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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

the development of racial(ised) identity
in people of mixed parentage

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SUMMARY

In a society concerned with 'racial' purity and anxious to protect 'racial' boundaries people of mixed parentage are presumed to experience pressure, internal and external, to be aware of 'racial' differences and their own perceived ambiguous position. Some commentators believe that people of mixed parentage 'do not fit' into society. If only they would pretend to be 'like the rest of us' then everyone would be happy. There are few, if any, representations of coherent identities.

The main concern of my research is to discover the factors which influence the development of racial(ised) identity in people of mixed parentage. An understanding of personal and social identity is an important part of my research. I investigate how people of mixed parentage express their racial(ised) identity and question whether racial(ised) identity formation is ever really finished.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

We utilise race to provide clues about who a person is. This fact is made painfully obvious when we encounter someone whom we cannot conveniently racially categorise ... Such an encounter becomes a source of discomfort and momentarily a crisis of racial meaning. Without a racial identity, one is in danger of having no identity.

Omi and Winant, 1986 (quoted in Ferber, 1997:196)

People of mixed parentage¹ experience pressure, often from external sources, to be aware of racial differences and their own perceived ambiguous position especially when located in a Western society so concerned with racial purity and anxious to protect racial boundaries. The main concern of this thesis is to understand how externally imposed marginality, often in the form of discrimination, influences an understanding of the racial(ised) self² and whether this in turn affects how the self is expressed both publicly and privately.

¹ I am aware that this term is problematic. However, I wish to avoid a vague term such as dual heritage, which could apply to people who have dual citizenship, parents of different European cultures etc. Mixed race and/or biracial explicitly continue the belief in the binarism of racial identity. Even mixed parentage is inadequate because everyone has parents of mixed gender. However, as no term is going to be acceptable to all, I have chosen to use mixed parentage solely as a personal preference. I will use the term to describe an individual who has one natural parent who would be considered white by the general population and one natural parent who would not be seen as white, whether they are Asian, South East Asian, African or African-Caribbean.

² Only using the term 'racial self' would imply that people are self-consciously aware of their 'race' (itself a problematic term which has a variety of social meanings from skin colour to nationality and ethnicity). In fact, most people are often only conscious of their 'race' when their skin colour/shade is given currency by others i.e. when skin colour is 'racialised'. It is impossible not to have a racialised identity in a society which promotes spurious racial categories with attributes of superiority and inferiority. The term 'racial(ised)' is used throughout this thesis to indicate the complexity of these issues and to suggest that individuals have an internal sense of self of which only one aspect is skin colour/shade and also an externally imposed sense of self which often focuses on skin colour/shade, particularly in the company of those who consider themselves 'the norm'. For people of mixed parentage those who see themselves as 'the norm' can be either Black people or white people, depending on the social context although a discussion of the more common 'norming' of whiteness can be found in chapter three.

With the numbers of ‘mixed marriages’³ increasing there is a growing interest in the lives of people of mixed parentage which has come from several quarters. There are those who seem to have a prurient interest in the sexuality of people of ‘different races’ and whose focus is on the parents’ relationship and how it transgresses racial boundaries. Abby Ferber (1997:194) conducted a study of white supremacist literature and found that:

Because white supremacist discourse is primarily concerned with constructing white identity and maintaining white privilege, the variety of white supremacist publications share an obsession with interracial relationships, perceived as the ultimate threat to that identity.

Such views have been developed and fuelled over many centuries through ‘science’, literature, art and religious imagery which created demarcation lines between black and white, evil and good, degenerate and pure. There also remains, even in ‘tolerant’ post-modern times, strongly held convictions that inherited, biological differences exist between people of ‘pure races’ and that by allowing people from different ‘racial groups’ to bear offspring, society is producing generations of people who are considered to be psychologically unstable social miscreants (Ferber, *ibid.*).

Others appear troubled about the possible sense of confusion experienced by people of mixed parentage because they seemingly ‘do not fit’ into society. This view suggests that unless one is either ‘purely’ Black⁴ or white, one is inevitably

³ The term ‘mixed marriages’ or ‘mixed race relationships’ is used in common parlance to describe intimate relationships between people who are considered to be from different ‘racial groups’. In this context the term ‘racial groups’ tends to refer not to ethnic or religious groups (e.g. Jew/Gentile couplings) or nationality but to those whose skin colour and/or physiognomy is distinct.

⁴ By capitalizing the word Black, I am seeking to differentiate between those who use ‘black’ as a descriptor of people of African origin (sometimes evident in quotes found in this document) and its more inclusive, political use for describing people of African or Asian ancestry. By using this definition I do not intend to suggest that Black people are a homogeneous group. I acknowledge the wide range of cultural identities, experiences and religious diversity to be found within Black

Footnote continues on next page

condemned to permanent rejection or else to the seemingly psychologically damaging road of stepping in and out of particular identities in order to be acceptable (Lindsay, 1994). Some of this concern appears to be altruistic but may also be an attempt to hide the discomfort expressed by Omi and Winant (1986, quoted above).

There does appear to be some genuine consideration, mainly focused on children, and by those whose job it is to show an interest, about the opportunities available to people of mixed parentage to understand and express their mixed heritage. Such people, often social workers and teachers, have been criticised for 'seeing race in everything' and for being less concerned for the welfare of children than their 'politically correct' positions on race issues (see the critique of Roger Hewitt's 1996 work in *Routes of Racism: the social basis of racist action* in CARF, 1997).

In recent years there have been television discussion programmes (The Time, the Place, ITV, 1993; Ricki Lake, C4, 1993; Esther, BBC2, 1995; Oprah, BBC2, 1997) documentaries (*Hitler's Forgotten Victims*, C4, 1997, *Love in Black and White*, BBC2, 1998) magazine and newspaper articles (*Life is no longer a matter of black and white*, The Daily Telegraph, December 28, 1994, *Persecuted for Love*, More, 17-30 August, 1994, *Mixed Blessing*, Pride, February/March 1995) which all look, sometimes superficially, at people of mixed parentage. The media often describes

communities. Where appropriate I have utilised the concept of ethnicity in recognition of the cultural differences that exist within ethnic minority groups.

It is also important to point out here that I am not restricting my use of the wholly inadequate term 'Asian' to those from the Indian sub-continent. Neither am I using the American definition which generally describes as 'Asian' people from South East Asia. My sample of those who could be loosely described as 'Asian' include those with a parent from Fiji (with Indian ancestry), Africa (with Chinese ancestry) and Sri Lanka, as well as countries more often seen as Asia.

extreme cases, as this attracts more viewers or readers. Often they involve people who deny their dual or multiple heritage and who express one part of their racial(ised) identity to the total exclusion of the other. Other participants talk about how hard it has been to be accepted by both communities they represent. Such images confirm to the general population what it has suspected all along, that people of mixed parentage are confused, lacking in self-confidence and/or emotionally damaged. In fact, they are 'a problem' for society. Dangerously, some observers of such media choose to openly express what many covertly think, that it would be 'kinder' if people of mixed parentage did not exist at all and perhaps people should be discouraged from creating 'the problem' in the first place (Ferber, 1997).

Another tactic of the media is to show people who have not considered their identity an issue and who claim never to have experienced any confusion or exclusion. These are treated as heroes by audiences who are comforted to know that race really does not matter and that ignoring such topics is the solution; if only people of mixed parentage could pretend to be 'like the rest of us' then everyone would be happy. There are few, if any, representations of stable or coherent⁵ identities.

A rare example of media coverage which showed young people of mixed parentage who were confident and proud of their heritage was available in a 1997 Channel Four Learning production entitled *Double Exposure: Talking about Race*. Two young women of mixed parentage are featured within a group of twelve young people of

⁵ 'Coherent identities' is used to suggest a sense of knowing ourselves and having a unified self-image. It also suggests that we understand how we fit into (our place in) wider society. Developing a sense of coherence helps us to avoid confusion in our dealings with others so that we feel supported as well as able to make a contribution to society.

different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. Jenna's father is black and Canadian and her mother is white and English, 'and she comes from Newcastle, she's a Geordie' (transcript CN: 22852/001:4). Although she is comfortable with her 'mixed-ness', Jenna is frustrated that, 'When you're ticking a box ... there is no box for me on the sheets. And if it had Mixed Race on the form, I would tick Mixed Race, 'cos that is what I am' (CN: 22852/001:10). Incidentally, Jenna's comment about her mother's regional origins shows how important all aspects of her social identity are to her.

Myfi, whose mother is of mixed parentage and whose father is white, expresses that she is proud of her heritage but is aware that she is often seen by others as white. She makes her mixed background clear very early in the discussion and this causes some surprise as she has short cropped hair and wears a nose ring. The surprise from the white group members may come from having discovered her 'hidden' origins although this is only implicit in the discussion. For Black members, there is also some embarrassment as there had been an assumption that her appearance signified 'a skinhead, you see - and - you think she's racist' (CN: 22852/001:13)'. Neither Jenna nor Myfi intend to 'pass' for white but Myfi's style of presentation causes some discomfort and forces the audience to question how people of mixed parentage present themselves. Should they 'perform'⁶ as Black or white people? Should they

⁶ As Jacques (1991) points out, self-image or identity is dependent, not on the facts of biography or biology, but on how successfully individuals communicate themselves to others. But Jacques does not stop there, there is a third element to his theory. How others talk about an individual can also influence his or her expression of identity. Jacques suggests that '... the subject will succeed in constructing his or her self-identity to the extent that he or she manages, across all the communicational interactions in which he or she becomes involved, to integrate the three poles of any communication act: by speaking to others and saying *I*, by being spoken to by others as *you*, or by being spoken of by others as a *he she* that the subject would accept as appropriate.' (p.xv)

give cultural clues to their heritage or should they be free to express themselves as they wish?

An understanding of the process of developing racial(ised) identities is an important part of my research. The suggestion that identity is fixed because of heredity or biology is considered. I also investigate the growing view that an individual's identity is dependent upon a wide variety of factors from physical environment to media representations, peer involvement and personal experience and that expression of identity is variable and fluid.

I want to challenge the previous research which looked only at children and teenagers and appeared to suggest, as Erikson (1968) does, that their identities are more or less settled by the time they reached puberty, and that the process is a universal one. I question whether racial(ised) identity formation is ever really finished and also whether experiences of racism and prejudice⁷ which are specific to people of mixed parentage influence their racial(ised) identity and how this is expressed.

⁷ I am aware of the recent debates that racism is not only based on rejection of people due to biological differences, i.e. skin colour and physiognomy, but also based on ethnicity, culture or religion (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992, Modood, 1992, Gilroy, 1993). However, most of the respondents in my research seemed to understand the term 'racism' in its more traditional sense and so I use the term in the same way. This concurs with Lewis Gordon's (1995: 383) view that, racism is '(1) the conviction that one's race is superior to other races and (2) the institutional practice of treating one's race as superior to others ... [The superior group] serves as the criterion of its own justification, whereas the inferior groups can only be 'justified', as it were, in terms of the superior group'. In my view, racism perpetuates intolerance and bigotry, discrimination, antagonism and violence expressed verbally and/or physically. Such behaviour is based on assumptions and stereotypes.

It is rare for bigotry from Black people towards white people to be based on a sense of superiority, although there are some current Afrocentric debates which may assert superiority (Asante, 1989, Van Sertima, 1986). I have therefore used the term 'prejudice' to describe negative attitudes and behaviour from Black people towards white people even though a few respondents described such behaviour as 'racism'.

This research is presented in eight chapters. After this introduction is a literature review which summarises what I consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of previous scholarship in relation to how the scholars perceive and theorise racism and the formation of racial(ised) identities as well as the methodologies they employ.

Chapter three deals with the theoretical framework of the research. I investigate theories of identity formation and development including philosophical and social psychological hypotheses. There is a detailed discussion of more recent notions of multiple or textured expressions of identities. I question whether a group of people who often defy categorisation can 'fit' into any theoretical framework which avows certainty or whether in fact their very fluidity encourages a more pragmatic view of identity which enables the observer to understand identity in terms of lived experience.

This chapter also looks at representations of culture and how they are linked to people's expressions of their 'racial' heritage. Racial(ised) identity formation is also dealt with, including a discussion about supposed stages of development. I reflect, too, on the categories of 'black', 'white' and mixed parentage/mixed race as racial(ised) identities as well as issues of 'passing' for white as a strategy for gaining acceptability.

Chapter four deals with the methodology of the research. I describe the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and look at issues of values, objectivity and 'insider status'. The subject of power relations is included in this section. I show how multiple methods of data collection and analysis have been

used to good effect in this study. I did not use a triangulation method but allowed ‘the quantitative component to map out general patterns and the qualitative phase to reveal processes and the perspective of those actually involved in situations ...’ (Bryman and Burgess, 1994:222).

Chapter five looks at the particular methods employed, including a discussion on sample, data collection systems, interview and transcription styles. This chapter includes what might be described as ‘factual’ data provided by the respondents as opposed to the more impressionistic information discussed in chapter six.

Chapter six is Part 1 of the discussion of the main findings of the research. Thirty four people were interviewed, mainly from the wider Midlands area, but some from further afield, including one participant who lives in Switzerland. Issues discussed included family background, schooling, friendships, interests and role models. There is an explanation for the categories chosen for observation and how these are linked together in order to give a coherent picture of the expressed situation of people of mixed parentage.

Chapter seven forms Part 2 of the findings and looks specifically at respondents’ experiences of racism and prejudice. How racial(ised) identities are produced/affected by such experiences is discussed.

Chapter eight concludes the thesis and describes how the findings support or challenge other scholarship in this area. It summarises new insights into the real life

experiences of people of mixed parentage and how they develop their racial(ised) identity.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter I will be reviewing the rather limited selection of literature concerning people of mixed parentage. For many years, there was only passing reference to the subject matter which mainly consisted of the authors' observations rather than the experiences of those observed. For example, sociologists such as Robert Park (1928) and Everett Stonequist (1937) both suggested that people of mixed parentage are 'marginal' people. While Park argued that people of mixed parentage had the advantage of a more detached view of life which led to greater creativity, Stonequist saw them as inevitably facing a crisis of identity which led to 'damaged' personalities unable to function effectively in society unless they choose between being accepted in the white community or being part of the Black community. According to Stonequist, there can be no middle ground. It is important to set writers such as Park and Stonequist into their historical and social context as this provides an insight into their perspectives. In 1930s America racial segregation was evident in most areas of life. Miscegenation¹, or interracial marriage which resulted in 'the mixing of races', was still illegal. It is not possible, with late 20th century eyes and experience, to truly understand the motivation of researchers such as Stonequist. However, it is probable that he, while perhaps resistant to scientific racism, will not have been able to completely eradicate from his mind the arguments

¹ 'miscere – mix, genus – race – cohabitation, sexual relations, or marriage between people of different races' (Encarta 97). Clearly this term is problematic in that it reifies 'race' and suggests that humanity can be classified into separate 'races' or even species. It is used here in line with its historical context.

propounded by 19th century Social Darwinism and the Eugenics Movement. This may have influenced his concerns about the psychological damage he claimed was experienced by people of mixed parentage.

Although Britain had no legal constraints on the development of 'interracial relationships', there was considerable social stigma attached to these unions, a result of the influence of the Eugenics Movement into popular thought. Ken Little's 1947 ethnographic research in the docklands area of Cardiff consisted of his own observations of the status and difficulties of people of mixed parentage, rather than any experiences they expressed themselves. Little confirmed the popular view that children of mixed parentage experience uncertainty about their personal and social identity. The young people he observed were involved in a variety of social activities but were viewed in the main by the local population as 'unreliable' and 'shiftless' (Little, 1972:159). They were encouraged to remain separate from the white youth by the institutionalisation of their status as the 'Coloured Youth Movement of Cardiff'. Little says that the children were confused about their identity because they lacked 'on the one hand the cultural and national pride upon which many of their fathers at the worst can fall back, and on the other they fail to gain any compensatory ties in the society of the land in which they were born' (Little, *ibid.*:159). Little seems to have obtained these impressions from the white residents who objected to 'racial mixing' and never examines why the children did not develop 'compensatory ties'. Even the title of the book, *Negroes in Britain*, suggests that 'Negroes' cannot be British and that they, and their offspring, are therefore outsiders.

Comments on the confused and confusing psychological and social status of people of mixed parentage were also prevalent in fictional literature during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries e.g. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* by James Weldon Johnson, 1912, *The Lady and the Unicorn* by Rumer Godden, 1938 and *Bhowani Junction* by John Masters, 1984 [1954], among many others. In recent years documentaries and films featuring such issues have increased, especially in the United States, with such productions as *Banana Split* (1991) and *Do 2 Halves Really Make a Whole?* (1993) both of which explore South East Asian/American identity.

Often researchers looking at 'mixed race relationships', in the context of a predominantly white society with considerable social pressures to prevent such unions, have focused on the partnerships between Black and white people. There have been studies which have indicated the special tensions experienced by the parties to these relationships (Richmond, 1954, Hill, 1965, Little, 1954 and 1972). These researchers seem to concentrate on the problems rather than the positive experiences. The more positive studies tend to be anecdotal in nature (Alibhai-Brown and Montague, 1992).

With a growing interest in social psychology, the early American self-identification² research of Clark and Clark (in Newcomb and Hartley (eds.), 1947) provided new insights into the development of racial(ised) identity. British work such as that by Susan Benson (1981), Anne Wilson (1987) and Barbara Tizard and Ann Phoenix

² The suggestion here (first formulated by Freud, 1924) is that all humans develop their sense of self through identification with others (initially parents). They identify with those who love and nurture them and absorb into their thinking and behaviour the images and world views presented by those who offer such care. Eventually people may come to identify with others who appear to share the same physiognomy, nationality, political views etc.

(1993) have tried to build on the Clarks' work and answer the difficult question of the impact of self and other people's perceptions on the identity of people of mixed parentage. Wayne Richards (1995) and Les Back (1996) have looked at some issues of self-presentation in teenagers and young adults but there have been few thorough investigations of the process of identity development and expression, especially with adults. There is a growing scholarship in the United States, particularly by people of mixed parentage themselves (Root et al., 1992 and 1996), but the understanding of race issues is very different due to the theory of hypodescent and so it has limited value when looking at the British context³.

Few studies have asked people of mixed parentage themselves how they view their own lives and experiences, why they express particular identities and what has influenced those identities. In this review I will be focusing mostly on two British studies of mixed parentage identity, viz. the research of Anne Wilson (1987) and that of Barbara Tizard and Ann Phoenix (1993), although I will make passing reference to the other British and some American literature. My choice of these two works is mainly because they are the closest, with some major differences, to my own research subject. They are concerned with similar issues and try to represent the British experience.

My main concerns will be to investigate how the authors theorise racial(ised) identity and how they relate these theories to the relationship between these identities and racism. I will look at the methodology of both studies and will discuss both the

³ It is interesting to note that while the hypodescent tradition does not exist in the British context, it has its roots in northern Europe and was taken to America by the English and the Dutch where it became established in law (see Fernández in Root, 1996).

positive contributions these research projects have made to our knowledge of the experiences of children of mixed parentage and also what I consider to be the limitations of the research projects. Finally, I will compare my own standpoint to that of the authors concerned.

Review

Influenced by the symbolic interactionist model of identity formation⁴, the American research of Clark and Clark (in Newcomb and Hartley (eds.), 1947) informed much of the early thinking on race and identity formation. The Clarks' work was the first comprehensive research in this area and was carried out on 3 - 7 year old children of African-American origin at a time when segregation of black and white children was still a powerful item on the agenda of American educational politics. The Clarks, who were themselves African-American, were not so much concerned about the children's racial heritage as their skin shade - light, medium or dark. One can only presume that those with lighter skin would be more likely to be born to one black and one white parent. The researchers used a variety of dolls with different skin colours to ascertain which doll each child thought looked like them, which they thought looked 'nice', which they thought looked 'bad' and how they would classify each doll using the official terminology of the day. As successful African-Americans, the Clarks were clearly very concerned about the responses of the black children who preferred the white dolls, which signified to them a developing self-hatred which had its roots in societal rejection experienced by the children they studied:

⁴ The symbolic interactionists, such as George Herbert Mead (1934), believed that 'the self' was developed by internalising the impact of social processes. Social action and interaction with others helps individuals to construct their sense of 'self'. In the Clarks' case, they believed that the interaction of 'Negroes' with a hostile society would inevitably negatively affect their self-image.

Human beings who are forced to live under ghetto conditions and whose daily experience tells them that almost nowhere in society are they respected ... will, as a matter of course, begin to doubt their own worth. Since every human being depends upon his [*sic*] cumulative experiences with others for clues as to how he [*sic*] should view and value himself, children who are consistently rejected understandably begin to question and doubt whether they, their family and their group really deserve no more respect from the larger society than they receive (Kenneth Clark in *Dark Ghetto*, 1965, quoted in Milner, 1983:139).

Theoretical Viewpoint

The majority of work in this area takes a loosely social psychological standpoint. In her research project, sociologist Anne Wilson (1987) wanted to find a way of replicating the Clarks' study but utilising a more 'realistic' method. She believed that the American polarisation of black and white was too rigid and that the children interviewed should be allowed to express their own choices of identity which did not necessarily 'fit' the Clarks' categories. Wilson, hoped that her research findings would 'de-problematise' what she calls 'interracial families' and would help those involved in the support and care of the children in these families to have greater understanding of the issues involved. Her concern was to understand, from the viewpoint of the children she studied, how they viewed their own racial(ised) identity in response to photographs of other children, in other words how much they identified with the images they saw. She also interviewed their mothers in order to discover how much they understood about what influenced their children's identity development. However, in her attempt to widen the Clarks' categories, Wilson still suggests that categories are an important way of understanding one's place in the world. As she states:

... a categorization section was added, where the children were required to put the photos of the children in groups, according to their 'race'. ... When the groups had been constructed, the respondent was asked, 'Which group are *you*

in?’ to allow a second identity choice to be made on the basis of secondary categorization. (1987:61)

Even though she wanted the children to also define themselves, it is clear that Wilson assumed they would also categorise themselves within a particular group. This concurs with the views of psychologists Tajfel and Wilkes (1963, quoted in Milner, 1983) who showed through their experiments that people categorise certain groups, for example, by skin colour. When they do there is a tendency to notice the differences between the groups and to emphasise the similarities within them⁵. There is a suggestion from Wilson’s work that people of mixed parentage cannot simply exist in their own right; they have to place themselves or be placed in order to create a sense of comfort for themselves and for others.

Wilson’s research also focused on the social structures around the children which might influence their understanding of themselves including family, school, peers and location. She found that the children were aware of their skin colour from an early age and that the messages children receive from society are that economic and other advantage is dependent on skin colour. Wilson also found that mothers had the power to influence their children’s understanding of their racial(ised) identity either positively or negatively and that this depended in the main on the mother’s attitude to her own place in society and the place of cultural education for her child.

⁵ It appears that each of us has a desire to point the finger and to make judgements of others. In order to do this we utilise the tool of categorisation so that we can describe others as ‘these people’ or ‘their sort’ thus setting ourselves outside the particular category. This is almost always a way of asserting our superiority.

In both the Clarks' and Wilson's studies there appears to be an unchallenged assumption of how identity evolves. Neither study questioned whether previous hypotheses concerning the influence of gender, age, class, area of residence and the attitudes of others were true. They were much more concerned to understand how the children placed themselves within the socially defined categories.

Barbara Tizard and Ann Phoenix (1993) had a different agenda when they studied fifty-eight adolescents of mixed parentage. Their study compared the responses of white children, Black children with two Black parents and children of mixed parentage. They still wanted to discover how the children viewed their racial identity within certain racial categories but were also interested in developing a greater understanding of the impact of gender and social class on such an identity. Their theoretical base appears to be a social psychological one which takes into account not only societal structures but also the attitudes prevalent within the society and therefore influential in the lives of the respondents.

Wayne Richards' (1995) youth work experience provided him with access to a group of young people who were given the freedom to discuss their understanding of their racial(ised) identity without being confined to the descriptions assigned to them by others. Richards found that his respondents challenged the Eriksonian view (discussed further in chapter three) of stages of identity development as many of them made significant changes well after adolescence.

Les Back (1996) particularly wanted to move away from the type of ethnography which took the lives of those studied and provided a romanticised analysis which did

not reflect the actual experiences of the respondents. He felt that such research retained rigid, politicised descriptions of race and racism. Back wanted the young people he met not to be constrained by the outsider's views or categorisation but to be able to express themselves in their own style. He states that he wanted his work to be:

... read in an intellectual space that lies somewhere between the arrogance of a naïve empiricist orthodoxy and the types of theoretical escapism that result in little more than a reconfigured form of critical distance (1996:6).

Back achieved this by quoting the respondents at length. Although he provides his own perspective in his analysis, this style also allows the reader to challenge Back's viewpoint and to make his or her own interpretation of the daily lives of the young people involved.

My own research has a similar intention. While my personal experience often matched that of the respondents, I determined not to impose solely my own view or my interpretation of their lives. I wanted the respondents to have an opportunity to speak for themselves in a world (particularly in an academic one) which often wants to speak on behalf of others as though they are too unsophisticated to interpret their own experiences.

Relationship between racism and racial(ised) identities

The literature on race and identity formation indicates a view that children begin to form their racial(ised) identities at an early age. Porter (1971) believes that racial awareness is apparent between the ages of 3 and 5 years but suggests that children of mixed parentage may find that this process takes a little longer. According to more recent research it appears that, 'Estimating the point at which this milestone

[becoming aware of their racial(ised) identity] might occur for biracial⁶ children is difficult ... Nevertheless, somewhere between the ages of 3 and 4, these children develop race awareness' (Deborah J Johnson in Root, 1992:40).

In Wilson's study of fifty-one children aged between six and nine years, photographs were used by the interviewer in order to ascertain which picture the interviewee child most identified with, which children they would invite to a party, who 'resembled their three best friends' and then to group the photographs "according to their 'race'". Wilson states that she had used photographs rather than dolls, as used by the Clarks, because she wanted 'to show variations in skin tone, hair and facial features as accurately as possible' (Wilson, 1987:60). She showed pictures which she believed would be familiar to the children. Wilson tested children's view of themselves as well as how they thought others viewed them. The study demonstrated that children of mixed parentage do not have to experience the confusion and 'in-betweenness' previously believed to be the only possible option for such children.

Wilson, in a section entitled 'Finding and Keeping a Racial Identity' suggests that, 'all children and adults are faced with a range of categories and criteria from which they must construct a viable racial identity' (Wilson, *ibid.*:34, my emphasis). She seems to suggest that while there is an imposed racial(ised) identity this remains negotiable. There is no mention of the 'invisibility' of white people in British society and her comments naively suggest that *all* people are aware of race. The subject of 'whiteness' and its currency is explored in chapter three.

⁶ A problematic term used mainly in the United States to describe people of mixed parentage

The most important factor for Wilson in the development of a coherent identity is the extent to which the mothers were explicit in their understanding of the extent of potential racism on the children. She is critical of mothers who deny that their child will experience racism and sees that as an indicator that the child will experience identity conflict. This appeared to put an enormous pressure on mothers to provide their children with a sense of coherence. The study did not look at the children's own experiences of racism and how it impacted on their identity but instead focused on the experiences of the mothers who were harassed by strangers and neighbours. There is passing mention that, 'Racial insults are often the first lesson in racial labelling that a child in a multiracial area receives; name-calling defines sharply who is who in the ethnic pecking order' (Wilson, *ibid.*:179) but no explanation of how the children experienced this name-calling. Wilson seems to suggest that children gain knowledge through this social education which she sanitises by calling it 'white institutional bias' (Wilson, *ibid.*:187). Such knowledge then allows them to make the choices of which identity to emphasise.

Tizard and Phoenix are equally lacking in their explanation of how racial(ised) identities develop. They state that their areas of research are how the respondents name themselves in terms of their racial(ised) identity, whether they experience confusion, how important this identity is to them and where they think their affinities lie. The authors found that the majority of respondents feel their mixed heritage is an advantage and that they are able to negotiate the hurdles placed in front of them. There is a useful section in their book entitled, 'Dealing with racism' which describes their respondents' experiences of racism. It also considers the parental responses to the incidents and how they discuss race issues in the family. However, while there are

insights into the strategies used by the children, there are no comments about the impact of racism and how it has influenced the racial(ised) identities of the children involved. This is clearly due to the age group of the respondents. I would suggest that it is only after the period of adolescence that people can understand the consequences of their childhood experiences and that if they had asked teenagers what were the *effects* of racist experiences, they would not have had enough 'life experience' to make an adequate assessment. Tizard and Phoenix were more concerned to identify what influence parents had on their children's identities rather than other factors.

Both studies seem to measure coherence of racial(ised) identity by the self-description used by the respondents, that is, rather than measuring the respondents' actual coherence (not an easy task), they rely on a proxy, and this is especially evident in the Tizard and Phoenix study. The authors seemed pleased to find that less than half of their sample of children of mixed parentage saw themselves as 'black' and that over half the children would have described themselves as mixed, brown or coloured. They state that 'we believe it is an advantage for young people to feel positive about their mixed parentage. It is, however, less obvious that it is an advantage for them to have a black identity' (Tizard and Phoenix, 1993:163). I do not concur with the view that naming oneself as 'Black' is an indicator of identity coherence; 'naming' and 'regarding' oneself as Black are not necessarily the same thing. In my own research there were a large number of self-descriptions used but many of the respondents would also, in what they considered appropriate settings, call themselves Black or accept that they would be seen as such. Again this may be a result of studying older age groups but it is also because my own agenda was not so rigid.

It is important to understand that Tizard and Phoenix had a very specific agenda for this part of their research. They were funded by the Department of Health who wanted to influence the controversial debate concerning transracial adoption. The then Conservative government were fiercely opposed to what they considered 'politically correct' policies of 'same-race' adoptions and wanted to prove that such procedures were misguided. Throughout the study there is considerable mention of 'transracial adoption' and this seems to be the overriding factor in the motivation for the research.

Methodology

Both projects had what many would consider small data samples. In itself this is not necessarily problematic as small samples can provide an accurate reflection of the whole group being studied (Bertaux, 1981). Wilson reconstructed much of the Clarks' research but also ensured that male and female subjects were shown in the photographs and that there was a wide variation in skin tone and hair texture. By not imposing the two categories of 'black' and 'white' as descriptors of race she allowed more flexibility for the respondents. She asked similar questions but also interviewed mothers. The sample was taken from contacts made via an organisation which aims to increase parents' racial awareness in order to encourage their children to have positive views of their own identities. The children all had one white parent and a parent of African or African-Caribbean origin. The children all lived with their own parent(s) and were the natural children of the family. The mothers were interviewed using semi-structured questionnaires which aimed to elicit the mothers' own perspectives on the issue of racial identity.

Tizard and Phoenix took their sample, which they intended to be representative of young people generally, from 'the school system' (Tizard and Phoenix, 1993:39) in what is now known as year 11. They wanted to interview equal numbers of boys and girls but found some difficulty obtaining permission from boys' schools. They also wanted to find respondents from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds and, like Wilson, wanted to interview parents. Unfortunately, because of difficulties with some of the schools, their sample became less than satisfactory with a majority of girls and respondents from middle-class families, with over half attending independent schools. They also experienced difficulty in gaining contact with the parent sample and so ended up with only a third of the parents they had intended. Unlike Wilson, they were able to speak to fathers as well as mothers. Wilson's sample was, to some extent, self-selecting but Tizard and Phoenix relied on teachers' perceptions of the suitability of children of mixed parentage.

Tizard and Phoenix designed questionnaires which consisted of open-ended questions and the interviews mainly took place in classrooms. The parent interviews were carried out in their homes. Most of the interviews were carried out by Black female interviewers and 22 per cent by white female interviewers.

Limitations

A major limitation in Wilson's study is that while her methods are an improvement on the Clark studies, when the children were shown the photographs the images were all of families with two parents present. Wilson states that, 'a fair proportion of the women were either separated from their child(ren)'s father or were single parents' (Wilson, 1987:63). I therefore question whether some children felt the photographs

were representative of their lives. Would their identification with some images rather than others have been influenced by their views of the families represented in the photographs rather than their actual self-image?

Another concern is that, although Wilson clearly states that the mothers could not be viewed as representative of all mothers of children of mixed-parentage, the study is confined to women from a particular 'racially aware' organisation and their friends. It would have been useful to have seen interviews of mothers who have not had the opportunity to discuss race issues at length and looked at whether their understanding of their children's heritage was different. I am concerned that, although mothers were questioned, fathers' views were not sought. This is, in part, because Wilson is convinced that the majority of children have their '*identity content* usually controlled by the mother' (Wilson, *ibid.*:59, Wilson's emphasis). Even accepting that some fathers would be absent, it would have been helpful in research on young children to have fathers' perspectives concerning their children's identities and their role in how such identities are formed.

Another omission in Wilson's research is that there is no mention of the racial or cultural background of the interviewer. While race or culture may not have a bearing on the results, it would have been helpful if such information was available in order for some analysis of the influence of the interviewer to be made. Comment was made that 'some of those who were chatty and open before the test became more and more defensive as it progressed' (Wilson, *ibid.*:88). I would suggest that a possible reason for this would be that there might be some suspicion that, what I presume was a white interviewer, was asking questions about the child's racial(ised) identity. It is also

possible that ‘before the test’ means in a group setting and that the children became uncomfortable when they were tested without the support of their peers or their mothers.

Tizard and Phoenix used both Black and white interviewers but I question their justification for using the white interviewers being that they could not find any people of mixed parentage to use for the task. I am concerned that some of the questions when posed by white interviewers may have caused anxiety for the respondents, especially those concerning experiences of racism. It may have been very difficult for interviewees to discuss discrimination with someone who, for them, may represent the perpetrators of such behaviour. Neither study seems to have taken into account the power dynamics present when adults interview children and how these can influence the answers given to questions. I will be discussing issues of power, bias and the racial background of interviewers in chapter four.

A further concern about the Tizard and Phoenix sample is that the children interviewed did not represent the majority of children of mixed parentage. The very ‘Britishness’ of independent schools would make it less likely that the children would have reported racist incidents to their teachers and even discussing the subject may have been viewed as inappropriate. While I would not wish to assert that people with privilege are not usually aware of the identity needs of their children, I would like to suggest that the parents of the majority middle-class sample would have a vested interest in maintaining a ‘white perspective’ in their children’s lives as most of their contacts and acquaintances would be white.

Most previous British research has focused on the accounts of children. Bagley and Young (1978 and 1984) chose to look at children aged 4 to 7 years; the first study was of children who had been adopted and the second was of those who lived with their natural parents. Benson (1981) researched the offspring of 'mixed race' families who ranged from a few months to 20 years. Wilson (1987) limited her study to children aged between 6 and 9 years. The Tizard and Phoenix (1993) project was unique in that no published research in this country had focused on teenage children and their work does provide valuable insights into children in their mid-teens. However, there were, in my mind, still limitations in looking at this particular age group. In concentrating on 15-16 year olds I believe they were looking at an age group which has concerns more likely to be found in most teenagers in the general population. Such issues may be whether they are tall/short/thin/beautiful enough, or listen to the 'right kind' of music to be accepted by their peer group. I would suggest that, except for a small number whose parents are politicised in their views on race, racial identity is only one amongst many competing priorities for this particular age group.

Several research projects undertaken mainly by 'biracial' scholars in America have indicated that from adolescence to adulthood, perceptions of identity change markedly, as can be seen in the following quotation,

Issues surrounding biraciality vary by developmental stage; 3-year-old biracial children may not yet be aware of their status, the 13-year-old may be in the midst of dealing with it, and the 30-year-old may be fully comfortable with it. (Cauce *et al* in Root, 1992:209)

While it is very important to study the way children view themselves, as this can give good indicators of the identities they might express in the future, I believe that adults have a different perspective on how those identities have been formed. A wide range of experiences will have influenced their views of themselves. Studying children in

their teens also does not take into account that identity, whether based on gender, class, ability, race, sexuality and other factors changes and develops throughout a person's lifetime. Identity is not fixed at a certain age. This view is supported by Kokumo Rocks:

It began at the age of fourteen. I began to question myself, who am I, black or white? ... As I grew older, I began to think again about my identity ... In my late twenties I began to study, read books that explained how I felt. They called it prejudice, discrimination, racism, alienation. (in Camper, 1994:327)

Another limitation in all previous studies, not just the two particularly mentioned, is that they looked at children of African/white or African-Caribbean/white backgrounds. Only Richards (1995) had a wider target group. He studied twelve young people, ten of whom had one white and one African-Caribbean parent. The other two respondents were of Iranian/white and African-Maltese/white origin. The American literature has a much wider span of groups, including many of Asian/white origin (Hall, Kich, Daniel and Valverde all in Root, 1992). Wilson states that 'Children of Asian/white marriages were ... excluded on the grounds that cultural and religious differences within many Asian/white families introduced extra factors into the issue of the children's identity. It could be argued that these children would potentially experience as much *cultural* as *racial* conflict in the formation of their identity' (Wilson, 1987:57, Wilson's emphasis). Such a view suggests to me that Wilson is denying that these children would experience racism (as I have defined it in the footnote on page 10). Cultural factors do not protect them from racism and, in some cases, may add to the discrimination they face. Tizard and Phoenix (1993:40) simply stated, 'Unfortunately, we did not have sufficient resources to add on other groups, such as young people of Asian origin, despite our interest in them'.

I accept that there may be smaller incidences of mixed relationships outside of certain ethnic groupings but that does not mean that there is no valid experience to uncover in people of other 'mixes'. There is no reason to believe that in more recent times people of Asian/white origin in Britain have not had similar experiences to those of African/white or African-Caribbean/white. The same experiences may well apply to those people of Chinese/South East Asian/white origin. Limited numbers of such offspring should not result in a denial of their experiences.

Present Study

My research will differ from previous studies in two main areas. It will firstly widen the field and will look at the experiences of people of African-Caribbean/white, African/white, Asian/white and South East Asian/white origin.

Secondly, it takes a more phenomenological approach⁷. Few studies look at the every day experiences of people of mixed parentage as expressed by respondents. Most past research has observed their responses to particular experiments. My research investigates and privileges the experiences of the adult mixed parentage population. I try not to impose my own expectations on the research and attempt to retain an open-minded attitude. I believe that my research, while not undermining the study of children's experiences, shows that adults can perhaps better describe the impact of society's views on their lives and their racial(ised) identities, especially the impact of discrimination.

⁷ While not adhering strictly to Husserl's (1977) suggested processes, I did attempt to gain knowledge from the lived experiences of the respondents rather than applying philosophical or social psychological arguments to their own interpretations. Clearly some comments confirmed the theorists' viewpoints but I tried not to assume that they would, and also looked for any new phenomena which would not have been expected.

Also, although relatively small, my sample covers a very wide range of experiences and backgrounds and is perhaps more representative of the many varied lives of people of mixed parentage. Too many studies of identity formation and development suggest it is a universal process. My study will not provide neat answers for those who want to know how to 'deal with the problem' but will hopefully show that there are many ways and means which people of mixed parentage use to achieve stability and contentment with their racial(ised) identities.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

identity -

distinct and recognizable nature of an individual which results from a unique combination of characteristics and qualities. In philosophy, identity is the sameness of a person, which may continue in spite of changes in bodily appearance, personality, intellectual abilities, memory, and so on. In psychology, identity refers to one's conception of oneself and sense of continuous being, particularly as an individual distinguishable from, but interacting with others.

Hutchinson Multimedia Encyclopedia, Helicon Publishing 1994

This chapter identifies the main theoretical standpoints concerning identity formation and development. The first part is a general one which concerns both personal and social identity formation. The second part is more specific and discusses the development of a racial(ised) identity.

Part One

‘How do I know who I am?’ is the fundamental question to be investigated in this chapter. The philosophical definition of identity posited at the beginning of this chapter, that ‘identity is the sameness of a person’ which cannot be changed by environment, has its origins in the seventeenth century. The concepts propounded by writers such as René Descartes in *Principles of Philosophy* (1644) contributed to the view of a person “as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose ‘centre’ consisted of an inner core ...” (Hall, 1992:275). The Enlightenment view was that innate ideas and concepts are the basis of human knowledge. Descartes believed that God had created two types of substance, thinking - the mind - and extended - the body. He argued that soul and

body were independent of each other and so external stimuli could not influence the essential core of a person. Individuals were believed to be born with a fixed identity which could not be changed by environmental or social factors and which remained with them, unaltered, throughout their lives. If we therefore ask the question, 'How do I know who I am?' the answer from these seventeenth century philosophers would be 'Because you are conscious of being able to think and reason. Who you are is a fact of life.'

But is mere consciousness and reason enough to answer our question? Empiricists, such as English philosopher John Locke in his work *Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Essay II, xxvii* (1690) challenged the rationalists' views that such knowledge can be acquired without experience. He also rejected Descartes' (1644) insistence that continuity of the soul or spirit was sufficient evidence of continuity of personhood. Locke defined a person as 'a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and different places' (1690:2.27.9). In other words, continuity of consciousness is an integral part of what Locke means by a person; such continuity allows us to develop a personal narrative through our memories. Again if asked the question, 'How do I know who I am?' Locke may answer, 'You discover who you are by being aware, through your memories, that you are the same individual who acted in a certain way at a certain time as the person you see in the mirror today.' Locke focused on memory as an indicator of personhood because he believed that there was the possibility of greater continuity in memory than in other empirical facts such as the physical body which changes over time. However, Locke fails to take into account the possibility of false, inaccurate or inaccessible memories, which calls into question the

use of memory as an accurate sign of personhood. It could be said that because memory is almost never precise, autobiography is no more accurate than biography. Indeed, autobiographies and biographies often present different but complementary pictures of the same person and we can never be sure which is the more accurate narrative. Hence there is often the necessity for other ways of confirming your identity which do not rely on self-perception (or only continuity of consciousness) but may require external observation and confirmation by a third party.

David Behan (1979) has re-interpreted Locke's (1690) work and suggests that Locke's notion of identity is not, as usually perceived, the mere continuity of consciousness but our present moral identification with our memories. Behan's interpretation states that we feel a concern and a responsibility for our past actions because we can identify with the person who carried out the particular behaviour. We appropriate these past memories as our own and this constitutes our personal identity. We can feel guilt, shame, pleasure, obligation, pride etc. in the present when we think about our past behaviour and others can hold us responsible for our actions. So in answer to our original question of 'How do I know who I am?', Behan might suggest that Locke would add, 'Not only do I remember my past, but I morally identify with it.'

Behan does not explain why we are able to feel guilt, shame etc. about the actions we remember performing. However, if he is correct in believing that Locke's continuity of memory is not just concerned with facts but with moral feelings and judgements about those facts, where does that morality come from? What informs those feelings? If the feelings that help us form our identity have a moral content, then we can only

answer this question by examining the relationship between the individual and the rest of society.

