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WHAT HAPPENS AFTER SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION? AN EXPLORATION OF INTERMARRIAGE AND 'MIXED RACE' YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRITAIN

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Abstract

Theorizing on segmented assimilation has usefully spurred debate about the experiences and positions of the second generation in the US, and more recently, Europe. This theory has focused primarily on how young people fare in secondary school, and the crucial role that families and ethnic social networks can play in supporting second generation individuals. But what happens when young people leave home and enter into mainstream higher education institutions? Theorizing on segmented assimilation does not address either the implications of intermarriage for integration and upward mobility or how we should conceptualize the experiences of the growing numbers of 'mixed race' individuals. In this paper, I first consider the question of whether intermarriage is linked with upward mobility in the British context. I then explore the racial identifications and experiences of disparate types of 'mixed race' young people in Britain. How do such young people identify themselves, and what may their identifications reveal about their sense of belonging in Britain?

Key words: mixed race, intermarriage, segmented assimilation, integration, young people, Britain

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION? AN EXPLORATION OF INTERMARRIAGE AND 'MIXED RACE' YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRITAIN[i]

Introduction

Theorizing on segmented assimilation has usefully spurred debate about the experiences and positions of the so-called 'new second generation' in the US, and more recently, in Europe. While this model has been helpful in illuminating the diversification of integration pathways for different immigrant groups to the USA, it has been criticized by analysts in both the US and Europe along various lines (see Thompson & Crul 2007; Crul & Vermeulen 2003). The fact that SA theory may not be fully applicable to European cases, however, may be an unreasonable test of its merits, given that it was developed specifically in relation to the incorporation of post 1965 immigrants from mostly Latin America and Asia into the US. Nevertheless, with the benefit of hindsight, it appears that theorizing on segmented assimilation (as exemplified by Portes & Zhou 1993; Rumbaut & Portes 2001) is now in need of some refinement.

Segmented assimilation theory has primarily focused on how young people and adolescents fare in secondary schooling and the crucial role of family (and ethnic social networks and resources) in supporting second generation individuals. This theory essentially focuses on the second generation when they are minors and adolescents, subject to their parents' influence and authority within the home. At the heart of this theory is the contention that young people who delay assimilation into the mainstream (and who avert a slippery slide into a minority underclass, or who avoid wholesale Americanization in White suburban settings) are most likely to succeed in secondary schooling and enter onto a trajectory which can ensure educational and socioeconomic success.

The benefits of ethnic retention are said to encourage the second generation in educational achievement and high aspirations, while shielding them from mainstream influences which can weaken coethnic ties and hinder educational achievement. This pathway is exemplified by the case of Cubans in Miami and Punjabi Sikhs in suburban California (Portes & Zhou 1993). For example, in 'Valleyside', a rural, predominantly White town in California, Gibson (1989) characterizes the selective assimilation pattern of the Punjabi Sikhs as 'accommodation and acculturation without assimilation'. Gibson observes: '…most Punjabi Sikh immigrants openly and actively reject the notion that Americanization means giving

up their separate identity' (p. 24). The second generation Sikhs in Gibson's study tend to achieve academic success and entry into good universities.

In the case of those who follow the 'selective assimilation' pathway - the one most likely to ensure success - the story provided by SA implies that the trajectory into mainstream inclusion and success is largely unproblematic and smooth, once young second generation individuals are successfully coached and supported into good universities. But what happens *after* young people finish secondary education and leave their family households? Many studies of the post-1965 second generation in the US have primarily focused on either socioeconomic indicators or ethnic identity (Min & Kim 2009). But very little is known about their dating and marriage patterns, and their implications for the emergence of a third generation (whether it be 'mixed' or not). One limitation of SA theory is the fact that while this theory focuses on second generation minors and adolescents, and how they fare primarily in terms of economic incorporation, it does not attend to the more social aspects of integration, when they leave school and make the transition into young adulthood – a phase of young adulthood where they are typically faced with choices about potential marriage partners, and about the meanings and salience of their ethnic and racial identities more generally.

Despite evidence of ethnic retention in studies such as by Gibson (1989) and Portes & Zhou (1993), it would appear that parents' emphasis on selective assimilation has not hindered rates of intermarriage for groups such as many Asian Americans and Latino Americans in the US, where the percentages of Asian or Latino husbands or wives with spouses of another race or ethnicity surpassed 30% by the late 1990s, with most of these married to a White partner (Bean & Stevens 2003, but see Min & Kim 2009). Therefore, what happens in terms of the social networks and partnering of successful second generation young people entering the mainstream (Joyner & Kao 2005)? And what do such interethnic unions, and the growth of second and third generation multiracial people suggest for our understandings of 'integration' and differential pathways? The parental strategy of 'selective assimilation' (ethnic retention) may, ironically, lead second generation individuals into mainstream settings in which they will encounter a variety of possible marriage partners, and will potentially encourage intermarriage.

