Hidden Voices

A Study of Wiltshire’s Minority Ethnic Residents

Written by Dr Sharon Collins & Helen Begum,
Wiltshire County Council
in association with
Wiltshire Racial Equality Council

Forward by Dr Mark Baldwin, University of Bath
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We are also grateful to the staff of schools and colleges that participated in this study for their valuable time and co-operation. A significant number of other individuals also provided much support in conducting the fieldwork and though they haven’t been named, we are as equally grateful to them.

And finally, a special big thank you to all the respondents who kindly agreed to participate in the study, without whom, this study would not have been possible.

Dr Sharon Collins and Helen Begum

March, 2002
Wiltshire County Council
Authors’ Note

It is important for the reader to note that the contents of this report are drawn from the information recorded during qualitative focus groups and interviews with local minority ethnic residents. The information contained in the report reflects the opinions and views of the respondents and not the personal views of the authors. It is important to bear in mind that this report only represents the views of those people interviewed and not all minority ethnic people in Wiltshire.

While the vast majority of people interviewed enjoyed living in Wiltshire, there is no doubt that, for many people, there are a range of significant difficulties encountered in day-to-day life arising from language and cultural barriers as well as experiences of racism. It is important to address these issues to ensure that future policy development and service planning are inclusive of the needs and views of Wiltshire’s minority ethnic residents.

When writing this report, careful checks were made to maintain the anonymity of respondents. All names of respondents, schools and businesses that participated in the research have been omitted.

Where respondents’ quotes are used in the report, words appearing in a bold type are those spoken by the facilitator. In places where excerpts of a conversation involving more than one respondent have been used, letters have been used to differentiate between the respondents. Within quotes, the use of ‘(…)’ signifies that the rest of the response is omitted as it is of little relevance. The use of ‘…’ signifies a pause in speech or that the sentence is left hanging. The use of ‘__’ denotes that a person’s name has been omitted.
Forward

‘The amended Race Relations Act gives public authorities a new statutory duty to promote race equality. The aim is to help public authorities provide fair and accessible services, and to improve equal opportunities in employment’ (CRE website 2002 http://www.cre.gov.uk/). Local authorities and other public bodies in Wiltshire are subject to this duty to promote racial equality. But how are they going to achieve this? There is plenty of guidance emerging from government departments and from organisations such as the Commission for Racial Equality, but one thing is for sure, these public bodies will need to listen to the voice of those citizens from minority ethnic communities who experience racial inequality and racism within Wiltshire. There is a requirement to consult as well as a requirement to promote and it has been the purpose of this publication to give a platform to the voice of marginalised citizens. Public bodies in Wiltshire now have a clear message that there is a substantial minority of Wiltshire residents from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, of all different ages and with a diversity of experience, all of whom have experienced racial inequality and racism within the county boundary.

This publication is the latest in an important, if short, line of similar volumes which have given a voice to those experiencing racism in rural areas where officials are still prone to saying ‘there is no racism here, there are no black people to experience it’. Well, here are black people who have lived in Wiltshire much longer than most Wiltshire residents saying ‘here we are, we like living in Wiltshire, but things could be considerably better’. There is more than ample evidence here for public authorities to accept that there is racial inequality that requires action if services are to be made accessible to all Wiltshire residents and life experiences are to be improved.

It is notable how well balanced this document is. It provides an overall picture of Wiltshire’s minority ethnic residents liking the Wiltshire life, but pointing clearly to a range of areas in which their lives could be improved. The different sections highlight the ways in which school, work, access to local services and generally living in Wiltshire provides a context of racial disadvantage and racism. It is particularly dispiriting to note the way in which young black people have become so used to experiences of racism that they do not classify verbal abuse as racist. As the report puts it ‘learning to live with verbal abuse appeared to be the norm amongst the young respondents’. There is also evidence here of inequality within the employment sector that confirms institutional racism is a factor in Wiltshire life.
I believe that this publication is important because it is well researched and well written, but mostly because it persuasively reflects the words of minority ethnic citizens in Wiltshire. It will be, for this reason, an important document to spur action under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act by public services within the county. I think it will also be of interest to people in similar positions in other rural areas around the United Kingdom. It is a powerful and positive document that is worthy of serious study and appropriate responsive action.

Mark Baldwin
University of Bath
March 2002
1 Introduction

The aim of this report is to present an insight into the experiences, perceptions and needs of minority ethnic residents living and working in Wiltshire. This is a subject that has, to date, received scant attention. Little has generally been written on the experience of minority ethnic groups living in rural counties, such as Wiltshire. The limited literature that has been written in the South West, commencing with Jay's 1992 report entitled 'Keep Them In Birmingham', was based on four counties in the region, and excluded Wiltshire.

The conduct of this study is timely. The councils in Wiltshire have entered a period of rapid modernisation. The development of community strategies; consultation strategies; social inclusion strategies; local strategic partnerships; and the onset of ‘E’ government, all need to incorporate the needs and views of our minority ethnic citizens. Of particular importance, is the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which came into force in April 2001. This Act places a new duty on public authorities, when they carry out their functions, to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; promote equality of opportunity; and promote good relations between people of different racial groups:

The duty's aim is to make race equality a central part of the way public authorities work, by putting it at the centre of policy making, service delivery, regulation and enforcement and employment practice. (CRE, 2001)

By 31st May 2002, every public authority will have to publish a Race Equality Scheme, an action plan setting out how they plan to meet their general and other specific duties to promote race equality. (For further information, see Appendix A).

Summary of Key Findings in this Study

The respondents who participated in this study had diverse experiences of living and working in Wiltshire. However, a number of common themes and issues emerged, many of which parallel findings of previous research on the minority ethnic population living in rural counties. Below is a brief summary of the key findings that emerged from this study.

• Contrary to the belief that racism is not a problem in Wiltshire, respondents recollected experiences ranging from subtle racist comments to cases of
racial harassment and physical abuse. The experiences included incidents in the school setting, the workplace and public places. Many respondents considered their experiences to be racial prejudice borne out of a lack of contact with people of minority ethnic backgrounds. Although they often did not classify this as racism, it is still racism nonetheless.

- Secondary school respondents identified difficulties in reporting racial incidents in schools and some of the adult respondents discussed the difficulties of reporting racial incidents to the police. It emerged that one of the key factors hindering the reporting of racist incidents was the fear of retribution, both within the school setting and the wider public setting.

- Problems arising from a language barrier were common among a number of the older respondents and some of the younger adult respondents. A lack of English language reading and writing skills meant that tasks of form filling, finding out information about services and entitlements, attending parents’ evenings and finding employment proved difficult for these respondents. Many respondents were keen on improving Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills but felt restricted by their lack of English reading and writing skills.

- A sense of isolation was identified by a few respondents, particularly female respondents who were not in employment and had few opportunities to meet people. A couple of professional respondents also talked about experiencing a sense of isolation in the workplace.

- In terms of access to, and use of, public services such as sports facilities, libraries and advisory services, some of the female respondents identified childcare responsibilities and transport arrangements as barriers to accessing these services. A number of respondents identified religious and cultural factors as reasons for not using some of the leisure and social facilities such as youth centres and swimming pools.

- During discussions on classification and ethnic monitoring on application forms for jobs, it emerged that some respondents felt they were discriminated against as minority ethnic applicants and viewed ethnic monitoring negatively. A couple of respondents had the perception that securing permanent posts and gaining promotion in local authority jobs was difficult for minority ethnic applicants and employees.
Wiltshire’s Minority Ethnic Population

The small numbers of minority ethnic individuals living in rural areas may be a reason why it has tended to be a neglected area of research. There is a commonly held belief that racism is not a problem in areas with a small minority ethnic population. This is very much a myth. Not only is racism widespread in rural areas, but it is often compounded by limited contact with minority ethnic individuals and limited knowledge of other cultures in predominantly white areas. (For a further discussion see the section entitled ‘Literature Review’).

In Wiltshire, there is a small, but significant, minority ethnic population. At the time of writing, the estimated size of the minority ethnic population had to be based on the 1991 census. By applying census minority ethnic percentages to the most current population figures available, it is estimated that there are 4,500 individuals of a minority ethnic background living in Wiltshire. One third of Wiltshire’s minority ethnic population is estimated to live in just 12 wards. The market town of Trowbridge, in West Wiltshire, appears to have the largest concentration of the minority ethnic population (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward Name</th>
<th>Estimated Minority Ethnic Population</th>
<th>% of the Total Ward Population</th>
<th>% of the Total Minority Ethnic Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warminster East</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>5.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drynham (Trowbridge)</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town (Chippenham)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>3.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John O’Gaunt (Trowbridge)</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>2.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College (Trowbridge)</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2.31%</td>
<td>2.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durrington</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
<td>2.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adcroft (Trowbridge)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>3.31%</td>
<td>2.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyneham</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.71%</td>
<td>2.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Tidworth</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>2.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amesbury</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1.17%</td>
<td>2.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park (Trowbridge)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.81%</td>
<td>2.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulford</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1.31%</td>
<td>1.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Source: 1991 Census and Oxford University 1998 Population Figures
Literature Review

Literature on the minority ethnic population in rural counties is, currently, limited and existing research conducted in the South West excludes Wiltshire. Eric Jay’s research entitled ‘Keep them in Birmingham’ (1992), conducted on behalf of the Commission for Racial Equality, was an influential piece of work which prompted further research projects on rural racism. A number of common themes and parallels emerged between the studies in terms of experiences of living and working in a rural county and access to statutory and non-statutory services. Below is a summary of the key findings of the principal research studies conducted in rural counties.

- ‘No Problem Here’
  Previous studies have highlighted how people in authority in rural counties have tended to dismiss racism as a problem due to the small numbers of minority ethnic individuals living in the area. Dhalech (1999) documented how this attitude was conveyed among many people, including councillors, senior directors and managers of statutory and non-statutory agencies. Gaine (1995) and Jay (1992) also found this to be true among many members of staff in schools.

- Experiences of Racism
  The studies documented widespread experiences of racism and discrimination within a number of settings including schools, the workplace and public places. Experiences ranged from overt and blatant racist remarks and harassment to subtle condescension and bigotry (Jay, 1992). A lack of interaction with people of a minority ethnic background was identified as a factor contributing to racism and prejudice in rural counties, where many attitudes were borne out of ignorance and based on stereotypes.

- Barriers to Accessing Services
  Previous studies noted how many organisations operated on a ‘colour-blind’ and ‘available to all’ basis. However, they failed to account for difficulties which may arise as a result of language and culture differences. Language difficulties were identified as a major barrier for many individuals.

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1 Following Eric Jay’s report based on Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset, the key pieces of research carried out in rural counties include Nadira Kenny’s study entitled ‘It Doesn’t Happen Here’ (1997), based in Somerset and Mohammed Dhalech’s work entitled ‘Challenging Racism in the Rural Idyll’, based in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset (1999).
of a minority ethnic background. Filling in forms, attending parents’ evenings, accessing information about services, reporting incidents and carrying out other general day-to-day tasks proved to be quite difficult.

• Feelings of Isolation

A sense of loneliness and isolation was shared by many minority ethnic individuals who spoke very little English. Previous studies described how there was little in place for individuals of a minority ethnic background in terms of meeting places and social groups, including places of worship and social clubs. Previous research has also highlighted a lack of statutory and non-statutory support networks for people of a minority ethnic background, in the absence of which, internal support within the family was of great importance.

• Identity and Becoming ‘Invisible’

Previous research has highlighted how some respondents tried to shed their ethnic identity in an attempt to assimilate and become ‘invisible’. Some respondents spoke of not wanting to be seen as ‘different’ or ‘rocking the boat’ (Jay, 1992). Jay’s report noted how some young children of a minority ethnic background who grew up in a predominantly white environment had a negative view of their colour and wanted to become white.

Methodology

Before embarking on this study, a number of fundamental questions had to be addressed. The first question concerned the choice of research methodology. Due to the lack of literature on minority ethnic groups in Wiltshire and also the need for current information, it was decided that the study would be based primarily on fieldwork.

The second question concerned the nature of the data required and how it was to be collected. Since the aim of the study was to gain an insight into the perceptions and experiences of minority ethnic groups, it was decided that the most appropriate research method would be qualitative rather than quantitative data collection. Whereas quantitative research places emphasis on objectivity and the acquisition of ‘hard’ facts that can be measured or

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1 Chris Gaine conducted his research entitled ‘Still No Problem Here’ in schools in Wiltshire and Swindon.
quantified, qualitative research, with its roots in the humanistic tradition, places emphasis on insight. In order to acquire such an insight, the researcher is required to get ‘close’ to their data. Qualitative techniques strive to determine what things ‘exist’ rather than to determine how many such things there are. Consequently, they are not concerned with measurement nor require standardised data collection (Hedges, 1981). Instead, qualitative techniques are concerned with the acquisition of a large volume of rich data from a limited number of individuals, which is analysed in a more ‘explicitly interpretative, creative and personal way’ than quantitative research (Walker, 1985). Qualitative research is concerned with analytical generalisations rather than statistical generalisations. Jean Morton-Williams (1985) notes that ‘The need for depth of understanding outweighs the need for quantification’.

The qualitative approach was essential given that the key aim of the study was to hear the ‘voice’ of people who were marginalised or invisible. The qualitative approach was essential then, to ensure that minority ethnic citizens in Wiltshire were given an opportunity to be heard.

The principal qualitative technique chosen for this study was group discussions (‘focus groups’). Since the groups would consist of individuals that knew each other, there would be a relaxed environment in which respondents may feel confident to share experiences and discuss sensitive issues, such as racism. Discussion of experiences by peers could also prompt the respondents to remember their own experiences. Another advantage of focus groups is that they allow contact with a large number of individuals, much larger than would have been possible through individual interviews. This was particularly important to this study due to limited time scales.

In contrast to the ‘standard’ focus group comprising 6-8 individuals, it was learnt early on in this study that ‘mini’ focus groups, comprising 4-5 individuals, were far more appropriate. The groups were based on free-flowing conversation, which was important in order to discuss fully the respondents’ experiences and perceptions of living and working in Wiltshire. It proved to be much more effective to discuss subjects in the depth required for this study in a smaller group.

While the study was primarily based on focus groups, on certain occasions, one-to-one or duo interviews had to be conducted. In some cases, focus groups were not feasible due to an individual’s geographical isolation or because they had small children and needed the interview to be conducted
in their home. Interviews also tended to be conducted with business owners, where it was impossible to arrange mutually convenient meeting times between different business owners or due to geographical dispersion. To maintain consistency in subjects discussed, the interviews were conducted using the same topic guide as the focus groups.

The focus groups were held in premises that were familiar to the respondents so that they felt relaxed and at ease. Typically, the adult groups met in their community group’s usual meeting place and the focus groups with young people were held in a school classroom. Interviews tended to be conducted in the respondents’ home. With prior consent of the group, the discussions were tape-recorded. In all cases bar one, the interviews were conducted in English. In a couple of the adult focus groups there were some language problems which proved difficult to overcome due to a lack of common language except English. In rare cases, it was difficult to express or understand ideas and discuss issues in much depth. In these cases, all attempts were made to try and clarify what was being said and what was being understood.