Immanuel Kant in *Foundations of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785) focuses on the moral element in his theory of personhood and provides us with insight into this relationship. While Locke (1690) viewed our morality as based on our rights and obligations under the law, which can change from one society to another, Kant believed that morality is universal, unequivocal and not subject to any exceptions; it is also the means of 'reconciling individuals in a society of strangers' (Scruton, 1996:112). Kant maintained that people are rational beings who have free will and who choose to act in accordance with moral (not just legal) duty. In other words when we make these choices we are using our powers of reason and we should be held responsible for our actions if we fail in this obligation.

While Kant concurs with Descartes' (1644) view that the ability to think at all is evidence of our existence, it is only one part of the picture. He also insists that an understanding of personhood necessitates a much greater awareness of the external world than Locke suggests. The universality of our moral personality ensures that we are aware of what we *share* with others rather than what *distinguishes* us from others. While Descartes 'shut the self in its inner prison' (Scruton, 1996:46), Kant insists that knowing ourselves comes from contact with others, the external world. However, Kant also believed that we cannot know ourselves completely; there is a part of ourselves which is knowable (phenomenal) and a part which is un-knowable (noumenal).

If we take Kant's argument that there is an inner me and an external, more social me, we need to ask how do they relate to each other? Are they two persons within us or are they interdependent aspects of the same person? Georg Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807, trans. 1910) suggests that rather than there being two distinct parts to our personhood, knowable and un-knowable, we have a more interactive consciousness which develops through self-knowledge. However, this self-knowledge is not achieved in isolation. Hegel believed that we can only become truly self-conscious as a collective achievement; there not only has to be a 'we' but we discover the 'we' through mutual recognition and affirmation. To Hegel, perhaps Kant's (1785) noumenal self is the 'I' while the phenomenal self is the 'we'. Hegel's viewpoint might be expressed as follows:

I am who I am only insofar as I am understood to be so by some other. The self that I am is nothing which exists in isolation of other self-conscious selves. The self is essentially social in its very construction (Scott-Kakures *et al*, 1993:334).

As twelve year old Frankie states in Carson McCullers' (1951:51) play, *The Member of the Wedding*, '... just now I realised something. The trouble with me is that for a long time I have been just an "I" person. All other people can say "we." ... All people belong to a "we" except me ... Not to belong to a "we" makes you too lonesome.' Frankie sees everyone around her as belonging to a group or society where they are supported and affirmed. She, on the other hand, feels there is no one who appears to her to share her physical appearance nor her vision for her life. She feels she can only truly understand herself if she can find a 'we' to which she can belong.

We also see a further move from the idea that personhood is fixed at birth. Hegel suggests that self-consciousness is not achieved overnight; there is a process of

change and development, 'each form of awareness signals and foreshadows some other, more complete, form of consciousness' (Scott-Kakures *et al*, *ibid.*:331).

The interdependence of the inner me and the social me is even more clearly observed in the work of social psychologist George Herbert Mead in *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (1934) It is not clear whether or not he rejected Hegel's (1807) separation of the inner and social me. What is apparent is that Mead was heavily influenced by Kant's (1785) theory of the two identifiable selves. However, he saw the inner and external selves of previous theorists as intertwined, as two ways of expressing the same personhood rather than two separate entities. Although we can be aware of seemingly separate selves when we have a dialogue in our minds, one subjective and one objective, the selves are images we develop from observing social interactions and which we then internalise. We understand Mead's 'real me' (which, in line with Kant's view, can never be completely knowable) by observing the behaviour of others and comparing it with our own actions and inner dialogues. The 'real me' has developed and comes to understand itself through observation of others and the 'social me' adapts its behaviour in relation to how it anticipates others will react. Mead's interpretation is helpful in understanding the impact of social processes on the expression of personhood and the fluidity of social identity, which will be discussed later, but seems to suggest that we can have little certainty or continuity in our sense of self.

So is it possible to have any certainty about ourselves or do we spend all our lives developing our identities but experiencing a sense of fragmentation? Denis-Constant Martin (1995), describes the work of Ricoeur (1990) which helps to answer this

question. Ricoeur claimed that selfhood (*ipse*), which is the product of the many identifications we make in community with others, evolves over time. Clearly Hegel (1807) and Mead (1934) would agree with this. However, he also discusses a static and unchanging sameness (*idem*) which is our sense of belonging to a group or society which holds the same or similar values, habits and/or behaviours although these preferences are also acquired over time. While there is less of Hegel's universality in this suggestion, it 'introduces in the concept of identity both the notion of continuity and that of change without making them contradictory' (Constant, *ibid.*:7). Ricoeur's formulation is helpful in that it does not deny adaptation or change but it does allow for some constancy which could be one constituent of that equivocal term 'coherence'.

The introduction of the 'social me' moves us from the question 'How do I know who I am?' to the more complex 'How do I let others know who I am? How do I express to the world who I am?' Such questions rely on a move away from 'fixedness' and 'sameness' of the inner self to the concept of both continuity and development which results in a more fluid and flexible social identity. However, this move does not do away with the concept of personal identity; there is rather a symbiotic relationship between the two selves. It broadens the discussion to include an understanding of how our awareness of our selfhood is expressed in our dealings with society.

Identity formation as 'unfinished business'

Psychologists such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) and Erik Erikson (1968), follow the Meadian tradition that people are influenced by society but appear less concerned with how individuals contribute to changes in society. There is less

focus on the 'real me' than on the 'social me'. As with Mead (1934), Berger and Luckmann view development of a sense of self as being through the internalising of the observed world around us. We respond to others according to our experiences and perceptions of the world. Berger and Luckmann bring in an embryonic concept of multiple expressions of who we are. Circumstances can change how we view ourselves at any particular time and we can recall, by remembering our past interactions, our different realities. The views we have of ourselves are not distinct and therefore confusing; there is an element of fusion between each experience or event which ensures a sense of cohesion or unity within the social self rather than fragmentation. This fusion comes as a result of the narration of our experiences.

Mead (ibid.) viewed the development of both the real and social me as mutually interactive and dependent on a growing understanding of the world. He seems to have identified loose chronological phases viz. infancy, childhood and adulthood. Erikson (1968), however, saw much clearer and distinct stages in the development of identity with the process normally being completed at the end of adolescence. In Erikson's theories there were still some aspects of Meadian thought. He believed that there was some mutuality between our own identity development¹ and that of others around us; as we change so do those with whom we come into contact. It is these contacts with others, which can be both positive and negative, which assist us in achieving 'coherence'. Erikson identified eight stages of development, beginning at birth and ending in old age. Progress is determined by the success or failure of each previous

¹ As a Freudian psychologist, Erikson saw this particular element of identity as both ego identity and the avoidance of role confusion within society. He appears to collapse Mead's 'real me' and 'social me' into one identity.

stage. In terms of both personal and social identity development, Erikson believed that the crucial time was stage five, Identity vs. Identity Confusion, which took place during adolescence (from puberty until about eighteen or twenty years). According to Erikson, successful passage through this stage results in 'fidelity', that is, a sense of belonging in society and being able to make a contribution. Achieving fidelity is the end of identity development and the remaining stages are concerned more with how to develop the contribution we make to society.

I take issue with Erikson's view as I would suggest that, although adolescence can be a time of great upheaval and change, it does not necessarily herald the end of either personal or social identity development. In my opinion we need to ask whether the many experiences in adulthood which influence our understanding of ourselves, including the impact we feel we have on others, affect how we choose to express particular aspects of our 'selfhood'.

George Kitihara Kich (in Root, 1992) provides some insight into this question. He is speaking specifically about people of mixed parentage and suggests that while individuals who are 'biracial' develop their sense of security in their both their personal and social identity through many family, educational and social processes, this understanding is not complete until adulthood. There are several research projects which have indicated that from adolescence to adulthood, perceptions of social identity change markedly. Carla Bradshaw (in Root, 1992:84, my emphasis) believes the teenage years are when 'awareness about their differentness *begins* to dawn' because children's contact with others who influence their lives increases. Cauce *et al* (in Root, *ibid.*:209) state, 'Issues surrounding biraciality vary by developmental stage;

3-year-old biracial children may not yet be aware of their status, the 13-year-old may be in the midst of dealing with it, and the 30-year-old may be fully comfortable with it' and Christine C Iijima Hall (in Root, *ibid.*:252) undertook her own studies on respondents over the age of eighteen "in an attempt to eliminate adolescent 'identity crisis' (Erikson, 1968) as a factor in their responses".

With the interaction between the 'real me' and the 'social me' being so closely bound, it seems impossible to separate the two aspects of personhood definitively. Our 'sense of self' clearly changes according to our response to our encounters with others (this selfhood is far more 'knowable' than Kant's 'noumenal self'). There is also not as much internal unity as we might be led to believe. While, as Sampson (1993:17) points out, many believe that 'each individual must become a coherent, integrated, singular entity whose clear-cut boundaries define its limits and separate it from other similarly bounded entities', many circumstances throughout our lives can force us to question the 'real me' or to see it as having more components than we think. We may experience turmoil when facing serious illness or the death of a loved one; we may not feel or act as we expected and so our sense of who we are may be altered either temporarily or permanently². While some may say that such upheaval causes 'identity crisis', it may be that such uncertainty could, after the initial shock has subsided, be liberating and may allow an opportunity for a new and different self-awareness. Likewise there are multiple versions of the social me which depend on many widely

² We often hear people say, 'I didn't think I was the type of person who ...' when disaster strikes

varying circumstances and experiences. It is perhaps not possible to develop Erikson's (1968) sense of coherence and that all we can hope for is to 'feel comfortable' with ourselves at certain times while at the same time being aware that the level of comfort, and so our self-perception, may change depending on a variety of circumstances.

'Unfinished' and multiple identities

A further application of this view of developing identities is that people are able to establish and express socially several different aspects of their personal identity and that this occurs in response to a variety of societal influences. All of us are more than just our gender, class, ethnicity or sexuality but we learn to express different aspects of ourselves as are relevant in particular circumstances. In this section, while there is still acknowledgement that our personal identity may influence how we express ourselves and be influenced by the responses of others, the main focus is on the multiplicity of social identities we adopt. These identities are not discrete and separate; they are rather intertwined and interdependent.

Saul Feldman (1979:401) draws on the work of McCall and Simmons (1969) to explain his view of identities. He says:

Individuals have multiple and often unrelated identities. At the same time, a person may have an occupational identity, religious identity, familial identity, deviant identity etc. ... Sometimes these identities remain separate, sometimes they conflict with other identities, and sometimes they may complement each other.

Robert Broadhead (1980) suggests that people reveal some areas of their identities more than others depending on the situation. He states that individuals have to learn to articulate their identity in such a way as to be acceptable to others in particular

situations; Robin Cohen (1994:205) describes this as ‘situational identity’. Despite this multiplicity of expressions of identity, Broadhead seems to concur with Ricoeur’s (1990) view of sameness and selfhood when he suggests that people are able to manage this situation and be ‘whole’ in their approach to life, “Put simply, individuals cannot ‘do’ everything at once, even though, symbolically, they can ‘be’ everything at once.” (1980:179).

A knowledge of ‘nonequilibrium physics’ leads Edward Sampson (1985) to believe that such a theory can be transferred to an understanding of multiple identities. He feels that the insistence by some psychologists (like Erikson, 1968) that there has to be equilibrium (i.e. balance and symmetry) and order between the ‘real’ and the ‘social’ in personal identity has resulted in a restrictive and inflexible approach to an issue which has many more possibilities. Sampson states:

This ... introduces us to a new kind of entity: personhood-as-process, open-ended and dwelling always at the edge, far from equilibrium. We encounter a decentralized, multifaceted ensemble whose coherence³ as a being is sustained only by virtue of its continuous becoming. (1985:1206)

Sampson suggests that individuals, and the groups to which they feel they belong, are continually in the process of becoming, both personally and socially (although the distinction between the two is increasingly blurred), rather than being established from birth.

Campt (1993) suggests that, rather than using the term ‘multiple identities’, which can indicate separate identities, the term ‘textured identities’ is more helpful as it speaks

³ Sampson’s use of ‘coherence’ is different from that of Erikson. He suggests that coherence does not necessarily require integration and unity but can exist when there is a process of continuous evolution.

of continuity. She sees texture as one might the layering of oil paint on a canvas, each layer adding detail and depth to the final picture. The layers are individually applied but develop and improve the depth and overall impact of the picture. Camp (1993:117) describes such identity thus:

‘Texture’ connotes multiplicity and plurality without fragmentation. It is not a static construction but shifts and changes contingently in relation to the various subject-positions and locations which these [Afro-German] women occupy in their social interactions ... Moreover, the notion of ‘textured identity’ provides a sense of continuity within one’s sense of self/identity often lacking in the notion of ‘multiple selves’ or identities.

Camp’s stance clearly includes both personal and social identity which constantly interact with each other in a positive and productive way.

Having looked at the general theories of personal and social identity we move onto a discussion about the development of a specifically racial(ised) identity – the expression of a socially imposed identity which often impacts on the personal identity of those involved⁴. This inevitably includes consideration of the topics of whiteness and Blackness.

Part Two: Racial(ised)⁵ identity

The greater focus on the ‘social me’ in this section does not discount the presence of a ‘real me’. However, as racial categories are social constructions with a clear hierarchy of power attached to them, and social practices entrench people into particular racial(ised) identities, there can be no doubt that such identities emphasise the ‘social me’. As Natasha Levinson (1997) states, ‘Confronted by the daily reminders that one

⁴ This does not imply a move away from a notion of balance between the ‘real me’ and the ‘social me’ but suggests that the social me and the real me have prominence at different times.

⁵ An explanation of my use of this term can be found in the footnote on page 5.

is marked out as a particular kind of person, social identities do consolidate ...'. The proposition that development of the 'social me' depends on mutual interaction, on dialogue between individuals, is rarely examined when applied to racial(ised) groups. There is undoubtedly little equality evident between white groups and Black groups in Western society's social structures. Thus 'the Other' can be sentenced to a lifetime of being used by the dominant group to fulfil its own sense of self⁶ while at the same time being constrained by the responses of the dominant group to its *own* (i.e. the Other's) selfhood⁷. Thus we see a move away from any form of dialogue to a self-centred monologue.

This second part of the chapter is divided into a further two sections. We will first of all investigate the 'taken-for-granted'⁸ aspects of racial(ised) identity illustrating this through two very different media presentations of the topic. Secondly we will look at how racial(ised) identities are developed. As people of mixed parentage often feel pressured to 'choose one category' when faced with describing their 'ethnic origins' to officials, we will look at how this impacts on the racial(ised) identity of people of mixed parentage and how such tension is resolved.

⁶ See Toni Morrison's (1992) discussion of the 'serviceable Other' in the case of representation of Black people in literature.

⁷ As Hall (in Donald and Rattansi, 1992:255) states: 'Racism ... constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness.'

⁸ The term 'taken-for-granted' is used to suggest that there is 'received wisdom' about both Black people and white people and their respective places in society. There are unchallenged assumptions in society which most white people are more than happy to leave uncontested.

Section One: Taken-for-granted racial(ised) and cultural identity

If we accept that social identity is not fixed, that it is constructed, ever changing and developing and that it has many forms of expression, how does an individual begin to develop a specifically racial(ised) identity? The process is clearly similar in all aspects of identity formation whether gendered, class-based, religious, cultural or racial. The 'social me' which comes to understand itself in reference to others is, however, made aware of the significance of skin colour when differentiation based on that specific category is of importance to the wider society (Frankenberg, 1993).

The Hegelian/Meadian suggestion that our identity is, in part, influenced by our observation of and interaction with others is well illustrated in an episode of the cult American comedy programme, *3rd Rock from the Sun*. The main characters are aliens in human form (and, as might be expected, white), 'These aliens arrive in our world completely innocent, while equipped with superior intelligence to analyze every experience. This screwy vantage point of an innocent, a blank slate, seeing everything for the first time is the comic framework from which to satire (*sic*) the human condition and American society, to look at all of the injustices and absurdities and humorously point them out to us.' (NBC Website, 1998) In the first scene quoted here, Dick, the alien High Commander who in human form is 'the Father', is speaking to Tommy, his 'son'. (All quotes from 'Dick Like Me'⁹, show number 115, aired in America 23rd April, 1996):

⁹ 'Dick Like Me' is a play on the title of John Howard Griffin's autobiographical book, 'Black Like Me' (1964)

DICK:	Tommy, I talked to your teacher, Mr Randall. He said that you're not fitting in.
TOMMY:	Of course I'm not fitting in. To fit in you have to be something.
DICK:	Well, we're something, we're human beings. Why, has anyone said differently?
TOMMY:	No, no it's ... everybody at school's something extra, you know. They're African-American or Italian-American, Asian-American, Audio-visual-American. (<i>audience laugh</i>)
DICK:	We're human American, that should be enough.
TOMMY:	Dick, it's part of my mission as an adolescent to rebel against my upbringing and if you don't tell me what we are than I can't do my job. (<i>audience laugh</i>) Frankly, I can't work like this.
DICK:	All right. If we have to be part of some group, we will be. I'll do some research, I'll ask around, I'll find out what the best thing to be is and by the end of the week, we'll be that.
TOMMY:	What should I be till then?
DICK:	We're carbon-based life form, just tell everyone we're Carbo-Americans. (<i>audience laugh</i>)

Tommy clearly feels a need to belong, to understand who he is in relation to others, to find a place among those from whom he can gain recognition and affirmation, the Hegelian 'we'. He also observes around him that just being white means to have no 'otherness' or specialness. Unlike those who define 'the Other' as *lacking* what the dominant group has, Tommy deduces from his observations that individuals need to have an *extra* dimension to their social identity in order to belong¹⁰. He is unaware that socially constructed groupings have had to be invented in order for the Other to develop a sense of belonging, that demarcation of particular people into 'kinds of people' is entrenched by social practices (Levinson, 1997). Naively, Tommy suggests

¹⁰ This is in contrast to popular opinion in some quarters that 'hyphenated Americans' are not real Americans (Theodore Roosevelt Speech in New York 12 Oct 1915, quote taken from The Hutchinson Multimedia Encyclopedia, 1997)

that not being 'the norm' is more desirable, that there is status in being the Other. He is oblivious to the power assumed by the dominant group and to the serviceability imposed on the Other (Morrison, 1992, Sampson, 1993).

A further irony is that there can be a choice of identities. Dick is going to investigate which groups they can choose from. Even though he states, 'I'll find out what the best thing to be is and by the end of the week, we'll be that', Dick, like Tommy, is unaware of the power and hierarchy inherent in certain identifications. As 'the family' look at various ethnic groups, they comically discount certain groups based on nothing more than factors such as their national flag. As the aliens are white, it is safe to assume that their final choice would be a white group.

In the next scene Dick, who works as a physics lecturer, is with his white anthropologist colleague, Dr Mary Albright, and their secretary, Nina, who is African-American and has arrived wearing a traditional African head-dress. Dick questions why she is wearing it and Nina explains that it's a symbol of her heritage. She goes on to point out:

NINA:	In case you haven't noticed, I'm black ...
DICK:	<i>(Pretending)</i> Well, of course I noticed ... and Dr Albright, you are?
DR ALBRIGHT:	Could I be any whiter? <i>(audience laugh)</i> <i>Dick looks at them both puzzled.</i>
DR ALBRIGHT:	What?
DICK:	I'm sorry, all you people look alike to me.
DR ALBRIGHT:	<i>(Shocked)</i> Excuse me? <i>(audience laugh)</i>
DICK:	I just don't see why people have to divide up into these arbitrary subsets, I mean, skin colour, <i>(mocking)</i> please ... <i>(Pompously)</i> You may see colour ... but I see people.

DR ALBRIGHT: *(Sarcastically to Nina)* Aren't we fortunate to have someone so enlightened? *(To Dick)* Oh pious one, show us the way. *(audience laugh)*

DICK: This verges on sarcasm

NINA: You know, my heritage happens to be very important to me.

DR ALBRIGHT: As it should be. I'm Irish and I'm very proud of that and *(to Dick)* you're ... what?

DICK: Me? *(Hesitating)* I ... I ... I'm ... er ... one of those ... er ... you know, one of the really good ones. *(audience laugh)* You're this big anthropologist, you tell me, what am I?

DR ALBRIGHT: Certifiable.

DICK: *(Feigning understanding)* Yes, that's what I am, certifiable. Certifiable and damned proud of it as my father was before me and his father before him and his father before him. Certifiable. Of course, we no longer practise ...

The above scene demonstrates that if aliens appeared on earth, assuming they did not have the same 'racial' divisions in their own society, they would see the foolishness of categorising people by skin colour. Dick does not take-for-granted any meanings attached to skin colour. He does not see any value in such a category. Nina's attire has more worth as it is an outward expression of heritage and is seen to assist the portrayal of a specific self-image. It is interesting to note that Dr Albright does not attempt a similar expression of her Irish identity. She is a member of the dominant group which has provided her with a well developed sense of selfhood. She is not required to express any cultural¹¹ affinity to enhance her social status; her Irish-ness is

¹¹ Culture is used here to denote a system of shared beliefs, language, customs, rituals and traditions viewed as belonging to particular people groups or societies. '... culture provides people with various narrative formulations which they grow up learning and employ to frame their experiences and understanding' (Sampson, 1993:123).

only relevant when she needs to add weight to her argument with her highly intelligent but socially inept colleague.

In the final scene quoted, Tommy is wearing a suit and sunglasses, playing guitar and singing a blues song about the struggles of being an alien on earth. Harry, Dick's 'younger brother', is in the room. Dick comes in to complain about the music:

DICK:	Tommy, what are you doing?
TOMMY:	Well, I'm black now. I'm black ... and I've got the blues.
DICK:	You can't be black. Nina is black ... and I get the impression from her that they have strict rules about these things.
	<i>Tommy resumes singing to the complaints of Dick. Mrs Dubcek, their neighbour arrives to complain about the noise.</i>
MRS DUBCEK:	Who died and made you T-Bone Walker?
DICK:	Mrs Dubcek, as long as you are up here ... What ethnic group do you come from?
MRS DUBCEK:	Well, I'm a little Czech, a little Romanian, I'm your basic Slavic mutt, like my third husband. <i>(Audience laugh)</i>
DICK:	What were your first two?
MRS DUBCEK:	The first was Irish and the second was er ... one of your people.
	<i>Dick, Harry and Tommy look at each other excitedly. (Audience laugh)</i>
DICK:	Our people?
MRS DUBCEK:	Yeah, you know, Jewish.
DICK, HARRY AND TOMMY:	<i>Jewish ... (Audience laugh)</i>
DICK:	What tipped you off?
MRS DUBCEK:	Well, with your name, it's pretty obvious.
DICK:	Our name?
MRS DUBCEK:	Solomon!
DICK:	Oh you wonderful, wonderful woman <i>(kisses Mrs Dubcek)</i> . Thank you so much.
	<i>Mrs Dubcek leaves in a hurry.</i>

TOMMY:	This means I'm still a minority and chicks dig minorities.
DICK:	Oh, who knew that Solomon was a Jewish name when we took it off the side of that truck?
HARRY:	Go figure. We could have been the Wal-Mart's. (<i>audience laugh</i>)
DICK:	(<i>Crying</i>) We're Jewish ... I don't know what to say ...
HARRY:	Mazel tov! (<i>audience laugh</i>) I'm sorry, it just popped out.
	<i>Evening on the roof with Harry, Tommy and Sally (Dick's 'sister')</i>
DICK:	Isn't it great to know who we are? I finally feel like I belong in this big melting pot they call Earth.

The above scene marks the family's 'enlightenment' and we see that they view cultural and 'religious' affiliation as more rational than biological markers. While most modern academics agree that racial(ised) identity is not fixed, there are still suggestions that culture is so bound within history and geography, that a person's cultural identity is less flexible than his/her racial(ised) identity¹². Peter Caws (in Goldberg, 1994) suggests that culture is inherited from family and community in such a way that, for many, it is not negotiable. Ossie Stuart (1992:185), on the other hand, suggests that cultural identities are fluid and variable depending on circumstance. He believes this to be especially true for Britain's Black population.. Stuart says that cultural symbols adopted by Black people, 'are unfixed and still evolving but they combine to reconstruct a collective history, or identity, from the fractured histories of the African or Asian diasporas (Gilroy, 1987)'. *3rd Rock from the Sun* suggests that culture is, in fact, a package that can be acquired; the adoption of particular cultural identities does not even have to bear any resemblance to our own histories or

experiences. The family's newly acquired Jewishness is certainly not part of their heritage nor does it have to have any emotional meaning for them. They have been ascribed a cultural identity by virtue of their randomly-chosen name even though they are not aware of what social acts are expected by those who express such an identity. However, despite the falseness of the chosen descriptor, it gives them a sense of belonging, at least temporarily. This may seem far-fetched but there are examples of people picking and choosing symbols of particular ethnic groups in order to promote an image which suggests an adherence to a particular lifestyle or philosophical outlook¹³. bell hooks (1992:14) criticises 'contemporary commodification of black culture by whites [which] in no way challenges white supremacy when it takes the form of making blackness the "spice that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture."'

A second, more serious and distressing encounter with the 'taken for granted' approach to racial(ised) identity is seen in *The Color of Fear*, an exceptional film written and directed by Chinese-American, Lee Mun Wah. Eight men of various ethnic origins - 2 white American, 2 African-American, 2 Hispanic and 2 Chinese-American discuss their experiences of living in the United States. A powerful discussion takes place and I make no apology for quoting at length. In the first extract the men are discussing their own ethnicity and what it means to be American:

¹² Clearly there is more symbolic meaning attached to cultural identity: it might even be asked whether racial(ised) identity is but one part of a greater social identity made up of culture, gender, age etc.

¹³ Madonna's recent re-invention of herself as a more spiritual and transcendental being is marked by the wearing of bindis and clothes reminiscent of shalwar kameez. Such symbols have no connection with her Italian ancestry but, like her previous fascination with African-American culture, are designed to demonstrate her 'radical chic' (hooks, 1992:157)

DAVID CHRISTENSEN (DC), (*white*): I grew up in this area, right alongside the native Americans and some of them to this day are my dearest friends and I ... I like their cultures, yes. And I even seek after artefacts from ... from their history that ... er ... there's no struggle or strife. We don't *cause* it.

LEE MUN WAH (LMW), (*Chinese-American*): In Chinese, you know, the word American really means white to us.

DC: Do you think that we don't get excited as ... as Americans when you say you are something other than just American?

ROBERTO ALMANZAN, (*Hispanic*): You know, what is presented to *me* as an American does not *look* like me, does not *think* like me, does not *smell* like me, does not *cry* like me, does not *play* like me. So for me to say that ... for me to use that as my primary identification, for me, it means to deny ... all, nearly all of me.

DC: For years I've said, 'Why do these guys have such a *problem* being a color? Why can't they just be individuals and go out and make a place for themselves?' And ... and I hear you saying that we *whites* don't allow that, that we keep you down. Why aren't we just humans, I mean, why aren't we just brothers?

VICTOR LEWIS (VL), (*African-American*): I'd like to ... say one more thing that's hard about talking about racism and that is that er ... you know, people of color are spilling their guts and, er, doing education, er, to white people, 'Let me explain to you how you got *this* wrong, let me explain to you how you got *that* wrong, let me explain ...' And then, we get cross-examined and told, 'Maybe your problem is ba, ba, ba, ba, ba ...' And it's always, you know, racism gets looked at as a person of color's problem and it's *not*! Er, racism is essentially a white problem and there's a way in which American and white and human become synonyms.

The 'Why can't we just treat each other as human beings?' ... for me, when I hear it from a white person, means 'Why can't we all just pretend to be white people? I'll pretend you're a white person and then you can pretend to be white (*other participants laugh*). Why don't you eat what I eat, why don't you drink what I drink, why don't you think like I think, why don't you (*shouts*) *feel* like I feel?' ***¹⁴damn it, I'm so sick and ***damn tired of hearing about that. *I'm sick of that*. That's what it means to be human beings to me, that's what it means to be white, that's what it means to be American. 'Why don't you come the hell over here?' That's what I hear every ***damn day and you *know* that I can't come over there, you *know* that this skin and that this hair and the way that I talk and what I think and I feel will *never, ever* get included because I'm unpalatable to this ***damn nation, I'm unpalatable. You cannot swallow me, you cannot taste me, you cannot ... because you don't want to, you think you can survive without me but you can't, man. (*exhausted with distress*)

¹⁴ *** symbolise censored words or part words in the broadcast. They do not represent an affront to my own sensibilities.

(*Calmer*) You think ... and you think that, 'Hey, it'll all be fine when we just treat each other like ... human beings.' And what that says to me is, 'Don't be yourself, be like me. Keep me comfortable, connect when I'm ready to connect, come out to my place. Or maybe I'll come down and get some artefacts from your place.' Uh-uh, that is bull****. (*long pause*) And when you say that your ethnicity is American, there *is* no American ethnicity. You had to throw away your ethnicity to become American. That's what it means. (*pause*) That's what it means. You give up who you are to become American. And you can pretend that it's OK because you're white. When *we* give up who *we* are to become American, we know that we're dying from it. You're dying from it too but you don't know it necessarily. 'Get ethnic', you know. (*pause*) You know, I'm not going to trust you until you are as willing to be changed and affected by *my* experience and transformed by *my* experience as I am every day by yours.

Second clip:

VL: What I see from white people generally, they don't talk about themselves as white people. They talk about themselves as human beings, as if it means the same thing. Now, what I want to know is, what it means to be white.

DC: I never consider myself as you do, a part of an ethnic group. I think that's what you're looking for and you're not going to find that among us because we don't look at ourselves as an ethnic group.

VL: Do you know that that means something?

DC: I don't know what it means, I mean ...

VL (*interrupting*): I'm telling you that that means something ...

DC (*interrupting*): I'm trying to answer your question, Victor, and as you were asking that question, I'm saying, 'Well, gosh, I never considered myself part ... of a white group.'

VL: I just wonder, doesn't it seem kind of deep to you that you don't have an answer to that question? That, that, th... you have no ... do you have any notion that, that the fact that you have no answer to that could actually be a source of meaning, experience or knowledge?

DC: The opposite is how I feel about you, Victor, that you have no comprehension that the world is open to you. You think that the white man is a block and a dam to your progress and he's not. I think that *you* put up that dam and that block yourself in your regard to the white man.

UNNAMED AFRICAN-AMERICAN (*to VL*): I think that's one of the major

problems with racism. I think he [DC] did answer the question. As a white man, he doesn't *have* to think about his position in life, his place in the world. The history books tell him, as they are written, that this world is his.

VL (*to DC*): I need to respond to your thing that, you know, that I create my, my own racial predicament by *my* thinking and *my* attitudes ...

DC: You, you block your progress ...

VL: I block my own progress ... ?

DC: ... by allowing your attitude to the white man to limit you.

VL: I think what it means to be white, in part, is that, er, you have the privilege of blaming people of color for their own victimisation under white supremacy. I've heard you say that to me, (*indicating around the room*) I've heard you say that to him, I've heard you say that to him, I've heard you say it to him, I've heard you say it to er every person of color in the room who challenged your perception of yourself in the world. That is part of what it means to be white.

DC: Maybe that's part of the answer, that we feel that the field is wide open and each man can stand on his own ...

VL: No, no. (*Shouting*) North America was a red continent. South America was a red continent. You are (*shouting louder*) *not* standing on your own ground; you are standing on red ground ... (*pause*) (*quieter*) and that's what it means to be white - to say that you're standing on your own ground, and standing on somebody else's, and then mystify the whole process so it seems that you're not doing that.

Third clip:

VL: It's like one of those parking garages with the spikes coming up. You know, *you* live in the world where, when you drive your car past, the spikes lay down and *I* live in a world and ... and the men of color here live in a world where when we come up to the spikes, man, they're facing right at us.

DC: The thought comes to me, Victor, you're going in the wrong direction. Why don't *you*, with *your* people look for something within yourselves that can make you feel equal to us? Because what I hear is, you are not equal and I do not feel that.

LMW: So what's keeping you from *believing* that that's happening to Victor? (*pause*) Just believing, not to know *why* that's happening to him. What's keeping you from *believing* that that's happening ... ?

DC: (*interrupting*) ... because it seems like such a harsh life. And I just don't want to believe ... I ... I would assume, Victor, that your life is really that hard, difficult and ... and unpleasant.

LMW: What would it mean David, then, if the life really *was* that harsh? What would that mean in *your* life. If it really *was* that ...

DC: (*interrupting*) ... but that would be a travesty of life. You have here something that shouldn't exist.

LMW: And so what if it does? (*pause*) What if the world were not as you thought, that it actually is happening to lots of human beings on this earth. What if it actually were, and you didn't know about it? What would that mean to you?

DC: (*distressed*) Oh, that's very saddening ... you don't want to believe that man can be so (*more distress*) cruel to his ... to him ... to himself or his own kind ... (*pause*) I do not want to accept that it has to be that way or ... maybe it is and it *must* be because you (*to VL*) express it, and the others in the group express that it is ...

VL: From ... from here, I can work with you.

These extracts show very clearly and painfully how particular racial(ised) identities are firmly fixed in the imaginations of those who live in societies where race is a category with attributes which carry status and power. The taken-for-granted issue is that Black people are responsible for their own lack of power and that they should emulate white people if they want to extricate themselves from their prisons of under-achievement and poverty. Despite the fact that whiteness in Western society marks an individual as a member of the dominant society, with access to many privileges, it is evident from the film that the white group members are unaware that their skin colour has any value. They express a 'social me' in which skin colour has no part to play. In fact, white people generally fail to see themselves as having a racial(ised) identity at all (Ware in Alund and Grandqvist, 1995).

Besides the absence of a sense of racial(ised) or cultural identity among many white people, there is also a belief that such an identity is solely the province of Black people. Frankenberg (1993:196) states that, 'Whiteness as a cultural space is represented ... as amorphous and indescribable, in contrast with a range of other

identities marked by race, ethnicity, region, and class'. In Frankenberg's study she describes one of her research interviewees as being 'much more sharply aware of racial *oppression* shaping Black experience than of race *privilege* in her own life ... conceptualizing her own life as racially neutral - nonracialized, nonpolitical' (ibid.:49). She also goes on to conclude that '... whiteness *does* have content inasmuch as it generates norms, ways of understanding history, ways of thinking about self and others, and even ways of thinking about the notion of culture itself' (ibid.:31).

This viewpoint is made clear in *Double Exposure: Talking about Race* (1997, Channel 4) where issues of race and identity were discussed by a group of young people of different nationalities. In the programme we see Russell, who is white and English, demonstrating that he is aware of Black people's skin colour but denying that his whiteness has any impact in his own life. His comments are uncannily similar to David Christenson's:

... I mean - I don't even think of myself as a colour ... The fact is, it doesn't necessarily mean that I am proud to be White, or proud to be anything, apart from myself. I only write White on an application form because it's the colour of my skin, not because it - it reflects my beliefs, because it reflects my culture or anything, it's just because I am. (programme transcript, CN: 22852/001, 1997:8)

Russell's freedom not to see his colour as important results in a belief that his whiteness has no cultural value and does not represent any particular belief systems. Shiguftah, who is of Pakistani parentage, would beg to differ. Despite the fact that she was born in England, she struggles to call herself British or English because those terms, and the images they represent, signify racist attitudes. She sees 'the Union Jack and I see racism written all over it ...' (ibid.:12) For Shiguftah the Union Jack clearly

represents a nation which, for the most part, is white and has, at times, mistreated her and her family.

We also find that, in the main, cultural identity inevitably belongs to the 'Other'. Just as racial(ised) identity is almost exclusively ascribed to Black people because 'white' is viewed as the norm, so Western society accepts its own Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking heritage as the marker against which all other communities and societies must measure themselves. Helma Lutz (1990:7) makes this point when she insists that focusing on the cultural background of Others makes the westerner's culture, which is considered 'modern, tolerant, civilized, emancipated', the norm and anyone else's as different, alien and strange, 'West European society happens to be considered the prototype of the modern civilized society.' (ibid.:10). As we will see, people of mixed parentage create confusion and uncertainty for societies which like to maintain a distinction between Black and white in terms of both physiognomy and culture.

Section Two: Developing a racial(ised) identity

In a society which sees racial(ised) classifications as acceptable and which does not often challenge the premises on which they are built, it is not surprising that social identity becomes racial(ised). Having looked at what racial(ised) identity is, it is important to understand what processes are involved in the development of such an identity. Social psychologist David Milner (1983:66) studied what he described as the 'racial identity' and attitudes of children. He found that '... social attitudes and identity are closely linked; both emanate from the reality that surrounds the child.' Milner believes that if a society sees 'race' as an issue of importance, all children will be expected to have an increased awareness of their racial(ised) identity, 'Here

children come to view their world through race-tinted spectacles, whether they are Black or white.’ (ibid.:66). However, the extracts from *The Color of Fear* and *Double Exposure: Talking about Race* both demonstrate that while Black people are compelled to be aware of their racial(ised) identities, white people have the freedom to be unconcerned about their own skin colour and what it represents.

Milner also describes the work of P.A. Katz (1976), who suggested that there are distinct influences on the racial understanding of white children from as early as five years of age. The influences include observing physical differences in other children; developing views of Black people, generally from adults; having these views positively or negatively reinforced by contact with Black people¹⁵; labelling groups and communities as homogeneous and believing that certain people belong to those groups permanently; developing an ‘us’ and ‘them’ attitude¹⁶. Mary Ellen Goodman (1964), has suggested that there are three overlapping processes of racial awareness, racial orientation and racial attitudes which occur in the same order in every individual. All these developments continue until maturity and simply go through various stages of reinforcement through the media representations of Black people, lack of realistic portrayals in educational resources, adult expressions of prejudice etc.

Black children too are influenced by the external, particularly by images around them.

There have been many studies of Black children’s (mainly those of African origin)

¹⁵ White people see themselves in the mirror of Blackness. As Toni Morrison (1992:52) states, ‘Africanism is the vehicle by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfilment of destiny.’ Similar comment would equally apply in the British context but would also include ‘Asianism’ which is perhaps already addressed by Said’s (1978) concept of ‘Orientalism’.

¹⁶ Similar findings about group identity can be seen in the work of Tajfel et al. (1970).

identification with particular racial images (Clark and Clark, in Newcomb and Hartley (eds.), 1947; Goodman, 1964; Porter, 1971; Jacobs, 1977). Many children in the studies mentioned showed a preference for white images although as they matured, their preference for their own racial group increased and this was seen as a positive step. The impact of negative imagery on the lives of Black children makes it difficult for a wholly positive racial(ised) identity to be developed, 'They may identify with their own group, but then it is difficult to escape the implications of this derogatory group-identity for their own self-image. Alternatively, they may identify with whites, which denies their true identity, is unrealistic and fraught with anxiety' (Milner, 1983:144).

The notion of representation is an important one which has been neglected by the social psychological perspectives previously discussed. We are not born with racial(ised) identities. Seeing ourselves or the group to which we belong represented in particular ways, with specific images portrayed, results in a discourse which informs us about ourselves and others about us. We then become aware of how others see us and have to reconsider our social identities and how they are expressed. In terms of racial(ised) identities it is clear that white people are, without exception, represented as 'the norm'. As Dyer (1997:3) states:

Whites are everywhere in representation. Yet precisely because of this and their placing as the norm they seem not to be represented to themselves *as* whites but as people who are variously gendered, classed, sexualised and abled. At the level of racial representation, in other words, whites are not of a certain race, they're just the human race.

There are many representations of Black people, mainly consisting of negative stereotypes. Just as we only come to know what it is to be English by observing the representations of Englishness we are presented with, so both Black people and white

people come to understand what Blackness is through observing 'the Other' through various media depictions. As Meena, Meera Syal's (1996:211) ten year old character in *Anita and Me*, notes when recalling lessons at school where Indian people were the subject of discussion:

Then there were the 'modern' images, culled from newspaper and television clips, where hollow-eyed skeletons, barely recognisable as human beings, squatted listlessly around dry river beds, and machete-wielding thugs tore into each other in messy city streets, under the benevolent gaze of a statue of Queen Victoria.

Meena felt the images portrayed a people to which she was meant to belong but which she did not recognise. She was compelled by these images to prove to her friends that she was not like the Indians represented in the media but was afraid to express the 'Indianness' she knew from her home life. Although only a child, she was forced to express an English cultural affiliation in order to find some acceptance while fighting the racial(ised) identity imposed on her by others and which rendered her unacceptable at times. Meena's 'selfhood' was fragmented. As bell hooks (1992:3) states, '... for black people, the pain of learning that we cannot control our images, how we see ourselves (if our vision is not decolonized), or how we are seen is so intense that it rends us. It rips and tears at the seams of our efforts to construct self and identity.'

Just as social identities in general are modified and adapted in response to our dialogue with others, the development of racial(ised) identities is a process which does not end after childhood. Tina Campt's study (1993) of the experiences of Afro-German women demonstrated that, even as adults, the women felt their racial(ised) identities evolved. Campt states '... the construction of their identity is thoroughly

conditioned by the responses of others to their colour and the meanings they attach to it.' (ibid.:114).

For people of mixed parentage racial(ised) identity is more problematic than for 'monoracial'¹⁷ people. The 'social self' finds that encounters with some may encourage a Black identity while others encourage a white identity. Although people of mixed parentage may assert for themselves a 'mixed' identity, this is not always acceptable to wider society. As a result of society's ambivalence there has been pressure, both historically and in the present time, on those of mixed or multiple heritage to make a choice¹⁸; here we see the notion of representation again coming into play. The next section investigates the rationale for 'passing' and also the equally complex issue of asserting 'Blackness'.

¹⁷ 'Monoracial' being an American term for those whose parents are of the same 'racial' background e.g. two Black parents, two white parents, two Hispanic parents etc. Although problematic, I have used the term hesitatingly only in order to avoid lengthy descriptions such as 'Black people with two Black parents'.

¹⁸ The highly complex, and suspect, system of racial categorisation in the United States has, for generations, insisted that there are two distinct 'races', black and white, and that the rule of hypodescent (the One Drop Rule) establishes to which category an individual is assigned. For some people of mixed parentage in the United States, there is a desire to be free from the need to express allegiance to one particular aspect of their heritage and a preference for a more flexible 'tick all which apply' style of categorisation. There is also a growing lobby which wants people of mixed parentage to assert a separate identity from both Black and white groups; not just 'Other' but a 'Multiracial' identity. Although it expresses high ideals that 'multiracial' individuals prove by their mixed heritage that "'race" is not a biological reality at all; it is nothing more than a social, cultural and political invention. It doesn't exist.' (Charles Byrd, speech at Multiracial Solidarity March II, 9.9.97), there are also some worrying trends which border on another form of exclusivity.