Current demographic projections in Britain and even the US (according to Lee & Bean 2004, 20% of Americans could identify themselves as multiracial by 2050 – not that distant a future) suggest that while ethnic boundaries will not disappear overnight, they will grow ever more complex and blurred (Parker &

Song 2001). If this holds true, we need to track the social aftermath of SA theory, and we will need to investigate the differential pathways for groups, as they marry, and have children. In other words, what comes after segmented assimilation?

Theorizing on segmented assimilation does not address either the implications of intermarriage for integration and upward mobility or how we should conceptualize the experiences of the growing numbers of 'mixed race' individuals. While there has been a long tradition of US scholarship which has addressed the links between assimilation, upward (and downward) mobility (see Gans 1992), and intermarriage (see below), research on these issues is still very nascent on the other side of the Atlantic. In this paper, I first consider the question of whether intermarriage is linked with upward mobility in the British context. Second, I examine the varied racial identifications and experiences of different types of 'mixed race' young people, and explore what their identifications reveal about their sense of 'belonging' in Britain. By addressing questions concerning intermarriage and the growth of mixed race people, I explore the aftermath of segmented assimilation and the continuing relevance of this theory in the British context.

Intermarriage and upward mobility in Britain?

Intermarriage is regarded by many analysts as the ultimate litmus test of 'integration' (see Warner & Srole 1945; Gordon 1964; Alba & Nee 2003; Lee & Bean 2004). Conversely, low rates of intermarriage have often been interpreted as an indicator of the maintenance of strong ethnic identities. Milton Gordon's (1964) book *Assimilation in American Life* develops an explicit link between the process of 'assimilation' and intermarriage, in which he argues that intermarriage is the *inevitable* outcome of what he calls 'structural assimilation'. The price of such assimilation, for Gordon, is the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values' (p. 81).

But as argued by theorists of SA, one can achieve upward mobility on the basis of limited acculturation – i.e. one can de-couple economic and social forms of assimilation – and that selective acculturation is conducive for upward mobility via adherence to ethnic norms conducive to educational success. While Gordon's study is dated, and largely focused on European immigrants to the USA (plus 'Negroes' and Puerto Ricans), his theoretical linking of intermarriage and integration has not been revised

or questioned by more recent analysts, including the proponents of segmented assimilation (though they

have clearly departed from theories of classical assimilation in other respects).

But in the increasingly complex landscape of many multiethnic societies, we must critically

examine what we mean by 'integration' in this formulation, including forms of both economic and social

integration (Song 2009; Lucassen & Laarman 2009). While intermarriage may be said to herald a form of

structural assimilation, in terms of one's formal inclusion in certain families, social networks, and social

institutions, we cannot assume that minority individuals (or couples) who have intermarried necessarily feel

welcomed, or that they straightforwardly 'belong' in mainstream settings. Nor should we assume that an

interracial partnership is automatically devoid of prejudice or racism within the couple relationship, the

wider family network, or indeed the wider society (see Luke & Luke 1998; Twine 2004; Rockquemore &

Laszloffy 2005). Large-scale intermarriage is an undeniable marker of a lessening of social distance

between two groups, but this decreasing social distance should not be understood as an unalloyed ticket to

social inclusion.

There is still very little known, empirically, about the lived experiences, and socioeconomic

outcomes of, intermarriage in contemporary societies such as Britain. While theorizing on SA is clear that

ethnic retention during adolescence promotes educational attainment (and thus, upward mobility), it does

not address the implications of second generation interracial partnering for economic mobility and social

integration/inclusion. Is intermarriage (with Whites) associated with economic mobility in Britain?

We are witnessing significant levels of intermarriage in Britain today. Not surprisingly, there is

general consensus among analysts that rates of intermarriage are substantially higher for the second

generation than for the first. However, as in the US, rates of intermarriage vary considerably across minority

groups, with Black Britons (especially men) exhibiting the highest rates of interracial partnering than any

other minority group – quite the opposite case with African Americans in the US. In a recent analysis of the

Labour Force Survey, nearly half of Black Caribbean men *in a partnership* were partnered with someone of

a different ethnic group (and about 1/3 of Black Caribbean women), while 39% of Chinese women in

partnerships had a partner from a different ethnic group (Platt 2009; Berthoud 2005).[ii] To provide some

sense of the burgeoning unions between White and non-White Britons, there are *more* 'mixed' Black

Carribean/White Britons under the age of 5 than children of this age with two Black Caribbean parents

(Owen 2007)! Thus, in Britain, the mixed population is comprised of both older second generation individuals who are mixed, and younger third generation children.

