Sharing crisps with someone different?

Social Cohesion, Diversity and Education Policy
Irene Bruegel, South Bank University
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Summary

Enclosed is a report of research on patterns of children's friendships conducted in 12 English

primary schools between 2003 and 2005. The schools varied greatly in ethnic and faith

diversity, with as many as 60 of the 600 children surveyed identifying themselves as Muslims.

We found that

- Friendship at primary schools can and does cross ethnic and faith divides wherever children have the opportunity to make friends from different backgrounds
- At that age, in such schools, children are not highly conscious of racial differences and are largely unaware of the religion of their friends.
- That the positive benefits of mixed primary schooling particularly for white children, extend into the early years of secondary school. They were more likely to make new friends from a different background, were more aware of racial discrimination
- There was some evidence that parents learned to respect people from other backgrounds as a result of their children's experiences in mixed schools.
- That the ethnic mix of primary schools can vary within local catchment areas and that parental attitudes allied to a rhetoric of choice reduces the chances of children from different backgrounds being in the same primary class.
- In the areas we studied this was particularly true of Catholic schools.
- Muslim children separated school and home more than other children, but their Muslim school friends did not come home with them any more than their other friends.
- The process of secondary school transfer affects behaviour and inter-racial relations as children react to a sense of rejection (not included in this paper)
- Secondary school transfer processes also tended to disrupt pre-existing inter-ethnic friendships more than others.
- Children in non denominational secondary schools from all ethnic backgrounds were largely opposed to 'faith' schools.
- In the one case we studied, primary school twinning had little effect on white children's attitudes, fuelling indeed their community's sense of losing out on investment.

Drawing on the large body of research into the social psychology of prejudice, we conclude

by arguing that day-to-day contact between children who can more easily see each other as

equals has far more chance of breaking down barriers between communities, than school

twinning and sporting encounters

We therefore think that if it is to address the questions of integration effectively, the commission

- Has to consider how far policies of enhanced school choice and the retention of existing faith schools have hindered integration
- Has to consider how policies and processes within schools help or hinder the respect and understanding pupils have for one another, with particular regard to the attitudes of white children
- Has to ensure that local examples of school twinning and informal contact are independently and systematically evaluated for their impact on attitudes and behaviour.
- Should systematically evaluate the educational benefits for white children from traditionally poor achieving backgrounds of learning alongside children from high aspiring ethnic groups, asking the question of how some of their achievements might 'rub off' on to their white peers.

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Introduction

'If we play football together, run the PTA together, sing in choirs or learn to paint together, we are less likely to want to harm each other' Tony Blair 2002

'Citizenship in the curriculum is fine, but if it goes no further than celebrating diversity, it won't work. What works is sharing crisps with someone different' Cllr David Ward, Bradford quoted in the TES 28.5.2004

'*Only through racially integrated schools could America ever generate sufficient social capital – familiarity, tolerance, solidarity, trust, habits of co-operation and mutual respect – across the racial divide'*(Robert Putnam 2000:362).

Social Capital is an important part of Labour's community cohesion agenda (Worley 2005). But Blair's vision and Ward's insight are almost completely absent from reforms proposed in the Education and Inspection Bill 2006. The Community Cohesion Review Team chaired by Ted Cantle investigated the circumstances that surrounded the disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley and identified schools as being *'central to breaking barriers between young people and helping to create cohesive communities'* (ODPM 2003; CRE 2006). Though a detailed set of community cohesion standards have been developed for schools (Home Office 2005), they are not translated into the thrust of the current educational reforms.

While *ethnic* diversity is sometimes posed as a threat to social capital, the thrust of our argument is that increasing *school* diversity may pose far greater problems for the development of social solidarity. The drive for competition between pupils and between schools, sits poorly with the collaboration required to build social capital across diversity.

The consequence, we would suggest is that racism and distrust of the other will not be contained as well as it might otherwise be. This is a complex and highly contested issue of how far schools can make good wider social problems. In place of schooling that is socially and ethnically inclusive, peripheral, poorly funded add-ons of school twinning and community festivals are the best that is on offer (Haddock 2003, Cantle et al 2006).