It was important not to influence responses through formulating questions based on preconceptions. Instead, discussions were conducted in an informal conversational style, which allowed scope for exploring and discussing issues important to group members. To prevent the conversations from moving onto topics that were irrelevant to the study, a topic guide was used which listed the broad subject areas to address during the discussions. The fact that a framework had been established prior to the discussions greatly simplified the analysis stage. The first stage of analysis consisted of ‘fracturing’ the transcripts then re-structuring the data, first by categorisation of recurrent themes, and then by developing relationships between the categories. The structure of this report has largely been determined by the structure which emerged during the analysis stage.

In accordance with the qualitative methodology, the findings are presented in this report ‘in terms of impressions gained, as hypotheses rather than as firm conclusions’ (Morton-Williams, 1985). The findings are used to illustrate the range of perceptions to particular issues rather than to highlight how many such views exist.

A third question to be addressed before conducting the study concerned the size and composition of the sample for the fieldwork. The aim was to reach as many minority ethnic individuals from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, social backgrounds and age groups as possible, within the
limited time scales. The Wiltshire Racial Equality Council (WREC) Community Development Workers were of great assistance in setting up adult focus groups on our behalf, through their contacts with community groups. The Development Workers had already established good relationships with individuals in these groups, which certainly assisted in obtaining the consent of these individuals to take part in the study. The Development Worker was often present during the focus group, which served to reassure the individuals.

Contacts with young people were made primarily through the Wiltshire Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS). The timing of this study coincided with another piece of research that was being undertaken by a researcher at the University College of Chichester. The objective of this research was to understand the experiences of young people within the school setting, which was also an area of interest to our own study. The researcher had already organised a series of focus groups at schools in Wiltshire and, since the subject matter was of mutual interest, she kindly allowed us to accompany her and share the group. This eliminated duplication in contacting schools and gaining parental consent. The fact that there were two facilitators present did not seem to have any adverse effects on the group dynamics or the willingness of the respondents to talk.

Within this report, the term ‘minority ethnic’ is used to refer to people who would define themselves as non-white in terms of their ethnic identity. All respondents were of a ‘visible’ minority ethnic background; that is, they were identifiable through skin colour or distinct physical characteristics. Most work on race and ethnicity in Britain concentrates on the non-white communities as they account for around 80% of the total minority ethnic population in the country (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996). Not only are they a significant group, but as they are easily identifiable, their experiences in terms of racism and discrimination are also considered to be different to white minority ethnic groups.

In total, 61 individuals took part in this study, ranging in age from 8 to 80. The principal minority ethnic groups involved in this study were the African-Caribbean and Asian groups. However, individuals from other minority ethnic groups took part as well as individuals with dual heritage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-Caribbean</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Heritage (White/African-Caribbean)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Heritage (White/Asian)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Heritage (White/Somalian)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Ethnicity Breakdown of Respondents

Table 3 shows a breakdown of respondents by age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-18 years</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-59 years</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Age Breakdown of Respondents
2 Experiences of Living in Wiltshire

This section considers the experiences of living in Wiltshire for individuals of a minority ethnic background. It looks at the integration of minority ethnic individuals within the wider local community as well as the extent to which they feel a close attachment to local residents and families of a similar ethnic background. Their experiences and perceptions are considered in light of a number of factors including religion/culture, language difficulties, friendship and support networks and experiences of racism. This section identifies significant variations in the extent to which these factors have a bearing on the experiences of the respondents depending on their ethnicity, age, occupation and individual personalities.

Within this report, the term ‘community’ is used to refer to a geographic community. It encompasses residents of a locality, whether it be a small neighbourhood, town or the county. Membership of this community is based on a common geographic locality rather than shared views, beliefs or religious and traditional cultures. A sense of belonging to the community is based on the level of integration with local residents and friendship networks formed within the locality.

In certain instances, references have been made to minority ethnic communities, such as the Moroccan community and the Asian community. The term ‘community’, here, goes beyond a shared geographic proximity. Membership of this type of community is based on shared religious or cultural traditions and beliefs. In comparison to inner cities, Wiltshire does not have visible minority ethnic communities living in close geographical proximity. However, for some individuals of the minority ethnic population, there is a strong affiliation with local individuals and families of a similar ethnic background. Some individuals would see themselves as part of small minority ethnic communities consisting of local individuals and families, who do not necessarily have regular contact with each other as they are geographically dispersed.

Community Networks

During discussions with respondents of all ages, it emerged that the extent to which they felt part of the local community depended on the length of time they had resided in Wiltshire, their age and their occupation. In some instances, factors such as religion and traditions as well as individual personalities and opportunities to meet people were just as important. Some
respondents felt very much part of a local community while others felt a stronger affiliation with people of a similar ethnic background.

A female professional respondent, who had lived in Wiltshire all her life, talked about her positive experience of growing up in Wiltshire. She lived in a small village where she felt very much involved in the local community. She talked about village events and activities that she had been involved in organising. She had a strong sense of belonging to her local community:

It is a little village and I’m the only black person. It’s quite a nice mix because people get on with their own stuff, but there is quite a lot of things that go on in the village and they make sure that everybody’s invited, try and include everyone.

Since she had lived in Wiltshire all her life, her friendship networks were established at school and in the workplace. She felt very happy living in Wiltshire. Similar experiences were shared by a group of African-Caribbean adults in their 30s who had also lived in Wiltshire all their lives.

It was not only respondents that had lived in Wiltshire all their lives that felt part of the local community. Another professional respondent, who moved to Wiltshire in 1994 due to his work in the army, felt he was very much part of the local community. He had made many friends in the area and was often involved in arranging local events and activities with other local residents. A Korean respondent, who had lived in Wiltshire for a number of years, also felt very much part of the wider community. She had built up her friendship networks with parents at her son’s school and felt settled in Wiltshire. She had previously lived in another rural county in the South West and felt that people were far more accepting of diversity in Wiltshire in comparison.

An Asian business owner felt that, having lived in Wiltshire for 16 years, he and his family were very much part of the local community. When he first moved to Wiltshire, from another county, he had no local friends or family. He talked about the need to make an effort to mix with the locals in order to be part of the community. He was often involved in fundraising for the local church and local charity events, which helped him to meet new people and make friends:

That’s the sort of thing that helps us to infuse in the community, regardless of colour. I didn’t know anybody at all really, then we came here and made friends and, after 16 years, we just feel like part of the community.
A group of older African-Caribbean respondents discussed how they thought it was important to make an effort to integrate with the local community. They had all lived in Wiltshire since the 1960s and felt very much part of the community. They felt they had worked and contributed to the development of the town in which they lived.

They also felt that there had been a reduction in discrimination and racism compared to previous decades and that people were far friendlier towards them today. They put this down to having the chance to prove to the locals that they are good people:

There was complaint at first but basically you have to apply yourself and show that you can live up to a standard (…) Well, going back to the start, when like everywhere else people are afraid of what they don’t know, when we come here first, the people around they was afraid. 1960, there wasn’t a lot of black people around for them [the white people] to know and as soon as we start to apply ourselves and to show that we are like anybody else, we make our own sport, we make our own parties or whatever. For a time, we cling together and gradually we start to move out (…) So now that they know us, it’s a different thing. You have to apply yourself. We show that we are good people, and nobody need not to be afraid of us and now, in Trowbridge, everyone of us can say we have so much friends.

The older African-Caribbean respondents said that they loved living in Wiltshire and that the rural environment reminded them of back home:

I wouldn’t want to live anywhere else in this country but Wiltshire: Trowbridge, Melksham, Devizes and Chippenham. This is one of the best places. To prove that… many people in London, as soon as they retire, they come to the West country, because this is one of the best place. It remind you so much of back home. The environment, the food, the farms and the people.

Many respondents felt their children were happy and integrated within the local community to a greater extent than they were themselves as children. This was particularly true for respondents whose children have lived in Wiltshire for most of their life as they have had the opportunity to mix with their peers at school and form their friendship networks.

A group of Asian females in their late teens/early 20s who had lived in Wiltshire for almost 13 years, felt that it had been easier for them to integrate than it had been for their parents and grandparents who had moved to Wiltshire at a later age.
A: When you’re growing up, you’re being shaped aren’t you? And you can mould into society as it is, whereas if you’re a grown up, you have your values impregnated in your brain.

B: ‘Cos my mum, when she came from Bangladesh, she lived in Birmingham, she kinda built her friendship there and to move away from that, she misses it.

Alongside a sense of belonging to the wider local community, many respondents also felt a close affiliation to members of a similar ethnic background who lived locally. The older African-Caribbean respondents had a strong affiliation with other local African-Caribbean residents. This sense of belonging was established through their involvement with the local church. The church was not only a place of worship but also a place of socialisation.

Groups of Moroccan adult respondents also identified a strong affiliation with local residents of a similar ethnic background. Some of the Moroccan adult respondents had lived in Wiltshire for almost 30 years and said that they liked the area and found the majority of the people friendly. A couple of the respondents had moved to the area very recently; one male respondent who moved to Wiltshire almost a year ago, said he had decided to move here because all his friends from back home were living here. He felt a stronger sense of community among the Moroccan families in Wiltshire than in London, where he had previously lived. Social activities for the Moroccan respondents took place in the local mosque, which they had collectively helped to build almost five years ago. They had also successfully bid for a piece of land from the local authority and had plans to have a community centre built there. Though the Moroccan men and women had some white friends and had a good relationship with their neighbours, it emerged that their affiliation with other Moroccan locals was of greater importance to them due to similarities in cultural traditions.

The group of Asian female respondents in their late teens/early 20s explained that a sense of community was very important to their parents and elders. They were quite happy about their own geographical detachment from a visible, close knit Asian community for reasons which are further discussed in the section entitled ‘Religion and Cultural Traditions’. However, their parents and grandparents sometimes felt socially isolated in Wiltshire as their friendship networks were in larger cities. This was particularly true for their mothers and grandparents who were not in employment. Their household responsibilities often meant they had few opportunities to meet people and socialise within the wider community (see sections entitled ‘Language Difficulties’ and ‘Religion and Cultural Traditions’).
An Asian housewife in her mid 30s, who moved to Wiltshire from another county six years ago, explained that she often tried to make an effort to meet people, make new friends and integrate with neighbours. When she moved to Wiltshire with her husband, she did not know anybody and had no family in England. Since she was not in employment and had childcare responsibilities, her opportunities to meet people were limited. She made friends with neighbours and a few parents at her children’s school and she occasionally did some voluntary work at the school. This respondent felt very lonely, despite her efforts to socialise with people. Her health visitor introduced her to a Moroccan women’s group in a neighbouring town. However, she found it difficult to integrate with other members of the group as they often spoke in Arabic. She now cannot attend the group because bus timetables make it impossible for her to get back in time to collect her daughter from playgroup. Loneliness is something that very much affects her life and she spoke about her plans to move to a larger city in the near future, though she says that her children are very happy living in Wiltshire:

It’s not definite yet, but we’re thinking about it ‘cos we both feel lonely. We haven’t got any one of our own here. We haven’t decided yet. Our children’s schools are really good here. They are happy in school and we’re not having any racial problems, so things are okay. We may go in the future but still nothing definite yet. I get depressed because I live alone. I’m lonely, I miss my family.

Religion and Cultural Traditions

For many of the African-Caribbean, Moroccan and Asian respondents, their sense of community was based on a common background, religion and traditions. This was particularly true for the adults and the older respondents whose friendship networks consisted primarily of individuals of a similar background.

The Moroccan, and many of the Asian, respondents were Muslim and their religious affiliation was generally very strong. As Muslims, they would not socialise in certain public places such as pubs, due to religious restrictions. The adult respondents were happy that their children felt very much part of the local community and had many white friends, but they also expressed anxieties about their children participating in certain social activities and social settings with their white peers. There was a worry that the children would transgress from their parental cultural norms and beliefs in the absence

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3 Direct translation from Bengali.
of positive influences from a visible Muslim community. The Moroccan men expressed concern about their children attending the local youth centre as they preferred a more controlled environment where there was no danger of the children coming into contact with alcohol, cigarettes and drugs (see section entitled ‘Youth Centres and Other Social Activities’).

The local mosque was very important for the Moroccan community, not only as a place of worship, but also because it provided a social setting where children and young people could learn about their cultural traditions. In the absence of provisions for young people, which comply with religious restrictions, the parents were apprehensive about their children socialising outside of the school and mosque setting. The Moroccan respondents identified the need for a local community centre which would have multi functions, including providing a social outlet for young people:

    Our children, most of them have got nowhere to go because of our religion as Muslims. We would like to bring our children up as Muslims and, really, they haven’t got anywhere to go here in the town except the mosque and it’s too small to do activities (…)

In another Wiltshire district, a group of Asian middle school pupils talked about how they attended the local mosque every day after school in order to learn to read Arabic and Bengali. The mosque also served as a place of socialisation for the children.

In terms of religious or cultural festivals and celebrations, there were mixed feelings about celebrating in Wiltshire. The Moroccan respondents felt that there was a strong community based around the Moroccan attendees at the local mosque. In discussing Ramadan, the Moroccan women felt that it was good now that a mosque had been built in their town, because a lot more people travelled from other towns to meet there. The mosque provided a social as well as a religious setting. One of the respondents mentioned how she liked going to the mosque to meet different people. Everyone came together at religious festivities and the adult males talked about the need for a larger venue for their celebrations.

In contrast, the group of young Asian female respondents in their late teens/early 20s felt that their community was too geographically scattered to be able to celebrate religious festivals:

    A: Eid isn’t exactly amazing round here.
    B: It’s completely pointless.
    C: It’s boring because the people around us don’t celebrate it, it’s a community thing…
    A: and there’s a lack of people (…)
Other respondents, both young and old, had similar feelings about celebrating religious festivals in a community where there were very few individuals with a similar religious and cultural background. Often, respondents claimed to travel outside of Wiltshire to celebrate with family and friends. Some respondents mentioned that they had to travel outside the county to attend places of religious worship. For example, one Asian business owner said that he travelled to Bristol once a week to access his nearest Gudwara.

As well as religious and cultural traditions, a few respondents mentioned that they had dietary requirements that were not widely available in Wiltshire. A Chinese respondent explained that he had to travel outside of Wiltshire to be able to purchase certain foods. A group of Fijian women identified the lack of availability of their staple diet as a particular issue for them. They explained how they had to travel to Swindon to purchase their food, involving a three-hour round trip by bus.

**Dress**

A number of the female Muslim respondents felt that their traditional dress was a determining factor in the way some people treated them. A female business owner, who lived just outside the Wiltshire border, said that she received a lot of racist comments due to her clothing, which immediately identified her as a Muslim. She felt that her experience of verbal abuse had increased since the September 11th 2001 incidents.  