Educational attainment has been found to influence rates of intermarriage among groups. In a recent study using data from the General Household Survey (from 1988 to 2004), rates of intermarriage were found to be higher for ethnic minorities with high educational qualifications (such as the British Chinese), *except* for Blacks (Muttarak 2007a). In comparison with Black and Chinese Britons, but especially Black Britons, South Asian Britons evidence low rates of intermarriage – even among second generation Asians with higher educational attainment (though Indians intermarry at much higher rates than do predominantly Muslim groups such as Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and second generation Asian *women* with high qualifications are most likely to intermarry). However, according to Berthoud (Berthoud 1999:51, YCM study) intermarriages are roughly equally common among Black Caribbean men with high *and* low levels of education, and among those with good and bad employment experiences. This latter study suggests that there is considerable class diversity among Black Caribbean men who intermarry with White British women. Therefore, educational attainment may or may not influence rates of intermarriage, depending upon the specific group in question – clearly, more studies are needed in this area.

As for the relationship between intermarriage and upward mobility, the evidence is, again, mixed. While Berthoud (2005) argues that intermarriage does not appear to benefit or penalize Black Caribbeans, other research looking at occupational mobility and intermarriage in Britain suggests that ethnic minority women in particular receive an 'intermarriage premium' (this premium is operationalized in terms of occupational mobility by comparing occupational position in 1991 and 2001) when they partner with a White Briton – though Black Britons receive the smallest premium (Muttarak 2007b). Cultural differences generating normative pressures to remain endogamous can continue to play an important role in shaping the partnering decisions of specific British minority groups. But rather than being beneficial for mobility, as 'selective acculturation' is said to be in relation to SA, this South Asian endogamy (especially among Muslims) may accompany patterns of ethnic residential segregation and relatively low socioeconomic indicators.

As found with some Black Britons who intermarry with Whites, caution is needed in automatically equating intermarriage with upward mobility. One difficulty in assessing possible upward

mobility and intermarriage is that mobility which coincides with intermarriage may be a by-product of earlier social or economic mobility of the partners, or even of their parents (Gans 2007). And as discussed above, studies which posit a relationship between intermarriage and upward mobility would not have information about whether the couple have the support and 'connections' of either the minority or White family and wider social networks. In this way, many assumptions are built into models linking intermarriage and economic mobility.

Also, how have mixed people in Britain, the progeny of intermarriage, fared in socioeconomic terms? A recent report by the Office of National Statistics (Bradford 2006) asks: Are mixed people more like their minority counterparts, or their White counterparts (as the vast majority of mixed people have one White parent)? This report found that those who identify as Black Caribbean/White are *less* likely to be in professional occupations (20%) than (non-mixed) Black Caribbean (25%) or White Britons (27%) (Bradford 2006:24). Clearly, this finding goes against the implicit logic of assimilation, in which intermarriage with Whites would normally be associated with upward mobility. The opposite is true for South Asian/White mixed people, with a higher proportion of this group in the professions, in comparison with either South Asian or White Britons – here, it would appear that those who are intermarried are a more elite subgroup of South Asians. In fact, those who identified as White/South Asian were the most likely to be in managerial or professional occupations (30%), while those with White/Black Caribbean identities were the least likely to be in those occupations (20%) (Bradford 2006). Furthermore, those who were Black Caribbean/White were the most likely to be unemployed (16%), while South Asian/White mixed people were the least likely (10%). Therefore, disparate types of 'mixed' people exhibit different socioeconomic profiles. Thus, while Black/White intermarriage is most prevalent in Britain, it appears that Black/White mixed individuals are the most disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms, while South Asians are the least likely to intermarry, but those who do intermarry are likely to have children who are more privileged than other groups.

Based on the figures above (though analysts are not entirely in agreement), there appears to be some evidence that the projected scenario in SA (in the US), in which Black second generation groups are particularly vulnerable to a downward trajectory, may be at least partially replicated among mixed Black/White Britons (in terms of their employment profile), even though they are the 'products' of intermarriage. Historically, the White working classes have partnered with the Black working class in

various metropolitan areas, ranging from London, Liverpool, and Bristol (Benson 1984). But as Berthoud

suggests, there is also now a growing segment of the Black middle class which is partnering with middle

class Whites as well.

The emergent patterns of intermarriage in Britain clearly have implications of intermarriage for a

new generation of 'mixed race' individuals, and their identities and sense of belonging. Although SA theory

has focused on the benefits of ethnic retention and coethnic affiliations for socioeconomic indicators, more

research in future will have to examine the complex and varied outcomes of second generation cohabitation

and marriage patterns (including coethnic and cross-generational partnerships – Min & Kim 2009).

