

White Racialized Identities

Empirical research into the racialization of white identities in British Sociology

In their introduction to a collection of papers on whiteness, Twine and Gallagher (2007: 5) label the empirical studies of localised whiteness as it intersects with class, nation and gender, the 'third wave' of whiteness studies. Thus far, the intellectual project of using whiteness as an explicit tool of analysis is not one that has taken root in the UK. Those of us interested in pursuing it may wonder whether we will be in time to surf the fourth wave, let alone jump on the third one. Here I argue that there are plenty of empirical studies that investigate the racialization of white identities in the British context: they just do not refer to themselves with the term 'whiteness' very often. It is worth reiterating that I am going to focus on empirical fieldwork in this essay, for three reasons. Firstly, because this is a domain saturated in interdisciplinary theoretical writing: there are no reviews of strictly empirical work, although there are a number of reviews of theory. Indeed this journal has provided two of those (Nayak, 2007; Ferber, 2007). Secondly, sociology is not the main disciplinary origin of many of the contributors to this corpus, and I am a sociologist. Third, US academia is the centre, the metropolis of whiteness studies and work in the peripheries does not usually get much of a look in, as Nayak (2007) indicates. Yet I will be drawn also to a comparison with the USA. Indeed, this international comparative element is part of the methodology I advocate at the end. However, in this article I aim to identify some of the principal themes to have emerged from the sporadic *empirical* studies of white racialized identity in the British context, from the early 1990s until 2007. I will begin with an introduction to the British context and then identify some key themes in the fieldwork. After that I will draw some comparisons with the US fieldwork and finish with an interpretation of what all this means for a critical research agenda.

British background

British scholars have frequently opted to avoid using the term 'whiteness' in relation to work that in the US would clearly fall into the domain of 'whiteness studies'. Indeed, there are good reasons to carefully choose our language. Presenting the findings of research data full of implicit and explicit assertions of racialized difference often expressed through claims of the eclipse of traditional solidarity and fairness can be interpreted by audiences as endorsing populist ideas of beleaguered white communities upon which Far-right political mobilization across Europe is based. The

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danger of lending credence to identity politics based on white racial reflexivity haunts the British fieldwork. The paradoxically broad disavowal of 'whiteness' on the part of UK academics working in the field of the sociology of racism therefore forms part of the context in which the following synthesis is produced.

British fieldwork

Empirical sociological studies that contribute to a research agenda on 'white' identities in specifically British contexts, have made sporadic appearances over the last decade and more (Hoggett, 1992; Back, 1996; Phoenix, 1996; Tyler, 2003, 2004; Nayak, 2003; Byrne, 2006; Dench et al., 2006; Reay et al., 2007; Author, 2007). The main themes I have identified are; invisibility; norms/values; cultural capital and integration; contingent hierarchies; and Empire.

Invisibility

The assertion that whiteness denotes an absence of specificity, or is an invisible non-raced identity is the traditional starting point for discussions of whiteness. Phoenix's (1996) interviews demonstrate how young white people enjoy the luxury of idealising egalitarianism, and asserting that colour is unimportant in judgements of personal worth, while essentialising blackness, experienced as a threatening presence in particular spaces. They are thus forced into the confrontation with the contradiction expressed by identifying themselves with non-racial identities, while recognising 'that being white signifies a social location, and as such, has a history and interconnections with other colours' (1996:192). The white subject is always viewed as a non-racial universal individual, while the Other is essentially a raced member of a collective (Farough, 2004). Yet some studies emphasising spatial awareness and mobility suggest that whiteness is *not invisible* to anyone. Watt and Stenson (1998) find that young white people in provincial Southern England see particular spaces as dangerous for a number of classed, gendered and racialized reasons, i.e. fear of crime and violence, an experience heightened when they do not know individuals resident in the areas they are crossing. Young minority people avoid certain areas, and even whole towns, seen as fearsomely white. Yet we should also steer clear of generalising this fear into a norm: other white subjects find that mixed occupation of space can be or become their norm, and their ontological security is unbalanced by an excess of whiteness. The difference between multicultural Stoke-on-Trent (where he went to

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college) and his home town, Coalville in Leicestershire, pushes 'Jim' in Tyler's (2004) study to question prevalent ideas on 'race' when he returns. Whiteness may emerge therefore as either marked (visible) or unmarked (invisible), depending on the location of the person doing the looking.