Byrd and others appear to encourage an antagonistic attitude towards those people of mixed parentage who choose to describe themselves as Black. They state that this is a negative choice and only feeds into the hypodescent rule. On his internet web site called *Interracial Voice*, 'The Voice of Conscience of the Global Mixed-Race/Interracial Movement', there has been long-running correspondence concerning this issue which has forced the creation of further categories such as 'white identifying multiracial' and 'black identifying multiracial' people. There is also a great deal of berating of media programmes such as *The Cosby Show* which uses light-skinned actors and describes them as black. Some correspondents have challenged the philosophical standpoint of the web site. Stephanie Webster, questioning the site's book review page asks, 'Did it ever cross the reviewer's mind that there are many multiracial people who do identify as black and take great pride in that? I think the reviewer displays the disturbing notions of "multiracial" superiority' (12.11.98). Certainly in the United States, the classification of people of mixed parentage rages on.

'Passing' for white

Not being able to negotiate an identity which fits comfortably with an individual's view of themselves can create such a strong desire to be accepted that behaviour is adapted to ensure that acceptance. Thus 'passing' can occur in many contexts including cultural and class-based. We will be looking specifically at how 'passing' for white has been a strategy used by some people of mixed parentage when they have found life as a Black person too uncomfortable. There are complex reasons for this behaviour. As discussed earlier, whiteness brings power, privilege and advantage¹⁹ and consequently there can be a desire to secure the benefits which often accompany whiteness. Frankenberg (1993:11) states that "'white' is as much as anything else an economic and political category maintained over time by a changing set of exclusionary practices, both legislative and customary." If an individual can persuade people that s/he is white then access to economic and political power is more likely to be achieved. However, F. James Davis (quoted in Piper, 1992:13) believes there is a high price to pay for 'passing' for white, 'Those who pass have a severe dilemma before they decide to do so, since a person must give up all family ties and loyalties to the black community in order to gain economic and other opportunities.' 'Passing' not only results in contact with Black family and friends being terminated but language is altered so that no hint of cultural 'Otherness' can be detected. Acceptance of the values of white society is paramount, even to the extent of openly discriminating against Black people in order not to be discovered. Fanon (1986) illustrates this very well when he comments on Abdoulaye Sadji's novel, *Présence Africaine*, which is set

¹⁹ There are clearly some economic limitations associated with class, gender and disability but, as David Roediger (1991) states, white people can claim their white identity even when they are oppressed but Black people will always be marginalised.

in St. Louis, in the United States. There is a description of the reactions of a 'mulatto' woman who is 'almost white' to the genuine affections of a 'Negro' man. She is insulted by his declaration of love because this connects her to the origins from which she is desperate to escape.

Shame for one's ancestry has been a major motivator in adopting 'passing' as a strategy. Syal's (1996:211) Meena felt compelled to make up stories about herself because she 'was driven purely by shame' which she felt in history lessons when 'tatty textbooks' portrayed, among other images, 'Victorian soldiers ... their feet astride flattened tigers, whilst men who looked like any one of my uncles, remained in the background ..., their posture servile, their eyes glowing like coals'. Such shame is evident in the attitudes and behaviour expressed by the characters Dennis and Charlotte Cooper and their son Sebastian (otherwise known as Dinesh, Shashi and Sabaj Kapoor) in the BBC 2 comedy *Goodness Gracious Me* (1998). Dennis and Charlotte have friends who call themselves St. John and Vanessa Robinson rather than their real names of Sarjeet and Vina Rabindranath. The two Indian couples have tried to eradicate from their lifestyles anything which they think would denote their ethnic origins. They join their local golf club, wear clothes which they believe to be quintessentially English and despise everything Indian. The humour and the sadness lies in the fact that they naively believe they can hide behind these symbols of Englishness, that they can 'pass' culturally and that the biological markers of their origins will therefore disappear and that they will be accepted by white society which despises their Blackness. Sabaj, who comes home from a trip to India where he has been finding his 'roots', is shocked by their attempts to 'pass'. He states, 'You're not fooling anyone. You're serving Pimms with courgettes in it!'

The assertion of the superiority of white people and the subsequent establishment of systems to reinforce this view contributes to the internalisation of such negative opinions in the minds of many Black people. hooks (1992) believes that there are fantasies concerning whiteness carried in the minds of Black people and suggests that this is the reason why so many appear to have such a strong desire to be like the white people who have contributed to their oppression. hooks asserts that, 'Systems of domination, imperialism, colonialism, and racism actively coerce black folks to internalize negative perceptions of blackness, to be self-hating' (ibid.:166). Franz Fanon (1986) points out, the more 'the colonized' believe in the superiority of white people and the more they try to be accepted by white people, the higher the likelihood that they have to renounce their own personhood²⁰.

'Passing' has sometimes been used in the compartmentalised areas of individual's lives, e.g. at work or when trying to join certain organisations, rather than being a complete process. For some it has been a temporary choice although the cost of 'returning home' and facing those abandoned for a more comfortable existence is difficult to calculate as is the psychological cost of living a false life afraid of being 'found out'.

The reactions of those abandoned are understandable. In this lengthy quotation, Adrian Piper (1992:13) explains her own feelings of betrayal:

Trying to forgive and understand those of my relatives who have chosen to pass for white has been one of the most difficult ethical challenges of my life ... Obviously, they believe they will be happier in the white community ... their

²⁰ Similar self-deprecation can be seen in the thought and behaviour of some people of Asian ancestry. Many first generation settlers to Britain felt strong pressure to prove their entitlement to residency in Britain and, in order to gain a semblance of acceptance, became the parodies of 'Britishness' we see in the Coopers and the Robinsons (mentioned above).

concept of happiness as involving higher social status, entrenchment within the white community ... and greater access to the rights, liberties, and privileges the white community takes for granted. What is harder for me to grasp is how they could want these things enough to sacrifice the history, wisdom, connectedness, and moral solidarity with their family and community in order to get them. It seems to require so much severing and forgetting, so much disowning and distancing ...

Despite the pressures from some quarters, many people of mixed parentage have remained 'visible', either loyal to the Black communities to which they believe they belong or else successfully positioning themselves within both (or the many) communities their ancestry represents. Such determination has its own pitfalls. For many people, remaining within the Black community has resulted in reduced economic and social opportunities. For example, people of mixed parentage living in port areas such as Cardiff and Liverpool were often ostracised by the local community. They were treated with contempt and had limited access to employment. With such prevailing negative attitudes, it is clear that choosing to remain in places such as Bute Town or Vauxhall could be a painful decision.

People of mixed parentage who choose not to 'pass' are also sometimes accused of being the authors of their own downfall. Piper (1992:30) shows how she experienced first-hand such accusations from her friends who had preferred her company when she did not challenge their comfort and when she 'acted white':

... some whites simply can't take my avowed racial affiliation at face value, and react to what they see rather than what I say ... Among the costs is that I've lost other white friends who are antagonized by what they see as my manipulating their liberal guilt or good will, or turning my racial identity into an exploitable profession, or advertising myself in an unseemly manner, or making a big to-do about nothing. They are among those who would prefer to leave the whole matter of race - and, by implication, the racism of their own behaviour - shrouded in silence.

Blackness

While 'passing' has been an option used by some people of mixed parentage, it has often proved to be a costly and stressful strategy. However, asserting a Black identity is not without its problems. There is, of course, the long history of the go-between 'mulattoes'²¹ (Jordan, 1977, Comitas and Lowenthal, 1973) which is not easily forgotten and can create hostility and lack of trust. Even in modern times, there can be a sense of the paler the skin, the more opportunities for advancement. In recent years media representation of Black people in film (Dyer, 1997) and television drama (Pine in Kidd-Hewitt and Osborne, 1995) and in modelling (Trepagnier in Bhavnani and Phoenix, 1995), although very limited, is often focused upon those with lighter skin. Such 'preferential treatment' is used by some Black people as fuel either for their mistrust or their envy of people of mixed parentage. Michele Paulse (in Camper, 1994:46) clearly illustrates the dilemma for people of mixed parentage:

Historically, white people have chosen people mixed with the white race, particularly those among us who resemble whiteness the most, to guard their systems in countries they have colonized ... As a result, the more white features we have, the more alienated we are made to be from our ... ancestry. Among Black women, the less "Black" we appear, the more suspicious we are of each other ... As a mixed race woman ... [it has been] extremely difficult to accept not only could my colour be used against me by white people but women of colour, too, would perpetuate this colonialist tactic.

²¹ In the Caribbean 'mulattoes' often came to regard themselves as superior to the unmixed population. These views of self-importance were derived from a well-planned manipulation by the slave owners to ensure loyalty from the mixed population and to develop a hierarchy of authority among the slaves which would free the masters from having direct involvement with the workers. They were to provide the 'buffer' between black and white. Winston James (in James and Harris, 1993:234) says that the plantocracy's social and economic subterfuge gave 'the coloureds' superior positions in the slave hierarchy. 'they were given a greater opportunity to learn skills to become artisans and many worked as house or domestic slaves - positions much sought after by the slaves, male as well as female, who had to work more arduously under a harsher regimen in the fields.'

In colonial India, the East India Company and some regiments provided financial incentives to single merchants and service men to marry Indian women. As with the 'mulattoes', the offspring, eventually known as Anglo-Indians, were the subjects of a social system which gave them limited status but ensured their loyalty. 'Taught to be loyal to Britain, and to consider themselves European, their attempts to be completely British were the cause of mirth and scorn in European social gatherings throughout India ... The Indian, in turn, [resented] the special treatment given by the British and ... the superior airs which Anglo-Indians adopted in dealing with Indians' (Minto, 1995:51).

While there seems to be an absence of awareness of what constitutes whiteness, there are many competing discourses of 'Blackness'²². Blackness in Britain has undergone innumerable changes in recent years. Daniel J Crowley (1960, in Comitas and Lowenthal, 1973) believes that it is inevitable that the culture of groups changes when they are subsumed within another society. Crowley states that people try to hold on to their symbols and practices but that these will become combined with 'the forms and values of the one or more cultures in which we participate in the course of a lifetime.' (1973:277). Such dilemmas occur when communities are colonised or migrate. Lutz (1990:5) suggests that minority groups are not able to hold onto their culture and have to '... construct an autonomous concept of cultural identity, in opposition to cultural hegemony'. Many of those who have seen their parents' culture negated and compromised look for ways to express what they consider to be worthy of respect although, for the most part, such narration is a new version of the family's heritage, 'Languages, idioms, cuisines, music and so on, have scaled their individual territorial boundaries and have become far more generalized, shared and amalgamated within the Caribbean diaspora than they are within the Caribbean itself. To this extent ... the most pan-Caribbean of Caribbean peoples are to be found in the Caribbean diaspora - not in the Caribbean itself.' (Winston James in James and Harris, 1993:255).

²² The descriptor 'Black' was originally a pejorative term for all people with 'non-white' skin colour whatever their ethnic or national origin. During the 1960s, with the rise of the American Civil Rights Movement, the term 'Black' was transformed and became a positive expression which increased appreciation of and pride in expressing a Black identity, particularly among African-Americans. In Britain, most of those who had migrated in the 1950s from Commonwealth countries had similar experiences of discrimination in employment, education and so on, irrespective of country of origin. They would have called themselves, and been 'politely' called, 'coloured' or 'non-white'. By the end of the 1970s, 'Black' had become an inclusive term which drew together people of African and Asian origin into political solidarity against racial discrimination.

With the importation of Caribbean forms of Rastafarianism, reggae and African-American rap music, there has been a growing expression of Black identity which can be seen in both African-Caribbean and Asian youth via music and styles of dress. Modood *et al* (1994) found that many of the respondents in their study, both African-Caribbean and Asian, had become aware of their need for a positive 'Black' identity as a result of their experiences of racism. Several Asian respondents wanted to make clear their political views on racism:

For these respondents the term 'Asian' signified that the individuals ... suffered from a common experience of racism; but so did other individuals, most notably Afro-Caribbeans. Hence the important anti-racist colour-identity was not 'brown' or 'Asian' but 'black', for that enabled a broader unity and a more effective political challenge to racism.

The issue of racism is very important in how I see myself. I identify with 'black' as a political term because, to fight racism effectively, minority groups need to be united. Calling yourself different ethnic groups in the battle against racism is divisive and ineffective.

(1994:107).

Identification with these particular forms of Blackness develops a sense of unity (Ricoeur's *idem*) among the young people involved and also is seen as a rebellion against the rigidity of parental expectations. Many Black young people want to assert both their individuality within the home and their synthesis with other Black youth in the public arena. Many young people of mixed parentage see these representations of Blackness as available to them and not just to those with two Black parents.

Another discourse of Blackness which impacts on the racial(ised) identities of people of mixed parentage is the growing essentialist standpoint of some Black groups. In the main, this has been the result of frustration with a lack of economic and social development despite years of anti-discrimination legislation. Such a standpoint privileges skin colour above all other aspects of identity. Michael Dyson (in

Goldberg, 1994:218), discussing the experiences of African-Americans, is concerned that such an approach is sometimes exploited by both the majority *and* the minority culture. Dyson says that 'black culture's relentless evolution and metamorphosis' is denied both by those who want biological differences and stereotypes to be perpetuated and also by those who want to assert the existence of particular cultural standards in order to 'help define racial authenticity'. This results in an insider/outsider, friend/enemy situation.

The essentialists insist on ascribing particular aspects of 'Blackness' as authentic and this ensures homogeneity within organisations or groups; this is often considered a fundamental element of unity. Ricoeur's (1990) sense of 'sameness' can only be achieved within these groups if all membership requirements are met. Not only that, but there has to be mutual recognition and affirmation between members. As Jacques (1991:xv) suggests:

A human being only becomes *somebody*, only acquires a personal self, after passing what one might call an additional he/she test, the test of other people.

While such 'authentic' relationships can provide moral support for those within the group, anyone not meeting all the criteria, even if they initially appear to do so, will soon feel uncomfortable and the relationship will become fragile and even untenable (Giddens, 1991). This is especially true for those who may consider they qualify for membership of several groups by virtue of their multiple identifications. People of mixed parentage may experience hostility from some essentialist Black groups whose own antagonistic relationship with wider society has created a need to be separate.

With even broader diversity among people of mixed parentage than among Black people generally, it may be more difficult to establish a sense of authenticity if this requires homogeneity of history, culture or experience. However there are other narratives of authenticity. Some people may wish to privilege some aspects of their personhood above others. For others, authenticity may recognise a multiplicity of identities and may see this multiplicity as a unique quality which increases their connectedness with others with equally diverse identities. Christine C. Iijima Hall's (in Root, 1992:328) research found that many people of mixed parentage view themselves as holding a specifically mixed identity which is not expressed as a fusion of two other racial origins but as an identity in its own right.

Conclusion

We have investigated in this chapter the question, 'How do I know who I am?' and discovered a elaborate maze of theories. We have seen a move from the simple 'inner essence' of Descartes (1644) to a more complex understanding of the inner/unknowable ('noumenal')/real me and the external/knowable ('phenomenal')/social me. We have charted a move away from self-consciousness derived solely from within to a self-awareness and both personal and social identity constructed out of a creative dialogue between these two selves. In other words, I cannot know the 'real me' without relating to society.

We have also noted Ricoeur's (1990) suggestion that, paradoxically, it is possible to have both change and continuity within our personhood/identity. Most modern theorists see identity as developmental and fluid and it seems clear that there are a multiplicity of identities or selves which we can and do express socially. How our

self-expressions are received by others often results in further changes to our social behaviour and can even affect our sense of self (the 'real me').

This basic theoretical framework when applied to racial(ised) identity allows an understanding of social identity which come into being through discourse with wider society. Despite Hegel's (1807) and Mead's (1934) suggestion of mutual dialogue, in the arena of 'race issues' there still remains a preoccupation within dominant groups with having neatly packaged and compartmentalised categories. People of mixed parentage clearly challenge the apparently insurmountable boundaries and fixedness of the essentialism which privileges skin colour above any other factor.

Adhering loosely to grounded theory principles and a phenomenological approach, I do not wish to impose my own theories or those of others onto the research group. Instead, I allow the respondents to give voice to their own experiences. This will undoubtedly help us to discover whether or not the theorists are correct and also to add to their suppositions with real life narratives.

The research questions the accuracy of the suggestion that people of mixed parentage have difficulty in placing themselves comfortably in society. I attempt to understand the negotiation of identity which takes place within a multiplicity of life experiences and interactions with others. By allowing the respondents to speak for themselves I hope to discover whether they are able to accept the 'I' and the 'me' of their identity and at the same time adapt to the expectations of the 'them'; to discover their 'selfhood'. Their responses will also assist us in understanding whether it is possible to find a sense of belonging within a multiplicity of 'we's; to experience 'sameness'.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

It is ... necessary for research never to claim the last word and always to be reflexive, to be about itself as well as about its focus for concern.

Michael Schratz and Rob Walker, 1995:15

Introduction

This chapter and the next are concerned with the collection and analysis of data for research purposes. I have used the term ‘methodology’ to denote the various theoretical aspects of research, although some analysis of my findings is outlined in this section (the chapter on ‘methods’ is more concerned with the practicalities of the application of the theories). This chapter outlines qualitative and quantitative research methods and acknowledges the value of both. Having opted for a qualitative approach myself this chapter contains a discussion of values and objectivity, power dynamics which can inhibit the interview process, the insider/outsider status of the interviewer and the inevitability of bias.

Quantitative and qualitative approaches

The debates around the desirability of quantitative and qualitative methods of research have resulted in polarised views and approaches. Those in favour of quantitative research prefer methods comparable to those used by the scientific community which encourage an impersonal, ‘objective’ viewpoint. There is an emphasis on using experimental methods to validate acquired knowledge and such knowledge, because it has been so rigorously tested, is considered to be universally applicable. de Rivera (1984:682) is critical of psychologists whose research has followed this line, ‘... the

study of emotion has been dominated by the counting of heart beats, the ratings of facial expressions, the scaling of answers to objective questions.' Quantitative data collection and analysis are usually used to test previously formulated hypotheses and aim to both confirm the previous research and to find new outcomes which can form new theories. This positivist style can be limiting as it uses strict question and answer systems created by the researcher and with no room for individual interpretation of the questions, or indeed the answers. It also studies behaviour from outside the system rather than observing it from within.

The heart of the critique of such methodology made by feminist researchers is that quantitative data reinforces the authority of scientific discourse and considers anything concerned with opinion, feelings and experience to be of inferior quality and use. As Ann Oakley (in Roberts, 1995:38) says:

Women are characterised as sensitive, intuitive, incapable of objectivity and emotional detachment and as immersed in the business of making and sustaining personal relationships. Men are though (sic) superior through their capacity for rationality and scientific objectivity and are thus seen to be possessed of an instrumental orientation in their relationships with others.

Thus by gendering such characteristics, there is a body of thought which places quantitative analysis as more authentic and unquestionable. It strengthens the masculine/feminine divide and relegates qualitative data to an inferior status with talk of it being less rigorous and therefore more suspect. It is interesting to note that when quantitative methods were first employed in the field of sociology in America in the 1920s, it was as a result of considerable scepticism from the scientific community about the validity of sociological research. It seems that by appearing more objective, the social scientists thought they could increase their credibility and move from being

‘pseudo-scientists’ into the authentic fraternity (and an exclusive brotherhood it was at that time). Daniel Bertaux (1981:34) is scathing of this approach:

As surveys (and statistics too) can only record attitudes, behaviours and social characteristics of *individuals*, positivism gave them the noble title of ‘variables’ and was led to redefine sociological theory as ‘a system of propositions about relations between variables’. A very superficial analogy with physical sciences ... was developed to establish the ‘scientific’ character of this view, which is epistemologically false and practically sterile.

During the 1920s and 30s there was resistance to this style of research from the Chicago School which preferred a more qualitative approach.

Qualitative methodology emphasises social process and its context. It relies, not on the theories and opinions of the researcher but on the perspective and interpretation of the interviewee. The informant’s account is less limited by the structure of the research and an individual’s understanding of his/her own life is valued. This approach does not depend on the application or testing of a particular theory but allows for conclusions to be drawn from the research. In this particular style of research, existing concepts are not imposed *on* the data, rather, the aim is to generate new ones *from* the data (see the more detailed discussion of grounded theory on p. 95).

Whilst increasing in popularity in social science research, this method of data collection and analysis is not without its critics. A major complaint is that it relies not on facts but on interpretations of people’s lives. The development of life histories as useful tools in qualitative research began with Thomas and Znaniecki’s *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1958, first published in 1918-20). Such ‘stories’ are very valuable, ‘... the notion of the life story means something like “what events have

made me what I am,” or more precisely, “what you must know about me to know me,”...’ (Linde, 1993:20). As Sampson (1993:123) so clearly expresses, ‘... it is the stories that we learn to tell to frame our experiences, to explain us to ourselves and others, that are the central features of human life.’ Clearly respondents have to depend on their ability to recollect incidents and to reconstruct them into narratives which are understood by the researcher.

Analysis of such data tries to ascertain whether there are specific life stages (Erikson, 1968) or whether there are similar events which occur, irrespective of age, which influence identity development. This style of research also allows for the personal experiences described by respondents to be placed not only in their historical context but to be used to understand their impact on present identities or identification (Kohli in Bertaux, 1981). Although it is not possible for a researcher to live through the eyes or life of the interviewee, nor verify the details, the interviewee’s life experiences can also be compared with that of other interviewees in similar circumstances or from similar backgrounds.

Another criticism of qualitative research is that verification of the ‘truth’ is impossible. Michael Schratz and Rob Walker (1995:41) in a chapter written with Barbara Schratz-Hadwich on memory-work devised by feminist researchers such as Frigga Haug (1990) discuss the importance of seeing a person’s recollections as ‘... a relevant trace in his or her construction of self ... What is significant about memories is not their surface validity as true records, but their active role in the construction of identity.’ That ‘recollections are likely to be incomplete or unreliable ’ (Allen,

1991:179) is obvious but this does not mean they are not an important part of how a person describes their own reality or understands their own experiences.

Blending the two approaches

Much social science research has, in the past, concentrated on what might be described as ‘hard’, factual and scientifically tested data. Some researchers would discount quantitative research as ‘no longer considered appropriate for studying the meanings of the everyday life world in which we all live’ (Barnes, 1992:116). Bertaux (1981:31) suggests that focusing only on statistical data provides very limited research:

... I would like to tell them [‘positivists’] that their concern with representivity of samples, with data analysis, with proof, can be met also with this reputedly ‘qualitative’ approach, and that this approach yields even more: a direct access to the levels of *social relations* which constitute, after all, the very substance of sociological knowledge. (Bertaux’s emphasis)

However, I believe that factual evidence should not be rejected out of hand and that it is naive to abandon it completely. As Mary Maynard (1994:13) has commented, ‘... in rejecting quantification, feminists [and others] have overlooked the contribution that research involving enumeration has made to our knowledge and understanding of women’s experiences. Further, the *political* potential of such knowledge should not be underestimated’ (Maynard’s emphasis). It is essential that in order to understand or to explain the life experiences of a person, one takes into account the social context and structures which have influenced their lives. Factual details allow for this to some extent. Jennifer Mason’s work is mentioned by Bryman and Burgess (1995:222) who state that she managed to accommodate both quantitative and qualitative data in her research, although not strictly using a triangulation method, and was able ‘to allow the

quantitative component to map out general patterns and the qualitative phase to reveal processes and the perspective of those actually involved in situations ...’.

Derek Layder (1993:140) discussing the work of David Silverman (1985) states that it is often said that one downfall of qualitative data is that it generally relies on small samples but that ‘Silverman argues that simple counting techniques can give a sense of the whole body of data from which such examples are drawn ... In this sense, simple methods of counting can deepen and extend qualitative analysis’. Bertaux (1981:37) in his research on artisanal bakery in France defends the use of small samples when utilising a life story methodology:

The first life story taught us a great deal; so did the second and third. By the fifteenth we had begun to understand the pattern of sociostructural relations which makes up the life of the bakery worker. By the twenty-fifth ... we knew we had it: a clear picture of this structural pattern and of its recent transformation. New life stories only confirmed what we had understood, adding slight individual variations. We stopped at thirty: there was no point going further. We already knew what we wanted to know.

I found a similar process took place in my own research. I had hoped to interview at least fifty people but after twenty five interviews, it became clear that there were obvious common threads in the experiences of people with very different backgrounds. I needed to check my initial impressions by ensuring I had a representative sample and so, with the majority of those interviewed being women, I began to insist that almost all of the rest of my contacts were men. Although this meant not visiting some women whose lives, I am sure, would have been very interesting, it helped to maintain a healthy balance. By the thirty-fourth interview it was clear that only minor differences in perspective were appearing and that any further interviews would not add to an understanding of the lives of people of mixed parentage.

Quantitative data is an essential part of my own research as it locates the historical events and experiences of the respondents in the structures in which they grew up¹. However, as I wanted to avoid making presumptions about their lives, I did not wish to apply other quantitative methods, such as rigid questionnaires or representational images, which would have inevitably included questions aimed to verify a particular theoretical viewpoint. Such methods have previously been used (Clark and Clark in Newcomb and Hartley (eds.), 1947, Wilson, 1987, Jacobs, in Root, 1992) but, to my mind, were too limited in their approach (see chapter two). I feel that a solely quantitative study, whilst in many ways simpler to undertake, would imply a homogeneity in the experiences of people of mixed parentage. It would not show how much people can and do have a choice in their interactions and identifications. My aim throughout the research was to allow the interviewees to explain their own experiences and interpret for themselves how this impacted on their identity. I used informal, semi-structured interviews to allow respondents to provide their own perspectives on their lives. By providing both types of information I believe I have avoided the often cited criticism that qualitative data is too focused and not set in a social context (Layder, 1993).

Values and objectivity

The claim that quantitative research provides true objectivity has been questioned by researchers such as Gunnar Myrdal (1969) who suggested that social scientists should be aware that subjectivity runs through everything humans do because no one is

¹ As well as looking at the limited official statistics, I asked questions about respondents' age, the race and ethnic origins of their parents, location of where they live, their employment situation, how they describe themselves etc. See Appendix 1.

detached from the influence of their own upbringing and environment. Franco Ferrarotti (in Bertaux, 1981:20) states that because of the inevitable behaviour modification which takes place when researcher and researched interact, the 'process renders any presumption of objective knowledge simply ridiculous'. More recently, Colin Barnes (1992:116) has suggested that those researchers who opt for a qualitative method do so because, '... analytically, they acknowledge that they are unable to put their own knowledge of the social world on one side in the vain hope of achieving objectivity'.

Questions posed by both quantitative and qualitative research are often devised with a particular viewpoint in mind and this can clearly influence the outcomes of research.

As Anne Opie (1992:52) suggests:

Although at one point they [feminist research techniques] are liberatory because they open to inspection what has previously been hidden, they are also restrictive in the sense that they can appropriate the data to the researcher's interests, so that other significant experiential elements which challenge or partially disrupt that interpretation may also be silenced.

It is also inevitable that factors of age, gender, ethnicity etc. will impact on the questions posed. Researchers need 'to be aware of how the social and cultural factors which both parties bring to the encounter affect what happens thereafter' (Carol Jones in Allen and Skinner, 1991:211).

While accepting that no research is value-free, it is important that qualitative inquiries are carried out with a certain degree of rigour. While it is clearly impossible to repeat procedures exactly when undertaking semi-structured interviews, systematic and methodical collection and analysis of the data are no less important with qualitative data than with quantitative. This entails covering the same topics with each

respondent and, as much as possible, using the same questions, given that respondents often answer in a way that does not conform to the order of the questionnaire. In my own research I used a three part questionnaire (see Appendix 2). The first two sections were requests for factual information about the respondents and their family backgrounds. The third section consisted of open-ended questions which were intended to elicit accounts of personal history and experience. Each interview began with a preamble and the questions were placed in an order which seemed to flow naturally and in a conversational style. On most occasions, the questions were asked in the order they appeared on the prompt sheet but occasionally the respondent had included in their reply an issue covered elsewhere and so, of course, the question was not repeated.

On most occasions the interviews became dialogues although I resisted providing too much opinion or discussion of my own experiences until the process was completed. Often, I would include comments such as ‘of course’, ‘that’s a common experience’ or ‘that must have been difficult’ in order to encourage the flow of conversation and to allow the respondents to feel confident about the importance of their contributions. As Hammersley (1995:143) points out, interviewees ‘will often be looking for some indication of whether the answers being provided are appropriate, and also perhaps for any sign of judgmental reaction. Generally, then, the interviewer needs to give clear indications of acceptance’. Such feelings of acceptance can clearly only be achieved if there is some dialogue between the two parties. I would also answer questions about my own experiences but avoided lengthy personal comment insisting that I wanted to hear about the respondents’ own experiences

On one unusual occasion only the first question was asked. This occurred when the respondent was asked to describe her early years. She began to tell her 'story' in such a free-flowing and engaging way that I felt it would have been a tragedy to stop the proceedings in order to maintain my own agenda. In fact, at the end of the interview, I looked back at the questions I had intended to ask and discovered that the respondent's account had covered every aspect of the questionnaire.

A further attempt to ensure a rigorous approach was by tape recording all the interviews. This allowed me to concentrate on the respondents' replies and encouraged a two-way process. It only proved problematic in two cases. The first was due to an error on my part. During the pilot study, I had not explained to one respondent that I would be recording the interview. She was aware of the machine throughout the process and this inhibited her conversational flow. I quickly learned to ask permission from prospective interviewees at the first contact. The second occasion was with a respondent who was very concerned about confidentiality. She would consciously change particular identifying words or phrases before she responded at times. All other interviewees, even if they were initially nervous, appeared very quickly to settle into the process and ignored the tape recorder.

Bias

Closely linked with issues of objectivity is that of researcher bias. Traditionally it was not acceptable to admit to having a personal view of the subject matter being researched. However, it is clear that whatever method of research is used, researcher and researched are inevitably engaged in an interactive process. Quantitative data can be collected using questions which reflect the concerns and limitations of the

researcher. This is especially so when funders seek specific answers to particular questions in order to justify their existing or proposed policies. As Carol Bailey (1996:53) suggests, 'When someone else pays for the research, the research topic and research questions are often developed in conjunction with the sponsor'. As mentioned in chapter two, one of my criticisms of Tizard and Phoenix's (1993) work is that the funders had a vested interest in challenging social services' 'politically correct' same-race fostering and adoption practices. Certainly from the lengthy criticism of these practices in the book it is clear that Tizard and Phoenix view transracial adoption as unproblematic and make it clear that their study should be seen as 'the next step in the debate' (Tizard and Phoenix, *ibid.*:37). They wanted to interview young people of mixed parentage who lived with at least one of their natural parents believing that many would be brought up by 'their white biological mother, and sometimes white stepfather ... like transracially adopted children, without a black parent'. The research agenda appears to be to prove that such children are not disadvantaged in their racial(ised) identity development when there is no Black parent around and therefore transracial adoption should not be discouraged.

Another pressure imposed on researchers has been to discourage them from proffering opinions during the interview process for fear of biasing the results. However, as Miri Song (in Song and Parker, 1995:249) states, 'One way I was able to encourage disclosure was by disclosing information about myself first'. While I would agree that entering into conversation which communicates strong personal views would have a detrimental impact on the research, it is virtually impossible to prevent one's facial gestures, body language and general demeanour having an impact on how people behave in the research situation. It is equally important that where a particular

question has impacted on the respondent or the interviewer, such a response is acknowledged during the transcription and analysis of the data.

Power dynamics

One of the major impacts of feminist research² has been to question the research process which has previously been seen as hierarchical and sometimes oppressive. There is no doubt that age, class, gender, race (even shade of skin colour), ethnicity etc., which have a powerful impact in society, can also influence the research situation. Researchers often carry with them into the interview an element of power. Aiming to equalise the relationship between researcher and interviewee is naive; trying reducing the impact of the power differential is perhaps more realistic. Even if all else were equal, the researcher is still seen as 'the one with the knowledge' even when asking the interviewees for their own valuable experience. Ken Pryce (1979), who undertook a participant observation study in Bristol's Black community, discovered that his academic credentials were a barrier between him and the people he observed. In my own research I found that, at the initial contact, prospective respondents appeared more willing to be interviewed when they were told that the research was being supervised by a university. However, I also made a conscious effort during the process not to use academic jargon.

Feminist researcher Janet Finch (in Bell and Roberts, 1984:74) claims that there is a special relationship between women when they are both the interviewer and

² I question whether what is now considered by many social scientists to be mainstream research style should still retain the title 'feminist'. Naming it as such constricts it and ensures it is still considered by some a women's style of research which focuses only on women's lives. I would suggest it would have more impact and would be more widely acclaimed if it were now described solely as 'reflexive research'.

interviewee, 'because both parties share a subordinate structural position by virtue of their gender'. While I agree with the basic argument, I believe that Finch's view is rather simplistic and romantic. In my own research I found that, with two of the respondents, being a woman of similar age, education and origins did not necessarily result in easy interviews. One of the women found the process difficult because she was embarrassed about talking about herself. The other seemed rather suspicious about the questions, although on reflection this was perhaps due to my own preconceptions about her which may have created barriers between us. I had been put in touch with her via an acquaintance and her demeanour on the phone was welcoming. As she was also carrying out research she seemed very willing to help. However, I learned just before my visit to her home that she had previously been a psychotherapist. This created in me inhibitions which might otherwise not have existed. I expected to be scrutinised and so was not able to relax during the interview until fairly late into the proceedings. The respondent had also never considered the issues we were discussing and this created some difficulties for her too. Once the interview was over and she was able to talk about more familiar issues, she was very relaxed and effusive. These particular situations indicate the naiveté of assuming that 'feminist research' is as egalitarian and empowering as it claims. Empathy, relationship and empowerment which have so often been quoted by feminist writers as necessary for open-ended, interview based research seem to have been overstated. As Joan Sangster (1994:11) states, 'While a detached objectivity may be impossible, a false claim to sisterhood is also unrealistic'.

There is clearly not always a shared ideology between researcher and respondent. My own views on how racial(ised) identity 'should be' expressed differed at times from

those of the people I interviewed. However, as a result of the contributions of the respondents which challenged my own viewpoint, my perspective developed during the time I was undertaking the research. At the end of several interviews, once the formal process was over, there was considerable discussion concerning issues affecting people of mixed parentage. This post-interview information often gave more insight into the respondent's perspective and I was able to note their comments for future use in the analysis process. Some respondents who had developed their own interest in the area wanted more information and I always sent my bibliography if requested so that they could carry out their own personal research.

The issue of race is rarely mentioned by 'feminist researchers'. Finch neglects to mention that some Black women might view being interviewed by a white woman as oppressive and that the research process might not be as empowering a situation as she claims. There has been much criticism of the white feminist perspective which views 'the sisterhood of all women' so fancifully (Parmar and Carby, both in CCCS, 1982, Ramazanoglu, 1986). Not least of the critics is Deborah King (1988:58) who firmly states:

Feminism has excluded and devalued black women, our experiences, and our interpretations of our own realities at the conceptual and ideological level ... The assumption that the family is by definition patriarchal, the privileging of an individualistic worldview, and the advocacy of female separatism are often antithetical positions to many of the values and goals of black women and thus are hindrances to our association with feminism.

Another concern about power dynamics is that the interview process can, on rare occasions, be a harmful one. For the respondent, there can be a sense of intrusion and imposition. Encouraging an interviewee to discuss experiences which they have tried to ignore, hide or deny can create disquiet and can disrupt their view of themselves

and others. Clearly developing rapport³ early in the interview is essential in order to reduce the likelihood of this situation occurring. The skill of the interviewer must surely include identifying when a particular topic is too private or painful or when a respondent would not benefit from having such an issue aired.

Research which asks respondents to divulge personal information can result in considerable emotion being expressed. This occurred on several occasions during interviews I conducted. More often than not the topic of conversation would be parents. Particular areas of distress occurred when discussing fathers who were ill or had died or mothers who had experienced difficulties from their families for marrying Black men. Several respondents were surprised at the depth of their emotions. One interviewee, talking about her white mother's response to racism against her children, said, 'Because my Mum let it out aggressively and she'd go up the wall practically, in the end we didn't tell her ... to protect her ...' The respondent then paused because she was too upset to continue. She went on to say, 'I'm sorry, I thought I'd got over all that.' Another respondent, whose father had been very ill prior to the interview, described with deep emotion how she felt when he was in hospital:

... the thing that shocked me about my response to that is that, in a sense, even when he was unconscious after the heart attack, he was still there, I could still see him, I could still touch him. And what was unbearable, and still feels

³ Jennifer Hunt (1984:283) usefully describes several different approaches to the theme of rapport. She states that the classical definition is 'the amount of trust between researcher and subjects necessary to facilitate the acquisition of valid and reliable data' but suggests that more recent developments have been to understand rapport as a number of negotiations with the respondents rather than a single intervention. In my particular case rapport is more 'the process whereby the researcher accomplishes membership by displaying the very features by which subjects distinguish themselves from others' (Hunt, *ibid.*:286). I learned that by stating my own background at the request stage, I was able, with most respondents, to develop trust at an early point. This continued during the interview process through comments I made which demonstrated an understanding of their experiences. I was aware that rapport was achieved when interviewees made remarks such as 'I expect this has happened to you' or 'You'll know about this'.

unbearable, is not being able to touch, just not having him there physically. But emotionally I thought that if he does die, that love is so real ...

The respondent could not continue the conversation because she was too upset. As my own father had recently undergone heart surgery, I was deeply moved by her distress and this created an atmosphere of mutual support between us. No doubt such involvement with the interviewee would cause unease for those who believe research should be objective but I believe my response not only helped the interview process to be more open but also left the respondent feeling less isolated in her distress. I also received some personal comfort from the encounter. As Ruth Wilkins (1993:96) states:

Our emotional responses may aid a sophisticated sensibility in two ways. Firstly, properly understood, they may have a *sensitising, cognitive* function which alerts us to the meanings and behaviours of others. They make possible a sensitive attunement predicated on our capacity to empathise, which in turn depends on our personal and emotional resources. Secondly, a sophisticated sensibility, grounded in emotional responses, has an important *interpretive function*. It is a medium through which intuitive insight and inchoate knowledge arise, and this in turn depends on the availability of similar emotions and/or experience, whether imaginatively or actually, within our own biography.

Each time emotion was displayed by respondents, my own experiences would come to mind and, feeling genuine empathy, tears would come to my eyes. This did not appear to embarrass interviewees; in fact, it seemed to quickly deepen the relationship and allowed respondents greater freedom to describe other difficult experiences.

The role of the researcher as the keeper of the information divulged in the interview can create anxiety for the respondent, especially as researchers have the ability to edit the words shared with them. Clearly when people are at ease with the interview process, there is a tendency to reveal private information; in fact, there is a hope and

expectation that they will do so. Such detail may not always be confidential as, in some circumstances, several people may be involved in the transcription and analysis of the data. There is even more risk when the researcher does not have control over the material and it is edited in a way which is not acceptable to the respondent or the researcher. In order to reduce this stress for the respondents in my research, I assured them that I would be the only person to transcribe the tapes and that only my supervisor and I would have access to the interview material. I also sent every interviewee a copy of their own transcript. This was done for several reasons. Firstly, so that the respondents could be reassured that they had not ‘given away their souls’ especially those who had been very open with me. Secondly, I felt I was giving them a different form of access to a small representation of their own life histories. Few people have the time, the energy or even the courage to write about their own experiences; this process allowed that to happen. I am aware that it encouraged some of the respondents to discuss the contents with their family and friends and opened up dialogue that previously had not been possible. Finally, some interviewees expressed some relief that ‘someone is telling our side’ and felt that they were making a difference to the lives of other people of mixed parentage by sharing their experiences with me. Having a copy of their transcript hopefully reassured them that what they had said was valuable.

Insider status

Linked with the concept of power dynamics is the issue of insider status. Merton (1972/73) questions how valid a claim to insider status is. He is concerned, certainly when considering the racial origins of the parties to the interview, that there is no such thing as a homogeneous Black or white community. Merton (1972/73:15) says that

claiming insider or outsider status suggests that ‘... one has monopolistic or privileged access to knowledge, or is wholly excluded from it, by virtue of one’s group membership or social position’. Song and Parker (1995:243) hold a similar view.

They state:

Thus the dual categories of ‘black/white’, as well as ‘insider/outsider’, have not only tended to obscure the diversity of experiences and viewpoints between and within various groups, but these categories have also obscured the diversity of experiences which can occur between the researcher and the researched.

As two sociologists who are both of mixed parentage, they understand only too well that insider status is even more problematic when researching people of mixed parentage who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Do I, as the offspring of a working class English mother and a middle class Indian father have anything in common with someone who has a middle class Australian mother and a working class Pakistani father? Being female and approaching middle age, what do I have in common with a teenage male, or an elderly one? Insider status when researching people of mixed parentage is only claimed on one level; namely, sharing the experience of being of mixed parentage. The common thread is learning to negotiate two, or more, racial(ised) identities and dealing with the racism or prejudice which comes from either ‘side’ of one’s origins. As Song (ibid.:248) again states, ‘...experiences of racism and discrimination were always assumed to be a key point of commonality between the interviewees and me, and this recognition of commonality was important in establishing trust between us’.

There are other potential difficulties when there is a claimed mutual understanding or characteristic shared by interviewer and respondent. Where both researcher and researched define themselves as Black, there can be a false sense of security for the

interviewee who may believe that the information provided remains in the hands of the interviewer whereas, as we have seen earlier, there are often several people involved in the analysis of what can be very personal data.

A further pitfall is that the research can be marginalised as it is considered too subjective and biased; it comes as no surprise that such criticism is not made when the two parties are white. William H. Turner (1986) in his study of Black Harlan, Appalachia, his home area, felt that his knowledge of the local area, the fact that his family had lived and worked in the region for many years and that he was known to many of his respondents allowed for easy rapport between him and both Black and white interviewees. However, one of the difficulties for him as a Black ethnographer was that he felt external pressure to be extra vigilant in his research of the experience of the Black residents in order to 'avoid the pre-ordained definitions I take (as an insider) of issues and specific networks and other social structures. That is, I must detach affirmation from affection' (1986:282).

Despite the potential pitfalls, there are some advantages to achieving insider status. Finch (in Bell and Roberts, 1984:77) in the study of the wives of clergymen discovered that by admitting that she was, at the time, married to a minister, she was welcomed as 'one of them ... My motives, apparently, had been explained'. At the very beginning of my own research I did not divulge to the people I interviewed my own mixed origins (except the friends and colleagues who already knew my background). After the first three interviews, I decided that the process would be more productive if people knew my position beforehand and so I began to explain at the first contact or else at the end of the preamble during the interview. Often during the

process respondents would state that they ‘noticed something’ about me. A typical comment was, ‘... I could see, if I saw you, I would know that you have got some other blood in you. I wouldn’t know what it was, but I would know that you’d got some other blood in you.’ Another interviewee stated:

I knew you were mixed but I didn’t know what. In fact you look like my Mum, just colour-wise. All her life people have asked my Mum, ‘Are you Greek? Are you this? Are you that?’ All her life.’