The British Government's lack of concern with inter-ethnic interaction within schools belies the importance generally placed on young people's attitudes to ethnic identity and difference and the how 'beliefs, attitudes and values [are] shaped in formative years ' (Grugeon and Woods 1990:4: Dutton and Singer 1998) Recent research in the US (Holme 2005; Frankenberg, E et al 2003) shows, for example, that the daily experience of attending racially diverse schools has long term effects on students as adults and their comfort in 'interracial settings'.

Despite the involvement of some young men in violent and menacing 'turf wars', young people more generally are recognised to be the first to forge hybrid identities and bridge cultural divides through fashion, sport, music and dance (Home Office 2004). Nor is this entirely fanciful. All the evidence shows that racial stereotyping is weaker and adaptation to ethnic diversity stronger amongst younger people. The probability that people know and interact with people from different ethnic backgrounds is closely related to age in Britain (Home Office 2004) and belies the view that ethnic diversity necessarily undermines social capital.

In New Labour policy social capital *within* schools is largely restricted to teacher networks (Halpern 2005:158). The policy emphasis has been on partnerships between schools, developing social capital amongst heads and senior teachers. Only for the 14-19 year olds will curriculum links bring children together, but that may be missing the boat, after strong school and ethnic group identities have been forged (Dutton and Singer 1998, Brown 1995). Shared out-of-school facilities and enhanced teacher contact may bring younger children together, but that will largely be an unintended consequence of such policies. In the context of the fissiparous processes of competition between schools and between pupils they can be likened to masking tape, not the social glue, relevant to a multi-ethnic society.

Abbas (2004) goes further to argue that the competitiveness agenda has 'systematically removed' issues of race equality in education. This is not just an issue of faith schools that have become a point of discussion (Cantle 2005), but of the impact of greater competition between schools for pupils on the degree of ethnic segregation within the system and within schools themselves. Discussion of ethnic segregation has been more muted (Burgess et al 2004b) than social segregation (Gorard and Taylor 2004, Burgess 2004a), partly because the picture is still more complex. But a study of the implementation of school choice in Stockholm, showed that segregation by income and race increased significantly

(Soderstrom and Uusitalo 2005). This is particularly pertinent in that Blair's forward to the White Paper on Education extols the Swedish reforms.

Ethnicity and the focus on children

Many of the children we surveyed in primary school, like those considered in other research (Conolly 1998) had difficulty identifying the ethnicity or faith of their friends At the same time children's friendship patterns clearly reflect ethnic divides (Smith and Tomlinson 1989;Verma 1994; Bhatti 1999;Moody 2004; Robinson 1998). This is hardly surprising given parental attitudes and the patterns of residence and school segregation that flow from them. Children don't construct the ethnic landscape they work within, but nor do they simply reproduce existing hierarchies of status. The way in which they negotiate the landscapes provide useful insights, we believe, into the process through which solidarities and social capital develop.

Our approach is to reject both the evolutionary psychologist assumption of inevitable divides and the rather complacent stance of current education policy. The first is based in the truism that people choose friends they resemble, when the issue is what resemblances are salient (Brown 1995; Tatum 1995). We acknowledge the 'one consistent finding in the social psychological literature' that ' social categorisation, causes group members to form biases towards their own group and discriminate towards other groups' (Spears Brown 2002), but stress that this applies to *all* groups - classes, football teams etc within schools or simply artificially constructed groups – possibly more than to ethnic minorities.   Gender divisions in school groupings are far more universal, but, interestingly rarely identified as undermining social solidarity. Even in an area of East London riven by racial strife, Cattell and Evans (1999) point to huge generational divides:

'You need a passport to get into Ozolins Way if you look under 45' ; 'We harp on about the good old times…there is this dreadful resentment of youth, everyone wants them out of the area'

Even when pared down to the observation that people tend to make friends who look more like themselves (de Bruine 2005), 'looking like oneself' is subjective and clearly contextual (Ali 2003), not genetically hard-wired. The shift in focus of racist discourse from Afro-Caribbeans to 'Muslims' and east European asylum seekers is evidence enough on that point. A high proportion of children not classed as 'white-British' now come from mixed or 'other' heritages, confounding many notions of physical difference as the basis of diversity.