White norms and values in practice

North American writers (Jacobson, 1998; Frye, 1992; Lamont, 2000) have suggested that whiteness is constructed as a set of interrelated norms and values, ranging from a feeling of racial superiority, Christianity, the work ethic, to lying and chronically unethical behaviour, fetishising rationality, order and repression of emotions. Moreover, the process of constructing whiteness as normal, and otherness as abnormal occurs through selective understandings of culture as discrete and static, these understandings being presented as acts of common sense by the interlocutor. In the British context, I also highlight a distinction between urban and rural settings for a struggle over values.

Urban settings

Hoggett's (1992) study of Tower Hamlets, in the East End of London, demonstrates the predominance of values as a battleground in racialized inter-communal tensions. The Bangladeshi incomers in this borough are perceived as embodying values that used to characterise the working-class East End communities; collective solidarity, patriarchy, entrepreneurialism. The sense of loss of such values is thus the cause of a degree of jealousy.

'The resentment the whites feel toward the Bengali community is made poignant by the fact that the latter community has many characteristics – extended and intensive kinship networks, a respect for tradition and more seniority, a capacity for entrepreneurialism and social advancement – which the white working class in the area have lost' (1992: 354).

In local discourse, the physical presence of the Other in Tower Hamlets becomes embodied in the figure of the cockroach (Hoggett, 1992), when the modernisation of a tower block housing many Bangladeshis leads to an infestation. Here we return to more familiar notions of associating dirt, impurity and potential disease with out-

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groups (Douglas, 1966). The Bangladeshis' status as 'matter-out-of-place' is thus embodied, in contradiction to the social values and shared history of oppression *objectively* binding them to local working-class white East Enders. The out-group seemingly assumes the values of the white working class, while simultaneously 'stealing' these values from them. Thus what follows is a series of projections and identifications. 'The local white is engaged in one sense in an envious attack upon the Bengali within him', writes Hoggett, 'an attack which twists and corrupts him into its opposite' (1992:354). Indeed, the traumatic experience of racialization evokes recognition of loss of place, standards, and status for white subjects.

Rural settings

Although 80% of the UK population lived in urban areas at the 2001 Census, this represents a 10% shift to rural areas since 1991. The English countryside has long been constructed as a repository for pure English values, and a space of authenticity vis-à-vis the dangerous cosmopolitan urban centres (Neal and Agyemang, 2006; Sibley, 1995; Rowe, 1998; William, 1973). These texts demonstrate that urban inhabitants are constructed as culturally alien: their presence degrades cities, and exacerbates their distance from the putative bucolic norm.

Hubbard (2005a; 2005b) argues that rural landscape is racialized as white in the process of opposing the locating of asylum-seekers in particular spaces in England. Alongside protests over land use *per se*, he identifies elements of discourse produced in campaigns in rural Nottinghamshire and Oxfordshire that construct asylum-seekers, regardless of their geographical origins, as an undifferentiated (over-ridingly male) criminal, sexually threatening and alien presence in the English countryside. Hubbard identifies a specific narrative of white rurality dependent on implicit norms of location away from chaotic and dangerous multicultural settings. One complainant writes to the local planning authority: 'As a Bicester resident, I do not want to live in a multicultural community. Having lived in London and Surrey I have experienced the trouble this brings' (Hubbard, 2005a: 14).

Tyler's study of the Leicestershire village of 'Greenville' (2003) shows that semi-rural space is characterised by a white, middle-class habitus. Because the Asian families in Greenville lie outside notions of respectability and normality, by not

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3 getting involved in charity activities or going to the pub, they are produced as
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5 'abnormal' (2003:394). Indeed, Garland and Chakraborti (2006: 164-65) echo this
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7 finding, adding that while some ethnic minority village residents' professional status
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9 may obviate a degree of the hostility, they still cannot own the cultural codes required
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11 to function 'normally'. 'For community 'insiders'', they contend, 'rural villages can
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13 be places where kinship and shared identities can be played out and enjoyed; for those
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15 subject to the 'othering' process, such places can be cold and unwelcoming' (Ibid.:
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17 169).