When this happened, the interview appeared to flow more easily, or perhaps I relaxed into the process more, feeling that I had gained authenticity and credibility. In fact, even then, I would suggest that insider status was not necessarily thoroughly established at this point. Throughout the interviews, as two-way conversations occurred, more similarities of experience were shared and so insider status was granted, sometimes early in the process and, at other times, near the end.

I felt that being given such status by the respondents was a privilege. As Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (in Josselson, 1996:117) says, being an insider did not just enable her respondents to talk more comfortably but was of personal benefit, ‘...interviewing these women was for me an act of liberation as well as a labor of love’. Such satisfaction for me came when some respondents expressed that the interview process had encouraged them to develop a clearer understanding of their identity and that this was as a result of talking to someone else who is of mixed parentage. One interviewee said:

I wasn’t too confident about this [the interview]; I didn’t want to do this. I was thinking, ‘I really don’t want to talk about it.’ And then when Mum told me that you were mixed parentage and I thought that maybe it is ... This is ... I actually thought the other ... maybe it’s time that I actually just let it out. It’s a good opportunity.

Analysis and interpretation

Analysis of qualitative data is often seen as problematic. When compared to the ‘hard facts’ of quantitative data, transcriptions, interview notes and other qualitative data are ‘described as voluminous, unstructured and unwieldy.’ (Bryman and Burgess, 1994:216) Systematic analysis is essential if qualitative research is to be credible. Probably the most popular analytical style used by those undertaking qualitative research is grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This style of analysis aims to draw out concepts and theory from the collected data and to encourage the use of coding systems in order to create the concepts. This approach helps to ‘increase the production of research which is detailed, non-trivial and of use to lay-persons as well as to sociologists’ (Turner, 1981:226). In my own analysis, I modified the grounded theory approach to make it appropriate for my particular area of study.

Glaser and Strauss suggested nine stages of analysis, the first being the development of categories which closely fit the data. In developing categories from the data I had collected, I first of all looked at what I considered ‘common sense’ elements of the research area. In a word processing package, I placed each transcript in a separate file and used a simple ‘find’ command to look up incidents of particular words such as ‘family’ and ‘area’. To further investigate these categories, I expanded the search from, for example, ‘family’ to ‘parents’, ‘mother’, ‘Mum’, ‘father’, ‘Dad’, ‘sister’, ‘brother’, ‘siblings’ and so on.

The second grounded theory stage is to saturate the categories. In my research, each category was given a general title but within this title was a multiplicity of options

which I investigated until I could find no other reference to that particular category. As a result of this saturation, I was able to make some sense of the accumulated data (grounded theory stages three and four). For example, it was obvious that those who had attended school in 'multicultural' areas were more likely to have friends from wider ethnic backgrounds than those who lived in rural areas. However, further examination showed that being in 'mixed' schools did not necessarily protect respondents from racism and that issues of identity were challenged in both areas albeit in different ways. While investigating the obvious areas, I found unexpected ones. For example, when looking at such words as 'racism' or 'prejudice' and their many other euphemisms, I came across the term 'You think you're nice' as a derogatory remark. This led to an analysis of a particular form of 'shade-ocracy'. There were also clear linkages between some categories. For instance, when looking at 'friends', 'mates' or 'peers', it made sense to link this with 'school' or 'college' and these categories were also linked to 'location'.

It is essential in this type of research to not only look only for data which confirms the researcher's viewpoint but also to look for new, unexpected results. Researchers need to be careful not to ignore what they do not want to see, especially when it does not fit with their own experiences or values. It is clear that the researcher's own agenda can impact not only on the process but also on the analysis; analysis cannot be value free, 'Who the researcher is can no longer be left out of the account without jeopardising the validity of the enquiry' (Schatz and Walker, 1995:5). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:210) also point out:

What is important is that these [existing ideas of the researcher] do not take the form of prejudgments, forcing interpretation of the data into their mould, but are instead used to make sense of the data. This requires the exercise of some analytic nerve, tolerating uncertainty and ambiguity in one's

interpretations, and resisting the temptation to rush to determinate conclusions.'

By using grounded theory as a basis of analysis, I found it easier to allow the data to determine the more obscure categories rather than only imposing my own. However, I had to frequently question my choices in order to reduce the possibility of my own agenda having too much impact on the eventual conclusions.

As much qualitative research is concerned with the lives of a multiplicity of people, it is, as Linde (1993:96) says, not possible to always provide accurate interpretations:

The investigator cannot hope to come up with a single correct interpretation, but can attempt to produce one or more interpretations that will be adequate for the analytical purposes of the investigation ...

There are too many perspectives to provide a simple portrayal of people's lives and experiences, even if they have similar ancestry. However, it is possible, through the interview conversations to elicit narratives which can explain respondents' experiences when they are set in their social and historical context.

As my area of research concerns people who cannot be neatly placed into convenient classifications and whose origins and experiences are not easily compared, it was important that I did not use rigid processes in order to extract information. Using limited statistics to understand the social context was helpful, as was asking the respondents for 'factual' information about their backgrounds. The bulk of the research, however, was carried out using semi-structured questions which allowed interviewees the freedom to express their experiences and views how they wished.

Conclusion

Analysing such a wide range of data was not easy but using a loose version of grounded theory and a simple word processing feature I was able to investigate many different aspects of the respondents' own versions of their lives. Despite the heterogeneous nature of the group, there were several experiences common to most of the respondents. There were also some unusual ones which highlighted the very unconfined nature of the research group. This ensured that I did not provide neat, clear cut theories about the development of racial(ised) identity in people of mixed parentage but that I demonstrated that there were as many options for developing stability as there were different narratives about how this had been achieved.

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Methods

Introduction

This chapter is an introduction to the data collected for this research. It includes a discussion of the data collection techniques and questionnaire format. There is also an explanation of the interview process. I describe how the data was recorded and, finally, there is an account of the particular features of Parts One and Two of the interviews and of the sample.

Data collection

The total number of interviews completed was thirty-four. This number includes the five pilot interviews which, although different in minor ways, had a valuable contribution to make to the research.

Obtaining the first few interviews was initially straightforward; I contacted friends and colleagues who were only too happy to help out. Unfortunately, once the pilot study and the first four main interviews were completed, the situation became more difficult. Hoping to use the ‘snowballing’ technique, I had asked the first group of respondents if they would approach family or friends to ask if they would be willing to be interviewed. Unfortunately, because this was not their own project and therefore not a priority in their minds, they would often forget to do this. Other enthusiastic people gave me phone numbers of people around the UK but, because I am self-funded, the potential interviewees lived too far away for me to arrange to visit them without incurring unreasonable cost.

I therefore tried several other ways of contacting potential interviewees. I wrote to a local radio station sending them a brief pre-written request but heard nothing back. Another radio station allowed me to go on air but, as a news broadcast was imminent, I was only able to speak for about 60 seconds. A breakthrough came with an insert in a school newsletter. I received a phone call from an interested parent who put me in touch with a community project staffed by two people of mixed parentage who were both very happy to be interviewed. Other schools and churches located in inner or outer city areas were sent information but, although two of the schools agreed to put my request in their newsletter and even offered me interviewing space, no one contacted me. At times I became despondent and realised this was not a helpful way of meeting possible respondents. Wilson's (1987) research had used the snowballing method successfully but only because her contacts had been made via an organisation which specifically supported children of mixed parentage and their families and therefore had a vested interest in Wilson's work. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) had official backing for their research and targeted a narrow age group within a particular setting, viz. schools. Although they were occasionally frustrated at the lack of assistance they received from some head teachers, the narrowly defined research group made the process simpler than with my own target group.

By coincidence, the situation changed quite dramatically when a flyer about a community group for children of mixed parentage in the Midlands was passed to me by a tutor. This resulted in contact with two of the staff members who were both of mixed parentage, one of Indian/English heritage and the other of African-Caribbean/Irish origins. One of these respondents, at the end of her interview, gave me the telephone numbers of three of her siblings. All of them agreed to see me and

one of them gave me five further contacts. The ‘snowball’ effect of these contacts has been invaluable. An important lesson I learned from this was to ask for phone numbers *at the time of requesting further contacts* rather than hoping people would phone me with the information. I was concerned at first that all my interviewees may have the same political perspective (as in the case of Wilson’s work) especially as I and many of the initial interviewees were from public sector or voluntary organisations which prioritised equal opportunities issues. This fear was unfounded as there was eventually a wide range of experiences, occupations and family backgrounds within the sample.

It was interesting to note that I had far more female than male contacts at one point. This was no doubt due to the fact that I had more female colleagues and friends that I could approach. I managed to redress the balance later in the research process by not accepting any more female contacts. Undoubtedly this will have resulted in some valuable contributions being lost but it was important to me to have a sample which was not only more representative but also allowed me to understand the experiences of both women and men (see theoretical sampling, Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Questionnaire format

Formal questionnaires are, I believe, of limited use in the type of study I have undertaken. To quote Richard Ochberg (in Josselson, 1996:97), ‘... questionnaires, for example, limit our informants to narrow menus of preselected questions and answers. In contrast, interviews let informants choose the events that matter to them and put their own construction on them.’ In the end I used a mixture of formal and open-ended questions which seemed the ideal solution. The small pilot study (5 interviews)

aimed to assess whether the informal questionnaire was an adequate tool for not only eliciting information but also for ensuring the respondents felt comfortable with the process. It was essential that I was able to develop rapport with the respondents and so all aspects of the pilot study were evaluated. The pilot showed up some omissions in the questions I had formulated and also identified the need for a consistent starting point with each respondent, including a very clear request to tape record the interview. I also attempted with the pilot study to include as wide a range of respondent attributes as possible¹. While no such research can be wholly representative, I believe that I managed to cover an extensive number of variables.

Taking all of the above into account, I began each main study interview with a preamble that explained my expectations and responsibilities². Part One of the interview consisted of questions about simple biographical details, such as occupation, age group, number of siblings etc. (see Appendix 2). This was an attempt to relax the respondent by requiring one or two word answers and it was evident by the body language of many of the respondents that they did become less anxious as the questions progressed. Part Two included questions about family background and these responses allowed me to form a pen-picture of their backgrounds and present

¹ e.g. 2 male and 3 female respondents; one housewife, two students, one retired domestic worker and one public sector employee; age range from 22 years to 83 years; 2 with African-Caribbean/Welsh origins, 1 Asian/Irish, 1 Asian/English and 1 African-Caribbean/English origins; 4 with Black fathers and 1 with a Black mother; 1 living in an inner city area, 1 in the outer city, 2 in suburbia and one in the countryside; 1 interview took place in my home, 2 in the respondents' homes, 1 in a university department office and 1 in the respondent's own workplace.

² One interview was conducted by a friend, who is herself of African ancestry, who lives in Switzerland. She interviewed a respondent of Swiss/Sri Lankan parentage. She followed the questionnaire but it was interesting to note that, as an actor/musician, rather than a sociologist, she elicited more information about the respondent's role models and musical influences. I would have concentrated more on the family and educational aspects of the interviewees experiences. Nonetheless the interview provided many helpful insights into not only the particular respondent but also into a continental European view of mixed parentage.

position. Part Three consisted of more open-ended questions such as ‘Can you describe your childhood to me? What sort of area were you brought up in? Who did you live with?’ I found that this enabled the respondents to talk about themselves in a leisurely and comfortable way. This also enabled me, during the analysis, to place their responses into a social context in order to understand the respondents’ biographies in terms of wider society. As Bertaux (1981:44) states:

We should tell stories; not only the life stories of various people but also the story of such and such a pattern of social relations, the story of a culture, of an institution, of a social group; and also, our *own* story as research workers.

The questions were asked in an order which, to me, appeared to naturally follow on. For example, question three asks respondents ‘Did you ever notice that you were treated differently from other children because of your Dad/Mum? Were you ever teased because of your Dad/Mum?’ This was followed by ‘How did you cope with this?’ and then by the question, ‘What effect do you think these experiences had on you?’ At times I interjected with follow-up questions. An example of this was during an interview when the respondent was rather nervous. The following is an extract of the first question in Part Three,

Q Can we talk first of all about your childhood? Things like what sort of area were you brought up in? Who did you live with? How did you get on with your family?

A I was brought up, until I was about 9, in ----- [deprived city district] with my Mum and Dad and my two younger brothers. My two older brothers are half brothers; we’ve all got the same father but I see them as brothers. We met them when they were older. They didn’t live with us but we had close contact with them.

We were ... just a family ... I was the oldest one in the family at home.

Q How did you get on with each other?

A Great ... it was good. You used to get in trouble with your parents and have fights with my brother and stuff, so it was just normal.

Shortly after my Dad died, we moved to ----- [inner city area].

Q What effect did your Dad's death have on your family?

A Upside down .. my brother was born. He was about 6 months old when he died so it was a massive effect.

Q How did he die?

A Cancer. I think he must have been ill for quite a long time but it didn't seem like it to ... like, me and my brother. It didn't seem like it, it just ... happened.

Q Where did your Mum and Dad meet then?

A I think it was like on the blues scene and stuff like that ... blues. Mum grew up ... I suppose she was a rebel really. She was into Mods and stuff and she used to go up and down on runs - into this and into that. And she was into Motown and stuff and she was brought up in an inner city area as well anyway, so ...

The inclusion of extra questions mostly occurred when I wanted to find out more information but it was also a useful way of steering the conversation back to the question or else reassuring any respondent who was struggling to think of any more to say.

Interview process

Most of the initial contacts were made by telephone. The majority of people appeared happy to be approached although occasionally I would meet with a guarded response. This reticence seemed to disappear when I explained the process. The phone calls took a matter of minutes and only one person asked for a confirmation letter, although I sent letters to those whose interviews were planned some weeks ahead. The venue for the interview was chosen by the respondent. Some who were employed preferred day time appointments and agreed to see me at their places of work or at the university. Others were happy to see me at their homes. I found this arrangement helpful as it again placed interviewees into their social settings.

Not all respondents were alone when I interviewed them. Donald's daughter, who had made the introduction, remained during the interview and provided some useful historical information. Eleanor and Azeem are partners and were interviewed together, as were Rudolph and Anita. I found that there was dialogue between the two respondents in both cases which provided greater insight and variety in the resulting data. A similar process occurred when Hazel's friend, who is also of mixed parentage, sat in on the proceedings. She added some personal biography as well as confirming much of Hazel's viewpoint. Half way through the interview with Carmel, a friend who is of mixed parentage came to visit and also joined in the conversation, taking the same role as Hazel's friend mentioned above.

I tried not to look at the questionnaire during the interview so that it was more suggestive of a conversation than an interview. My own perspective was only introduced into the actual interview when I felt it would help the respondent to feel more comfortable about offering their own personal experiences. Often at the close of the interview, respondents and I would talk about the subject matter and I was asked questions about my own experience and viewpoint. I would happily discuss these issues at this point as it clearly could not then influence the data.

The interviews took between 45 minutes and 1½ hours depending on how much detail was offered by the interviewee. There were a few times, usually when I had a stockpile of tapes to be transcribed, when I was relieved when an interview ended before the first side of the tape finished (C90 tapes) as I was aware that this would take less time to type up; at these points I made strenuous efforts not to close the interviews prematurely. However, there were many other occasions when the detail

was so useful, fascinating or unusual that I wished the interview could have gone on longer.

Recording and transcribing of material

Transcribing, even using a transcription machine, took far longer than I had anticipated. Typing the conversations was a pleasure when the voice recording was clear and uninterrupted. However, many people would move their position in relation to the tape recorder or would have to deal with a domestic or work situation and there would be background noise which made listening to the tape more difficult. One mishap occurred when I paused the tape for the respondent to answer the telephone and forgot to take off the pause for at least a further 20 minutes of conversation. Trying to recall the lost part of the interview was very difficult. Needless to say I was extremely careful not to make the same mistake again.

I wrote the responses to Parts One and Two as they were given. Part Three was tape recorded and later transcribed. For the pilot study and most of the main interviews I transcribed in full but for some I omitted long general responses and kept to particular and specific replies. As mentioned in chapter four, all but two of the interviewees responded well to being tape recorded. Despite the obvious practical problems which can be encountered using tape recorders e.g. batteries failing, AC lead not long enough, people turning away from the microphone, I agree with Barbara Laslett and Rhona Rapoport (1975:972) who state that the benefits of tape recording are that:

‘(1) it permits more complete and accurate transcription of the interview materials, and (2) it allows the interviewer greater freedom to concentrate and become involved with the interview situation, by eliminating the need to be concerned with problems of recall and/or note-taking. It also allows the interviewer to observe more of the nonverbal nuances of the interview situation’.

All the tapes were transcribed and I maintained a consistent system for indicating pauses and information omitted by my choice either because of irrelevance or because of confidentiality. Emotion was more difficult to express and I dealt with this by either using capitalisation, pause marks (e.g. ... or [...]) or italics. In one interview the respondent, who is a performing artist, was very dramatic when describing some of her experiences. I transcribed part of the interview concerning her school days as follows:

I never wanted to go to that school. I never even went for two weeks because I was still adamant and begging my Mum, 'I ain't going.' I was just a brat now; not a horrible brat to my Mum, but I was just rebelling in that respect but not like horribly; but I must have been. So the teacher come along and goes, 'How many have you got Lesley [respondent's friend] out of ten?' And she was, 'Four, Miss.' And she was like, 'Lesley [tut]'. 'And how many has ----- [respondent] got out of ten?' 'Four, Miss.' 'FOUR!! [shouting]' She hit me across my head. I thought, 'Regret.' I get up. I flung the woman over the table, out the classroom, booted ... The class was like ... [gasp].

Transcriptions were always sent to respondents with thank you cards and an agreement to change any factual aspects which I had recorded incorrectly. No one contacted me about changes. The system of data analysis I used is described in the previous chapter.

Characteristics of the sample

As mentioned above, I tried to ensure that the sample covered as wide a range of people and potential experiences as possible. Choosing the categories which follow was a result of understanding the links between the categories and issues of racial(ised) identity. The particular variables mentioned below were contained in the first two parts of the interview. The information is more 'factual' than impressionistic. However, it will become clear that I found it difficult to make a simple separation

between data collection and analysis. The data outlined in this chapter is not merely a collection of abstract facts. Each section constitutes an embryonic discussion of the categories which are detailed in chapter six when the third part of the interview is discussed.

It was important to discover the racial and ethnic origins of the respondents, as this sometimes impacted on their understanding of their history and assisted in their self-education in terms of identification with particular racial(ised) symbols. Also other categories were chosen because they were concerned with the *experience* of becoming aware of their racial(ised) identities through the mediating elements of age, family position, gender, location etc.

Age

This particular variable was chosen in the hope of discovering how the expression of a racial(ised) identity changes with age. It is clear from previous research (Wilson, 1987, Hall, Bradshaw and Cauce *at al*, in Root, 1992, Tizard and Phoenix, 1993) that for people of mixed parentage there is an awareness of racial(ised) language and identity from an early age and certainly my own research demonstrates this. It is also clear that there are various stages during childhood and adolescence when some of this awareness become stronger because of both positive and negative contact with others, both Black and white. My own concern was not to disprove the existence of this particular process but to question whether it is always the same process with each individual and if it ends at adolescence, as Erikson (1968) suggests. By studying respondents over the age of eighteen, the participants were able to have an overview of their childhood experiences; I was able to ascertain from them how they had

experienced the different stages of growing awareness and also whether they had experienced changes following adolescence.

For analysis purposes I banded the respondents into age groups although I also marked in a research diary the actual ages. Of those I interviewed the majority, 32 out of 34 (94%), were between the ages of 18 and 45. The other two respondents were over 80 years old. I believe the lack of interviewees between 46 and 75 would have been corrected if my research had been concentrated around port areas such as Liverpool, Cardiff and London where the 'mixed' populations are much older due to relationships established between 'coloured seamen' and local women going back to the 19th century and even earlier (Fryer, 1984, Visram, 1986). It is interesting to note that the two eldest interviewees were in fact from London and Cardiff. As my research was mainly carried out in the Midlands, the age group was inevitably narrower as the majority of people of mixed parentage in this area were born to Black parents who had come to England from the 1950s and onwards (Modood *et al*, 1997).

Gender

I interviewed 19 women and 15 men. I noted the gender of the interviewees as I believe that experiences within family relationships and in society are gendered. There is a considerable weight of research concerning the role of men and women in families and societies (e.g. Mernissi, 1988, Keen, 1992, Tannen, 1992, Gray, 1992). It is clear that both men and women experience advantage and disadvantage but in different situations. When race is an added factor, there still remain gendered experiences. For example, Claudia Lewis-Moore (1996:8) states:

Assumed attributes of Black women include the over-aggressive African woman; the strong, dominant African Caribbean woman who is head of the

household and the passive or 'hysterical' Asian woman who is subject to oppressive family practices.

Imagery of men of African and Asian ancestry is also distinct but equally negative. Ali Rattansi (1992:27) quotes Jenkins' research (1985, 1986) which describes the stereotypes of African Caribbean and Asian workers (although not mentioned, the stereotypes appear to be those of male workers rather than female).

Some regarded Asians as lazy compared with Afro-Caribbeans, while others reversed the comparison. Generally, Asians in Britain have been regarded both as scroungers *and* as so industrious that they are taking over jobs and businesses, as both thrifty *and* flashy ... Afro-Caribbeans are seen as both lazy *and* as extraordinarily successful in activities requiring considerable physical exertion and mental discipline such as sport and athletics (Rattansi's emphases).

For all Black men there have been continued sexual fantasies of the impassioned or the sultry (Barnes, 1949, Fryer, 1984). When I come to the analysis of the questionnaires, it will be clear that there is a difference in experiences of men and women of mixed parentage. This is especially true when considering their encounters with racism and prejudice which I believe impacts on their understanding of their racial(ised) identities.

Area of residence / location

Area of residence was included as a variable as I believed it may be indicative of the contacts people of mixed parentage have with Black and white people on an every day basis. I felt it may also denote an allegiance with 'the Black community' or 'the white community' as well as social mobility which may, in turn, be linked to aspects of compromise, or 'passing', in expression of a racial(ised) identity. Wilson's (1987) respondents all came from a town in the south of England with a growing 'mixed

race' population. It is difficult to ascertain from Wilson's work whether or not she took into account the area of residence as her work focused much more on the influence of the family. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) suggested that they wanted to look at social class in their study but, as has been pointed out in chapter two, more than half of the sample attended independent schools, suggesting that they were from high income families. This may not be the experience of most people of mixed parentage, many of whom would be from lower or middle income families (Barn, 1993). In my own study only four respondents had attended public secondary schools and one of these had received a full scholarship.

Location was a rather problematic category. Residence was divided into inner city, outer city or suburbia. For those interviewed at work places, I had to use my own knowledge of their home areas to make judgements about the type of locality in which they lived. Even interviewees' own descriptions were not necessarily those I would use myself. One respondent lived in an area considered by others in that vicinity as inner/outer city boundary. The particular respondent described the area as suburbia. I interviewed two brothers in what I would describe as suburbia to be told later by a worker for a national survey company that it was considered one of the worst districts in the area with the highest crime and lowest house prices. A further complication with this category was that a small number of people had been brought up in areas very different to where they now live (better or worse). I concluded that 14 respondents (41%) lived in what could loosely be called inner city or 'racially mixed' areas, 7 (21%) lived in the outer city perhaps better described as 'predominantly white' and 13 (38%) lived in the suburbs or countryside.

I found it more helpful to use the main part of the document to assess whether the childhood experiences which had influenced their racial(ised) identities and identifications had been in predominantly white areas or in 'racially mixed' areas. My deductions from this part of the 'statistical' data would suggest that slightly more (48%) of respondents had grown up in the inner city, 16% had grown up in outer city areas and 36% in suburbia or countryside. This suggests that there is not much movement between type of area during childhood and adulthood even when families moved residence to a completely different locality. This may indicate the level of personal comfort people feel in settings where they can be accepted and where they feel free to express their racial(ised) identities in what they consider a 'safe' environment. In the next chapter, which analyses the respondents' experiences, we will see the impact on identity of those who have moved from one type of area to another, whether from suburbia to the inner city or vice versa.

Occupation

Asking the respondents to describe their occupation was an attempt to understand two particular areas of their lives. Firstly, whether they were in jobs chosen because they required knowledge of race issues, and in particular, those which impacted on people of mixed parentage. Secondly, to discover whether occupation was linked to social mobility and also whether compromise concerning expression of racial(ised) identity had been necessary for this mobility. Throughout my research I strongly resisted over-classifying people. As my main premise is that identity development is a never-ending aspect of life, I felt that using the Inspector General's static classifications of employment would restrict respondents' self-classification. I did loosely band occupations such as social work to include probation officers, community workers

and project workers. I also banded under teacher/lecturer people who described themselves as such whether they were at university level or classroom assistants. It would appear that none of the interviewees was unemployed. However, there were several respondents who described themselves having an occupation but who would accept that the work is occasional and income is irregular. In this case being unemployed and 'awaiting opportunities' often become the same thing. Musicians or performers are a good example of this. In the present climate of increased self-employment and freelance work, occupational title seems to be more important than current employment status.

I found that eight respondents (23%) were in jobs which necessitated a knowledge of race issues whether this was as teachers of cultural studies, project workers with young people of mixed parentage or musicians and performing artists who, at least some of the time, use their skills to work with Black children in general and children of mixed parentage in particular. They were aware that their mixed parentage had been an occupational qualification when applying for their jobs or tendering for contracts.

Several respondents described their experiences of discrimination when applying for jobs. No one suggested that they felt they had to deny or minimise their racial(ised) identity in order to get their present jobs but many felt that there were strong pressures on them to conform to particular expectations in order to keep the jobs. The impact these experiences had on their racial(ised) identity will be discussed in the next chapter

Self-description

Of my sample, 32 (94%) respondents were born in the United Kingdom, one was born in the Caribbean and one was born in Africa. In my desire not to force respondents into categories, I asked them to say how they would describe themselves on race and ethnic monitoring forms if they were free to use any description rather than the prescribed ones. There were twenty-six different responses. Although this would create an impossible task for national monitoring, it demonstrated that self-assigned race and ethnicity are very individual. Unlike Tizard's and Phoenix's research (1993:51) which found that, "Only 24 per cent of the mixed-parentage young people used the term 'mixed race'", my research showed that 13 out of the 34 people interviewed (38%) used the word 'mixed' in their self-description while another 11 (32%) used descriptions which clearly indicated they were of mixed parentage e.g. 'White/Other and Black/Other', 'Welsh Caribbean' or 'Cultural Hybrid'. This suggests that as people mature they have a firmer commitment to declaring themselves 'mixed' than perhaps when they were younger. Only 12 out of the 34 interviewees (35%) used 'Black' in their self-description, but many more, when discussing their experiences, clearly aligned themselves with other Black people. Only two respondents described themselves as white; it is interesting to note that one was in his 80s and had spent most of his life trying to 'fit in' in a predominantly white community and the other, who was in his late teens, had received so much teasing at school that he felt pressured to avoid telling people about his heritage. At the end of the interview, however, he stated that he felt it was time to become bolder and to get rid of the barriers of guilt and fear he felt held him back in relationships.

It is also interesting to note that only one of the four respondents of African origin described herself as African whereas four of the 20 respondents of African-Caribbean origin used the term within their descriptions which were, 'African/Irish/Other - UK black', 'African', 'English born African' and 'Black - African' Although this is an indication of the trend of some people of African-Caribbean origin to declare their African ancestry, it is worth noting that in my sample, such terminology was only used by those who professed a strong allegiance to Rastafarian philosophy, although not all Rastafarians in the sample used 'African' in their self-description. In the small Asian sample, one person described himself as White European. Of the remainder, 2 refused on ethical grounds, two described themselves as 'mixed race', one as 'Black - ---³/Australian' and one as 'English, mixed'. This again indicates to me the individuality of the respondents and that assumptions about homogeneity should be questioned. In the next chapter we will see how interviewees understand their 'mixed identity' and how they 'manage' this in the context of a society which sees racial identity as fixed.

Parental racial and ethnic origin

When looking at parental ethnic and racial origins I found that the majority (85%) of respondents had Black fathers; there were only 5 (15%) Black mothers in the sample. This sample is slightly more than in the general Black population where 'Two-thirds of the Caribbean and South Asian people who had entered mixed ethnic partnerships were men; among the small number of Chinese mixed relationships, it was the other way round - two-thirds of the Chinese people with white partners were women' (Modood *et al*, 1997:31) but is perhaps more representative of the trends in the 1950s

³ See footnote on p. 116

and 1960s. All but two of the African-Caribbean parents were first generation (were not born in England) and came from Aruba, Barbados, Jamaica and St Kitts. The Asian parents were all first generation and were from Fiji, India and Pakistan and one other country⁴. The African parents were all born in Africa and were from Nigeria and Somalia and two other countries. This question was asked in order to ascertain the connection between parental 'homeland' and racial(ised) identity. Through this question, along with more detailed responses in the main part of the interview, I hoped to also discover whether having contact with both parents resulted in a more stable sense of racial(ised) identity as a result of the transmission of culture through food, music, language and religion. I also wanted to ascertain whether a person's ethnic origins influenced their self-description and identity.

Parental language and religion

This particular question is linked to the previous one as I suggest that language and religion can be useful indicators of cultural affiliation. I was interested to see whether access to non-English languages or non-westernised forms of religion would ensure greater contact with or understanding of Black family members and Black communities. Very few participants were fluent in languages other than English. Two brothers whose mother is Finnish were fluent in that language but only one had learned Urdu and was able to communicate with his Pakistani family. He also had a stated interest in learning more about Islam. Those with a parent who had arrived from the Caribbean had been discouraged as children from speaking patois but many

⁴ It is important to note that three of the respondents were very concerned that the birthplace of their Black parent was not noted. Two of them had parents who were political refugees and they were concerned that details may help to identify them and create some danger for their parent or for them. A third was worried that she could be identified by any friends who might get sight of details of her interview if the thesis was to be published. I assured all three respondents that I would agree to their wishes.

had made the decision as teenagers to learn what is presumably a general form of patois as distinct from that spoken by their Caribbean parent as part of a developing pan-Caribbeanisation of their identity.

Religion did not play a major part in the lives of most respondents. Most of the respondents took their spiritual lead, if they had any, from their mothers. Out of the 34 interviewees, one was brought up mainly by her father, one was raised for most of her life by grandparents and one by adoptive parents, the remainder lived for the most part with both parents. As most of the mothers were English or Irish, with generally Christian roots, the offspring did not feel compelled to adopt what would be considered by the general British population, a 'foreign' religion. The four interviewees with Muslim fathers were not brought up as Muslims, neither were the two respondents with Hindu fathers brought up as Hindus (although one of these fathers had converted to Christianity before his daughter was born). The respondent whose father is Buddhist and mother Quaker developed a respect for both religious groups but, due to the lack of Buddhist Temples in the area where she grew up, attended Quaker meetings. The only ones who seemed to find religion a problematic factor in their childhoods were the four offspring of a mother who is a Jehovah's Witness. All four of them felt that the pressure from her about her religious beliefs overshadowed all other childhood and adolescent pressures, including racism. Tizard and Phoenix (1993) found a rather stronger connection between parental religious beliefs and their respondents' own allegiances. This is perhaps sometimes more a result of compliance with family expectations than personal beliefs. Most of those in my sample who expressed strong religious beliefs had not had very much encouragement as children but had made their own choices as teenagers and adults

Parental self-description

I wondered whether the way parents described their own racial and ethnic origins would impact on how their offspring described themselves. I had to rely on how the respondents thought their parents would describe themselves as I did not interview any parents. Responses varied greatly. For example, those who self-describe as mixed race had Black parents who they thought would call themselves 'Black West Indian', 'Asian', 'West Indian', 'Jamaican', 'Bajan' 'Anglo-Indian' and 'Not known'. Those who included the word 'Black' at any point in their self-description had a Black parent who might describe himself or herself as 'Black-Caribbean', 'Jamaican', 'Afro-Caribbean', 'Black', 'West Indian', 'English - coloured' and 'Not known'. The parents' self -descriptions appeared to be of little consequence to the respondents and certainly did not impact on their own racial(ised) identities.

Parental separation

I asked respondents whether their parents were still together in order to get some indication of family stability and experiences. Only two respondents, one of African and one of African-Caribbean origin had parents who had very short term relationships. All other respondents' parents had been married, a situation which may have been different if the sample had been younger because of the lack of pressure to be married in more recent years (Kiernan and Eastaugh, 1993). Fifty two percent of the respondents' parents had divorced. Breaking the figures down further, 44% of the sample of Asian/white origin had experienced divorce, 58% in the African-Caribbean/white origin sample had divorced or 'not together long-term' parents and 100% of the African/white sample had separated parents. From the discussions with respondents much of the divorce is attributable to the whole range of usual marital

pressures but there is often associated pressures of family or societal disapproval to be added to the equation.

One disturbing fact is that although the only mothers who had died were those in the oldest sample, 13 interviewees (38%) had experienced the death of their father (10 fathers), only two from what could be described as old age. A further two respondents had fathers who were dying which suggests that by the time my research is completed, it may be that 44% of the sample has a deceased father. All but one of the fathers mentioned are Black. The deceased white father died when very old. As the sample is a relatively young one, it is surprising to me that so many have a deceased parent.

The impact on the respondents of divorce or death was variable. Some had very poor relationships with their fathers and others were very close to them. However, as Fiona Marshall (1993:79) points out, even when there has been a poor relationship with a parent many still grieve the loss, 'You also have to mourn for the relationship you never had, for the father or mother you would have loved to have loved'. Although Marshall is talking specifically about loss of parents through death, divorce can create similar responses. We also need to consider that most of these respondents had lost the parent who had marked out their 'difference' from the rest of society and while there may be some relief for individuals who found such difference problematic, for the majority who had come to value their mixed identity the loss would inevitably cause a reassessment of their own position in society. As Marshall (ibid. 85) states:

Inevitably, losing a parent means losing a part of yourself: the flesh from which you come, if nothing else. But it's actually far more: you've lost someone who was greatly responsible for the moulding of your identity - you

may even have depended on the identity which your father had of you, on his definition of you.

Siblings

I wondered whether the family position of the interviewee might play a part with the pressures on eldest children to be compliant or to set an example to the younger children. I was also interested to find out if being a middle child would result in more identity dilemmas or whether developing an awareness of and an interest in a black identity would be the domain of the 'rebel' in some families.

Race and ethnicity of partner

I feel it is important to note that all respondents in the sample were heterosexual. I did not choose only to research heterosexuals and in fact, until they mentioned their partner's gender, I made no assumptions concerning interviewees' sexuality. Sexuality may be a factor in racial(ised) identity but I did not have an opportunity to discuss this with respondents.

Seven of the respondents did not have partners at the time of interview; one was divorced, two recently separated, two chose not to be in a relationship and two were widowed. Of the remainder, fourteen had white partners (although three of these were considered to be 'mixed ethnicity'). Five had 'monoracial' Black partners and five had partners of mixed parentage.

When broken down by gender, none of the men in relationships had a 'monoracial' Black partner; two had partners of mixed parentage and two had white partners of European ethnicity and seven had white English partners. The female sample was

quite different. Of the sixteen women with partners at the time of interview, five had ‘monoracial’ Black partners, three had partners of mixed parentage, two had white partners with ‘mixed ethnicity’ and three had white English partners. It is clear that more of the men chose white partners. This finding is similar to that found in the PSI study (Modood *et al*, 1997:30) which reported that half of Caribbean men born in Britain had white partners but only a third of the women had a white partner. Men of South Asian origin were also more likely to have a white partner than their female counterparts (19% and 10% respectively).

As became evident during the discussions with respondents, the racial or ethnic identity of partners did not necessarily impact on their own racial(ised) identity but, at times, created difficulties for others who made assumptions about the respondents’ commitment to the ‘Black community’. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Offspring

Finally I asked interviewees how many children they have. This was simply to ascertain whether or not to ask at a later point how they communicate their racial(ised) identity with their children. Seventeen of the respondents had children, most having one or two children but two having seven children.

Social and personal characteristics of the interviewees

These were not recorded during the pilot study but they were entered into a ‘research diary’ for the main study. Beside brief notes which described how contact was first made and my feelings at the first contact, I also noted the setting of the interview. This included décor and also the physical appearance and demeanour of the

respondent. My feelings on completion of the interview were noted and any follow-up contact.

These notes helped to prevent the data from being ‘sterile’ (Bertaux, 1981) and allowed me to understand respondents within their specific contexts. As Kohli (in Bertaux, 1981:62) states, ‘By representing individual life histories, the biographical method is meant to give access to the reality of life of social aggregates (strata, class, cultures etc.)’. This strategy also enabled me, in many cases, to verify the continuity of respondents’ self-expression. For example, if an interviewee described having developed an awareness of their ‘Blackness’ by adopting particular cultural practices, I could survey the room for literature, music collections, art work and other visual representations which demonstrated particular identifications. Even in work environments, I looked for posters or other ‘ethnic symbols’ in the office or work area. The few interviewees who still lived with parents would clearly have less choice about their surroundings but it was interesting to note whether or not parents had incorporated aspects of their children’s dual heritage into the home.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate some of the processes involved in carrying out my research. As my research focuses on an older age range than the work of Wilson (1987) or Tizard and Phoenix (1993), it is clear that many of the processes and questions were quite different to their research.

In order to give a realistic picture, I have included the difficulties encountered. While the collection of the data was, for the most part, an enjoyable experience, there were

some frustrations especially at the transcription stage. Analysis of the information was a lengthy and often exhausting process. However, once the data was in a clear and organised system and I could see some patterns emerging, I felt energised and re-committed to the task.

Finally, it is important to stress that while I have analytically separated out the characteristics of the sample, I was careful in the interpretation to understand the interrelationship between the different variables. Chapters six and seven detail the main analysis and findings.

CHAPTER SIX

Findings - Part 1

Introduction

Much of the data I have collected relies on respondents' memories of events and their own interpretations of the meaning of those events. In chapter four I have discussed the issues surrounding such a style of data collection. It is sufficient to say here that while factual biography is an important element in identity formation, there are other elements which may be described as unsubstantiated or even 'invented' which are also valid. I concur with Kwame Anthony Appiah's (1992:282) view that 'Invented histories, invented biologies, invented cultural affinities come with every identity ...' Respondents' memories and views on how their identity has changed and developed may not be wholly accurate (contrary to Locke's, 1690, expectations) but still form an important part of their understanding of themselves and their identity.

Having used the data to generate categories in line with the application of grounded theory procedures, the information which follows is placed into sections which I believe are closely linked. For instance, I begin with the issue of physical location which looks at where respondents' grew up and also where they now live in order to ascertain the extent to which contact with others in predominantly white or in mixed areas may have influenced the sense of personal identity and its expression. Where one lives during childhood and adolescence undoubtedly affects one's experiences; it often determines the type of prejudice and racism one experiences (see chapter seven). Area of residence certainly influences the type of school attended and

friendships established as well as contact with other family members. Location can also influence the choice of intimate relationships we develop. Finally, it affects the identifications we make toward region, dialect, class, employment and so on. The process of linking categories this way is evident throughout this chapter. The other categories discussed are type of school attended and other aspects of education and occupational choice, friendships, wider family, parents, role models and heroes and partners. A separate section devoted to respondents' experiences of racism and prejudice can be found in the next chapter.

In keeping with my theoretical arguments concerning identity development (see chapter three) I have tried, as much as possible, to present the data in a way which demonstrates a developmental process. In some sections this means chronology of events is important (e.g. educational experiences in childhood, adolescence and adulthood) but in others there is more emphasis on particular experiences which contribute to identity development (e.g. moving from outer to inner city and *vice versa*). There are abbreviated conclusions at the end of each section; final comments on the findings and their relation to my theoretical framework will be found in the Conclusion (chapter eight) to the thesis.

Location

I am concerned here with geographical location, the mix of population and perceptions of 'community'. The question 'Who are my people?' (Tessman, 1995) is an important one, and the answer depends in some part on the physical environment and the communities found in that locale. All places have histories and the identity of a place depends on which histories are told and by whom. Some areas, particularly

inner and outer city areas during the 1950s and 60s, were considered by local residents to have had their unspoilt characters marred by the influx of 'strangers'. Residents would no doubt have denied that all places 'are always already hybrid' (Massey, 1995:183). At that time Black families would be aware that their presence in a particular location was problematic to local people and that they would be required to negotiate 'a place in the localist ideology' (Back, 1996:43). However, as more Black or 'mixed' families moved into the area, there was a change in the families' sense of personal safety and comfort as the people they encountered reflected more their own experiences and personal or family histories. As we have seen, a sense of coherence (Erikson, 1968), 'personhood' (Sampson, 1985) or well-being with who we are, is influenced by encounters with others, and such encounters take place in particular bounded spaces. We will see below how geographical location and communities impact on the respondents.

In order to understand the impact of location on identity development I will be looking at the type of environment respondents grew up in, what effect any move of location had and whether the choice of where to live as adults is an aspect of their self-expression.

Inner city

Accepting the difficulties in making accurate descriptions of areas (see chapter five), the data suggests that 48% of respondents had grown up in what would now be described as the 'inner city', that is, in an environment where there is high unemployment, environmental problems such as vandalism, high levels of property crime, greater fear of personal crime and greater numbers of people from minority

ethnic groups than in the general population. However most of these respondents had been born in these areas during the 1950s when they were initially the only Black people in the street. Many were aware that the situation quickly changed during their childhoods:

... it was only I think towards the latter half of the 1960s that more Black people started moving into our street. (Paul, age 28)

It was quite a residential area, erm ... there were a few black children and Indian children around when we were children but predominantly it was a white area when we were very, very young but that rapidly changed as time went on. (Claudine, age 39)

For most interviewees, the experience of living in an increasingly mixed area was a positive influence in the development of their 'mixed' identity. They felt that the greater contact with people of other backgrounds was an advantage. One respondent, Gillian (age 28), was brought up in an industrial area in the north of England with a relatively large Asian population. Gillian, whose mother is African-Caribbean and whose father is English, felt that this gave her benefits which living in the suburbs could not have provided:

My closest friends ... my very best friend was white, but my other closer friends were, both male and female, from mainly Gujarati speaking who lived in the locality. So I've sort of grown up being able to speak a few little words and phrases and going to dinner and eating Asian food and enjoying that as well.

Respondents also had connections with others who were in similar family situations and, perhaps more importantly, looked like them. Another respondent, Tricia (age 28), believes that, contrary to public images of inner city life, she was fortunate to have been brought up there. She has many friends and some relatives who have similar parentage:

From experience of talking to other mixed race people, I just didn't realise how lucky I was. I just thought that was normal really. I didn't realise the benefits I had of living in a multi-cultural inner city area. But I just took that

for granted. That's why I just saw myself ... I suppose I didn't see myself as being any different to anybody.

