

THE CONCEPT OF A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY

A Lecture to mark the establishment of the
Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations in the
University of Warwick

JOHN REX

Occasional Papers in Ethnic Relations No.3

Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations
Arts Building
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL

November 1985

THE CONCEPT OF A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY

The Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations is a Designated Research Centre of the Economic and Social Research Council. The Centre publishes a series of Research, Policy, Statistical and Occasional Papers, as well as Bibliographies and Research Monographs. The views expressed in our publications are the responsibility of the authors.

© John Rex 1985.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recorded or otherwise, without the prior permission of the authors.

Price: £1.00 (including handling charge and VAT)

Orders for Centre publications should be addressed to the Administrative Assistant, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, Arts Building, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL. Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to the University of Warwick. Please enclose remittance with order.

ISSN 0267 5668
ISBN 0 948303 50 6

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN ETHNIC RELATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Working Papers on Ethnic Relations

1. Mike Fenton and David Collard **Do 'Coloured' Tenants Pay More? Some Evidence**
2. Mike Fenton **Asian Households in Owner-Occupation: A Study of the Pattern, Costs and experiences of Households in Greater Manchester**
3. A. Brah, M. Fuller, D. Loudon and R. Miles **Experimenter Effects and the Ethnic Cueing Phenomenon**
4. Hazel Flett and Margaret Peaford **The Effect of Slum clearance on Multi-Occupation**
5. Hazel Flett **Council Housing and the Location of Ethnic Minorities**
6. R. Miles and A. Phizacklea **The TUC, Black Workers and New Commonwealth Immigration, 1954-1973**
7. David Clark **Immigrant Responses to the British Housing Market: A Case Study in the West Midlands Conurbation**
8. Michael Banton **Rational Choice: A Theory of Racial and Ethnic Relations**
9. Bridget Leach **Youth and Spatial Poverty: Activity Space Patterns of Black and White Young People in Leeds**
10. Robert Miles **Between Two Cultures? The Case of Rastafarianism**
11. Margaret Elliot **Shifting Patterns in Multi-Occupation**
12. Hazel Flett **Black Council Tenants in Birmingham**
13. Yvonne Dhooge **Ethnic Difference and Industrial Conflicts**
14. Hazel Flett **The Politics of Dispersal in Birmingham**
15. Mark Duffield **The Theory of Underdevelopment and the Underdevelopment of Theory: The Pertinence of Recent Debate to the Question of Post-Colonial Immigration to Britain**
16. John Rex and Malcolm Cross **Unemployment and Racial Conflict in the Inner City**
17. Frank Reeves **The Concept of Prejudice: An Evaluative Review**
18. Richard Jenkins **Managers, Recruitment Procedures and Black Workers**
19. Malcolm Cross **Migrant Workers in European Cities: Concentration, Conflict and Social Policy**
20. John Solomos **The Politics of Black Youth Unemployment: A Critical Analysis of Official Ideologies and Policies**

Research Papers in Ethnic Relations

1. Peter Weinreich **Manual for Identity Exploration Using Personal Constructs**
2. Mark Johnson and Malcolm Cross **Surveying Service Users in Multi-Racial Areas: The Methodology of the Urban Institutions Project**
3. Parminder Bhachu **Parental Educational Strategies: The Case of Punjabi Sikhs in Britain**

Policy Papers in Ethnic Relations

1. Barry Troyna and Wendy Ball **Views from the Chalk Face: School Responses to an LEA's Policy on Multicultural Education**
2. Selina Goulbourne **Minority Entry to the Legal Profession: A Discussion Paper**
3. John Benyon **A Tale of Failure: Race and Policing**

Bibliographies in Ethnic Relations

1. Zig Layton-Henry **Race and Politics in Britain** (Revised Edition)
2. Anne-Marie Phizacklea **The Employment of Migrant/Immigrant Labour in Britain** (Revised by John Solomos)
3. Nora Kornalijnslijper and Robin Ward **Housing and Ethnic Relations in Britain** (Revised Edition) (Forthcoming)
4. Mark Johnson **Race and Health**
5. Mark Johnson **Race and Place** (Geographical)
6. Daniele Joly and Jorgen Nielsen **Muslims in Britain: An Annotated Bibliography 1960-1984**
7. Mark Johnson **Race and Care**

Monographs in Ethnic Relations

1. Heather Booth **Guestworkers or Immigrants? A Demographic Analysis of the Status of Migrants in West Germany**
2. Robin Ward **Race and Residence in Britain, Approaches to Differential Treatment in Housing**

