and any focus that's detrimental ... It shows in a way that they're allowing personal interviews with detainees.

The amount of information they're actually giving to the volunteers when they actually meet people”.

Third, the police obtain credibility because the HOAS provides them with an opportunity to demonstrate that their conduct is acceptable:

“In terms of the detainees or their families, their view is quite often that the police are over there and black communities are over here and there's nothing in between. And what this is, is a scheme that is bridging the gap right so then, on quite a few occasions, if their son or daughter has been treated reasonably well, they come away thinking well actually all these things I heard about the police, maybe its not all true”. (co-ordinator)

**Improving the relationship between black people and the police is not one of the project's explicit aims. It is, however, a strength with benefits for both parties involved.**

**9.5 The project aims to include all of the diverse minority ethnic groups in Sheffield. However, the term 'black' fails to reflect this intention. It is a source of confusion and is thus a potential weakness of the project.** The following quotes are derived from interviews with the custody officers:

“Black to a police officer means exactly that, the colour black, which is by and large Afro-Caribbean or Somalian or whatever”.

“I'd say black would be talking about Afro-Caribbeans, people of mixed race and people of Asian but not necessarily Chinese; I don't know why but not Chinese”.

The project does in fact include the Chinese within its definition of 'black'. This confusion is extended to the issue of Irish inclusion:

“I fail to see how Irish people could fit into that kind of category of a minority group”.

“Unless its specifically talking about travellers, gypsies, then fair enough. Then you could say that they are a group who are a minority within the overall society ... but you're gonna have to be quite specific talking about travellers, gypsies, whatever you want to call them; rather than Irish”.

The custody officers' interpretations have important practical implications in that they will fail to advise certain detainees who are entitled to the project's assistance. **It is essential that all of the agencies involved fully understand which groups the project aims to serve and why.** This should be clearly stated in all of the project's literature and correspondence where appropriate. In particular, the custody officers require a formal statement of this kind.

**9.6 The above subsection indicates that the project seeks to include diverse interests groups within its aims and objectives.** However, the management committee members acknowledge that they should not neglect to target the project's resources:

“My worry I suppose is that it will try, because all of a sudden there's money and there's another worker, that we'll end up trying to do an awful lot over a very wide range of things and not retain a focus”.

“It is quite easy to take on all the needs of all communities ... But I think we actually need to remain focused and target those communities in the greatest need”.

**Defining ‘those communities in greatest need’ is a difficult and sensitive task which needs to be approached carefully.** It is crucial that the project makes informed decisions when prioritising groups requiring its support. This is acknowledged by one committee member:

“Not all communities are able to establish links in the same way with statutory organisations and campaigning and things like that. But the classic one who’s often over-looked in terms of services is the Chinese community. A lot of assumptions are made about self-reliance and stuff like that”.

This means that **the project’s policy of consulting local community organisations is good practice and allocating resources for this purpose is appropriate.** It ensures that the project’s resources are targeted efficiently and enables the project to justify its support of particular groups.

9.7 The following comments reveal **that the project has the potential to provide services for the community as a whole:**

“If a white person did phone, you know, I don’t think it would stop anyone. It wouldn’t stop ME from going out. At the end of the day, I’m still gonna get the experience, you know, and I’m still giving a helping hand so it don’t make no difference”. (volunteer)

“What I wouldn’t actually support is us spending a year servicing purely white organisations. But I don’t mind if there are particular issues that are facing the broader community at particular times that we can offer our support and expertise to; then we would do that. But our prime focus has to be the target groups within the black community”. (management committee member)

The limitations of pursuing this kind of potential are highlighted in subsection 8.6. In addition to this, **incorporating services for the whole community involves implementing a constitutional change within the project.** One of the volunteers succinctly summarised the main issue involved:

“But the project wouldn’t be as it is now, if it was to help black and white people, because ... it would be a different type of organisation altogether. And my feeling is that this project has been set up because black people actually are not represented properly and they need to be and white people do not need this sort of support”.

**Community-wide initiatives are likely to substantially alter the project’s aims and objectives. They should therefore be pursued with extreme caution.**

9.8 **The importance of promoting the project’s independence** was highlighted in subsection 7.2. The following comments from volunteers serve to reiterate this point:

“This is the kind of project that can make you or break you. They have to be really careful especially working so close with the police. I mean there’s no point in even beginning to work for the black community if they’re not gonna trust you anyway”.

“The best thing the Black Justice Project can do is try and win the trust of the black community by showing that its got nothing to do with the police and that its totally independent”.

The project is only effective if it gains the trust of local black people. However, it is also only effective if it has the support of organisations such as the police and, its main funders, the probation service. **Adhering to its aims and objectives involves a delicate balancing act whereby the interests of black people are prioritised whilst the co-operation of relevant organisations is secured.** The issue of independence is likely to become increasingly significant as the project diversifies. **The project should therefore continue to pursue its current policy of shunning local politics and rejecting a pressure group strategy. This will maximise the likelihood of success in this area.**

## 10. The Future

10.1 Volunteers are currently being trained in the **role of an appropriate adult**. Incorporating this function as part of the HOAS is worthwhile for three reasons. One, it will increase the number of call-outs and will therefore utilise the volunteers more effectively. Two, it will help to secure the custody officers’ co-operation with the HOAS in general. The custody officers stressed that they have significant difficulties in this area and would welcome the project’s input:

“If there’s anything to improve the appropriate adult scheme then I would support it. Its one of our major problems in custody”.

Three, it compliments the project’s aim to focus upon the needs of young people. However, implementing and operating an appropriate adult initiative will significantly diminish the project’s existing resources. The project needs to secure additional funding and the support of relevant social service departments within the local authority if it is to implement this role in full.

10.2 A priority over the next two years is to consolidate and develop the role of **the assistant co-ordinator**. Diverting young black people away from crime is a worthwhile, general aim. The co-ordinators need to continue liaising with local youth and community groups and the education department’s youth service in order to formulate specific objectives. This will enable them to establish the specific needs of well-defined target groups. It will also ensure that the focus of their efforts is condensed.

10.3 The project aims to employ an **administration assistant** in the near future. This will considerably reduce the office work currently undertaken by the co-ordinators and will thus enable them to concentrate their efforts on furthering the aims and objectives of the project. Designating the training of the administration assistant as a priority is therefore of significant benefit in the long term.

10.4 Seeking **additional funding** for the project will remain a priority over the next two to three years. This funding needs to be sought with the project’s long-term objectives in mind:

“Our long-term objective is to provide a unified service from educating people about their rights, helping them when they get arrested, helping them in court, helping them in prison and then helping them on



release from prison to get back into society. So we can provide a whole range of services to do with black people and criminal justice". (co-ordinator)

The objective of assisting black people in court is logically the next step for the project. Consultation with the probation service is necessary in order to assess the viability of future development in this direction.