As in the US, a multiracial third generation exists in Britain, but it is very young, with many

under age 10 (Owen 2007). There are, however, second generation multiracial young people who

have reached adulthood in Britain, and I now turn to my study of this population. 'Race' for many

second generation minorities can still act as a barrier to integration, but is this also the case for mixed

individuals? If they are neither White nor a monoracial minority, 'mixed' individuals cannot easily be

analyzed in terms of the segmented assimilation model – a model which is based upon the recognition

of distinct ethnic and racial boundaries between groups. In my discussion below, I focus primarily

upon mixed individuals with one Black parent, and those with one East Asian parent – the groups

which are seen to follow very different trajectories, according to SA. While concerns about ethnic

retention are evident among some mixed young people, their upbringing within a mixed family, and

in an increasingly multiethnic Britain, reveals three main ways in which they think about their

identities and 'belonging' in British society.

Identifications of 'mixed race' young people in Britain

Because intermarriage is believed to decrease the significance of cultural distinctiveness in future

generations, the children of such unions are less likely to identify themselves with a single ethnic or racial

group. A number of studies in the US (see Rockequemore & Brunsma 2002; DaCosta 2007; Root 1996)

and UK (Tizard & Phoenix 1993; Ifekwunigwe 1998; Ali 2003) have already demonstrated the

emergence of multiracial identifications, which are distinctive from monoracial or monoethnic

identifications, though multiple identifications can be held simultaneously, or can be chosen in different contexts (see Telles & Sue 2009 for a good review).

Overall, our knowledge about the diversity of the mixed population in Britain is limited, but one reason why most research and policy has focused on the Black Caribbean/White and Black African/White mixed groups is that these two part Black groups comprise the largest of the 677,000 (1.2% of the population) identified as 'mixed' in the last 2001 British Census. The South Asian/White group and 'Other mixed' group (including most of the Chinese/White) constitute the next largest groups.[iii] The 'other mixed' category is heterogeneous, with many different identities, including mixed White ethnic identities. However, these numbers are almost certainly an undercount, with some parents designating their young children monoracially (Bradford 2006), as opposed to a multiracial categorization (see Xie & Goyette 1997).

I now draw upon some of the findings of an Economic and Social Research Council funded study of the racial identifications of different types of 'mixed race' young people in Britain, including Black/White, East Asian/White, Arab/White, South Asian/White, and minority mix (e.g. Black/Asian).[iv] We adopted a cross-sectional study design, with the use of a semi-structured online survey, followed by in-depth interviews with a sub-set of these survey respondents. Young adults were recruited from universities and colleges of further education across England (but primarily from London).[v] A stratified sample (based on location and size of the mixed race student population) was drawn from a sampling frame that integrated ethnically-coded data for students in universities and colleges supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Learning and Skills Council. These institutions sent out an email (with a link to our online survey) to its student body. We were able to include 326 of the roughly 500 surveys returned to us. Survey respondents were asked a variety of open and close-ended questions about their ethnic and racial identifications. Of these 326 survey respondents, we obtained a sub-sample of 65 young people for in-depth interviews (27 men, 38 women).[vi] Respondents in the sub-sample of 65 were then interviewed about their understandings and experiences of their racial and ethnic identifications in more detail – usually within 1 to 2 months after the completion of the online survey.

Various US studies of multiracial people have found that part Black 'mixed' people may be more constrained in their racial identifications (and categorized as 'Black') than are other 'mixed' groups, such as East Asian and White people in the US, whose choices of a 'best single race' were more variable than those of part Black individuals (see Harris & Sim 2002; Herman 2004; Xie & Goyette 1997; Tashiro 2002). We were particularly interested to see how mixed individuals would respond to the instruction to *choose only one group (to which they felt they most belonged)*, and anticipated their responses to reveal how they thought about race and issues of belonging. Would respondents choose one group, or would they insist upon being multiracial? The remainder of this paper focuses upon the interview responses to the question about a 'best single race'. This paper draws solely on the interview subset (n=65) because these interviews provided the rich, qualitative material which illuminated the complexity and nuances surrounding racial and ethnic identification – something not easily captured in the online survey on its own. While we cannot make any systematic comparisons between the 5 different groups, given the small and variable number of interviewees in each group, this section provides an *exploratory* examination of how different types of multiracial individuals think about, and experience, their racial identifications in their everyday social interactions with others.

<u>White, British, European, Irish</u>

In response to the instruction to choose one group, respondents used a variety of racial and ethno-national terms which I included under one category. Almost half of the interview sample (33 of 65) chose terms such as 'White' (11), 'British' (10), 'White British' (6), 'European' (3), 'Irish' (2), and 'English' (1). Although terms such as 'White', 'British', 'European' and 'Irish' are not equivalent terms, they were grouped together, because, as I explain below, these respondents conveyed very similar meanings through the use of these terms.