Statistical Papers in Ethnic Relations

1. Heather Booth **Second Generation Migrants in Western Europe: Demographic Data Sources and Needs**

Occasional Papers in Ethnic Relations

1. John Cowley **West Indian Gramophone Records in Britain: 1927-1950**
2. Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations **Research Programme (1985-1989)**
3. John Rex **The Concept of a Multi-Cultural Society: A lecture**

Reprint Papers in Ethnic Relations

1. Barry Troyna **"Policy Entrepreneurs" and the Development of Multi-Ethnic Education Policies: a Reconstruction**

The Concept of a Multi-Cultural Society

Professor John Rex is Associate Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations and Research Professor in Ethnic Relations in the University of Warwick. He has written extensively on questions of sociological theory, on the theory of race relations and on race relations in British Inner Cities. Among his best known books are Key Problems of Sociological Theory, Race Relations - Sociological Theory, Race and Ethnicity, Race Relations and Conflict (with Robert Moore) and Colonial Immigrants in a British City (with Sally Tomlinson).

The Concept of a Multi-Cultural Society

The establishment of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations in the University of Warwick marked the third stage of the initiative of the Social Science Research Council (now the Economic and Social Research Council) in the sphere of race and ethnic relations research. The Council originally established a Unit in the University of Bristol under the direction of Michael Banton in 1970. This Unit moved to the University of Aston under my own Directorship in 1979. Finally the Unit was transformed into a Centre which has now become fully part of the University of Warwick.

Although these changes have not prevented continuity in the Unit and Centre's work, it is of some importance to notice that at different stages the task of Units and Centres was envisaged differently by Council. At first it was thought that they should do fundamental research, leaving short-term policy issues to be dealt with by government departments. Later, however, they were pressed more and more towards research with practical policy applications. Within the latter option, moreover, there was pressure to do research on commission for government departments.

In these circumstances it was necessary that the Unit should be clear about the principles of academic research. On the one hand its staff felt that they should perform more than a technical role, gathering facts which might be useful to government in the pursuit of undisclosed policy objectives. On the other, if the ends of such policies were to be subject to criticism, some way had to be found of distinguishing the value standards used by researchers from those of political partisans.

Value Orientations in Social Science

Fortunately these were not new problems. They had been discussed in 1939 by the great Swedish social scientist Gunnar Myrdal¹ when he was invited to make a definitive study of race relations in the United States and the Unit was able to respond to the pressure to do policy oriented research by reaffirming his fundamental principles. These were as follows:

- 1) Social science always involves something more than the mere description of facts.
- 2) It claims not merely that such-and-such is the case but that it is necessarily the case. That is to say, it not merely describes but explains.
- 3) The concept of something being necessarily the case, however, has a special meaning in sociology. What is necessary from the point of view of one value

standpoint is not necessary from another. What is necessary from the point of view of one interest is not necessary from the point of view of another.

- 4) Sociology cannot of itself declare one value standpoint to be morally preferable to another. All it can do and what it certainly should do is to make its value standpoint or the state of affairs which it is taking as desirable, clear and explicit.

Myrdal, himself, chose, in studying American race relations, to ask the question, "what structures, institutions and policies are necessary to achieve the ends set out in the American constitution, as interpreted?"

The key to any honest approach to policy-oriented research is to be found in Myrdal's fourth principle. If asked what conditions are necessary for the successful implementation of policy, the researcher should ask for a clear and explicit declaration of policy goals. Unfortunately, all too often, when policy questions are posed there is no such explicitness or clarity. The honest researcher must therefore begin with a critical review of policy goals making clear what states of affairs are being held to be desirable and claiming "necessity" for any policy, institution or structure only relative to the stated goals.

What I am going to suggest in this lecture is that a new goal has become widely accepted in British race relations, namely that of the multi-cultural society, but that the meaning of this term remains remarkably obscure. One of the first and central tasks of a Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations must be to clarify its meaning, because it is in relation to the meaning given to the concept that our various specific researches fall into place.

Multi-culturalism is a new goal for British race relations. It was not discussed much before 1968 and even today much research is directed by another and quite different value-standpoint, namely that which emphasises equality of individual opportunity. In theory, if not in practice, this other ideal is shared across a wide political spectrum and is certainly the basis of much discourse in the social service departments about social policy.

In the fifteen years of its existence the Unit and Centre has concentrated very largely on the study of inequality and racial discrimination in the spheres of housing, employment, education and urban planning and most of its work has served to confirm in special institutional contexts the conclusion reached in successive Policy Studies Institute studies of national samples, that in all these spheres immigrant minorities from Asia, Africa, and the West Indies have suffered disadvantage due to racial discrimination.²

There is, of course, a need to continue such studies and to locate and publicize the origins of and responsibility for discrimination. But more and more of the problems posed to us are not about equality and how it can be promoted, but about the multi-cultural society, which prima facie at least, must mean a society in which people are not equally but differently treated. If in fact we pretend that multi-culturalism and equality are the same goal under different names we are creating precisely that kind of fuzziness which Myrdalian principles would suggest we should avoid.

