Ethnicities

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(An)Other English city

Multiethnicities, (post)modern moments and strategic identifications

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ABSTRACT The interpretive turn in urban studies signals a heightened emphasis on the locus of the city as the site for both the making and unmaking of identities and differences. Juxtaposing examples from British popular culture with narrative extracts from my published ethnographic research on 'mixed race' family and memory, this article addresses two key problematics associated with this discursive shift. First, I explore the concept of multiethnicity as another paradigm for understanding the relationship between structures and forms of agency, particularly as multiethnicity forces a rethinking of racialized and essentialist notions of Englishness and non-Englishness; what I refer to as differentiating between the hyphen and the ampersand. Second, I assess the extent to which lived and constructed ideas of 'the urban' in general and 'the city' in particular are preconditions for the performance of multiethnicity. That is, are urban sites ideal laboratories for an illustration of the ways in which 'mixed race' and multiethnic subjectivities are intertwined?

KEYWORDS diaspora ● Englishness ● identity ● 'mixed race' ● multiethnicity

INTRODUCTION

> Mulattos may not be new. But the mulatto-pride folks are a new generation. They want their own special category or no categories at all. They're a full fledged movement. (Senna, 1998: 14)

For as long as humans have populated the earth, intergroup mating and marriages have been commonplace (Gist and Dworkin, 1972: 1). As such, it is argued that there are no discrete or pure biological 'races' (Rose et al., 1984). Yet, in the popular folk imagination as well as in interdisciplinary

scholarship, the problematized idea of 'mixed race'[1] persists (Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Daniel, 2001; Parker and Song, 2001; Williams-Leon and Nakashima, 2001). In fact, not since the 19th-century Victorian era, when pseudoscientific treatises on the presumed social pathology of the 'racial' hybrid abounded, has there been such an academic interest in 'mixed race' studies. That said, the intellectual content and social and political contexts of contemporary scholarship are very different. Rather than being objects of the scientific gaze (as speaking subjects), scholars, many of whom identify as 'mixed race' or 'multiracial', have deployed the idea that 'race' is a social construct that shifts across space and time.[2] In so doing, they seek to validate 'mixed race' as a legitimate psychosocial and political category.

Over the past decade, and particularly in North America, theoretical, empirical and biographical work on 'mixed race' that addresses the fluidity, dynamism, complexity and practices of identity politics has flourished.[3] As we begin a new century, a body of writings is emerging that talks back and to the resurgent literature that gave birth to the 'multiracial' nomenclature and its contested politics (Christian, 2000; Gordon, 1995; Mahtani and Moreno, 2001; Masami Ropp, 1997; Njeri, 1997; Spencer, 1997, 1999). By critically engaging with either the problematics or the possibilities of 'multiracial' activism, expression and ideology, this latest phase signals the emergence of a critical discourse on 'mixed race' and 'multiraciality'[4] from which there are no signs of retreat.

This empirical and experiential celebration and contestation of 'mixed race' and 'multiraciality' is by no means unified or essentialist. The most interesting debates have emerged from different conceptualizations of the canon. For example, conceptual and political disagreements over the categories 'mixed race', 'biracial' and 'multiracial' stem from the dominance of binary 'black/white'[5] paradigms in US and British 'racial' discourses (Leonard, 2000; Mahtani and Moreno, 2001; Price, 2000). The emphasis on socially designated 'black/white mixes' is said to exclude those who are socially designated and identify as dual minority 'mixes' that do not include 'black/white' and neglect certain individuals who claim triple or more 'mixes':

> In the recent explosion of writings about multiraciality, we have seen a plethora of discussion about white/black crossings and white/Asian crossings (and we want to remind you that we are using these terms very suspiciously). But we worry that we have not yet seen a great deal of discussion about people who are of dual minority mixes, or who are not part white. (Mahtani and Moreno, 2001: 67)

This binarism also overlooks the important fact that conceptions of 'race', 'mixed race' and social status are historically, geographically and culturally specific and hence do not travel easily (Erasmus, 2000; Torres and Whitten, 1998; Whitten and Torres, 1998). The American 'one drop' rule, which

subsumes anyone with at least one known African ancestor under the heading 'black' whether or not they also have European and/or Native American ancestry, differs remarkably from the more fluid notion of 'race' and social hierarchy in Brazil, wherein ascribed gradations between 'black' and 'white' are varied and many (Daniel, 2000; Twine, 1998; Winant, 1999). In a British context, 'black' as a collective 'multiracial' identification does not perform the same intellectual, political or cultural labour as it did in previous decades (C. Alexander, 1996; Gilroy, 1987; Mercer, 1994; Mirza, 1997; Modood, 1988). The fact that the Irish have 'become white' in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, along with recent racialized class and ethnic conflicts in the north of England as well as the current European/American rhetorical 'clash of civilizations' are all powerful indicators of the ways in which 'blackness'/'non-whiteness' and 'whiteness' are shifting and thus unstable signifiers of exclusion and inclusion (Bonnett, this issue; Hall, 2000; Hesse, 2000).

A broader historical and geographical vantage point also highlights the cross-cutting ways in which the global processes and erotic projects of slavery, imperialism and diaspora(s) have created similar shifts in the local making, management and regulation of status and power as articulated through the everyday discourses and practices of 'race', 'mixed race' and social hierarchies. These trends are manifest in the long tradition of intellectual engagement with issues of *mestizaje* (Latin America, Spanish Caribbean), *métissage* (French Canada, francophone Caribbean, francophone Africa), *mesticagem* (Brazil, lusophone Africa) and *miscegenation* (anglophone Africa, anglophone Caribbean, Australia) as comparative examples of scholarship on the contested notion of 'race' mixture.[6] All of these interwoven and historically located positions rupture allegedly stable racialized fault lines and at the same time (paradoxically in the case of some) reinscribe 'race' – a term predicated on scientifically dubious criteria.