A striking 15 of 16 of the East Asian/White respondents, most of the South Asian/White respondents (8 of 10), and just over half (8 of 15) of the Arab/White respondents chose terms within this category – as opposed to only 2 of 17 Black/White, and no 'minority mix' respondents. So how should we interpret these chosen identifications? We found that most of

these respondents distanced themselves from the idea of being *racially* White (Song, forthcoming 2010). The term British was considered by many respondents to be an inclusive, race neutral term which denoted cultural belonging, and which could complement one's ethnic or racial ancestry. For most of these respondents, identifying White (or British) as the group that contributes most strongly to their identity meant that they were first and foremost British in *cultural terms*. All of these respondents articulated a strong sense of feeling British, as they had grown up in Britain, with a predominantly British upbringing. They reported that they were comfortable and rooted in British culture, especially if they had had little exposure to their minority culture and background. Given that they had grown up in Britain, the still predominantly White mainstream culture loomed large. This understanding of British or White differs from the more delimited understanding of White (as a racial identity) in most US studies. For example, Paul (Chinese/English), chose 'Irish (or European)' as his 'best single race' in the survey, and explained that, '*My English is better than my Chinese, I look more Western than Asian, and I was educated in the West*'. But his interview also revealed that he sometimes called himself 'British', and saw himself first and foremost as a 'Eurasian' person who, despite his predominantly European upbringing, was deeply interested in his Chinese heritage.

In addition to the multiplicity and fluidity of identifications Paul articulated, there was often a blurring around the use of racial (White), ethnic (Chinese), and national (Irish or British) categories. Even though Paul did not feel straightforwardly Irish or European, he felt much more European, or Western, *culturally*, than he did Chinese, given his upbringing in Ireland and England. For Paul, being both Chinese and English did not in any way preclude his sense of belonging in White mainstream Britain – as experienced, for instance by some second generation groups in the US.

Mohammed (19) had an Egyptian father and Irish mother. He grew up in London, and he also stressed inclusive understandings of what it meant to be British:

It's wherever you're born. It's home for me…..Um, I don't think color is …. It's if you speak the language, you're part of the culture…there's a new culture emerging in London, Britain, just the youth culture, urban.

Mohammed explained that choosing the term British transcended any narrow notion of race, and that this term incorporated everyone who had grown up in the cultural melange he experienced in London. Respondents who had grown up in London tended to articulate a hybridized, cosmopolitan view of culture and belonging, while race was regarded as of decreasing importance.

A number of those who had chosen White also conveyed a strong sense of being 'mixed race'. For instance, Jane (29) (of Chinese and English descent) chose 'White?', but in her interview, she revealed that she had chosen 'White?' because (like Paul) she had had little knowledge of Chinese culture or dialects. Jane reported that she felt neither Chinese, nor White, but that she felt both 'mixed' and British. Her strong sense of belonging in Britain did not hinge upon her ability to locate herself clearly into a definitive ethnic and racial taxonomy.

In a minority of cases, choosing White or British was in spite of, or because of, racism throughout their lives. One respondent, George (25), who was Chinese and English, chose 'White British', even though (or because) he was always seen as Chinese. George grew up with numerous experiences of racism, in which he was taunted for looking 'foreign'. He reported that while he felt very British in his upbringing and values, he did not believe that such an identity was validated by others. George tended to experience his mixedness in a predominantly negative way; he did not want to be seen as foreign, and the meanings attributed to his putative foreignness made him feel objectified and devalued. Thus phenoytpe was central to how mixed respondents were able to choose and assert their ethnic options, including the extent to which their chosen identifications were validated by others (Waters 1990).

While some respondents experienced their mixedness in primarily positive ways, others' experiences were less positive. Clearly, group differences applied in terms of which types of mixed people felt that they could claim a White or British identity. East Asian/White and South Asian/White (and to a lesser extent, Arab/White) respondents were the most likely to claim

'White' (or 'British') as their 'best single race', while very few Black people chose 'White' or

'British' as the group which most strongly contributed to their sense of selves (though in

interviews this did not mean that part Black respondents did not feel British in cultural terms). The

majority of the interview sub-sample emphasized a strong sense of belonging in Britain, coupled

with a largely symbolic attachment to their minority cultural background. Thus, claiming a racial

identification, e.g. as White, Indian, or Black, did not preclude also feeling British, and regarding

Britain as their home. These terms were clearly not mutually exc lusive , and the interviews

pointed to the multiple locations of belonging and identification articulated by these respondents.