The issues which arise here originally arose for me in a sharp form when I participated in the U.N.E.S.C.O. experts meeting on the nature of racism and race prejudice in 1967.³ The main theme of the statement which we drew up was about racial discrimination and inequality and how they could be overcome. Some Black Americans on the committee then argued that the Statement should begin with an affirmation of "the right to be different". Our decision however was to exclude such a reference because as one member of the Steering committee put it "every racially oppressive and segregationist government would seize on the statement as a justification of inequality."

It was surprising perhaps that the desire to include a reference to difference came from Black Americans. After all, the whole history of the Civil Rights movement had turned upon a rejection of the Plessey versus Ferguson decision of 1896 that facilities which were separate and segregated could nonetheless be equal. What was evident now, however, was that Black politics included another theme. Assimilation was rejected as a sign of equality. The goal of the Black Movement was to attain equality of respect for a separate Black culture.

In Britain today there are many egalitarians who take a similar view. They believe that anti-racism and the goal of equality requires that all minority cultures should enjoy equal respect. The unfortunate thing, however, is that because of the fuzziness of the ideal of multiculturalism, they gain apparent support from many whose aim, far from being equality, is precisely that minorities should receive something different and inferior. This is particularly true in the sphere of education.

Plural and Multi-Cultural Societies

One good way of clarifying these issues is to look at the theories which sociologists and anthropologists have developed in studying plural multi-cultural and multi-racial societies. It can be seen from these studies that such societies are far from providing us with an ideal and it must therefore be in some very special sense that we speak of such an ideal in contemporary conditions.

Most sociological theory had dealt with unitary societies or with conflict within

society. Furnivall broke new ground however with his study of the plural society in Indonesia.⁴ There he found different ethnic groups living side by side but interacting with each other only in the market place. The result of this was that, while the separate ethnic communities were governed by the morality and the religion and the kinship order, the market place was subject to no kind of moral control. While European capitalism had grown slowly out of the past and was constrained by some kind of common will, capitalism in Indonesia involved a market place in which one group simply oppressed or resisted another. The plural society was plural in two senses. One was that each ethnic community existed separately and had its own communal morality. The other was that the private and communal world was separated from that of the market place. The question which this raises for us is whether what we will achieve if we have a multi-cultural society is the encouragement of tight knit communal morality within groups and a world of total exploitation between groups.

M.G. Smith argues along similar lines.⁵ Whereas, as he sees it, unitary social systems have a single and complete set of institutions covering the spheres of domestic life, religion, law, politics, economics, education and so on, it is characteristic of plural societies in the British West Indies that there is no such overall institutional set. Rather what we have is a number of ethnic segments each of which has its own nearly complete institutional set. These segments would in fact be separate societies were they not bound together by the political institution i.e. the State. Putting this in another way Smith says that such societies are held together only because one group dominates the others. The various groups are differentially incorporated, if not de jure, at least de facto. Here again it would seem the plural society model is a model of racial domination.

If we are to maintain the model of the multi-cultural society it must clearly be distinguished from that suggested by Furnivall and Smith. This can best be done by drawing a distinction between the public and the private domain. There appear then to be four possibilities:

- (a) One might envisage a society which is unitary in the public domain but which encourages diversity in what are thought of as private or communal matters.
- (b) A society might be unitary in the public domain and also enforce or at least encourage unity of cultural practice in private or communal matters.
- (c) A society might allow diversity and differential rights for groups in the public domain and also encourage or insist upon diversity of cultural practice by different groups.
- (d) A society might have diversity and differential rights in the public domain even though there is considerable unity of cultural practice between groups.

The ideal of multi-culturalism, in which multi-culturalism is held to be compatible with equality of opportunity is represented by (a).

(b) is possibly represented by the French ideal of assimilation of minority groups.

(c) is common under all forms of colonialism and is represented above all by the S. African Apartheid system.

(d) is the state of affairs which existed in the Deep South of the United States before the Civil Rights programme took effect.

The crucial point about our multi-cultural ideal is that it should not be confused with (c). All too often it is, and those who support (c) are likely to accept the slogan of multi-culturalism and bend it in that direction.

Let us now be more precise about what we mean by the public and private domain.