In the historical moments of slavery and imperialism, 'mixed race' communities were socially engineered and managed. Yet, it is worth pausing for a moment to ponder why the circumstances are ripe in certain contemporary social and political milieux for the (re-)emergence of a politicized 'multiracial' movement and not in others. For example, in the USA, organizations such as RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally) and AMEA (Association of MultiEthnic Americans) unsuccessfully lobbied the US Congress and marched on Washington demanding the inclusion of a 'multiracial' category on the 2000 census (Fernandez, 1996; Nakashima, 1996). Not wanting to upset the very powerful American caucuses of colour, in particular African Americans, as a compromise solution the Census Bureau introduced the 'tick all that apply' option which means that, for 'statistical' purposes, those who tick more than one box may be subsumed under one 'racial' heading such as 'black' or 'African American'. On the other hand, in Britain, changing demographics suggest that 'mixed race'

families and their children will be a formidable force in the future.[7] Although this may be demographic fact, other than the support group People in Harmony, the 'mixed race community' displays minimal public signs of the degree of politicization evident across the pond. In fact, it was previous responses to the 1991 census as well as consultation with focus groups, and not external pressure, that motivated the Office of National Statistics to deploy the 'mixed ethnic' option with a free text field for the 2001 census (Aspinall, 1997; Owen, 2001). Since the 1970s, in Brazil, once heralded as a model of 'racial' democracy, political movements such as the *movimento negro* have re-emerged, suggesting that all is not well in 'racial paradise' (dos Santos, 1999; da Silva, 1999; Ribeiro, 1996). In (post-) apartheid South Africa, in light of the 'official' dissolution of apartheid categories and the everyday persistence of racism in the new guise of economic apartheid and heightened conflicts among and between Africans, Asians and 'coloureds', historically 'coloured' communities are having to redefine and reposition themselves (C. Alexander, 1996; Marais, 1996; Rasool, 1996).

Whatever the global context, political motivations for either the social engineering, suppression, dismantling or reconstruction of the ideas and practices of 'mixed race' are contingent. As Small reminds us: 'the analytical enterprise . . . must continue to focus on structural contexts, institutional patterns, and ideological articulations as they are expressed in the light of local histories' (2001: 129). 'Multiracial' or 'monoracial' identity politics is frequently governed by unresolved and played out tensions between the sovereignty of the state and the public sphere as they collide with both individualized expressions of multiethnic and/or 'multiracial' identities as empowerment, and monoethnic and/or 'monoracial' collective mobilization in the competition for economic resources and civic recognition (Body-Gendrot, this issue). This dialectical dance performed by structure and agency is succinctly described by Burroughs and Spickard:

> There is a real split, then, as yet unresolved, between the compelling logic of multiethnicity and its promise for mixed individuals on the one hand, and the practical political imperatives of monoethnically defined groups on the other, in an age that has not yet wholly given up monoethnic definitions. (2000: 247)

In the second and third sections of this article, I will explore in greater detail the specific extent to which the restricted and racialized natures of 'white' English group membership and the compulsory 'black' non-English designation limit the '[multi]ethnic options' (Waters, 1990; see also Song, 2001) of individuals who identify as 'mixed race' and/or multethnic as these affiliations and identifications are constructed, played out, maintained and transgressed in the specific contexts of 'the urban'.

Mapping the terrain

Following from this, what I want to address in this article are two key problematics. First, I will explore the concept of multiethnicity as another paradigm for understanding the relationship between structures and forms of agency, particularly as multiethnicity forces a rethinking of racialized and essentialist notions of Englishness and non-Englishness. That is, I will examine the interplay of hierarchically positioned signifiers such as locality, generation, gender and social class as they collide with the newly discovered – but omnipresent for some of us – (post)colonial, (post)modern and (post)racial states of hybridity, rupture, multiplicity and difference (Brah and Coombes, 2000; Fusco, 1995; Gilroy, 2000; Hesse, 2000; Spickard, 2001); what I refer to as differentiating between the hyphen and the ampersand. Second, I wish to uncover whether lived and constructed ideas of 'the urban' in general and 'the city' in particular are preconditions for the performance of multiethnicity. Moreover, are urban sites ideal laboratories for an illustration of the ways in which 'mixed race' and multiethnic subjectivities are intertwined? Invoking the structure and agency dialectic again, both 'mixed race' and multiethnicity are self-constructed as situational, negotiable and fluid, and at the same time their operationalization is externally constrained by static, essentialist and binary notions of 'blackness'/'non-whiteness' and 'whiteness'; what I call strategic identifications.

THE HYPHEN VS THE AMPERSAND: MULTIETHNICITIES AND (POST)MODERN MOMENTS

> I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishmen, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. (Kureishi, 1990: 3)

> This has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment. It is only this late in the day that you can walk into a playground and find Isaac Leung by the fish pond, Danny Rahman in the football cage, Quang O'Rourke bouncing a basketball, and Irie Jones humming a tune. Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. (Smith, 2000: 281)

Any critical exploration of multiethnicity must be preceded by a brief discussion of the muddled concepts of ethnicities and ethnic identities as they seem to be frequently conflated with 'races' and 'racial' identities. Roosens, for example, challenges the idea that ethnicity is exclusively based on the myth of common origin or the maintenance of cultural traditions:

> In the elasticity of the expression 'ethnic identity,' the dynamic character of the cultural, the social and the psychological becomes visible in combination; these three dimensions overlap each other and make many nuances possible. . . . It is therefore not at all surprising that the words 'ethnic group,' 'culture,' and 'ethnic identity' are confused in daily usage: ethnicity can only be manifested by means of cultural forms that give the impression that they are inherent to a particular category or group of individuals. It is impossible for ethnic identity to mean anything without the existence of ethnic groups or categories, for it is a relational construct. (1989: 19)

While Roosens's formulation is a useful one for understanding the situational, negotiable and dynamic aspects of ethnogenesis, Banks's linking of the relational facets of ethnicity to the oppositional and, in certain instances, superordinate character of 'race' goes a bit further:

> 'Ethnicity' has only really flourished when allied to some stronger (though not necessarily any more 'real') partner such as 'race' or 'nationalism'. . . . Indeed in many cases, it seems to have been something of an absent partner, contributing little or nothing to the alliance. (1996: 182)

However, Song provides an intelligent synthesis of both Roosens's and Banks's claims:

> ethnic identities are constantly undergoing reinvention-sometimes by minority people who have had little exposure to or knowledge of their ancestors or their so-called ethnic origins. . . . Rather than adhere to overly neat analytical distinctions between racial and ethnic identities, future studies concerning minority groups' ethnic options need to examine the variable and complex intertwinings of racial and ethnic identities as experienced by disparate ethnic minority groups. (2001: 77)

To summarize, constructions, performances and practices of ethnicities as ethnic identities are relational, dynamic, negotiable and not necessarily primordial. The extent to which an individual or a group can exercise ethnic options is frequently determined by majority versus minority status as well as by to what degree the oppositional construct 'race' operationalized as 'racialization' is at the heart of the myth of nation formation.