The 'one consistent finding' of social psychology means that relatively crude attempts to bring children from different schools together for inter-ethnic/ inter-school activities start at a considerable disadvantage. It has long been known (Allport 1954) that 'contact' is not sufficient to develop inter-ethnic understanding: context is important, equality of esteem, institutional support and common interests are all relevant (Brown 1995). Contact abstracted from social relations of power may change little, and in specific circumstances, for example bussing of children forcibly, may make things worse (see Bauman 1996 on bussing in the British context)

We argue that it is important to distinguish between ongoing and sporadic contact, especially where the former is part of day to day accepted routines and the latter is artificially structured to 'address' difference. However worthy and imaginative, such contact will tend to be distorted by prior group identification amongst potential rivals (Holme 2005: Klein 2005). We looked at one particular twinning between primary schools in the North to get a feel for its impact on the white children. There were positive aspects to it. One school governor noted that the children in the Moorside village would otherwise not see an Asian until, and unless, they went to the town's sixth form college. He felt that the mixed race children in the school benefited from the contact –'they came alive', because people were 'talking about things that were meaningful to them'. But the children from the village referred to the twin school, as 'the brown school', 'down there'; they couldn't remember any of the children's names because they were 'difficult to pronounce' and the visits of the children did little if anything to assuage the sense of grievance of the white parents that the outer areas were losing out in funding to 'Banglatown', for example in the closure of the sixth form in the all white semi- rural secondary school. The children from the white community envied the resources of the inner city school, but treated their days out as external to them and their concerns. The twinning earned the school 'brownie points', but appeared to make only a very superficial difference to attitudes. The official report on Oldham in 2006 argued that such initiatives were too recent to have a visible impact (Cantle 2006 see also Haddock 2003)

The main study

The research we discuss here is part of a wider investigation into social capital and the family (Edwards 2003). We focussed on the transition between primary and secondary school in three areas of London (two with diverse populations, and a third outer London Borough); a New Town in the outer South East with a traditionally skilled white working class population and an outer estate in Birmingham with a predominantly white working class population. The

schools from which we draw our sample of 570 children are described in table 1; they were selected as schools that were average or above average in attainment levels at 11. The 12 schools are organised into 4 pairs which are within half a mile of each other, with another 4 more isolated schools. We surveyed two cohorts of pupils in year 6, asking them about their friends in and outside school, their identity and activities, their life within the family and outside school and interviewed parents of 75 of these pupils. We followed up 60 pupils into secondary school (see Table 1 'panel members'), another 70 students through focus groups and individual interviews with 25. The difference in the ethnic composition of adjacent primary schools, at least for pairs 2, 3 and 4, illustrates the degree of ethnic segregation at primary school level, and the link between ethnicity, poverty and Key Stage 2 results. It is clear that class and poverty operate as partially cross-cutting ethnicity in such areas.

Ethnic segregation in the secondary school transition process

We found that individual primary school heads who took issues of race equality very seriously were able to help parents get places for their children in highly rated schools; in one instance the upshot was that a number of local white parents felt aggrieved. A local teacher in the neighbouring struggling secondary school described how the white boys deprived of access to the highly-rated local school 'reigned' down on the Black and Asian children on their way to school and in their own playground. In this instance the processes of transfer fuelled pre-existing tensions.

The interviews showed, too, how for some parents and some children same ethnicity preferences were an important part of finding a suitable school. Three white working class Birmingham parents grappled with this. One mother wanted her daughter to go to the very same local school as her father, uncle, older cousins had but found *'all of a sudden we're out'.* She was offered a school that the mother rejected on the explicit grounds that *'she would have to get 3 buses to get to, though 'she has never been anywhere on her own' She's 11 and knows nobody there'.* This may not be the whole story since another child's parents described that very same secondary school as unacceptable in the following terms:

I would not have allowed it. I would have taken her out…(father)
'…*It's all Indians'* (mother)'
'...*because, and I am not being racist about this'*…Indians *'think a lot more about education than we do, to their own way'* (father)

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Their problem was that the Indian parents become parent governors and *'end up running the school'.*

The first parents rejected a third school on similar grounds:

I'm not being racist really, but they are all Asians there and she doesn't know any of them'

But then said, interestingly *'If she mixed with them and knew some of them, it wouldn't be so bad'* and made clear that she would do all in her power to stop her daughter going to the fourth school, a Catholic secondary because her nephew *'ended up on drugs from going there and he's been in prison'.* So Catholic schools are not necessarily viewed as 'better'.