An interesting aspect of living in an area with a rapidly developing mixed population is that there can be different narratives of place within the same family. I interviewed four siblings who had all been brought up in the same house. One of the older sisters, Tanya (age 33), described the area in the following way:

I mean, the whole area was very posh. You know the area, [it] was very middle class, teachers and doctors and stuff like that. Our road wasn't teachers and doctors, it wasn't far off. ... there were no other black people. Within probably a year, most of the neighbours on either side and across the road had moved because they didn't like us living there ...

Ryan (age 28), only five years younger, described a very different experience. This demonstrates the rapidly changing demographics of the area :

[We] lived in a terraced house ... There were loads of kids all in the houses along so it was all very ... like a big playground. ... There were ... next to us there were an Irish family, next to them was a West Indian family, next to them was an Asian family, then another Irish family so it was all very mixed.

Comments from their younger sister, Lynn (age 26), illustrated even further changes:

It was ----- [place name], which helped as well because ----- [place name] is quite laid back and quite accepting really. So it was like there were other Black families on the road.

Q Did that make a difference?

Well, yes, because I don't ... I never felt like ... the odd one out, you know. I didn't feel like our family was the black family or anything like that and I know other families who have had that experience.

It is interesting to note that these siblings now have very different homes. Tanya's home, now situated in suburbia, does not reflect her Caribbean heritage at all whereas Ryan and Lynn both live in inner city areas with very eclectic tastes in décor and furnishings.

One of the younger interviewees, Joshua (age 22), saw living in a mixed environment as providing a sense of physical and emotional safety:

... normally when you came out of your house there were your Asian mates, your black mates, your white mates. You're walking down the road to school and everybody was out there of all different cultures. There is that feeling of, sort of, being safe that you don't realise that you had until you move into a predominantly white area ...

This sense of protection and, to a certain extent, refuge, did not wholly protect Joshua from experiences of racism or prejudice but at least allowed him support from others in similar circumstances.

Outer city

If we look at place as geography, I estimated that 16% of respondents had grown up in what could loosely be called 'outer city'. These areas are rather like buffer zones between the inner urban areas and the suburbs. They have some tree-lined streets but were traditionally overspill areas following the 1960s redevelopment of city slum areas. These areas now have a growing 'ethnic' population but there would have been very few Black families in evidence during the childhood of most respondents. In terms of social relations, most interviewees described such places as 'predominantly white'. White residents who occupy these areas often view the influx of Black people as a threat to their personal domain, "they feel as if that space is being invaded by 'foreign' newcomers" (Back, 1996:41). Malcolm (age 30), a psychiatric nurse, describes his childhood area:

I was brought up in ----- [Midlands town], a predominantly white, working class kind of place. ... It was ... initially me and my brother were the only non-white people in the area. Then a few Asians opened up a few shops and then in a year to two years their windows were getting bricks for no specific reason; just to try and get rid of them. Then another black family moved in down the road, that was, sort of, the last few years I was at school

For those brought up in such areas, there is the suggestion that living in such places contributed to an anglicised outlook on life. There was little exposure to any other cultural forms of expression. Contact with other mixed families was rarely possible and Black people were seldom seen in the locality. However, at this stage in their lives, children in these localities knew little else and accepted it as the norm. Their questioning happened as they approached adulthood and broadened their experiences.

As Hazel (age 33), who now lives in an inner city area, explains:

Where I was brought up was in erm ... ----- [outer city] and it was very ... predominantly white people ... We didn't really have much to do with black people. I mean, on the estate there would probably be about ... about 4 black families ... And because it was ... I mean, because there wasn't any Asians, there wasn't hardly any black people but because I lived there and grew up there it was the norm to me and it didn't seem like anything was wrong.

It is important to state that this exclusively British cultural upbringing did not *only* happen in the outer city or suburbia. Families living in ethnically mixed areas could just as easily remain distant from the 'otherness' of the Black parent's culture, especially where the white mothers made the decisions about diet, hairstyles and recreational activities.

Suburb and countryside

Those living as children in the suburbs or countryside (36%) seemed to experience similar 'outsider' status to those in the outer city. One difference is that most residents of outer city areas, even in the 1950s and 60s would have contact with Black people at some time either through shops, service providers or employment. This is less likely for those in suburbia or the countryside. In the more affluent areas, there may have been greater observable wealth and physical contentment but the feelings of separateness experienced by the respondents who had been brought up there were

very uncomfortable. However, it is only through adult eyes that, as they reflect back, they understand how negative the experience was. A respondent, Anna (age 37), who has only recently begun to reflect on her racial identity feels she did not experience any great sense of isolation during her childhood. However, during our meeting she became aware of having experienced as a child a compulsion to protect *others* from their own feelings. I suggest she may also have been protecting herself from the effects of their questioning, either direct or indirect:

... I went to the local school and I had a happy, uneventful childhood, meeting my friends, cycling round the streets. ... Because I know what people of a certain generation are like and therefore, especially growing up in the area I grew up in, very conservative, and if anyone looks different, then they're bound to be different so ... I felt I needed to be prepared and I felt protective towards them somehow because I felt as though I had nothing to go through but they did ... and I would help them to do that by chatting.

It is clear that even at this early stage of her identity development Anna felt 'different' even if no one had explained it to her.

One respondent, Benjamin (age 40), was born in a historical town in the south of England. His circumstances had a great impact on him. Because his African father did not live with the family, local children questioned the genuineness of his English mother's status:

... well, we were initially the only black family in ----- [town] ... nobody would actually believe that we were actually born in the town and they thought we'd come from Africa, somewhere out there, you know. They just couldn't believe that ... We had to come from somewhere else, you know. I think there was some of this adoption thing, 'Have you been adopted?', you know.

Moving places – inwards

Benjamin's early painful experiences were eased somewhat when his mother moved the family to a more urban area in the Midlands during his late teens. He says that he sensed a greater degree of comfort living there. He felt that, even though he had the pressures of making new friends, the people he met in the locality were at ease with him because the area had quite a large Asian community and 'that in the Midlands, they're very used to people coming in and going out.'

Moving from a predominantly white area into mixed area was not always a positive experience. For some, the lack of other Black people in the suburbs, although it had sometimes resulted in feelings of difference and isolation, had also meant that there was no need to conform to a particular image, especially of 'Blackness'. The pressure to conform on moving to the inner city was particularly potent for the women of African-Caribbean/white origin who were seen by some Black people they encountered as too anglicised in their demeanour. This was clearly based on the view that having come from a predominantly white location, they had not had any exposure to 'black' culture. Anita (age 34) had been born in a mixed area but had moved at the age of five to an outer city area. She had both Black and white friends there but found moving back to an inner city location at the age of fifteen very difficult as the 'black' culture she encountered in the city was much more pan-Caribbean:

Because I moved from a predominantly white area to a predominantly black area, because I didn't speak patois - people laugh at me if I do - and I used to get ... really get called names. They used to call me 'English Girl.' 'Go away, you English girl. Go on you white girl. Go back to your country,' which is like ----- [former outer city area]! 'Go back to your white man land.'

Hazel had also found arriving in the city daunting because of cultural differences. She had moved at the age of sixteen and commented that she had never seen so many

Black people in one area. She also had difficulties with food because having had such an English diet, she felt foolish when she thought a plantain was a banana, 'that was really a culture shock ...' Despite such negative experiences, respondents in this position, as do most teenagers, adapted to the situation and made some changes to their behaviour and appearance.

Moving places - outwards

For some respondents a move from a poorer to a more affluent area was very difficult. Being made to feel an outsider was mentioned by several respondents who, because they had not been brought up in the area, were treated in various ways ranging from insignificance to intrigue and rejection. Joshua found being subjected to white people's looks and suspicions disturbing, '... you did feel isolation with all these white people around you.' He chose to continue his education in his inner city school where he felt he could retain some sense of stability. However, in the new location, rather than withdrawing into isolation, he developed the role of educator with his white friends who held stereotypical views of all Black people. When the media portrayed city disturbances in racialised terms, Joshua would explain to his friends how different his experiences of life there had been in the hope that he would change some of their attitudes. His present role as a project worker and educator may have had their beginnings in this setting.

Natalie (age 44) had been born in Tiger Bay (now Butetown), the docklands area of Cardiff where the mixed population has been well established for generations. Natalie had felt comfortable and protected there. Her family moved to the outskirts of Cardiff when she was at primary school, and she recounts travelling on a bus in the new

neighbourhood with her sister and their African-Caribbean father. Other children on the bus stared at them open-mouthed. With childhood innocence as her protection, she was not upset at their looks of shock. In fact, she remembers feeling sorry for them because she thought they were suffering from some form of disease which prevented them from closing their mouths.

Choice of location

During childhood there is little choice about area of residence but as one gets older, more opportunities for mobility can arise. These clearly depend on employment conditions, economic position and family constraints. Despite the problems of making my own judgements of how to describe areas, I concluded that 14 respondents (41%) now live in what could loosely be called inner city or 'racially mixed' areas, 7 (21%) live in the outer city and 13 (38%) live in the suburbs or countryside. These figures suggest that there is little movement between type of area of childhood and adulthood even if it is in a different locality. Few people, after leaving the parental home, moved to a completely different type of area. Only three people had moved from suburbia into inner city areas. All three describe their moves as being in response to a growing understanding of their racial(ised) identity and said that they generally feel more comfortable in such surroundings. Although brought up in an area which became demographically 'multicultural' throughout her growing years, Carmel (sister to Tanya, Ryan and Lynn) decided to live in an area with a predominance of Black people when she left home. She believes this was a reflection of her growing awareness of herself as a Black woman:

Because to me, ... as soon as I was in that environment, I just loved it. It was just like *me*. I felt at home there and, you know, I thought, 'Well, this is me'. So whether it's harder or not I haven't got a choice. I just felt at home there in that life.

This response was mirrored in a recent Channel Four documentary called 'Fusion: Looking for Dad'. Seventeen year old Fraser Airs, who is of Bajan/English origin, was born in Leicester but has recently moved to predominantly white Southend-on-Sea. He describes his regular visits to London and his aspirations to live there, especially in Brixton, 'Brixton just seemed warm to me, just seemed warm, you know ... what London is, it's real. There's just so many different varieties of people and I like that but personally Brixton is just a place, sort of, of refuge where I can just go and be and have inspiration as well' (C4, 1998). Fraser clearly feels that both his personal and social identities can be respected and affirmed by living in an area where he sees greater representation of mixed parentage or Blackness generally.

Two respondents had moved from inner city to suburbs, both due to job availability and aspirations. One has maintained close links with her family and friends in the inner city. The second had been brought up, even in the inner city, to have little contact with other Black people and does not feel uncomfortable in a predominantly white area. Both have economically successful lifestyles and are comfortable with their situations.

Overall the respondents who have remained in familiar settings feel generally comfortable. While they still experience some prejudice or racism wherever they live many had developed coping strategies, which will be discussed later. Only two people mentioned problems specifically concerning race issues and neighbours where they presently live. Hasna (age 38) and her African-Caribbean partner and children live in a suburb of a Midlands city. She describes the situation as follows

... living in this street ... when we first came, all the eyes were on us. Generally, wherever we've been, you're just conscious that you are a black family in that area. You're OK when you've got rags and 2 rusty old cars but when you get a nice car, it's 'Oh, gosh, they shouldn't have that.' ... those are the problems. It's not that I have a problem with my mixed heritage, I just don't see it in terms of mixed heritage, it's more in terms of how society treats you as a black family.

Andrea (age 40) had been brought up in Wales but has lived in various locations since her teens. She moved to an inner city area several years ago and finds that there are specific pressures on her now which she did not experience growing up. She observes that in her present location there are different factions and groups being established which are vying for her membership but she would rather live in and between several groups. This does not appear to be a typical experience but seems to be particular to Andrea who feels she is only now, as she is approaching middle age, coming to understand her multiple heritage, a later stage in life than many of her 'mixed' friends. These friends are comfortable belonging to more than one group or community and seem to be able to resist the pressure to conform to the expectations of others.

Conclusion

Location, and especially the structure of the local community, appears to impact on respondents' understanding and acceptance of their parentage and their subsequent racial(ised) identity. Tizard and Phoenix (1993:71) found that the majority (68%) of their sample would prefer to live in 'racially mixed' areas which the authors saw as an affirmation of their 'mixed status'. Tizard and Phoenix did not, however, discuss whether type of location had an influence on identity development. My research suggests that, from the respondents' point of view, there is a greater sense of Ricoeur's (1990) 'selfhood' and 'sameness' in identity for those who grew up in areas where there was a greater proportion of Black people, and particularly of 'mixed'

families. The narratives of such places have, in recent years, allowed for the inclusion of 'mixed' families and for the expression of a particularly 'mixed' identity by the offspring of those families. The development of a racial(ised) identity seems to have been more unfettered than for those who had little contact with other Black people as there was a greater sense of personal safety, the ability to communicate more openly with neighbours and friends in similar households and, for many, the freedom to express a social identity which was affirmed and supported by the local community.

However, this does not necessarily mean that those brought up in the suburbs, who sometimes felt isolated as children, did not manage to develop a sense of coherence at a later stage. Some chose to move to places where the local culture provided a refuge for them and where social relations served to reinforce their self-awareness; there was clearly a recognition of some space as 'Black' and some space as 'white'. As will become evident later, there were also a variety of other strategies which most of the respondents, irrespective of location, adopted to develop and maintain balance and a sense of self-worth in the face of social opposition.

Education

Location clearly influences the type of school attended and the impact of peer pressure or support on identity formation. My research is not concerned with differential outcomes in attainment between white and Black children (Gill *et al*, 1992) but with how the type of school attended influenced the development of respondents' racial(ised) identity. By 'type' I mean not only the difference between state and public education but also between whether schools were perceived as predominantly white or racially mixed. The type of school attended would also

necessarily affect the peer groups which developed. Again, I depended on the interviewees' own recollections of school life and friendships and how these positively or negatively impacted on their racial(ised) identity. Although this section is presented chronologically, i.e. primary, secondary and further/higher education, it demonstrates the developmental processes which are helped or hindered by the British education system.

Tizard and Phoenix (1993) found in their study of young people of mixed parentage that where the children were educated had an impact on their sense of comfort with both aspects of their lives. Those mixed parentage children educated in predominantly white schools expressed more affinity with white children whereas those attending multiracial schools felt more comfortable with Black children (1993:87). The children attending demographically multiracial schools, who were usually from 'working class' backgrounds, 'were most likely to admire black music forms, wear black fashions, and listen to black radio stations' (ibid.:87). As Tizard and Phoenix only studied adolescents of African and African-Caribbean origins, they made no comments about the young people's connections to Asian culture even though some would have attended schools with a large proportion of Asian pupils.

Unlike the Tizard and Phoenix study only 2 of those I interviewed started school in the 1980s. The majority began their school life in the 1960s and 1970s and a few much earlier. It is clear that while Tizard and Phoenix can describe the influence of black music and fashion in 'working class' schools, the respondents in my study, even if they lived in poor areas, would still have found themselves in a small minority at school.

Public school

Unlike the study mentioned above, only five respondents had attended public school: one a primary school, one a secondary day school and three secondary boarding schools. All of them had also attended state schools at some point. One respondent, Anthony (age 26), who is of Indian/Irish origin had felt that his primary education in a public school had been uneventful in terms of racism. He believed this was because of class differences; pupils attending public school, in his view, were less likely to express prejudice directly. His evidence for this was 'the onslaught' of racism he experienced in a state comprehensive school. Others, however, did not see class as an issue. The absence of other Black children was more a problem for them.

Lydia (age 39) went as a boarder to a charitably funded Quaker secondary school after finding it very difficult to settle in a state secondary modern school. Lydia, who was born in England, is the only child of a father who is a political refugee from a South East Asian country and a mother from Australia. She had felt culturally isolated in her primary school and this continued into her state secondary school. She describes her experience of the Quaker school in the following way:

I was very homesick ... I didn't have too much confidence in my ability to mix with the other kids and so was very quiet at first and didn't make lot of friends but found that as a school it was a very kind school ... There were very few Black children in the school. There were three of us I think and the others were older so there wasn't actually anyone in my year. There were foreign children. There was one girl who was Greek ... and there was an American girl, so there were some other cultural experiences within the school which I think was useful as well, which hadn't been at the previous schools. And there was more awareness of other cultures ... I did begin to make friends and I changed myself. I changed the way that I presented. And it did change the way people viewed me and I began to be more accessible I think.

The other respondents who attended public boarding schools found the isolation from their families traumatic and discovered that, although there were children who had come from other countries to be educated at the schools, the topic of race was never considered or discussed. They do not describe overt prejudice from other children but indifference and sometimes insensitivity from teachers and other staff.

A common experience of many respondents irrespective of the schools they attended is that of being drawn to the few other Black pupils. Simran (age 22) is of Indian/English origin and attended state schools. She remembers that at her primary school ‘... there was one other Chinese girl and I clearly remember trying to sit next to her in assembly just because I felt more comfortable sitting next to her.’ Most interviewees feel there was an unspoken mutual understanding between them and the other Black child or children. This did not depend on the others being of mixed parentage but on the fact that they were not white. This was a deliberate strategy of self-protection but is only recognised as such with hindsight.

State schools

Most respondents attended state schools throughout their education. Those attending schools in outer city or suburban areas did not necessarily experience more comments about their racial identity than those attending schools with a greater mix of ethnic origins but the remarks were consistently different. As many of the interviewees brought up in inner city areas were of school age when the Black population in the UK was very small, experience of schools with a more mixed population is confined to younger respondents, mostly those under thirty years of age.

The majority of respondents who remembered their schools as predominantly white, irrespective of area of residence, said that they were aware that they were in a minority at school. The two eldest, Donald, 77 and Betty, 83, said they had no memories of negative reactions. Betty was brought up in Tiger Bay, Cardiff. She sees her school difficulties more as a result of being poor and having to ask for 'charity' than feelings of difference. This lack of tension may come from Betty's filtered memory but could equally be because the school, situated in the dock area, '... had all nationalities. We had Greeks, Maltese, Italian, Spanish, Jewish, Africans, West Indians, Indians, Turks, all nationalities.' Donald, who was brought up in West London, appeared to minimise any difficulties.

Primary education

For most respondents, their first encounter with racism and prejudice was at school, although most would not have described it in those terms at the time. These experiences were usually in primary school, although for two interviewees, it was as early as play school or kindergarten. Richards' (1995:65) research project found similar experiences, 'It was in the infant school, away from the protection of the family that individuals were first made aware that they were different to other people, through being subjected to racist abuse'. In my own study, the discrimination was, at such a young age, seen more as 'not being liked', 'being picked on' and 'being left out'. This detailed recollection by Tanya expresses experiences similar to those described by others:

And there were definitely, definitely lots of racist incidents at school. ... there was a girl in my class [...] ... I think she was very pretty and she was also very popular and she had a birthday party. This is when I was ... seven or eight, and she invited everyone in the class except me ... And I remember waiting and waiting and waiting to be invited and I actually went up to her and said, 'Oh, can I come to your house?' And she said, 'Oh, erm, I'll have to ask my Mum'

and she walked off. I probably asked her 5 times. I never, ever thought it was about colour because I didn't know I was black, I didn't know I was different ... I think I got the message the third or fourth time I asked her and I remember thinking, 'Oh no, she doesn't like me.' ...

I have my own memory of standing in the dinner queue at primary school and being told by another 8 year old that I had been born out of my mother's bottom, which was why I was brown, but that his white skin proved that he had come out of his 'Mum's boobs'. As my mother had sensibly explained to me the simple workings of the female anatomy, I was able to laugh contemptuously at the time, but the fact that over 30 years later the incident is so clear shows how children's comments can leave lasting impressions. A more long lasting outcome of 'teasing' is evident in the life of Joonas, who is 18 and the youngest respondent. Joonas is of Pakistani/Finnish origin and was teased at primary school when children saw his father. Talking about the effects of other pupils' reactions to him, he says:

I definitely wanted to be with everybody else and I didn't like being different in a way. I just wanted to be the same as everybody else. I didn't feel different when I'm with a crowd. I didn't go, 'OK I'm an outcast to everybody else.' I didn't feel that. And I wanted to be the same as everybody else ...

Q What effect do you think these experiences had on you?

Erm ... [long pause] well, I don't tell people that, OK, my Father's Pakistani and my Mother's Finnish. I admit that my Mother's Finnish but I say that my Father's English. I don't say that he's Pakistani and that's maybe because of ... always those small comments have got to me and I've been ashamed of it. And I have been ashamed of it, I admit it. But I never tell people. And I still don't tell people.

Although he describes himself as white European, Joonas feels this is deceitful and wants to be able to be honest about his identity but fears the reactions of others. He has not even told his girlfriend nor his best friend that his father is Pakistani, although he says he thinks they suspect he is not 'white European'. It was very gratifying for me at the end of the interview when Joonas said that as a result of our meeting he was

going to begin being more honest with other people and not hide his origins. He felt that discussing the issues had made him feel less guilty and that ‘maybe it’s time that I actually just let it out. It’s a good opportunity.’ Erikson’s (1968) theory of stages of development clearly does not apply in Joonas’ case as he has not completed his identity formation even though he is at the end of adolescence.

Secondary education

By secondary school most people had developed a sense of difference and become more suspicious of the motivation of people’s words or actions; derogatory behaviour by others was more likely to be considered a result of racist attitudes. Sometimes this remained subtle, being excluded and stereotyped, but for others, predominantly the younger respondents, there was more blatant abuse. There was racist name-calling, bullying and even extortion. Harjit (age 29) is of Indian/English origin and attended schools in the suburbs of a Midlands city. He describes himself as ‘one of the only Black Asian pupils there’. At primary school he was aware that he was ‘different’ and so developed, through his musical skills, a strategy for becoming ‘acceptable’. If he could play a tune on request, he could maintain some popularity. By secondary school this was insufficient protection and so other tactics had to be employed:

I was bullied at school er ... for about 4, 5 years, by a gang of ... of racists, you know, who were perhaps about 4 or 5 years older than me, maybe 15, 16. And I remember having to develop strategies there, you know, of dealing with ... attacks, if you want, the physical attacks or the verbal attacks ... I got to a stage where I was having to give over money ... and I got to a stage where I just lost my temper and one day, the one guy who was kind of like the ring leader had come to a class that I was waiting outside to go into. I was with all my class mates and they were all around and so he came up to me, got me in a corner and started trying to give me a dead leg or something and trying to get money out of me. So I hit him and I think I broke his nose and from that moment I didn’t ... I had no more trouble.

An interesting comment made by Harjit, however, was that he felt the bullying he had experienced at secondary school had prepared him for dealing with racism in the future. Despite the great trauma it had been for him, he saw the school as a relatively safe environment in which to practise his survival tactics. Harjit was not the only respondent who felt pressured to solve the problem physically. Azeem (age 24), Joonas' older brother, was educated in Finland, Pakistan and England. He found that, because he could speak fluent Finnish and learned Urdu while in Pakistan, he did not receive many negative reactions in those two countries but in England he was taunted at both primary and secondary school. He says that, in order to avoid further bullying, he had to fight back:

So when I put my foot down and, you know, there might have been a few fights or whatever but I needed to let people know. Even though you lost the fight, it didn't matter. But people knew then that if they say something there's going to be trouble. So I ended up, after the second year, I didn't have that problem.

Unfortunately, such responses are not always the solution. Benjamin found that when he reacted to racist bullying, he was viewed as the offender and not the victim. Although he felt an outsider in his first school, his difficulties became more apparent at middle school:

All the rest of the kids would get into a big gang and they would ... all of them would seek to fight with me. And I was bigger than a lot of them so I used to thump them, basically, but I would be in trouble, not the 20 kids that were attacking me. So if I defended myself, I would be the one in trouble. ... if you're the only black kid and you're being bullied and you're big, you go and tell the teachers and they say, 'Oh, don't be so silly, you can take care of yourself' and when you do, you're in trouble.

Violent responses were not restricted to male respondents. Two women remember being involved in physical fights at school after attempts to verbally negotiate had failed. They described themselves as being 'rebellious'. They did not experience the

same level of bullying as the men mentioned above but they felt they had no option but to react physically.

The above comments seem to suggest that the respondents only experienced negative reactions from white people and that they were seen as no different from other Black pupils. This was not always the case. Joshua found that an 'in-between' status was imposed on him by others although he eventually came to reject this status himself.

As he says:

... every now and again, you realise where you fit in when your own peers turn round and call you a half breed and say, 'You're a breed' or 'Shut up, you're a breed. Anyway, what would you know?' And that could come from a black peer or a white peer. ... I feel, that being mixed race, you do have ... do, sort of, try and fit in to sort of white and black cultures and sometimes do question, which one am I? (Joshua, age 22)

Some of the younger respondents found a sense of comfort in being with children of different backgrounds; perhaps the same comfort they felt in their local environments. Eleanor (age 25) who is of St. Vincent/English origin, attended an inner city primary school which had a large Asian population. She saw this as an advantage:

... my junior school was ... it was all Asian except for me and another mixed race girl and a white girl. They were all Asian so, you know, you learnt to count in Punjabi and things like that ...

Teachers

Not all the negativity came from other pupils. Sometimes teachers' reactions were less than helpful. Many respondents, irrespective of type of school, found teachers had little understanding of race issues. Such experiences confirm previous research in this area (Troyna, 1984, Gill *et al.*, 1992). Again, most respondents described experiences which could have been those of children with two Black parents.

However, while the cultural heritage of some Black pupils was acknowledged, the pupils of mixed parentage had their heritage ignored. Robert (age 31) is of Chinese/English origin and attended a grant maintained school which had a growing Asian population. The main focus of racist abuse were boys from the Indian sub-continent who were regularly described by other pupils as 'Pakis' but also Robert found that:

There were only a very few Chinese pupils, a handful at the most, erm and so, you know, for those reasons it wasn't really important on a day to day level other than, as I said, every so often it was like a little electric shock. Something would happen, literally like putting your hand into one of those sockets and getting a short, sharp, shock but not being ground down by it, not being, you know, your life not being pervaded by it.

One such 'short, sharp shock' came from a teacher who, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1994 budget announced there would be VAT on certain food, commented 'Oh, well I guess that means all our chinkie food will be more expensive.'

Robert describes his reaction:

I was just livid and I just spent the rest of that lesson just, like, staring at him and glaring at him menacingly. I've never forgot that. And that was one of the seeds that was planted in my head to sort of perhaps at a later date maybe make something of that fact that you are of Chinese origin because until that point I hadn't really.

There were several examples of insensitivity when, as in Benjamin's case, respondents told teachers of racist incidents. Often they remember being told that the perpetrator did not mean to be rude. Schools told many respondents that they should be able to deal with the situations themselves.

Martin (age 38), who is of Somali/English parentage, attended a comprehensive school which had previously been a grammar school. It had retained its grammar

school image and avoided controversy. Discrimination by pupils or teachers did not appear to be challenged:

The school, I think, they would have done something if somebody had been murdered or had things stolen from them or been beaten up on a sort of ethical, legal basis but again on a flat field. They wouldn't ... to intervene in something about racism, I think they would have thought was political. Erm ... and their antipathy to the issue generally ... 'Ignore it and it might go away. It's not our business, anyway. That's too political. It's harmless.' Also, 'It's inevitable' maybe.

Other respondents found that teachers had low expectations of them or treated them with disdain. As Milner (1983:167) points out, 'The teacher is not the only arbiter of the child's educational experience, but is perhaps the most important one'. Tanya, Carmel, Ryan and Lynn, all from the same family, had been encouraged by their mother to learn basic number and letter skills before they started school. Their father, who was seen by all of them as distant and uncommunicative, nevertheless would reward them for their academic ability. However, they all expressed disappointment with the school system which seemed to underestimate their talents. They all shared the view that their racial origins were a major factor in teacher expectations. Tanya clearly recounts a situation where she had to write an essay about home life. The teacher's feedback to her was humiliating:

... she said, 'The essays were very good [...] Now, Tanya, *WHAT-DO-YOU-EAT-AT-HOME?*' [said slowly and deliberately]. And that's just how she said it ... I thought, 'What am I supposed to say, fish and chips?' ... These were all posh white children ... I can't remember what I said. But she obviously wanted me to say banana, mango, missionary, you know, all the tropical fruits. I didn't know what to say and I still remember just feeling very, very humiliated. She also spoke to me like I was a moron although I was one of the cleverest children in the class. She had her perceptions about me, all very carved out.

There were few examples of blatant discrimination but in a few cases there was overt abuse of power by teaching staff. Malcolm (age 30) is of Bajan/English parentage. He

and his brother attended a middle school where ‘We suffered a lot of racial abuse off a lot of the teachers ...’ He even cited an incident where the head teacher assaulted him:

... dragged me out of the assembly for no reason and made me stand outside his office from about half-nine in the morning until about five o’clock at night. And even our teachers tried to get him to let me go. He made me stand there, rips my t-shirt off me. My parents couldn’t find me because I hadn’t turned up from school so they had to go to the school. My Dad nearly killed him ...

Occasionally a teacher’s negative reactions, when added to those of other pupils and society at large, resulted in extreme responses. Helen (age 35), of Jamaican/Irish origin, felt that her abilities had been greatly underestimated at school and was aware that her weight and her racial origins were commented on regularly. She describes a breaking point when a teacher treated her more harshly than she did Helen’s friend:

I get up. I flung the woman over the table, out the classroom, booted ... The class was like ‘Helen!’ [gasp]. I said, ‘Look, woman, you think anybody hit me? You see from my Dad was the last man to be hitting on me. My Mum don’t even hit me.’ So she was like, ‘I bet your Mum’s scared of you.’ I wanted to kill her then.

Such extremes of reaction are thankfully rare for those I interviewed but the feelings which surround them are not.

College

Previous research has been limited to childhood and adolescence and did not investigate whether racial(ised) identity develops beyond early teenage. I was interested to know if experiences in educational settings in late teenage and beyond contributed to further changes in racial(ised) identity. I also wanted to find out whether coping mechanisms had been modified. Of the thirty four interviewees, fourteen did not receive further education. Six undertook vocational training in

education, nursing and social work to pre-degree level. Fourteen respondents went to university or polytechnic (four were students at the time of interview).

It seems that further and higher education, for the most part, provided fairly protected environments in which respondents could use the strategies they had learned as children for dealing with racism. By the time they went to college, they had become more verbally adept and assured about their racial(ised) identity. For some, securing a place at college was a boost to their confidence. Being in a small minority at college was not an insurmountable problem for most respondents as this had been their experience at school. However, the younger interviewees who had attended school with a greater racial mix had a new experience of surviving in a predominantly white setting.

Some respondents who had felt isolated during some of their school years continued at college to seek out others who were considered different. Lydia felt more confident than many other students at her university as she had already lived away from home at boarding school. She had also had to compromised some of her family's cultural practices in order to fit in. However, she still felt an urge to meet others who had, at some point in their lives, felt disaffected and continued to defend her position when opposed:

... when I went to university, one of the first people that I became friends with was an Armenian woman whose family had been ejected from Armenia some years before ... So I started forming friendships with people who had some similarity in terms of their experience and talking about their experience [...] I became quite popular and probably cultivated the image of being interesting, interesting background ... So I started using it more at that stage, I think ... I also had developed a lot more verbal skills by then so I could put people down. I mean, it still hurt, but I had learned not to show it so much and I was able to defend myself more verbally.

Like many other respondents, Lydia has swung from strong cultural affiliations to a loosening of ties at different times in her life. She has currently returned to expressing herself confidently as a Black woman.

Nine respondents had chosen to study subjects either at undergraduate or post-graduate level which were loosely linked to social sciences. This they felt had protected them to a certain extent from more overt racism and they believed that others on the courses were 'more aware'. Natalie, who went to university as a mature student, found this was the time when she learned most about herself. She had experienced racism in her school and workplaces but had not felt able to challenge it. On her access course, white anti-racist staff questioned her about how she expressed her racial(ised) identity:

[they were] quite political, quite radical, and I would say that that was when my eyes were really opened ... and that really changed me quite a lot around issues of racism, and that I hadn't imagined all the things I'd felt all these years, you know, which I had taken on myself and thought, 'Oh, it's just me' or 'I'm just extra sensitive, paranoid even'. [...]

Q So what changes did you make in yourself, do you think?

I think I started to become more open about my blackness, it wasn't ... I wouldn't say ... I wasn't ever ashamed of being black but I suppose I began to be proud of it.

Those who had attended vocational courses had equally varied experiences. Whereas most university level places are dependent on 'A' level grades, courses which are more vocational seem to rely on interview systems to decide who is accepted. The subjectivity of such procedures can clearly give space to interviewers' prejudices which, if they are not challenged by other interviewers, can be highly influential in the outcome of the interview. Claudine, who felt that the name calling she encountered at school had been balanced with positive influences at home, had achieved good school

grades. She had applied to a School of Nursing in her home area but at the interview stage it was made clear to her that she was not expected to progress very far and that she would only be accepted on a lower status course than she anticipated:

... they just made it so painfully obvious that they didn't want anyone of mixed origin or black working within that unit.

Q What sort of things did they do or say?

I think it was just the intonation in the voice. That was the only time really that I was confronted with out-and-out racism really, feeling that I really wasn't good enough.

Joshua had been accepted on a course where he was the only male student, 'only the second bloke in 5 years to take the course'. He felt that this was more a talking point than his racial(ised) identity. However, there came a point where he was asked to be photographed for the training manual. He felt this smacked of tokenism and was based not just on his gender but on his race too.

Occupational choice

The majority of those who had left school and not moved on to college had had some difficulty finding work which most believed was because of racist attitudes of potential employers. The respondents in Richards' (1995:67) study held similar views, 'An awareness of the persistence of racism develops in response to the experiences of direct or indirect discrimination that individuals encounter, for example in employment ...'. Betty remembers leaving school in the 1920s with a good report and going for her first job. She did not understand the interviewer's reluctance to employ her and it was her white mother who had to explain:

He was a little dapper man and he interviewed me [...] ... he called me and he said 'We're very pleased with your leaving card and everything' he said 'but we can't, it's the other members ...' Well, I couldn't make out what he meant so I went to mother and said, 'Well, he said he would take me but ...' 'Well that was because your face was too black for him,' she said.

Not all interviewees were as ingenuous as Betty. Tricia had tried to find work after leaving school and, although the interviewer was not explicit, she viewed his lying about the availability of a job as a racist response:

And like just little instances where ... you know, that you are aware that you are black, say, when you go for jobs and stuff and things like that. I went for a job in town the once and my Mum was with me and she saw a sign and she went in to see if it was still there and he says, 'Yes.' And so then I went in afterwards and he said, 'No.'

It was interesting to note that, at the time of interview, nineteen of the thirty four respondents to the research are in what could loosely be described as either social work, caring professions or education. Of the others two are full time mothers, two retired semi-skilled workers, three musicians (one of whom works with young people on identity issues), one a performing artist (who also teaches), four were students, one a company director, one a sales representative and one was in the Finnish army. It was also of note that twelve people were either studying or working in areas associated with race issues e.g. s.11 teacher, project workers with children of mixed parentage, race advisor etc. This suggests that there are opportunities arising for some Black people, including people of mixed parentage, to view their appearance and experiences as 'genuine occupational qualifications' in particular types of work. Understanding the development and expression of racial(ised) identity is an important factor in such contexts. 'Passing' in order to secure employment does not appear to be considered desirable by those I interviewed. How respondents view and express their racial(ised) is described in a later section.

Conclusion

Most of those involved in this study went to school at a time when, even in inner city areas, there were few Black children. Being in the minority created a sense of

isolation which required careful manoeuvring if school days were to be survived rather than endured. On an individual level, various survival tactics were employed such as verbal or physical attack, developing skills which others admired or trying to assimilate. Although aggression created discomfort, the sense of achievement in winning battles helped some to develop kudos and status, especially for boys

While supposedly in education to develop children's confidence in learning, some teachers provided little or no support to Black children, 'black and Asian pupils were often expected to fail by their teachers' (Report by the CRE entitled *Racism through the Nineties*, 1993, quoted in Skellington, 1996:193). As children, respondents often saw differential treatment from teachers simply as a response to their economic position, gender, or ability. However, with increasing knowledge of race issues, it became clear that racism might also be a motivator in their isolation. Victims of bullying were either told to deal with it themselves, ignored or punished for reacting aggressively. This created a sense of impotence and further isolation.

For those who attended schools with a mixed population, there were pressures to express a particular form of 'Blackness' which was acceptable to the pupils of 'monoracial' origins. Sometimes they felt confined to 'in-between' status by their peers but many found some comfort in being in a 'mixed' environment where they would seek out others for mutual support. Living in 'multicultural' communities which created similar demands resulted in respondents learning to develop 'acceptability strategies' in that arena at the same time.

The survival strategies learned in the playground and classroom were useful when in the more 'adult' environment of further or higher education. Respondents often became practised at identifying those who would be supportive and those who would be antagonistic. They became more confident in challenging unacceptable behaviour by others, although at considerable emotional cost.

In terms of subjects studied, there seemed to be an identification with particular issues (race issues, education, social work), with respondents seeing them as linked to personal development and perhaps as indicators to others of a specific racial(ised) social identity. The subjects were/are often those where more liberal views are expressed although it was disappointing for some to find that 'liberal' teachers or students can cleverly disguise their less acceptable points of view.

Although the research did not set out to look at career choices, information provided by interviewees seems to indicate that some people of mixed parentage may find that their experiences determine the types of employment they choose. Jobs can sometimes reflect political and social affiliations and are therefore useful markers of identity. Describing one's occupation as 'race advisor' or 'inner city community worker' provides a shorthand message to others about social alliances and even about personal narrative. There is also a sense of respondents wanting to see a positive outcome from their own struggles by helping others who need encouragement and support. Their dual or multiple ancestry can be an occupational requirement in particular types of employment, especially in the caring professions. This can create increased opportunities but may also result in 'backlash' comments from both Black and white colleagues such as 'You only got the job because you're mixed. You're the

acceptable face of Blackness.’ The historical legacy of privilege continues to create tension and conflict at times. However, as will become evident later, many people of mixed parentage have developed quiet confidence in their skills and experience which can override a sense of self-doubt.

Friendships

A major impact of both location and education is on the friendships which develop. Contact with others who provide support and encouragement clearly affects how we view ourselves, ‘For all children, having friends is the utmost social achievement and an indicator of social competence’ (Cauce *et al*, in Root, 1992:214). As Kich (in Root, *ibid.*:309) states:

In reaching out of the parental and extended family orbit, children become more aware of how others see them and their families. Friendships characterize the beginnings of this stage.

In this section we will begin to see the nature of friendships for example, how loyalty, understanding and support along with embarrassment, lack of awareness and even betrayal can all be found in the same friendship. While I have initially placed the topic into racial groupings, I also look at how friendships change with age. In this section we will see how racial(ised) identity development impacts on choice of friends.

White friends

For most of the respondents in my study, their early years were spent in predominantly white areas even if they would now be designated inner city. The majority of people at that time had mostly white friends. Some, like Rebecca (age 44), Claudine and Tricia, talk of having cousins or family friends in the locality who were also of mixed parentage and who were friends. Claudine felt that she lived in two

cultures because her friends at primary school were all white, 'You'd go out and do all the things little girls do but come weekends and what have you, my sister to play with, cousins, friends, what have you, so it was like a balance between the two cultures.'

However, even at an early age there was a sense for some that living and being educated in a predominantly white environment resulted in caution in friendships. Some felt compelled to assimilate and to 'act white' in order to be acceptable to white friends as this reduced feelings of isolation. Loyalty from white friends was only secured if any differences were minimised. This was possible while in the playground but more difficult to achieve when friends came to visit.

Lydia found her trust in white friends was broken when she took them home and they met her father, 'I remember taking a girl home once and thinking she might be a friend and then seeing the look on her face when she saw my father and then thinking, "She's not a friend."'

While some found their white friends loyal to them, the friends' parents were not always so supportive. After negative experiences some found it difficult to go to friends' homes for fear of their parents' reactions. Paul remembers white friends inviting him for tea, certain it would be fine:

You went along quite naively and I think you don't realise immediately. [...] You are searching for answers really and you think, 'Maybe if I'd said this or if I'd done this.' But what I've realised in hindsight¹ is this was an adult and they had all these thoughts about me [...] It does bother you because you think how stupid I was, you know, as a young child when you're none the wiser.

¹ Hindsight is a tool used by many respondents to understand as racist the wide variety of experiences which in the naivety of childhood caused considerable pain but were not recognised as racism

It is sad to note the self-recrimination which goes along with being the victim of racism. Paul had to face many other such examples before he was able to develop self-protective strategies for dealing with incidents. In these cases, respondents did not blame their friends for the poor parental behaviour. They saw their friends just as shocked at their parents' behaviour. Presumably children who have overtly racist parents do not easily make friends with Black children whereas those with parents whose conceal their views more effectively make friends and are then faced with seeing their parents in their true light. One of Anita's white friends was told by her parents that she had to stop playing with Anita and other Black girls, '... we knew it was a racist trip but they were saying it was because we were naughty.' My own experience concurs with this. I had a friend at secondary school who became distant with me once she met my family. I discovered that her mother, on being told about my parentage, said that our friendship had to end, her excuse being that I had a bad influence on her accent.

There were also examples of interviewees' friends being embarrassed by their parents' racism. Malcolm, who lived in a suburban area in the Midlands says, 'I used to go to some friends' houses and I was either not allowed in or kicked out because I was black and a lot of friends were really upset and embarrassed by what their parents had done.' There was a further complication for Hazel, whose mother is English and whose father is African-Caribbean, when shade of skin colour was brought into the equation:

I was walking around with my friend who was an English girl, a really good friend, and my black friend ... and we was going to the English girl's house ..., a very well-to-do family she was from, she kind of like stopped and says to my friend, 'You'll have to wait here' to my black friend. She goes, 'Hazel, you can come.' And I was like, 'Hold on, what's happening here? [...] Why has Steph got to stay here?' And she said, 'Because my Mum doesn't like

people that are dark. You're OK, but not you, Steph.' And I was like [startled look], you know, your mouth just drops and so I said, 'Well, I'll stay here with Steph.'

Ryan also received clear messages about shade of skin. He loved football and played regularly with his friends, Black and white. He mentioned an incident which had a great impact on him:

... we were in the park and this was with my friend who's black ... black, black, you know, and we were only about 12 or 13 and we got into some trouble with these guys and they ... the one guy said to Dave, who was my friend, 'You black so and so' and he turned to me and he said, 'And you ... whatever you are' and he couldn't ... and he obviously thought, well you aren't black because you're not the same as him so what are you?