This myth of nation formation is at the centre of racialized constructions of Englishness as 'pure' and 'white' (McCrone, this issue). Edmunds and Turner would define this version as 'malign Englishness' ('closed, insular, earnest, masculine, and reactive') as opposed to 'benign Englishness' ('open, cosmopolitan, ironic, feminine, and creative') (2001: 93). The explicit assumptions of 'malign Englishness' (what I refer to as popular folk concepts of Englishness) are at the root of the need for multiethnic assertions, which are possible within the nation formation model of 'benign Englishness'. Popular folk concepts of Englishness are invented imaginary narratives of origin and national identities perpetuated by so-called 'indigenous' Englanders for the purposes of maintaining social boundaries and excluding those

who are perceived as both outsiders and racially, ethnically, religiously or linguistically different (Cohen, 1999; Hall, 1992; Gale and Naylor, this issue).

In other words, both the nostalgic attachment to a 'bygone' England and the perceived threat to its customs and traditions are informed by the mythologies of indigeneity and 'racial' purity, which are determined as much by social exclusion as by inclusion; what Bywater (2000: 11) humorously defines as 'our notion of not-ness'. Today we could say our nation of not-ness. According to this myth, to be English is to be 'white', but not all 'whites' are English, nor are all English 'white' (Ware, 1992; R. Young, 1990). 'Whiteness' is the given, normative, naturalized, privileged and, thus, the template category by which all other racialized 'deviations' are measured (Dyer, 1997). Although the maintenance of privilege and power may be the universal logic underpinning 'racial' ideology, local meanings of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' are never fixed, nor do they travel easily. Now, in the age of globalization, transnationalism and global capitalism, *as much as in the past*, it is impossible to define English cultural identity independently of external influences and specific historical, economic and political processes:

> The history of Britain [and by extension England] and the history of the British Empire [and more specifically the English Empire] are two sides of the same coin. Neither can be understood without the other. And at the heart of their unity, interpenetration and interdependence is the age-old black presence in Britain. (Fryer, 1988: 4)

That is, cultural production and social transformation in England have always been informed by antagonistic relations with former colonizers, former colonies and within the contemporary 'New World Order' (Brown, 1998; Dwyer and Crang, this issue; Hesse, 2000). The ancient and contemporary popular folk concept of Englishness must be understood as dynamic and historically contextualized, and thus both cyclical and politicized rather than static and ahistorical (Christian, 1998). These unresolved tensions provoke the unanswered question, in the 21st century, what distinguishes the 'indigenous' English from the 'imported' or diasporic English (Hannerz, 1996; Pieterse, 1995)? An extract from Alibhai-Brown's interview with British Labour MP Oona King illustrates the way in which there is no straightforward answer to this question:

> For me racism is not an academic point. It is all too real. Given my background though I feel that I have to be a bridge builder. My mother is working class, Jewish and from Newcastle. Her grandfather was Hungarian and her grandmother was Irish and Scottish. My father is from Georgia in the US and was a member of the Civil Rights Movement. I have been called nigger, yid, and half-caste. I am multi-ethnic. (cited in Alibhai-Brown, 2001: 101)

In her depiction of her family's multigenerational and gendered transgressions of religious, ethnic, 'racial', national and geographical boundaries,

King's testimony highlights the ways in which personal histories are infinitely more complex than one-dimensional, inscribed racialized and ethnicized labels. Yet, the forged tension between indigeneity and diasporicity assumes that one cannot be situated in both frames. When cornered with the question 'where are you from?', visible minority ethnic, English-born children of visible minority, ethnic, immigrant parents cannot defer to the 'neighbourhood nationalism' that so strongly defines their everyday existence and was readily apparent during the recent uprisings in the north of England in 2001. The response 'Peckham' (a multiethnic south London neighbourhood) or 'Balsall Heath' (a multiethnic neighbourhood in the city of Birmingham) falls on deaf ears, for the anticipated reply is based on the implicit assumption that one does not belong 'here'. As Fred D'Aguiar, who was born in Guyana and emigrated to England while still a child, recalls:

> London was spoiled for me by my belief that one day I would return to Guyana and when that was no longer true, by a feeling that London did not belong to me, could never belong to me on account of my race, my minority status. A white majority made me aware on a daily basis that I was a visitor, a guest whose invitation to the club could, at a moment's notice, be withdrawn and the friendly standoffish bouncers would suddenly turn menacing. (2000: 197)

Despite full-time English residence, the automatic infliction of a (mis)placed diasporic condition also renders individuals with one 'white' English parent and another parent from the Caribbean, continental Africa or the Indian subcontinent unable to carve out territorialized spaces that reflect both the realities of cultural upbringing and the complexities of deterritorialized ancestries (Ifekwunigwe, 1999). As a participant in a BBC radio programme entitled 'Other', Jessica, the English-born daughter of a Ugandan mother and a Jewish American father, poetically describes this state of un/belonging as: 'Finding home in smaller things . . . in the ocean, in the taste of mangoes . . . building homes in other people' (BBC Radio 4, October 2001).

In differentiating between the hyphen and the ampersand, what I am advocating are two progressive, subversive and perhaps utopian models of Englishness – dual paradigms for belonging that are not predominantly racialized and do not enclose but rather include both Guyanese-English Fred D'Aguiar and this Nigerian, Irish, English & Guyanese author. At the moment, such transnational identifications are associated with profound paradoxes of citizenship; what Gilroy refers to as 'the rootless cosmopolitanism of the Black Atlantic' (2000: 115). Although living and in most instances born in England, frequently to 'indigenous' Englanders, those of us who are chromatically different from the majority population must acknowledge the impact of 'white' English exclusionary practices on reconstructions of cultural and transnational local identities (C. Alexander, 2000;

Parker, 2000). The outcome of the prescribed specificity of 'white' Englishness is that hyphenated sons and daughters of the English African diaspora[8] are denied full citizenship (Tulloch, 2000). Ampersand children of 'white' English mothers or fathers are also denied access to an English identity that they can rightfully claim on the basis of parentage (Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Ifekwunigwe, 1999). Having said all of this, I am mindful of Caglar's cautionary note regarding the potential pitfalls of my argument:

> The notion of a 'hyphenated identity', instead of resolving cultural essentialism, tends thus to highlight the *problematic* nature of collective attachments: the clash of interests experienced by translocal groups which arise from their multiple and multilocale attachments and commitments. . . . The stress is always on the hyphenation of ethnic . . . identities to the exclusion of other forms of identification. (1997: 175; emphasis in original)