In this sense parental choice systems of school allocation can be seen to fuel racism, partly because different groups see the process as weighted against them in obscure ways and partly because it enables parents to act upon their prejudices, to the potential disadvantage of their children. The young people in the main valued mixing and getting to know others, inhibited generally only by fears of bullying. The children saw denominational schools- which are important in the inner London localities- as contributing to this dispersal of friendships:

'*I think it (faith schools) is sort of out of order, cos you are just like singling out only one group and the rest get kicked out'. 'I don't think they are a good idea because you don't get to mix with other cultures, which means you don't learn about different cultures and that means when you are in the world, you won't really know very much'*

 'you'll all be the same in one respect, but I think it's better to be in a school with all different cultures and people.'

The impact of segregation at primary school level

The ethnic and social composition of a school does not define the social and ethnic pattern of friendships, nor do friendships necessarily undermine stereotyped attitudes towards other groups. Sharing a classroom does not ensure that friends are made across ethnic divides, but we found a sizeable and probably rising level of inter-ethnic friendship.

In all about 40% of the 1250 primary school friendships analysed in our sample crossed ethnic lines. This might seem low, but it is more than the comparable figure in Smith and Tomlinson's 1988 study, though the rise amongst Asians- from 21% to 44%, and Afro-Caribbean from 42% to 71%, was much greater than that amongst whites: from 26 to 28%.

The opportunity of white British children to have friends from a different ethnic background is limited in many of the classes included in our study; as was the opportunity of ethnic minority children to have *same* ethnicity friends in such classes. Looking at all the mixed friendships of white children, they are overwhelmingly concentrated in Inner London: over 70% of white children with friends of other ethnicities were in Inner London schools, when only 27% of all white children in our sample lived in Inner London. Our outer London sample of 272 friendship links of white children featured only 3 mixed friendships. Such friendships were commoner in the more working class areas of the South East New Town and the Midlands Outer City Estate, but many of these were friendships with children from 'other' backgrounds, Chinese for example or from mixed heritages. There were exceptions. In a small Catholic School in the Midlands where we surveyed three classes, two lacked any inter-ethnic friendships, but in one a Catholic Afro-Caribbean child was the centre of the main girls' friendship network. Her mother, making no reference at all to ethnicity, noted how close the group were, that they all grew up together, right from the age of 2 and shared Holy Communion. This interesting perception marginalized the non-Catholic children in the child's friendship group.

In general, however, friendship patterns displayed are largely the result of fairly extreme geographical segregation between schools, though they also reflect the fact that Asians are treated as a single group. Inter-ethnicity friendships would be higher still if we classified friendships between Bangadeshi and Sikh children for example as inter-ethnic, as we do friendship links between West African and Afro-Caribbean children[i].

In general there were few statistically significant differences, apart from locality between common and mixed ethnicity friendships. Boys and girls were, generally, as likely to cross boundaries. Many children identified interests in sport or tastes in music and fashion as what they had in common with their friends (Blatchford 1998); but there was no evidence that this was stronger for same ethnicity or different ethnicity friendships (Moody 2004). While Asian children tend to separate school and home lives, visiting patterns are much the same when their friends are Asian, as when they are from other ethnic groups. The Asian children in our sample did not appear to cultivate out of school friendships to compensate for a lack of classmates from the same ethnic background. Overall we found that mixed ethnicity friendships were of equal or longer duration; children visited one another's houses as much; and parents knew of one another as often. The friendships were less home based: the children stayed over less and parents were less likely to be said to be friends. Balancing the

parents who sought to keep their children from undesirable peers of different ethnic backgrounds, there were examples where the children's friendships brought parents together across ethnic divides, to appreciate common values:

Asked whether the child's friends shared their values, one white London mother responded