In fact the notion of the two domains seems at first to be at odds with mainstream sociological theory, since most sociologists see all institutions as being interconnected with one another in a single system. This seems to me to be equally true of the functionalist paradigm as developed by Malinowski⁶ and Radcliffe Brown,⁷ of the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons⁸ and the Structuralism of recent French Marxism.⁹ In all of these the private domain is not an optional extra but plays a part in socializing individuals for participation in the public sphere. Per contra the public domain is seen as shaped by the morality which is inculcated in the family and through religious institutions.

The actual history of European social institutions, however, belies functionalist theory. The polity, the economy and the legal system have been liberated from control by traditional values and have been based upon new values of an abstract kind. On the other hand it has seemed possible to permit the continuance of folk values and folk religions as long as these do not interfere with the functioning of the main political, economic and legal institutions of society.

In fact a great deal of classical sociological theory deals principally with the evolution of the new abstract value systems which a large-scale society requires. Ferdinand Tonnies saw that folk community must give way historically to association and society, the first being based upon the natural or real will, the second upon the deliberate artificial and rational will.¹⁰ Durkheim wrote about "organic solidarity" based upon the division of labour, which would replace the "mechanical solidarity" of small-scale community based upon kinship,¹¹ and, even more radically of an "egoistic society"¹² in which values were located in the minds of separate individuals. Finally Weber saw in Calvinist religion and the Protestant ethic the end-point of an increasingly rationalistic

trend in religion and, together with that, the development of political leadership based upon rational legal authority.¹³

Moral and legal systems of an abstract character thus were seen by all these authors as governing the social evolution of the modern state and of a formally rational capitalist economy. This is how what Parsons calls the Hobbesian problem of order (i.e. of how to avoid a war of all against all) was solved. This too is the significance of Furnivall's observation that the common will which characterized European capitalism was absent in Indonesia. It is under colonialism that we find what Marx called "the callous cash nexus". Economic and political institutions in Europe were embodied in what one might call "the civic culture".

The development of this "civic culture" (e.g. the abstract public morality, law and religion) by no means implied the disappearance of folk morality, folk culture and folk religion. These now came to fulfil new functions. On the one hand they bound men together into separate communities into which individuals were socialized and within which they achieved their social identities. On the other they provided for what Parsons called "patterns maintenance and tension management". Living in a larger world with abstract moral principles was, so Parsons believed, only psychologically possible, if individuals had the possibility of a retreat where they could enjoy more intimate relations and "let their hair down".

The ideal of the multi-cultural society which I have outlined above really presupposes the evolution of modern type of society, of which Weber and Durkheim especially wrote. In simple societies morality and kinship structures had to govern the whole range of human activity. In an abstract and impersonal society a new more abstract form of law and morality had to be developed to govern large scale political and economic organisations, while the old folk culture and morality helped the individual to retain some sort of psychological stability through more immediate social interdependence. Thus multi-culturalism in the modern world involves on the one hand the acceptance of a single culture and a single set of individual rights governing the public domain and a variety of folk cultures in the private domestic and communal domains.

Perhaps one should also say something here about the relation of what I have been saying and Marxist sociology and political thought. I think that the latter contains a certain duality. On the one hand the liberation of the market from traditional restraints represents for Marx the creation of precisely that type of society without a common will to which Furnivall refers. On the other Marx may be seen as envisaging the emergence through class struggle of a new rational socialist economic order. To the extent that he does one may see Marx too as envisaging the possibility of a new civic culture.

The Institutions of the Public Domain

We must now consider more closely the institution of the public and the private domain and in each case look more closely at the ways in which they are likely to intrude on one another. As we shall see education intrudes into both spheres and the communal ideologies which bind people together in the private sphere may have implications for their integration or non-integration into public life.

The main institutions which constitute the public domain are those of law, politics and the economy.

Law determines the rights of any individual and the way in which he or she is incorporated into society. The very mark of the plural society is that different groups and categories of people are differentially incorporated. In our ideal multi-cultural society on the other hand, we are positing that all individuals are equally incorporated and that they have equality before the law. The ideals of the multi-cultural society and of its civic culture are not realised insofar as any individual or category of individuals is harrassed or under-protected by the police or are denied access to or the protection of the courts.

In the sphere of politics again, in the plural society different groups have differing degrees of political power. In the ideal multi-cultural society each individual and group is deemed to have the same right to exercise political power through the vote or by other means. This by no means excludes the notion of conflict but no individual or group should find the rules governing such conflict stacked against him. Participation in such a political system is a part of the multi-cultural ideal.

The economy refers in the first place to the institution of the market. This involves the processes of bargaining and competition and the sole sanction which an individual may use against the other is the threat to go to another supplier. The market should exclude the use of force and fraud. But while it is a rule-governed institution it excludes by definition the concept of "charity". "Charity" is a concept which belongs to the world of community and folk morality. What is involved in market behaviour is the more abstract morality of sticking to the rules of peaceful market bargaining. The maintenance of such a system is another and quite central part of the civic culture and the multi-cultural ideal.