<u>Minority heritage</u>

Seventeen (of 65) respondents nominated one non-White group as their 'best single race': 7

Black/White respondents chose Black, 4 Arab/White respondents chose Arab, 1 East Asian/White

respondent chose East Asian, 1 South Asian/White chose Asian, and 4 'minority mix' chose one

heritage over the other. In comparison with the 33 respondents who chose White (or a cognate

term), which primarily referred to their cultural upbringing in Britain, the assertion of a minority

identity appeared to be pointed, though what exactly was being asserted could vary considerably

in meaning. In some cases, an assertion of a non-White identification was linked to experiences of

racial prejudice and a sense of being a racialized minority. For instance, Joan (25) had an Iranian

father and an English mother. When asked why she chose 'Iranian', she said, *'I feel more close to*

their customs, and their beliefs and the people, to be honest… rather than English.' In the course

of the interview, Joan also spoke of the many experiences of racial prejudice she had experienced

when she was growing up. Her attachment to Iranian culture and practices, in addition to her

experiences of racism ('they'd just call me Arab; it was just so horrible…I felt like a real outcaste,

yeah') meant that she did not feel able to claim White or British as the group to which she most

belonged.

        Significantly, 7 of 17 Black/White respondents chose 'Black' (versus 2 Black/White

who chose 'White'). For instance, Keith (19), who had a White English mother and a Black

Jamaican father, chose 'minority (Black)'. He revealed that, especially in public settings, he had

experienced various forms of racial prejudice as a Black man. The cumulative nature of these experiences with the White world reinforced his sense of being Black, even though he acknowledged his mixed heritage. Keith reported that some years ago, when asked what his nationality was by a bank teller, he had replied, 'English' – only to have an older White man retort, 'You're not English!' This incident had shocked and upset Keith, and since then, he said that he did not feel he could claim Englishness, even though his mother was English, and he had been raised in England. The realization that he was seen as Black (as opposed to mixed or English) reinforced his sense of being not only negatively valued, but at the margins of mainstream society.

However, Keith's (and Joan's) experience was in the minority in the interview sample. In comparison with Keith, who emphasized a sense of racialized minority disadvantage, most of the other part Black respondents who nominated 'Black' did not refer to experiences of racial prejudice per se, though many of them mentioned that they were often racially assigned as 'Black'. In other words, the part Black respondents reported a more limited sense of their ethnic options, given societal tendencies to see them as monoracially Black. Nevertheless, most of these respondents emphasized their pride in a Black Caribbean or Black African cultural background – a background which did not compromise their sense of belonging in British society. For instance, Sarah (21) came from a middle class family, and attended an elite university in Britain. She was wholly positive about her mixed Black Caribbean/English heritage, and claimed 'Barbadian' as her 'best single race': 'When I say to people, oh my dad is from Barbados, they're like, wow, really? That's so cool! I'm like, that is quite cool, actually.' For Sarah, there was no tension between claiming a Black, and mixed identification. At the same time, choosing 'Barbadian' did not appear to preclude a strong sense of belonging in Britain.

Nevertheless, some of the Black/White respondents articulated concerns about the negative values and images associated with Blackness which they encountered in their day to day lives, and the fact that people tended to see them as Black, without acknowledgment of their mixed background. While a few respondents associated racism with their assertion of non-white race, most respondents who reported a non-White 'single best race' (especially middle class

respondents) spoke of these identifications as a symbolic and celebratory assertion of difference, rather than a badge of minority marginality.

Can't choose one race

Of our 65 interview respondents, 15 could not, or would not, choose one racial/ethnic group in the survey, and ticked 'can't say'. The two most common reasons for this were that a) respondents reported that they did not identify at all along racial lines; b) respondents felt genuinely 'mixed race', and would not choose one part of their heritage over the other. These respondents appeared to adopt a principled refusal to choose one single race. In comparison with the other types of mixed groups, a larger proportion of Black and White young people reported that they were unable or unwilling to choose a single race.

Four respondents reported that they simply did not identify along racial lines. These respondents reported that their 'race' and their multiracial heritage was unimportant, like Richard (19), who had one Portuguese and one Pakistani parent. Although he was not seen as White by others, he reported that his 'mixed' status did not affect his day to day existence: 'I mean, no one cares [if you're different]'. Although Richard was interested in and valued his cultural heritage on both sides, he simply did not identify in racial terms. When asked about his cultural upbringing, it became evident that Richard's parents had de-emphasized the idea of ethnic or racial difference in their family: *Basically what they did, my dad doesn't speak Portuguese, my mum doesn't speak Urdu, she learnt a few words here and there…. So they just raised me as neutral, which is British really…. I just don't think they were that bothered about it.*

Beth (25), who had a Black African mother and White English father, explained that she rarely thought about 'race': '*I personally forget most of the time that I have an ethnicity, but I am lucky to have been successful academically and study in a world where I don't feel that such things are important.*' These respondents reported that race was just not a central way in which they thought of themselves – that some other attribute was far more central to their lives – like a hobby, what they were studying, or their religion.