'*The one that he really likes, yes. I think there are some children that behave really horribly and so I don't think they could have the same family values or whatever values you call it. But I do feel that the Asian boys are the nicest boys in his class so I think they have a common we have a common link with them cos they have a nice, you know, morals… A lot of Mary's friends tend to be Muslim so I think there must be a lot in common with the way we bring our own up. I have very high expectations of behaviour and NEVER put up with bad behaviour from my children so they tend to be attracted to similar to themselves that know how to behave. A lot of kids in Sam's school who don't know how to behave so you don't wanna be friends with them cos they're horrible'*

A middle class Pakistani mother in East London could distinguish influences on her sons

"*[Older son] has been spoilt by bad company, …. He's been skiving and stealing with Somalians or different children in the community. He sometimes doesn't come home till 1 or 2am. Even he was in court once. [Younger son] is very different, he has two nice family friends [mixed race, both with White mothers and African-Caribbean fathers]; the mothers keep a very good eye open for the children, they encourage them to make progress with their studies, encourage respect*"

Within the classroom: assessing within-class clustering

In our sample there were 25 groups of children who had a realistic opportunity of having a friend from a different ethnic background, given the numbers in each class. These covered 500 in-class friendship links and are treated in what follows as case studies of friendship networks in final year primary school classes.

In general the pattern of friendships shows very little clustering: the proportion of same ethnicity friendships is close to that to be expected from the composition of the classroom. Across all the groups children were only 10% more likely to choose a friend from the same ethnic background as the in-class ethnic profile would predict, far lower than Moody (2004) found for his USA sample. This varied between the classes in denominational schools and those in local authority schools. Allowing for the dispersion of white pupils between faith and

local authority primary schools, white children were *more* likely to cluster together within denominational schools, with a weighted average clustering of 1.6, compared to .8 for white children in local authority schools. This could be a function of scale, with white children clustering more the fewer there were, rather than a function of denomination per se, but it illustrates how opportunities for making friends do not translate seamlessly into friendship patterns.

The twenty five networks we mapped, included 11 white groups in which half were just as likely to have non-white friends as the numbers in the class would predict and five (generally denominational primary schools) in which white children could be seen to cluster together as friends, in the sense that more of their friends were white than the numbers of white children in the class would suggest. The most extreme apparent clustering of white children occurred in a CoE school in an Asian area, with a tiny handful of white children in each class. Looking at the classes in which clustering appears strong, for one or more ethnic groups, some is an artefact of categorization. Much of the apparent clustering of Asians in one school hides friendships involving Pakistani, Indian Muslim, Hindu and Bangladeshi children.

Secondly the picture ignores the gendering of friendships. If we take account of this and set our arena of choice more narrowly to having between 20% and 80% of children from the same ethnic background in the class as the scale at which same gender/ different ethnicity friendship can develop, only one class had any very highly clustered groups, black Africans and whites. It is also clear that even where children cluster strongly by ethnic group, there is interaction with others and that some children remain isolated from others of apparently the same background.

While our data on children's friendships within individual classes shows some evidence of clustering along ethnic grounds, in general children were linked into a multi-ethnic friendship network, except where schools themselves were highly segregated. Children from mixed and 'other' backgrounds sometimes appeared to be the catalysts for such networks, though it is also clear that some individual children were extremely popular with their peers irrespective of background. Relatively few children in schools in diverse areas had friendships at school that were exclusively within their ethnic group; and where they did, this was at least in part a reflection of a stronger desire to have friends of the same gender, leaving few alternative opportunities.

We examined whether children sought out-of-class friendships to compensate for a lack of opportunity to make friends of the same ethnic background within their class.

Overall the fewer class-mates children had of the same ethnicity, the more they chose friends outside their own school. This turned out to be truer for white and Afro-Caribbean children than for Africans or Asians. Asian children in particular did not nominate children outside their class very often as their friends, bringing into question the idea that they operate in tight ethnic enclaves around after-school religious activities (Smith and Khanon 2005).