These racialized paradoxes of ethnic belonging were most evident in the 'narratives of multiplicity' (Cornell, 2000) articulated in the British television programme 'Brown Britain' (Channel 4, September 2001). More interesting than the ahistorical celebration of 'mulatto Britain' and the spurious assumptions of 'racial' purity underlying the film's title and its therefore problematic premise,[9] were the myriad ways in which those interviewed – major and minor celebrities – defined themselves and their parentage. Generation, locality, gender, visual proximity to popular perceptions of 'whiteness' as well as whether the ampersand included variations of South Asian, Caribbean or continental African all determined the extent to which ethnic identifications replaced or included racialized signifiers. For example, in his testimony, musician and artist Goldie, who spent most of his childhood in local authority care, demonstrates the ways in which monoracial categorization conflates multiethnic differences: 'My father is Jamaican from St Anns & my mother is Scottish from Glasgow, but the basic black principles in the ghetto were you're white or you're black and that was it' (Channel 4, September 2001). On the other hand, the author Hanif Kureishi, himself Pakistani & English, describes the ways in which visual approximation to the 'white' English norm can also conceal multiethnicity:

> My kids are pretty pale. They're whites I guess really. No one is going to look at them and say 'There's a Paki'. The darkness has been diluted out of them to a certain extent. . . . But I think what's important is to explain their history to them. They may be pale skinned but it's not only the matter of the colour of your skin, but where your head is. Where your identifications are. You explain to them. Their grandfather came from India to England and this was the relationship between India and England at that time and give them some sense of their history. (Channel 4, September 2001)

Both Goldie's and Hanif Kureishi's statements illustrate the complex, contradictory, multilayered and evolving nature of transgenerational

identity formation, not just for ampersand multiethnic individuals but also for hyphenated multiethnics. In other words, as Mahtani's work with multiethnic women in Toronto suggests: 'participants explored the necessity of considering multiethnic relations as constructed with other axes of domination and resistance, emphasising that to be multiethnic means to be internally and externally differentiated through intersections with other unfolding relationships' (2001: 188).

The narrative extract of Northumberland English & Yoruba Nigerian Bisi,[10] one of the 25 participants in my Bristol-based ethnographic research project,[11] further exemplifies the expressed tensions between monoracial categorization and multiethnic identifications:

> After you have lived here for a bit, you get aware that, in fact there's a whole load of stuff that gets involved in mixed relationships, which maybe one would choose not to take on board. . . . These assumptions of what's strange and what's not. All that is a lot more theoretical once you've got children. Then perhaps the real stuff is gonna make the other stuff not matter so much. . . . The question of what race are my children? What do they think? How do they feel? It's difficult as well.
>
> I think Elizabeth said, 'I'm one-quarter Nigerian (very specific, very precise), but I'm three-quarters English, Mummy'. Which is true. I ask my son sometimes, 'Do you think you are white?' I don't know whether he says it to please me or not but he says, 'Well, no, not really'. And they use this dreadful term, 'half caste', ''alf caste' [Bristolian pronunciation]. They say, 'You are, aren't you Mum?' I say, 'What kind of a word is that? Half of what? How can one call oneself half of something?' I don't think that's made any impression on them basically. Because it's the basic term they use at school, and everyone knows what it means. 'I'm 'qua'a caste [Bristolian pronunciation again] aren't I Mum?' 'What do you mean caste? Do you know what it means?'
>
> Of course, Julia looks completely English. What are they to feel? Julia's probably the child who'd have the least problems adjusting to a new country. She hasn't got this terrible sense of 'normal' Elizabeth has. She's outgoing. Actually, they are all quite shy funnily enough, apart from Emma. Julia is more sociable than Elizabeth. That's why she would have less problems.
>
> You can't actually feed thoughts into your children. They are aware that they are not completely British. Let's put it like that. I don't know how far that goes. The words I put it in then are negative. They are aware that they are not completely English. Is that being aware of something positive or not? It's only through talking and discussing that I know what they think. Being aware that one's system of ideas isn't absolute. It isn't the absolute, the one above all others. There are many and they are all sort of parallel and contradictory. If you are mixed race, you belong in two (or more) cultural traditions, which may be mutually contradictory, you just have to find that middle space.

Bisi's reflections illustrate the complexities of identity formation for 'mixed race' mothers and their 'near white' children. For example, in an

English context in which 'whiteness' is normalized, naturalized and associated with Englishness, it is not surprising that Bisi's daughter Elizabeth emphasizes that, in fractional terms, she is only 'one-quarter Nigerian'. Bisi does not deny her daughter this privileging of 'white' Englishness. At the same time, Bisi does lament the fact that her four children are learning to reproduce the very colonial nomenclature – 'half caste' and 'quarter caste' – that has marginalized 'mixed race' subjects for centuries. In addition, Bisi's observation that her daughter Julia, who looks 'completely English', is the one child that would have the least difficulty adjusting to another cultural context is consistent with the ruminations of other socially designated 'black' respondents with socially prescribed 'white' children. What Bisi's extract pinpoints are the specific and contradictory lived challenges confronting second generation 'mixed race' children – they do not look 'black' enough to be considered 'black'. Rather, isolated from their 'mixed race' mothers, Bisi's children are seen as 'white'. It is only the recognition of their maternal parentage that calls into question the authenticity (and purity) of a 'white' designation.

For example, Bisi's children deduce that they must be 'quarter caste' because their classmates have discerned that their mother is 'half caste'. The active contestation and shifting construction of multidimensional identities by second generation 'mixed race'/'white' children are underexplored and fertile research areas. Their evolving narratives could help us understand further the ways in which dominant 'racial' ideologies are internalized and reproduced in microfamilial contexts. Exploring the strategic ways in which these children's racialized identities shift across time and space – i.e. 'white' at school, 'mixed race' at home – could also fortify the critical theoretical assertion that racialized identities in general and conceptions of 'whiteness' and 'blackness' or 'non-whiteness' in particular are neither fixed nor stable. Moreover, uncoupling 'race' and ethnicity would enable Bisi's and Kureishi's 'white'-identified children to unproblematically claim their Nigerian & English and Pakistani & English origins respectively. For, as Price suggests, 'Multiethnic identities exist and shift between as well as at both ends of the White/non-White dichotomy' (2000: 185).