Black and 'mixed' friends

For most respondents, friendships with Black children at a young age were rare as there were so few other Black families around. It seems that only the youngest interviewees had experienced a 'multicultural' environment. Joshua's early years in a racially mixed area were a real contrast to his late teens in the suburbs. Joonas too attended a mixed school but his painful experiences of racism had forced him to identify as white and had therefore limited his contact with Black children.

For most, the choice of friendships changed as they moved into adolescence. This was mainly due to a sense that white friends did not really understand or appreciate the experiences of racism, either overt or more subtle. By the time Paul was a teenager, he had Black friends and white friends but he felt more supported when racist incidents happened with the Black friends and isolated when they occurred with the white friends:

Then there were opportunities to associate with Black people and I quite enjoyed that because when trouble did break out, if we were going to a pub or club and couldn't get in, I knew that we were all being targeted rather than just

me. And I felt embarrassed anyway. Because I remember going to a club with a white girlfriend as a young teenager and with white friends. They all got in and I couldn't get in ...

Simran, equally became frustrated when her white friends at university seemed to deny or underplay her experiences. They would be out together in a 'very white' town in the South of England. Simran, through her course work and conversations with other Black people, had become more aware of 'the gaze' of white people, "... at that stage I was starting to talk about it to my friends and I'd say things like, 'Do you realise I'm the only black person in here.'"

She found that they tried to convince her that, as it was not a problem for them, it should not be a problem for her. She also found that they saw her mixed origins as their rationalisation of why she should not call herself 'Black', which caused them discomfort. When Simran protested and explained her views on political unity against racism her friends continued their objections, 'But you're not *really* [Black] are you? You're just one of us. You're not *really* Black.' She went on to say, 'And that kind of makes me feel uncomfortable.'

While she continued with the friendships, she also was conscious of a need to be with others who understood her situation. This she found in another young woman of Indian ancestry. Despite their cultural differences, their common experiences of racism drew them together:

I had ... I still have a really good friend who's Indian, but she's much more Indian than me, which is quite interesting really. But she had some similar experiences of racism but her family background was totally different to mine. They're Hindus. She had a lot more problems with her family but at the same time it was nice to just be with someone who wasn't white. It's quite strange really because we didn't really have anything in common.

Joshua also had white friends who denied that the racism he and his Black friends faced was real:

If I was there with a black mate ... and we walked into a shop, you would feel differently than if I went into the shop with a white guy. You feel that you are being watched, someone looking over your shoulder to see if you're going to steal something. You do have that feeling ... And that was something you would commonly talk about with your black peers or your mixed race peers. You could say, 'Look, when you do go into a shop people watch you don't they?' and your white friends would say, 'No they don't. You're just imagining it, it's paranoia.'

As a teenager Helen began to develop friendships with black girls who spoke patois and, for her, epitomised 'Blackness'. She felt that her experiences at the hands of teachers had emphasised society's view of her as Black rather than of mixed parentage. She felt her friendships with Black girls had been supportive and so she embraced 'Black culture' wholeheartedly, "And when I used to be with my friends, that's when I realised, 'Oh, yeah, I *am* black. I need to talk black now because I *am* black but I need to talk it.'"

However, not everyone received full support from Black friends. Tricia felt that she was sometimes isolated from both Black friends and from white ones. During typical childhood arguments with friends, she found different but equally unsupportive reactions came from different groups of friends:

You start noticing things when you have arguments with your friends ... they'll throw your colour in your face, like if you're with your white friends, they'll say, 'You black this, you black that.' And then with your black friends it would be 'half-breed' and 'red skin' and things like that.

Adult friendships

Another aspect of this study which differs from previous ones is that I could discuss with respondents how their friendships developed in later life. Most people, even if they had only white friends as children, seemed to make a conscious effort to develop friendships with other Black people as they matured. Paul saw this as an aid to

becoming more comfortable in his imposed place in society and of securing some protection and support when facing difficulties. Harjit has a mix of Black and white friends but feels that ‘... the people I’ve met, the people that I’ve befriended and stuff, I’ve kind of ... that’s all been a part of my ... my process of understanding my identity ...’

Andrea, who had been adopted as a child by a family where the father was of mixed parentage and the mother was white, felt that as she grew up, she began to understand better the conversations she had had with her late adoptive father about his own experiences. She feels she is at a crossroads in her relationships because she does not want to cut off from white friends but feels that their understanding of her is limited:

I’ve noticed that the friends I relate to the best are the mixed race friends ... because they understand. ... But I’ve noticed now in the last 3 or 4 years, I switch out of my English friends very quickly. I’m much less tolerant of my white friends than my mixed race friends.

Lydia also looks now for friendships where there is some commonality of experience. She feels she has had to be brutal at times when abandoning relationships with white friends in order to protect herself from the pain of being rejected or misunderstood:

I now have a very close group of friends who are tremendously important to me, who know me for what I am and accept me for what I am and that’s very important to me. As I’ve got older ... a number of my friendships with white women have fallen by the wayside really, often because of the classic thing really that the friendship goes so far and then you actually find that, in fact, there was something about you that they never accepted at the time and I can’t take it. ...

Conclusion

Hegel’s (1807) assertion that identity development is a process which depends on affirmation and recognition from others is confirmed by the experiences of many of

the respondents. It is also clear that, as Mead (1934) suggested, there is a mutual response between how we see ourselves and how other see us and that we adapt some of our behaviour as we anticipate others' reactions to us. Throughout this section we have seen the impact of friends on the respondents and how influential their contribution is to racial(ised) identity formation – not only how people of mixed parentage interact with others (the 'social me') but also how they perceive themselves (the 'real me'). We also see some discontinuity of Ricoeur's (1990) 'sameness' when respondents did not find support from white friends and had limited contact with Black people.

At the early stages of their lives the respondents used the same tactics as any other children to secure friendships - played sports, listened to music, invited friends to their homes. Those who lived in white areas and attend predominantly white schools inevitably had white friends due to the lack of other Black people in the locality. A similar result was found in the Tizard and Phoenix (1993) study. However, there were some difficulties when the parents of white friends did not accept the friendships. Friends were often embarrassed by what they saw as their parents' racism.

In my study, it became clear that as racial(ised) identity developed, so choice of friends changed. There was a growing awareness that white people, even when they were close friends or partners, did not fully understand their situation. Few people abandoned their white friends completely but they began to experience less comfort with white people. Some white friends saw it as a compliment to suggest to a person of mixed parentage, 'but you're not really Black, are you?' Other white friends wanted to deny or minimise experiences of racism being recounted. Respondents

began to search for friendships with those who understood, recognised their uniqueness and provided a sense of support and protection. Sometimes Black friends who had two Black parents lacked sensitivity and awareness but, on the whole, they were supportive. However, the greatest understanding came from others of mixed parentage, irrespective of cultural or ethnic differences.

Wider family

At the same time as influencing the school attended and the friendships formed, location also impacts on the contact respondents had with their wider families. Clearly parents and close family are very important in the identity development of all individuals, and they will be discussed later, but the significance of grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, and even family friends, should not be underestimated. Most previous research (Wilson, 1987, Gibbs *et al*, 1989, Motoyoshi, 1990), even though it stresses the importance of parental support does not seem to view the wider family as being of any great significance in identity development. However, writers who are themselves of mixed parentage, are only too aware of the impact of the wider family. The following is an extract from a piece by Bernadine Evaristo (in Camper, 1994:322):

To my Grandmother who never left suburbia

When your only daughter fell in love with my father you went up the wall. For you it was the most inconceivable nightmare; with one fell swoop all your dreams were crushed. You made it your mission to stop the marriage. In post-war Britain it simply wasn't the thing to do, and after all, what on *earth* would the neighbours say!

The first child born to my parents was the light brown of girls born in adverts today. Not Caucasian but definitely not *too* negroid looking. You were shocked, relented, and held the child. How could you not love this beige delight? The colour of the grandchild had won the day. Battle over No dead No victories.

Having listened to the accounts of many of the respondents, it is clear that the above experience of disapproval of 'mixed' relationships is not uncommon, although not all the grandparents welcomed the 'beige delights'. In this section we will see that wider family can be very influential in how people of mixed parentage view themselves from an early age. As most respondents did not speak about this particular aspect of their lives in developmental terms, unlike previously, I have had to present the information under topic headings.

Response to parents' relationship

Many respondents, even if they had little contact with their wider family, had heard stories of the reactions of their grandparents to their parents' relationship. Jennifer (age 34) was brought up mainly by her Indo-Fijian father. She has no contact with her mother but says 'I know my grandparents weren't at all happy about my mother marrying my father.' Others had also learned, mainly from their white mothers, about family disapproval. In my own situation, my mother did not hide the fact that my white grandparents were very antagonistic towards my father and, in fact, she would recount the abusive comments they, and some of my parents' neighbours, would make about my father and their relationship. I was aware from an early age that my grandmother in particular did not warm to me and that my younger sister was more acceptable probably because she physically resembled my mother rather than my father.

Paul remembers his mother telling him that 'her sister and other relatives in her family weren't happy with her having a relationship with a Black man, you know. And they were saying, it won't last and all this.' Paul felt this antagonism resulted in him

having less contact with his white family than with his black family. Several interviewees recounted situations where their white mothers were isolated from their families for having relationships with Black men. Andrea knows that her adoptive mother ‘experienced the racial harassments; being called all sorts, being spat on and, you know, not very nice things going on.’ Tanya says this negativity also impacted on how the children of the relationships were treated:

My white grandmother ... was very racist. She threw my mother out. My mother would tell us stories of the racism she’d experienced as a white woman with black children [...] my grandmother made huge distinctions between me and my cousins.

Most of the white parents had managed to regain contact but this was, for the most part, because they had sisters or cousins who had also developed relationships with Black men and the families had reluctantly accepted the situation.

Anita believes that her parents’ relationship resulted in a split in her white mother’s family but that there was a lot of support from the ones who kept in contact:

... the side of the family that didn’t accept that Mum had chose black, we didn’t really see. But the side that loved my Mum, we saw them all the time, holidays, everything with them. We used to go on holiday with my white family.

Although some respondents felt that their grandparents never really accepted them, many more, despite the historical antagonism between their parents and grandparents, felt that they had been loved and cared for as much as any white grandchildren.

Contact with wider family

Gillian was the only respondent who had no contact with her wider white family. Her parents had never lived together and, although her white father had supported her

financially, she had no contact with him until her mid-20s. She was brought up initially by her African-Caribbean mother and partner but moved to live with her grandparents when she was very young because of family breakdown. All her family contacts were African-Caribbean. She believes that her upbringing was similar to that of many other African-Caribbean child living in the UK. Although her relationship with her mother was often difficult, Gillian said that she had excellent role models in her uncles. Attending a racially mixed school and living in a Caribbean household provided Gillian with a good understanding and appreciation of her mixed heritage. However, she feels that she would have benefited from knowing her father, not because this would have impacted on her racial(ised) identity but because she would have felt more 'whole' as a daughter.

It was interesting to discover that Gillian experienced one particular difficulty in living with her Black family. She feels her grandparents had been influenced by the degeneracy theories of 'interbreeding' which had been used in the Caribbean to develop the 'shade-ocracy' so prevalent in her grandparents lives, '... they got on to the fact that I got frequent colds and that I was always a snotty-nosed kid. And they were saying I'd got weak blood because ... they were saying it was because of mixing the blood.' When she developed a serious relationship with a man who was also of mixed parentage, her grandparents were very concerned:

... [they were] saying, "If you have kids, they're going to be 'dundus' or they're going to be albino." We had some terrible arguments and they were saying, 'No you mustn't. You must either go for full black or full white.' It was scientific. It was like, 'They're going to be awful, they're going to have near transparent skin.' I think they're talking about in Jamaica or something when they say, 'Two dundus get together...' 'Dundus' - I hate that term

It is clear from most respondents that acceptance by the wider family assists their own acknowledgement and expression of a mixed parentage identity. The small number of respondents who, in the main, only had contact with their wider white family felt they had missed out on certain aspects of cultural education. Hasna, who was born in a politically volatile country in Africa, moved to England when she was six years old with her English mother because the political situation became unstable. They lived in a white area and Hasna was sent to a predominantly white boarding school. Hasna feels that she was forced to educate herself about her dual heritage and her in-between racial status and that it took many years of hard work but when she did, it was a shock to her wider family and to her friends.

Martin's experience was similar to Hasna's, in that his Somali father, who had come to England as a student, returned to Africa as part of his government's arrangements for tuition fees. Martin remained in England with his mother and grandparents in a small northern town where his mixed parentage was minimised or ignored. His father corresponded regularly and visited occasionally but died suddenly during the civil war in Somalia. Martin's only contact with the country is now via other Somalis who have come to the UK. Whereas Hasna has since developed strong links with Black people of varying cultural backgrounds, and is married to a man of African-Caribbean origin, Martin's links with other Black people seem more limited.

The majority of respondents had some contact with both sides of their family although there was often more limited with wider Black family members. This was mainly due to the fact that most respondents had Black fathers who had arrived alone in Britain in the 1950s and other family members did not come to the UK until many years later

Those who lived in 'mixed' areas did not necessarily miss out completely on 'Black culture'. Many of their white mothers' friends and relatives had relationships with Black men. The women shared close relationships which helped them survive family hostility. Some of the men became regular visitors to each other's homes for card games or, as in the case of Claudine's father's friends, to have their hair cut by him. For some, like Natalie and Claudine, this was a positive experience. They had cousins, many of whom were the offspring of mixed relationships and were able to understand the circumstances and experiences of the respondents. Claudine describes her situation as follows:

When we were very young, we all grew up together, you know, family were at our house or we'd go over to their house. Dad had a lot of friends as well so there were lots of other people to mix with, Dad's friends in particular ... [Auntie's] children were mixed race.

Helen saw little of her Jamaican father's family but had contact with Black relatives via other members of her mother's Irish family:

But my family, like our aunties, my Mum's sisters, and uncles ... erm, Indian, so I've got three cousins who are Muslims, or whatever, Chinese, English, Irish, small island, Jamaican, African, Indian. These all the people in my family, yeah? All mixed up and ... so I haven't got a quinto [problem] with race.

As we have seen previously, siblings can have very different experiences of family life. At the beginning of the research, I wondered if the family position of interviewees might play a part in this with pressures on eldest children to be compliant or to set an example to the younger children. I wondered if being a middle child would result in more identity dilemmas or whether developing an awareness of and an interest in a black identity would be the domain of the 'rebel' in some families. None of these factors seemed to have an influence on racial(ised) identity. Even in the two families where I interviewed more than one sibling, the identity issues did not

seem to be connected with family position or gender of siblings, only with experiences of support or conflict.

One example of such an outcome can be seen in the lives of sisters Tanya and Carmel. They have contrasting memories of their Kittitian grandmother. Tanya has painful recollections of the time when her grandmother came to stay shortly after Carmel was born. Tanya says she and their older sister were treated badly by her. The eldest sister, 'was abused and was beaten. I wasn't beaten, I was ignored.' Tanya is very clear that, although this grandmother returned to St Kitts three years later, '... the years that she lived with us are very embedded in my mind, very unhappy times.' She feels that this experience may have subconsciously 'shaped my relationships with black people in a way that I'm not aware of'. She also believes that Carmel's strong sense of 'Blackness' is a direct result of the grandmother's favouritism, 'I don't think it's a coincidence that Carmel's very black, having had this black woman really adore her and look after her very well ...'

Independently, Carmel agrees with Tanya's assessment. She says that her grandmother, 'sort of latched onto me ...' She feels this resulted in her having a closer relationship with her father than did her brother and sisters. She also agrees that her grandmother helped her develop an awareness of what she describes as 'the black side'.

Some respondents, either as children or later in life, had visited Black relatives in their countries of origin. For some this was a liberating experience. Harjit found that visiting India, his father's homeland, had a great impact on him. His family contacts

in Britain were, for the most part, limited. He had an aunt who lived nearby but Harjit said there was little contact because of 'family politics'. Harjit's father died when he was eleven years old but his mother kept in contact with family in India. The visits to Indian relatives not only helped him to learn more about his father's life and but also to understand himself more:

When I went back to India maybe two years ago, I went back to his village ... and that was fascinating going back to the house that he grew up in ... And [...] just seeing where he came from and where part of you comes from as well ... I don't know, but there was something warming and comforting about actually ... seeing it all and seeing, you know ... it almost makes sense, to a degree, of [...] ... my life and what I am.

Conrad, (age 22) is of Sri Lankan/Swiss origin and felt his visit to Sri Lanka was educational and also increased his understanding of his family:

... family life on the whole is really very nice there because the family IS one big family where everybody talks to each other and you really do have a close relationship because you see each other often. You eat out, you have festivities together and it really feels like a family which is not at all the case here [in Switzerland].

Azeem had been taken to Pakistan by his father, without his mother's permission, when he was a child. He had not realised the difficulties his father's actions had created and says that he easily settled into life in Pakistan. He enjoyed living with his aunt, learned Urdu and went to school there. He feels this has given him a closer link with his heritage and makes him proud of his dual origins.

Not everyone's experiences were so beneficial. Azeem's brother, Joonas, was very young when they were abducted and, although happy with his Pakistani family, was traumatised by the events once he had returned to England and understood his father's behaviour. This may be an added factor in his reluctance to admit his dual heritage

For Jennifer, visiting her Indo-Fijian family with her father was interesting but did not necessarily create closer connections with them. She found that the relatives were very welcoming and friendly but that the lack of mutual language meant she felt like an outsider. She says the visit ‘widened my horizons. But I think of it as Dad’s family.’ Jennifer views her mixed origins as an interesting talking point but does not feel any pressing need to express her dual heritage.

Conclusion

Again we see that both personal and social identity are, for the most part, dependent on the opinions and actions of others. There is a continuous dialogue taking place during childhood and beyond which establishes how we position ourselves and how others position us (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991). Whatever essence there may be in our personal identity, whether it is inherited biological, psychological or personality traits, there appears to be some suggestion in respondents’ narratives that their relationships with family can affect how they view this ‘inner self’. This in turn influences the self they present to the world.

As with all families, grandparents and other wider family have an important role to play in developing self-esteem and confidence. Stonequist (1937), Little (1972) and others believe that people of mixed parentage experience identity conflict in part due to their inability to move comfortably between their two families. It is presumed that there is a sense of divided loyalties which creates psychological and social dissonance. My research demonstrates that conflict within the wider family can indeed create tension for children of mixed parentage who find it painful to discover that they are unacceptable to a part of their family. For some the rejection is long term

but most families become reconciled, especially where there have been several 'mixed' relationships within the family.

Carla Bradshaw (in Root, 1992:84) states that, 'The level of the family's ability to resolve interracial issues becomes the basis for a consolidated sense of self.' It is certainly the case that most respondents, when they felt acceptance within the family, even if it was muted, developed a more positive self-image and were able to express their dual heritage more comfortably. Having cousins of mixed parentage assisted this positive 'sense of self'; a mutual recognition and understanding developed which did not exist with white cousins. Visiting family who live in other countries also often increased understanding of dual or multiple ancestry and, for some, helped to increase confidence in expressing their racial(ised) identity to wider society. Those who had support from the wider family, whether Black, white or both sides, developed greater continuity in their racial(ised) identity.

Parents

From the data I collected I concluded that an even more important factor in the development of a secure identity than either location, schooling, friends or wider family is that of parental support. All other research I have come across would agree that parents are highly influential in the identity development of children of mixed parentage (Wilson, 1987, Tizard and Phoenix, 1993, Richards, 1995 etc) It is clear from my conversations with respondents that mothers in particular have the potential to be a major influence in the lives of their offspring. It is assumed by most interviewees that their mothers *should* be the main source of physical and emotional support, certainly in childhood and adolescence. However, as with any group of

people, there were varying struggles and pleasures in the mother-child relationships. Fathers, for the most part, were of a generation who, irrespective of nationality or country of origin, believed their role to be that of breadwinner and disciplinarian. Most fathers were generally more emotionally distant although there were some respondents who viewed their fathers as their closest ally and even their heroes.

Unlike previous research (Wilson, 1987, Tizard and Phoenix, 1993), the responses I received were mainly from people who no longer live with their parents. I had to rely on the respondents' recollections of their childhood experiences and many acknowledged that their comments were being made with adult understanding. This was especially true for those who now have their own children and who have come to appreciate the pressures of parenting.

Five respondents were brought up in 'atypical' situations, the remaining respondents lived with both parents during their childhood years although fourteen sets of parents eventually divorced. Gillian, as previously mentioned, lived for most of her childhood with her grandparents. She describes anger towards her mother, who was the victim of violence within her relationships. Gillian grieves for the mother-daughter relationship they never had. Only in recent years has she understood the dynamics of domestic violence and how it impacts on self-esteem. This has developed an understanding between the two women although the relationship remains unequal:

... I'm just discovering a lovely relationship with my Mum. We haven't had a good relationship until very recently. I've always felt very irritated by my Mum, and angry and disappointed with her as well. And I'm just starting to find out that she's actually a nice person. ... I'm really like the mum and she's like the daughter.

By her own admission, she has viewed her never-seen father as a fantasy hero. At the time of the interview she had spent a long time trying to trace him and had met him only once. She was feeling very rejected because his family had objected to her contact with him. Nonetheless she now displays his photograph with pride and feels she has completed her understanding of her dual identity.

Other respondents not typical of the sample are Rudolph (age 36), who lived in children's homes for part of his childhood because of family difficulties and Andrea who is the only respondent to have been adopted. She has met her natural mother once but says that she has no feelings for her. She is still trying to trace her father, a task which has become more important to her now that her adoptive father, who she held in such high esteem, has died. She was in the unusual position of having been adopted into a 'mixed race' family at a time when there was no formal policy of 'same race placements'. Contrary to the views Tizard and Phoenix (1993), she feels that having an adoptive father who was himself of mixed parentage enabled her to experience support which she feels would not have been there in an all-white family.

Jennifer and Simran were brought up, in the main, by their fathers. Jennifer said very little about her mother but has a strong commitment to her father. Because her father's Hindu family are culturally very different, and still live in Fiji, and because she has no contact with her mother's family, she says, '... because of my background, I feel a separate entity anyway, neither part of my mother's side of the family nor my father's side of the family. I feel a bit removed from both of them.'

Simran's parents separated and she was brought up by her father from the age of ten. Her mother is Anglo-Indian (that is, of the community of Indians of Indian/European descent, see Minto, 1995). Simran has memories of overt racism against her mother. 'I've actually heard my Mother say that she's never experienced racism and I'm ... I just don't know what to say to her because I've *seen* her experiencing racism and it just amazes me that she could say that.' Despite the fact that she remained with her father after her parents' divorce, she now enjoys a close relationship with her mother which she describes as more akin to friendship. Simran feels that she can discuss race issues more openly with her mother as they now share similar views on the subject.

Parents' role in minimising racism²

Ignoring their child's racial(ised) identity or denying or minimising their experiences of racism seems to be a strategy used by several parents. Simran is frustrated with her white father's attitude. When she discusses with him her job as a project worker with children of mixed parentage, he minimises her own experiences of racism:

I'm dealing with racism and situations like that all the time and he, he kind of ridicules it sometimes and he's like, 'What do you know about this?' and I still can't really tell him [...] he doesn't think that I'm of a different race ... I don't think he'd want to see that.

Lydia recalls her mother trying to encourage her to hide her mixed heritage so that she could 'pass' as a white person. At the time, Lydia felt her mother must know best but with maturity questioned the motivation behind the suggestion:

And I remember my mother saying that, 'Well, one of the things we could do is to dye your hair, and you could pass for Mediterranean or Spanish, you

² Respondents' experiences of racism are discussed more fully in the next chapter but it was important to comment on parental responses to racism and even the racist or prejudicial attitudes of some parents in this section.

know'. And I remember thinking, at the time, there was a certain sense of relief, 'Oh well, that's all right then.' But I always remembered it and later on that took on a different significance in terms of strategies I was taught and ways of thinking which later on I rejected ...

Lydia's relationship with her mother has suffered over the years because of a lack of understanding of race issues whereas she has a very strong emotional attachment to her father who has a greater understanding of her experiences and feelings.

Stephen (age 22), like several others, found that his parents did not take seriously his complaints about racist name calling. His white father especially did not appreciate the stress racist taunts created for him "he'd just sort of say, 'Oh it doesn't matter, they're not being nasty whatsoever' and he'd sort of make out it was my problem. He'd sort of say, 'Oh don't be so sensitive about it ... just try and fit in ...'"

Paul had similar experiences:

I used to say, 'I got called this at school today.' But sometimes they would be quite nonchalant about it and you'd think what's the point of raising it? My Dad would say something like, 'What do you expect?' or 'You're making too much fuss.'

For Paul this was a denial of his experience and, as a child, he was discouraged from discussing more serious matters with them.

Tanya, unusually, saw her mother's minimising as a helpful approach as she believes it made the children more independent:

I used to say, 'Oh, Mom, someone called me this.' 'Did they love? Mmm' and didn't talk about it, didn't ... and it was very good for us that approach, very, very good for us. We never, ever grew up thinking we were different or we were less than everyone. We grew up thinking we were better, we were cleverer, we were smarter, we ... in spite of the poverty.

However, there are inconsistencies in Tanya's views because, when describing nieces who live in inner city areas she says she is jealous of their confidence in their racial(ised) identities which have come from being encouraged to discuss issues with their mothers and not having them ignored.

Parental attitudes to the racism experienced by their children may be due to the false assumption that if the issue is not aired, it will go away. This is borne out by comments made about Black fathers who tried to create a sense of Britishness in their children in order to reduce the possible pain they might experience if they expressed any other cultural heritage. Carmel recalls her father saying, 'Be as English as possible'. Rudolph, during the time when he was at home felt that his father, who is Jamaican, had pressurised him and his siblings to 'be English'. He told them about life in the Caribbean but did not want them to express any Caribbean heritage now that they lived in England. He would punish them if he heard them speaking patois. While parents may have thought they were helping their children by protecting them, the opposite may have true, 'To be told your experience is untrue, worth nothing, by white society hurts. To hear it from your mother's mouth cuts even deeper.' (Anonymous, in Camper, 1994:270)

The minimising of racist experiences may also be parental guilt about not having safeguarded their child from abuse or even that they finally have to face the 'What about the children?' question which was no doubt less than charitably asked when their relationship began. More cynically, parents may simply want to protect themselves from the responsibility of having to discuss race issues with their children because of their own discomfort with such matters

A complaint made about parents by some respondents was their lack of cultural education. Anita and several other female interviewees felt that their white mothers should have learned more about skin and hair care and that they should have taught them more about the different types of food they could eat. However, several of these respondents also laid the blame for this lack of culture in the home on their Black fathers who they felt had neglected their duty of passing on a particular heritage. As Anita points out:

... my Dad and Mum had never told me my history and that really ... I was just really upset that Dad had never told me my history and that upset me ... I thought, 'I can understand why Mum didn't tell me, because she didn't know it. But my Dad, what excuse has he got?'

At the same time, while she feels her father denied his children 'a cultural education', Anita believes he was also under pressure to conform in order to minimise his own pain and struggle.

For those who did learn from their parents, there was a stronger sense of being able to resist the cynics (white or Black) if challenged about their cultural authenticity. The private and public expression of identity is often problematic for people of mixed parentage, many of whom are brought up in homes which only express Britishness. Meera Syal, the British-born Indian actress and author, although not of mixed parentage, describes the inhospitality of the public arena and the protective and nurturing environment of the private. She remembers feeling 'different' from other children in her predominantly white school because they treated her as "not like them". But 'when she returned home ... she would enter a "a little India", the world preserved by her parents. And not just her mother and father there was a whole

extended network of family ... not connected by blood but by something stronger, by India.' (Suzie Mackenzie, *The Guardian Weekend*, April 6, 1996:13).

In their mothers' defence

Many respondents were fiercely defensive of and protective towards their mothers. It might be imagined that this is gender-specific but in fact was equally apparent in both male and female respondents. Many, when asked whether they discussed experiences of racism with their parents, said that they did not want to upset either of them, but especially their mothers. They seemed to be aware from a young age that the women might blame themselves for their children's difficulties. Azeem says, 'I never used to tell my Mum. I used to like take care of things myself. I used to like take things into my own hands and I didn't want to upset my Mum at all ...' Tricia felt that her mother's reactions to her difficulties would cause her distress. She remembers as an adult having a discussion with her mother about the racism she had encountered as a child and her mother becoming upset and asking why she hadn't confided in her earlier:

And I said, 'We didn't want to hurt you' because we knew that she'd been through a lot herself, having black children and having to face racism off people who assumed that she didn't have black children, like, in places where she worked, having to listen to racist jokes and ... In the end we didn't tell her ... to protect her ... [pause because of distress].

Joshua, too, felt that discussions about his experiences might be difficult for his mother and he did not feel she deserved to be distressed when she had worked so hard for her children:

... you never want to offend your mother and you could have a really close relationship and go spoiling it by saying, 'Well you don't know where I'm really coming from.' ... I've never questioned my Mum about it because I

think it would bring up too much hurt for her to have to explain it to me ... and I've chosen that way.

He remembers a discussion in the home with his brother and step-father. He was concerned that his mother would feel rejected:

... after that I remember going back to my Mum and saying, 'Mum, I hope you wasn't offended by what me and ----- [brother] was talking about. You're still a big part of me. You're my mother.' I didn't know how she felt about having mixed race kids. I suppose in a way I still don't. She said it was interesting. She said she never realised that's how we were thinking.

Even those in very traumatic circumstances did not criticise their mothers. Rudolph's mother had been sent to prison for violence but he felt it was important to explain that '... it wasn't really her fault ...' Gillian, too, had witnessed much violence before moving to live with her grandparents. However, she stresses, 'my mum always did her best and she never, ever beat us once; never beat us at all so she was always trying to do her best.'

Some respondents were very aware of the lack of understanding their mother's showed about their children's needs but again they were sympathetic. Tricia, who describes her brother as very critical of their mother's inability to discuss their heritage after their father died, shows sympathy rather than condemnation:

... he doesn't feel our Mum gave us enough black influence after my Dad died ... He's not, sort of, looking at the fact that my Mum lost ... like, it affected her for years afterwards. He's not, sort of, taking all that into consideration.

Paul, despite his parents lack of support when he discussed teasing, recognises the efforts his mother has made to understand the Black community around them. Through this she has instilled in her children a pride in their origins, perhaps even more than their father has done:

I must say that my mum is so proud that she's associated with the African Caribbean community and you can see she loves watching anything which involves any Black person on the TV ...

The respondents who felt that they developed a more outward expression of their 'Blackness' were also aware of how this affected their mothers and that they needed to reassure them that they were not rejecting them. Helen and her brother became Rastafarians in their teens and their mother initially found this very difficult, "... my Mum and family thought, 'Oh, they're turning Rastas. Oh my God. They don't like us.'" Helen felt obliged to explain to her mother that their particular form of Rastafarian philosophy and lifestyle did not reject white people:

... Mum feared because she thought we'd be like them ones over there [in Jamaica] but we was the Jesus dreads. ... So I had to always reassure my Mum. 'No Mum. No Mum. Me and you, darling.' ... Which is not my Mum's fault that her forefathers just want to rule everything and can't take that a black man is running things. It's not her fault. So I can't blame her.

Several other respondents were aware that their white mothers might feel separate from their children. Hazel talks of being proud to have a white mother. She and her mother spend a lot of time together but Hazel is clear that she always describes herself as a Black woman with a white mother. Natalie was also aware of her mother's difficulties when she and her sister began to understand more about themselves and to express their dual heritage. She feels this created a barrier between them:

... my sister and I are quite vocal now on Black issues and my father is a lot more than he used to ... But I do think, I can't talk about it too much with my mother, but I do think that she feels excluded from all this. ... Yes, one of the views I've got is that there's a guilt within us about rejecting the white bit of us and whilst we know we're not doing it, the white parent I think sometimes feels it.

As with all families, there were also differences in perceptions between family members. Tanya and Ryan had very positive comments to make about their mother

She was seen by them as having prepared them for the future. Tanya felt this had been more to do with their general self-esteem rather than their racial(ised) identity. '... she'd wanted children for a long time and she wanted us to be beautiful and clever. She told us every day we were beautiful and clever.' Ryan, five years younger, viewed her encouragement in a different way. He believed that her own experiences encouraged her to help them to face discrimination:

My Mum was really brilliant because she just really, like, forearmed us before we went to school and she just told us, 'This is going to happen and that is going to happen and you're going to get called these names and that names and that's because these people are stupid.' [...] this is where my Mum got, sort of, became so acutely aware of racism was when she was a little girl. Being Irish was as bad as anything you can be, you know.

Ryan was so grateful for her support that in his early twenties he wrote a letter to her thanking her for all her efforts raising her children, 'I said, you know, I wouldn't want to be any other way than I am now and it's all down to her.'

In the same family, Carmel, found greater tensions with their mother, '... during childhood, in teenage, me and our Mum had a lot of tension because I always identified with the black more than the white ...' The youngest family member, Lynn, found being 'the baby' problematic; she feels her mother was very manipulative:

... I didn't leave home until I was 20 because, you know, I had all that kind of emotional blackmail from Mum. [...] ... and I did get on quite well with my Mum until I decided to leave home or until I wanted to get out of it and she didn't speak to me for about a year after I left home and she often says, 'I thought my heart was going to break' and all that.

Despite these difficulties, Lynn, too, believes her mother understood something of discrimination because of her own heritage. She is also proud of her mother. '... I can't imagine being ashamed of her or not wanting people to know I've got a white

Mum ... If anything, I'm proud of the fact that I've got mixed parents. It's like, 'Hey look I've got a black Dad and a white Mum'."

The role of fathers

The majority of fathers described by respondents were seen as the family 'breadwinners' and were consequently less available to their children. Most were viewed as emotionally distant. Tanya struggled with her father's lack of emotional involvement. She is vitriolic in her comments and feels his behaviour influenced her negativity towards other Black men and towards anything connected to St Kitts. This long quote expresses well her unfavourable views:

And my father was completely disinterested. Everything completely was delegated to my mum except in extreme circumstances ... My Dad would say, 'Oh the West Indies is this. Oh, the West Indies is that [...] Oh, I can't wait to go home. And if you're not careful I'll take you home.' ... I would say to my brother and sisters, 'I'm not living with those jungle bunnies.' And that was me talking about black people! I hated the thought of St Kitts where we would be amongst the West Indian people that my Dad thought were so fantastic. And we very much saw the West Indies as a primitive, primitive existence away from civilization and I still feel like that. ... My father left me ... left us a new house over there ... That house represents to me meals never eaten, places never visited, clothes never worn, good times never had and the West Indies represents to me erm ... my father, that I didn't get on with.

In contrast, Ryan, who experienced similar lack of commitment from the same father shows an understanding of his behaviour in the context of a hostile society and unfulfilled dreams. There appears to be some sympathy for him which stems from Ryan's own experiences as a Black man in a predominantly white society:

He wasn't a bad Dad in that he beat us or anything but he didn't have any relationship with you, we didn't know anything about his background or, you know, we didn't have ... But I understand him now. As you get older, you know, I really understand it. ... I wished I'd had a better relationship with my Dad.

Lynn feels that her poor relationship with this man is actually the fault of her mother who constantly criticised him in front of the children. Lynn believes that if this had not happened 'we probably would have had decent relationships with him.' She, like Ryan, rather than completely discounting his involvement, describes him as 'quiet' and 'kind of inaccessible'. There is none of the anger expressed by Tanya. It appears that, of those I interviewed in this particular family, Tanya has struggled the most with her mixed identity. This seems to have stemmed from the rejection she felt from her paternal grandmother who favoured Carmel. I would suggest she was so wounded by the treatment she received that, on an emotional level, she rejects her Caribbean heritage. However, intellectually this causes her difficulties and so it seems that in an effort to deal with this she works in a project with parents of children of mixed parentage, perhaps to help them avoid the difficulties she has faced in her own search for a coherent identity.

Joonas also experienced problems in his relationship with his father which impacted on his own racial(ised) identity. This was not only due to the teasing he received at school but because of his abduction to Pakistan. As he was very young, he did not realise the seriousness of his father's actions and was enjoying his stay in Pakistan. However, his mother pursued both her sons and, risking her own safety, travelled to Pakistan alone to bring them home. Joonas now feels this was an act of great bravery and sacrifice and remains indebted to his mother; presumably nothing his father does can match her heroism.

There were many respondents who, even though their fathers were often out at work and not as involved as their mothers, still viewed them positively. They admired their

fathers' courage and determination to 'make it' in a hostile environment. Rebecca describes her father as, 'a larger than life figure, and I value him more as the years have gone on because he tells me so much about the Caribbean.' Although Rudolph criticises his father for forcing his children to 'be English', he understands this was a reaction to the dreadful treatment his father faced when he arrived in England:

He tried to teach us how to survive more than how to worry about the things he had had to fight for because he was really involved in that racist trip when he came here, you know. He had violence and all that, basically, when he used to walk with Mum and it was terrible.

Claudine says that her father 'wasn't really the kind of Dad you could sit down and tell your problems to' but she respected his survival against the racism he faced. As with several respondents whose mothers were Irish, Claudine viewed her parents relationship as co-dependant as they had both had to face prejudice:

... well, when Dad came over, why the Irish and black people could gel together so well, because they were both the undesirables really. Disaffected people. Dad would tell me the stories or I'd read up on books and you'd see on a 'Room to Let', 'No blacks, no Irish, no dogs' so I can see those two people gelled together.

There was evidence of respondents seeing Black fathers, who predominated the sample, as more understanding of their racial(ised) experiences. While several respondents were clear that their main cultural influences had been from their white parent, mainly mothers, they also, like Rudolph, described their Black parent as having more understanding by virtue of having experienced racism themselves, even if it was not always a point of discussion. Malcolm remembers:

Dad used to always say to me, 'You'll have to work twice as hard as everybody else because of the fact that you are black and people will discriminate against you.' So he was pretty open and he used to explain it to us so we were aware of it.

Paul shares this view, 'There will be times when I feel I can associate more with my father because I feel that he has been treated as a Black man in a certain way.' Lydia, too, sees her father as the one who really understands her because he has lived with hostility and discrimination. Similar sentiments are expressed in *Anita and Me*, a moving novel by Meera Syal (1997). In it we encounter Meena, an eight year old of Indian parents. She faces racist abuse one day and goes home to tell her father. Although not of mixed parentage, her experiences are similar to many respondents. Before she has a chance to tell her father about her day she notices something different about him:

... then I looked at his face and saw something I had never seen before, a million of these encounters written into the lines around his warm, hopeful eyes, lurking in the furrows of his brow, shadowing the soft arches of his mouth. I suddenly realised that what happened to me must have happened to papa countless times ... (1997:98)

Andrea says of her late adoptive father, 'I suffered immense loss when my Dad died because he was my Dad, he was my father-figure. He was like me; he was mixed race ... I think this is why I'm a bit lost.' Her father knew what it was like to 'be different' and understood the pressures on people of mixed parentage.

Although comfortable expressing a 'mixed' identity, Gillian faced a very difficult situation when she finally met her white father. She had spent so much time trying to guess what he might be like and felt that he completed her sense of self when they met:

I'd always wondered what he was like; I wondered what life would be like if I was with him; I wondered if he was thinking about me too ... My Dad just came in and he just ran towards me and threw his arms round me and I was like ... I couldn't believe it ... It was brilliant ... The last thing I said to him was, 'Dad, don't let anything happen to you. Don't please Be very, very careful because now I've found you, I don't want anything to happen to you. Just be careful.' Because I think, like you said, he's proof He's like

authenticity. It's like proof of authenticity ... That's proof [a photograph of Gillian and her father] that I can say, 'That's my Dad. I have got one and he's real and not just a figment of my imagination.' And when he's gone, I mean, there's just no point really.

Gillian's remark about authenticity were reflected in comments made by other respondents, especially those whose parent had died or was very ill. Anna's Indian father had died shortly before our interview and she expressed a deep sense of loss. Even though he was 'less forthcoming' than her mother, she says 'I just wish he was here so that I could ask him things, not about my ... about him really, about his experiences when he came over and that sort of thing.' Anna's pause mid-sentence suggests that her own sense of self may have been helped by talking with her father. Lydia's father had had a heart attack a short while before the interview and she says, 'I fell to pieces and was absolutely useless. ... I was desperate for him not to die.' She later told me that she was afraid that if he died she would have no proof that she has a Black father. As we saw in the last chapter, losing a parent can be traumatic enough for anyone but when one parent signifies an often questioned part of the person's identity, any sense of coherence which has been developed over the years can be shaken, albeit temporarily in most cases (Marshall, 1993).

Tricia confirmed this view when she expressed deep emotions while discussing her father's death which occurred shortly after he'd taken her on a visit to Jamaica. She was only nine years old at the time. She feels that this loss has made her determined to express her 'mixed-ness' in a world which wants everything neatly packaged

I remember coming to the conclusion that I was half-caste. I wasn't black and I wasn't white. I was half-caste and we were like a people amongst ourselves. And that was me and I wasn't going to go one way or the other, I think

Harjit's father died when he was eleven years old. He described the confusion he felt about having only his mother with him to symbolise his heritage. He had felt guilty that he did not always want people to see he had only a white mother after his father's death. This he linked again to a need to authenticate his origins and therefore validate his experiences especially when they were questioned by others. Lydia, too, after our taped interview ended told me that one of her fears was being thought a fraud in terms of her 'Blackness'. She feels that her understanding of racial and cultural issues may be considered 'second hand' by those with two Black parents and so there is pressure on her to prove herself in some circles. The need to be seen as having had particular experiences in order to be validated by others appears to be a powerful one and is discussed further when we look at respondents' experiences of racism.

Racism and prejudice in parents

A small number of respondents expressed real concern about what seemed to them to be their parents' racist or prejudiced attitudes. Two of the five Black mothers had negative comments to make about other Black people. Stephen says of his Black mother:

[She] would kind of stupidly slag off Black people in Britain but she'd do it more like, 'Why don't they get off their butts, sort of thing, and work.' And also there's a part of her, I think beforehand, not wanting to quite accept that she was Black.

Some of those with white mothers who expressed racist views felt this affected their views of their fathers, Black people in general and themselves. Tanya describes her mother's attitudes as:

... quite racist - she used to work with a lot of West Indian nurses and she used to come back from work, you know, in front of my Dad or whoever was there.

she'd say, 'These West Indian nurses, they're all big mouthed, they're all this and the other.'

Tanya's father could be just as destructive in his comments. He would warn his daughters not to marry white men and would often say, 'You've got to beat the white man at his own game.' Carmel, Tanya's sister, made similar comments, 'My Mum was really racist and so was my Dad ... And when you are in there in the middle, in this like no-man's-land ...'