An Asian housewife discussed how she used to feel uncomfortable wearing a headscarf when she first moved to Wiltshire, as people would often stare. She said that people were used to it now, but she was still uncomfortable with the thought of wearing a sari in public:

> I used to feel uncomfortable before but not so much now. But I’ve never worn a sari out before and I can’t help but think I’d get stared at, so I don’t wear it.

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4 A focus group with Fijian respondents consisted of women whose husbands served in the army. The length of time the respondents had lived in the UK ranged between one week to one year. The respondents held four-year visas, after which their husbands and their families will be relocated. The respondents lived in housing provided by the army. Many of the services they accessed were provided by the army and, therefore, their needs, experiences and perceptions were different to other respondents.

5 This refers to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001.

6 Direct translation from Bengali.
An Asian female respondent in her early 20s explained how she felt that people treated her differently depending on whether she was wearing traditional Indian clothes or western clothes:

If I’m out shopping dressed in my Indian clothes, people think ‘oh Indian housewife’ and they treat me like that as well. If I’m in my western clothes, they see me as their peer and treat me as an intelligent person (…)

**Skin Colour**

It appeared that experiences of racism and prejudice depended very much on skin colour rather than nationality, place of birth or religion. Skin colour is often the most visible characteristic of a minority ethnic person. A significant proportion of the young respondents were born in England. However, time and time again, examples were given of verbal abuse, including name calling: ‘Paki’; ‘Blackie’; ‘Chocolate Chip Cookie’, and being told to ‘go back to your own country’. The older African-Caribbean respondents felt that white minority ethnic people were treated better than black people because they were not so easily identifiable.

Do you think people still go by those stereotypes of Black and Asian people as being trouble makers?
A: They do that because of the colour of your skin...
B: Just because you dark.

Do you think it’s more because, I mean we’ve got other foreign people in this country, like other Europeans...
A: They get treated better.
You think they get treated better?
A: Yes ‘cos they white (…)

One African-Caribbean female respondent, aged 11, said that she did not experience any racism or verbal abuse because of her skin colour. However, during her attendance at a predominantly white primary school, she was constantly aware that she was a different colour to her peers. She felt uncomfortable in assembly because she stood out.

In my old primary school I was the only black in the whole school and so I was like in assembly and I was like ‘oh no you can see me, I stand out’.

I don’t know, I just, I feel more comfortable because I was born there [in Jamaica], so I feel more comfortable there and like, here, I feel like I stand out (…)

On the other hand, a male African-Caribbean respondent and a female respondent of dual heritage, both aged 15, gave examples of being made to feel ‘dirty’ because of their skin colour:
A: To see if somebody likes me, well some people don’t actually want to touch me ‘cos of my skin colour so, that’s how I know if they really like me, you know, give them a pat or shake their hand.

B: They make you feel dirty.

A: Yeah, if they don’t want to shake my hand then it means they don’t want to touch me (…)

An Asian female business owner highlighted the shocking effects that the experience of racism in school had had on her two younger children. She explained that her eldest daughter, aged 15, did not seem to have any problems with racism in school. However, she was concerned about the younger children, aged five and six, who had developed very negative views about their colour. Her children attended a school where there were only three black children in total. They were both very aware of their colour and often suffered verbal abuse from other children. They did not want to be black and thought that white people were more privileged than black people:

Every time she goes to wash, she put so much soap on and she goes ‘mum, the more I rub, I think my skin is going to become lighter and I am going to turn white one day’. I was like ‘what is wrong with you?’, she says ‘there’s nothing wrong with me mum, but I’d like to be white’.

‘My complexion, mum, being dark you get picked on. Brown is not the best colour’.

Another member of the same family discussed how some people could be very welcoming and that skin colour was never an issue, but others tended not to be able to see beyond skin colour.

A group of secondary school pupils talked about skin colour and felt that their experiences would be different if they were white. A female respondent of dual heritage (Asian/White) claimed that she would like to see what it would be like to spend a day as a white person:

A: I always wonder what it would be like to be another colour. Talk about a TV programme called ‘Changing Races’. How do you think it would be for you? ‘Cos you said you’d like to try it for a day. How different do you think it would be?

A: Quite different.

B: You won’t get any comments from younger people or anything.

Some people are so nice, they don’t care about black, white, green, blue, and some people they think about brown colour. I said, ‘look colour doesn’t matter, humanity is more important’, and some people say ‘no, you shouldn’t live in this country’.
Language Difficulties: Impact on Day-to-day Life

A number of respondents identified their lack of English reading and writing skills as a problem, especially when they received official letters or had to fill in forms. This was particularly true for the older African-Caribbean respondents, who had had few opportunities to attend language classes when they had immigrated to the UK. A number of Moroccan and Asian female respondents, primarily housewives, also had similar problems. The Moroccan women tended to rely on their children to help fill in the forms but they worried about what they would do when their children left home. They talked about the difficulties they experienced while carrying out simple day-to-day tasks including filling in prescription forms at the chemist and returning items to shops. They wanted to improve their English reading and writing skills and be able to fill in forms independently.

Some of the older African-Caribbean respondents explained that they found their local council very helpful when they experienced difficulties in filling in forms or understanding letters. However, a couple of respondents discussed the disadvantage of not being able to read or write. One respondent mentioned how his lack of reading and writing skills made it difficult for him to access information about his entitlements:

Anytime I get a letter from the council, I have to bring it back to them and tell them to read it and tell me what it is and fill it out for me (…) 27 years I live in a council house, so they know that, that I can’t read or write (…) There is things in this country you can get, but if you’re like me you can’t get it, they don’t tell you.

A Moroccan male respondent felt that it was difficult to find a job or get promoted when you were unable to read or write English well:

Our problem is, we can speak English but the writing is the most difficult. They cannot promote you if you don’t write anything.

Some of the young respondents discussed how language difficulties made it difficult for their parents to attend parents’ evenings or report racist incidents to the school (see section on “Young People and the School Setting”).

A female Moroccan respondent explained that during encounters of verbal abuse in public places, it was often difficult to reply due to limited language skills:
In any country there are good people and bad people, but sometimes you find it bit difficult because you sometimes can’t understand how to speak very well, and if they say something to you and you do not understand what they said, you cannot reply.

All respondents with limited reading and writing skills were keen to improve their skills. They all displayed an interest in attending language classes and some were already attending classes set up by the Wiltshire Racial Equality Council (see section entitled ‘Language Classes’).

Classification

The respondents had very mixed views when the subject of classification was discussed. Some of the older African-Caribbean respondents explained that their children, and even their grandchildren, did not see themselves as British even though they were born in Britain. When they filled in forms and had to define their ethnicity, they often would tick ‘Caribbean’ or write ‘Jamaican’. The respondents explained that this was due to their children not feeling British, often as a result of racism:

A: That’s what my children, that’s what they… they don’t put British, they put Jamaican [on forms].

When you fill in forms what do you put?

All: Caribbean.

A: And our children, they do the same thing.

B: It’s the way they are treated, these children supposed to feel British, the children they born here but they don’t feel British (…)

Your grandchildren, do they put British?

A: They don’t put British, they say they are Jamaican (…)

It was mentioned that forms often failed to list the specific ethnic categories that applied to them. This was the case for a number of parents who had children of dual heritage or were of dual heritage themselves. One group of professionals discussed how their children were all born in the UK, but they tick ‘Other’ as there was no box for ‘Black British’ or ‘British Asian’:

A: Like for me, there isn’t a box for people from Mauritius so I just put it under ‘Other’ or ‘Black’.

B: I put ‘Black Caribbean’, but if my daughter was filling it, she would put ‘Others’, because there is no ‘Black British’ is there? It doesn’t say that does it? So my daughters would say ‘Others’.

They wouldn’t put British?

B: No, because there is not ‘Black British’, it’s ‘Black Caribbean’. They were born in England, they consider themselves as ‘Black British’, yeah, but there’s no box there for ‘Black British’, so they tick ‘Others’.
Whilst discussing classification with a female African-Caribbean business owner, it emerged that there was suspicion of discrimination if ethnicity was identified. The respondent did not think that identifying her ethnicity on certain forms was necessary and so would often leave the box blank. She also did this when filling in forms for her children:

I do put myself down as British. Sometimes when, well I know I shouldn’t really, but sometimes when it’s got the nationality ‘Black’, ‘White’, ‘Asian’, ‘Afro-Caribbean’, sometimes I don’t actually tick the box. I leave it blank. Sometimes I just think it’s unnecessary so I leave it blank.

**Do you think it has implications on how you get treated?**
Sometimes. It depends on what you’re applying for or what the form’s about. Sometimes I just think it’s unnecessary so I don’t write anything, so I just leave it un-ticked. But that’s just me.

**Switching Identities**

An Asian female respondent in her early 20s explained how she felt more ‘Bengali’ than her Asian peers in Birmingham because she was detached from the Asian community and wanted to ‘hold onto’ her culture. However, further on into the discussion she mentioned that she was able to ‘be herself’ among white people rather than Asian people. She felt able to adapt to both her parental cultural traditions and the social norms of her white peers, though they were very different to each other.

This respondent illustrated the dual personalities adopted by many Asian children brought up in Britain. Research on this subject has identified that, since these children’s parental culture is very different to those in the West, the children try to fit into both by adapting and modifying their behaviour to suit the setting. A group of Asian female respondents in their late teens/early 20s discussed their strategic behavioural changes:

A: I’m more myself round white people than I am around Asian people. Sounds a bit strange.
B: I feel like I know them [white people] more, although I don’t know them, I do know them more because I’m always around them (…)
A: But that’s only with grown up Asian people, I mean older Asian people. It’s not with the younger Asian people.
C: No, my Asian peers, I’m myself with them, I can tell them...

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7 Kathleen Hall (cited in Haw, 1998) documents how British Asian Sikh teenagers consciously and strategically act ‘British’ or ‘Indian’ depending on the geographical and social space in which they are situated. The movement and identities which are produced by these teenagers cannot be easily classified as ‘British’ or ‘Sikh’ and is more than the simple blending of the two.
about my white friends, but it’s only with older Bengali people that I can’t, ‘cos they had a different upbringing.
A: There’s a whole code in behaviour around them, it’s like a protocol, you have to be a certain way around them.
C: Manners!

These respondents liked the fact that they were detached from a visible Asian community because they felt much freer. Since they were geographically separate from an Asian community, they were not constantly being ‘monitored’ by their elders in public places. This made it easier for the girls to live ‘dual’ lives. In the absence of an Asian community, the home setting and the public setting were two very different social spheres. In contrast, the boundaries are a lot more blurred in an Asian community as Asian elders are also visible within the public setting:

What do you like about Wiltshire then, I mean, in comparison to Birmingham?
A: We’re secluded from everyone else... well it’s got its good points and bad points.
B: Well, obviously everyone in the Asian community’s always gossiping, so that’s one good thing, I mean, living in Wiltshire [away from all the gossip].
A: We’re away from all the, like, bad things.
B: You’re not influenced [by the Asian community], more of a laid back lifestyle.

Racism in Public Places

The extent to which respondents experienced racism or prejudice in Wiltshire varied. While some respondents recalled incidents where they had experienced overt racism, others stated that they had not experienced racism at all. However, during discussions, it emerged that, while the majority of respondents had encountered some form of racist verbal abuse or comments, they did not classify it as racism. Many respondents defined racism as physical abuse and aggressive verbal abuse that went beyond isolated incidents of name-calling.

I mean, obviously you get called names in the street, you know, but it’s just petty things like that. I’ve never had any like major incidents regarding racial tension.

The majority of respondents talked about how they often dealt with racist comments by just ignoring them and brushing them off:

You’re just used to it. We just accept it. That’s their problem, not mine... Unless it becomes physical.

Similar views were also expressed in discussions with young people. Initially, in all discussions, the majority of respondents claimed to have no problems
of racism but, later on, recollected accounts of being called names and experiencing verbal abuse (see section entitled ‘Young People and the School Setting’).

A couple of female respondents felt that they had been treated unfairly by bus drivers due to their ethnicity. A Greek female respondent shared her experience of a bus journey where she was unsure from which bus-stop to alight. She asked the driver for help but she felt that he had been unwilling to help her. As a result, she missed her stop and had to walk back. A group of Moroccan respondents recalled an incident encountered by their friend where a bus driver claimed that the particular bus service did not follow the route she was going. The lady started walking home and as she neared her house, she saw the same bus go past her. The Moroccan respondents felt that this lady was treated this way because she wore a headscarf:

She was so upset. She is ill as well, she is diabetic. She’s very tired, she’s very weak (…) She was very upset.

Many respondents discussed how white youths were often the perpetrators of racist incidents in public places. A Chinese professional respondent experienced problems with a group of local youths who would taunt him and shout out insults and abuse every time they saw him. He described one recent incident:

And then sometime, they see me walking in the street and they shout racial abuse like ‘get out of my country’ and that sort of thing and run away and, er, sort of making funny sounds (…) **Is it mainly young people that convey those kinds of attitudes?**

Yes, to me these are the three particular ones [the 3 teenagers] and I was just rushing to Tesco to get some ginger for my cooking and they run across and saw me and they started screaming and shouting and being very aggressive ‘fuck off’, so very upsetting. I know they did it because I’m foreigner, I’m not white’.

Often, the respondents put offensive behaviour down to immaturity rather than racism. This was one of the reasons why many of the respondents had not taken any action against this sort of behaviour. An Asian housewife also experienced an incident involving youths. She described an occasion when she returned home to find a group of boys in her front garden who verbally abused her as she went to her front door. A little while later, she went outside to find her daughter’s bike had been broken by the youths (see section entitled ‘Reporting Racist Incidents’).

An Asian female respondent described how the nature of racism in Wiltshire, or predominantly white counties, was very different to racism in inner cities.
She felt that, in Wiltshire, there is far more prejudice than actual ‘hate’ of minority ethnic groups:

I haven’t experienced racism, but immaturity. I’ve experienced prejudice, racist immature remarks and, I think, kids do that because they don’t understand. It’s nothing racist. I think there’s a lot more racism in the cities than there is here. In London, you really notice it. I think the only time when people are racist towards other people of different races is when they’re threatened of something. Right now, we’re a small community, we’re not such a threat to them, we’re not taking over their jobs, but in bigger cities there is a lot more racism ‘cos they feel threatened (...)

An older African-Caribbean respondent talked about an incident during Christmas where she had attended the local community centre for a Christmas activity arranged for the older African-Caribbean people. She was with a group of friends when someone came up to them and asked them what they thought they were doing in the community centre and implied that they did not belong there:

In Christmas there was a... somebody come talk to us and they said ‘why did you come here? How long you been here?’ And we’re here before them because they’re younger than us. They feel you’re invading their premises.

Similarly, another older African-Caribbean respondent highlighted an occasion where he was asked where he had got his passport from, implying he had come to the UK illegally:

Couple of months ago, this bloke said to me ‘where did you get your passport from?’ I said ‘I got a British passport’, he said ‘you don’t belong here ain’t you?’ I said ‘I come here with a British passport’.