However, what has not and perhaps cannot be resolved is the extent to which multiethnic individual affiliations can really counteract or even coexist with monoethnic group identifications (Song, 2001; Waters, 2000; White et al., 2000), particularly as monoethnic identity is frequently reaffirmed via group membership in ways that multiethnic group identity is not. Elsewhere, I have questioned the utility or possibility of 'mixed race' collectivities in the light of the differential ranking of parental 'race' groups:

> How do we create political alliances forged from shared marginal status while also acknowledging the varied and inherently hierarchical power dynamics within, between and among such disparate and differently racialised groups?

> For example, in a Whiteness-centred society such as Britain, those who can pass for White face a different set of psychosocial challenges than those individuals whose non-Whiteness is visibly marked. (Ifekwunigwe, 2001: 45)

On the other hand, Mengel is more optimistic:

> Are mixed race people not 'halves' or 'doubles' but a third category: possessing a third consciousness which stands on its own, qualifying mixed race identity as . . . possessing a collective memory through shared experiences? . . . a legitimate and viable panethnicity – a group response to a collective racial categorisation. (cited in Burroughs and Spickard, 2000: 248)

In this section, rather than tracing the contours of a specific paradigm for multiethnicity, what I have attempted to demonstrate are the inextricable links between structure and agency as manifest in the interplay among the constructs of 'race' and ethnicity, monoraciality and 'mixed race', mono-ethnicity and multiethnicity, as well as individual identifications and group affiliations.

STRATEGIC IDENTIFICATIONS

> Recently I visited Liverpool for carnival. There the black community is one of the oldest and longest-standing in Britain, stretching back over some three hundred years. Many of the people were very light-skinned and I have to admit feeling in some way 'authenticated' when I was among them. This leads to another story. During the Liverpool 8 riots of the 1980s, there were reports that white youths had joined the rioting. 'But,' said someone from Liverpool, 'they weren't white. They were black. The police mistook them for white, but they were black.' (Melville, 1992: 741)

As the discussant for my original paper given at the Tate Modern workshop on 'Multicultures and the Right to the City', which was the inspiration for this article, Mike Keith asked two pertinent questions. First, invoking Engels, he asked 'to what extent is the city a factory for the suppression of difference?' Second, 'is there a specificity or particularity to the urban sites within which the performances of [multiethnic and 'mixed race'] identities are either endorsed or impeded?' By way of a response to Keith's speculations, in this section I will develop what I call the process of strategic identifications as a way to illustrate how the urban in general and the city in particular are preconditions for the (un)successful performances of multiple identities, be they racialized and/or multiethnic (Back, 1996).

As a useful starting point, Holston and Appadurai's introductory chapter to the excellent collection *Cities and Citizenship* reminds us of the ways in which the movement of peoples and the circulation of capital to, from and

within cities inevitably lead to the reconfiguration of conventional notions of citizenship:

> the world's major cities make manifest these reconstitutions of citizenship. The compaction and reterritorialization of so many different kinds of groups within them grind away at citizenship's assumptions. They compel it to bend to the recognition that contemporary urban life comprises multiple and diverse cultural identities, modes of life and forms of appropriating urban space. (1999: 9)

One fascinating English urban site for the ongoing reinvention of the (post)modern citizen is the former slave port of Liverpool where Akousa and Sarah, two Irish & Bajan (from Barbados) birth sisters and participants in my project, were born and raised. Both their longer narrative recollections of growing up (Ifekwunigwe, 1999) and the following extracts reinforce the salience of the three key themes emerging from Brown's longitudinal ethnographic research in what she refers to as 'black Liverpool':

> The first concerns the participation of black men in the city's shipping industry; the second concerns the birth of the black population – a process narrated with special reference to the prevalence of interracial marriage in Liverpool; and the third concerns the transformation of their racial identity from 'half-caste' to 'black'. These related processes . . . have given rise to the contemporary [and portable] form of black Liverpudlians' local and racial identities. (1998: 299)

This emergent empowered and reconciled global/diasporic 'black' consciousness is also consistent with Melville's reporting on her 'authenticating' visit to carnival in Liverpool, as well as the police's misrecognition of 'mixed race' Liverpudlian participants in the 1980s uprisings, with which I opened this section of the article. However, this strategic identification with 'blackness', whether reconstituted locally as Liverpudlian or influenced by 'black American hegemony' (Brown, 1998: 317), must be reconciled with the impress of familial circumstance and the disempowering forces of racialization.

That is, public and political paradoxes of what I refer to as the popular folk concept of 'race' – as it pertains to *social constructions* of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' – inform the private and personal realities of 'mixed race'. Contested dialectics of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' also delimit constructions of Englishness and the English African diaspora. The discourses of both territorialized Englishness and the deterritorialized English African diaspora are themselves prescribed by the popular folk concept of 'race'. This concept is a potent, dynamic, social and cultural imaginary, the naturalization of which attaches symbolic meanings to real or manufactured physical differences (Ifekwunigwe, 1999). These create, explain, justify and maintain social inequalities and injustices, and perpetuate differential access to privilege, prestige and power. However, as the extracts below reveal, it is contradictory racialized perceptions of physical differences that

frequently determine and undermine the lived experiences of those who, as active agents, identify as, and/or are socially designated as, 'mixed race' *and* 'black' (Gordon, 1997; Zack, 1995).

For example, Akousa's[12] recounting of biracialized[13] bullying in school demonstrates the ways in which 'mixed race' children are forced to negotiate public and private spheres that negate and acknowledge their 'white' English or, in Akousa's case, 'white' Irish parentage respectively (Sibley, 1995). By choosing to align herself with her 'black' friend, who is the victim of a racist taunt, rather than to 'opt out' as a 'mixed race' person, Akousa both submits to the indelible imposition of compulsory 'blackness' and legitimates 'black' as a powerful and positive political affiliation:

> School: school was an experience. Primary school wasn't too bad. There were a lot of Chinese kids and black kids, and everyone skitted each other off, called each other 'four eyes' or 'fatty'. It wasn't so heavy, there were certain racist undertones, but because you had other black kids there, you had a bit of alliances with other people and things like that. But 'round the school, some of the streets we couldn't walk up. 'Cos the kids would come up, just particular streets, and call us 'nigger' or 'black bastard'. So we never walked up that street, we'd have to go two more streets down.
>
> It was mainly when I went to secondary school, which was like a horror story for me. I wouldn't go to that school again, I wouldn't do my school career over again. People reminisce a lot over their school days. [Kisses teeth] My mum thought she was doin' a good thing, she was sendin' me to an all-girls' school – secondary modern school. Half of it was boys, half girls. We didn't mix, but we shared the hall, which was in the middle. I was the only black girl there. The whole area is a white area. They called you 'nigger' and 'coon' and 'You need to get back where you came from'.
>
> All those things were goin' on in school. I remember the first couple of weeks of school and I missed the bus stop. It was only a simple thing – just one bus stop. I started cryin' me eyes out. I was totally terrified to walk up any of the streets to get to school rather than the way that I normally walked. I was frightened some white people might come out and pick on me. . . . I was standing next to this white guy and he started to call this black girl a 'nigger' and I said, 'Who are you callin' "nigger"?' 'Oh, you're alright Akousa, there's nothin' wrong with you. You're fine.' I said, 'Listen love, if you're callin' her a "nigger", you're callin' me a "nigger" '. And I walked away.
>
> School was heavy. Another heavy experience was during the first couple of weeks of school. There were skinheads in the area as well. There was a skinhead, and he was sittin' on the street. I'd just come from the shop up the road. He had his big boots on, and he said, 'Hey "nigger", come polish my boots for me'. Here I am eleven and a half, and being confronted with this guy. All I could do was run.

Although focusing on the East End of London and not Liverpool, Phil Cohen's work on the indelible imprint of constructed 'whiteness' (and, by

extension, 'non-whiteness'), as it is mapped onto social and symbolic spaces, explains how racialized identities are maintained and policed in urban places such as Akousa's surroundings:

> Whiteness is given content only when it is sociologically anchored by a narrative of real and imagined community. The mapping of skin politics onto . . . territorial rivalries invariably racializes space. Skin as surface covers the whole body. . . . The color coding of the body politic follows the same totalizing logic: an area is constructed as all-over black, white, or Bangladeshi, or Jewish, irrespective of the relative density and composition of the different groups living within it. (1997: 271)

However, for 'mixed race' individuals such as Akousa, becoming 'black' as public mandate, personal survival strategy and empowering identification is not always a straightforward process. In one situation, her classmate marks her as 'mixed race' and thus spares her the 'racial' abuse that he directs at her 'black' friend. In another context, the skinhead does not recognize her 'mixed race' parentage; he brands her a 'nigger' and confronts her with racialized aggression. Here, Akousa is compulsorily 'black'. I reappropriate Rich's (1986) theorizing on the political institution of 'compulsory heterosexuality' to describe what I call 'compulsory blackness'. 'Compulsory blackness' is a political institution wherein it is presumed that identification with 'blackness' is the implicit or explicit exclusive personal preference of most 'mixed race' women and men with one 'black' continental African or 'black' African Caribbean parent and one 'white' British or 'white' continental European parent. The ongoing challenge then remains coming to terms with one's 'blackness' as both affirmative and as a source for social discrimination in a manner that does not require partial genealogical or cultural annihilation.

For example, in her longer testimony, Akousa positions herself as a 'light-skinned Black woman' (Ifekwunigwe, 1999: 113–14). At the same time, she acknowledges and applauds the resilience of her 'white', working-class Irish mother who raised her and her three siblings on her own. In fact, she punctuates one of her discussions on 'black' identity politics with the statement: 'At the end of the day I have a white mother.' Akousa also had additional 'black' continental African, African Caribbean and African American safety nets into which she could fall when identifying exclusively with her 'white' Irish (and English) maternal culture was insufficient. As cultural surrogates, these women introduced Akousa to 'black' literature, taught her how to cook African Caribbean dishes and showed her basic 'black' grooming skills – creaming the skin and oiling the scalp. Akousa fondly recollects the pivotal role played by these fictive kin in the form of continental African and African American surrogate sisters and African Caribbean 'other mothers'. Fictive kin are not biologically related to individuals. However, they perform the same functions as these family relations.

Both the schoolroom incident and the skinhead encounter examples illustrate Akousa's consciousness of the contradictory way in which she is 'racially' positioned as both 'mixed race' and 'black'. Akousa also acknowledges the significant roles her 'white' Irish mother, 'black' African Caribbean 'other mothers' and continental African and African American surrogate sisters all played in her journey from girlhood to womanhood. I define Akousa's reconciliation of these biracialized public forces and private influences as 'additive blackness'. 'Additive blackness' is a cumulative process of 'racial' reconciliation, wherein a 'mixed race' individual starts with her/his familiar social foundation and builds forward without having to sever ties with her/his often 'white' English (or in this case Irish) roots. This particular psychosocial process of becoming 'black', as both an individual and collective response to racialized oppression and as an affirmation of political consciousness, does not compromise the specific allegiances and attachments that 'mixed race' individuals may have to 'white' identities, cultures and family.

On the other hand, in the following extract, Akousa's younger sister Sarah,[14] exposes the private conflicts within families that may counteract or potentially undermine this project of 'additive blackness'. That is, she recalls that, at the precise historic moment that her local streets were exploding with imported and empowering emblems of Black Power, some 'white' English mothers of 'mixed race' (and 'black') children were reacting to, and in fact reproducing, the biracialized dictates of a society that ignored the significant influences of maternal culture:

> At home, Black Power was just comin' in and my sister went to the corner shop and seen her first afro. I was with my friend Jenny whose mum is also white. My sister came home and said to us, 'Oh, I've seen some afros in the shop. Oh, they're really brilliant.' This group of women with afros, she's saying how brilliant they were. At home, we were startin' this awareness of Black Power and black identity. We always related to bein' black, because all the signals we got from when we were growin' up, we were nothin' else. We definitely were not white. I remember when Jenny's mum would get angry with her, she used to call her 'black bastard'. It was always 'black this' or 'black that'. It was really hard for me to hear. In fact, her mum used to always say to us: 'When you grow up, never marry a white man because when he gets angry he may end up calling you names.' But then, the Black Power started comin' along and all the positiveness that brought at that time was brilliant. Like somethin' we could all really feel good about.

Although socially designated and strategically identified as 'black', Sarah and Akousa's 'white' maternal parentage positions them at multiethnic, multicultural and 'multiracial' intersections and, hence, at the front lines of social and political change. By virtue of birth and circumstance, they grapple with the everyday confusion associated with the assumption of a 'black' identity in the face of lived experiences and family

backgrounds that are infinitely more complex and varied. Within pre-established biracialized social contexts, both their narratives speak to a desire for 'racial' reconciliation and an integrated sense of self that can embrace equally and fully both 'white' maternal Irish & 'black' paternal Bajan social and cultural inheritances. In ideal circumstances, all of the women and men with whom I spoke expressed a desire to be liberated from political discourses that mandate compulsory and exclusive 'black' affiliation and that silence indigenous and diasporic multiethnic and cultural inheritances, which are themselves neither homogeneous nor static (Ifekwunigwe, 1999).