Among those who insisted upon a mixed, as opposed to singular, racial identity, 6

Black/White respondents talked about the importance of having their mixed status recognized; this

was because many people (of all backgrounds) would see them as monoracially Black. This forced

inclusion into the collective category 'Black' meant that they had to deny their White heritage (see

Zack 1996). All 6 of the Black/White respondents claiming a multiracial identity were women.

While we cannot explore this finding more fully in this paper, it may be that part Black men are

even more normatively constrained from claiming a mixed heritage than are women. Interestingly,

while Black/White respondents were most consistently racially assigned by others (as Black), they

were also the most likely to claim a multiracial, as opposed to a monoracial, identification. Many

of the respondents who insisted upon a mixed identification articulated some of the most

impassioned views about the centrality of their mixedness, to their sense of selves.

Conclusion

Despite various criticisms, theorizing on segmented assimilation has been invaluable in documenting the

differential pathways taken by various second generation groups. However, as the new second generation

has matured, we need to explore what happens when second generation young people leave home, and enter

into mainstream settings, where they will make choices about friendships and encounter potential marriage

partners. Thus, in this paper, I have first discussed the implications of intermarriage in Britain for the

potential integration and mobility of minority young people. Second, I have examined the question of how

multiracial (as opposed to monoracial minority) young people in Britain identify themselves, and what these

identifications tell us about their senses of belonging in Britain.

As I have argued above, evidence about the socioeconomic positions and experiences of

intermarried couples in Britain is still emerging, and the dividends of intermarriage may vary for disparate

groups of variable class and educational backgrounds. While some analysts argue that Black/White unions

(which are most common in Britain) are just as likely for individuals with little as well as high levels of

educational attainment, others argue that educational attainment is inversely related to the propensity to

intermarry in the case of Black Britons (unlike the case of South Asian and Chinese Britons). In Britain, it

appears that norms of religious and ethnic endogamy remain strong for many South Asian Britons, translating into lower rates of intermarriage for them, overall, than for Black or Chinese Britons, even when educational attainment is taken into account.

In the US, according to SA, the Black second generation is most racially segregated and vulnerable to downward mobility. In Britain, we find a rather different scenario, with long-standing mixed social networks and neighborhoods in metropolitan areas and relatively high rates of Black/White intermarriage. Rather surprisingly, mixed Black/White (the offspring of intermarriage) individuals, on aggregate, appear to be doing *less* well than Black or White counterparts in the labor market (ONS 2006). Although mixed South Asian/White individuals in Britain fare better in the labor market than do non-mixed South Asians as a whole, we need to temper the tendency to automatically link intermarriage (with Whites) with economic and social mobility and integration. Over time, British studies also need to investigate more fully patterns of coethnic partnership (see Min & Kim 2009) and their implications for our understandings of integration and belonging (Song 2009).

Thus intermarriage may or may not enhance upward mobility in specific ways, depending upon the group (or sub-group) in question. According to a variety of measures, many British minorities are performing better than their White peers, such as in educational attainment (Modood 2004), and increasingly, there is concern about the position of the White working classes (Runnymede Trust 2009). Many analysts of integration, who seem to presume that intermarriage is the final outcome of the 'assimilation' process, may be overly sanguine about what intermarriage (with Whites) implies in terms of economic and social integration, and need to consider the class backgrounds of both minority partners and the White people they marry.

And while SA theory has primarily conceived of the mainstream as White and middle class, the growth of intermarriage and multiracial individuals (not just in the US, but in many other multiethnic societies, such as Britain) necessitates a reformulation of the so-called mainstream (Alba & Nee 2003; Waters 1999), and of ethnic and racial boundaries more generally. Regarding the identifications and experiences of disparate types of multiracial Britons, a significant degree of intra-group diversity emerged, even among Black/White and East Asian/White individuals, whose experiences and understandings of their mixed status depended a great deal upon their physical appearance, their class backgrounds, and the ethnic

composition of the places in which they grew up. Across all the types of mixed people, however, many of the multiracial respondents felt that they were part of *a* mainstream culture (which could be predominantly White in specific regions/settings, while for others, being part of the mainstream could mean being part of a multiethnic, culturally hybrid locality and culture, as was found in many parts of London and other metropolitan areas). For many (though not all) mixed young people, questions about ethnic retention were largely moot – growing up in Britain, and with one White parent, attachment to a minority culture and sensibility was primarily symbolic.

But like their non-mixed second generation counterparts in SA, these mixed young people in Britain did have to decide what, if anything, their 'race' and mixedness meant. As discussed above, the categories and terms respondents chose to describe themselves required interpretation, and did not speak for themselves, as they could signify a variety of meanings and experiences, even within one type of mixed group. Almost half of the respondents (comprised of many of the East Asian/White respondents) chose White or British as their 'best single race', and in doing so, were making assertions, not about being White racially, but about belonging in Britain. Overall, these multiracial respondents exemplify a multicultural sensibility in which race-neutral understandings of national belonging are often emphasized in conjunction with, or as being more important than, a recognition of ethnic and racial identity derived from one's parentage. However, assertions of belonging, or of being British, were not always validated by others, especially for some respondents who were seen as visibly different.