We asked primary school children what they had in common with their named friends and how they differed from them. White children never referred to a common ethnicity, while Asian children sometimes did, but in the main the children at age 11 were not operating with any strong ethnic categorisations and were often unable or unwilling to identify a friend's ethnicity, still less religion or to see ethnicity as a salient difference (Conolly 1998). To sum up: at primary school there was a slight tendency for children to seek out friends from the same ethnic background and when the school was too segregated to provide this, there was some tendency, particularly amongst white children, to focus on out of school friends. For the most part children's inter-ethnic friendships proved similar to intra-ethnic friendships as we have defined them; the main difference was that moving on to secondary school was more likely to rupture inter-ethnic friendships than same ethnicity friendships.

What children took with them from their primary school friendships
We followed through 60 of our primary school respondents into secondary school, some in year 7 and others in year 8. Segregation still dominated their opportunity for friendships across ethnic boundaries, but they almost all felt that the larger school increased opportunities for broadening the ethnic profile of their friends. In practice the children in the follow-up sample reported about as many cross ethnicity friendships after the move as before. Not surprisingly given the distribution of children between schools, it was the white children who were most segregated in their friendships.

Even if they didn't keep the same friends as they moved schools, the ethnic profile of children primary school friends was a major influence on whom they subsequently befriended. Clearly geography influences this: the more ethnically diverse a child's primary school, the more ethnically diverse their secondary school is likely to be, and with it the ethnic diversity of their

friendships. To separate out the effects we standardised for the ethnic composition of the white children's secondary school in a regression model and found that the link between being in a mixed primary class and having friends from a different ethnic group was still significant, after this allowance had been made (t=3.72).

There were exceptions: one white middle class girl living in a highly deprived area changed the ethnic profile of her friends markedly when she moved from an inner city Catholic school class to a suburban Convent school. In the first school none of her friends were white while all her secondary school friends were white, even though her secondary school was as ethnically mixed as the average. She characterised her primary school as *'mostly African race and that. It was only like 3 English race people'*, and found she shared more with her new classmates. On the other hand she denied that ethnicity was the issue because 'I don't really tend to notice what race they are' and had maintained good contact through the church with one of her Black African primary school friends.

The other exceptions involved ethnic minority children from inner city primary schools who went to more socially and ethnically exclusive, high ranking and, generally, Catholic schools. The three students in this category, tended to have a circle of friends of secondary school that were predominantly from ethnic minorities, despite the small numbers of children from such backgrounds at the schools. Sometimes these were friends at another secondary school, or in one case, an older girl known before the move was made. They were also friendships that were forged by common journeys from inner city locations. Though the children might be described as culturally integrated because they proved to be educationally successful, the clustering could be a form of bonding in an unfamiliar, environment.

The attitudes of the white children who came from 'white' primary schools differed from others. No child with a white home and primary school background identified Muslims or Asians as 'picked on', in a period when attacks on Muslims were generally increasing. In contrast, most other children, white and non- white, saw either Muslims or Asians as 'picked on'. To some degree the differences could reflect differences in immediate experience in their locality, but they would also seem to relate to differences in their day to day contacts with Muslim children.

Conclusions
Our research on primary school friendships across ethnic divides shows that they matter, both in patterns of friendships in secondary schools and in parental attitudes. Individual

friendships are not necessarily enduring; rather the evidence is that day to day friendships over a long period can translate into social and cultural capital, which enables young people to relate to peers from different backgrounds. At best bridging social capital will be forged across ethnic groups, enabling broader systems of bonding at school and community level to be developed. Of course in situations of heightened ethnic conflict erstwhile primary school friends may well turn on one another: the wider political context can never be ignored.

In drawing conclusions from this exploratory research, three questions arise: first, who or what is responsible for existing levels of ethnic segregation between and within schools; second, what can be done about it, given that neither Governments, nor schools can begin to decree patterns of friendship; and third, how does the concept of social capital influence the way we might think about policies for schools?