Some of the respondents identified incidents at local pubs and clubs where they had experienced verbal abuse because of their colour. A young female respondent of dual heritage described her mother’s experience in a local pub at Christmas, where she was told to leave by a customer:

He said to my mum that she had to get out because she was black and she doesn’t belong in ___ [the town] (...) And then my dad said ‘right’, ‘cos it was his local pub anyway so he got up and left and the man just stayed there. My mum was like really upset, anyone would be if they got insulted like that...

A Fijian woman, whose husband served in the army, also described a similar incident at a local pub where her husband was called a ‘black bastard’. A Portuguese respondent described a recent incident where she was queuing outside a nightclub and the people behind her implied that they could push
in front as they were English:

A: I was talking to my sister in Portuguese, in the queue, and one of the girls just behind us, she was going to the security ‘I’m English, I’m English’. I was thinking ‘who cares?’

B: They think ‘I’m English, I can go first’. That’s what she meant by that maybe.

A: Oh yeah, that’s what she meant.

A Moroccan respondent explained that her husband, a taxi driver, was often insulted and harassed when he went about his day-to-day activities:

Yeah, he get people saying ‘f-off back to your own country’, you know, swearing.

As well as experiencing incidents of verbal abuse in public places, two respondents shared accounts of harassment experienced at home. A Portuguese respondent spoke about ongoing incidents of stones being thrown at her windows by groups of adolescents (see section entitled ‘Reporting Racist Incidents’). An Asian middle school respondent described how her family had moved houses due to experiences of harassment:

A: We moved houses because people started chucking mud-balls and eggs at our windows.

B: Oh that was probably because it was, er, Halloween.

C: Yeah, was it Halloween that day?

A: Nah, it was all the time.

Stereotypes

Many of the respondents had encountered negative stereotypes and prejudice regarding their culture and religion. One Asian business owner felt that people did not understand the input that the minority ethnic groups had had in the development of the British economy. She had often heard negative comments based on stereotypical assumptions about her home country, such as ‘you come here because you have no food back home’.

A group of older African-Caribbean respondents also felt that people still stereotyped black people as ‘troublemakers’. However, one respondent discussed how things were a little bit better today compared to the past:

This stereotype thing, that’s the worse thing that happen. I might be a bad one I do bad things, but she’s good and then they say ‘they all the same’. That’s one of the things that spoil a community. I tell you one thing, it’s a little bit better now, not a lot. In the 60s, 70s, 80s, everything that’s done bad, and if it’s a black person, it’s a Jamaican. It still goes on: robbery, murder, it’s a Jamaican. Just because they don’t know and it just say, everybody the same, they say ‘he’s black, he’s a Jamaican’. But now, gradually, they
get maybe from the accent or whatever, they know [the difference between Jamaican and other black people] but it still goes on (...)

Some of the secondary school pupils demonstrated the ignorance among many of their white peers about people of different ethnic backgrounds. One Greek secondary school pupil talked about how his sister was often called ‘Paki’ even though she was not Asian. Other pupils talked about how many white children still hold very negative preconceptions about certain ethnic groups. They believed that what they experienced most of the time was prejudice, based on stereotypical assumptions rather than actual racism in Wiltshire (see section entitled ‘Young People and the School Setting’):

Yeah, why is it that if you see black groups of people, they assume you’re bad because you’re black, and you do drugs ‘cos you’re black?

Yeah, I’ve heard normal white people talking about how they think that more coloured people would do robberies and stuff like that.

### The Effects of Racism

A number of respondents discussed the effects racism had had on their outlook on life and living in Wiltshire. For some respondents, continuous verbal abuse and harassment had left them feeling like foreigners and ‘second class’ citizens:

**Do you feel that, because you’ve put in so much yourselves, you’ve worked so hard for the area you live in, do you feel that’s appreciated by the white people today?**

All laugh.

A: I don’t think they do.

B: No they don’t.

A: I think we’re the second class to them.

They felt undermined and devalued despite their best efforts and hard work within the community. Respondents talked about how daily experiences of racism ‘destroy you mentally, physically and emotionally’ (see section entitled ‘Working in Wiltshire’). One Greek respondent explained how racism encountered in her previous job had left her feeling vulnerable and suspicious of white people. For other respondents, certain isolated incidents had left them feeling anxious and in fear of their own security or their children’s
security in public places. One professional respondent described how he felt he had to ‘prepare’ himself before he could leave the house:

A: When I’m walking in the street, I think I’m going to take my mobile.
B: If you feel as though, you know ‘I gotta take my mobile or take my camera’ just in case that happens, then that’s sort of like very restricting.
C: It’s not very relaxing.
B: And you’re almost like ‘I’m ready now’.

An Asian housewife was left feeling anxious for the safety of her children following an incident at the local park where an older male kept passing her at different points and kept threatening to tell the authority that she was breaking car parking regulations, even though she was parked legally:

From then on I felt a little anxious for my children. If my children go to the park on their own he may cause some trouble.8

A number of respondents also discussed the effects of racism on their identity. As previously mentioned, the older African-Caribbean respondents explained that they, and their children, did not ‘feel British’ despite being British citizens. One Asian respondent discussed the concerns she had for her five year old son growing up among a predominantly white school population. She worried about the possible experience of racism and the effects it could have:

I mean, I was anxious about it, more so for my son than for me. He’s only five, his identity’s not developed at all. He’s going to continuously develop, and he’s possibly going to face more discrimination than me, because I, you know, grew up in an inner city. I went to a school, you know, that was predominantly Asian. I then moved to London. Like I said, I lived in an area where there was huge diversity, so I’ve had people round me who understand me, know where I’ve come from, so much in common, but he doesn’t and he won’t. He’s the only... there’s only two black children in his school and he’s one of them and that was my anxiety.

**Reporting Racist incidents**

The vast majority of respondents explained that they often do not report racist incidents for a variety of reasons. For some respondents the fear of retribution often prevented them from reporting racist incidents, while others did not feel the incident was serious enough to contact the police. Some respondents said that being able to identify the perpetrators was a problem.

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8 Direct translation from Bengali.
It appeared that, in the majority of cases, respondents just ignored the problems or learned to cope with them. There was also a mixture of experiences among those who did report incidents, either to the police or other agencies.

One Chinese professional respondent, who constantly experienced racial harassment from a group of white youths, explained that he was unable to report them due to a combination of factors:

I think, individual situations, you have to balance. You don’t want to overreact and suffer the consequences ‘cos, you know, by telling the police vaguely, not knowing who the perpetrators are, police don’t know who they are and you just suffer the consequences. You know, more trouble, but at the same time you don’t want to leave things to go on forever. In some of the cases with children, what can you do with them? The police come and they say ‘oh they just children’, you can’t punish them. I know they give them warning but what?

A Portuguese female respondent who had contacted the police following incidents involving local youths, explained how it was difficult to take action against harassment if the perpetrators were unknown:

I called the police a few times but they weren’t doing anything. We had to see them [the perpetrators]. How can I see them? I can’t stand outside the door expecting for them to come.

An African-Caribbean professional respondent, on the other hand, described an incident that had had a successful outcome, following police intervention. His friend had been racially harassed in their local town centre by a young female. His friend called the police, who came out straight away and arrested the young lady. The respondent thought the police took the matter very seriously. An Asian respondent contacted the police following repeated verbal abuse from a group of white youths. The police came out after three days but she said the police did what was in their capability and the outcome was positive:

When we are out and we’re speaking in Bengali, these children would repeat what we are saying. They’ve done that a few times. But after informing the police and informing the mother, the boy got a warning and since then, he hasn’t done anything else.9

However, in a few cases, respondents felt that contact with the police had not had a positive outcome. Some respondents described how they felt that their complaints were not taken seriously or that they did not hear of any outcome. In a few cases, there was extreme dissatisfaction expressed

9 Direct translation from Bengali.
with the police, in terms of how they dealt with a racist incident. One Moroccan respondent explained that her husband had been in contact with the police a couple of times following experiences of racial harassment. However, they did not hear anything from the police on either occasion. Her husband still gets harassed by the same people.

An Asian female business owner had had very negative experiences of the local police when she reported incidents encountered at her restaurant. She felt that the police were generally unhelpful and she often felt let down by the service. She claimed that she had given up with the police and now used her own strategies to deal with difficult and abusive customers (see section entitled ‘Working in Wiltshire’):

A: And then the police, I feel so disgusted about the law, and now I say to the police ‘I’m gonna take the law into my own hands, what law you doing for me?’ I paying the police, I paying the everything, tax, insurance. What is all this for? No one’s helping. They [customers] have meal, they don’t pay, they refuse to pay, they have lovely drink, I call the police; police say they have the right to go. I said no.

B: What they call this kind of thing is civil matter (…)

A: Fair enough, from now on I’m not gonna call the police anymore. I have four mouths to feed. I’m doing this for myself and no one helping me. When I need help you not helping me, it’s a civil matter. You tell me go to the solicitor, have I got time to go to the solicitor? Have I got enough money to go to solicitor? No. I’m paying police tax and rate (…)

This respondent’s sister, who, with her husband, ran a restaurant in Wiltshire, also gave very negative accounts of her experience of reporting incidents to the police. The couple have experienced ongoing racial harassment from a particular group of people at their restaurant. They have endured a number of attacks ranging from windows being smashed, fireworks being lit outside the entrance of the restaurant and even knife threats on members of staff and physical violence (see section entitled ‘Working in Wiltshire’). The respondent described a recent incident where she and her husband had been physically attacked at closing time. She was appalled by the way the case was dealt with by the police and no longer had any faith in the police service:

But we have no faith whatsoever with the police. I came home and I was literally in bed for a few days and there was no police coming for the report or anything. So three days went by, I was in bed and I think they called once and said ‘at the weekend we are very short of police which is the reason why we cannot take
a statement from you’. And that was a reason from them and on the third day, I’m losing all the evidence [the scars]. There was bruising and lots of blood, you know. I was in bed in such pain. Anyway, so I called the police. Those people are arrested and I was told someone in the morning will come and take a statement from us. This is the third day now, can you believe it? It was a physical attack being made on us and they’re still not bothered (...) We just received a fax from Wiltshire Police saying that someone could come to my house and take a statement, and I thought ‘now you remembered?’ Anyway, he took a statement and there was no photographic evidence taken from me and, by that time, I was losing evidence. On the 6th day, that’s when they did, on the 6th day, there wasn’t much of it there anyway, you recover by then (…)
3 Access to Local Services

This section examines experiences of accessing and using key local services. It highlights how religious and cultural factors, as well as transport and childcare responsibilities, can sometimes prevent respondents from accessing certain local services, such as sports centres and social venues. This section also highlights how a lack of English language reading and writing skills amongst many members of the adult minority ethnic population hinders their access to local services. The findings in this section show how important it is for services to incorporate the specific needs of minority ethnic residents.

Libraries

The library service appeared to be widely used by young people or by parents on behalf of their young children. Libraries were primarily used to loan books, although one respondent also mentioned that his children hired video films. Occasionally, a few respondents used the computing facilities in the libraries, but many computer literate respondents stated that they had computers and Internet access at home. Respondents who attended colleges for language classes and ICT tended to use the libraries and computing facilities within their colleges rather than in public libraries.

In contrast, there appeared to be a lack of use of the library service among adult respondents. The predominant reason for this seemed to be a lack of time for reading rather than the need for library books in different languages. One of the female respondents who used the library service for her children mentioned that she would use the library computers if she knew how. The Fijian respondents had never used a local library and, when asked if this was due to the library not stocking books in different languages, they replied that it was more to do with not having time. They also mentioned that, in Fiji, libraries are more for academic use rather than for leisure.

Health and Social Services

All the respondents with whom health services were discussed were very positive about their experiences. Some of the Muslim women preferred to only see female doctors, while others were happy to see male doctors for general health concerns and female doctors for women’s problems. A group of older African-Caribbean respondents also had positive experiences of the health service today and stated that they were treated with respect, although they felt that they had suffered from discrimination in former decades.
their opinion, inadequacies in the health service were due to a shortage of resources and funds rather than racial discrimination.

With the exception of one respondent, all the women that had been in contact with health visitors were very positive about their experiences. They liked their health visitors and found them useful.

Only one respondent, an elderly African-Caribbean gentleman, mentioned that he had been in contact with Social Services. His wife was disabled and, although he carried out most of the household chores himself, he needed help with ironing. Social services were currently in contact with him, but had told him that resources were limited. At the time of writing, the case was still going on:

A: Social Services, now I have problems with them, because my wife is disabled and I got to do everything at home. I gotta do the cleaning, the washing and everything but I can’t do the ironing and I been asking and asking and asking and no one give me help. I gotta wash my clothes and wear them just the same [unironed].

Do you not get any support from Social Services? Did you apply?
A: I apply. Somebody came last week and said ‘we are so tied up, we got so much to do, we haven’t got nobody to do it’... they trying to help but they still short of people. She said she coming back sometime this week. There’s a lot of young black girls around here, they haven’t got a job, why not they employ some of them? They can’t find people to employ. First she say we haven’t got no money (...) Would you prefer a black person to help or...?
A: I don’t care who, I just want it done.
B: Something should be done about that, even for two hours man, even just the ironing (...)

Legal Advice

Many of the respondents had visited Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABs) to seek legal advice and found the service useful. For example, business owners in Kennet had sought advice from the local CAB after suffering attacks on their businesses. The CAB had given them good advice, informed them of their options and encouraged them to take further action.

A number of respondents in Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge mentioned that they had used the CAB in Trowbridge on a number of occasions. The closure of this CAB in August 2000 was seen to be a real problem. At the time of writing, the Trowbridge CAB was due to re-open in May 2002. One
of the Moroccan respondents highlighted how useful he had found the Trowbridge CAB:

It [the CAB] was here before, it was alright. I felt happy coming here and seeing them and they do a lot of things for you. Now you have to go to Devizes or Warminster or Frome.

A Portuguese respondent who had to travel to another town to access a CAB, had found that they were often too busy to help her:

With application forms, I went to use the Citizen’s Advice, and now it’s hard and we go to friend. We go to Chippenham and they don’t accept anyone from Trowbridge, so we have to go to Westbury. So we go to Westbury. I went there two times, it was full booked.

For legal advice or information on health, the Moroccan respondents in Trowbridge now go to WREC as their first point of contact.

Another respondent explained how her husband used to go to the CAB in Trowbridge before its closure. There have been instances in the past where she wished she could have gone to the CAB, but a lack of confidence prevented her from going:

Sometimes I wish I could go but I don’t know how it works. Once I was trying to bring my mother over to this country. My husband couldn’t help much because he was busy with his work, and all the letters that came, I tried to reply to them myself because I didn’t know where the advice bureau was, haven’t ever been there. I wanted to go but I didn’t know how they can help and it’s far.\(^{10}\)

The Fijian respondents mentioned that they had problems accessing information, particularly on benefit entitlements or work-related matters. They relied heavily on their husbands to seek information from the welfare officers and other officials. Often the husbands were too busy to be able to seek information on their behalves:

So you were saying about the information you get about things going on comes from your husband, what sort of information is that?
Crap, things I don’t need to know (…) I don’t have a working visa right now so I’ve been at home, getting bored. I’ve just asked him a few things to ask the welfare officer, social security, national insurance, but it’s always ‘tomorrow, tomorrow’. I’m still waiting for tomorrow.