Our Black/White respondents differed from our non-Black respondents in their greater propensity to choose a minority race (Black). However, most of those who chose Black also professed to feeling British, and while a few respondents associated their choice with a disadvantaged minority status, most made positive and symbolic assertions of their Black heritage. There was also a surprising degree of diversity even among Black/White respondents, including the significant number of women who insisted upon a multiracial identification, and those who refused a racial designation altogether. It is clear that class background and resources will continue to play an important role in mediating one's experiences of multiraciality, perhaps most significantly in relation to Black/White individuals, given the substantial growth in Black/White mixed people in Britain across both working and middle class backgrounds.

In Britain, multiracial individuals are part of an increasingly ethnically and racially diverse landscape, in which the significance of ethnic or racial difference will vary according to specific contexts and situations. Being mixed was reported to be quite 'ordinary' for many multiracial respondents, especially in metropolitan settings where ethnic diversity was considered the norm. Though I do not wish to overstate this point, the very choices that these multiracial individuals perceive about their friendships and partners, social networks, and cultural affiliations are now less determined by the recognition of meaningful ethnic and racial boundaries – and this may even be true for many non-mixed second generation young people in metropolitan settings.

The growth of mixed people also necessitates a reconsideration of 'the' group experience, as multiracial people do not (yet) comprise a discrete group of people in Britain, given the great deal of diversity in the racial identifications and experiences of mixed people, whether they are Black Caribbean/White or Chinese/White. Just as intermarriage (with Whites) may not always signal outright inclusion and mobility, the experiences of multiracial individuals may be highly variable, with some experiencing their mixedness in predominantly positive ways, while others, especially from a working class background, may perceive prejudice and various barriers because of their mixed ancestry (Tizard & Phoenix 1993).

Future studies of intermarriage and of 'mixed race' people must grapple with other theoretical and methodological difficulties: how should we classify the marriages of mixed people (the offspring of intermarriages)? Is it intermarriage if, for instance, a mixed Chinese/English person marries a White person, or would this count as a marriage between two members of the majority society? If this same mixed person married someone who was 'purely' of Chinese heritage, would this, then, count as intermarriage? Related to the emerging complexity of classifying mixed people and their unions, growing 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2007) more generally will pose methodological and theoretical challenges for any claims which link intermarriage and integration (or upward mobility). Related to this, do we categorize someone as 'mixed' if they have one minority grandparent (thus a mixed parent)? Should such a person be called 'second generation mixed'? How far back, generationally should we go in marking 'mixture' before the whole exercise becomes meaningless?

These seemingly distant questions about classification and categories are actually much more pressing than we may realize, if current demographic projections about mixing are borne out. What we mean by integration, and assumptions about the social distance between ethnic and racial groups, will need far more fine tuning, with the growing multiple pathways and outcomes experienced by monoracial and multiracial people within multiethnic Western societies. Thus we need to look beyond the horizons outlined by SA – a theory which relies upon the existence of clear and relatively stable ethnic and racial boundaries. In Britain, it is possible that, by the time we reach the maturation of a 'third generation' of mixed individuals, the whole notion of mixture will have become even more ordinary. In fact, in many (albeit variable) contexts within metropolitan Britain, the force of 'race' as a master status and identity (as opposed to other axes of identification) may be increasingly questionable.

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[ii] Platt's analysis of the Labour Force Survey notes that 'inter-ethnic partnerships are defined as those where one partner regards themselves as belonging to a different one of the 15 ethnic group categories to that claimed by the other partner' (p. 13) . Given the wide range of 15 ethnic groups, interethnic unions were not necessarily ones involving a White partner, though many of them probably do. Also, only a third of Black Caribbean women and something over half of Black Caribbean men are married or cohabiting (Platt 2009).

[iii] Most of this Black group (316,000) is comprised of Black Caribbean/White individuals.

[iv] This ESRC funded project, 'The ethnic options of mixed race people in Britain, was conducted with Peter Aspinall and Ferhana Hashem (both from CHSS, University of Kent), and was carried out between March 2006 and July 2008.

[v] In fact, 33% of mixed people in Britain lived in London in 2001 when the Census was taken (Bradford 2006). Most of the respondents were between 18 and 29, with 258 women and 68 men. This significant gender imbalance mirrors the gendered patterns of participation found in other studies of mixed race.

[vi] Black/White 17
East Asian/White 16
South Asian/White 10
Arab/White 15
Minority mix 7
Total= 65