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19 One Greenville Asian family extended its house (against local opposition) and the
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21 anxieties of the villagers reveal the prism through which the Asians are
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23 (mis)understood. Their private space is feared as a site of over-use: as a residence,
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25 business, and a prayer room. One villager states that: 'They are very nice people but
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27 eyebrows are raised when the hordes of friends and relatives come from Leicester. It
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29 isn't done in Greenville' (Tyler, 2003: 405). Indeed, Tyler concludes that 'wealthy
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31 Asians are thought to live in extended families, are perceived to be excessively
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33 wealthy, extravagantly religious, run disruptive businesses from their homes and cook
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35 smelly foods' (2003: 409). While their economic capital secures them residence in the
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37 wealthiest sector of the village, the Greenville Asians literally cannot buy the requisite
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39 cultural capital to become invisible in it.

Cultural capital and integration

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41 For the middle classes in semi-rural Leicester, tranquillity is a prized ideal. While
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43 solidarity (for the poor elsewhere) is demonstrated through the routines of charity
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45 work, the real test of belonging is to attain invisibility. Talking of a particular Asian
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47 family in the village, one resident tells Tyler (2003:400) 'They are as good as gold ...
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49 I never see them'. Hiding oneself and keeping the noise down is viewed as the correct
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51 way to behave, a value contradicting the justification for not forging more intimate
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53 relations: Asians 'don't mix'.

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55 This 'invisibility test' seems from our own fieldwork (Author, forthcoming) to be
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57 applied by the majority of white UK people to the integrating minorities. They
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59 generally understand 'integration' to mean 'assimilation'. 'Denise' sees her two
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friends as ideal integrators:

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'My husband's cousin is Indian (...) they do wear their saris at special occasions and things, but they're not here demanding to bring a bit of India or, you know, to be Indian in this country (...) The children's godmother is from Jamaica (...) Janine is just as English as I am because, well, she was born here, but not because of that, because she's not, you know, they're just the same as me and anybody else. They're not trying to be different'.

The contrast of minorities 'trying to be different', with the expected norm of assimilation therefore generates frustration and resentment in white interviewees. They tend to use the 'when-in-Rome' argument to bolster the case for assimilation. The various practices seen as disruptive can be countered by stating that 'we' would not be able to do such things if we lived abroad (Author, 2009). These are usually related to dress code, access to welfare, the construction of churches, and the celebration of culture.

One of Wells and Watson's respondents, a butcher (2005: 269-70), narrates his area's transformation away from Britishness through the types of meat available. The white working-class clientele's demand for rabbit has long given way to the appearance and proliferation of halal, and before that, kosher butchers. The expectations of civilized and classed familiar meats have been overturned by 'smelly' and alien meat preparation methods: a microcosm of the invasion narrative related in the rest of their interviews.

We have argued so far that white identity requires both strategically and ideologically-procured and maintained invisibility (i.e. a denial of raced specificity), and the performance of values and norms that are reflexively juxtaposed against competing and inferior ones. What sustains these norms? Cultural capital can involve among other things, shared expectations of behaviour on the part of minority groups, a belief that one is part of a tradition of dominance including Empire, knowledge of norms and behaviour patterns that will produce intended outcomes in particular situations; including the right to question certain people's eligibility for various resources without this being countered, and the assumption of rationality juxtaposed with the irrationality of Others. We might think of this as the basis for Lewis' (2004) 'hegemonic whiteness'.