This is not to say that a market economy cannot be replaced by another type or allocation system or what is sometimes called the command economy. Here certain abstract goals are made explicit and organizations are set up to advance them. But the best that such a system can achieve is formal justice. Here as in the market economy there is no principle of charity, which is again assigned to the folk community.

To say that these are the macro-institutions which are required in the civic culture of a multi-cultural society is not to say that such a society will always be totally harmonious and peaceful. The pursuit of directly political goals involves conflict and markets too break down and give way to collective bargaining and political conflict. All that I wish to claim is that it is to be assumed in a multi-cultural society that no individual has more or less rights than another or a greater or lesser capacity to operate in this world of conflict because of his or her ethnic category.

Any suggestion that individuals or groups should receive differential treatment in the public domain is a move away from the multi-cultural ideal towards the plural society of colonialism. It would mean that groups were differentially incorporated de facto if not de jure. And this is true even in an atmosphere of paternalism. This would be the case, for example, if, while other groups had their needs provided by separate functional departments, all the needs of the minority were provided by a single Department of Minority affairs.

It may perhaps be suggested here that the efflorescence of race relations programmes at local level reflects not a genuine multi-culturalism, but this trend towards different and separate provision. It is moreover a process which it is very difficult to stop once it is in train because a considerable number of individuals from minority groups may be rewarded for staffing it.

The Boundaries of the Public Domain

So far I have discussed the institutions of law, politics and the economy as institutions of the public domain, and I have suggested that matters relating to the family, to morality and religion belong in the private sphere. It is now necessary to note, however, that the public domain is often extended through bureaucratic state activity in matters of the family and morality, particularly in the Welfare State.

Two kinds of barriers are breached in the modern state. On the one hand it intervenes in the economic sphere through ownership, through control, and through subsidies to ensure efficient productions. But, on the other hand it intervenes in what are essentially family and community matters. It directs the economy towards full-employment so that all bread-winners may have jobs. It permits as well as directing trade union activity to ensure job security. It makes provision through social insurance to ensure that individuals without employment have an income. It may build homes and let them or subsidize the building of houses for private ownership. It may provide education for children and for adults and it may provide social work services to help in resolving personal and family problems. All of these activities involve breaches in the barrier between public and private domains. When the State provides moreover its

provision is universally oriented. It cannot easily make its provision multi-cultural, or, if it does, it may provide unequally and unfairly for different groups.

T.H. Marshall¹⁴ has suggested that it is the mark of the modern state that it provides, in addition to legal and political rights, a substantial body of social rights and that this has led workers to feel a greater sense of loyalty to the state and nation than they do to class. In terms of my argument, however, there is an even more fundamental point. This is that much of the feeling of identification which individuals once had with the private domain and the local community is transferred to the state.

Undoubtedly functions have been lost by the family and community to the state, although there is an argument that state intervention actually supports the family and enables it to perform its primary tasks of consumption and primary socialisation more effectively.¹⁵ What seems to be the case is that there is inevitably a degree of state socialist provision for family welfare in the modern world and that this is an area of collaboration between public and private domains. When the state intervenes in education, however, more difficult problems arise.

Education and the Public and Private Domains

A modern educational system has three clear functions. It selects individuals on the basis of their achievement for training for various occupational roles. It transmits important skills necessary for survival and for work in industry. And it also transmits moral values. It is this third function which brings it into conflict with the private domain, for clearly one part of the socialization process consists precisely in the transmission of moral values.

Clearly no ethnic minority will object to the selection mechanism being part of the public domain. What is important is simply that this mechanism should give equal opportunity to all. Again, if the minority is committed to living by employment in the industrial system, it will itself wish to take advantage of any skill training which is available. Moral training, however, involves other issues.

Insofar as it is simply concerned with the transmission of what we might call the civic morality and culture, the problems which moral training through the schools raises will be small. True, there will be doubts about the desirability of encouraging competitive and individualist values, because, taken out of context, these conflict with the principles of charity and mutual aid underlying local communities and the private domain. But this is an inherent tension in industrial society and one with which industrial man has learned to live. Moreover there are parts of the civic morality which are of value and importance to minorities. Especially this is true of the notion of equality of

opportunity. Much more important than any objection to this aspect of the schools moral role is the objection to its interference in matters which are thought of as private or as involving individual choice. This is true of all matters relating to sex, marriage, the family and religion.