Lydia believes both her parents were very supportive when she was growing up and that this was partly due to them both being 'strangers in a strange land'. However, her white mother had been brought up in Australia where racism had been legitimated and this had impacted on her. Lydia finds some of her mother's attitudes and comments very distressing:

... some of the things which she expresses racist views about, because she's my mother, I can't bear it at all. And I've been cruel at times and looking back on it, I've been impatient. I've put her down and I've humiliated her at times in front of other people when she's said something to me which was so awful that I couldn't bear it. And that's taken a lot of working through.

However, rather than causing Lydia discomfort with Black people, the comments had the effect of making her less tolerant of white people.

Conclusion

While the early philosophical theories of identity did not focus on family structure, the later social psychologists, as might be expected, saw family as crucial in the development of both personal and social identity. Most respondents believed that their parents had an important influence on their racial(ised) and such a view is confirmed

by previous research (Milner, 1983, Gibbs *et al*, 1989, Mass and Cauce *et al*, both in Root, 1992).

Until recently, and certainly in the British context where these matters do not have the same high profile as in the United States, many parents have been reluctant to discuss the issues with their children. According to my respondents, older generations of parents (especially those who migrated to Britain in the 1950s) believe that if their children 'act British' they will be accepted by white society. The hope was that by persuading their children to ignore taunts from family and friends, any problems would disappear.

Many of the interviewees were aware that their parents' relationship had created family tensions. White mothers in particular recounted to their children tales of rejection from families who disapproved of relationships with Black men. Children saw their parents as both victims and survivors of a racist society and were then reluctant to add further burdens to their shoulders (especially their mothers') by discussing their own difficulties.

They were also often aware, certainly as they matured, that Black parents had faced considerable racism. They felt that their Black parent should have understood the hostility their children faced and should have helped them to learn strategies for surviving racism, although many did not have this assistance. It was also expected that the Black parent should have provided cultural education for their children although this role often fell to white mothers who were ill-equipped for the task. It is interesting to note that many respondents viewed their Black parent as authenticating

their own 'Blackness' and that the absence of a Black parent, through separation or death, created an even greater sense of loss than for 'monoracial' offspring. The 'Blackness' expressed was often in a form unfamiliar to the Black parent but which gave to others clear messages about the political and emotional allegiance of the subject.

Respondents felt that unless parents are willing to discuss matters openly and to provide their children with appropriate emotional support, it is difficult for people of mixed parentage in the British context to develop a secure sense of social identity from their parents. When parents are not supportive, much of the development of 'selfhood' in identity takes place outside the family context as people identify with others in the wider community. Those who receive little understanding or support from home find ways to educate themselves about survival strategies and also about their cultural heritage. Many respondents said that contact with others of mixed parentage assisted this process and encouraged a greater sense of self-worth and 'sameness'. Although it is clear that parents who encourage discussion and education and who give support to their children provide a springboard for an early secure identity development, parenting which lacks this perspective does not necessarily prevent people of mixed parentage from developing secure cultural and racial(ised) identities as they mature.

Role models and heroes

Role models and heroes can be an important component in identity development. While heroes are usually those who have achieved far more than we feel we will ever manage, and can be fictional characters, role models tend to be those we admire and

who influence the way we present ourselves. We also often use role models as the benchmark for our own achievements. Tizard and Phoenix (1993:75) asked their respondents about their heroes in order to ascertain their 'alignment' with white or Black people. I am not convinced that this an accurate indicator of such alignment especially with the increasingly evident appropriation of Black (mainly African-American) 'leisure forms' by white working-class youth (Back, 1996:185). Analysis of my own data would suggest that while some respondents would say that their adolescent icons impacted on their racial(ised) identity at the time, many more stated that their role models and heroes changed significantly as they developed a greater understanding of their identity. Again in this section we look at the issues from a developmental point of view.

Many respondents complained about the lack of suitable role models when they were young both for Black people in general and for people of mixed parentage in particular. Clearly the situation has changed in recent years. With increasing access to celebrities, including high profile politicians, via television, film and other media, there has developed a wider range of role models for young people to admire or emulate.

A small number of interviewees saw a parent as their hero or role model. For some this was the white mother who had been rejected by her family and had struggled to develop a sense of self-worth despite the hostility. For others it was the Black parent, mainly father, who had survived the prejudice and racism of British society with dignity and self-respect intact. However, the strongest influence in the development of

role models was the media, in its widest sense, whether TV, music, sport and, to a lesser extent, literature.

Music was the most frequently mentioned media. Many interviewees felt that this had a strong influence on their 'presentation of self' to the world as young people. Some respondents, like Hazel and Simran, had been brought up listening to their parents' records. Hazel's father had played mainly Black artists '... John Holt, Bob Marley so, you know, you always got that side ...' whereas Simran's family had more eclectic tastes, '... my family are very into Michael Jackson [*laugh*], that kind of music. Not specifically any culture, not Black music or Indian music.' Most interviewees, when they were children, had listened to popular music of their particular era and not specifically 'Black music'; the choice of styles being influenced by radio, television and their friends.

It was listening to African-Caribbean and African-American music and identifying with the appearance of the artists, rather than the experiences expressed in the lyrics, which many felt had influenced their expression of identity during adolescence. Tanya remembers, 'I became aware of Bob Marley, became aware of reggae, black became very fashionable ...' Although she felt she did not quite 'fit in' with her friends, at least they were enjoying music which Tanya felt they would see reflected in her. She would have some status with them which had previously been lacking. As a teenager,

Claudine felt her role models were Black musicians:

... I got an awareness of music and the reggae culture and started going out a lot to the usual black night clubs and getting into the music scene. So I suppose possibly any of the ... the roles models were music, musical role models. Probably Bob Marley, Gregory Isaacs, those kind of people

She feels that, as she has matured, her musical preferences depend more on whether she enjoys the music rather than who is playing it. Eleanor has similar views. She feels her racial(ised) identity has gone through phases and that musical taste depended on 'what phase I was going through in life as well. When I was in my 'Black' phase, it was all rap and hip hop, that was what was big then as well anyway. That was, you know, Run DMC and stuff like that.'

Ryan, who is a musician, had thought a lot about how music has played a part in his life. As a teenager he had mainly enjoyed the music of white bands, 'I loved listening to punk and new wave and stuff like that. You know, all very white, all very white stuff.' However, Ryan admits that he also had wider tastes, influenced by his older sisters, but that there was an unspoken 'rule' about not admitting this to his friends. He had some important insights into his own song writing. He is aware of pressure from others to be a 'Black musician' and for his songs to reflect his African-Caribbean origins as though this, in some way, would prove that he sees himself as part of 'the Black community'. He tries to resist the coercion because, as this lengthy quote shows, this would be a false representation of the experiences he has had growing up in his particular family situation. Living in his locality, to him, does not encourage the type of song writing he believes is expected of musicians with Caribbean origins:

You know, corn meal porridge in Jamaica and stuff was just, like, completely alien. It may as well have been Norwegian folk music or something. It was like, it had nothing to do with me at all. Whereas when you're 15 and you're a bit, you know, trying to be a bit of a rebel, the Clash is a lot more, you know, relevant to what you're doing round you I suppose. And, you know, my immediate environment and being born in England and experiencing what everyone else experiences here, like the weather for God's sake. That probably has a big effect on how you turn out in the long term. Just, you know, all those miserable October and Novembers and, you know, it goes into you somehow and it does come out in other ways. A lot of the songs I write are all very

erm ... are all quite, not dark, not ... you know ... I'm sure if I'd been raised in the Caribbean sunshine, I'd write happier songs but they're just not very happy. They're just more reflective of my environment.

Alternatively, Harjit, also a musician, was given a strong cultural education by both his parents and he feels it is important to express his mixed heritage in his songs. Unlike Ryan, he has visited his Indian father's birthplace and so does not feel that his immediate locality prevents him from expressing his Eastern heritage. However, he also is questioned about this choice but mainly by white people who feel he should express his 'English-ness' through his music.

It is important to note that 'Black music', certainly the forms heard in Britain, is usually restricted to that influenced by African-Caribbean, African and African-American styles. The interviewees who expressed an interest in music were, in the main, speaking of these particular forms of 'Black music', irrespective of their own cultural origins. Even Conrad, who is of Sri Lankan / Swiss parentage and has lived most of his life in Switzerland, describes his major musical influences as 'Afro-American jazz'. Conrad does like 'Certain Indian musicians like erm ... Sakir Hussain' but focuses most of his attention onto Steve Coleman:

I think the reason why he really impresses me is because [...] he really transforms all his knowledge he has, his knowledge of the traditional Afro-American music, he transforms it into a new form of expression which is really, really new and er ... I really admire this, this ability to create something new out of existing forms basically.

The situation may change in the next few years with the growth of Asian bands with a wide range of styles, from ragga/reggae influenced Apache Indian to the more eclectic Asian Dub Foundation.

For most interviewees, role models changed as they matured. Some said that as adults they no longer hold people in such high esteem and tend to see their former heroes more realistically. As Lynn says, '... I've kind of realised how individual we are, everybody is, and if you kind of set up a hero for yourself, it isn't yourself, it's like you can never be another person, you know.' Martin saw himself as an iconoclast who is very critical of anyone who sets themselves up as a voice for others.

Others were aware that they had moved from having white icons to now looking to Black role models. Joshua spent most of his childhood playing football with his friends who were from varied backgrounds, 'Going through school, anyone who had a Manchester United shirt on, he was a role model [...] so that was like, football, 100% ... my role models didn't come down to what colour the person was it was more what they were doing and it was playing football at the time.' In his teens Joshua began to look for role models who more closely represented his own background. Joshua says:

Now, my role model is Bob Marley and that's not just because he's mixed race, it's because of his music and what he's done ... and the lyrics he puts across and the sort of messages that come with it. It's like his philosophy on life ... it's just that when you listen to his music, there's lyrics in there [...] he's putting good positive messages across.

Tricia mentioned having a mixture of musicians such as John Travolta and Grace Jones as her childhood heroes. Although Grace Jones is African-American, to Tricia, her appeal was her strength as a woman. This strength was a reflection of what Tricia had seen in her white mother and aunt, 'I saw them as strong working class women, very, very strong.' Again with age Tricia has moved to 'more Black role models now, more Black women role models. They're all just like friends and peers and tutors and you know.' Paul had also moved his allegiance from the white nuns who had taught him at school:

As you grow older, you have Black role models like Nelson Mandela in terms of pursuing something, Gandhi, really, in terms of not giving in and at the same times, having a dialogue with people who'd be willing to oppose you . . . What I'm conscious of as well is that I feel what's lacking in Britain are some Black role models. I think there are a lot of pretenders to the throne who try and speak on behalf of Black people.

Gillian has always seen her high achieving Black uncles as general role models but felt that Marilyn Monroe had had an impact on her as a woman when she was growing up. As she reached adulthood, however, she says she became more aware of Black women who more realistically reflected her own appearance. Gillian has also developed an interest in Black women writers and she looks to them for inspiration:

I've never met bell hooks but I'd love to meet her. She's obviously somebody, I read all her works, I love her poetry. She's somebody who I've got more respect for because of the quality of her interpretation of a whole range of issues and just her excellent ability and the struggle that she's been through . . . It has changed, it's more in terms of Black role models but it tends to be more in terms of women.

Literature has also influenced the thoughts and actions of other respondents who described their early role models as white. Hasna, who looked to The Osmonds in her youth, now finds Black writers speak of her own experiences, '... Chiekh Anta Diop, he's written about linguistics and history of Black people in Europe; Ivan van Sertima, who's a Guyanese writer. There's also Malcolm X's wife Betty Shabazz and, of course, Maya Angelou.'

It is interesting to note that no respondents mentioned Black people in sports, TV or films as role models. This is no doubt due to the age range of respondents. With higher profile athletes such as Colin Jackson, Denise Lewis and Jamie Baulch and more Black actors on both the small and big screen (albeit still mainly in supporting roles) perhaps teenagers in the 1990s would choose such personalities as idols

Conclusion

Consumption was not a focus of this research but clearly when talking about role models and heroes, many of whom are musicians or authors, the subject of self-image and consumer choice (Bauman, 1988, Giddens, 1991, Beck, 1992) needs to be briefly examined. Bauman, Giddens and Beck all believe that self-image is enhanced by consumer choices and that people parade their identities through their particular preferences³. Bauman in particular is concerned that the myriad of choices available creates anxiety for consumers.

For people of mixed parentage the pressures of deciding which in-group style to adopt are clearly evident during adolescence; respondents mentioned this dilemma as a common experience. There may be at that point some anxiety about which group allegiance can best transmit a particular identity; this is a time when young people, more than anything, want to 'fit in' somewhere, want to develop their 'sameness' (*idem*). However, as we have seen, careful consideration is given before decisions are made. As Warde (1994:896) in his critique of Bauman, Beck and Giddens states, '... those for whom consumption is most meaningful, who consider their behaviour carefully, and who would suffer the most embarrassment should their decision be wrong, are those least likely to make a mistake ...'

Many white people in the ever shrinking global world are choosing to adopt an 'ethnic' style in their homes or personal dress and, I suggest, are trying to give a

³ Appiah (1996:70) agrees with this view and suggests that, 'If ... I fall into the class of those for whom the consensus on ascription is not clear ... I may have a sense of identity options but one way I may exercise them is by marking myself ethnically ... so that others will then be more likely to ascribe that identity to me.'

particular anti-discrimination message, 'I like their cultures, yes. And I even seek after artefacts from ... from their history that ... er ... there's no struggle or strife' (David Christenson quoted in *The Color of Fear*, see chapter three). However, I would suggest that by the time people of mixed parentage become adults there have been so many choices to negotiate that there has developed a sense of security with their self-image which is expressed through well thought out decisions about style of dress, choice of home décor and other consumables such as music and literature. My research also suggests that adults of mixed parentage who have become comfortable with their racial(ised) identity are also free to be flexible about their consumption choices.

It is clear that, whereas in adolescence role models may have some impact on expressed identity, with maturity, racial(ised) identity influences the choice of icons. In recent years there has been an increase in Black public figures who can be seen as potential role models. For my respondents Black role models did not need to be of mixed parentage although it would no doubt be encouraging to see more mixed families represented in drama and literature.

Partners

In recent years there has been much criticism of high profile Black people, usually men, who have white partners. Comments have come from both the white far right who believe such unions taint 'the white race' and also from Black groups and individuals concerned about the diminution of 'the Black race'. Such criticisms are tempered by the acceptance that the Black people involved generally still have links with their Black families. More condemnation seems to be levelled at people of mixed

parentage with white partners as it is assumed, sometimes rightly, that they have little contact with their 'Black side' and that they are further denying their already 'watered down' heritage. They are accused of not being 'Black enough'. It is sometimes considered that only by being with a Black partner does someone demonstrate their authenticity and their commitment to 'the Black struggle'.

Unlike previous research (Wilson, 1987, Tizard and Phoenix, 1993, Richards, 1995) I was able to ascertain from respondents whether or not their expression of identity was linked to the race and ethnicity of their partners. During the interviews I also discussed with most of them any difficulties they had encountered when involved in 'intimate relationships' in general. The statistical breakdown of these relationships can be found in chapter five. It is difficult to make any generalisations from my findings because every relationship is different and is either successful or breaks down for a variety of reasons. What works in one relationship is a death knell to another. It has been difficult to draw comparisons and so I have mentioned notable and rather individualised responses. In the following examples there is some evidence that developing racial(ised) identity does impact on choice of partner or on pressures within established relationships.

Four of the interviewees, Hazel, Helen, Carmel and Anita have never had intimate relationships with white men. All four women, in varying degrees, demonstrated an adherence to Rastafarian philosophy. This has inevitably influenced the social settings they inhabited and the contacts they made. They all appeared to be proud of their 'Blackness' and felt their partners' racial background added to their own status and

authenticity as Black women, although none of them expressed the view that people of mixed parentage should not have relationships with white people.

Only three respondents said that they had only had relationships with white people. Of the rest, nine did not elaborate on past relationships and twenty one had, at some time, had a partner with two Black parents or of mixed parentage.

The three respondents who had only had white partners were siblings Tanya, Ryan and Lynn. Tanya had had Black 'boyfriends' as a teenager and pointed out that her partner is of European/English origin with strong family links to Judaism. She feels that she and her partner have an understanding which stems from both of them coming from families which are sometimes considered 'outsiders'. Ryan says he is puzzled as to why he has 'never been out with a non-white girl, you know, Asian or any other ...' especially as he was raised in a racially mixed area. However, as we have seen above, this has not resulted in him denying his own background or in him trying to 'pass' for white. Lynn, on the other hand, feels that she has good reasons for not having a Black partner:

... I think it's weird as well because I'm only attracted to white blokes which I think ... does some people's heads in, you know. ... But I think that's more to do with experience because when I was at school I fancied black boys and mixed race boys but I think the experience of being ..., you know, the way they treat you. I don't know if it's just me or if all women get it but I just ... they repulse me most of the time.

Lynn gave details about the types of comments she has received from her father's Black friends and from other Black men she has known which have made her very uncomfortable. She does not say whether she ever received such negative attention from white men. However, Lynn goes on to explain that, in spite of her experiences

and her preferences for white men, 'I do know black guys who aren't like that and I *do* get on with them. It's not that I hate all black men and don't give them the time of day, it's just that I'm not sexually attracted to them at all.' Despite these unusual responses, Lynn, like Ryan, she does not aspire to be white and is proud of her mixed ancestry:

I'd never say I'm white although I'm as much white as I am black, you know, so it's like ... it ... it does ... I do think I'm quite broad minded and that is probably because I'm mixed race because you do have to, you know, you *do* experience things that if you were white you wouldn't ...

Unlike the three mentioned above, the majority of respondents had had relationships with Black people, whether of mixed parentage or not. Joshua was one such respondent, 'I've had quite a few girlfriends. They've been Black, they've been white, they've been mixed race. That's not by choice that's just the way it's happened ...' He had an experience which did not seem to be common but which gives a further insight into the 'shade-ocracy' prevalent in some Black communities. He was going out with a young Black woman but the relationship was in some difficulties. He describes that his girlfriend, "... turned round to me and said, 'Is it because I'm black?'" Her question caused him a lot of distress because he felt she should have seen that he was comfortable with his own mixed identity and happy to be in a relationship with someone who was not of mixed parentage:

I said, 'Why have you asked me that question?' ... Personally, I felt gutted, I felt really gutted. I just felt, 'Oh, how could you bring it down to that? After knowing me for such a long time, how could you pop that question?'

Tricia, whose partner is white, demonstrated no less confidence in her identity than Gillian, whose husband is Black. Both had been brought up in mixed areas and had experienced a variety of positive and negative reactions to their mixed parentage. Both felt that their relationships with their partners had developed because of

circumstance rather than design. Gillian in particular felt this to be so. Because of her very distressing early memories of watching her Black mother being beaten by her Black step-father, she had vowed she would not be married, and certainly not to a Black man, '... generally I thought that black men were pretty horrible and not ... and I said I definitely wouldn't marry a black man ... '. However as she matured and thought about relationships, Gillian knew that there was more likelihood of her meeting Black men because of her cultural attachments:

... chances are it would be a black man because of my cultural ... you know ... And later, going into the church as well, which is predominantly black, I thought, 'Well chances are again that if I do end up with anyone, he'll be black' because that's where my affinity was.

A further conflict was that her grandparents were disappointed with her choice of husband. He was not as well qualified as they would have liked, a common cry from many parental figures, and he was also from a part of their own Caribbean island which they considered undesirable. They gave Gillian strong messages that felt she should marry a white man, 'A white man's going to look after you more.' As with many relationships, her grandparents discovered their concerns were unfounded and that their granddaughter's husband was 'a good man'.

Breakdown in relationships occurred whether respondents had white or Black partners. The failure of relationships did not necessarily depend on racial differences, although there seemed to be more pressure on partnerships when the respondent became more vocal about his/her Black heritage. Conrad, who had recently ended his relationship with his white Swiss girlfriend, felt that the pressures came after he visited Sri Lanka:

I just knew that ... things had to change ... and I think that that has something to do with the background I have because I wanted to see different

aspects of life and ... different people. I really had the urge to ... to meet other people ... it was just an urge to get out and break away from, kind of, the rigid structures that had been, had become dominant in that relationship. I think that's how that relationship came to an end.

Rebecca was divorced and not in a relationship. Although she had been out with men from a mixture of origins during her teens and early twenties, she had married a white man. She says they did not discuss race issues before they married and feels this was a mistake. She struggles to understand why the relationship did not survive and wonders:

... if it's anything to do with me being black and he can't say, 'No it isn't.' But then why ... he knew who I was? He reckons that as I got older, and this is probably true, as I got older I got 'blacker', I think, because I do want to adopt the black culture. I don't know if that's the reason, I don't know.

Rebecca feels that her expression of herself as a Black woman has grown and that, if she did have another relationship, it would be 'Preferably somebody black, I think, because I know the difficulties.'

Where there was openness about matters of race and ethnicity, relationships still suffered the usual stresses but there appeared to be more mutual support and understanding. This did not guarantee that the partners would never misunderstand or be misunderstood but respondents in this position seemed more able to resolve the conflicts. Tricia's partner is Irish and they discuss race issues. They are aware that they need to give their son a wide range of cultural experiences in order that the many aspects of his heritage are available to him. Tanya and her husband realise that it is important for their daughter that she is made aware of her multiple heritage

It appeared that, for many of those interviewed, their partner's parents were potentially more a cause of conflict than their own differences. Several interviewees described problems in this area on many occasions during their teenage and early twenties. In more settled relationships, such stresses did not always occur but, when it did, it was only mentioned by those with white partners. Those with Black partners suggested they had good relationships with their partners' families. Typical of the treatment received from white partners' parents is that described by Lynn concerning her former husband's family:

Erm ... well, I remember when I met my husband's Mum, she wasn't very pleased ... I think she wanted a Lady Di because ... her son's really tall and, you know, light brown hair and from ----- [fairly middle class area] ... So obviously when she met me she wasn't very pleased and she didn't want us to get married.

Anna is aware that her husband's parents have strong right wing views, '... so somehow they're going to have to come to terms with the fact that I am who I am ...' She tries to understand their views but avoids conflict with them by not discussing controversial issues in their company. Others deal with such difficulties in different ways. Harjit avoids all contact with his partner's mother:

... but her Mum at first was ... you know, didn't want me on the scene at all. And I think possibly because she said that, I couldn't be arsed with meeting her and it was important to my partner that I made the effort, you know, to go round and attend family functions, not to be put off by what her Mum had said or stuff but just to ... But I found myself thinking, like, well, 'Why the fuck do I want to go round and ... and have to play a role in order to ... in order for my Blackness to become more acceptable to her? Why should I play a role as being nice as pie, you know? I'm still going to be what I am ...'

Conclusion

As the success or failure of relationships depends on a wide range of individual factors, it is impossible to generalise about whether or not racial differences impact on the relationships of people of mixed parentage. It does not appear that a person's own

expressed racial(ised) identity is negatively influenced by the partner (external pressures are often more at play than internal ones) but neither is there necessarily a positive effect. While there might be freedom to develop a sense of 'selfhood' (*ipse*) through identifications made through discourse with others, this would not come from the partner. There may also be the need for some to develop a secure racial(ised) identity through mutual support from people with similar backgrounds and this may cause further pressures within the relationship.

Some respondents felt obliged to prove their 'Blackness' and believed that they would be judged on the ethnicity of their partners. It *is* clear that those with Black partners at the time of interview, seemed to feel a little more secure in their position in the community, especially with other Black people. Such security was not necessarily lacking in those with white partners but where there was little communication about race issues, added pressures were experienced; this was especially true for those respondents who became more vocal about their heritage.

Openness about race matters appears to allow couples to support each other and provides the partner of mixed parentage with the security to express their own dual or multiple heritage. This situation, however, is not unique to mixed relationships. freedom of self-expression on all types of matters is essential in healthy relationships. racial and cultural differences are just one aspect of this self-expression.

In my view, an even more influential factor in the development of racial(ised) identity is an individual's experiences of racism and prejudice which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Findings Part 2 – Experiences of Racism and Prejudice

Introduction

The second part of the findings is devoted to the experiences of racism and prejudice. While there was some mention of these issues in the previous chapter, the following section provides greater detail of the continuity of these experiences throughout the respondents' lives. The use of narrative was particularly important when discussing this subject as it allowed for an interpretation of the respondents' experiences which some see as the ultimate aim of such a method (Josselson and Lieblich, 1993). The stories they told were sometimes very distressing to hear but the use of narrative aids, even through the mediation of the written word, greater understanding and empathy for the respondents (Eisner, 1997). Caroline Ellis (1995) suggests that stories about life experiences should go even further and should evoke in the reader an emotional response which leads to a greater awareness of their *own* lives. As we have seen in the last chapter, the respondents' narratives of place, family life, struggles with authenticating their expressions of racial(ised) identity etc. are varied, with some clear distinctions in terms of gender and class. Contrary to conventional wisdom, there was little difference in the type and level of prejudice and racism faced by those of different ethnic backgrounds. The individual voices of the respondents, in fact, make up a picture which portrays similarity and even sameness of experience.

An understanding of the impact of racism must always be contextual, social and historical. Teresa Kay Williams, in a chapter entitled, *Race as Process: Reassessing the "What are You?" Encounters of Biracial Individuals* (in Root, 1996 200),

describes her research with people of mixed parentage with both African/white and Asian/white parentage:

Many biracial interviewees in this pilot study have explained how they learned about their racialized self through social interaction. They identified specific interactional incidents as having foisted race onto them and alerted them to their racialized existence.

It is clear that racism is not self-evident but is intersubjective; it is shaped by interaction with others. Racial(ised) identity develops from both positive and negative contact with others too.

Rather than imposing any particular academic interpretation of racism in this section, I prefer to allow the respondents to speak for themselves as their own definitions will not necessarily concur with those of scholars. In order to avoid leading the respondents to particular answers, I rarely used the word 'racism' in interviews unless it was used by the respondents themselves. I usually asked at which point were respondents aware of being treated differently because of their mixed ancestry. This provided a more flexible approach and allowed interviewees the freedom to describe their experiences without being bound to a particular viewpoint.

The very small number who said they never experienced racism were those who, like Jennifer, did not see their racial(ised) identity as a major issue. Even Joonas and Donald, who describe themselves as 'white European' and 'English' respectively, talked of incidents of discrimination which happened because of their skin colour and which made them aware of their unacceptability.

More numerous were those who felt that their treatment at the hands of bigots had ensured that they could not ignore their racial(ised) identity and that it would be

problematic for them unless they developed self-respect and an acceptance of their identity. Respondents who mentioned being the victims of racist comments were asked what type of remarks were made. The comments were typically abusive descriptions which are often used against those with two Black parents, including 'nigger', 'Paki', 'wog', 'chink', 'blackie' and 'black bastard'. There was also additional terminology concerning their mixed parentage such as 'half-breed', 'half-caste' and 'red skin'. The following are just a few examples:

One or two people started having a go at me and calling me 'chink' or making some eye ... thing with their eyes or what have you. (Robert, Chinese/English)

And then two blokes got out of this car and erm ... started running as well and, you know, started shouting, 'Paki, Paki.' (Harjit, Indian/English)

That was when I started to notice that because I had an Asian boyfriend at the time and that's when I started to notice people's prejudices because, you know, I'd be called 'Paki' and things like that ... (Eleanor, St Vincent/English)

... the regime was bad in the first [children's] home where they kept us, because we was black. We had that thing like 'the blackies' ... (Rudolph, Jamaican/English)

It was 'Paki' this and 'Paki' that. It was 'dirty Paki' whereas before I never experienced that. It was really malicious and extremely insulting. (Anthony, Indian/Irish)

I was getting called Black Sambo and nigger ... (Paul, Kittitian/Irish)

... racial taunts, 'Black bastards', the usual sort of stuff that most people experience, the majority I suppose. There was always a lot of that. (Malcolm, Bajan/English)

I had long hair and they used to pull my hair and tease me and call me names ... 'blackie', 'wog', 'nigger', the usual really. (Claudine, Bajan/Irish)

When encountering prejudice from Black people, some respondents mentioned hearing further descriptions of their mixed origins such as 'breed' and 'dundus'

Contrary to popular belief, there was little difference in the treatment meted out to those of part-African and those of part-Asian heritage. The victims of such abuse seemed to be resigned to the fact that they would be seen as 'Black' or 'Other' whatever the mix of heritage. Claudine's and Malcolm's comments about 'the usual' also reflected an expectation that mixed parentage for them afforded no protection against racist comments. Williams' (in Root, 1996) research found that, while their experiences of racism or prejudice differ in content according to the ethnicity of the victim, the intention of the perpetrator is the same, that is, to ensure the victim feels unacceptable because of 'racial' origins. The outcomes are also similar in that Williams' respondents felt that racialised encounters resulted in them questioning their status in society. It is again important to remember that the reflexive manner in which these, and my own, respondents spoke of such matters was a result of maturity assisting understanding and, to some extent, allowing interviewees to put some distance between them and experiences which for many had been more difficult to deal with as young people than as adults. In this section I will again be approaching the subject developmentally in order to demonstrate the processes respondents went through as their racial(ised) identities evolved.

Childhood experiences

Tizard and Phoenix (1993) have a detailed chapter in their book which describes their respondents' early experiences of racism which were mainly in the form of name calling at school. Many of the interviewees in my research reported similar childhood experiences and these have been documented in every section of the previous chapter

As previously mentioned several respondents had experienced exclusion as children from school place activities or friendships. None of the respondents suggested that they had any intuitive understanding of racism. As children they were unable to articulate as racist derogatory remarks or behaviour from others. In fact, most only understood childhood events as racist through adult eyes. At the time such behaviour was presumed to be based on the gender, social class or general unacceptability of the respondent. Carmel feels that age placed such experiences into context:

I mean at the time I didn't really put it [being made a scapegoat by teachers] down to that, I just presumed I was the naughty one, you know, sort of internalised it. So it's only, sort of growing up, when I think back and with an adult mind and knowledge ... I didn't really put it down to my colour, I just thought I was the naughty one.

Some, like Donald, minimised not only the intentions of others but also the impact on him:

... you were called 'darkie'. There was nothing else. 'Darkie' didn't mean a thing to us in those days.

Q When did that first start happening?

Ah, well, possibly when you went to school but we never had any problems, no problems at all. [...] ... no, as regarding the lads, we were all the same with no distinction.

He and his siblings were often called 'darkie' by other children but he insisted that disparaging comments only had an effect if the victim allowed it to. He was taught by his Black mother that skin colour was not important and therefore he must ignore any abuse because it would then stop happening:

See, I mean, if you keep calling people 'darkie, darkie, darkie', now if you listen to people, some people call 'darkie' and they're calling you for a reason. It could be that they're trying to attract your attention, and that's fair enough, you listen to the tone of the voice. But then you listen and you can hear the abuse and you ignore it. ...

On one level it appeared that Donald really had not allowed the racism he faced to affect him, but on another he clearly had been forced to learn strategies for dealing with it, 'You didn't take any notice because if you took notice of things like that, it used to snowball and that's the last thing you could do.' Despite his protests, Donald was under no illusion that he was seen as 'different' by his white peers and that he was under pressure to 'fit in' as much as possible.

All other respondents who remember incidents in their youth are now, with adult understanding, under no illusion that such derogatory terms constituted racial abuse and marked their lack of acceptability to some white people. The language of racism had to be learned and, for most respondents, this did not take very long. As Natalie says, 'I realised that when people called you a nigger or a gollywog there was malice behind it. So that was when my eyes were opened.'

The respondents were asked how they dealt with such experiences. Most talked about feeling upset and rejected when they were young, not talking to anyone about it but gradually learning strategies for dealing with abuse or avoiding it. Some, like Joonas, learned 'to laugh, you know, to fit in.' Conrad, who lives in Switzerland, who found it difficult to associate people's negative reactions to him with racism, says that being treated as 'different' has 'taught me to just be on my own a bit and not rely too much on other people. But of course it was also difficult at times because I felt kind of lonely of course, yeah.'

Adolescent experiences of racism

We have seen in the section on school days and friendships how racism impacted on the respondents' self-image. Many of the men in the sample said that as adolescents they had used sport, music or other activities to mediate their relationships with a variety of people. They learned strategies for defending themselves, and this occasionally involved violence. They also learned to express their racial(ised) identity, especially through music, in a way that ensured a comfortable level of self-esteem. For young women this time of their lives seems to have been more difficult to negotiate. Several of the female respondents had moved into inner city areas during their teens and found that their unfamiliarity with cultural rhetoric made them feel isolated. This was particularly the case for young African-Caribbean women. The most frequent comments were about how women of mixed parentage were perceived to view themselves as superior. This long extract from Anita is representative of the incidents reported:

Erm, the black girls used to be really funny; used to look at me really nasty and used to say the things they say to my daughter now, 'You think you're nice; you think you're pretty' and all of that. I used to think, 'I ain't done anything.' [...] Another thing I used to get ... I don't know if you'd call it racism, is the way I speak. Because I moved from a predominantly white area to a predominantly black area, because I didn't speak patois - people laugh at me if I do - and I used to get ... really get called names. They used to call me 'English Girl.' 'Go away, you English girl. Go on you white girl. Go back to your country,' which is like ----- [an area of Birmingham] 'Go back to your white man land.'

Eleanor describes similar experiences, '... I didn't walk right, I didn't talk right, I didn't wear my hair right. I didn't wear the right clothes.' Hazel also found it difficult to understand the hostility involved in comments such as, 'Oh, you think you're nice because you're mixed race.' Gillian was told, 'You think you're white' and 'You

think you're nice, don't you?' She felt that her relatively straight hair was the main focus of attention. Helen was insulted by the remarks made about her:

So the vibe that I created in here was, 'She thinks she's nice.' And I used to say, 'No, I don't think, I *know*. [laugh] No I don't; I don't think I'm nice. I don't think I'm too nice for anybody. I just know who I am. And don't tell me I ain't black. Don't tell me I'm not a Rasta woman, don't.' That's my vibe

There were suggestions that some Black women were antagonistic because of competition for the affections of Black men who were viewed as preferring light-skinned or white women. In a conversation with Carmel and her friend, Louise, who was also of mixed parentage, it was clear that the situation continues:

Louise: But it's even now, I mean, what were they like? Because we used to go to the dances and it was all brown in this and brown in that. And like those black girls give daggers all night, it's ridiculous.

Carmel: They do. You do get it from black women because of it.

Louise: And it was all down to the men basically, you know. They're the ones that boosted up the brown girls. It's really, really sad.

This connection of lighter skin colour with 'you think you're nice' is clearly historical and creates division, especially for women. As Alice Walker (1983) comments, "Unless the question of Colorism – in my definition, prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color – is addressed in our communities and definitely in our black 'sisterhoods' we cannot, as a people, progress" (quoted in Root, 1992:344)

Despite these pressures, all the above women have, with maturity, found a comfort level which enables them to develop relationships with people irrespective of skin colour or shade. They are also women who would, in many social circumstances,

describe themselves as 'Black' irrespective of any challenge to that descriptor they may encounter. As Louise, Carmel's friends points out:

I think you go through a phase, I think teenage, where you go through a dilemma and all of a sudden you realise the world is Black and white. Up to that point you're just a kid and then you realise that the world is Black and white and, 'Hold on, where am I?' And then there's no answer to it though. The only answer is to grow up and just be yourself.

Adult experiences of racism

Most respondents described incidents of racism as adults which would be familiar to many Black people in Britain. Paul remembers being made aware of his unacceptability when out with white friends one evening. He went to a night club with them and was the only person not allowed in by those in charge. He felt embarrassed not only for himself but for the dilemma faced by his friends who had to either stay at the club and make him feel more rejected, or leave and subconsciously blame him for spoiling their night out.

Ryan believes that he is also treated like any other Black male:

Like the other day we stopped and helped an old lady carry her bag, an old white lady in Handsworth Wood, and you do get that initial reaction as I walked up to her, 'You're going to have my purse.' And you really have to deal with that. I've had it a few times going in the underpasses in town and people ... and some people cross over and you think, 'What's wrong with you?' And then you remember, 'I'm projecting this image. A black man with no hair.'

Ryan knows that he comes under suspicion in shops and describes what he imagines are the thoughts of shop workers:

'Hang on, who's this coming into my shop?' So I *do* get that quite a bit I *do* get that people initially being frightened of me. And I'm certain it's not just because I'm ... I'm only 6' tall anyway. It's not because I'm big. It's because no hair, black and it's like, 'Oh dear.'

Joshua, too, does not escape the negative reactions from white people when he goes shopping. He feels it's irrelevant that he is of mixed parentage; the shop keepers see a Black youth coming in:

I feel that I was treated differently, but I feel I was treated on the same level as a Black person. For example, if after school we went to a shop, you would feel pressurised ... You feel that you are being watched, someone looking over your shoulder to see if you're going to steal something.

Such stereotypes are mentioned by Malcolm who, when he had just moved into a predominantly white area in the South Midlands felt he was the subject of much interest in his neighbourhood. He had seen enough negative representations of Blackness through media portrayals of Black men in general to recognise the reasons for neighbours' negative reactions, '... when I first moved in you could see curtains twitching and people got quite distressed I think. People in the neighbourhood shops were aghast when I walked in. They're getting used to me now. I haven't raped or killed anybody or broken into anybody's house!' It is important to note that the majority of such incidents happened to male respondents there being more stereotypes of Black men which are intended to instil fear into white people.

However, not all racism was blatant. Many respondents experienced what Ryan described as 'velvet glove racism' which, in his case, consisted of:

Like I say, not hostile, obviously not mentioning it, not bringing it up, maybe saying, 'Do you like cricket? Do you go to cricket?' you know, that kind of bollocks but it's not, it's all very polite, you know, 'You've got a lovely smile.'

Ryan found this more problematic than overt abuse as it could not be challenged. Rudolph, too, felt that with the exception of organised racist threats via fascist groups, most of his experiences were indirect.

Some respondents, as they grew up, tried to rationalise the racism they had experienced and to understand the perpetrators. Anthony says:

I get angry about it but at the same time I think, well let's look at where this person has actually come from, the way they've been conditioned, the workplace that they're used to working in, the people they're used to mixing with.

Rudolph also attempts to understand the behaviour of oppressive people:

... most of those people who are racists, it's because they're sick, it's a mental illness. It's got nothing to do with education, intelligence or anything like that, it's just sickness because they've been brainwashed. And so have the black people.

He says he feels sorry for racist people and wishes they had been 'born half-caste' because they 'wouldn't have to suffer that disease'. Despite such rationalisations both Anthony and Rudolph, and many other respondents, feel that they have to distance themselves from such people for their own protection.

Racist ill-treatment, whether blatant or more subtle, did not necessarily result in a mistrust or fear of white people. Many of the respondents had white family and friends who balanced the negativity. However, a caution seemed to have been developed which resulted in an awareness that in certain circumstances racism may be encountered. This included situations such as when approaching groups of white youths, being in locations where there is likely to be general tension, or racial tension in particular, and going for job interviews.

Racism in employment

Being interviewed for jobs was considered by several respondents a potentially difficult area. Despite their experiences of discrimination during their youth, few anticipated problems with securing employment as they believed their qualifications

or other personal qualities would be sufficient. There seemed to be an initial naivety which was cruelly shattered when they applied for jobs or attended for interview. As we saw in the last chapter, Betty, who left school in the 1920s was shocked to discover that, despite a good school report, there were barriers to her employment because her 'face was too black' for her prospective employer. As Tricia says, 'you are aware that you are black, say, when you go for jobs and stuff and things like that ... As I say, you notice the racism more [as you get older].'

Claudine, who had faced cruel teasing as a child, came to understand that her racial(ised) identity would impact on her adult life too. She was under no illusions that her application to a school of nursing was unsuccessful because of racist attitudes from the interviewers. She was the only candidate whose mother was asked to attend the interview and was asked for details about the stability of her home life. Claudine was told directly that she may find it difficult to work with some of the doctors, the not-so-hidden message being that her skin colour would not be acceptable to some of the medical profession. There was no blatant racism that Claudine could have used as the basis of a formal complaint against the interviewers only coded comments.

Benjamin, who works as a Christian minister found that he faced discrimination at his interviews and even from one particular congregation but received little help from the church authorities:

... you know for a fact that if you were a white priest in a situation where the parishioners had it in for you, the powers that be would support you. When you're a black priest and there's a conflict with the congregation, they support the congregation.

Paul also remembers being asked different interview questions than a white friend when they both applied for the same job. Even his friend was surprised at the situation:

He said to me, 'They just asked me simple questions really.' I said, 'Didn't they ask you how you'd react if you were told to do something?' He said, 'Oh no, no.' So you realise that people are still willing to come with those sort of concepts about Black people ... You started to hear about discrimination at work and you thought, 'Hang on, I've felt like that. I've felt powerless.'

In so many of these cases, respondents were treated in the same way as people with two Black parents. Contrary to many historical situations where people of mixed parentage had been emotionally, physically and economically manipulated by slave owners in the Caribbean or government officials in colonial India to ensure loyalty, their mixed backgrounds were of no consequence to the interviewers. They did not feel they were given easier entry into the job market.

Those who had managed to secure employment felt that they then faced discrimination in the workplace. Malcolm, a health worker, believed he was not promoted as quickly as his white colleagues. He assumed this was partly due to the challenges he had made to managers about inequalities in service delivery within his particular setting. Anthony felt compelled to challenge the attitudes and comments of colleagues too and found that the emotional cost of this strategy was very high, he would be avoided or even ostracised. Other respondents felt pressure to be the 'expert' on race issues or felt their colleagues expected them to speak out against injustice while they took a back seat. Natalie found herself in this position and resented it even further when her qualifications for her opinions were questioned by some white colleagues who felt that she wasn't 'really Black'.

Several respondents, mainly musicians or artists, were self-employed and felt this was one way of protecting themselves from the race politics which they had experienced in other work settings. Lynn felt that she could never return to office work where she would be forced to listen to racist banter or covert comments. Although this situation provides less financial security, it is felt to be preferable to the wearing away of self-esteem which was encountered in regular employment.

Racism and mutual recognition and support (or lack of it)

Racist experiences often impact on racial(ised) identity. Respondents report developing closer emotional connections to other Black people. Mutual understanding has led to friendships, intimate relationships and political action. A level of comfort was experienced when in contact with other Black people, whether of mixed heritage or not.

However, this was not a constant experience. Some respondents had found that they had their 'Blackness' questioned and that there seemed to be hurdles to overcome in order to be accepted into Black communities or organisations. We have already seen that the question of being 'authentically Black' is often addressed to adolescent women. As many men's relationships are activity based rather than linked to empathetic attachments, there seemed to be a greater ease of entrance into Black groups and organisations for male respondents and it seems that there was less opportunity for exclusion or the need to prove 'authenticity' (culturally or racially). However, two men interviewed suggested experiencing difficulties with other Black people. They saw themselves as Black but found that some Black people did not recognise them as such. As previously mentioned Joshua talked about having to deal

with negative comments from Black and white peers at school. Rudolph, who is Rastafarian, feels that '... when you go to the black people, some will accept you as black but a lot of them won't accept you as black, so that's more racism. It's too much. We experience it from both sides.'