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There are however alternative cultural capitals. In Watt and Stenson's (1998) exploration of the contingency of racialized space and young people's leisure-related mobility in 'Townsville', the cultural capital of non-whites includes security-oriented knowledge of places of dangerous, excessive whiteness. Moreover, minority spaces, however safe, are not always emancipatory for members of the minority, e.g. for young Muslim women, who prefer to go somewhere more anonymous for nights out, an experience echoed by young Sikhs in Kaur's (2003) study of Southall. Watt and Stenson's respondents' leisure itineraries are shaped by intersections of class, raced identities and gender. Their middle-class suburban white youths are fearful of both white working-class neighbourhoods and an Asian area in the town, whereas non-whites steer clear of particular areas in 'Townsville' unless they know white people who inhabit them, through school or shared leisure activities. Indeed, most of the inter-ethnic friendships were among the working-class respondents on estates (1998: 256). The middle-class youth, more advantaged in many areas of cultural capital, are in this respect impoverished in (multi)cultural capital that they have *not* accrued (in contrast to their working-class peers) from 'personal contacts across the ethnic divides which were so important for moving confidently about the town' (1998: 257). This deficiency has not escaped one strand of the British middle classes. Some of Byrne's (2006) London mothers talk about choosing a school with 'the right mix' (of racialized groups, in which Whites remain in the majority) for their children, while in Reay et al.'s (2007) study of parents' school choices, the 'right mix' is now vital to some middle-class parents' projects of enabling their secondary school-age children to accumulate 'multicultural capital'.

Contingent hierarchies

Where the British-based work most acutely pinpoints the complexity and conceptual fluidity of white identities is in identifying where conditional alliances, allegiances and loyalties that blur the black/white binary emerge.

Tyler's (2004) inter-generational dialogue among smalltown Leicestershire inhabitants shows how the contingency of personal biographies may shape how people perceive 'Others'. Among the interviewees, no homogenous representative voice is expressed: white superiority is contested by some, just as it is accepted unthinkingly by others. Identification can take the form of empathy, for example, as in 'Sarah's recognition of her own narrative - the experience of *her* Czech immigrant

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3 father's struggle to run a business - in critiques of Asian businesses (Tyler, 2004:
4 304).

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7 In Nayak's (2003) study of three youth subcultures in the city of Newcastle, the 'Real
8 Geordies' see themselves as the most authentic bearers of working-class culture. Their
9 family and/or occupational histories and allegiance to Newcastle United F.C bind
10 them to the region's manufacturing and mining base. This leads them to view the
11 keystone of respectability as hard work, which subsequently grants entitlement. They
12 contrast themselves flatteringly with the 'Charver Kids' (unemployed status,
13 involvement with petty crime, and ambivalent relationship to black music and dress),
14 and the 'White Wannabes' (fascination with what they understand as Afro-American
15 culture). Wells and Watson's London shopkeepers (2005) perceive their 'authentic
16 locals' position as jeopardised by groups receiving State resources at the expense of
17 people like them, i.e. on the basis of cultural otherness *per se* rather than earned
18 through hard work. Spaces that were seen as neutral, or as resources previously
19 accessible to the whole community have been turned into mosques, for example,
20 indicating the neighbourhood's demographic fall from Britishness.

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22 Les Back's (1996) ethnography of South London estates suggests that values
23 determine the salient borders of identity, as culture becomes the modality through
24 which the young people are racialized. Black and white youths put aside differences
25 to ally against Vietnamese and Bangladeshi newcomers on their estates (1996: 240-
26 41). While the black youths are well aware that in other circumstances they could be
27 the victims of such aggression from their white counterparts (see also Hoggett, 1996),
28 in the context of defining authentic membership of the estate, their secular, linguistic
29 and music-based coalition with white youth in 'Riverview' appears to predominate.
30 They thus become what Back terms 'contingent insiders' (1996:240).

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50 Moreover, Wells and Watson (2005) find in their survey of shopkeepers in a London
51 borough that not all those championing white values are white, while some champions
52 of white rights include their black neighbours in their embattled and beleaguered
53 'we'. In those cases the Other is usually Muslim/Asian, which resonates with Back's
54 configuration of Afro-Caribbean + White vs. Asian. The contingency of belonging
55 revolves around factors including histories of residence and social networks, as
56 Hartigan (1997) finds in inner-city Detroit. When British people complain now that
57 'they' get preferential access to housing over 'us', the 'us' may well include local
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3 black, Mixed and Asian people, and the 'they' might, in parts of the UK, be white
4 European migrants (Author et al., 2008). Clearly, the power relationships at a personal
5 and local level allow for whiteness to be stretched to incorporate those not
6 phenotypically white beneath its cultural canopy, and exclude some who are!