It is arguable that schools ought not to intervene in these matters at all or to do so only on the most general and basic level. Such an argument turns upon showing that in a variety of practices in these spheres in no way prevents the proper functioning of the state and may positively assist it. The counter-argument is that it is of concern to the state how family matters are arranged, both because the state is concerned with the law of inheritance and because it has to uphold individual rights even against the family.

On family matters, however, there are considerable tensions between minority communities and the school in contemporary Britain. Amongst Asians, for example, there is a great emphasis upon arranged marriage and the relative exclusion and modesty of females. Neither the official curriculum of British schools, nor the peer group culture in which minority children inevitably participate foster the relevant values. Sometimes schools may be unnecessarily provocative as when some of these require participation of girls in mixed swimming classes, but more generally the whole ethos of the school, based as it is on the encouragement of individual choice and free competition strikes at the root of any tight-knit marriage and family system.

There is often a fundamental clash of values on these matters in any modern society. The notion of equality of opportunity appears to point to the rights not merely of families but to those of individuals, male and female, against the constraints imposed by families. Feminism has made the issues here especially sharp. It is unacceptable in terms of feminist values that a woman should be forced into a marriage or that girls should be denied the maximum degree of education because of some preconceived notion of the female role.

Such emphases in the argument are, however, quite misleading from the point of view of Asian parents. They fail to take notice of the fact that an arranged marriage reflects the care which the family shows towards its daughters, guaranteeing them a dowry far more substantial than anything which an English girl might get from her parents. Indeed it can be said that the whole system gives the bride more rights than does the notion of marriage based upon random selection and romantic love. Much more than this however, the assertion of freedom in the sexual sphere is bound up with a whole set of values about the marketability of sex which is reflected in the media and in sex-shops. The feminist demand for greater freedom is therefore seen as part of this larger package which offends against all Asian concepts of modesty and love.

There is no point in my seeking to resolve this clash of values here. It is simply important to note that it exists and that in a society which seeks to achieve both equality of opportunity and the toleration of cultural diversity, institutional arrangements will evolve to deal with this tension. In the case mentioned parents will often be identified with what the schools have to offer by way of equality of opportunity, but may seek to limit its role by the withdrawal of children from certain kinds of activity and also seeking to provide supplementary moral education outside the school.

Another potential source of discord is religion. Here, however, the way has been prepared in a Christian society for dealing with potential conflicts. Because the various Christian sects and denominations have engaged in conflicts, even in international and civil wars, which have threatened the unity of the State, most nominally Christian societies have already downgraded religion to a matter of minor importance towards which there was no danger in exercising toleration. Once, therefore, Roman Catholics were given the right to teach their own religion in schools there was no barrier in principle to allowing Islam or Sikhism or Hinduism to be taught in a similar way. Difficulties only seemed to arise with quasi-religious movements like Ras-Tafarianism because of their strong political content.

Wider than the religious question was that of instruction in minority cultures, thought by many to be the key issue in any programme of multi-cultural education. Such innovations, however, are often far from popular with minority communities, who see them as diverting energies from subjects more important to examination success, and, in any case as caricatures of their culture. The strong preference of minority people is that, unless such teaching can be carried out by minority teachers in schools, it is best done outside school-hours. What may perhaps be important is that while minority children learn about majority culture, provision should also be made for majority children to learn about minority culture, since this will foster equality by encouraging equal respect for other cultures.

The question of language creates greater dilemmas. Teaching in mother tongues and teaching of mother tongues have both been seen to be important in a wide variety of minority communities. Teaching in mother tongue is important at the outset for those who do not speak the main school language. If they are simply confronted by this other language on entering school, children's education is likely to be seriously retarded. What is required therefore is initial teaching in the mother tongue with the main language gradually introduced until it replaces mother-tongue as a medium of instruction. Paradoxically the importance of using mother tongue as an initial medium of instruction is that it can facilitate assimilation. Much more important, however, is the fact that it promotes equality of opportunity.

The teaching of mother tongue is of separate importance. Systematic provision for such teaching is beyond the means of most minority communities, and, if it were literally left to mother, the mother tongue would simply become a restricted ghetto language. What minority people want is to have financial support so that it can be used to enlarge the cultural experiences of the group. It cannot in the kind of society which we have in mind here ever attain anything like equality with the main language in some sort of bilingual state. But there is no reason why minority people should not be able to express themselves and communicate with each other about their experiences in their own language.

What I am suggesting here is that, once we recognize the inherent tensions to be found in the educational system, because it is at once part of the public and private domain it is possible to envisage a balance of control. The school should be concerned as the agent of the public domain with selection, with the transmission of skills and with what we have called here the civic morality. The community should control education in all matters having to do with their own language, with religion and with family affairs. In a multi-cultural society, the state should provide financial support for this latter type of activity.