An unusual perspective was described by Stephen who had experienced a lot of verbal abuse at school. Although at a young age he wished he'd had a white family, as he matured he came to value his 'mixed-ness' and even saw this as uniqueness. He was almost apologetic when he mentioned that, as he got older, the abuse sometimes pleased him because it gave him the intersubjective recognition he wanted – he was different enough to warrant the negative attention and this meant that people recognised his 'Blackness':

... this is what I mean about it being a bit reassuring ... if you've got some sort of white thug come up and say, 'Fucking nigger', at least you know where you stand. ... it sounds a bit strange, it was like ... people having a go at you, white people having a go at you, it's sort of ... this sounds mad, slightly reassuring in a way because you know where your footing is.

In a similar way, Lydia had, at times, wished she had darker skin because she felt she would create less confusion in the minds of others and would not have to expend so much energy proving to them that she was Black. When racist incidents occurred, she felt some relief despite the discomfort. Such comments are confirmed by Claire Huang Kinsley (in Camper, 1994:121), who is Chinese-American woman. She describes an incident at work where a service user refuses her help because she is 'Chinese'. Huang questions her own reactions and, after some coaxing, answers

I was pleased. Okay? I was pleased that I had been a target of racism. The REAL kind, the blatant kind, the kind that regular people mean when they say "racism." I was pleased because this was proof that I really was a woman of colour, no matter what anyone said. I had my credentials. I had my badge. I counted.

It is interesting to note that Huang felt the racist comment had more authority and weight in proving her status as 'a woman of color' than the multiplicity of remarks from those who wanted to see her as white.

In fact, Blackness does not only have to be proved to some Black people. Another struggle encountered by many respondents was an attempt by some white people to negate them or ignore their 'Otherness'. This usually presented as an insistence that some respondents were 'not really Black'. We have seen how Simran's friends thought they were reassuring her when they made such comments. Natalie had similar experiences with friends:

I can remember when I was a teenager and friends would be talking about black people and I would say, 'Hang on, what are you saying? I'm here' and they'd say, 'But we don't think of you as black'

Tricia said that people would be making derogatory remarks about Black people in her presence and when they noticed she was there they would say, 'Oh, but you're all right because we know you and ...' This was not exclusively a female experience Malcolm says:

I used to get that, too, 'Well, you're not really Black, are you?' ... Some people say, 'Oh you're not really Black.' And some Black people say, 'Well, you're more white than black.' On occasions I have stood in the middle, I can't go either way. That's when I found things confusing.'

Conclusion

My research demonstrates that racism is seen by people of mixed parentage as involving a wide range of negative treatment at the hands of others. These include derogatory comments from both white and Black people and can involve the negation or ignoring of 'Otherness'. The hierarchy of skin colour becomes evident from an

early age, providing barriers to overcome in order to secure acceptance or else placing hurdles in the way which are sometimes too high to jump. There can also be a gendered element to such antagonistic treatment. More difficult to deal with is what has been described as 'velvet glove racism' which cannot be easily defined or challenged but which causes great discomfort. People of mixed parentage are also subjected to negative stereotypes and representations and this can create hostility from both white and Black people.

According to many of the respondents, experiences of racism and prejudice create a questioning of both the 'real me' and the 'social me', e.g. 'If people are rude to me, it must be because I'm a horrible/unacceptable person.' Certainly at a young age there is no protection against such thoughts as few children are able to rationalise the behaviour of others, especially adults. These experiences ensure that people of mixed parentage, at some time in their lives, are confused about their place in society. Many felt that this confusion was solely the result of racism and prejudice and that without the negative social relations, they would not experience the marginality which representations of people of mixed parentage so often carry.

Racism and prejudice also creates emotional tension in social relations. Some respondents felt they were not certain who they could trust and became wary of developing relationships for fear of finding out that friends had covertly racist attitudes. They felt that they could only safely express their racial(ised) with other Black people; some suggested they only felt completely safe with other people of mixed parentage.

Finally, many respondents found that white family in particular questioned their loyalty to 'one side or the other'. Those who chose to express a 'Black identity' felt compelled to reassure white family and friends that this was not a rejection of them but an attempt to find a more comfortable place in society.

In understanding the experiences as narrated by the respondents, it seems that developing a racial(ised) identity which is comfortable and manageable is only achieved gradually. People learn to deal with conflict and become more confident in their 'mixed' identity, whether this includes an expression of Blackness or not. This process relies on learning both defensive and protective strategies over time.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

Introduction

This section draws together the main points of the thesis and aims to understand them in the context of racial(ised) identity development. As we have seen in chapter three, there are a variety of theories of identity which have helped us to understand some of the processes described by respondents. The aim of this research was to avoid imposing theoretical viewpoints onto respondents, and to allow them to speak for themselves, and so the theories outlined below are only viewed as a useful starting point. The narratives of the respondents are the focus of this research and have allowed for a wider appreciation of the variety of theoretical standpoints as opposed to a singular approach.

In terms of the information provided by the interviewees, it is clear that memories are important in providing a sense of personhood (Locke, 1690). Perhaps even more significant is our moral identification with our memories (Behan, 1979). However, we have also seen that memory is not always accurate and that personal narrative is inevitably an interpretation of a variety of factors, some of which may be embellishments of the 'facts' but which nonetheless provide an autobiography which has life, colour and meaning.

Kant (1785) shows us that the universality of moral personality ensures that we become aware of others and especially of the characteristics we *share* with others rather than what *distinguishes* us from others. Many respondents made it clear that

they became aware of their difference from others from an early age but that they also, throughout their lives, experienced an urge to seek out others from similar backgrounds or with similar experiences. Kant also believed that personhood has two parts, the knowable ('phenomenal') and the un-knowable ('noumenal'). Respondents did not seem to confirm such a strong separation as they suggested that there was a greater interaction between the inner person and the person they expressed to others.

This interactive approach is more evident in Hegel's (1807) theories of identity. His suggestion of a need for mutual recognition and affirmation is important and is clearly demonstrated in the narratives of most of the respondents. The life stories also provide some elucidation of Hegel's view of the changes which take place as knowledge is acquired which influences both personal and social identity.

Mead's (1934) work reinforces Hegel's viewpoint as we see the suggestion of a 'real me' and a 'social me'. Certainly the interviewees in my research viewed themselves as having a private and a public image and that each informed the other. They were aware that they changed their behaviour in the social context as they anticipated the reactions of others. Most were also clear that their racial(ised) identity was subject to change and that being people of mixed parentage allowed them a fluidity of identity which others may not be able to experience.

There is now considerable agreement that identity is not fixed at birth, as Descartes (1644) would have us believe, and that it develops and changes with age. Despite the theories of those who believe that identity development stops at the end of adolescence (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Erikson, 1968), more recent discourse on

racial(ised) identity, mainly by scholars of mixed parentage, suggests that such identity continues to change during adulthood and beyond (Kich, Cauce *et al.*, Hall, Bradshaw, all in Root, 1992). Many respondents would agree with such observations as most would say that they are aware that they will make many more changes in how they express their racial(ised) identity in the future. However, they would also feel their lives at times require continuity rather than constant change. Ricoeur (1990) suggests this is possible through the development of 'selfhood' (*ipse*) and 'sameness' (*idem*), both of which change over time, but with 'sameness' providing a sense of constancy in relationship with like-minded people and groups.

My own theoretical viewpoint, mediated through the findings, is that we can learn from Hegel's (1807) concept of discovering selfhood through an ongoing process of mutual recognition and affirmation which occurs through our social relations. Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Erikson (1968) (all following the Meadian tradition) also saw identity development as a process, with Erikson in particular concerned with specific phases. My own view is that there *is* a process akin to Camp's (1993) creation of 'texture' involved in establishing a racial(ised) identity but that there are no specific stages which must occur in a particular order. Unlike Erikson, I see the process as never-ending because both personal and social identity (with racial(ised) identity as just one aspect) are always influenced by such factors as place, social relations, identifications and historically constructed representations, all of which change over time. The findings also suggest that Ricoeur's (1990) concept of selfhood and sameness are relevant to the lived reality of the respondents. They find their personal identity (their selfhood) is influenced by the opinions and reactions of others and changes as a result of their experiences but they also find some constancy in

particular supportive and affirming social relations. Such relationships still take time to develop but provide a stability and a 'sameness'.

The remainder of this conclusion shows how the narratives of those I interviewed provide even greater insights into the lived experiences of people of mixed parentage generally.

Main findings

My research looked at the various social influences on identity which are experienced by people of mixed parentage. These included location, friendships both in school and later, family support or lack of it and experiences of racism and prejudice. Having taken these factors into account, what is the outcome in terms of an internal sense of racial(ised) identity and how that identity is expressed externally?

The following is an overview of my findings:

- ❑ Where people live during their childhood and/or adolescence, affects how they understand and express both/the many aspects of their racial(ised) identity as adults. The choice of where to live as adults also influences the expression of the 'social me'.
- ❑ The type of school attended, in terms of racial mix, influences the variety of friendships and the demonstration of a positive mixed identity during adolescence

- ❑ The level of access to both parents and their representative families and friends. impacts on an individual's understanding and acceptance of a dual or multiple identity even when the relationships are not always successful.
- ❑ As might be expected, mothers are very significant influences in the lives of their offspring and can influence~~d~~ their racial(ised) identity.
- ❑ In the main fathers have less direct dealings with their children than mothers but they can have much influence in developing self-esteem in their offspring.
- ❑ Role models and heroes as children do not seem to depend on location but are influenced in the main by TV, music oriented radio or sporting interests. Heroes and role models change with maturity and experience. They appear to be an indicator of identity coherence.
- ❑ The racial(ised) identity of partners seems to depend more on opportunity to meet a wide range of people and on individual circumstance than on a particular person's understanding of their own 'Blackness'. Stability of the long term adult relationships does seem to depend on mutual understanding of racial and cultural issues.
- ❑ A significant component in the understanding and expression of racial(ised) identity is the respondents' experiences of prejudice, discrimination and racism, both covert and overt, from both white and Black communities.

- ❑ Racial(ised) identity develops and changes with age. Most people view themselves in terms of their gender, age, regional location, educational attainment, class and so on. For most Black people, including those of mixed parentage, racial(ised) identity is also developed often as a result of experiences of conflict and a sense of ‘Otherness’. As with other areas of personal and social identity, expression of racial(ised) identity changes over the years.

Process of change in identity

Childhood

As we have seen, most respondents, during their early years, lived unaware of their difference until they faced teasing from other schoolchildren or neighbours. Negative attitudes from teachers reinforced a sense of unacceptability. Respondents mostly viewed such discrimination as a result of their class, gender, size or general behaviour; very few understood the language of racism and none had an innate awareness of it.

At such a young age most tried to minimise this treatment and when they recounted the incidents at home, there was often lack of support from parents. It is undoubtedly true that, for most people of mixed parentage, an understanding of the motivation of those who treat them badly develops with maturity. As Mead (1934) suggests, it is through observing the dialogues which take place in society, that a person becomes aware of the inner dialogue which affects the ‘social me’. Paul describes how, as a child, he came to a realisation of the plight of many Black people and subsequently understood his own imposed position:

I remember watching TV as a child ... and seeing some black guy as a servant and I remember seeing this black guy being told to move around on his hands

and knees, crawl around on his hands and knees by some white guy ... I felt unhappy about it and I thought that, you know, I'm connected in some way with this, with what's happening on the TV ...

Teenage years

Television and film, in other words, fictional others, seemed to be a major source of enlightenment for many respondents, especially during their teenage years. Helen, Anita and her partner, Rudolph, all mentioned the 1977 television adaptation of the Alex Haley novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976), which had a great impact on their understanding of their African ancestry (the accuracy of the portrayal was not a concern to them at the time). Rudolph says that he and his friends, who were mostly Black, had never discussed race during their childhood but as teenagers they became incensed when they realised the suffering which had been caused by African slavery, 'the only time that it was a topic was ... we watched *Roots* on telly and we was all motivated and stimulated into violence.' Anita had similar sentiments, 'When I watched *Roots* ... it was a shock for me to watch *Roots* 'cos my Dad and Mum had never told me my history.'

It is at this time that teenagers generally become aware of the wider world and current affairs begin to grab their attention. National and international incidents seen on television news set off thought processes which force them to look at how society might view them or their families. We have looked at the impact of representation in the lives of people of mixed parentage and Anna confirmed its importance when she recounted seeing images of Asian people being forced to leave their homes in East Africa in the 1970s, 'I think from then ... Just seeing ... I think before that it was not an issue. But after that I felt that I had that ambassadorial role.'

Teenage years are, as Erikson (1968) believes, a time of great upheaval and self-doubt. Role models and heroes provide us with a stage on which we can observe particular social relations and decide which character to identify with and imitate thus assisting in the development of self-awareness and self-confidence. Respondents had a variety of role models which changed as they matured and which, in adult life, became more connected with their own racial(ised) identity. The lack of role models for people of mixed parentage was an area of concern although many saw successful Black people generally as worthy of emulation.

Most respondents felt that, even if they struggled as children to 'fit in' with their peers, as they matured from childhood into adolescence and late teens, they became more aware of the positive aspects of their 'difference'. They saw themselves as unique but at the same time understood that they had common experiences to share with other people of mixed parentage and with some Black people; many developed a sense of 'sameness' within their social circles. Few respondents saw themselves as sharing 'sameness' with white people. Lydia remembers realising that, even though she is light-skinned, she did not want to be thought of as white and English so she 'cultivated the image of being interesting'. At the time Eastern religions were catching the attention of intellectuals and Lydia felt this made her Eastern ancestry more attractive to others. The negative responses she had experienced as a child were replaced by intrigue and fascination.

Helen used another strategy, that of adopting symbols which expressed her racial(ised) identity (see Appiah, 1996). She felt that learning patois from her friends gave her greater movement between friendship groups and more acceptance from

Black girls. She describes her teenage years in the present tense. 'I'm learning patois and every ting so I'm just cool and I'm just nice how I am'. She also found that this skill made her more confident when challenging abusive white people.

Very few people of mixed parentage have parents who provide them with access to information about culture and heritage. Jewelle Taylor Gibbs (1989:326), in her study of 'biracial' adolescents in America believes cultural education within the family is the mediating influence in the development of a stable 'mixed' identity.

One of the major issues of interracial families is the transmission of a coherent sense of a cultural heritage and an ethnic identity to their children. In contrast to other minority families, these parents do not share the same racial or cultural heritage even if they are from the same socioeconomic background and educational level.

I agree that family support and encouragement concerning racial(ised) identity is an important aspect in the lives of children of mixed parentage. However, I question whether irreparable damage is done if these factors are not present. I encountered many people whose parents rarely discussed race issues but who, in later life, found various other means of creating or developing their own particular expressions of their racial(ised) identity. Hasna was in the unusual position of having a mother who gave her many opportunities to learn about her African heritage. She would bring out artefacts they had brought from Africa when they were forced to leave because of the political situation. However, these objects would be replaced in their boxes to protect them almost as though mother and daughter were allowed to occasionally explore the daughter's 'Otherness' but it must be safely hidden away again.

Harjit's parents had been open and supportive about the impact of racism. They had also given him considerable 'cultural education' but even he felt that he is still learning how to express himself. At the age of 29 he said:

... and I'm thinking a lot more about my own identity and ... about ... I mean I've had issues in my head about that I've worked through and just ... from Black pride to nationalism to culture ... a whole range of things really ...

Several respondents wished they had learned more about their Black parent's language. Conrad feels this would have given him greater access to his Sri Lankan family. Hasna felt that the few words she had learned provided a bridge into her father's family but lack of fluency prevented her from developing stronger relationships with them. Robert believes that if he had learned Chinese, his authenticity may not have been questioned quite so much.

As teaching from parents is often so lacking, self-education is an important aspect to developing a comfortable 'social me'. For some people this happens when they discover resources which educate them about their family or 'ethnic group' history, mostly via the media and literature. This process encourages new self-expressions within society. Music is another avenue explored as an attempt to understand and express an allegiance to a particular lifestyle or social or political viewpoint. This is not necessarily other people's music. Harjit believes he developed an understanding of his identity through the music he has written:

... Identity ... I was able to discover a lot about myself through my music and through how I express myself and ... the sort of songs that I am writing ... just writing about, erm, culture and identity and ... I wrote this song called Indian Skies and ... the chorus is, 'Take me home, I don't know where I belong Why should it surprise if my heart lies in Indian skies?'

Adulthood

I made no assumptions about at what age respondents felt comfortable with their racial(ised) identity. However, many interviewees were aware that they had, with increasing age, felt a need to express both (or the many) parts of their heritage. They had reflected on their childhood attempts to 'fit in' with the expectations of others which had usually resulted in them 'acting white'. They had decided instead that they would choose their own style of social expression and self-presentation.

The many and varied experiences of racism and prejudice are a major factor in the changes people of mixed parentage make over the years. If Hegel's 'I' and 'me' are understood better in the light of the 'we' then contact with negativity and exclusion based mainly on skin colour makes plain to many people of mixed parentage where society places them in the hierarchy of race. Throughout the conversations with respondents it was clear that they believed that they are still judged negatively at times. This treatment ensures that the process of establishing a secure racial(ised) identity never ends as anticipating the reactions of others leads to adaptation to different circumstances at different times. Anna says that, 'I'm sure in your relationships with other people, if they're making presumptions about you, they do it on the basis of what you look like.'

Most respondents are clear that the hostility they still face as adults is solely because they are physically dark and this is borne out by their experiences. Malcolm lives in a predominantly white suburban area and is sometimes approached by young people in the area who believe that because he is Black he must therefore be involved with drugs, 'One thing people always say is that they expect that I smoke dope because of

the way I look.’ Ryan is aware that his appearance and style of dress give an impression which some would see as fitting the media image of young Black men, “And then you remember, ‘I’m projecting this image. A black man with no hair.’” He has had reactions from people when walking in the city centre which confirm to him that they feel threatened by his image. However, contrary to Mead’s (1934) viewpoint that we alter our behaviour in anticipation of the reaction of others, Ryan says he does not adapt his image or behaviour because he is determined that other people will not force him into changing himself in order to alleviate their own fears. Ryan also recounts an interesting and amusing tale of when he first realised how *he* is also affected by the media portrayal of Black men. It gave him an insight into why he gets the reactions he does from white people:

I understand it in a way (laugh) because one night, it was about 4 o’clock in the morning and I was fairly ... fairly intoxicated and I was at an all-night garage at the little cashier window and inside there was like 4 TV monitors. And I was feeling a little bit paranoid and I was out late and I’ve had a few drinks and, you know, just on your toes, sort of thing, in the middle of Birmingham. And I looked on the monitors and I saw this big guy with no hair, you know, standing ... I wasn’t sure because all the monitors were different places so I was going like that and I thought, ‘God, he looks ...’ and I looked round, and it was me! And I couldn’t find him and I looked round and thought, ‘Bloody hell.’ (laugh) And I really, really did look intimidating and frightening to me.

Erikson’s (1968) view that identity development ends at adolescence is often challenged by the respondents’ narratives. The impact that considering becoming parents has on people is one such example; they have to assume responsibility for another person’s self-image and self-worth. Robert says that if he was to face the possibility of fatherhood he would ‘probably approach these issues differently, probably ... with a much greater degree of political urgency.’ Simran said that she wants to be confident about her own racial(ised) identity before she has children

especially as she thinks her parents could have helped her to understand her identity more if they had thought about such issues before they had children.

Tricia had faced racism as a teenager but became much more conscious of the need to express her 'Blackness' when she became pregnant, especially as her son's father is white:

I went through another identity thing when I got pregnant with my son ... Because he has got more of a white influence than a black influence, I thought that it's going to be really important for me to have, to show more positively, like, my black side and stuff. And so I formed a more stronger black identity during my pregnancy with ----- [son]. That was just about making sure that he had a positive black identity around him because I suppose he'll have to face a lot of the issues that I did, especially looking white as he did.

Tricia makes sure that her son has Black role models around him through family members and also has Caribbean styles of decoration visible in the house. Tricia was also aware that her partner's Irish heritage needed to be expressed and made efforts to include this in the changes she made so that her son would have a wider number of possible identifications.

Further self-education is carried on in adulthood. Some people of mixed parentage choose to spend time with others who are open about race issues. Hasna feels such action helped her to 'to become certainly a lot more aware.' She also chose to take 'various courses' where she met more Black people thus developing her sense of both 'selfhood' and 'sameness'. Her home decor and accessories clearly reflect her own African and her partner's Caribbean heritage, 'Certainly I've taken that on board far more consciously as an adult than what we had at home.'

If we look again at the issue of representation, Paul felt himself ‘connected’ to the images he was seeing as a teenager and this made him, in later years, look more closely at the influence of the media. He recalls, during a media studies course, viewing 1950s Trades Union films which described the job interview processes Black people faced and showed the derogatory comments made by the interviewers; a familiar scenario from his own life. For Natalie, an understanding of how to express her ‘Blackness’ did not begin until she was in her thirties. She was on an access course which challenged her view of herself, encouraged dialogue, not only with others but in her mind, and this enabled her to change her outlook and self-expression, ‘it wasn’t until I went on that course that I had the confidence to start to make statements, if you like, about who I am ...’

For many, understanding ‘who I am’ resulted in a change of role models. Preferences for particular forms of media changed over the years and often included Black musicians and writers. Expressing their identity in their lifestyles and home décor also enabled respondents to develop a ‘social me’ with which they were comfortable.

Black, white or mixed race?

It is commonly believed that many people of mixed parentage struggle to call themselves Black and some of the research on children supports such a view (Tizard and Phoenix, 1993). However, my research has found that, irrespective of how respondents described their identity, many of them chose to identify as Black, even if others do not accept their entitlement to such a description. How did the majority of respondents see themselves? Except for Anna and Jennifer, who saw themselves as mixed race but said they did not see the relevance of their racial origins, there

appeared to be two main perspectives: Black or Black/mixed. The self-definitions depended on circumstance, social relations and location.

Black identity

Although most respondents felt their parents could have been more helpful in their identity development, a few felt they were fortunate to have parents who explicitly encouraged them to view themselves as Black. Hasna describes her mother's function in this, "I suppose she was as honest as she could be at the time and she did say, 'You are black. Your Father is black and you are black' and there was never any attempt to hide that ..."

For many, an understanding of their 'Blackness' started during their late teens and early twenties. Some, like Lydia, found that their white parent did not necessarily understand their new self-expression, '... my mother has struggled enormously during my 20s and 30s to understand my political views and my identification as Black.'

Many of the respondents who chose to express a predominantly Black identity sometimes found they had to prove themselves worthy of the title. Carmel, raised by her Caribbean grandmother in infancy, felt she had to go through a period of confusion and ask herself some very difficult questions before adopting the Black identity she so clearly expresses now. She felt a strong connection to her African ancestry once she learned about the impact of slavery through the films she watched, 'I mean when you think back like my Great Grandmother, the life she must have had which is a stone's throw from me. We're not talking about 20 generations, it's just a

stone's throw away.' However, she found that her adherence to Rastafarianism did not guarantee her an easy passage into acceptance as a Black woman:

But even with Rasta in the early days when it was militant, if you were half-caste you had to prove yourself twice as much, you know. You had to be prepared to defend yourself because it was blacker than black, you know.

Helen feels that she has proved herself through adopting Rastafarian beliefs and lifestyle, learning patois ('I need to talk black now because I *am* black but I need to talk it') and being involved in teaching, singing and acting which often articulates race issues; again we see the use of symbols as indicators of racial(ised) identity. As for many people of mixed parentage, Harjit discovered that people were afraid that he was denying his whiteness. A white colleague felt he should not express his 'Black Asian' identity, 'But you live here, you speak English. You are English. You're as English as Mr Kipling.'

Black/'mixed' identity

While some respondents only described themselves as Black, more often the term 'Black' was used alongside others which expressed a racial mix. The term 'half-caste' was used by many respondents when describing titles they were given or assumed for themselves in their childhoods. Most were aware that this term is no longer politically appropriate, although some, like Rudolph, continue to use it as a descriptor but interchangeably with the terms 'Black' and 'mixed race'. While he sometimes calls himself Black, he is also at ease with the term 'mixed race' and feels that people of mixed parentage feel at times like a separate group from other Black people. This view is confirmed by Tricia who feels that she cannot feel complete allegiance to either white people or Black people. She maintains that the experiences of people of mixed parentage are not always understood by those with two Black parents. She

describes herself as 'mixed race' but appreciates that she is seen as Black and is not ashamed of this. Lynn feels this to be the case too, '... the only people who know what it's like to be mixed race are mixed race people, you know, so ... But I really like the fact that I'm mixed race ...'

Lisa Tessman (1995:105) suggests that, "The 'who are my people' question has frequently been raised as a problematic question by people who are marginals, on the edges or the outside of communities, people who recognize their community identifications as multiple, intersecting, and conflicting ..." Identification with others who share similar origins and experiences was very important to my research group and provided an arena in which to develop a positive sense of self. The respondents gained some sense of 'sameness' by associating with Black people in particular settings but felt at their most comfortable with their racial(ised) identity when in the company of other people of mixed parentage; it was in this social setting that they gained most approval and affirmation.

The only respondent who found her identity more confusing as she got older was Andrea. At the age of forty she expresses a lot of dilemmas:

... I feel at my age now, I'm deciding, should I go and be with my white friends, should I stay with my Muslim friends or am I going with [partner] ... because he's part ... erm ... African. But I just feel ... God, I've felt more torn of where I am and where I'm coming from and which culture I'm in, which identity group I'm in. It's got harder and harder especially over the last 5-10 years I would say ... But I am myself just torn with, 'Am I this or am I that?'

Despite her acknowledged confusion, Andrea finds spending time with friends who are also of mixed parentage allows her the freedom to discuss these issues and also gives her a sense of comfort and belonging which she finds lacking in other

relationships. Clearly belonging to a 'we' is an important survival strategy in Andrea's fragmented world.

Joshua is very clear that he wants to describe himself as being mixed race but is concerned to point out that this is not based on any sense of superiority. Contrary to the history of people of mixed parentage, his experiences have not led him to see himself as better than Black people who are not of mixed parentage. 'I feel that I was treated differently, but I feel I was treated on the same level as a Black person'. Joshua knows that his stance is open to challenge and he often finds Black colleagues questioning him and feeling that he is unwilling to support them:

'How can you do that? What about your black brothers from way back? What about slavery times?' 'Well, yeah, I'm aware of all of that. But I'm here today and I'm mixed race and that's where I'm coming from.' And I feel that you have to keep explaining and explaining ... and sometimes you think, 'What's the point? I may as well just call myself black and save people a lot of grief and trouble. That would be the end of it.'

During the interviews, respondents were asked whether they would change anything about their backgrounds. Some understandably said that they would have preferred their parents to have been happier in their relationships and to have stayed together. Clearly, those who had a parent who had died mentioned that they wished they were still alive. For all the respondents there was consensus concerning parentage. No respondents would have changed their parentage. Robert expresses well the sentiments of many interviewees, '... in terms of, you know, do I wish I was born something else or do I wish my parents never got together and all that kind of stuff? Honestly, ... never, really, honestly.'

A serious regret for most respondents was the lack of education they received about their culture or about racism in general. Simran speaks for many others when she expresses her disappointment with the lack of education she had concerning racism she might experience:

I wish that racism was talked about in my family. Even now I don't know what I'd do if someone said something really racist to me ... I wish someone had said to me, 'If someone says this to you, just say this back.' ... So that would have been nice and obviously to have learned more about India when I was younger.

A small number of respondents were concerned about their skin shade. These were exclusively respondents who considered themselves light skinned. Gillian used to question her identity because her shade of skin colour sometimes made her feel uncertain:

I remember looking at my hands and thinking, 'Why are my hands so ... why am I so light?' and wonder, you know, 'It's a mixture and I'm so mixed and that's why I've come out ...' And every now and again I'd catch myself thinking, you know, 'I could have been darker' or 'I could have been lighter'. And just sort of asking questions of myself.

Paul also remembers questioning his self-image when he was a child, "I remember thinking to myself, 'Why aren't I white?' Then I remember thinking to myself, 'What would it be like to have parents who are Black?' And so you have all these questions going round in your mind." Lydia has had similar concerns but says that she has tried to be realistic in order to accept herself. This quote demonstrates her struggles well:

I have wished I was darker skinned because ... I felt, and again this is irrational because it's not true, but I felt that it would make it easier in terms of visual identification, that my presentation would be less ambiguous and that might make it easier. And yet I also know from friends in similar positions who are darker skinned that it doesn't.

A surprising discovery was that Joonas, despite his difficulties admitting his parentage to his friends and colleagues, is finding himself at a point where he is beginning to

accept the unchangeable, 'I mean I'm growing up and learning to live with things that ... or accepting things more ...'

Coherent Identities?

Identity theories often debate whether or not people of mixed parentage are able to secure coherence in their identities. A predominantly white society with rigid categories of race will always have expectations that people of mixed parentage will display some discontinuity in their lives. People of mixed parentage are considered to have much greater difficulty adapting to life than those with what is considered a more unified identity. But, as Stuart Hall (1992:277) points out, there are few individuals who could honestly claim to have achieved 'wholeness':

The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with - at least temporarily.

I do not believe that any of the respondents would claim that they have fixed views about their racial(ised) identities. All of them would undoubtedly say that they are aware that they may change their self-perceptions and how they express themselves in the future. However, most maintained that they were 'comfortable' with who they were at the time of interview. They accepted their 'mixedness' and felt they had learned to negotiate a relatively safe place within their current social relations. They were aware, however, that dialogue with others who did not share their perceptions could occasionally undermine their sense of ease.

Only two respondents, Joonas and Andrea, felt that they were still struggling to find an untroubled racial(ised) identity. Joonas, at eighteen years old, was beginning to

consider his options. He was not comfortable with the ‘lies’ of pretending he was white but was afraid of further rejection from people around him. Andrea had, at the age of forty, only recently had to confront her sense of self as she had moved to a racially mixed area and was facing many conflicting expectations concerning her allegiances to particular community groups. As we have seen, if she had been brought up in such an area, she may have resolved these conflicts sooner. It was clear from the findings that there is a spatial aspect to identity; our racial(ised) identity is contingent on where we are brought up or where we live now.

My research found that most respondents developed diverse expressions of ‘the self’ which they allowed others to see. As Feldman (1972) and Broadhead (1980) suggest, these different narrations were expressed in different contexts and at different times. For most there *had* been confusion about ‘who they were’ in childhood and adolescence but by adulthood they were more confident. However, even at this point there was no sense of having ‘arrived’. There was a recognition from many that their ‘multiple identities’ made them unique rather than confused or marginal. I find Campt’s notion of ‘textured identities’ very helpful when looking at the experiences of the respondents in my research. A key element of that texture is a racial(ised) identity. Many would have recognised such a description of their own lives, especially those who had experienced considerable difficulties either about their racial(ised) identities or in traumatic family life. Most viewed each experience as valuable (even when painful) because it strengthened and provided greater depth to their identity. In conclusion, my research has shown that, in regard to racial(ised) identity formation in people of mixed parentage:

1. Racial(ised) identity is only one aspect of the 'social me' that is expressed by people of mixed parentage. Although undoubtedly influenced by a multiplicity of social relations, it lies within the control of the people themselves to decide how, where and when they express their racial(ised) 'social me'.
2. There is no set agenda or timescale for racial(ised) identity formation – it takes as long as it takes.
3. Establishment of a racial(ised) identity is a never-ending process that depends on a wide variety of factors. It provides many possibilities and opportunities for self-awareness and change.

I believe that by allowing people of mixed parentage to speak for themselves, this research will put to rest assumptions of marginality, confusion and isolation. Such speculation should be replaced with the more realistic view of a people whose sense of personhood does not depend on conforming to imposed constructed categories but on a myriad of identifications and representations. People of mixed parentage can, do and should choose to express their racial(ised) identity in a multiplicity of ways.

The following poem describes how a girl of mixed parentage decides to express her racial(ised) identity and her multiplicity of social identifications. She feels pressured by society to choose one expression above another but wants to find a middle ground. Her own selfhood can only be asserted if all elements of her heritage have equal place and power. It is clear that she is comfortable with her racial(ised) identity but the fight is to persuade others to acknowledge the many aspects of who she claims to be.

I am making a circle for my self

I am making a circle for my self
and

I am placing into that
circle: all who are for me,
and
all that is inside.

If I am only white and Jewish then mama stays
outside.

If I am only black and Protestant
then daddy stays
outside.

But Golda is in the circle. Ben Gurion. Moses.
And Grandpa Jack is
surely
in.

I am making a circle for my self
and
I am placing into
that circle: all who are for me;
all that is inside
me.

If I am only black and Protestant:
then daddy stays outside.

If I am only white and Jewish:
then mama stays outside.

But Harriet is in the circle. Martin King. Malcolm.
And Great
Grandpa Perry is
surely
in.

Arnold Adoff (1982)

The Out Takes

In keeping with my view of racial(ised) identity development as a never-ending process, I felt that, rather than ending the thesis with the conclusion, these 'out takes' could provide a springboard for future thoughts about people of mixed parentage. The out takes, unlike those at the end of some films, are not humorous mistakes but are comments made by real people about their lived reality. So often quotes about people of mixed parentage are negative ones. In this section I want to provide proof that 'Marginal Man' (Stonequist, 1937) does not have to be the fate of people who defy categorisation and compartmentalisation.

Yeah, oh yeah. I feel comfortable with who I am although obviously, like everybody, there's things you want to change about yourself, you know. There's things you want out of life, there's places you want to go, you know, there's ambitions you have so in that sense, yeah, we can probably never really be completely happy with who we are but ... but with who I am, you know, pretty much, I am what I am and I'm not ashamed or unashamed, you just have to get on with your life really haven't you?

Harjit, age 28

Because you're not an ordinary, every day white person, you can look at the world in a different way. And, you know, to get on with all kinds of people and for them to get on with you, I think it's quite difficult. I think for a white person to get on with a black person is difficult; for a white person to get on with an Asian person is difficult because they haven't got ... I mean, I was born with being mixed parentage.

Azeem, age 24

I wouldn't change anything now. There's nothing I'd change now. It's before; it hurt when I was younger. It's always ... children don't know any better and it's basically the influence of their parents that gives them the influence to be racist. They hear it at home and they think it's OK. They don't really know how much it hurts.

Joonas, age 18

I went through ... my childhood wasn't one of the happiest and, you know, chopping and changing from Black to white and finding my identity was quite

hard but I think I'm quite happy with who I am now ... I am quite happy. I wouldn't want to be white, that's for definite.

Eleanor, age 25

Yes, I feel really comfortable with who I am. I think there's a lot more ... your own identity and being comfortable with yourself. I think that's really important. And being positive. That really is important because that comes out in loads of other things like your motivation. If you feel good about yourself, feel good about what you do and what you're trying to achieve, you'll go and do it.

Joshua, age 22

... I wouldn't change anything. You know, the good, the bad and the indifferent. There has been some really bad times when I was growing up and I wouldn't have changed those either because again it's made me the person I am today. I'm comfortable with who I am, yes, most definitely. There's things I *would* change, be two stone lighter [laugh] but that's beside the point [laugh].

Claudine, age 39

Erm ... well, it opens your mind up to all the other possibilities, you know, because ... I'd never say I'm white although I'm as much white as I am Black, you know, so it's like ... I do think I'm quite broad minded and that is probably because I'm mixed race because you do have to, you know, you *do* experience things that if you were white you wouldn't ... the only people who know what it's like to be mixed race are mixed race people, you know, so ... But I really like the fact that I'm mixed race ...

Lynn, age 26

... to be honest ... I'm happy with who I am now.

Malcolm, age 30

You can feel comfortable in the white world and comfortable in the Black which is obviously an advantage. You know, see the beauty in both, you know. You don't have a hang-up about one or the other. Even though culturally the two are at war, you know, but you can just go into both and see the good in both, you know, the beauty in both. So I just see it as an advantage, definitely. It's like being bi-lingual. Like being able to speak two languages fluently, you know.

Carmel, age 30

I think I'm learning to understand that it doesn't have to be nice and neat

Gillian, age 28

APPENDIX 1

AGE GROUPS	18-25	7
	26-35	13
	36-45	12
	46-55	0
	56-65	0
	66-75	0
	76+	2

GENDER	MEN	15
	WOMEN	19

AREA OF RESIDENCE	Inner City	14
	Outer City	7
	Suburbs	13

OCCUPATION	Community/Social Work	8
	Student	5
	F/T Mother	3
	Teacher/Lecturer	5
	Musician	3
	Nursing	2
	Performing artist	1
	Sales	1
	Company Director	1
	Herbalist	1
	Minister of Religion	1
	Training Officer	1
	Retired domestic worker	1
	Retired lorry driver	1

SELF- DESCRIPTION	Mixed Race	8
	Mixed race - black	1
	Mixed race - Asian/English	1
	Other/mixed race	1
	White/Other & Black/Other	1
	Black	1
	Black - mixed parentage	1
	Black - dual descent	1
	Black - British	1
	Black - Caribbean	1
	Black - -- ¹ /Australian	1
	Black African	1
	Black African woman	1
	Black Caribbean - Irish	1
	African	1
	African/Irish/Other - UK Black	1
	Welsh West Indian	1
	Welsh Caribbean	1
	Cultural Hybrid	1
	English father/African-born Chinese mother	1
	English - mixed	1
	English-born African	1
	English/Somali	1
	English	1
	White European	1
	None	2

¹ See footnote on p. 116

PARENTAL ETHNIC ORIGIN	WHITE PARENTS -		BLACK PARENTS -	
	English	19	African-Caribbean (Jamaica, St Kitts, Barbados, Aruba, St Vincent, St Lucia)	20
	Irish	6		
	Welsh	2	Asian (Indian, Pakistani, ---, Indo-Fijian, Singhalese, African-born Chinese)	10
	Welsh/Irish	1		
	Finnish	2	African (Nigerian, Somali, ---, ---)	4
	Austrian	1		
	Caribbean	1		
	Australian	1		
	Swiss	1		

PARENTAL RACIAL ORIGIN	Black fathers	29	White fathers	5
	Black mothers	5	White mothers	29

LANGUAGE	English	49	PARENTAL RELIGION (AS DESCRIBED BY INTERVIEWEE)	Christian - Church of England	16
	English/Patois	2		Christian - Church of Wales	2
	English with Ibo	1		Christian - Pentecostal	2
	Creole/English	1		Christian - Protestant	1
	Welsh	1		Christian - Catholic	10
	Arabic	1		Christian - no denomination given	6
	German	2		Christian - Moravian	1
	Burmese	1		Christian - Baptist	1
	Marathi	1		Christian - former Hindu	1
	Urdu	1		Hindu	2
	Finnish	2		Muslim	4
	Hindi	2		Jehovah's Witness	4
	Somali	1		Buddhist	2
	Punjabi	1		Humanist	1
	Singhalese	1		Atheist	3
	Not known	1		'The Good Lord' religion	1
				None	7
				Not known	4

PARENTS TOGETHER	Yes	8
	Yes until death of one	10
	Yes until separation or divorce	14
	Never together	2

PARTNER	None	4
	White	17
	Black (A/C)	7
	Mixed	6

NO. OF CHILDREN	None	17
	1	5
	2	5
	3	3
	7	2
	2+1 step	1
	Adopted	1

APPENDIX 2

RESEARCH INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW NUMBER:

PREAMBLE

I am carrying out research about the experiences of people of mixed parentage or mixed race. I would like to be able to talk to you about your childhood experiences - family and school - and also what other things have influenced you in becoming the person you are now. It would be helpful if we could discuss your relationships with friends at college or work and with those you live with.

If I have your permission, our conversation will be taped and typed up. I will send you a copy of the typed version of the conversation we have. In no document will your name or that of your family or friends be mentioned and I will make sure you cannot be identified through anything I write. The tapes are ALWAYS wiped after they are typed. Although only a tiny part of the interview may be quoted directly, the information you give me will be very valuable when I compare your experiences with other people's to see where there are differences and similarities.

PART 1 - PERSONAL DETAILS

AGE GROUP: 18- 25, 26 - 35, 36 - 45, 46 - 55, 56 - 65, 66+

GENDER:

AREA OF RESIDENCE:

OCCUPATION:

SELF DESCRIPTION:

PART 2 - FAMILY

PARENTAL RACIAL AND ETHNIC ORIGIN:

MOTHER: FATHER:

RELIGION and FIRST LANGUAGE:

MOTHER: FATHER:

SELF DESCRIPTION:

MOTHER: FATHER:

STILL TOGETHER?

SIBLINGS:

No: Gender:

FAMILY POSITION OF INTERVIEWEE:

PARTNER'S RACIAL AND ETHNIC ORIGIN:

CHILDREN:

PART 3 - INTERVIEW

- 1. Can we talk first of all about your childhood? Can you describe your childhood to me? What sort of area were you brought up in? Who did you live with? How did you get on with your family?**
- 2. Were you involved in any clubs or social groups/gangs? What hobbies did you have? What sort of music did you listen to?**
- 3. Did you ever notice that you were treated differently from other children because of your Dad/Mum? Were you ever teased because of your Dad/Mum?**
- 4. How did you cope with this?**
- 5. What effect do you think these experiences had on you?**
- 6. Did your brothers and sisters have the same experiences - how did they cope?**
- 7. Did you ever talk to your parents about your experiences?**
- 8. Did your parents discuss with you their own backgrounds?**
- 9. How well did you get on with your parents? Did you have a better relationship with one parent above another? Why was that?**
- 10. How much contact did you have with your wider family?**

- 11. Did you have much contact with other children from similar backgrounds or who had two parents who were black/not white?**
- 12. As you grew up and left school, did you experience similar things? How did you deal with them as you got older?**
- 13. Everyone has someone they admire/heroes/role models, who do you think had the most influence on your life? Why? Did any of these change as you got older?**
- 14. When you began to develop close relationships, intimate relationships, did your background ever cause any problems?**
- 15. How did you get on with your partner(s) family?**
- 16. Have you talked to your children about their family background? How have you done that? How have they reacted?**
- 17. As you have grown older, have you ever felt like looking more into your origins? Why? Why not?**
- 18. Have you ever visited the country where your Mum/Dad/grandparents were born? If so, what effect did it have on you? If not, why not and would you like to go? How do you think you would feel if you went there?**
- 19. Were you taught your Mum's/Dad's language? Would you like to? What difference has it made/would it make?**
- 20. Are there any difficulties you still face as a result of your background? How do you deal with them?**

21. If you could change anything about your background, what would it be?

22. Do you feel comfortable with who you are?

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

PLACE:

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