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10 In terms of focus, Kaur's (2003) on white women in Southall, and Byrne's (2006) on
11 South London mothers, is therefore rare and welcome. Ferber's critique that gender is
12 usually ignored in US whiteness studies (2007) is equally valid for the British ones.

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14 Kaur notes that her respondents stress gendered experiences more than racialized
15 ones. Conscious of being a minority, and seeking to avoid drawing attention to their
16 whiteness, the women also realise they have to perform particular versions of
17 femininity to obtain respect and ward off the frequent accusations of loose morals
18 they either experience, or perceive as being levelled by the Asian men with whom
19 they come into contact. Byrne's mothers negotiate 'race' through complex narrations,
20 often eliding 'race' to instead focus on culture, nation, class and gender. 'While
21 whiteness was largely undiscussed', concludes Byrne (2006: 172), 'it was at the same
22 time defined through difference'. As a consequence of the identity-juggling and
23 erasure practices noted in both cases, the women's gendered experience is always
24 raced, their raced experiences always gendered. Indeed, an early attempt to tease out
25 white British women's whiteness (Lewis and Ramazanoglu, 1999: 40) noted that they
26 deployed strategies to avoid talking about 'race', including retreating to other terrains
27 of more comfortable identity:

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'Women could mark their whiteness as absence rather than substance by defining everyone as individuals, by claiming not to see difference, by denying the specificity of a white culture or by slipping into other facets of identity: especially gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, region' (Ibid.: 40).

With only three studies of women in the corpus, there is clearly a lot more work to do in conceptualising the intersectional in studies of white identities in the UK.

However, a set of trajectories of whiteness does become apparent from ethnographic studies. Nayak's 'White Wannabes' (2003); the youths on Back's 'Riverview' estate (1996); Watt and Stenson's Townsvillers (1998); Byrne's white mothers of 'mixed' children (2006); and Kaur's white Southall sisters (2000), all negotiate themselves across cultural and geographical terrains with varying degrees of ease and intimacy with black and Asian people from their neighbourhoods. While there is frequently tension, there is also alliance, through personal relationships drawing on shared

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knowledge and experiences. White actors can be highly reflexive about their racialized identities, and complex, contradictory ideas can be held.

Empire as presence

One emergent thread of this work is that of the post-imperial legacy of Britain, and how this plays out in the contemporary racialization of British social relations. The working and middle class subjects in the British work often position themselves as facing deprivation: the appropriation of 'their' values and territory is viewed as a physical and cultural invasion in which the State (local and/or national) may well collude. 'Jim' (in Coalville), reports that his uncles had been upset by the purchase of his grandmother's former house after her death: 'The presence of Asians in the home where they were brought up signifies an intolerable and unacceptable transformation' (Tyler, 2004: 299). Just as the link is often made in popular discourse between racialized minority presence and the physical degeneration of an area, so the Asian presence in Jim's uncles' home retrospectively degrades their status.

Communities can express nostalgia for particular values and relationships. The precise nature of the loss is shaped by the actors' location of themselves in a downward trajectory, or at best a fragile and threatened slot in the post-empire world order: whether or not empire is explicitly invoked (Gilroy, 2004). The direct evidence gleaned from qualitative interviewing is less compelling here, but this relationship is crucial, at least for the theorisation of British versions of a global white identity. Early studies written from within the 'race relations' paradigm, assumed the continuity of the coloniser-colonised relationship (Banton, 1967; Rex and Moore, 1967). However, as Knowles (2003) suggests, the justification for not examining such an important assumption is now far less easy to sustain. Knowles (2005) has followed up her appeal for the examination of postcolonial British whiteness with a small-scale study of white migrants in Hong Kong, yet the question she raises in regard to former imperial territories is all the more pertinent in relation to Britain itself. How exactly does the colonial heritage impact upon white identities, particularly in terms of its relationship with people descended from former colonial subjects in the metropolis? Tyler reports one of these rare moments of explicit juxtaposition and its interesting uses. Self-employed 'Mike', commenting on a retired, former Raj, client in Greenville, first situates himself as neither a racist nor a snob. He then describes the situation:

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5 'He has got Indians living to the back and side of him ... The house with the mosque
6 thingy ... So you can understand it from their point of view. They have worked hard
7 all their lives to achieve whatever bracket of wealth or status, to enjoy their retirement
8 in a quiet village, and all of a sudden you get three families moving into one house
9 and try and run a business from it. Transporter vans coming and going and they
10 probably have a couple of sewing machines running in the garage. Women doing a bit
11 of machining and then multiples of kids running around the garden, as he is sitting out
12 on a nice sunny day, and it all drives you mad. It is very difficult for them' (Tyler,
13 2003: 402-03).

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23 Mike's musings on the Asians' activities make his phantasies explicit, realigning him
24 as an ally of the Raj man by sharing a script of hegemonic whiteness that suspends
25 class differences between Mike and the client. It is tempting to think of this as
26 revealing the projection of some contemporary British fears; secular doubt in the face
27 of faith, where the latter is seen as communal, self-effacing and irrational; guilt over
28 others' industriousness that threatens your supposition of laziness and incompetence;
29 maybe combined with unfair competition (through unwaged family labour). Finally,
30 there is the plague of large noisy families and expressive communities, the hint of
31 high birth-rates and the ultimate assumption of power by the 'hordes'.

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39 Yet it could equally be argued that the younger actors, particularly in working class
40 areas (Back, 1996) do not reflexively utilise the colonial relationship for interpreting
41 their locations. Some questions that require further research are: to what extent are
42 younger actors, in comparison to older ones, aware of the colonial past? If the parasol
43 of whiteness shades both villages in middle England and urban estates, then do we
44 need to qualify the salience of the colonial legacy? I would suggest, by connecting
45 with, snagging on, regurgitating and revamping previous discourses that provide a
46 pool of interpretative frameworks and a blueprint of hierarchy. When this hierarchy
47 appears open to change, anxiety and tension are exhibited.

A Distinct British habitus for white identity formation?

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58 I have argued that white identities in the British fieldwork involve the construction of
59 contested sets of interlocking values, which neither coincide systematically with skin
60 colour, nor pertain exclusively to all members of a group. Indeed, a recurrent topic in

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3 is the heterogeneity and elasticity of the category 'white' in its members' affiliations
4 with black and Asian cultures. This of course means shifting the boundaries of the
5 'we' rather than abolishing the boundaries. In empirical fieldwork in Britain, social
6 relations often appear more complex than the black-white binary allows for: the white
7 subjects display a range of degrees of critique and reflexivity toward the dominance
8 of whiteness *on an individual basis*. Yet this conclusion in no way disturbs the
9 *structural* domination of whiteness: individuals cannot alter this, but they can and do
10 question and critique it, even if this is a minority position.

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12 Indeed, the majority of the British studies so far have been micro-level ones. It is not
13 the case that there is no tradition of theorising British whiteness in varying degrees of
14 explicitness (Puar, 1995; Bhattacharyya, 1997). Virtually all the writing on 'race' and
15 ethnicity in Britain could in some way be understood as covering different aspects of
16 whiteness. Landmark work such as Hall et al. (1978), Carby (1982) and Gilroy (1987)
17 are all partly about white British identity formation. Yet theoretical explorations of
18 whiteness have so far been minimal. This is a striking difference between the British
19 and American academic contexts. In the latter models of systemic racism that
20 explicitly conceptualise whiteness (Harris, 1993; Mills, 1997; 2003; 2004; Yancy,
21 2004) are available to researchers, as are the quantitative surveys of wealth, income
22 and residential segregation (Massey and Denton, 1994; Oliver and Shapiro, 1995)
23 upon which claims about the contemporary USA can be empirically based. British
24 researchers cannot yet moor their fieldwork to such sturdy bases.