To date ethnic separation between schools has been treated, almost universally, as an outcome of social inequalities and racist attitudes that feed residential patterns and parents preferred schools, while ethnic segregation of friendships within schools is treated very much as a natural phenomenon, with both good and bad effects. But behind many of the preferences of parents for residential locations and for certain schools lie fears of peer group effects on their children – getting in with the wrong crowd. These fears of peer group influence are marked by both class and by ethnicity, usually in stereotyped ways. Conceptualising children as active agents and schools as institutions for the development of ethnically inclusive forms of social capital provides a different framework, that might begin to unravel some of the prejudices that inform residential, schooling and political choices. Our research on primary school children can only provide hints as to how this might come about, but it implies taking seriously Putnam's (2000) point that school reforms that foster 'more communal schools' can foster civic re-engagement.

The process of ethnic segregation within schools.
Just as Simpson's (2004) study of residential segregation in Bradford showed little evidence that ethnic minorities were actively separating themselves off, as against facing barriers to dispersal, we could find scant evidence that Asian children in London desired to cut themselves off from the wider community. They did sometimes use their home language at school and were less likely to have friends visit or stay over with them, but this could separate them as much from other Asian children and from other Muslim children as from children from European, African or Caribbean backgrounds. We also found little evidence that Muslim children were more likely to identify a child outside their school as a particular

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friend, despite their involvement in out-of-school classes, often on a daily basis. There was one Sikh girl in our follow-up group who moved between secondary schools mid year, from a mixed school to a predominantly Asian girls' school, alongside her former Muslim primary school friends. She felt safer from bullying in the new school, but was well aware of now being a minority amongst Muslims. Gender rather than ethnic homogeneity appeared to be the issue.

The children we interviewed in local authority secondary schools were clear that they saw faith schools as isolating groups of children from one another. Much of the advantage they saw arose from being amongst the high achieving peers, who were well-behaved, rather than in any shared ethnicity. Our Muslim pupils, like the Christians, came indeed from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and different Muslim traditions.

We have shown how isolated white children living outside the inner city can be from children from different backgrounds, and indeed, with exceptions, it is white children from deprived backgrounds that share primary schools with ethnic minority pupils, much as one would expect. The opportunity to have school friends from different backgrounds is structured by class, locality and to some degree attitudes. Translating that opportunity into actual friendships would seem to depend at primary school level on the absolute numbers of children of the same sex from different ethnic groups in the class. In the main there is little clustering: opportunity plus gender predicts friendship patterns reasonably well, with some very specific instances of clustering. The clustering we found reflected the relative sizes of different groups; children needed a choice of friends of the same gender before they showed any tendency to stick with children from the same ethnic background, except for some white boys who anyway had few friends. Once they had a choice of friends of the same gender and the same ethnicity, they tended to have a mix of friends from different backgrounds. Subjectively, for the children, similarity and difference are relative; whether you see yourself as having the 'same' background as another child, or the same faith, depends of the diversity of the whole group.

Secondary schools were different from primaries in two main respects. Firstly mechanisms of school selection overlaid Geography in determining the ethnic mix of different schools and secondly they are larger, with more movement between classroom and set groupings. Because of this and because issues of identity tend to loom larger amongst adolescents, the translation from having contacts of a different background to having friends from a different

background will be more complex. What we have seen is that in the early years of secondary school, it will depend on prior experiences of inter-ethnic friendships.

With respect to access to secondary school places, our results show that class and ethnicity are cross cutting, especially where class background is reflected in educational aspirations. There were a number of ethnic minority parents, including lone mothers, African and Afro-Caribbean as well as Sikh parents who displayed all the attributes generally categorised as middle-class in the investment of time, attention and money put into fostering their children's educational attainment. Hence we found individual students from ethnic minorities who benefited from achievement rather than locality based allocation systems. The drive for schools to select on potential ability may undermine prejudices against certain groups, though it is noteworthy that the students that did succeed in this competition had by far the most ethnically clustered friendship networks, relative to the ethnic pattern of the school intakes. In the main, however, selection systems for secondary schooling tended to reduce the ethnic diversity of school populations below that of the broad locality, taken to be a five mile radius. This problem is indeed partly recognised in the Race Equality Impact Assessment of the Education and Inspection Bill. They point to *'potential negative effect of increased school diversity'* on parents '*least able to navigate the admissions system*' and to possibility that '*trusts will be concentrated in areas with the greatest social capital rather than disadvantaged areas'*(2.20:8). They rely on monitoring and goodwill, choice advisors and the School Commissioner to limit the problems, without setting out the powers that might be required to do this.