One could say that 'mixed race' individuals of 'black/white' parentage are exemplary metaphors for the (post)modern diasporic condition. With the city as their stage and as heightened representations of a generic angst, 'mixed race'/multiethnic subjects undertake the complex and dynamic work of (post)modern identity politics within the anti-essentialist, (post)essentialist and (post)colonial cauldrons characterizing embodied multiple and fractured 'racial', ethnic, sexual, national and gendered subjectivities (Appiah and Gates, 1995; Butler, 1993). Gayatri Spivak describes the inscription of this 'contemporary identities' work more explicitly: 'a wound, exposed by the historically hegemonic languages for those who have learned the double-binding "practice of their writing" ' (1995: 147). Similarly, one could say that the double narratives of 'mixed race'/multiethnic autobiographers reflect hierarchical gender, generational, ethnic and 'racial' tensions within societies, and are also located outside them in imagined but not imaginary spaces. For example, in their autobiography, Thelma Perkins and Isha McKenzie-Mavinga, two 'mixed race' sisters of Trinidadian & Jewish English parentage, wrestle with this 'double bind', and in so doing attempt to heal the 'wounds':

> Decades later, we are still trying to define ourselves. We are British because we were born in Britain and our mother was British; our father was Trinidadian and we can claim his nationality. We have the genes, the characteristics and the colouring of both our white mother and our black father.
>
> [Yet] the label 'mixed race', a sociologist's definition, automatically implies problems, perhaps because it is a label; for at least 45 years, those of us affected by labelling have been trying to change attitudes that, unfortunately, still persist along with the labels. . . . In America black people are referred to as Afro-American, a title which, while acknowledging the origins of black people, also acknowledges their right to citizenship. But black people in Britain, regardless of their place of birth, are always identified as West Indian, or Afro-Caribbean. (1991: 120)

McKenzie-Mavinga and Perkins's extract reinforces the fact that being or becoming 'white' is never presented as an option for 'mixed race' children. Being or becoming English (as opposed to the [post]imperial term British)

is also an affiliation denied 'black' kin with 'white' English mothers. Mythical beliefs about indigeneity and 'racial' purity entwine persistent constructions of 'whiteness', Englishness, 'blackness' and diasporic location.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have formulated critiques of racialized conceptions of ethnicities in general and Englishness in particular as they are delimited by the dialectics of structure and agency. I have also sketched narrative illustrations of the spatialized and historicized articulations of racialized formations which inhibit the performance of multiethnicities. In spite and because of the enduring significance of racialized differences, there is scope for the mapping of multiethnic places and hope for the celebration of multiethnic practices. Lesley Lokko traces the contours of this space:

> In the aftermath of the imperial endeavour, a new set of conditions comes into play: diverse, different and hybrid. The existing binaries have been replaced with a language that attempts to resist the old couplings in favour of a new set of spatio-social conditions. This is the space of the new experience, one that belongs solely to the contemporary, diasporic and post-colonial world. The binaries of white/black; same/different might therefore be replaced by 'white within black' or vice versa, 'same without difference', 'black between dark'. The possibilities for an architectural [and decidedly urban] rendering (or multiple renderings) of the terms are myriad. (2000: 31)

In other words, in biracialized (post)modern and (post)colonial moments, multiethnicities and strategic identifications stage debates that do not resolve but rather elucidate both the discursive and the political problematics of the concepts of cities and citizens in the age of transnationalisms and globalizations (Balibar, 1999; Sassen, 1999).

Such an interpretive approach to studying the (post)modern city is consistent with ongoing debates in urban studies concerning the primacy of place and the place of the self: 'the inhabitant of the (post)modern city is no longer a subject apart from his or her performances, the border between the self and city has become fluid' (Patton, 1995: 118). This fluidity takes on a corporeal quality:

> how our bodily images, (re)actions and feelings are constantly being (re)constituted by the spaces and places we encounter . . . the 'urban' as comprising multi-textured spatialities or sites and locations in and through which we, our (multiple, fragmented) selves, are 'made' (and 'unmade'). (Imrie and Pinch, 1996: 1257)

In her influential work, Iris Marion Young suggests that it is the city itself that is also the locus for the articulation of a 'politics of difference' – 'a being

together of strangers' (1990: 237). This diversity simultaneously breeds cultural fusions and social divisions (Grillo, 2000; Spooner, 1996). That is, 'the city pushes strangers together [but through cultural consumption and hybridization as well as social and political dissent] the city can be tamed, moderating differences into affirmations of self and social hierarchies' (Foulkes, 2000: 225). As Keith substantiates:

> The creation of a political space, a social space and a cultural space where the boundary stalking logics of identification are overturned, where uncertainty and unpredictability provide the conditions of possibility for the mutations, hybridity and combinations that define how newness comes into the world – these are all the definitive features of the lived city. (1995: 302)

From my own research, the 'heterotopia' of the city, as manifest in street-level performances of identity, is exemplified by Sarah's public siting and citing of the Afros during the burgeoning Black Power movement of her adolescence (Hannerz, 1994). Her recollection of the collective awakening of a 'black' Liverpudlian consciousness illustrates the ways in which city streets are the spatial arena for the assertion of oppositional civic identities (Rogers, 1998; Vertovec, 1998). Sarah's concomitant memory of private, 'mixed race' familial tensions highlights the multiple dimensions of ethnic and racialized identities as contingent, situational, strategic, relational and, in certain instances, paradoxical. In other words, multiethnic affiliations can be forged from a collective consciousness of both the falsity and fluidity of 'racial' categories as well as from the recognition of the slippery nature of local/national gendered identities (Gilroy, 2000; Mohanty and Alexander, 1997). However, as they are manifest in local urban milieux, differential lived realities and legacies of (post)colonialisms, sexisms, class oppression and ethnic discrimination must be acknowledged and interwoven with the formation of any paradigm or praxis of multiethnicities.

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Notes

1 So, why 'mixed race'? Although as problematic as *métis(se)* (a term I have re-appropriated and deployed in the past), my reviving of the term 'mixed race' is a necessary, deliberate and discursive political intervention. Unlike *métis(se)*, 'mixed race' is a term that is part and parcel of the English vernacular; unlike 'mixed parentage' and 'mixed heritage' which retreat from a racialized discourse (someone with 'white' Scottish and 'white' Welsh parents could claim

to be both 'mixed parentage' and 'mixed heritage'). To be 'mixed race' presumes differently racialized parentage. Therefore, for the purposes of critical discussion, I use the term 'mixed race' to describe individuals who, according to popular folk concepts of 'race' and by known birth parentage, embody two or more world views or, in genealogical terms, descent groups. These individuals may have physical characteristics that reflect some sort of 'intermediate' status vis-a-vis their birth parents. More than likely, at some stage, they will have to reconcile multiple cultural influences.