Conclusions

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26 The reader of the state-of-the-art fieldwork on white identities in the USA and the UK
27 is confronted with a number of similar scripts. These are post-welfare state discourses
28 of bereavement articulated by white subjects confronted with the breakdown of white
29 superiority (Weis and Fine, 1996; Weis et al., 1996; Lamont, 2000). Although
30 misrecognition of 'affirmative action' is the locus of such bereavement in the USA
31 (McKinney, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, 2006), and state control of resources in a post-
32 colonial context could be seen similarly in the UK, this is still a dovetailing rather
33 than a bifurcation of ways of envisaging white identities among the majority of those
34 encountered in research. The published British fieldwork elucidates the complexity of
35 the process of making 'white subjects' we as researchers are both witnessing and
36 carrying out.

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4 Yet having got this far, I wonder whether we are not in danger of reproducing a
5 double erasure. On one hand, that of minorities' pain and loss, and secondly, of the
6 roles of the decision-making, cultural capital-rich middle classes who make infrequent
7 appearances in this literature (Pierce, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Reay et al., 2007; Byrne,
8 2006; Author, forthcoming). It is clear that the research focus has so far been
9 primarily on young, mainly working-class men, principally in urban England. More
10 studies of middle-class subjects and women, outside England and/or in rural settings
11 would thus be welcome additions to this corpus, while the theme of making the
12 relationship of Empire to contemporary practice is a vernacular seam to be mined in
13 future work.

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21 In all we do we must remind ourselves that these social relationships we investigate
22 are not just about 'race', but nor are they just about gender, or class, or the specifics of
23 contemporary England or California. People's lives are irrevocably embedded in the
24 multiplicity of identities, but this is not the same as saying that this multiplicity
25 somehow cancels out the principal vectors of discrimination that contour people's life
26 chances, or that we can pick and mix identities (as if particular kinds of shoe or music
27 tastes are equivalents of structural locations). The people whose lives we study are
28 always located in power relationships. So we ought not to be asking only 'what does
29 this tell us about being white?', but always, 'what does this tell us about racism?' If
30 one of the answers is 'that it is much more complex than a world in which people are
31 hailed *only* as racial subjects', then so much the better.

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Whatever else we do in excavating 'what white looks like' (Yancy, 2004), it is a
grave error to forget that whatever it looks like is also always a function of what
'black', or 'Asian', or 'Latino' look like at any given moment. When we focus on
white identities, the temptation is to become fascinated by the diversity of the micro-
level and miss the macro-level strands holding it all together. This is the problem of
disconnection, which is an occupational hazard of both qualitative sociology and
critical theory. Empirical researchers have to read theorists and do engage with them,
but theorists seem generally less interested in empirical fieldwork.

Next, America does not have a monopoly on whiteness (although the vast majority of
US-based studies seem to assume just that). Over a century, American scholars have
made a compelling case for turning the academic gaze onto whiteness, establishing
that it is a source of power, and that this power works differently in different contexts.
Yet the framework of 'national' studies is a barrier to moving beyond the 'third wave'

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3 into the fourth, to imagining work whose analytic dimension encompasses more than
4 one national context, and which explores some of the global 'moral economy' of
5 whiteness (Author, 2007). In the domain of this moral economy fall people who are
6 not racialised as white, yet are impacted on by its norms in terms of their ideological
7 orientation to 'race' (Twine, 1996; Bonilla-Silva, 2006), and the significance of this
8 should be examined further.

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10 In summary, we need more empirical research; more internationally comparative
11 work; more analysis; more interdisciplinary studies and action-oriented research on
12 how this knowledge can actually be deployed in an emancipatory framework. So far,
13 awareness of structural racism and white people's diverse roles in it is seen as the
14 ideal (cf. Twine's 'racial literacy' (2004); 'confessional' narratives (Frye, 2000);
15 practical books and workshops on recognising one's role as beneficiary of white
16 privilege, etc.). Yet how does this process get rolled out into the communities where
17 people do not necessarily identify with explicit anti-racism? How do we use our
18 knowledge to become part of anti-racist praxis that engages white people of good will
19 who do not identify with anti-racism *per se*, to question their whiteness without
20 feeling attacked? And is this particular moment, when international finance and the
21 neo-liberal social relations deriving from it are losing their capacity to pass
22 themselves off as natural and benevolent, the most propitious time to try and make
23 this work?

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