The Fijian respondents felt they would benefit from an easily accessible central information point, such as a Citizens Advice Bureau.

\(^{10}\) Direct translation from Bengali.
Employment Services

In general, respondents who had used local employment services, including job centres and recruitment agencies, felt there was a very limited range of jobs on offer. The most widely available work was factory work and temping jobs. There was very little in terms of white-collar work and not much on offer locally for people with professional qualifications. The Moroccan female respondents felt that the range of jobs was more limited today, compared to former decades:

The ones that were there in the 80s were good, but the ones recent, in the past three or four years, I don’t think they’re very good. All they want to do is just factories and things like that. They’re not really... well... I haven’t found any like in the 80s.

Similar problems were identified by some of the young respondents when seeking full or part-time work following the completion of A levels:

You know after 6th form you started looking for work, did you use the employment service?
A: Yes.
What about the range of jobs that were available in the Wiltshire area?
A: Not much.
B: There’s a lot of bar work, for a part time job, a lot of bar work and a lot of evening work, early morning cleaning.
Would you say your scope was quite limited because of the rural context?
A: Yes.
C: I think that’s a problem for everyone, not just for us.

A professional respondent experienced the same problem when she used local employment services. She felt that there was not much scope for people with professional qualifications and found employment offers limited to office administration or factory work.

One of the African-Caribbean respondents mentioned that she had not found the Job Centre’s computer system very useful. She felt that human interaction was needed, as you cannot discuss your job requirements with a computer:

A: When I was looking for jobs, I didn’t find it [the Job Centre] user friendly. I just thought the whole system of looking for work in there wasn’t very user friendly to be honest because two years ago I was made redundant and I was looking for work. They had this machine where you can type in all your details and it comes with loads of jobs that suits your character and your experience but I found that when I had the printout, it was mainly to agencies. And when you ring the agencies for the jobs you never get the jobs anyway. I just thought it was a total waste of time.
B: It’s changed a bit now, the computer thing. You go in there,
you put in what job you want and it cuts it down.
A: Yes that’s what I did, same machine.
Would you prefer talking to a person face to face?
D: Yeah, the computers don’t understand what you’re looking for.

Childcare

Childcare arrangements were generally seen to be a problem for the female respondents. Lack of childcare facilities and the cost of childcare were both identified problems. One Asian respondent, who had no family living in Wiltshire, mentioned that she would really like a childminder. She worked part-time and childminding was juggled between her husband, a neighbour and one of her daughter’s friend’s mums. She explained that a lack of childcare arrangements was also a reason why she could not attend parents’ evenings. This was the case for many of the women interviewed who had small children (see section entitled ‘Parents’ Evenings’).

Childcare arrangements were also identified as a problem for many of the Fijian women interviewed. They relied on their husbands and each other to child mind and felt unable to go to local social activities. They had recently been invited to a dinner/dance organised for soldiers and their wives. They all wanted to attend as it was an opportunity to meet other wives and socialise, but they felt restricted by the lack of childcare facilities. They also mentioned that a lack of childcare arrangements prevented them from taking part in sport and leisure activities (see section below).

Sports and Leisure

One of the male respondents mentioned how he took part in a number of sports and leisure activities such as badminton and the gym. His children regularly went swimming. His wife, however, (who has only been in England for 13 months) did not feel comfortable going swimming, even though there were women-only sessions. Other Muslim female respondents also mentioned that religion and culture restricted them from taking part in certain activities, such as swimming. In contrast, a number of the Muslim Moroccan women enjoyed activities such as swimming, but talked about how it was too expensive for them to go as often as they would like.

The Fijian women showed an interest in participating in sports and leisure activities. They did not attend the local leisure centre and suggested that they would not feel comfortable going on their own – they would prefer to
go in a group. One of the reasons why they did not use the sports facilities was a lack of childcare facilities:

**What's the reason for not using the sports centre?**
A: I think it's looking after the kids. It would be nice to give them some time away from home (...)

**Would you like to go and do these things in groups or would you prefer to go individually whenever you want?**
B: Groups would be fun.

Some of the respondents, who were attending courses at their local colleges, tended to use the sports facilities provided by the colleges. They found them convenient, as there was also a nursery available in the college for their young children.

Many of the young respondents used the local sports and leisure facilities and often went bowling or swimming with friends. There were also individuals who were members of local sports teams and groups, ranging from football to majorettes.

**Language Classes**

As previously mentioned in the section entitled 'Language Difficulties', many of the respondents admitted that they had difficulties reading and writing English. They found it difficult when they had to read and respond to official letters or had to fill in forms. Some of the adult respondents were attending language classes. Some of the young respondents also mentioned that their mums were attending classes. These classes are often held in local colleges. Some of the young Asian respondents mentioned how all the Muslim families and local mosques were sent letters, leaflets and posters advertising the courses.

One of the respondent's wives had only been living in England for 13 months and had been unable to speak English. She now attended language classes held at the local youth centre. Her English had improved immensely and her family encouraged her to speak English at home.

Some of the Moroccan women had also attended language classes. They discussed how they had to pay for these courses and how they found it hard to finance their learning. They talked about how it was difficult to learn English in a mixed ability class because they did not always get the attention they needed.

One Asian housewife had never attended language classes, but would like to:
Would they be able to help me with a free teacher, to try and improve my writing and reading? Like there's many things I get confused on, hard words. I was wondering if anyone can help me with that kind of thing.

Some respondents also talked about the difficulties of teaching their children how to speak, read and write Arabic, Bengali or Chinese. While not a concern for some respondents - like one Indian business owner who claimed that his eldest daughter could not speak Punjabi - many of the Moroccan respondents felt it was important to have the facilities to be able to teach their children Arabic. One young Bengali respondent highlighted this to be a concern for her parents. A Chinese professional respondent explained that he found it upsetting that his daughter did not have the opportunity to mix with other Chinese people and, as a result, had forgotten how to speak Chinese:

A: Well, my children, they very much identify themselves with the local community, they regard [themselves] as English.
B: Well, they are.
A: Naturally, but at that age they start to conform to everybody else. I used to speak Chinese to my daughter till she was three. She spoke Chinese very well then, then she started going to school.
B: And she forgot it all?
A: Well, she refused to speak Chinese to me and that's like a real loss (…)

**Do you think if you were living in Bristol it would be easier for your daughter to...?**
A: Oh yes, definitely.
C: I think that's what it is because you go with the flow. I mean, that's what's happening, you know. The children, they are just integrated, you have no choice by living in Wiltshire...
A: I don't even attempt to speak to her in Chinese, there's no chance here.

**Access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

While the younger generation tends to be computer literate, this is not often the case for the minority ethnic adult population. Some of the adult respondents were very keen to learn ICT skills, but many felt hindered by their lack of English reading and writing skills. The Moroccan men also felt that they were restricted by the hours that they worked. While keen to learn ICT skills, they needed classes that were held either at the weekend or in the evenings. An officer from WREC mentioned that it was hard to find trainers that work outside the usual 9-5 office hours. One of the Moroccan men asked whether WREC could help them to set up a computer course.
A number of the Moroccan women had attended ICT classes organised by WREC. One of the respondents had only been twice though, before giving up. She felt that there were too many people in the class and that each person did not get sufficient attention. She wanted to learn how to use the Internet though, because she wanted to get access to the Internet at home. She mentioned how her son loved the Internet and how he was always getting in touch with relatives in Canada. He sent her lots to read, but she wanted to be able to use the Internet herself.

The Fijian respondents were also keen to learn ICT skills. Their interest in this subject was fuelled after hearing about one Fijian respondent’s experiences of using Internet chat rooms.

As previously mentioned, some of the young female Asian respondents and Fijian respondents discussed how they were often unable to participate in social activities due to childcare and cultural restrictions. A couple of the respondents, however, identified Internet chat rooms as a way of communicating, getting to know people or meeting new people:

Does anybody use the Internet?
My husband, I learn from my husband.
Do you use that to find out local information?
Just chatting in the chat rooms?
Is that what you do?
It’s from fiji.com, Fijians around the world (...)

A couple of African-Caribbean respondents talked about how they liked the idea of a chat room set up for minority ethnic groups in Wiltshire. This would allow them to chat with each other, even though they were geographically dispersed. The respondents thought that this would be a good idea, as long as procedures were put in place to ensure that the chat room was not abused:

It would be useful for people in villages who may not have much contact with their own culture. If they had access to a computer in that small village then they wouldn’t be so marginalised or isolated ‘cos they can talk via the computer to other people in Wiltshire. Give them a bit of interaction.
4 Working in Wiltshire

Within this section, the experiences and perceptions of respondents working and finding employment in Wiltshire are considered. A range of employees, small business owners and professionals took part in this study. Some respondents described positive experiences with their customers, clients, managers and work colleagues, while a few respondents had experienced racism and prejudice at work. During discussions, it emerged that a number of individuals viewed ethnic monitoring forms with suspicion when applying for work. It also emerged that there was a general perception among respondents that securing permanent posts and gaining promotion within local authorities is difficult for applicants of a minority ethnic background.

Business Owners

The business owners who participated in this study described very different experiences of running their businesses in Wiltshire. Whilst some respondents had very positive experiences of working in Wiltshire, others experienced continuous racial attacks, both verbal and physical. One Asian respondent described having a good relationship with other business owners close by, and that all the local businesses looked out for each other, in a similar fashion to a ‘neighbourhood watch scheme’. He said that he had little experience of racism in the workplace and enjoyed his work. Occasionally, racist comments had been made but he tended to ignore them and did not consider them to be serious. If racist comments had been made, they usually followed on from a theft in the shop and the police being informed, rather than being a racist incident in the first instance:

**Have you ever been in contact with the police?**
Not because of racism, but mostly it starts with somebody stolen something and you apprehend them and they’ll become abusive and racist, but that’s just their defence, aggression. It doesn’t start as ‘Paki bastard’, it starts with somebody trying to steal something and they sometimes become aggressive.

The respondent mentioned that he had experienced more problems in another county, where he had previously run a similar business, than he did in Wiltshire.

An African-Caribbean business owner discussed how she was very happy running her business in Wiltshire. She felt that, at first, customers and other local business owners had been wary of her as a black business owner. However, she found that, over time, people were more accepting of her and were very supportive of her business:
I hadn’t really had any problems running the business. I mean, when I first started in the market, I think there was a little bit of tension there because they weren’t used to seeing a black woman in business and they didn’t know how to take me, they didn’t know how to accept me. I think they thought I was going to rip them off with products. They think that black people are gonna buy knock off products and things like that.

In contrast to this, an Asian business owner who ran a restaurant just over the Wiltshire county border often had negative encounters with customers at her workplace. Verbal abuse was a very common occurrence, and this was often based on her religion. She also described incidents where ‘jokes’ would often ‘go too far’, leaving staff members feeling uncomfortable and intimidated:

Maybe joking, but he [the restaurant manager], because he’s really middle aged, he’s 50 plus, he sometimes is really scared. Because he’s scared I have to go every evening, 7 days a week. **Where does this happen, in the restaurant?**

Yeah and I’m so sorry for them. If I’m there and they threaten or say something jokingly, he don’t bother. If I’m not there he always phone ‘please come down, I’m so scared’. They’re doing their best and what people doing to them, I don’t like. We are not deserving all of this, we doing hard work day and night for surviving. It’s really bad. Sometimes customers come late night and I refuse to give him meal because we’re closed and then started to swear ‘Muslim lady’, straight away going to Muslim lady because I got symbol of it and then one of the men say, I was really, really angry that day ‘cos he say something about our Quran and I said ‘look watch your tongue, what you talking about’.

The respondent described problems encountered as a restaurateur and how she felt that the police were not very helpful in dealing with the incidents. She explained that the police dismissed her complaints against customers who refuse to pay as a ‘civil matter’. For a number of years, the respondent had been encountering racist incidents at her business. On one occasion, her property had been broken into and vandalised with racist graffiti. As a result, she found it difficult to insure her business.

Another member of the family who, with her husband, ran a restaurant in a Wiltshire town, also spoke of similar accounts. Incidents included fireworks being lit outside the entrance of the restaurant and knife threats. Following these incidents, the police had arrested the perpetrators. However, the couple were subjected to a violent physical attack in revenge. Many respondents discussed how they rarely reported racist incidents in order to avoid a similar fate (see sections entitled ‘Reporting Racist Incidents’ and ‘Reporting Racist Incidents in the School Setting’). These occurrences left the respondent
feeling emotionally and physically drained. The respondent contemplated the thought of giving up the business and moving elsewhere. The harassment experienced at the business in Wiltshire was often perpetrated by the same small group of people. The respondent explained that, when problems did occur, staff often had a lot of support from customers who would eagerly help by contacting the police and dealing with the perpetrators.

**Employees**

During discussions on racism and prejudice with a group of professionals working in one of the Wiltshire local authorities, it emerged that isolated comments from colleagues or clients were occasionally encountered, but were usually brushed aside unless respondents thought they were serious. Respondents explained that they very rarely came across blatant or overt racism. Two respondents felt that racism in the workplace generally tended to be quite subtle and that, consequently, it was difficult to prove its existence.

The majority of professional respondents agreed that, on the whole, management and senior officials were extremely supportive and pro-active in dealing with issues of discrimination and prejudice at work. In instances where respondents had encountered isolated comments and attitudes from colleagues, they described positive outcomes of their complaints to senior officials and management:

‘____’s very supportive. I actually went to her with a complaint and she was very supportive and my own manager, who has now left, she was extremely supportive. The people I was managed by directly were all very supportive, you know, very bright people who kind of had a handle on things. They knew what the issues were (…)

They felt that issues of racism were taken seriously by a number of key individuals at higher levels within the organisation. However, one respondent also felt that, in some cases, individuals at lower levels were more often concerned with being able to ‘tick boxes’ to show that they were complying with procedural requirements rather than understanding the real issues:

I think some people, with a lot of the things around work on racial awareness and, you know, discrimination, I think there are a lot of people who are good at ticking the box.

A couple of respondents identified feelings of isolation and detachment from their work colleagues and thought that their ethnicity could not be ruled
out as a factor which contributed to the way they were treated among their group of colleagues. A female respondent felt that her colleagues’ interaction with her had subtle racist elements. She felt the detachment of her colleagues was very much deliberate and, on one occasion, she had considered resigning:

You know racism can be covert, through attitudes and actions... they don’t have to be blatantly racist. Through action, exclusion, isolation, I put up, from my workplace. I initially started with a team and then I had to make room for a replacement officer, then I ended up in an office all on my own upstairs, so I was like Jane Eyre who lived in the attic... I can see the difference, because, that’s why I always end up sitting on my desk. When I go in the staff room, I used to make an effort, you know. There’ll be quite loud people talking away, that’s fine, maybe I’m not, you know, I don’t sort of, always feel comfortable in a large room, you know yapping away but obviously they won’t give you... they won’t give you that opportunity to join in.