What to do: the policy implications

However constraining existing residential patterns are, it is quite clear that they explain only a very small part of the ethnic segregation of children between schools, particularly in London where only a minority of children attend the nearest secondary school and where many public schools bus children from a very wide area to school. While inequalities in access to free transport need to be addressed, transporting children large distances to school is likely to undermine the wider benefits of more ethnically diverse schooling, partly because links with parents and siblings and out of school links between school friends will be more difficult to maintain. Transport of this kind offers contact and relatively unsustainable bridges, in place of multi stranded, and potentially fertile social links. Some ethnic minority parents were willing for their children to travel long distances to access high attainment schooling, but others worried, as did working class parents, about the journey to school itself.

A more effective strategy would be to build up the peer group influence of ethnic minority children who do well at school. To do so implies recognising important differences between ethnic minority groups as well as differences within them. In our sample of ethnic minority children from deprived backgrounds a disproportionate number had siblings and other relatives at University, and they themselves aspired- far more than the white children- to go on to University. It is worth recalling that the working-class white Birmingham parent quoted above was not complaining about Indians dragging down educational standards. He seemed to feel that his child had no chance of sharing their success, but greater contact at primary and secondary school could have made a difference. His daughter was after all at an all white, largely working class Catholic school, and to him Indians represented a fearful force creeping in on his territory.

To achieve the positive effects of diversity to which the Government pays lip service implies that all schools, including independent schools with charitable tax status, should have a duty to have regard to social cohesion in setting their policies, backed up by appropriate incentives and regulatory framework. The balance and cohesion sought needs to relate to class origins and ability as well as ethnicity and religion, for schools are already 'cherry-picking' ethnic minority children who show high potential. There may well be problems in implementation, balancing the rights of individuals to non –discrimination against the community advantages of more robust social cohesion, and for schools in managing a more socially diverse school system. But there are unrecognised benefits of generalising the value placed on education by disadvantaged ethnic minority groups beyond the world of the white middle class.

Our young respondents saw bonding and bridging capital as largely complementary. They saw what outsiders would characterise as homogenous and diverse friendship networks as each offering them support, valuing both, as they grappled with new meanings of 'sameness' and 'difference'. When we consider wider issues, most especially the needs of children to forge identities that are truly multi-cultural in both valuing family origins and transcending them with a strong sense of place within this country, the lack of concern with social capital building within schools is hugely problematic. To a degree the children recognised this better than the politicians, for they saw themselves as needing to learn how to live in this multi-ethnic, globalised world.

Table 1 Profile of Primary Schools and children in the sample

Location	Inner London Boroughs							Outer London	Outer Estate Midlands			Outer South East
	Pair 1		Pair 2		Pair 3				Pair 4			
School	**R**	**A**	**F**	**SG**	**SS**	**WH**	**L**	**WD**	**GA**	**H**	**OL**	**WR**
% white	62	65.6	33	25	44	32	33	96	95	88	92	96
% FSM	33	43	37	34	40	31	33	2.4	34	33	31	5
KS2 2003	29	27.1	28.7	29	29	26.2	24.6	29.3	26	27	27	27.6
Sample												
Total (n)	36	35	26	40	54	76	18	84	25	37	43	104
%white	67	66	24	58	7	52	58.3	58	100	93	88	88
% Asian	8	11	14	8	91	13	8	11	0	0	2	2
%Black African	8	9	38	17	2	15	17	10	0	0	2	1
% Afro-Caribbean	8	3	19	0	0	10	0	7	0	3	2	1
% other	4	11	5	17	0	10	17	14	0	3	5	7
Secondary School												
First choice	70	78	71	50	88	61	71	61	79	67	83	76
KS3 (average)	33	32.5	30.9	34.3	33	31.1	32	37.1	34	31	35	33.5
Panel Members	5	5	4	5	2	10	2	12	1	2	2	9

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[i] In analysing inter-ethnic friendships we ignored the mixed heritage children in our sample since it was impossible to define them their friendships as inter or intra ethnic from the information we had.