2 For examples, see Camper (1994), Christian (2000), Ifekwunigwe (1999), O'Hearn (1998), Root (1992, 1996) and Zack (1993, 1995).

3 For the USA, see Dalmage (2000), Daniel (2000), Funderburg (1994), Leonard (2000), O'Hearn (1998), Root (1992, 1996), Spencer (1997), Spickard (1989), Williamson (1995) and Zack (1993, 1995). For Canada, see Camper (1994), Mahtani (2001) and Nakada et al. (1996).

4 According to Maria Root, one of the leading proponents of the 'multiracial movement', someone who is 'multiracial' is 'of two or more racial heritages. It is the most inclusive term to refer to people across all racial mixes. Thus it also includes biracial people' (1996: xi).

5 For example, in Britain, the social and political category 'black' incorporates South Asian, Chinese and, in certain instances, Irish communities (C. Alexander, 1996; Mirza, 1997). Nevertheless, in Britain, there is by no means a consensus regarding the inclusivity of the designation 'black' (Modood, 1988). In fact, certain sectors of the religiously and ethnically diverse South Asian communities have rejected 'black' affiliation in favour of a (British) Asian identification. On the other hand, in the USA, 'black' refers primarily to individuals of African descent.

6 For recent Latin American and Caribbean examples, see Hanchard (1999), Torres and Whitten (1998) and Whitten and Torres (1998); for recent South African examples, see Bickford-Smith (1995), Erasmus (2000) and James et al. (1996).

7 According to the results of research conducted by the Policy Studies Institute, there have been interesting demographic changes in the ethnic and 'racial' composition of British families. Among their findings was that 'as many as half of British born Caribbean men and a third of women, had chosen a white partner . . . for two out of five children (39 percent) with a Caribbean mother or father, their other parent was white' (Modood et al., 1997: 27).

8 Borrowing from Patterson and Kelley (2000), I refer to African diasporas not simply as political *spaces*, but also as *processes* and *conditions*. That is, first, contemporary African diasporic processes extend the links of the migration chains which originated in the historical moments of the transatlantic slave trade and the rise of European empires: the adages 'We are here because you brought us here' or 'We are here because you were there'. Second, contemporary African diasporas are spatially constituted wherever African (post)colonial and transnational constituents find themselves, be that conventionally in the Caribbean, North and Latin Americas or Europe (Green, 1997; Modood and Werbner, 1997; Torres and Whitten, 1998). Their spatial and 'racial' locations as both gendered African diasporic agents and former 'black' colonial, tribal and island subjects inscribe sameness as they mobilize and

politicize (Adi, 2000; Bousquet and Douglas, 1991; Gilroy, 2000). Finally, African diasporic conditions persist and are transformed by the interface of transnational African diasporic traditions of resistance, protest and cultural innovation with global economic, political gendered and racialized hierarchical structures that exclude as they appropriate and commodify (Campbell, 1985; Chuck D., 1997; Rose, 1994). In other words, local and dynamic diasporic spaces, processes and conditions intersect with and in fact are produced by transnational identities, translated cultural commodities and global political strategies (Browning, 1998; Lipsitz, 1994).

9 On several occasions, the producers of this programme consulted me for advice, none of which they used. For example, I told them under no circumstances should they call the film 'Brown Britain', as it had dubious, South African tripartite connotations. Actually, perhaps this was intentional, as the thrust of the piece seemed to suggest that 'mixed race' people were a 'superior race': otherwise, as they speculated, why were there so many in media, fashion and the arts in Britain?

10 Bisi refers to herself as a Northumberland Yoruba. Her father is Nigerian, her mother is English and she grew up with them and her two sisters in middle-class Ibadan, Nigeria. At the age of 18, she moved to England to study art. In addition to being an accomplished visual artist, she is married to an Englishman and is the mother of three daughters and a son.

11 The original Bristol-based project involved 25 'mixed race' participants: 16 women and nine men. Participation in this two-year project consisted of respondents providing a series of tape-recorded testimonies about their childhood, gender politics, 'racial' and ethnic identity, class background, nationalism, family, sexuality, creativity, parenting and experiences of racism, among a variety of organic topics. This project culminated in the publication of *Scattered Belongings* (Ifekwunigwe, 1999), which weaves the narratives of six 'mixed race' women (two sets of biological sisters and two women who grew up in care in the UK, in either Liverpool, Cardiff, suburban London or in Ibadan, Nigeria) with a critical assessment of historical and contemporary understandings of 'hybridities', social hierarchies and identity politics.

12 Akousa grew up working-class in Liverpool with her Irish mother and without her Bajan (from Barbados) father. She is a Rastafarian and yet is not seen as a typical 'Rasta' woman. She sees herself as a 'black' woman and yet not everyone sees her as a 'black' woman. The lack of fit between the multilayered and textured complexities of Akousa's oral testimony and their flattened reduction to text reinforce for me the extent to which all of our lived experiences cannot be completely contained by the two sides of the page. However, with her extract and that of her sister Sarah, I have tried as much as possible to capture and preserve the lyricism of their Scouse (Liverpudlian) accents. In so doing, I am also emphasizing the ethnomethodological tension between the written and the spoken word.

13 I define biracialization as a process that dictates the specific structural, symbolic and oppositional relationships forged between people deemed 'white' and those socially designated as 'black'. As a substructure of the concept of racialization (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Omi and Winant, 1986; Small, 1994), biracialization highlights the dominance of 'black/white' discourses on 'race' and

'mixed race' – i.e. one is either 'black' or 'white', and never the twain shall meet. This binarism of 'mixed race' poses significant political and personal challenges for individuals who identify as 'mixed race' but do not have 'black/white' parentage.

14 Sarah was one of the first people I met when I moved to Bristol. Her woman-child idealism and hopefulness went far in a community that was frequently characterized by despair. Everyone knew and liked Sarah. In terms of Sarah's storytelling strategy, what was remarkable about her testimonies were the ways in which the bits and pieces of her life were interwoven with vivid descriptions of the houses and the neighbourhoods where she and her family lived. These became veritable signposts along her remembered journey.

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