Similarly, a male respondent felt that his colleagues would only interact with him on a formal basis. He very much felt excluded and isolated from the rest of his colleagues but he was unsure as to whether it was because of his ethnicity or because of his senior position at work. For both these respondents, their ethnicity was perceived as a factor which possibly contributed to the way people interacted with them:

It’s very difficult to pinpoint what it is but, well, my contact with people or my colleagues’ contact with me doesn’t seem to be very easy. Where they talk to me, they always seem to be slightly different, seem to be more serious or they don’t seem to be relaxed... is it because I’m a man... or because of the position of authority or... or is it because I’m non white? Oh it’s a different culture, I find it very difficult to... when you see people talk to each other and make jokes and laughing, you know, why can’t they do that with me?

However, in discussing isolation at work and interaction with work colleagues, other respondents suggested that individual personalities played a big part in the experiences and perceptions of working in Wiltshire. Two respondents in the group described very positive experiences of working with their colleagues and felt very much integrated and part of a team. They felt that feelings of isolation and detachment among other respondents might be due to their higher position within their work groups rather than their ethnicity.

The respondents said that overt racism was quite rare in their work, from both colleagues and clients. One male respondent claimed that when he first started his post in 1994, he encountered racist jokes being told among
his circle of colleagues. Though they were not told with the intention of upsetting anyone, the general attitude conveyed was that these jokes were not offensive as there were not many black people in Wiltshire. It was when the respondent showed disapproval that his colleagues realised their jokes were offensive:

I challenge it. When I went to my office, they had been telling racist jokes for ages and somebody told me once and I was ‘my gosh’ and they don’t do it anymore, well, they don’t do it in my presence, because they know if they make racist jokes I challenge them about it.

Similar to the explanation given by an Asian business owner (see section entitled ‘Business Owners’), one respondent explained that racial abuse was only encountered in a moment of aggression or in ‘their unguarded moment’, though equally as upsetting:

I mean, if you’re a client, you just look for anything. The first thing that comes to you usually is ‘dirty fucking Paki’ that’s usually the term, what comes out. I’m not saying it just washes over me … it’s just as upsetting.

During a couple of discussions, one with local authority employees, it emerged that there was a general perception that securing a job within a local authority was difficult for applicants of a minority ethnic background. When asked why they felt this to be the case, one respondent described her thoughts on instances where she had previously applied for work with one local authority and was unsuccessful. Though finding temporary employment was not difficult, the respondent had not found it easy to secure a permanent post, despite having the qualifications and experience needed:

Do you feel that it was due to discrimination on the grounds of race?
A: Well you can’t rule it out, I have no direct evidence but…
B: It is a factor.
A: Yeah, so I had quite a rough time, I mean, again quite negative, trying to find a job within the local authority. Although I’m in the organisation, I’ve been for six interviews and you begin to wonder why. I’ve got a degree, I’ve got my certificates (…) but I didn’t have any problems getting temporary contracts. I was getting work but, as a permanent member, I haven’t been successful.

On the whole, those respondents who currently worked for a Wiltshire local authority were positive about their experiences. In instances where they had experienced racial comments or attitudes, they felt that support received from senior level management was very good. They discussed how the team building exercises and racial awareness training was useful and they spoke
about some very positive work within their departments on developing an inclusive service.

In a discussion with a group of African-Caribbean adults, the perception of being discriminated against when applying for local authority jobs was resonated. The respondents felt that people of a minority ethnic background were disadvantaged when applying for council jobs, despite equal opportunity policies:

 Say job wise, like you’ll get at Trowbridge ‘cos they’re limited aren’t they? They say on the application form ‘equal opportunity’ but that’s not always true.

 Do you feel that?
 Yeah I do, especially the councils, council offices. If you apply for a council job or County Hall, you’re not gonna get it. As soon as you tick the application form, ‘Black’ or ‘Asian’ or something, you won’t get it.

 Have you applied?
 Loads.

Two respondents within this group held the perception that minority ethnic employees were not promoted easily, despite having the skills, qualifications and experience needed. When asked if they had personally experienced this when applying for work or promotion or if this was just a general perception, one respondent explained:

 Where I have been in a job before, I haven’t had the same promotional prospects as somebody else, even though I might be more qualified than the person who’s gone for it. Because he’s white, he’s gonna get it more ‘cos he fits in. ‘Cos the whole team is like predominantly white, if I like go for a position, they’re gonna think ‘well’…

 Is that your perception or what’s actually happened?
 That’s what’s actually happened.

One local authority employee also felt this way:

 I would say, not outwardly do they discriminate but I think that they’re not quick to promote ethnic minorities in there. I mean, I’ve been at the same job for a long time and, I mean, I got two degrees and yet I haven’t got very far with them at all, so I think they’re hopeless in that respect.

A number of the adult respondents were in employment or had been employed either in local factories or in administrative and clerical work. The male Moroccan respondents explained that they entered factory employment when they came to England but have had few opportunities to secure other forms of work as they lack English reading and writing skills. One respondent, who had only been in England for two years, felt that finding work and
getting promoted was difficult for someone who could not speak, read or write English very well. Despite these issues, the respondents were pleased about the staff development opportunities provided by the companies they worked for, including the provision of basic IT training for the staff.

When asked about their relationship with white work colleagues, the older African-Caribbean respondents explained that, during their time at work, they encountered very negative attitudes from their work colleagues and managers who saw them as ‘second class’ citizens. They discussed how they always ended up with the ‘dirty work’ that their white colleagues would not do and how they were seen as ‘money grabbers’ if they agreed to work overtime. They agreed that experiences have significantly improved over the decades, since discriminatory practices have been outlawed. In their opinion, overt racism and discrimination had decreased since the time when they first arrived in England.

Adult Moroccan respondents who were employed, or had previously been in employment, mentioned that their working relationship with other staff members was not, or had not been, a problem for them. Although they did occasionally come across individuals who would make comments, they tended to ignore them. They mentioned that the type of work that they did, did not require much interaction with other staff, and so there was a detachment from work colleagues, making it easier to ignore negative attitudes and comments. Though passing comments were encountered, the respondents agreed that they did not experience any problems in terms of serious racial incidents at work.

However, one respondent recollected incidents of racial harassment and abuse that she had encountered in the workplace. The respondent had received very little support from within the organisation when she made a complaint. She described how the racial harassment had affected her emotionally and mentally:

We had a different manager in our office. That manager didn’t like foreigners and, of course, from day one when he took over in our office, he made my life a misery. Because he was a manager and he was doing it, he then gave the opportunity for the other people, the English people in the office who were prejudice and racist and all that, to have a go as well. Before, they wouldn’t dare have a go because [of] the [previous] manager. But in the end, I just had a breakdown and I left work.

Did you ever, did you have anywhere you could go and tell someone?
Well, I went to the Personnel but he didn’t wanna know, he just
said it was ‘one of those things’. This manager, I was so scared, he had me in his office, he was a very huge man and very broad as well and see how little I am, and I wasn’t so heavy then. And I found him very intimidating and he was shouting and all that. I haven’t even done anything wrong. He was in a bad mood so he called me in his office and he said ‘if you like, you can take it out on me’ and I was so petrified. I don’t like to say this but, actually, I was so frightened that I wet myself. And you know, he was just raving on about anything and I just couldn’t understand why because whatever he was going on about it had nothing to do with me. I had a word with somebody at Personnel and I told him how I felt, and he said ‘you know, __, he’s always like that, he doesn’t mean it, he’s a big bloke and because you’re little, you know’.

**How long did it go on? How long did you stay there?**
Quite a long time. It started from about 1993 till November 94 then I just had a breakdown, I couldn’t take it any more. I ended up in hospital. But I was also in the union and I went to the union three times and the advice I got from the union was ‘put up with it or leave’. I had two options, I had to leave my job or put up with all the abuse and all that. And I’m the sort of person who don’t like to make a fuss, even though my husband’s English and my boys, they kept saying to me ‘mum you can’t leave it like that, you gotta do something about it’. I didn’t, I just suffered myself emotionally and all that. That’s why I ended up having a breakdown in the end. In a way I was the lucky one because I got a good solicitor, only because my boys advised me to. And I went to a good solicitor and I went to tribunal and I got compensated quite a lot but it’s still, you can’t forget it. The council paid up.

**Can you give us some examples of what kind of things you had to put up with at work?**
Oh God, ‘f-ing foreigner’ and one of the managers there used to get a member of the public to ring up, because we had our own extension on our desk, this particular manager would get a friend of his or somebody and he would ring up at a particular time in the afternoon, always be in the afternoon between 2 and 3 o’clock when there wasn’t like anybody apart from him as a witness, only himself and two other people who were on his side anyway. On the telephone there was just abuse ‘I don’t wanna talk to an f-ing foreigner’. It went on and on and in the end, people would come to reception and if there was any like Moroccans or Polish or Indians or Pakistanis, they used to say ‘send the foreigner to deal with the foreigner’, any black people, anything like that.
5 Young People and the School Setting

This section focuses on the experiences of minority ethnic young people in Wiltshire. Every young person that took part in this study had experienced verbal racial abuse but, more often than not, did not report it. This section examines experiences of racism in the school setting and explores reasons for the apprehension in reporting racist incidents. It also highlights the importance that minority ethnic young people attach to ‘fitting in’ with their white peers.

‘Fitting in’

It has previously been discussed in the section entitled ‘Dress’ how some of the female Asian respondents felt that they received too much attention when they wore traditional clothing. To avoid this, they tried to ‘blend in’ by wearing western clothing or by limiting their traditional clothing to wearing a headscarf rather than a sari. One of the young female African-Caribbean respondents felt that she really ‘stood out’ when she moved to a school in Wiltshire, especially during assemblies where she was the only black pupil (see section entitled ‘Skin Colour’). Many of the young respondents noted how they hated being treated differently. They talked about how they found it annoying or felt uncomfortable when other young people kept asking them questions about their home traditions or religion.

One group of middle school pupils discussed how their peers were always asking them questions:

Do you think that white people in this school know enough about, let’s say, Bangladesh?
All the girls shake their heads and say ‘no’.
A: Yeah, they keep asking about...
Too many questions?
B: They keep asking us to speak our language.
C: They keep asking too many questions.
What, so you think that they want to find out then, do they?
All nod and say ‘yeah’.
And do you like answering their questions?
They all shake their heads and say ‘no’.
A: I tell my friends a bit.
When asked if it would be a good idea if a lesson were held on the Bangladeshi culture and language, the pupils gave a mixed response. Some said that they would be embarrassed, while others felt that it would be useful because their white peers would then know more about their culture.

One respondent from this group said she would not tell her friends where she had been for the duration of the focus group, as her friends would ask questions.

A: When we go back to our class, our friends just ask ‘where have you been, where have you been?’
B: Yeah they will.
A: They start asking questions.
   **Are you gonna tell them?**
A: No.
B: I am.
C: I am.
A: I’m just gonna say that I been in the science lab.
   **Why won’t you tell them what you’ve been doing?**
A: ‘Cos they’re nosy.
D: No they’re not, they’re just curious, everyone’s curious…

The young respondents disliked being singled out or made to feel different to their peers. A group of Asian female respondents in their late teens/early 20s shared this sentiment:

   **You know we were saying about culture and how they [white people] don’t know much about it, did you get asked loads of questions about your culture?**
A: It’s a bit embarrassing actually, it feels like they’re picking on you (…)
B: You’re put on the hotspot, it’s embarrassing ‘cos you’re trying to be one of them but when they do that, it’s like they’re segregating you. No matter how hard you try to be a part of them, when they look at you as an Asian person, they say ‘oh what’s it like in your house?’ It’s like you’re being picked on (…)
C: I don’t think they mean it in a bad way.

**Racism in School**

Many of the young respondents said that they were very happy at school, had lots of friends and did not experience racism. However, during the course of the group discussions, it emerged that almost every respondent had experienced verbal abuse at some point in their school life. Very often, the respondents did not class verbal abuse as ‘racism’ because it was something that they were used to dealing with. Some of the younger pupils were bullied because of their religion or colour. In one focus group at a middle school, the group members were trying to understand why one
particular young person was being bullied:

A: And before, we were coming, yeah, to the library...
B: She tried to punch her, but we came in time.
   (to ‘C’) So they seem to pick on you don’t they for some reason, why is that?
C: I don’t know.
B: Maybe because she’s the only Muslim in her year.
C: I am.

The respondent who received the taunts and abuse was the only child in the focus group who wore traditional Indian clothes as opposed to school uniform.

A group of older African-Caribbean respondents discussed how much better things were today compared to former decades. When their children went to school in the 1960s, they were called names. Their grandchildren, however, felt very integrated and had many white friends. If anyone said anything racist to them, they stood up for themselves:

**What about your children, do they feel anything similar?**
A: In school, yes, when they start school…
B: One of my daughters, they said, ‘Where did you bathe? In the mud?’ It’s not like that now. My granddaughter is at school now and they come home, they got their little friends, it’s different now (…)

**Here, do you think your grandchildren mix with everybody else?**
A: Yeah, but children, they still have things to say to the other ones… They could give them as much as they get, they give them more.
C: These kids they are tough, not like when we… no they are tough, man.
A: You know they just give back what they get, they won’t take no rubbish at all…
D: I have 23 of them [grandchildren]. Only one of them is black, they all half caste.

**How is their experience? Do they live locally? When one parent’s white and one is black, children [white children] don’t know, but they still pick on…**
D: They can’t do that, they [his grandchildren] are very tough…

**Have they ever experienced any kind of racism in the school?**
D: No, they have loads of friends, loads of white friends… Sometimes they come to my home and when they come they say ‘Granddad, this is my friend’. And it’s natural, English white friend (…) They go to school together, they play together, they do everything together (…)

Most of the older children interviewed felt that any racism they experienced in school was rarely the result of someone hating them for their skin colour, but was more borne out of ignorance and a lack of contact with minority
ethnic people. They discussed how their peers knew little about other cultures, traditions and ethnic groups. As a result, they would make insensitive remarks and comments based on their preconceptions, which were heavily influenced by the media and adult family members (who have also had a lack of socialisation with minority ethnic groups whilst living in Wiltshire). Consequently, the young respondents claimed that they often ignored silly comments and remarks from other children and only reported incidents that they thought were serious:

_Do you think that, because there's not many visible ethnic minorities around, that everyone, not knows you, but recognises you? They notice you more?_  
All: Yeah.
A: Tiny kids who are really young, they always say like funny things like, ‘oh, how come she’s got coloured skin?’
B: Little kids are usually the worst. When my mum was childminding, I used to take the little kids to the park and there’s one little girl down there and she’s going ‘oh you’re black, well that makes you different to the rest of us’ and I’m like ‘not really’. My mum [whose white] really takes offence to that. The girl was going ‘I’m normal’. They must have picked that up from their parents or whatever, to have an opinion like that at such a young age, it was really shocking. It’s gotta be from the parents, I mean, you don’t get many kids at school going ‘oh they’re different’. It’s gotta be parents’ opinions (…)

One secondary school pupil explained how he felt he was bullied because he was a Muslim. A lack of knowledge about his religion often led to stereotyping:

_I was born in Sudan. I moved here when I was about a year old. I haven’t had so much bullying but, like, it’s just sometimes, ‘cos I’m Muslim, ‘cos people don’t know much about the religion at all, assume things that aren’t actually true or just stereotype, does get annoying sometimes. I haven’t had that much in the past few years. It was more when I was younger._

Many of the secondary school pupils discussed how encounters with racism diminished as they got older. They agreed that as they grew older, they became stronger and could stand up for themselves. They felt that the younger pupils experienced more racism because they were easy targets.