The other alternative is to take education out of the public domain and make it an intra-communal matter. This is what has been done in England in the case of Catholic schools and, in principle, no new ground is opened up if, say, Muslim or Hindu schools receive similar recognition. Obviously there would be a danger in such schools that the task fulfilled by the mainstream schools would be subordinated to the inculcation of communal values, but it is also possible that a balance could be struck here in which the controllers of minority schools themselves recognized the instrumental value of education in a modern society along with education in its own culture. In fact if this were recognized it might be more possible to achieve the right balance in a school controlled by the minority than in normal majority schools which find themselves in tension with minority cultures.

The Problem of Ethnic Social Work

Clearly education is a sphere in which the distinction between that which is necessary from the point of view of maintaining the culture of minorities and that which is necessary from the point of view of a large scale society is difficult to draw. Another even more difficult area is that which arises in connection with social welfare and social work. Social workers have sometimes claimed that what is necessary in dealing with minorities is a special kind of multi-cultural social work. If, however, the problems of minority people are so different would it not be possible for the community to be

subsidized so that it could take care of its own? Alternatively is the problem not that of combining professional standards with sensitivity to community values? In that case would not the answer be to train social workers from the minority communities so that they could add professionalism to their existing sensitivity? The problem of trying to train majority social workers in sensitivity is much more difficult than that of training already sensitive minority people in professional standards.

The Structures of the Private Domain

The nature of the sociological problem with which we have to deal is this. For a member of the majority as a society, the world of the family and the primary community is an integrated structural part of the whole network of social relations which constitutes his or her society. It is also a functional sub-system of the whole and its culture is continuous with that of the main society. Amongst ethnic minorities the situation is wholly different. For such minorities the family and community are part of another social system and another culture. Quite possibly in that society the extended kinship group carried much more weight than it does in industrial society and in some cases provided the whole of the social structure.

The most important function of the immigrant minority kinship group is, of course, primary socialization. In the case of the majority this function is performed by the family and the family exists in relative isolation from any larger community or network. In the case of the minority communities on the other hand the family is part of a wider network of communal and associational ties, the socializing community is larger and more people are involved in the child's socialisation.

The extended family is not, however, solely a socializing agency. It also provides a unit for economic mobilization and this function may even be performed when members are separated from one another by migration. The family and kin-group has an estate to which members may be expected to contribute either in terms of property or in terms of skills and qualifications. An event like marriage is not, therefore, and cannot be solely a matter of individual choice. It involves the transfer of capital from one group to another and, as a result, the linking of two groups. At the same time the new family constituted by marriage starts with a carefully husbanded inheritance of material and social capital.

Because extended kinship is seriously damaged by the fact of migration, the networks within which family life occurs come to depend more on artificial structures which are thought of as associations, but which are actually structures through which the wider community life is expressed. In my study of Sparkbrook¹⁶ I suggested that these associations had four functions. They helped individuals to overcome social isolation; they did pastoral work amongst their members and helped them to deal with moral and

social problems; they served as a kind of trade union defending the interests of the group; and it was through them that values and beliefs were affirmed and religious and political ideologies perpetuated.

Of particular importance is the role of the association in the affirmation of values and beliefs. Included in this is the offering to the individual of beliefs about himself, that is to say identity options or ideas about who he or she is. Naturally it is not the case that individuals automatically accept these options, but the associations are flexible instruments through which new identities appropriate to the new situation are suggested as possible.

Values and beliefs, however, cohere around the more systematic teachings of minority religions. Such religions have belief systems which go far beyond the present situation in explaining man's relation to nature and to his fellow-man. As such they can never be simply functional in a modern society. Nevertheless, whatever their particular content, these religions provide a metaphysical underpinning for beliefs of all kinds and therefore help to provide the psychological security which the whole community structure gives.

To a very large extent the kinship structures, the associations and the religions of the minorities may be seen as acting together to perform a function for the larger society. It is the function of what Parsons calls "pattern maintenance and tension management". Sociological jargon apart, however, we may say that they provide the individual with a concept of who he is as he embarks on action in the outside world and also give him or her moral and material support in coping with that world. To the extent that they perform these functions, communal structures and belief systems become a functioning part of the larger society, whatever the particular form of the social structure and whatever the content of its culture.

Minority communities and minority cultures do not threaten the unity of society. Nor do they imply inequality between groups. They can have their place within a society which is committed in its main structures to equality of opportunity. What I have tried to suggest is that a multi-cultural society must find a place for both diversity and equality of opportunity. Emphasis upon the first without allowing for the second could lead to segregationism, inequality and differential incorporation. Emphasis upon the second at the expense of the first could lead to an authoritarian form of assimilationism. Both of these are at odds with the ideal of the multi-cultural society.