One group of secondary school pupils discussed how they had all grown up in Wiltshire. The fact that they had grown up with their peers, they felt, had helped eradicate any racial problems. If they ever did experience racial name-calling, it would be from younger pupils. They all felt that any name-calling that they experienced was not malicious, but born out of immaturity or ignorance:
How does it feel being in a school which is predominantly English or white? Has it ever been an issue for you?
A: No, ‘cos we’re all English children anyway. I mean, we haven’t come in from America or anywhere. Most of us have been living in Calne, living in England, so it ain’t, there’s never been any racial...
B: In primary school, a lot of the kids, they’re quite immature and then, when you start getting into year 10 and 11, everybody just knows you and it’s fine.

Was colour ever an issue with you growing up here?
A: I’ve been the same as ‘B’.
B: All my friends from reception have grown up with me so I’ve never had any problems, but I’ve learned to kind of cope with the immature people, like in year 7, running about going ‘hello blackie’. They’re just not mature enough to understand so...

Do you get that much?
A: No, you know, when people make comments but they don’t mean it and they just like joke about and stuff, it doesn’t really offend you, you just shrug it off or whatever. No one ever says anything really bad that makes you go off and cry or whatever.

So you don’t feel anything is said with the real intention to hurt or...?
A: No.
B: They’re too young to understand.
A: And we’re not that different from them really, we’ve grown up with them.

How do you feel about that?
C: I just feel the same, nobody ever means to be horrible.

One respondent of dual heritage in this group mentioned that she would be worried about moving to a predominantly white school in an area where she had not grown up, for fear of not being accepted because of her colour:

I don’t know if I’d like to be a new kid though. Because you’re coloured, I always think you don’t know how they’ll accept you… you’re worried about what they’re gonna think about you ‘cos you’re a different race...

It was not only pupils that were subjected to racism within the school setting. One young respondent spoke of his mother’s experience as a teacher in Swindon. He said that she suffered taunts and abuse from the children because of her name and her foreign accent.

Reporting Racist Incidents

Many of the young respondents mentioned that they would not report racist incidents to a teacher. Some felt that little was to be gained by confiding in a teacher:

A: They often say ‘go see a parent or a teacher or your head of year’, but you don’t really wanna be talking to your head of year really about it, ‘cos they’d probably just write it down… You can’t really write down emotions.
B: There’s only so much that a teacher can do.
One middle school Asian pupil felt that reporting incidents to teachers had had little effect on the bullying she was experiencing:

A: They say that ‘you shouldn’t be in school’ and that ‘you shouldn’t do sports’ (...)
Is it a particular child or is it a group that pick on you?
A nods.
And they’re all white presumably are they?
A nods.
And how many are there in the group?
A: Five of them.
Have you told anyone?
A, B: Mr __
What did Mr __ say?
A: He said he’d talk to them.
Did he have a word with them?
A nods.
Has it made anything any better?
A: Nah.
When you go home, do you tell your parents?
A shakes her head.

Some young respondents actually felt that it made the situation worse if they reported a racist incident to a teacher. Even though the teacher promised to keep it confidential, the fact that they spoke to the bully about it meant that the bully knew the victim had told the teacher. This often led to further victimisation. Fear of retribution was a common reason for not reporting racist incidents, both for young people in the school setting and for adults in the wider social setting (see section entitled ‘Reporting Racist Incidents’). Young respondents said that they preferred to talk to friends or adult confidantes, such as counsellors, whom they could trust:

So what about, in terms of general bullying, if you found someone was bullying you for whatever reason, would you know where to go?
A: I personally believe that if you go to a teacher about being bullied it makes it worse.
B: If the bullies know that you went to a teacher...
A: The teachers always go, ‘oh it’s confidential’ and stuff like that, but then they go and see the bully and they go, ‘you’re bullying so and so’, so they go back... It’s easier if you confront them yourself.
Is that what you’d do?
A: Oh, people are scared of me, so I’m alright... ‘cos I’m a black belt in Judo.... After a couple of weeks it just wears off. Bullying, it’s just verbal...
So would you say it helps to have a strong personality?
A: Yeah, I think teachers make it worse. It would be easier to confide in someone outside of the school or a friend but not go directly to a teacher, they’re too involved...
How do you feel about talking to teachers about these kinds of issues?
B: Kind of the same, quite annoying ‘cos they go and tell the bully and the bully bullies you more. The way I deal with these situations is get friends to back me up and kind of get the bully on its own.
C: I don’t actually talk [to teachers], if anything happens I’d go to my parents and then they go.
A: My dad, if there is a problem, he doesn’t usually go through the school. He goes to the parents.
You said you’d like someone younger or someone from outside of school to come in.
A: Well there’s Ms __. I mean I’ve never used her, she’s the counsellor for all the like naughty kids. They go and see her and I think she’s a lot better than the teachers ‘cos she doesn’t like blab...
But she’s for the naughty children.
A: No I think she’s for everyone.
C: But it’s mainly the naughty kids that go.

One group of secondary school pupils discussed whether they felt comfortable reporting racist incidents to white teachers. A couple of the pupils said that they would prefer to confide in a black teacher, if there was one in their school. One pupil did not feel that a white teacher would be sympathetic:

At the moment, if something does happen, would you feel comfortable talking to a white teacher about it, if it was something to do with race?
A: No, ‘cos I think they’re gonna take the white person’s side. I just tell my mum personally and let her sort it out.
What about you?
B: Well, I would sometimes, if I really need, but not that much.
Anything like religion or race?
B: But if there wasn’t any [black teachers], and I really needed someone, I would go to a white teacher.

Many respondents preferred to tell a friend instead of a teacher. One of the middle school pupils, a shy individual, said that she always confided in her Asian friend, whom she trusted. This individual also spoke of how her parents were unable to do anything if she suffered from racist incidents because they did not speak English. A number of respondents talked about how they confided in their white friends and how these friends were always keen to get things sorted out and encouraged them to take action.

One secondary school pupil discussed how her white friends were sometimes picked on because of their association with her:

When I started this school, someone in Year 11 was bullying me. When I wasn’t around, they would go up to my friends and say ‘why are you hanging around with a foreigner?’ and stuff.
Some of the respondents said that they tell their parents if they experience a racist incident. Some of their parents took action and went to see the head teacher, while others told their children to ignore it. A couple of Asian middle school pupils felt that they could not tell their parents about the racial harassment they were experiencing because their parents could not speak English and, thus, would be unable to take any action.

Learning ‘to live with’, or ‘put up with’ verbal abuse appeared to be the norm amongst the young respondents. As one group of secondary school pupils explained:

A: When you’re little, when you first start getting bullied, you take offence but then, after a while, you just ignore it and learn to put up with it. It doesn’t really offend you anymore. **So, are there certain things that you just won’t report? Do you tell your parents?**
B: Yeah, I tell my mum and dad ‘cos my mum’s black and my dad’s white, my mum was like ‘oh don’t worry about it’, my dad was the one who took more offence to it than my mum. I don’t know why, but he just wanted to get everything sorted out... It didn’t get sorted out ‘cos I still get called names. Apparently this school has got a really good anti-bullying campaign, but I don’t think it’s very good at all...
B: I’ve always lived in Wiltshire but my grandparents are from Jamaica. All my school years, people always said stuff to me. I’ve put up with it. It’s not just people my age but adults as well and sometimes teachers, but I just have to put up with it.

There appeared to be a great contrast between the ways in which schools dealt with racism. A couple of sixth form pupils said that they did not actually know where to go if they experienced racism in school. Another group of young people said that their school had a long-winded process of reporting incidents in school, which involved writing down an account of the incident. The group members did not like this process because they felt it was hard to write down emotions. They thought it made them sound silly.

One pupil of dual heritage at the same school discussed how she felt that little action is taken in their school once a racist incident is reported:

Well, ever since I started my education at [junior school], people used to say stuff to me, even my cousins used to say stuff to me... and they used to call me names and that, and say I was stupid because I was black and that I was pathetic and I should go back to my country... but this is my country. When I came to this school it was hard ‘cos in, like Year 7, I was walking back home one time, and he was in Year 11, I think, he called names walking back home. And then when we brought it back to school,
they wouldn’t really do anything about it, they just said rewrite down...

One of the respondents from the same school discussed how he felt teachers try to avoid having to talk about issues of racism. He felt that it was easier to turn a blind eye to it:

I think teachers are scared to like, to talk openly about it… I think that’s half the problem, like people are too afraid to talk about it or discuss it.

A number of respondents who were parents, spoke of their own experiences, and their friends’ experiences, of reporting racist incidents to teachers. They often felt that there was a lack of understanding on the teacher’s part or that they failed to take sufficient action once an incident has been reported. As one African-Caribbean adult respondent stated:

If my daughter was having harassment, and it was racial harassment, I’d definitely be in there [the school] … but you have to find out what the details are first. I know people who’ve been in about racial tension and that, and the teachers they sort of like really smoothed it over. They don’t really see the problem.

The teachers?
Yeah, they can’t, they don’t see the problem. I think they’re sometimes a little bit blind.

They treat it like general bullying?
Yeah I think so.

A Portuguese female respondent discussed her experience of contacting the school when her son had experienced racist bullying. She felt that the staff were unwilling to recognise that there was a problem and she was never informed of any measures taken to resolve the issues.

Sometimes we say ‘what happened?’ And they say he fall over. It can’t be fall over all the time, because when he comes home, he tells me different story (…) They don’t inform us, we don’t know if they sort that out anyway, they don’t tell us.

A Moroccan female respondent also felt the same about reporting incidents to the school.

Sometimes they get her, she comes home and cries. But what do you do about it? We can do nothing about it. When I tell them [the school], they say ‘we will sort the problem out’ so nothing we can do.

**Multicultural Education**

A number of respondents suggested that it would be a good idea to teach about other cultures and religions in school. When asked whether they had studied cultures and religious festivals in school, many mentioned that these
activities were limited or non-existent.

A: When I was a Year 6, my sister was at secondary school. She used to take the bus back home and she used to get bullied and called ‘Paki’. We weren’t actually, you know... It’s annoying really... I couldn’t really do much about that and then my mum complained really well. They got disciplined. When I was at primary school, I used to get bullied as well by older kids ‘cos of where I was from and ‘cos it was a school in the country, don’t have many people from other cultures, so they weren’t used to it and they treated me really bad.

Some people might not know very much about your cultures, but do they ask you?

B: My friends do. Sometimes they do get it a bit wrong, but they don’t really get to talk and there isn’t much education about other religions really or... We’ve only done Hinduism. When I say to someone ‘I’m Muslim’, they’re like, they only know about India/Pakistan, and they assume because I’m Muslim, I’m from that area.

A group of respondents in another secondary school also felt that multicultural education was limited:

In your schools do you ever study, or are you taught about, any other religions or cultures?

A: Yeah in RE, but it’s all Christian and Muslim and that’s it really. I think last year we were supposed to have a topic on the black slave trade.

B: Yeah, we watched a video...

Another group of Asian respondents in the late teens/early 20s wondered whether multicultural education had been limited in their school because there were so few pupils of a minority ethnic background.

Have your schools celebrated Diwali and Eid?

A: They never even mention it.

B: Maybe because there isn’t enough of us.

C: Not the school’s fault, it’s just there isn’t enough children... ‘Cos there’s not much of a community here, there is no need to learn about us...

One group of secondary school respondents of dual heritage discussed how their peers could be really insensitive when they were covering a topic in history, such as the black slave trade. They described how their peers stared at them and laughed at the experiences and recorded accounts of the black slaves:

A: There’s this one boy in my class, if they say ‘Negroes’ [in the film], then he always looks at me, no one else, it’s always him. He always turns round and says, ‘you alright there, ___?’ And I’m, like, ‘yeah, why shouldn’t I be? Now he’s stopped saying that, but he’s still always looking...

B: If something serious is happening, like a black slave is getting beat up or lynched, they’d just start laughing.
C: Yeah, there was the Ku Klux Klan and this guy was praying and he gets kicked in the head (...) A lot of people were laughing and it hurts when they start laughing. They all want to watch it. If they don’t like it then why are they so eager to watch it? They’re so eager to watch then they say they don’t like racism.

Many of the respondents discussed how they hated feeling ‘singled out’ in school. One respondent in her early 20s discussed how she had only felt singled out at school when one of her teachers used to focus on her when they were discussing the Asian culture:

I’ve only felt that when the teacher points the finger and says, ‘oh __, you’re an Asian person, can you tell us what it’s like? That’s when you feel it, you’re singled out. I did used to feel singled out…

Another group of secondary school pupils discussed how they felt singled out when the subject of racism was discussed in assembly. Their peers would often turn around and stare at them. They did not like the way the subject was addressed by the teachers:

A: Teachers always go on about these things don’t they? Like in assemblies, they have like little poems… you get all like embarrassed sort of thing ‘cos your friends turn round to look at you. I hate it.
B: Yeah, when they talk about black people everyone turns round…
A: I don’t really like going to those assemblies. You don’t particularly like those issues being addressed would you say?
B: I don’t mind them being addressed, but they kind of make them stand out. It’s awful when they isolate kind of a group of us and they don’t see prejudice as being everyone or racism being in Hindus and whatever. It’s kind of like ‘black’ people and ‘white’ people. So they make it too simplistic?
All: Yeah.

Parents’ Evenings

During discussions with both adult and young respondents, it came to light that attendance at parents’ evenings was a problem for some Asian families due to their limited knowledge of the English language or a lack of childcare facilities. As previously mentioned, many Asian housewives have limited English. As one group of middle school pupils explained:

I was going to ask you about parents’ evenings...
A: Yeah, but none of our parents come.
B: My dad could come in.
C: My mum doesn’t speak English and my dad can’t come ‘cos he’s at work all the time.
D: My auntie told my mum that she should start coming to parents’ evenings.
B: My mum knows a little bit of English, she’s learning.