Conflict and Compromise in the Multi-Cultural Society

As a last word, however, let me qualify what I have said about the functionality of minority structures. I believe that we would do an injustice to the religious, cultural and political ideas of minority groups if we saw them as fitting easily and snugly into the social status quo. Sometimes their ideas and their institutions may be revolutionary or secessionist. Sometimes they are not addressed to the problems of the society of settlement at all, but to those of the original homeland. Should this mean that they are dangerous and should be repressed?

I think not. After all, British culture is by no means unitary. It can be and I think should be interpreted in terms of class struggle. The working classes nationally and regionally have developed solidary forms of organisation and revolutionary notions of social solidarity which challenge the social order and the culture of the ruling classes. The result of all this, however, is that what I have called the civic culture includes the notion of conflict. The social order which we have is the resultant of social conflict. I see no reason why there should not be a similar process as between majority and minority groups. Ours is a society which has produced institutions to deal with the injustices of capitalism. Surely it is not impossible to envisage a similar outcome to the struggle initiated by Rastafarianism which seeks to set right the injustices of the past 400 years. The only belief system which must be outlawed in the multi-cultural society is that which seeks to impose inequality of opportunity on individuals or groups. That is why the multi-cultural society must be an anti-racist society.

Summary: the Essentials of a Multi-Cultural Society

- (1) The multi-cultural ideal is to be distinguished from the notion of a plural society.
- (2) In a multi-cultural society we should distinguish between the public domain in which there is a single culture based upon the notion of equality between individuals and the private domain, which permits diversity between groups.
- (3) The public domain includes the world of law, politics and economics. It also includes education insofar as this is concerned with selection, the transmission of skills and the perpetuation of the civic culture.
- (4) Moral education, primary socialization and the inculcation of religious belief belong to the private domain.
- (5) The structure of the private domain amongst immigrant minority communities includes extended kinship extending back into a homeland, a network of associations and a system of religious organization and belief. This structure provides a valuable means in an impersonal society of providing a home and a

source of identity for individuals.

- (6) Nonetheless minority communities at any one time may conflict with and challenge the existing order as have communities based upon social class in the past. The new social order of the multi-cultural society is an emergent one which will result from the dialogue and the conflict between cultures.

Is a society of this kind likely to come into being in Britain? I think not. The concept of a multi-cultural society which is now in vogue is too confused for that. It might lead much more readily to "differential incorporation". Moreover there are still many to whom the very idea of multi-culturalism is anathema and they would oppose the emphasis upon diversity which I have advocated. But it never was the task of a sociologist to provide happy endings. All he can do is to clarify his value standpoint and indicate what institutional arrangements are necessary for its realisation.

Footnotes

- 1 Myrdal, Gunnar, (1944) The American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, Harper and Row: New York.
- 2 See Daniel William (1968) Racial Discrimination in Britain, Penguin: Harmondsworth.
Smith, David (1977) Racial Disadvantage in Britain, Penguin: Harmondsworth.
- 3 Montagu, Ashley (1972) Statements on Race, Oxford University Press: London.
- 4 Furnivall, J.S. (1939) Netherlands India, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- 5 Smith, M.G. (1965) The Plural Society in the British West Indies, University of California Press: Berkeley.
(1974) Corporations and Society, Duckworth: London.
- 6 Malinowski, B. (1962) A Scientific Theory of Culture, University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill.
- 7 Brown A.R. Radcliffe (1952) Structure and Function in Primitive Society, Cohen and West: London.
- 8 Parsons Talcott (1952) The Social System, Tavistock: London.
Parsons Talcott, Shils Edward and Bales Robert (1953) Working Papers in the Theory of Actions, Free Press: New York.
- 9 Althusser, Louis (1969) For Marx, Allen Lane: London.
- 10 Tonnies, Ferdinand (1955) Community and Association, Translated by C.P. Loomis, Routledge and Kegan Paul: London.
- 11 Durkheim, Emile (1973) The Division of Labour in Society, Free Press: Glencoe, Illinois.
- 12 Durkheim, Emile (1952) Suicide, Routledge and Kegan Paul: London.
- 13 Weber, Max (1930) The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Allen and Unwin: London.
(1968) Economy and Society Vol. 1, Bedminster Press: New York.
- 14 Marshall, T.H. (1950) Citizenship and Social Class, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- 15 Fletcher, Ronald (1966) The Family and Marriage in Britain, Penguin Books.
- 16 Rex, John (1973) Race, Colonialism and the City, Routledge and Kegan Paul: London.