The Asian husbands, who were predominantly employed in the catering trade, often worked in the evenings, making it difficult for them to attend parents’ evenings. If the wives could speak English, the fact that their husbands were at work meant that they had difficulties attending parents’ evenings due to the need to care for small children:

Do you have any problems with parents’ evenings or PTAs?
I can’t go to them very often. I can’t go because of the children. There’s no one to look after the children, that’s why I can’t.

Youth Centres and other Social Activities

A number of the young female Asian respondents mentioned that they were unable to participate in certain social activities, including attending youth centres, due to culture and religion. One group of female Asians in their late teens/early 20s discussed how they believed it was more difficult for Asian people to integrate than it was for African-Caribbean people, due to wider cultural and religious differences:

A: It’s not just culture, it’s religion as well. I mean, if we were to go to church and everything, well black people, although they’re different racially, they’re more in the community because of their religion (…)
B: I know, like youth clubs and things like that.
C: I don’t actually know where it is. I think they’re doing this other youth café. I don’t think I’d get involved, I don’t see it as something for me…
B: Because it’s not aimed at us.
A: I think if you’re a girl, there’s your religion restricts you from taking part, for example, swimming.

These difficulties were also expressed by a group of Muslim Moroccan men who worried that their children could be exposed to drugs, alcohol and cigarettes within the settings that youth club activities take place:

Do your children go to, well, when they were younger, or if you have any children in their teens, do any of them go to the youth centre?
Well, that’s what the problem, see the religion stop them to go ‘cos we not allowed to do alcohol or smoking and drugs or anything like that (…)
So you’d like a safer, controlled environment for them?
Well frankly, our girls won’t go there full stop, but if we have a
community they can involve together; they can bring their friends as long as they obey the rules of the building. They welcome. The centre will be no alcohol, no smoking, no drinking, no drugs somewhere allowed to get in there (…)

Similar anxieties were expressed by a group of African-Caribbean adults who were worried about the social environment at youth centres. They felt that their children could be exposed to alcohol and drugs around the youth centre premises and feared that their children could be socialising with young people who engaged in criminal activities:

My daughter used to pop in there every now and then but it wasn’t a regular thing ‘cos [the youth centre] had a reputation. She didn’t want to get involved in… people were on drugs, they drank a lot and vandalise (…).

A group of middle school pupils felt that their parents were over protective when it came to socialising with their friends outside of the school setting:

**Outside of school, do you go to your friends’ houses?**

A: No, we’re not allowed.
B: No, we’re not allowed.
C: Well over protective.

**Do your friends come to your house then?**

All say no.

One group of secondary school pupils mentioned that they used to go to their local youth centre, but stopped going following repeated racial taunts. There had been no one to whom they felt that they report the incidents. They discussed how the older teenagers would hang around the entrance and make them feel unwelcome and uncomfortable:

I went down there [youth centre] once and this boy started singing to me ‘there’s no black in the Union Jack and send the f-ing niggers back’. I was just thinking ‘yeah whatever’ and he sang it to me quite a lot of times, then it got harder when he introduced his friends to his pathetic little song. When they started singing it and that, that’s when I stopped going. I wish I hadn’t stopped going ‘cos then it looks like they have actually got to me, but…

Another group of secondary school pupils mentioned a couple of reasons why they did not like their local youth centre. One respondent mentioned the limited range of activities available at the centre, while another thought that the age range that the centre catered for was too wide. The respondent felt that the interests of 12 year olds were far removed from those of 17 year olds:
What kind of things do you do out of school? Do you go to youth centres?
A: There is a youth centre but it’s not very good.
B: The drop-in centre’s rubbish.

So what is it you don’t like about the youth centre?
A: There’s nothing to do really apart from listen to music. There’s a few games and things...
B: There’s kind of an age gap ‘cos it’s about 12 to 17 year olds and I think it’s kind of a bad age group. Then there’s the younger one which I used to go to, but then when I got too old I just couldn’t be bothered to go to the other one with the older age group. In Calne, there’s not really much to do. All I do is play sport.

This group of young respondents felt that there were few social activities available to them in their town:

So what kind of things would you like to see then?
A: A cinema.
B: There needs to be some sort of entertainment for everyone.
A: People our age, we got the school and everything, but in the summer, the summer holidays, you can’t come up and use all the facilities. There’s no area apart from the Rec, which is not that great ‘cos it’s full of dog poo and basketball nets are really messed up. There’s nowhere to go except bowling (…)

So you want more activities for younger people? Would it be increased activities in the youth centres or something totally different?
All: Different.
A: It’s not too far to go to Chippenham or Bath but it still costs money and the buses keep putting up the prices.

Do you all rely on public transport?
All: Yeah, when you wanna meet with your friends (…)

An adult African-Caribbean respondent also felt that there was very little for young people to do in Wiltshire, particularly in the town where he lived. In his opinion, there had been more activities in his youth than there were for young people today. He felt that youths in his town got bored which could lead to anti-social behaviour:

Was it better when you were younger? Were there things to do?
Yeah, ‘cos they had things like cinemas and youth clubs and things like that, there was lots more to do then. But now I can understand why there is so much trouble in Trowbridge with the youth ‘cos there is nothing to do whatsoever. The council should bring back some more things like that, facilities so people don’t have to travel outside of Trowbridge to go anywhere to do anything.
6 Press Coverage of Race Issues in Wiltshire
by Dr Mark Baldwin

There has been a great deal of formal research into national and international press coverage of ‘race’ issues. So we have a good framework for understanding the different ways these issues are explored – letting racist views dominate debates, racialising immigration, attacking cultural differences, criminalising minorities, maintaining a silence on minority issues, denying racism and undermining anti-racism. We have looked at all the newspaper cuttings for the last dozen years that the Wiltshire Racial Equality Council have collected on ‘race’ issues. So how are papers reporting this important aspect of life in Wiltshire?

Generally the picture is not as bad as the list above might suggest. There is no evidence of editors using race issues to allow racist ideas to dominate. We have not come across examples of cultural difference being undermined in the press. Crime reports do not criminalise young black men in the way that some national newspapers do. Many of the press reports we have looked at have printed news items such as a case of unfair treatment by an employer in a straightforward and factual way.

But there are underlying problems with press coverage, notably the way in which ‘race’ is nearly always a problem in coverage – racial violence, racial inequality, racial harassment etc. There are few examples of positive stories about minority ethnic individuals or communities. This gives an impression of a community under siege, individuals as victims with a lack of opportunity to settle happily in Wiltshire. Other chapters in this document tell an additional story about black citizens in Wiltshire, how they feel a part of the county and experience a sense of belonging. This is not reflected in press coverage. There are other difficulties in press coverage as well.

Even when problems of racial inequality and racial harassment in Wiltshire are being reported, like in an article from the Bath and West Evening Chronicle in 1988, the factual report is somewhat undermined by high profile quotations from a senior police officer and a local employer, that there are no problems with racial harassment and racial inequality in the workplace here. There are examples of the down-playing of racial motives in the reporting of violent incidents. In an otherwise straight piece of reporting the Wiltshire Times in 1999 made little of the racial motive in a punch-up outside a pub and the defence lawyer’s denial of a racial motive was widely
quoted. A brief quotation for the Racial Equality Council did offer some balance. In a Gazette and Herald report on another racially motivated incident of violence, again the defence denial of racial motive gets far more coverage than evidence of racial motivation. In coverage of the Glyne Agard case, in which a black man was beaten to death by soldiers outside a night-club in Westbury, the reporting is generally factual, with the racial motive made clear. Reports of the judge's strangely contradictory views somewhat undermine this, although we cannot blame the paper:

The judge declares that he did not believe the defendants were 'generally motivated by mindless racial hostility to the black race', but then states that 'you demonstrated hostility, simply because of the colour of their skin'.

The Gazette and Herald, in 1993, gave considerable publicity to the fascist British Nationalist Party (BNP). Although the whole article was couched in tones of great disapproval, from an editorial point of view, BNP policy on resettlement (repatriation) for 'humane' reasons, was given credence by being unchallenged. An incident in which a local businessman made what were considered to be patronising racist remarks at the launch of a Racial Equality Council (REC) report, was reported factually by the Wiltshire Times in 1990, but no attempt was made to analyse the reasons why two black women felt his remarks were racist. That he focused on the success of black athletes, spoke of welcoming 'new faces' in the country but that numbers should be restricted would seem, in hindsight, to be insensitive to say the least.

The Gazette and Herald reported in 1999

'how children from different backgrounds and cultures regularly do less well'.

There was a great deal then about what could be done about this and this section of the report was very positive about the action that could be taken to improve this situation. There were no details about the nature of the lack of achievement, however, and the report did seem to turn children from different backgrounds (different to what? Presumably to white children) into a problem within schools. There were no figures, and any analysis of figures for school achievement nationally will indicate a very mixed picture, with no suggestion that black children do uniformly worse than white children. In fact, such a suggestion would be a travesty of the truth in this area.
Despite these examples of problematising ‘race’ in press reporting, the general picture is positive. The Wiltshire Times reported the setting up of a Wiltshire Black Police Officers’ Association in 1999, enabling black officers and civilians to state how things were improving. In January 2000, the Salisbury Journal reported in very supportive terms, the racial harassment of a black bus driver, although a letter from a reader printed a few days before seems to have triggered their interest in the incident. Later that year the same paper printed an article about the ‘shameful catalogue of racism in our city’. This was a detailed, sympathetic report. In May 2001 the Western Daily Press reported how the Wiltshire Police were reviewing their stop and search policy in the light of complaints about racism. It reported that black youths were seven times more likely than white youths to be stopped and searched. Additional information about low arrest rates would have been even more supportive. In November 2001 the Wiltshire Times printed an article about the Wiltshire Racial Equality Council that publicised the positive actions they are taking to deal with racial inequality and racism, as well as promoting black and other minority ethnic people within the county. This appeared to be more of a press release than an editorially commissioned article.

Whilst there is this general positive analysis of press coverage of ‘race’ issues, the press in Wiltshire would do well to consider some of the ways that they report such issues, notably their problematisation of ‘race’ and the dearth of positive stories about minority ethnic communities and individuals in Wiltshire. As stressed previously, this publication gives plenty of good news about the ways in which black citizens of Wiltshire like the county and want to be here.
7 Concluding Comments

The aim of this study has been to understand the experiences, perceptions and needs of Wiltshire’s minority ethnic residents in a number of settings including schools, the workplace and public places. The findings have shown that there was as much diversity among the experiences of respondents as there were similarities. Many respondents, despite occasional experiences of racism or prejudice, said they liked living in Wiltshire and felt part of the local wider community. Among the responses there were some very positive experiences of living, working and attending schools in Wiltshire.

With regard to experiences of racism, the findings of this study illustrated a number of key parallels with findings from previous research in rural counties in the South West. Respondents discussed experiences of overt and covert racism in Wiltshire and it emerged that the nature of racism in Wiltshire was predominantly prejudice and negative stereotyping, borne out of the lack of presence of people of different ethnic cultures and backgrounds. Many respondents discussed how their strategy to cope with racism and prejudice was to ignore it. The fear of retribution was resonated by a number of young and adult respondents as a key factor for not reporting incidents. In instances where respondents had contacted the police, they had mixed experiences: some respondents were happy with the outcome, while others felt frustrated and disappointed. Insufficient feedback or action from the police; the difficulty in taking action against young perpetrators; and the frustration at not being able to identify perpetrators were some of the reasons why respondents had been disappointed after reporting racist incidents. In some instances, their negative experiences had left them feeling deterred from reporting incidents in the future. Young respondents discussed experiences of racism within the school setting and the difficulties in reporting incidents to staff members.

During discussions on the usage of statutory and non-statutory services, a number of the adult and older respondents identified language difficulties as a key barrier to accessing some of the services. Some respondents also found it extremely difficult to read and respond to official letters, fill in forms and seek information about their entitlements due to their language difficulties. Feelings of isolation and loneliness were identified by a couple of respondents, particularly those that had built their friendship networks elsewhere and had few opportunities to meet people due to language difficulties, childcare responsibilities and transport arrangements. For some respondents, a combination of these factors, alongside religious and cultural
factors, also had a bearing on their use of social and leisure facilities, including youth centres and public swimming pools.

One of the key issues identified during discussions on employment was the system of ethnic monitoring. Some respondents felt that by identifying their ethnicity they were opening themselves to discrimination when they applied for jobs. Another issue that emerged from the study was the perception among some respondents that securing a permanent post or promotion within Wiltshire’s local authorities was difficult for applicants of a minority ethnic background.

At a time of rapid modernisation within the councils in Wiltshire, the findings of this study will be invaluable in developing strategies that are inclusive of the needs and views of the minority ethnic residents of Wiltshire. The needs and issues addressed will help inform statutory and non-statutory organisations in future planning arrangements and service delivery.
APPENDIX A

Race Equality Legislation

The Race Relations 1976 Act

The Race Relations 1976 Act outlawed discrimination within employment and training, provision of goods facilities and services, education, housing and other activities in the UK. This enabled individuals who were discriminated against to bring forward proceedings and claim damages. However, the act did not cover all functions of public authorities.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and The Macpherson Report

The Macpherson Report, in 1999, concluded findings arising from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry on the Metropolitan Police Service. The inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence highlighted issues of organisational racism within the police service and recommended a review of police policies in order to alleviate overt and covert racism and discrimination. A new definition of institutional racism had been introduced as a result:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people (MacPherson Report, 1999).

Racism exists in many covert forms and there was often the problem of having to convince or prove to the police that the incident was racially motivated. The report recommended that a new definition of racist incidents should be adopted not only within the police, but also within local government and other relevant agencies.

A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person (MacPherson Report, 1999).

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

The Race Relations Amendment Act, the first amendment in 25 years, was borne out of concerns expressed throughout the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry and through recommendations made in the MacPherson Report in 1999. It came from a recognition that racism was something that needed to be addressed not only within the police service, but also in all policies and practices of institutions (CRE, 2000).
The new Act strengthens the 1976 Act in two major ways:

- It extends protection against racial discrimination by public authorities;
- It places a new, enforceable positive duty on public authorities.

This means that all the functions of public authorities will be subject to the Race Relations Act.

The new positive duty on public authorities requires them to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations in carrying out their functions. The duty’s aim is to make race equality a central part of the way public authorities work, by putting it at the centre of policy making, service delivery, regulation and enforcement, and employment practice.

The critical feature of the new duty is that it is enforceable. If the CRE is satisfied that a public authority is not complying with its specific duties, the CRE will be able to serve a compliance notice. Compliance with the new duty could also be the subject of inspections or audits by, for example, Ofsted and the Audit Commission.

The positive duty on public authorities incorporates the following requirements:

- Monitor staff by ethnicity;
- Assess the impact on racial equality of proposed policies, and to consult on them;
- Monitor the impact on racial equality of existing policies and practice.

Under the specific duties covering policy and service delivery, public authorities must publish a Race Equality Scheme by 31st May 2002. This scheme sets out how they plan to meet their general and specific duties to promote race equality (CRE, 2001).
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